The Sojourner's Return: Narratives on the Re-entry Experience

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Chapter 10
The Sojourner's Return:
Risks and Challenges of the Study Abroad Experience on Re-Entry

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ABSTRACT

Thousands of students are participating in study abroad programs, which is a major decision that could alter the life of a student and shape his/her future. It is important, therefore, to carefully weigh the options that come with being an international student. This chapter explores the history of study abroad, students' study abroad experiences, and the benefits of these programs. Study abroad benefits include personal growth, intercultural development, and career attainment. Educators consistently assert that a significant part of the studying abroad experience is training future global leaders to be more effective and efficient, respecting the diversities of people and cultures, including political and economic systems, and the willingness to take a stand for the world's welfare. Following this, the re-entry experiences of students who return to their home countries at the end of their studies are examined with respect to the physical, social, and psychological risks that student returnees are faced with.

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INTRODUCTION

Study abroad in the simplest sense can be described as a process whereby a student travels from their country of origin to another country typically for broader educational purposes. To quote Murphy, Sahakyan, Yong-Yi, and Magnan (2014), it is 'a primary vehicle for building student's global competence' (p. 1). Typically, study abroad experiences for most students in the Western-developed world involves a brief stay (less than a year) in another country. The Institute of International Education's (2016) report on length of study abroad experiences for American students has shown that between 2004-2015, the length of time that American students have spent studying at international destinations has steadily declined.

Similarly, a 2016 report from the Australian Government's Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) revealed that as many as 15,000 Australian students engage in short-term study abroad experiences compared to 1,500 in semester to year-long study abroad experiences in the year 2015. For most students from developing countries, however, study abroad experiences can last several years. Returnees from both short-term and long-term study abroad visits are reported to have positive changes in various domains due to their cultural experiences in the host nation. Hadis (2005) reported a heightened interest in global issues; increased recognition of diversity; increased academic and personal motivation, as some of the positive changes observed in student returnees.

Benefits notwithstanding, the experiences of culture shock and acculturation difficulties that are characteristic of cross-cultural education have been researched extensively with the conclusion that international students often experience challenges in their transition and acculturation process. Similarly, student returnees who complete their education in a host country after several years of studying abroad are also reported to undergo transitional stress as they re-adjust to their home countries (Rogers & Ward, 1993; Sussman, 2001, 2002). According to Christofi and Thompson (2007), even though international students study abroad in huge numbers, only about one-half of them return to their home countries of origin.

Returning home, no matter how brief the stay in a host country is, requires reintegration into one's culture of origin. Pritchard (2011) used the term re-entry trauma to describe the reintegration process of returnees from a host country to their home country. This process is likened to reverse culture shock, and may comprise a process of re-acculturation, feelings of grief and loss, changes in worldview and cosmic orientation, and a lack of preparedness for conditions in their country of origin (Pritchard, 2011). There is also another group of international students, who study abroad and return home temporarily for research or data collection purposes. For this group, they are exposed to two phases of culture shock and reverse culture shock during the tenure of their time abroad.

This chapter explores the re-entry experiences of international student returnees in two phases. In the first phase, a discussion of the benefits of study abroad experiences in a global sense (domestic students, international students, and institutions) is presented. In the second phase, we focus on the experiences of international students who return to their countries of origin at the end of their studies. Presented next is an examination of the physical, social, and psychological risks of the student returnees' re-entry experiences. We conclude with recommendations on how re-entry trauma and its ensuing impact can be managed.

BACKGROUND

Why Study Abroad?

The motive for international mobility as identified by Lesjak, Juvan, Ineson, Yap, and Axelsson (2015) implied that students have a desire to expand their personal and professional competence through their study abroad experiences. As an educational concept, study abroad was primarily only available to the wealthy as a means of social advancement and consolidation of wealth. Dorres (2007), in his paper on the history of study abroad as an academic program, traced the evolution of these experiences from its inception in the mid-1800s when it was first and foremost, a privilege. After WWII, however, study abroad became a vehicle through which students could learn about other cultures (Hoffa & DePaul, 2010). In today's world, a college education combined with study abroad experiences has become a medium through which students learn diverse skills that help them to transform their nation. Thus, students are encouraged to embark upon study abroad experiences.

Although any degree of study abroad in the global sense is advantageous, data from a 2004 survey of study abroad participants in the United States (US) revealed that year-long study abroad experiences are perceived as having more benefits in the long-term as compared to semester-long or shorter study abroad periods (Dwyer, 2004). Ingraham and Peterson (2004) also found that longer stays in a host country led to greater increases in personal growth, cultural awareness, and academic performance compared to shorter stay programs. These findings are quite interesting as the typical international student from a developing country normally studies abroad either for a Bachelor's, a Master's, or a Doctoral degree. Hence, they spend a longer period of time in the host nation as opposed to individuals from Western-developed nations who decide to engage in study abroad experiences.

There are many factors that motivate students to study abroad. For students in the US, Lewis (2016) summarized various factors that may motivate students to study abroad into the following: (a) the socioeconomic status of the student i.e.,

the higher the SES the more likely the student will have an interest in studying abroad; (b) social motivating factors i.e., the potential for interacting with others in the host culture as well as the host culture's norms on sex and alcohol; (c) cultural motivating factors i.e., the opportunity to enhance their awareness of and expand their knowledge of other cultures and languages; and (d) personal motivating factors i.e., whether or not study abroad experiences are expected as mandatory curricula experiences for the students.

For others from developing nations who aim to pursue an education in a developed nation, Boafo-Arthur (2014) listed some of the primary motivations that international students have for studying abroad in the US as: (a) a vast array of educational options and institutions which were of a higher quality; (b) the opportunities to apply for and receive study scholarships; and (c) exemplary student support services. Unfortunately, statistics on the average length of time that international students study abroad in Western educational contexts is currently not available. This notwithstanding, we consider the relative benefits of study abroad experiences for all students. Ingraham and Peterson (2004) provided several goals developed by Michigan State University's (MSU) international office as a guide in evaluating the relative benefits of the study abroad experiences of their students. These goals are to:

- Accelerate students' personal growth;
- Contribute to students' professional development;
- Develop students' skills for relating to culturally different others;
- Enhance students' self-awareness and understanding of their own culture;
- Facilitate students' intellectual growth; and
- Impact the internationalization of the student's home department, college, or university (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004, p. 84).

These goals were utilized by the authors in developing a mixed methods study to assess the relative benefit and impact of study abroad experiences from student's pre-departure and post-study abroad encounters. Results indicated growth in all the domains, as reported by students as well as MSU faculty, which provides support for the many benefits that study abroad experiences are said to provide. The next section presents the personal, professional, academic, and institutional benefits of study abroad, followed by an examination of the re-entry issues faced by international students who choose to return to their countries of origin upon completion of their education/study abroad experience.

Personal Benefits

During educational trips abroad, students have opportunities to interact and engage with a diversity of people, cultures and languages. This exposure is quite obviously a nascent foray into the global system (Boyle, 2012). With our modern world becoming increasingly more technologically driven, and consequently more widespread due to globalization, giving students the opportunity to weave seamlessly into other environments strikingly different from their own background is a distinct advantage. Having opportunities to experience, interact, and engage with people from other countries makes one more culturally aware. Through the process of being acculturated and engaged in another culture or society, we recognize our own cultural differences and develop an appreciation of other diverse environments. In the London School of Economics and Political Science's (2016) report on the benefits of studying a year abroad, they describe the ability to understand other's subjective or phenomenological worldview as being essential to success in today's globalized world. Additionally, students who study abroad are observed to not just have an understanding of others, but have the ability to appreciate the fact that other people will have differing points of view, and to value interactions of that nature.

Schulmann (2016) pointed out that even very brief study abroad experiences will augment student's comprehension and appreciation of diverse people and cultures. To reinforce this point, Schulman (2016) referenced a study conducted by researchers at Kennesaw State University in which students engaged in a short-term study abroad trip to Mexico. While the trip was only two-weeks long, after analyzing pre- and post-trip perceptions of their experiences, Carley and Tudor (2006) reported a significant difference in students' post-trip perceptions of the host nation, and concluded that the experience had a tremendous impact on participants and their subjective worldview of Mexico.

A sense of maturity, confidence, and the development of international alliances are also a part of the personal benefits reaped from the study abroad experience. The qualitative portion of Ingraham and Peterson's (2004) study had several quotes from students who reported feeling more confident, and having developed a greater sense of maturity while studying abroad. Other researchers have also found that enhanced cultural awareness, a sense of independence, self-confidence, and cross-cultural competence often develop in study abroad participants as a direct benefit of engaging with the host country (Bachner & Zeutschel, 2009; Deardorff, 2009). These internal changes were not only evident to the student participants, but to their instructors as well. Moreover, students reported making friends with individuals from all over the world, and found the ability to maintain those global relationships.

Professional Benefits

Today's employers believe in having adaptable and flexible employees who are able to engage with a multiplicity of individuals and cultures. Study abroad experiences equip students with cultural awareness; cultural awareness affords them the benefit of expanding their horizons and effortlessly applying their newly-gained knowledge in their various workplaces (LSEPS, n.d.). Dorres (2007) raised a salient point with respect to how study abroad experiences potentially give students a competitive edge in the job market, and increases their marketability post-graduation. According to Ingraham and Peterson (2004), students are also impacted in the domain of their career choices. The authors reported that students believed that their experiences abroad either confirmed their career choices, or caused them to reconsider previous choices.

In addition, students who embark upon study abroad trips and have experiences that closely mirror their chosen careers are able to make comparisons between how their chosen careers are practiced in their nation versus that of the host nation (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004). Additional benefits found by Ingraham and Peterson are assessed in the realm of learning to be adaptable and flexible in the professional sense as in most situations students often reside with other participants and groups they may not know, are tossed into situations that may be out of the norm for them, and may have unpredictable experiences within the duration of their study, and must create their own coping strategies to survive the experience.

Academic Benefits

Another benefit of the study abroad experience is that potential employers view students as more viable candidates when they do choose to advance their education. Thus, employers may be more eager to hire individuals who have studied abroad. In the US, as well as in the UK, graduate programs view students who have had study abroad experiences as culturally aware and having the ability to apply their learning in different contexts (LSEP, n.d). A study by O'Rear, Sutton, and Rubin (2011) focused on the impact of study abroad experiences on graduation rates. It was found that for American students, studying abroad actually helped them to complete their degrees.

Schulmann (2016) reported that students who participate in study abroad programs have a higher likelihood of pursuing doctoral degrees. The author presented research from the California State University-Dominguez Hills, Indiana University, and University of Georgia. In the study, students who studied abroad had higher graduation rates. Notably, the disparity in graduation rates between minority students

and Caucasian students narrowed when students from both populations engaged in study abroad experiences.

In addition to being more motivated to graduate on time, students' increase in intellectual and cognitive growth, gain new information and perspectives on sociopolitical issues, greater knowledge of history and geography of other cultures, academic and cognitive growth, and increases in achievement scores have been reported as part of the academic benefits of their time spent studying abroad (Cisneros-Donahue, Krentler, Reinig, & Sabol, 2012; Miller-Perrin & Thompson, 2012; Stone & Petrick, 2013) Further benefits were found in a study conducted to assess the academic benefits of a study abroad experience by Cisneros-Donahue et al. (2012). Their results indicate that those who study abroad experience benefits in learning and adapting new routines from their host nation's culture, increased functional knowledge as well as gained insight regarding geography, interdependence, interpersonal accommodation, and cultural sensitivity issues as opposed to their home country.

Institutional and National Benefits

Studying abroad is beneficial to academic institutions globally in economic and non-economic ways. Dwyer's (2004) study revealed that for some students, the potential for study abroad experiences influenced their choice of an undergraduate institution. For institutions, this implies that offering study abroad opportunities increase the overall attractiveness of their programs and schools to potential college students. Schulmann (2016) also discussed the likely consequences of study abroad opportunities on increased retention and graduation rates for students in the US. This is not surprising as Dwyer's study found that students who participated in study abroad opportunities were more likely to graduate as compared to those who did not. For institutions, this is beneficial as it implies that their students are able remain on course with their education and successfully graduate.

For most countries, hosting international students is a continual source of revenue for the educational sector. This is a powerful economic benefit that institutions and nations derive from study abroad students. As part of expanding their reach globally, Australia has launched a National Strategy for International Education program, which aims to strengthen their educational system, transform partnerships with other countries, and to put measures in place that will make Australia a global force in international education (AGDET, 2016). In 2015-2016, for example, revenue from international education contributed approximately AUD$13.9 billon towards Australia's economy. In the US, the mission of the *Institute for International Education* (IIE) is to expand access to education worldwide. The US has seen increases in the number of international students registering each year and in 2015 alone, revenue

from international students contributed USD$35 billon to the US economy (IIE, 2016). Beyond the economic benefits, international students enrich the educational experiences, cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, and respect for the diversity of local students and the general populace (Adams, Bank, & Olsen, 2011), and reinforce cultural interaction (Alghamdi & Otte, 2016).

Regardless of the personal, academic, and institutional benefits, re-entry trauma is said to affect many international students who return home at the end of their study abroad educational experiences (Pritchard, 2011; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010). Additionally, personal, cultural, political, economic, national, governmental, and career concerns, sometimes impede the re-entry process for sojourners (Hsiao 2011) to the extent that some international graduates may not return to the host country (Cristofi & Thompson, 2007). Re-entry adaptation or reverse culture shock may be even more challenging than the experience of culture shock (Hsiao, 2011; Thompson & Christofi, 2006), and feelings of disillusionment may accompany students' re-entry efforts (Christofi & Thompson, 2007). The subsequent sections consider some of the risks and challenges that international students contend with upon re-entry including a nascent exploration of recommendations that may aid in managing re-entry trauma for those students who return to their countries of origin after a study abroad experience.

Risks and Challenges of the Study Abroad Experience on Re-Entry

In a globalized world, travelling in between the host country and country of origin form an important part of an international student's mobility or transition trajectory (Szkudlarek, 2010). Popular country destinations for international students include the US, the UK, or Australia; these countries are swamped with a substantial number of students travelling from several places around the world (Hao, Wen & Welch, 2016; Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007). International students may travel across country borders within the same continent. In 2006 in Asia, for example, more than 74,000 Chinese nationals travelled to Japan for educational purposes (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007). Similarly, South Africa is the popular regional destination for a significant number of international students from other African countries who are in pursuit of Higher Education (HE) opportunities (Tillman, 2011). During the course of studying abroad, student sojourners often return to their home countries for the purposes of research, training, health, family, or leisure (Onwumechili, Nwosu, Jackson, & James-Hughes, 2003). Upon completion of their study abroad experience, many return home to settle down and focus on their career and family (Rose, 2017).

This transitional process of re-entry into one's country of origin is an important life event for any returning student (Kartoshkina, 2015; Pitts, 2016). A number of

professionals maintain that the transition back to their home country is the highlight of their international experience (Young, 2014). Time spent away from the host culture in one's home country, whether for short-term, long-term or permanent purposes, is fast becoming a topic of interest in the study abroad literature. Previous research on re-entry experiences and psychological consequences highlight a substantial number of concerns about re-entry difficulties faced by returning students (Gray & Savicki, 2015). Given the increase in international student mobility, it is crucial to gain a better understanding of the physical, psychological, social, and relevant issues linked to the re-entry experiences of student sojourners.

In a rapidly changing world, culture and re-entry or reverse culture shock are major issues for many students who transverse between the host and home country borders in the course of their educational studies (Martin & Harrell, 2004). Many foreign students return to their place of origin only to realize that they have become strangers in their own countries (Mooradian, 2004). Owing to substantial personal and home country environment transformation, at the point of re-entry, social mores and the original home climate may seem foreign to the kind of customs and practices they knew previously, or acquired while abroad (Bielsa, Casellas & Verger, 2014; Gaw, 2000).

Various words and phrases have been used to describe and capture the sentiments of international students returning to their countries of origin. Upon returning to their home country, the student returnee may feel like a 'cultural stranger' (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997) or 'a foreigner' (Bielsa et al., 2014). Some sojourners describe 'feeling out of place' (Gaw, 2000), 'rootless' (Pritchard, 2011), and 'a sense of non-place, of homelessness' (Butcher, 2004). Giving a portrayal of her re-entry experience, one participant in Martin and Harrell's (2004) study announced feeling a 'strange sense of displacement'. A section of Mooradian's (2004) article captured the sentiment of some student returnees in the phrase 'going home when home does not feel like home' (p. 40). Similarly, Kartoshkina (2015) conceptualized the return experiences of students from overseas as a bitter-sweet phenomenon.

To understand the re-entry experiences of international students as they stay over briefly or settle long-term in their countries of origin, we first need to consider their initial adjustment transition abroad. Stepping into an unknown cultural setting can be an overwhelming experience for the student pursing a degree abroad. With cross-cultural transitions comes a sense of disorientation, a disruption in lifestyle, and a process of readjustment (Rujipak & Limprasert, 2016). The international sojourner comes to a shocking realization that life perspectives, behaviors, and experiences associated with his/her home country are not shared by the host culture (Furnham, 2010). Initial overseas challenges and the process of adjustment to a new culture can be a bewildering and stressful experience (Gaw, 2000).

Response to this process of change is viewed by some scholars as occurring in a U-curve fashion (Brown & Holloway, 2008; Lysgaard, 1955; Mikal & Grace, 2012; Oberg, 1960; Pritchard, 2011). The psychologist, Lysgaard, was first to propose the U-curve hypothesis of cultural adjustment in 1955. Oberg's (1960) work on intercultural adjustment provided additional support for this model of adaptation to a new cultural context. This framework suggests that on entry into a new and unfamiliar culture, the sojourner goes through a honeymoon, culture shock, recovery, and an adjustment phase (Griffiths, Winstanley, & Gabriel, 2005; Rujipak & Limprasert, 2016; Sovic, 2007).

The honeymoon phase of intercultural adjustment is characterized by an initial interest, euphoria, and positive expectations about encountering a new culture (Cigularova, 2005; Doppen, 2010). The newcomer is fascinated about experiencing a culture different from his or her own. At this point, adjustment to the cultural milieu may appear easy, until this period is disrupted by events of change (Dettweiler et al., 2015). In response to cultural changes, the student sojourner may tend to experience boredom, rejection, frustration and loneliness (Gaw, 2000; Kartoshkina, 2015). Further, they may grieve over the loss of the familiar (Butcher, 2004). The loss of familiar social connections, customs, cues, and resources may result in the experience of shock (Gaw, 2000). Culture shock has been linked to limited language and communication skills, financial problems, loneliness, new living arrangements, discrimination, security issues, dietary difficulties, homesickness and foreign social customs, prejudice and xenophobic reactions (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Griffiths et al., 2005; Pritchard, 2011).

Pritchard (2011) noted that many of the Taiwanese students she interviewed missed eating local Taiwanese dishes while living and studying in Northern Ireland. Similarly, Gu, Schweisfurth and Day (2010) found that over one-third of the students they surveyed reported that adjusting to new pedagogies was a challenging task. Consistent with these experiences, Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) described culture shock as a psychological reaction to the events of strain, loss, rejection, confusion, surprise, and impotence caused by the sojourners presence in a foreign land. Over 75% of the Nepalese students who travelled to the United Kingdom (UK) for HE purposes in Gaudel's (2016) study reported that UK politics and the UK education system were underlying reasons for the experience of culture shock. The demand to respond to these ranges of challenges may result in psychological, social and behavioral disturbances (Gray & Savicki, 2015). In the study abroad scholarship, culture shock is linked to interpersonal difficulties, depression, anxiety, anger and fear (Butcher, 2002; Mooradian, 2004; Walling et al., 2006).

Gradually, against the backdrop of self-initiated, host institution or group led initiatives, the sojourner becomes accustomed to the host culture, reaches a state of stability, and can function well in their new environment (Mooradian, 2004).

This marks the stage of recovery, or as other authors have termed it 'acculturation'. Acculturation depicts the process of transformation that a sojourning individual may undergo as a result of continuous interaction with another culture (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989; Gray, 2014). In study abroad cases, the international sojourner acclimates to the host country's people, culture, food, customs, and establishes new social connections. Successful adaption to the host country's culture enriches the overseas experience, but poses an additional challenge to the student returning home (Arouca, 2013; Sussman, 2001).

Similar to the initial overseas adjustment, when students return to their home countries, they have to re-acculturate to the environment they left behind (Chamove & Soeterik, 2006; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). Martin (1984) pointed out that the process of re-acculturation may be more intense than the initial adjustment that students had to make when they first arrived overseas (Storti, 2001). This is particularly true if the student returnee was not bent on leaving, or was well adjusted to the host culture (Butcher, 2002; Cox, 2004). Moreover, re-entry difficulties are largely unanticipated; hence, preparation for re-entry may be inadequate. The sojourner may also begin to grieve the loss of peers, cultural experiences, and the lifestyle spent abroad (Butcher, 2002; Pitts, 2016).

Gullahorn, J. T. and Gullahorn, J. E. (1963) theorized that the returning student experiences shock upon returning home. Psychological distress in reaction to the original home context is termed reverse cultural shock. Reverse cultural shock is considered an extension of the U-curve hypothesis, which is explained in a W-curve fashion (Brown & Holloway, 2008; Kim, 2012; Pritchard, 2011). Consistent with this framework, the sojourner goes through a period of leave-taking and departure followed by the honeymoon, reverse culture shock, re-acculturation to his or her home culture, and then recovery (Davis et al., 2008; Pritchard 2011).

In the leave-taking and departure phase, prior to departure, the sojourner is preoccupied with the planning and logistics of his or her return home. Here, the student may begin to feel sad about leaving the host country, and may also feel anxious about his or her return home, particularly if they have spent significant time away (Mooradian, 2004; Storti, 2001). The honeymoon phase follows. At this point, the student is excited and happy to be back home, until this sense of excitement dwindles, and the returnee is suddenly hit by a crisis, caused by reverse culture shock (Mooradian, 2004). The experience of disorientation and shock upon return to a home country after residing abroad for a significant period can be unsettling (Gaw, 2000). With the passage of time, the sojourner learns to re-acculturate, re-adjust, and become accustomed to their previous home culture (Gaw, 2000).

One important distinguishing element between cultural shock and reverse cultural shock is that the sojourner does not anticipate difficulty upon returning home (Arthur, 2003). In an early study, researchers Rogers and Ward (1993) reviewed students'

expectations of returning to New Zealand (NZ) before their departure from overseas. Actual re-entry experiences were assessed four to ten weeks after their return. By analyzing questionnaire and interview data, their findings show that the student's earlier expectations were inaccurate; expectancies and experiences were disparate. As various authors have revealed, the process of re-entry may be more complex than student returnees usually envisage (Gaw, 2000; Storti, 2001).

In returning to one's home country, it is taken for granted that the individual's worldview, habits, and attitudes have changed. Likewise, the home country context may not have remained the same in the sojourners absence; change may have occurred. Many returnees wrongly assume that they will return home to a continued life as it were before their departure (Sussman, 2001). But, as Mooradian (2004) rightly described, the old no longer exists. Selby (2008) discounted the fact that the shock experienced upon re-entry into an original cultural context is similar to culture shock experienced in a foreign environment. According to Selby (2008), upon return to the original home environment, one may have to deal with a bruised self, triggered by challenges posed to prior experiences and a reconstructed self-image.

At this point, it is crucial to indicate that some research studies have found that difficulty upon returning home may not be universally shared by all returnees (Brabant et al., 1990; Pritchard, 2011; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010). Re-entry difficulty may be a function of specific demographic and situational variables such as the sojourner's: age; gender; religion; marital status; socioeconomic status; prior intercultural experience; cultural distance between members of the host country and the sojourner; duration since return; contact with host and home nationals; housing and job conditions (Brabant et al., 1990; Hao et al., 2016; Pritchard, 2011; Szkudlarek, 2010).

Referring to international students who encounter re-entry difficulties, Butcher (2004) argued that 'their worldviews have changed, their familial relationships have to be renegotiated, their expectations have been challenged, and, above all, their ontological security has been shaken' (p. 285). In the next section, citing previous research studies and practical examples, we discuss the points raised by Butcher (2004) in the context of physical, social and psychological harm.

Changing World Views, Negotiating Relationships, and Social Consequences

As a consequence of spending an extended time in a diverse cultural context, the returning international student acquires a different worldview of themselves, others, and elements of their home culture (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). As an example, when Bhutanese students returning from studies in Canada were asked to recall their re-entry experiences, eleven of them reported an increased sense of confidence,

maturity, professionalism, and the ability to think critically (Rose, 2017). The student returnee is viewed differently by their family and friends as a result of exhibiting newly gained knowledge and behavioral changes. The acculturation of new behaviors related to the host culture reshapes the student's previous cultural identity, and the way in which people in the home culture view and treat these returnees (Yoshida et al., 2003). In Yoshida and colleagues' (2003) research, 'Peers' perceptions of Japanese returnees,' the Japanese non-returnees perceived that their returnee peers were different in the sense that during re-integration, some of the attributes they exhibited (i.e., language and attitude) were foreign to the Japanese culture.

Few student returnees are aware of this change in their cultural identity; implications of this change usually become apparent at the point of re-entry and reintegration (Arthur, 2003). This newfound identity or self-construal becomes more obvious as social interactions with family and friends take place. While communicating and interacting, trends with family and friends reveal tensions instigated by the impact of the student returnees' behavioral changes, and the implication of this change on filial piety (Ward et al., 2001). For example, Louie (2006) noted that after international exposure, many of the Chinese returnees viewed themselves as special and unique, but nonetheless they faced frustration in the changed home environment; in their struggle to reunite themselves, they became a source of mockery for non-returnees of the home country. Other non-returnees showed disinterest in the sojourners' escapades while abroad, partly because they could not identify meaningfully with the sojourners' foreign experiences (Allison, Davis-Berman, & Berman, 2011). In some cases, as Storti (2001) suggested, some non-returnees may become hostile towards the home-comer, because they feel threatened or are jealous of the returnees' accomplishments abroad. In one study, Curiel (2016) observed that upon re-entry into their original home environment, more Saudi Arabian student sojourners faced opposition, violence, oppression, and/or discrimination because of their study abroad experiences, compared to returnees from other countries.

Insider vs. Outsider

The extensive body of literature on insider/outsider researcher duality provides additional support for the difficulties faced by returning sojourners, especially in view of foreign students who return home primarily for research purposes. Much of this literature examines, amongst other things, the way foreign students are positioned as hybrid researchers with varying roles as an insider and outsider (Chege, 2015; Cui, 2015; Mandiyanike, 2009; Orioles & Haggerty, 2012). Mandiyanike's (2009) study on the dilemma of conducting research back in your own country as a returning student—reflections of research fieldwork in Zimbabwe—showed the antipathy he faced by non-returnees when he returned from the UK to Zimbabwe for field work.

Due to tensions between the Zimbabwean and British Governments, his presence in the field as a UK affiliate was viewed with great suspicion.

In Oriola and Haggerty's (2012) study on conducting field research in the Nigerian Delta, Oriola's (one of the researchers) life was endangered in many ways. On one occasion, a gun was held to his forehead; although he survived this terrifying ordeal, it was a close call to death. After four years abroad, Oriola returned to Nigeria for data collection purposes; his research was focused on the recurrent kidnappings of foreign oil workers. As a Nigerian sojourner linked to a Canadian university, Oriola was advised by close fellow Nigerians while in the field not to disclose his foreign identity in order to remain safe. Nevertheless, even with his hidden identity, the kidnappers would have easily targeted him, and given his intercultural background, the ransom for his release would have been lucrative.

Bielsa, Casellas and Verger (2014) argued that 'the returning international sojourner is positioned, in ways, not essentially dissimilar to that of an outsider. They encounter explicit resistance, or ambivalence at the very least, towards the newness which they represent' (p. 66). Cultural changes to a returnee's cultural identity can cause a dissonance between their old and new cultural selves as they resume interactions with their home environment. Amidst social interactions in their home country, the sojourner often struggles to maintain the new self they gained while abroad (Church, 1982; Gaw, 2000). Consequently, they may begin to develop negative and critical emotions towards their original home environment (Walling et al., 2006).

Loss of Study Abroad Experiences

Re-entry experiences trigger psychological disturbances and social adjustments to the returning culture. Gray (2014) pointed out that the returning student does not only suffer from difficulties in of re-adjusting to the original home environment, but is also faced with the loss of study abroad experiences that may never be reclaimed. Loneliness and isolation are significant, or severe problems are experienced by the sojourner upon re-entry to the home country (Gaw, 2000). After spending one year overseas, Kartoshkina's (2015) study found that students returning to the US described feeling alienated (20%) and depressed (23%). Other students reported boredom and confusion while a fraction of returning students became critical towards the US culture upon re-entry. Elsewhere, over one-half of the NZ student returnees interviewed in Chamove and Soeterik's (2006) study experienced psychological distress, comparable to that of a bereaved individual. In response to re-entry difficulties, students may experience anger, anxiety, alienation, helplessness and depression (Butcher, 2002; Gaw, 2000; Walling et al., 2006). Gaw's (2000) study, 'Reverse culture shock in students returning from overseas' observed that shyness and speech anxiety were

more common among returnees who presented with high levels of reserve culture shock than returnees who reported with low levels of reverse culture shock. Twenty US undergraduate college students became critical towards their home culture after participating in a mission trip abroad. These students were infuriated about their home culture and further felt guilty about US politics and the US lifestyle centered on materialism, sexuality and spirituality (Walling et al., 2006).

In the face of re-entry difficulties, some returning students expressed a sense of frustration. Sahin's (1990) research indicated that one-third of Turkish returnees, after studying abroad, regretted making the decision to return home. Butcher (2004) argued that some student returnees hold unrealistic expectations about finding well-paid jobs, desire to be treated with deference, and seek influential promotions when gaining employment in their home countries. Examining returnees from Australia, Hao, Wen, and Welch (2016) noted that the current generation of Chinese returnees may face a unique and more complex set of challenges upon re-entering China. In contrast to the situation of older generations of sojourners, these students return home to a more competitive labor market of skilled domestic students, and the large numbers of other qualified academic sojourners also returning from studies abroad. As highlighted above, extended durations of time spent out of a home country have implications for the returning student sojourner. Thus, what remains is a focus on how the returning student can be supported to realize their full potential amidst the difficulties experienced at home.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Risks and Challenges of the Study Abroad Experience on Re-Entry

Thousands of students globally are participating in study abroad programs be it a short course or an extended period i.e., one year or more. Although there is a lot of excitement associated with studying abroad, it does come with its own range of issues which are oftentimes overlooked by the one undertaking the study (Szkudlarek, 2010). Studying abroad is a major decision that could alter the life of a student and shape his/her future. It is important, therefore, to carefully weigh the options (the merits and demerits) that come with being an international student. Seeking counsel from experienced individuals, or other international students with prior study abroad experiences will be most valuable and should be considered.

Studying abroad is reported to have made significant gains. Dweyer and Peters (2004) confirmed the benefits of study abroad programs. They outline these significant gains as including personal growth, intercultural development, and educational and

career attainment, amongst others. Surveying alumni of International Education of Students (IES), study abroad programs from 1950 to 1999—irrespective of the duration and where the students studied—the data taken from more than 3,400 respondents revealed that studying abroad is usually a defining moment in a young person's life, and continues to impact the participant's life for years after the experience.

The majority of respondents (97%) when asked about their personal growth, viewed studying abroad as an avenue for increased maturity, self-confidence, ability to tolerate ambiguity, as well as a lasting impression, and impact on their world view. With regards to intercultural development, study abroad educators consistently assert that a significant part of the studying abroad experience is training future global leaders to be more effective and efficient, avoiding ethnocentric tendencies (i.e., to respect the diversities of people and cultures, including political and economic systems), and willingness to take a stand for the world's welfare, not only what is beneficial for a specific country. Approximately 98% of respondents viewed their study abroad experience as useful, claiming it helped them to understand their own cultural values and biases better, while 82% responded that studying abroad enabled them to develop a more sophisticated way of viewing the world i.e., from different perspectives—an experience that challenged them to explore other cultures, and appreciate the people they came into contact with during their interactions. In terms of education and career attainments, studying abroad was viewed as providing a lifetime of benefits and opportunities as students acquired skills that steered the direction of their career; nearly one-half of the respondents have engaged in international work, or volunteerism after their studies.

Dwyer (2004) posited that conventional wisdom in the study abroad arena shows that more is better i.e., the longer the stay, the more significant the academic, cultural development, and personal growth benefits are accrued. And, Oosterbeek and Webbink (2011) brought to our awareness that studying abroad in recent years has increased rapidly. Being an important source of economic contributions to educational institutions and host countries (Paltridge, Mayson, & Schapper, 2012), international students have become important assets that cannot be ignored or overlooked. The phenomenon of international education and the challenges faced by international students has been interrogated by several scholars (Andrade, 2006; Barratt & Huba, 1994; Chen, 1999; Constantine et al., 2005; Sheehan & Pearson, 1995; Yi, Lin, & Kishimoto, 2003). These studies have revealed that international students are confronted with various adjustment issues in their new environments. Some of these issues are financial, accommodations, language barriers, and sometimes discrimination (Lin & Yin, 1997). It is thus important to identify and understand better, adjustment issues that are encountered by international students as the need for international education and number of student enrollment increases. The need to improve upon, and implement methods and strategies for supporting international

students academically, socially, culturally, economically, and psychologically is asserted by Paltridge et al. (2012).

The next section explores study abroad experiences, re-entry to home countries, and the way forward. *What provisions exist to support international students who return home to help them combat reverse culture shock? What training can be given to students to assist them in their acculturation back into their countries of origin?*

Reverse Culture Shock and Re-Entry

Issues regarding re-entry were identified years ago as can be seen in the works of Bochner (1973a, 1973b), Brislin and Van Buren (1974), and Howard (1974). Reverse culture shock received scholarly attention when Scheutz (1944) examined the difficulties experienced by returning veterans of the army. Earlier sources identified by Austin and Jones (1987) indirectly addressed re-entry issues from as early as 1935. Critical attention given to culture shock occurred during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and for the most part was studied through qualitative research methods. Lysgaard (1955), Oberg (1960), and Gullahorn, J. T. and Gullahorn, J. E. (1963) were the first to describe culture shock and reverse culture shock qualitatively as an intercultural adjustment. It is thus not a novel phenomenon but historically placed, which means that this issue has always existed. Yet, what can be done to reduce its occurrence is what is missing.

Reverse culture shock is described by Gaw (2000) as the process of readjusting, re-acculturating, and re-assimilating into one's own culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time. Re-entry is experienced by sojourners in diverse ways; some individuals may experience few, if any, effects of re-entry, while others appear to have problems ranging from a few months to one year or longer (Adler, 1981; Carlisle-Frank, 1992). While researchers suggest that no returnee is free from reverse culture shock, the data to support this hypothesis is limited (Adler, 1981; Church, 1982; Stelling, 1991; Ward et al., 2001; Zapf, 1991). Clinical evidence suggests that children and adolescents experience a greater severity of reverse culture shock than adults (Gullahorn, J. T., & Gullahorn, J. E., 1963; Stelling, 1991; Werkman, 1980).

Some of the common problems experienced include academic problems, cultural identity conflict, social withdrawal, depression, anxiety, and interpersonal challenges (Kittredge, 1988; Martin, 1984; Raschio, 1987; Sahin, 1990; Zapf, 1991). Returnees have also reported alienation, disorientation, stress, value confusion, anger, hostility, compulsive fears, helplessness, disenchantment, and discrimination (Adler, 1981; Church, 1982; Hannigan, 1990; Locke & Feinsod, 1982; Raschio, 1987; Zapf, 1991). Re-entry has been examined diversely from the re-socialization and re-acculturation perspectives. The adjustment difficulties experienced upon returning home, however,

differs from initial overseas adjustment on several significant dimensions and can be placed into the following *five* categories.

1. The adjustment difficulties that emerge are characterized by the unexpectedness of, and unpreparedness for re-entry problems. Adjustments in new host countries are often more understandable, and most individuals are prepared to make cultural adjustments in their new host country. Returnees, however, hardly anticipate having any problems upon their return home.
2. Some changes occur as a result of overseas experiences of which the individual may often not be aware.
3. Some changes occur in the home country and culture (politically and economically), which the returnee may not have known; at the same time, the returnee may perceive the home culture to have changed (based on his/her exposure and new environment) in ways that it, in fact, have not.
4. Friends, family, and colleagues expect returnees to exhibit 'normal' or pre-sojourn behavior (Sussman, 1985a), and are not expecting newly adapted behaviors and enhanced knowledge from the returnee. Thus, the perceptions and expectations of those that returned sojourners interact with are substantially different from those of their host culture nationals.
5. A lack of interest from colleagues and friends in the sojourn's experience is frequently a source of disappointment and frustration.

These re-socialization and re-acculturation experiences show the complexity and unique characteristics of the study abroad students' re-entry process. It explains the reasons why some international students returning to their countries of origin feel like 'strangers', 'foreigners', 'out of place', 'rootless', and 'homeless' (Bielsa et al., 2014; Butcher, 2004; Gaw, 2000; Pritchard, 2011).

Martin (1984) provided a thorough introduction to the field of re-entry by reviewing a variety of demographic and host country variables, which may influence the degree of re-entry difficulties. One important argument raised by Martin is the need to view the entire adjustment process from pre-departure through successful (or unsuccessful) re-entry as a process, and to refrain from the piecemeal approach that usually characterizes the adjustment literature.

Re-Entry Process and Research: The Way Forward

Several factors according to Sussman (1986; 2001) influence the nature and intensity of re-entry difficulties. The basic academic, social, professional, and cultural re-entry problems have been comprehensively identified by Mutual Educational Exchange

grantees (cf. Asuncion-Lande, 1974). Whether or not a returnee will experience these difficulties depends on such factors as:

- **Change in Financial Status (Howard, 1980):** This can vary from substantial reductions for multinational business employees to insignificant changes for scholars and students.
- **The Structural Difficulties of Re-Entry (Murray, 1973):** This refers to the structural difficulties and process of reintegrating oneself into the career path, the academic calendar, the technological environment, and the like.
- **Objective Changes in the Home Environment Affect the Re-Entry Process (Sussman, 1985a):** These may include changes in the political, economic, social, and corporate cultures. Another equally powerful obstacle is when the family has been left for a while and gained independence, thus altering family relationships.
- **Sojourner Changes (La Brack, 1983; 2007):** This refers to individual changes in attitudes, behavior (verbal and nonverbal), and world view as well as the sojourner's changed perception of his home country (Butcher, 2004; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015).
- **Home Culture Characteristic (La Brack, 1983):** This refers to the home culture perspective on re-entry, including the degree of tolerance for divergent ways of thinking and behaving.

Keats (1969), in an attempt to answer questions regarding benefits derived from an Australian education for Asian students, conducted a questionnaire survey (and an interview follow-up) of 500 returnee students in 10 Asian countries. She reported that the majority of the students found employment in their fields of study, and had adapted occupational methods to suit Asian conditions. However, many were frustrated with slow changes, and felt out of touch professionally due to a lack of educational continuity.

Bochner, Lin and McLeod (1980) interviewed Asian students in the US prior to their return to their home countries. Students reported skepticism about the usefulness of American approaches, and worried that their family and friends would not accept the American influences on their values. In a more detailed study of returning Japanese students, La Brack (1983) used both a questionnaire (186 subjects) and interview (84 subjects) format. He also interviewed 41 representatives of institutions involved with international study programs. He identified several specific re-entry difficulties, including awareness of the physical crowding in Japan, public conservatism, problems with re-joining clubs and other groups, changing friends, academic schedule, employment problems, and changes in values. Finally, in an exploratory study of re-entry experiences of American students returning

from home stays in Turkey and Germany, Martin (1984) investigated one aspect of the re-entry—namely, the perceived change in communication patterns in close relationships with family and friends. Using a questionnaire with 173 respondents, she found that while important relationships had changed, the amount of change and the direction of change was dependent on the particular type of relationship described i.e., parent, sibling, or friend.

Re-Entry Training

One of the flaws in the re-entry process is the lack of integration of empirical research with training design and implementation. Research is required to determine objectives of training, the range of training content, and training methodologies (Arthur, 2003; Brislin & Pedersen, 1976). As mentioned earlier, differences may exist between how cultures perceive students' overseas study experiences and its usefulness in the home culture. There are obvious dangers in employing the Western rationale that views overseas experiences as productive and worthy of being integrated into one's behavior and thinking. Some cultures, as difficult as it is for Western cross-culture trainers to admit, view an overseas experience and the accompanying personal changes negatively and embarrassing since, as a result, repatriates appear to be different from others in their home culture after their experience. One further ethical consideration—a constant consideration in cross-cultural or 'psychologically-based' training—is the potential stigmatization of participants in re-entry training programs (Gaw, 2000).

Scholars have reported that re-entry training and coaching are among the most often recommended strategies for successful repatriation of intercultural sojourners (Adler, 1981; Anderson, 2001; Arthur, 2003; Black et al., 1992b; Cox, 2004; Furuya et al., 2007; Hammer et al., 1998; Martin & Harrell, 1996; Martin & Harrell, 2004; McDonald, 1993; Nelson, 2005). Re-entry training should be the final component of a complete package of cultural adaptation workshops. Following the well-documented cycle of sojourner preparation, individuals should be exposed to screening for overseas assignments (see Hara, 1984; Moran, Stahl, & Boyer, 1983) in which a wide variety of critical factors are assessed to determine an individual's (and families) suitability and chances for success in an overseas assignment (Tucker & Baier, 1982). There must be pre-departure training to prepare an individual/family for entry into another country, in-country training to provide in-depth cultural information, and counselling to cope with the ensuing confusion and stress. Finally, re-entry training is needed to lessen the impact of reverse culture shock, and to provide a more positive strategy for coping with returning home. While re-entry workshops may be tailored to the needs of specific participants, the following content areas should be included during

training: Awareness of change, understanding of the cultural adaptation process, and ability to make personal adjustments to home/work environments (Sussnam, 1986).

An 'awareness of change' is a major component of re-entry training as individuals face a wide range of psychological, social, and work-related changes. Thus, a substantial training segment should be devoted to uncovering the following:

- Changes in Individual's Knowledge of Host Culture
- **Changes in Individual's Thinking and Behavior:** Sojourners often return home holding different attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors than they held at their initial departure.
- **Changes in Home Culture:** Returnees may face substantial political, climatic/geographic, social, organizational, and economic changes in their home culture.
- **Changes in Expectations of Home Culture Individuals:** Returnees need to have an opportunity to explore their home culture's expectations of them as returnees.

'Understanding of the cultural adaptation process'—a core component of re-entry training—provides returnees with the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the psychological process of re-adaptation and their initial overseas adjustment.

- **Adaptation Models:** This unit introduces the concept of adaptation cycles, among them are the U-curve and W-curve models. Trainers should be aware of research supporting, or refuting these models and alternative concepts (Grove & Torbiorn, 1985).
- **Culture Shock and Reverse Culture Shock:** Returnees should be introduced to these concepts, and the 'symptoms' associated with them. Trainers can draw upon returnees' experiences overseas in order to underscore idiosyncratic culture shock (and stress) reactions.
- **General Coping Strategies:** The trainees should be familiarized with various coping or adjustment strategies, both overseas styles and re-entry alternatives (Adler, 1981; White, 1980).

Another major training component, 'ability to make personal adjustments to home/work environments', focuses on planning for the individual's adjustment to social and work settings. While the need to understand general models of coping is apparent, trainers must also design individualized coping schemes for returnees. There is the need to clarify each returnee's points of stress in social and work situations; the ways in which returnees can successfully transfer skills, ideas, and behaviors; and the stress management techniques that can be used individually,

by the family, or at work. In addition, re-entry training itself should impart new skills and abilities to returnees. The design of individual coping strategies is often overlooked, when realistically speaking, it may provide the returnees with essential positive goal-setting strategies.

Pusch (1998) proposed a classification of re-entry styles with four distinct categories: free spirited, detached, re-assimilatory and integratory. These four re-entry styles are pictured across three dimensions, defined by Pusch (1998) as crucial to the re-entry process. The *three* dimensions cover: (1) the main concerns individuals may have about their repatriation; (2) the fundamental internal commitment of repatriates towards their home-country readjustment; and (3) the role they may desire to play or may be inherently playing upon re-entry. As asserted by the author, such a conceptualization may be helpful for rethinking the going-home process, both in the anticipatory and retrospective stages of re-entry. Even though this model has not been adopted by re-entry scholars, it seems to be gaining popularity among re-entry practitioners (La Brack, 2007).

- **The Individual Perspective:** A substantial number of studies related to the re-entry phenomenon focuses on sojourners' characteristics and situational factors of repatriation. Research shows that a number of factors can influence the distress experienced upon return, as well as psychological readjustment and overall satisfaction with the transition. The individual perspective is interrogated in terms of their characteristics.
- **Gender:** A significant number of empirical investigations suggest that men and women tend to experience re-entry differently (Brabant et al., 1990; Cox, 2004; Linehan & Scullion, 2002; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991). Sussman (2001; 2002), along with Martin and Harrell (2004), however, reported no significant relationship between gender and re-entry difficulties, indicating a need for further investigation of gender related re-entry concerns. Age is identified as the second most researched re-entry variable. There exists a positive correlation between age and re-entry adjustment: the older the repatriates, the less the re-entry distress (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Cox, 2004; Hyder & Lovblad, 2007; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991). Then, there is personality (Martin & Harrell, 2004; O'Sullivan, 2002); religion and marital status (Brabant et al., 1990; Martin &Harrell, 2004); and socioeconomic status, and prior intercultural experience and re-entry (MacDonald & Arthur, 2005; Martin & Harrell, 2004).
- **Situational Variables Include the Duration of Intercultural Sojourners:** Cultural distance as argued in the literature (Black et al., 1992b; Kidder, 1992; Triandis, 1989) influences repatriation cultural distance, defined as differences in norms between two environments (Kogut & Singh, 1988),

and can have a huge impact on returnees' readjustment processes. Similar to the length of one's stay abroad, the time elapsed since one's return has also been used as a predictor of re-entry readjustment. Contact with host-country individuals; r Researchers argue that the frequency and quality of interactions with host country nationals are directly related to expatriation adjustment (Kim, 2001; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991). The amount of contact with home-country individuals during expatriation has been reported to be significantly related to their home-country readjustment. Research shows that maintaining personal relationships with home-country individuals during foreign sojourns can have a substantial influence on reducing the distress of re-entry to one's home environment. Brabant et al. (1990) showed that the frequency of visits home is also positively associated with repatriation. Recent research, however, indicates that the quality of these encounters may be more important than their quantity (Cox, 2004, p. 208).

- **Attitudes:** Attitudes of home-country individuals towards the returnees seem to be another factor impacting the readjustment process. While this issue has been addressed in the literature on cultural distance and work-interactions, intercultural researchers have devoted little attention to further explore the topic of the compatriots' attitudes toward returning groups. Post-re-entry housing conditions are a recurring theme in findings on repatriation (Napier & Peterson, 1991). This is closely related to the fact that expatriating individuals often gain a number of financial benefits related to their relocation abroad, including preferential, high-comfort housing. At the same time, upon return, repatriates usually need to adjust back to a much more modest life-style (Gregersen & Stroh, 1997).

Martin and Harrell (1996, 2004) provided some theoretical outlines of a re-entry training program that distinguishes *four* training phases: (1) pre-departure; (2) overseas experience; (3) pre-re-entry; and (4) the re-entry phase itself. They distinguish between the various needs of returning employees, and those of repatriating students and suggest appropriate training designs for these two groups. Among other publications on re-entry training and coaching, Sussman (1986) reviewed literature on the re-entry processes and pointed out *three* elements, which should be considered when designing any re-entry session: (1) the background of the trainees; (2) the timing of the re-entry session; and (3) the place where the session should be conducted.

Szkudlarek's (2010) study titled 'Re-entry: A review of the literature' consisted of interviewing 31 re-entry trainers and analyzing their re-entry programs. This analysis included issues such as timing, location, duration, group composition, methodology, and thematic composition of a training session. Among the themes most frequently discussed during re-entry trainings were new, internationally-acquired

skills and knowledge, interpersonal change, and post-re-entry life planning. Less frequently did the trainers cover issues such as social and political developments within the home-country, the emotional side of re-entry transition, or practicalities of returning and networking. She suggested a number of alternatives and among these are online re-entry workshops, ongoing telephone coaching, non-profit sector support initiatives, and in-company re-entry sessions delivered by former repatriates. Within the student context, a number of re-entry teaching and coaching materials are provided by the trainers themselves; a student re-entry workbook by Denney (1987) and a re-entry guide by Pusch and Loewenthal (1988).

CONCLUSION

Student populations are the second most researched group of study abroad returnees (Chamove & Soeterik, 2006; Rogers & Ward, 1993; Sahin, 1990; Thompson & Christofi, 2006; Ward et al., 2001; Yoshida et al., 2003). The increasing popularity of international exchange programs makes it crucial that we understand the re-entry issues of young sojourners. Gaw (2000) identified feelings of alienation, loneliness, social awkwardness, insecurity, depression, shyness, and speech anxiety as common problems related to the personal readjustment of returning students. Indeed, it is important that HEIs attended by international students will ensure that effective re-entry training sessions are made available to students to ensure a peaceful transition from one stage to the next. Westwood et al. (1986) advocated that host-institutions should bear the main responsibility for providing anticipatory re-entry assistance to students who undertake study abroad experiences. This re-entry assistance can lower the effect of reverse culture shock, as well as other anticipatory consequences of re-entry back to one's home country.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Acculturation: In its simplest sense, this includes the changes that arise following contact between/among individuals from a different cultural background. This may lead to progressive adoption of elements of the other culture (e.g., ideas, words, values, and/or behaviors).

Acculturative Stress: A negative psychological reaction to the experiences of acculturation, often characterized by anxiety, depression, and a variety of psychosomatic problems.

Culture Shock: A feeling of uncertainty, confusion, or anxiety that people experience when visiting, doing business in, or living in a society that is different from their own. Culture shock can arise from a person's unfamiliarity with local customs, language, and acceptable behavior, since norms can vary significantly across cultures. The feeling of culture shock can dissipate over time. Visitors to a new country will at first be unfamiliar with the nuances of local culture, but will learn how to adapt as interactions with people continue.

Custom: A common practice among a group of people who have a shared heritage, such as a common country, culture, or religion.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): Educational institutions that provide education beyond a secondary or high school level.

Home Country: The country in which a person was born and usually raised, irrespective of the present country of residence and citizenship. For example, suppose one were born and raised in China, but moved to England many years ago and obtained citizenship. In this situation, your home country is China. This phrase is often used by people living in a second or third country (i.e., people such as expatriates, refugees, and tourists). In some contexts, however, home country can refer to the country where you live permanently. For most people, the country they are born and bred in and the country where they consider as the permanent residence is the same.

International Student: A student who pursues an education or spends part of their educational experiences in another country.

Re-Entry Trauma: The often-negative experiences that accompany reverse culture shock, and is encountered by returnee students when they return to their countries of origin.

Reflection: A consideration or analysis of a topic or experience that has an academic basis, but is also personal in nature. This is a common pedagogical method for courses on study abroad programs that examine cross-cultural issues. Through reflection, participants are asked to examine a particular cultural issue or practice in the host country and analyze it through their personal lens.

Returnee: Students who return to their "home" countries of origin after a short- or long-term sojourn to another "host" country.

Reverse Culture Shock: The degree of reverse culture shock may be directly proportional to the length of time spent overseas (i.e., the longer the time spent abroad, the greater the shock factor upon the eventual return home). Another factor that may influence the magnitude of reverse culture shock is the extent of the difference in cultures between the students' "home" country and the foreign "host" country. The bigger the cultural difference, the greater the reverse culture shock is likely to be upon return.

Sojourner: A short stay in a place that is not your home. Student sojourners temporarily reside in another country or culture for educational purposes and for varying lengths of time.