



diversityabroad

THE GLOBAL IMPACT EXCHANGE

A Quarterly Publication of Diversity Abroad

SUMMER 2019 EDITION

**BEING _____ ABROAD:
HEALTH, SAFETY, AND
SECURITY CONCERNS FOR
DIVERSE STUDENTS**



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PUBLICATION INFORMATION



The Global Impact Exchange

*A Quarterly Publication
of Diversity Abroad*

The Global Impact Exchange quarterly publication serves to advance domestic and international conversations around diversity, inclusion, and equity in global education with respect to the thematic focus identified each quarter.

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Summer 2019 Edition:

Being _____ Abroad: Health, Safety, and Security Concerns for Diverse Students

Published July 2019

With new initiatives to enhance global education accessibility for diverse students developing each year, global educators must increasingly consider the wellbeing of these students during and after travel abroad. What are innovative ways educators can move beyond color-coded maps and tips for travel to support marginalized identities as they move across the world—particularly LGBTQ+ students, students practicing minoritized religions, women, and students of color? What roles do we play in creating conditions and practices for student success while being _____ abroad?



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INTRODUCTION



By **ERICA LEDESMA**

Director of Professional Development & Member Services
Diversity Abroad

Yes, the academics are important. And yes, we hope students further develop their intercultural competencies. Ahead of any of these goals, however, the health, safety, and security of students participating in global programs are at the core of our work as International Educators. It goes without saying that positive outcomes—whether they be academic or personal—are dependent on the degree to which students experience both a perceived and a real sense of safety during international education and exchange experiences. While the field of International Education has focused for some time on developing practices and policies to promote safety among outbound and inbound students, we have focused less on how well these approaches meet the diverse needs of marginalized identities.

Equally important to the physical safety of our students, International Education professionals are increasingly focused on cultivating a sense of belonging among students (Supiano, B., 2018). A growing body of research correlates positive outcomes in higher education with a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012). As students enter new learning environments and adapt cross-culturally, we can be mindful of the identity-related factors that may impact their experience. For example, in some locations, locals may presume that students are not “American enough” based on their physical appearance. Other students may be the “only one” or “one of few” in their study location (student of color, first-generation college student, student with a disability, etc), which can contribute to fatigue and potential isolation. In cohort-based programs, the intra-group dynamics may cause friction among students who are unaccustomed to interacting with each other. Similarly, students from diverse backgrounds—whether on outbound study abroad or as matriculated international students—may experience discrimination during their studies. These types of experiences can be disorienting, exacerbate cultural transitions, and even contribute to mental health concerns (Gordon, 2016) that may negatively impact student learning and development outcomes. There are, however, concrete steps we can take to support students throughout all phases of global educational experiences if discrimination is a concern (Horse, et al., 2016).

A successful education abroad program experience for students requires a holistic view of health, safety, and security through an access and inclusion lens. This includes thoughtful and intentional program design, advising practices, on-site staff/faculty training, in-country orientations, and much more. Students will be better positioned for success if they experience a perceived/real sense of safety, a sense of belonging, and have access to identity-specific resources and support throughout all phases of an international education experience—exploring global programs, pre-departure, in-country living, returning home, and getting career ready.

In reading through the articles in the Summer 2019 Edition of the *Global Impact Exchange*, we invite you to consider the role of identity as we ensure the health, safety, and security of our students. Are we recognizing unique factors and risks that students from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds may face? Are we being proactive in anticipating the challenges and opportunities of maintaining wellness and a sense of belonging among students on global programs? Are all stakeholders empowered with the tools and knowledge to ensure the health and safety of our students?

Please share your thoughts and ideas with us at @diversityabroad and members@diversityabroad.org. Diversity Abroad members are invited to join the conversation on the online community forums.

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RACISM AS AN EMOTIONAL HEALTH HAZARD: STUDYING ABROAD AS A STUDENT OF COLOR

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In order to better meet the mental and emotional health needs of Students of Color (SOC) who study abroad, we need to prioritize hearing and sharing previous SOC's stories about racism, colorism, and discrimination as part of our standard pre-departure orientations. Short warnings are insufficient because racism is hazardous to our health. For example, in the US, 42% of SOC reported mental health problems in 2018, and as many as 62% of African-American students.¹ Williams' study of mental health stressors concluded that racism is a mental health problem,² and Abdullah and Graham concur that "experiences of racism have significant negative effects on both physical and mental health outcomes."³ While there is a need for more research on the mental health impacts of racism abroad, we know that study abroad is not immune; the wounds of racism travel with us, and scabs are often peeled off and new wounds are created. In contrast to racism experienced at home, however, SOC abroad are often emotionally unprepared to address it, often thinking that they will have a "break" from the painful situations that they face in the US.

Since race is constructed and expressed differently in each culture, SOC's experiences can vary greatly according to the racial climate of the study abroad location, the student's mental health prior to departure, expectations, and participation with white U.S. students. Research on the experiences of black students abroad indicates that some felt "freedom from (U.S.) racism."⁴ Still others "viewed race as an advantage in the host

¹ Sarah Ketchen Lipson, Adam Kern, Daniel Eisenberg, and Alfee M. Breland-Noble, "Mental Health Disparities Among College Students of Color," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 63 (2018): 350.

² David R. Williams, "Stress and the Mental Health of Populations of Color: Advancing Our Understanding of Race-related Stressors," *Journal of Health & Social Behavior*, Vol. 59, Issue 4, 2018: 466-485.

³ Tahirah Abdullah and Jess Graham, "The Link Between Experiences of Racism and Stress and Anxiety for Black Americans," *Anxiety and Depression Association of America*, updated article published on March 16, 2017: <https://www.anxiety.org/black-americans-how-to-cope-with-anxiety-and-racism> (4/14/2019)

⁴ Karyn Sweeney, "Race Matters: An Examination of the Study Abroad Experiences of African American Undergraduates," University of Denver, Digital Commons Electronic Theses & Dissertations, 1/1/2014: 30. Cites studies by Evans 2011 and Pryor 2008.

country, believing that they were exempt from stereotypes about the “ugly American.”⁵ Being part of the racial majority for the first time was also reported as a positive experience that helped some SOC bolster their self-esteem⁶. Nonetheless, many SOC reported negative links between experiences of racism and their mental health abroad. Sweeney concludes that among African-American students, “racism affected each of the participants’ experiences abroad.”⁷

Significantly, many of the SOC’s experiences of racism were mediated through the lens of participation in a half-white cohort of foreign students. During a cultural exchange the students from the Mexican university split the group into “Mexicans and Americans,” thereby “excluding” several students who identify as “Mexican” in the US. All semester SOC felt rejected when their white peers received more attention from local university students, strangers at clubs, and even host families. Daniela said: “Sometimes I can’t help but notice the dirty looks I get, or how some kids at my internship refuse to hold my hand or play games with me... I can’t help it that I do get sad.”

SOC’s experiences of racism and colorism were exacerbated by white peers. Daniela wrote, “Many events transpired this past week that have triggered my past experiences with oppression and racism within the United States.” Some SOC stated that these experiences triggered downward spirals of anxiety, depression, and PTSD. Biracial students who were mistaken as white also reported depression and anxiety related to experiences of feeling excluded by both white and SOC peers. Several students chose to seek help from mental health professionals.

Although Reza and Romita concluded that “a diverse student cohort is important for student learning while abroad,”⁸ many of the SOC’s most frustrating experiences were with white students in a very racially diverse cohort. Mexican-American student Consuelo complained: “It was disheartening and painful to have to listen to people talk about Mexican people in that way.” Similarly, Eva felt “heartache” when her peers disparaged a community that reminded her of her parents’ hometown. Our students’ experiences with white peers in Mexico are not isolated; Sweeney reports that “racial tensions with White U.S. students” often “follow students abroad.”⁹



⁵ Karyn Sweeney, “Race Matters: An Examination of the Study Abroad Experiences of African American Undergraduates,” University of Denver, Digital Commons Electronic Theses & Dissertations, 1/1/2: 32. Cites Jackson 2006.

⁶ Karyn Sweeney, “Race Matters: An Examination of the Study Abroad Experiences of African American Undergraduates,” University of Denver, Digital Commons Electronic Theses & Dissertations, 1/1/2: 34. Cites Dawson 2000, Jackson 2006, Jefferson 1997, Landau & Moore 2001, Tolliver 2000, Anaya 2011, and McClure 2010.

⁷ Karyn Sweeney, “Race Matters: An Examination of the Study Abroad Experiences of African American Undergraduates,” University of Denver, Digital Commons Electronic Theses & Dissertations, 1/1/2: 123-124.

⁸ Amir Reza and Lorien Romito. “Diversity Matters: Impacts of a Diverse Study Abroad Cohort on Intercultural Development,” *The Global Impact Exchange: A Quarterly Publication of Diversity Abroad*, Spring 2018 Edition: 24.

⁹ Karyn Sweeney, “Race Matters: An Examination of the Study Abroad Experiences of African American Undergraduates,” University of Denver, Digital Commons Electronic Theses & Dissertations, 1/1/2014: 36. Cites Gearhart 2005, Holmes 2008, Jackson 2006, Landau & Moore 2001, and Tolliver 2000.

In conclusion, education about racism and colorism must be prioritized in pre-departure orientation sessions so that SOC are not emotionally unprepared. Ongoing education and support groups should be incorporated into study abroad programs. We must ensure that study abroad insurance covers mental health costs so that students can receive professional assistance while abroad. Moreover, these services must conduct effective outreach since SOC are generally less likely to seek out mental health services.¹⁰

¹⁰ Sarah Ketchen Lipson, Adam Kern, Daniel Eisenberg, and Alfee M. Breland-Noble, "Mental Health Disparities Among College Students of Color," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 63 (2018): 350. Also see the article by Tyler Kingkade "Students of Color Aren't Getting the Mental Health Help They Need in College," *College* 01/14/2016: 2.

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INTEGRATING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION INTO PRE-DEPARTURE EXPERIENCES AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

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Study abroad does not really begin when students step foot out of the airplane. Rather, the learning experience begins when students start preparing for their trip—when they project an image of themselves as someone who will live, study, or intern abroad. Even before departure, preconceptions take shape: *What is this host country and culture like? What will my place be in it? Do I belong there?* Pre-departure orientations and workshops have the potential to inform such thinking—to aid students in the construction of their “self-image” as a study abroad participant. Thinking of study abroad in holistic terms entails recognizing that the learning process is not only defined by travel but includes components of study before, during, and after. This requires the active involvement of advisors and faculty leaders in order to coordinate efforts in a coherent approach.

To begin with, stakeholders need to identify students’ principal sources of anxiety and concern. For example, research on study abroad shows that when students travel to a non-English-speaking country, language anxiety may arise, since students fear that they will not be able to understand what locals say or make themselves understood, and this can potentially result in their unwillingness to communicate (Allen & Herron, 2003). Such fears can be alleviated, however, at least in part, by developing strategies like the use of comprehension checks and other tools for negotiating meaning. The implementation of pre-departure conversation exchanges, meanwhile, can give students practice resolving communication challenges in authentic interactions resembling those they will likely encounter in the target country and culture (Marijuan, 2018).

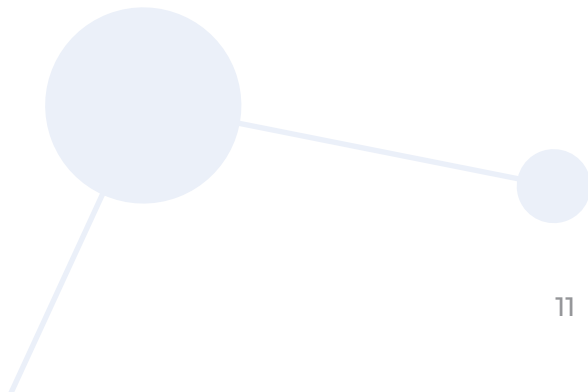
Cultural differences and unfamiliarity with specific cultural practices are a subject of concern for many students, especially those who have little or no experience traveling abroad. Students can feel uncomfortable or ridiculed when native speakers speak their mind (e.g., during explanation of house rules or personal comments during shared meals) (Allen & Herron, 2003). This can especially affect marginalized groups such as minority students who are already underrepresented in study abroad: according to a 2018 report by the Institute for International Education, of the students who went abroad for credit in 2016–2017, only 10.2% were of Hispanic/Latinx origins, 6.1% were Black/African American, and 0.4% were American Indian or Alaska Native. Creating an inclusive study abroad experience means addressing the cultural differences that all students are likely to face.

In addition, study abroad scholars have reported that even when students are bilingual and speak the language of the target country, they may still face stigmatization due to the variety of language they speak at home, or bilingual practices such as code-switching. This has been the case for bilingual students who speak a minority language in the US such as Spanish and travel either to an ancestral country (e.g., Mexico) or a non-ancestral country (e.g., Spain) (Riegelhaupt & Carrasco, 2000; Shively, 2016). Program designers need to be mindful of these students and address bilingual speakers' particular challenges, such as adapting to differences in language variety.

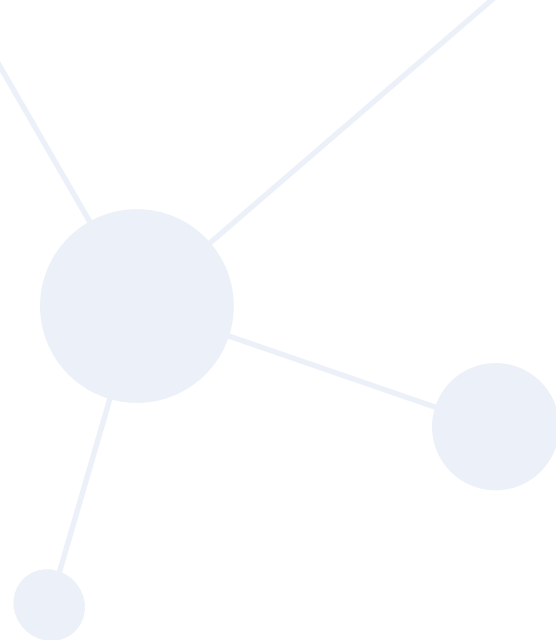
When it comes to gender, female students studying abroad can feel unsafe if they are addressed with sexually charged language in public places and social venues (e.g., Kinginger, 2008). In other circumstances, they may find it difficult to establish social networks with native speakers in certain regions (e.g., the Middle East) in comparison to male student peers (Trentman, 2013). LGBTQ+ students who advocate for the use of inclusive language (e.g., Latinx) and the possibility of spelling out their preferred pronouns (e.g., they, their, them) may wonder whether such preferences will be respected in the host country. In Argentina, for example, even though local students, journalists, and educators increasingly support inclusive language practices such as replacing words ending in *-o*, which signals masculine dominance, with words ending in *-e*, which signals gender fluidity (e.g., *latine* instead of *latino* in Spanish), conservative sectors of the Argentinian population openly oppose and even mock such linguistic innovations (Gambini, 2019). Similarly, academic institutions that influence language policies around the world such as *la Real Academia Española* (The Royal Spanish Academy) based in Madrid, Spain also do not support the use of inclusive language (Pérez, 2018). In interviews with students on our campus who have studied abroad

or whose friends have studied overseas, I have encountered anecdotal data from students in the LGBTQ+ community who have commented on the invisibility that they experience when they study abroad. Feeling “invisible” in the host country relates to locals' perceived lack of understanding about gender fluidity—and their perceived indifference towards students who ascribe to a non-binary gender identity. In response to these concerns, program directors need to be creative in helping all students facilitate the development of social networks with potential allies in the target culture. Discussions of gendered experiences should be an integral part of orientation workshops as well.

Building on the student experiences discussed above, with the support of the International Center at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, I have begun an initiative to enhance the immersion experience for students of diverse backgrounds. We promote pre-departure orientations and workshops in which students are able to raise concerns and are given room to reflect on potential biases they might harbor towards the target culture, as well as how they feel they might themselves be perceived. Students are encouraged to contact students from the host university via Skype or other platforms, and are provided with a list of contacts well prior to departure in order to facilitate these exchanges since “integration into local communities seems to lead to a greater breadth and depth of experiences, which in turn seems to affect learners' linguistic, sociolinguistic, and cultural gains” (Marijuan & Sanz, 2018).



At the curricular level, while students are studying abroad, they are asked to critically reflect through forum posts and classroom discussions. These written and oral reflections provide us with relevant data to know when interventions are needed since, as program directors, we are an integral part of the learning experience. The idea is that, with programmatic innovations, study abroad may be enhanced for students of all backgrounds, and the learning experience may be more democratized.



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THE STUDY ABROAD ROLLERCOASTER: REFLECTIONS ON RACIALIZED EXPERIENCES IN MEXICO

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Everyone who rides a rollercoaster can expect it to go up, down, and around rapidly and unexpectedly. That feeling of being on a rollercoaster symbolizes my own mental and emotional health as a black man who studied abroad in Mexico. I decided to study abroad three times in three different countries. While deciding to spend my first semester abroad in Mexico, I had the feeling that many people share when waiting in line to ride a rollercoaster. I was excited, nervous, and anxious. One important thing I forgot to pack and did not realize I needed was a survival guide for studying abroad as a student of color.

When I first arrived at immigration in the Mexico City airport, the official looked at my passport photo more than once. I immediately wondered, “Does he think that my passport is fake? Do I not look like a U.S. citizen because I am black?” I shook it off, but I couldn’t help but feel that I was being stared at and possibly being treated differently because I was black. I then wondered, “Did I miss something that my study abroad office or support staff did not cover in my orientation?” I then continued to shake it off but did not realize I was in for a culture shock surprise.

Early on in my semester in Mexico, I started to make friends with both international and local students. Those were my happy and high moments. Then one day at lunch when I was composting the scraps of my food, a white student said, “You should know better. There are people starving in Africa.” I froze. I felt both criticized for throwing the food away and embarrassed because I am black, and yet the white student said I should know that “people are starving in Africa.” As I was standing, my mental health was plummeting. Was

this racism? Is Africa what they think of when they look at me? There were so many questions that raced through my mind.

Later in the semester, when I socialized with some of the white students at a bar downtown, the white students received great attention from the locals. One man singled me out and asked me, “Where are you from?” “The United States,” I answered. He replied, “No, you’re dark like Cubans.” Was this colorism? I asked myself, “Are any ‘white allies’ going to speak up?” Again, I felt mentally and emotionally distressed, knowing that the perception of what an “American” looks like is very narrow and that often only one ethnic group is seen as “American” when abroad: white people. As one of the few non-white students in the group, I felt further isolated, anxious and depressed.

When I visited a rural town in Mexico with other students from the US, some teenagers pointed at me and yelled, “Negrito! Negrito! Negrito!” Already on the defensive because of my previous colorist/racist experiences in Mexico, I

immediately yelled at my white and Latinx peers: “They just called me the ‘N’ word three times and none of you are going to say anything?” I expected them to speak up. “Marq, it does NOT mean the ‘N’ word in this context. It means black,” responded my Mexican peer. Not ready to hear and understand that perhaps I misunderstood and that the teenagers were not actually calling me a racist slur, due to my previous experiences with racist language in the US, I emotionally shut down and isolated myself from the rest of my cohort. I felt perplexed as I stood there in the moment. So many questions raced through my head. “Why was my study abroad orientation very surface level on culture shock and why I was not prepared?” However, these experiences in Mexico prepared me for my next journey on a rollercoaster in both Canada and Germany.

Fast-forward a semester later, I decided to study short-term in Canada and then a year later, I decided to study abroad in Germany. Before both departures, I reflected on my experiences in Mexico and what I learned from those experiences in regard to being abroad as a black man from the United States. In both Canada and Germany, I was prepared not to take offense when people assumed I am not from the United States because of the color of my skin. Instead, I tried my best to understand the notion and concept they were provided. Instead of taking offense to the assumption, I decided to educate and initiate cultural exchange by saying, “I am from the United States, and where you are from?” From then, a change in dialogue between others and myself started to go from assumption to curiosity. These experiences influenced me to not give up on studying abroad, rather continue to study abroad with curiosity and openness to learn and grow.

Fast-forward four years later: I am now a study abroad staff member who supports current students of color who are studying abroad in Mexico. I have witnessed many of them encounter racism, colorism, and discrimination in some form and the ways that has impacted their mental and emotional health. The more I have observed my students, the more I’ve reflected on my own past experiences. At times it felt like all of us were on a rollercoaster at Six Flags, because like many students of color abroad, my mental and emotional health were on a rollercoaster as well. I, too, was unsure how to process my own experiences with race and colorism. Part of me felt that sometimes there were things that offended me that were probably not, in fact, racism, while another part of me felt that sometimes everything, in fact, did have to do with race and colorism. I realized that many students of color who choose to study abroad are not provided adequate preparation or effective support for the forms of racism and colorism that they will encounter abroad, nor are they provided with mental and emotional health resources that could help them when they do. Study abroad offices and support staff are the initial ride operators for students of color when they decide to study abroad. Therefore, it is important for the ride operators to go over concerns and have conversations for all students that are transparent before, during, and after studying abroad. In these conversations it is vital to address challenges of racism and colorism abroad and the impacts on one’s mental health so students of color can be proactive and understand the resources that are in place to help on their journey. It is also essential to train students who are white to be allies for students of color abroad. My goal as a young professional is to be that ride operator and help both students of color and students who are white that decide to study abroad benefit from my own experiences.

PROMOTING WELL-BEING AND SAFETY ABROAD: THE ROLE OF CONTINUOUS REFLECTION AND PEER EDUCATION BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER TRAVEL

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Standard pre-departure safety and security training for study abroad programs in higher education consists of sessions on topics like health and safety issues, conduct expectations, insurance, registration with the State Department, crisis management and response, and having clear communication plans (McCarthy, 2016). Increasingly, trainings on the Clery Act and Title IX legislation are also mandatory components of pre-departure orientations (Forum on Education Abroad, 2017). Intercultural trainings, which could include addressing topics such as gender and other cultural norms, also work towards increasing student safety while abroad, particularly for diverse or underrepresented groups like students of color, students with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ students.

As the overall number of U.S. students studying abroad continue to increase (Institute for International Education, 2018), resources abound on everything from how to create a culture of inclusivity, to countless student guides on studying abroad. Rather than a checklist of safety tips or “top-tens,” this article details a promising approach towards supporting the safety and wellness of first-generation, community college students of color as they study abroad. This is accomplished by following one simple, guiding philosophy: using a peer-to-peer model alongside engaging students in continuous reflection. Such a model ensures that any training is naturally grounded in the students themselves, as well as the real experiences of similar peers who preceded them. This model is particularly powerful for schools serving underrepresented and nontraditional student

populations, who might face challenges in finding resources tailored to supporting marginalized student populations in being _____ abroad.

School context

Stella and Charles Guttman Community College is a Hispanic-Serving Institution in New York City where 86% of students are Hispanic or Black, 72% are Pell recipients, and 43% are first-generation college students. Our distinctive Global Guttman program fully funds students—most of whom have never traveled abroad—to participate in short-term, faculty-led travel experiences. Since 2014, over 140 Global Guttman students have navigated 4 of the 7 continents—including countries such as Germany, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Jamaica, Belize, Chile, and China.

About the program

Global Guttman's three-phase study abroad model entails: 1) preparation, 2) immersion, and 3) community education. Central to all three phases is students' engagement in continuous, individual and collective reflection through writing, blogging, videos, and photography. Each of these phases is further described below:

Near-peer Preparation

Like with other stages of Global Guttman's study abroad model, reflection underpins how students are prepared to travel. Pre-departure orientations on Title IX, risk management, wellness, and intercultural awareness incorporate pre-trip reflection activities such as writing a letter to themselves that is then returned to them after the trip, and answering pre-trip reflection questions that are aligned to the learning outcomes delineated in the AAC&U's Global Learning VALUE rubric (AAC&U, 2018). However, what makes Guttman's pre-trip trainings truly unique is that they are all grounded in a near-peer model. Near-peers are those who are similar in age, ethnicity, gender, interests, and past or present experiences (Murphey & Arao, 2001). Near-peer past participants are invited to be on the student Selection Committee during the interview phase. Moreover, nearly all pre-departure trainings feature panels of alumni participants who are diverse in nature, and can collectively answer questions, share experiences, and field concerns as near-peers who can speak directly to issues that students might face while traveling abroad. For example, students of color participating in the Global Guttman China program revealed that the most helpful piece of cultural training they received was from a Black returned study abroad participant who shared his experience in China of being treated like a celebrity and being constantly

asked for picture-taking. Though anecdotal, incorporating near-peer models into pre-departure training provides students with real-life examples and experiences from those who most resemble them and are most likely to understand their experience of being _____ abroad.

Individual and Collective Reflective Immersion

During the trip, Global Guttman participants continue to engage in reflective exercises. Individually, students complete daily reflections that are posted to their personal ePortfolios. Collectively, students create an online travel blog that is shared with the larger college community and posted to the school's social media outlets. This regular journaling allows students to process their experiences, which is vital to maintaining their mental wellness while abroad. The shared travel blog also serves as a way to demonstrate the group's well-being in real time, as well as to potential future participants who often steer away from studying abroad because of safety concerns.

Integrative Reflection and Peer-to-peer Community Education

Upon their return, Global Guttman participants engage in post-trip reflections that are designed to parallel their pre-trip reflection. For example, a pre-trip reflection question designed to assess global self-awareness asks students to describe the ways in which their day-to-day life is connected to global issues. Upon return, students reflect on how this experience changed the way they think about their connection to global issues. This parallel design allows not only for assessment of change and growth but also for students to integrate their travel experiences and learning—a critical step underlying many of the high-impact educational practices (Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013). Furthermore, the reflections scaffold students

towards leading a community education event where students compose presentations in multiple media (e.g., booklets, presentations, photo exhibit, videos, podcasts) to share their experiences with the community at large. Most importantly, the audience includes peers who were not afforded the opportunity to study abroad. Through sharing their experiences at community events, students are not only able to spread the program's impact on them to their peers but also able to inspire future participants to consider studying abroad.

Student feedback on the model

Qualitative survey data revealed students' positive responses to continuous reflection and the impact it had on their curiosity and personal growth. For instance, a first-year Dominican student reported, "I liked the individual reflection because it made me realize exactly how I feel about this trip." Another student shared: "every step pushes me to wanting to know more about new cultures." Students also overwhelmingly praised the near-peer model of training. A second-year student who had never traveled out of the US before shared, "I liked the information the students who went on the trip last year gave us. It was nice to hear first-hand experiences." An Asian student whose only previous travel experience included a service-learning trip to Costa Rica with his high school shared a similar sentiment: "I thought the panel discussion with past Global Guttman participants was very informative and they gave valuable advice. I wish we had a few more minutes to talk to the panelists."

Conclusion

This case demonstrates how guiding study abroad participants to complete individual and collective reflections on a continuous basis—pre-trip, during the trip, and post-trip—can promote students' well-being throughout their travel experience. This is even more impactful when combined with learning from past participants who are most similar to them as near-peers, particularly for underrepresented students who face greater challenges but who often are not reflected in the health and safety training resources that exist. Finally, empowering current students to share their experiences upon their return expands access to study abroad by instilling in the minds of potential future participants that, no matter their background, they too can succeed in being _____ abroad.

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EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE AND ETHNICITY ABROAD AND AT HOME

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This year, I organized a panel entitled “Race and Ethnicity Abroad.” The intended purpose of the panel was to assist students returning from abroad in processing their experiences and applying them to life in the United States, and to prepare prospective study abroad students to understand they may have similar situations. This panel came about for two reasons. When I first arrived at University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass), a mid-sized predominantly white institution (PWI), I felt that the topic of race and ethnicity abroad was not being addressed sufficiently. I observed that the UMass Education Abroad website linked to resources that mostly discussed racism abroad, which I felt was a limited perspective on the topic. Our relationship with campus partners such as the Center for Multicultural Affairs and Student Success (CMASS) was relegated to one event each year and to our CMASS-IPO student advisor, a resource that few students utilized. Secondly, in my early years of working at UMass, one of my students who returned from abroad told me that I did not prepare her to manage issues regarding her ethnic identity in her study abroad destination. I thus felt responsible for not just this student but for all UMass students who had struggled with their identities abroad and found our resources lacking. Having hosted this panel at two different times of the year, I would like to share my suggestions with you so that you may implement a similar discussion on your campus or in your office.

1) Identify students who want to share their experience with race and ethnicity abroad with others.

First and foremost, this panel would not exist without the wonderful students who returned from abroad and talked about their experiences with race and ethnicity in international settings. Returned students participated in both the creation of the presentation portion as well as the panel portion of the workshop. My International Programs Office (IPO) colleagues and I recruited panelists by reading through our peer advisor applications and seeing what experiences students talked about, speaking with students while they were abroad and once they returned to campus, and asking students who regularly participated in IPO-related events. Students who were comfortable with sharing their experiences, whether positive or negative, joined the panel.

2) Invite students to participate in initiatives/working groups in your office.

One student, who worked as an IPO peer advisor for two years, co-created the Race and Ethnicity Abroad panel with me. She also served on the IPO Diversity and Inclusion Working Group with me and my colleagues. Not only did she and I create the backbone of the panel; she also redesigned pages on the UMass Education Abroad website to include conversations and current resources about inclusion and access for students of various races and ethnicities, gender and sexual orientation identities, abilities, and religions. Other students have also contributed significantly to IPO initiatives, such as communicating with faculty to approve coursework in Isenberg School of Management and the Biology Department to be taken abroad. These students' and peer advisors' efforts have resulted in resources that are relevant and appealing to UMass students of various identities and academic backgrounds, as well as an increase in the number of students who have applied for the IPO peer advisor position.

3) Determine a theoretical framework with which to address race and ethnicity in international situations.

Talking about race, ethnicity, and identity can be incredibly difficult, and no amount of time is adequate to have a fulfilling discussion. It is necessary to utilize a framework around which the discussion will be centered. Upon returning from abroad, UMass Amherst students often reported that they were confronted with challenges to their racial, ethnic, and national backgrounds that they never considered before going abroad, mentioning that people that they interacted with typically perceived just one of their racial or ethnic identities, or referred to them simply as

“American.” This feedback led me to address the topic of race and ethnicity through the frame of cultural relativism. Using cultural relativism, we were able to discuss the varying definitions of race and ethnicity in the United States, in other countries and communities, and even in different time periods. The framework allowed student panelists to unpack their abroad experiences from both their personal perspective and the perspective of locals in their study abroad community, and helped prospective students better understand why people from other cultures may perceive their racial, ethnic, or national backgrounds differently.

4) Connect the presentation to current conversations about race and ethnicity on your campus, in your office, and/or in your local area.

Another significant factor in creating this project was the increasing number of racial and racist confrontations on U.S. college campuses and within the local community around UMass Amherst. Students felt strongly about these incidents, and I referred to the incidents to compare them with race-related conflicts in other countries and communities to further students' understanding of race and ethnicity in different contexts. By incorporating current events into the presentation, attendees expressed that the theoretical framework was more relatable to their everyday lives and that they felt more comfortable asking questions and participating in the conversation.

5) Collaborate with organizations on campus and in the local community to promote conversations about race and ethnicity abroad.

As I work at a mid-sized PWI, it can be challenging to publicize a workshop on race and ethnicity abroad: the campus is large, and students of all backgrounds tend to feel uncomfortable speaking on the topic of race. One way of advertising a panel like this is to collaborate with student organizations, academic departments, and even neighboring institutions with interest in race and ethnicity abroad. In the first year of this panel, collaboration was limited. I intend to grow attendance next year by collaborating with faculty in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts and the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and advertising the panel at Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, and Smith Colleges.

These are just a few of the lessons I learned from creating this panel with students. I hope that you will consider implementing your own conversation about race and ethnicity abroad with students at your institution or in your office. The students learn so much about the topic while abroad, and it is worth sharing with the next group of students applying to study abroad as well as the greater campus community.

INNOVATIVE INTERVENTIONS ON-SITE THROUGH INTERCULTURAL TRAINING TO ADDRESS HEALTH, SAFETY, AND SECURITY CONCERNS OF DIVERSE STUDENTS ABROAD

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At Barcelona SAE, we launched a program called TODOS: The Outcomes-Based Diversity Outreach Strategy.¹ TODOS is based on four pillars: Providing Financial Resources, Inclusive Academic & Cultural Programming, Targeted Outreach, and Intercultural Training. To address the gaps in intercultural training that could lead to increased microaggressions, triggers, and reports of bias on-site, we now regularly hold intercultural training workshops, not just for our students but also for on-site staff, faculty, and homestay families as well as U.S. staff and partner universities.

One common objection we have received to this TODOS programming is that we are trying to change the host culture. That is a fundamental misunderstanding of what we are doing. The goal is not to amend the host culture but to provide locals that we work with (on-site staff, families, and faculty) the context from where students come from and provide them with inclusive language and supportive techniques to listen, validate, and support students on-site. Furthermore, we understand this is a two-way street, and our students, from all backgrounds, need to know that the host cultures they immerse themselves in have not had the same history, experiences, civil rights movements, and trending hashtag protests as they are used to in the United States.

Best practices in Education Abroad (EA) note that when preparing students for a study abroad program, discussing health and safety is paramount. However, during these discussions, topics around diversity, such as how host the culture may perceive your identity, are often absent or brushed over. By adding information in two areas we can greatly improve the experience, while directly addressing the health and safety of diverse students: the first is providing more context to the students about how the target culture will differ from where they come from in issues related to diversity. An example could be how people of color were treated historically in the host country, and how those populations are treated now. The second area where we can improve the experience includes adding more intentional on-site programming and interventions such as in-country training for on-site staff, faculty, and homestay families.

¹ <https://www.barcelonasae.com/diversity/>

This on-site training can reduce the general lack of knowledge which often leads to inadvertent microaggressions, triggers, and incidents of bias regardless of destination or length of the program.

The Learning Zone Model (Senninger, 2000) talks about the three zones to facilitate learning.



The model is composed of three circles. The first and innermost circle is the comfort zone, next is the learning zone, and the third is the panic zone. This model (2000) says that learning happens just outside of the comfort zone. However, you can limit learning capacity if a person is pushed too far outside of their comfort zone and into the panic zone. This concept applies to any student abroad as well and could lead to assimilation challenges and moving along the intercultural scale. Students who are constantly on high alert or live in the panic zone may be confronted with concerning health and mental health challenges. Underrepresented or diverse students are not only dealing with culture shock but may also feel unsafe because they don't have the same safety measures and support they are used to back home.

EA has started to dedicate resources to recruit underrepresented students to close the gap of accessibility. However, there has been very little work completed once the students are recruited and get on-site to help support these students abroad. Why don't we do more to make sure education abroad professionals are equipped effectively to train and facilitate meaningful discussions around race, gender, and sexuality in a cultural context? TODOS is specifically in place to take a small step towards educating on-site staff on diversity and inclusion to interact and help students. The stories of many underrepresented students returning from abroad follow a similar thread of on-site staff or homestay families not understanding the context and history where they came from and therefore not being able to support them as well as possible.

TODOS includes a diversity training series for U.S. and on-site staff on microaggressions and advising students of color, inclusive practices for advising LGBTQ+ students, and the legacy of Minority-Serving Institutions (HBCUs/HSIs) in the USA. Our local homestay families have been trained using the "TODOS Homestay Toolkit for Inclusion" to better prepare them for receiving students of diverse backgrounds. This training includes five tools for addressing matters of inclusion in the home. For example one of the tools is, "when in doubt, don't assume, ask (appropriate) questions." This specific tool is in place to help homestays foster intercultural conversations and avoid microaggressions. For instance, if a homestay family is hosting a female student who is wearing a hijab around the house, instead of asking the student why she doesn't remove the hijab because she has beautiful hair, ask her to share more about her beliefs and culture. The training uses everyday language that's easy to

² Photo Credit: <http://www.thempra.org.uk/social-pedagogy/key-concepts-in-social-pedagogy/the-learning-zone-model>

understand, and families work in groups to explore case studies around the five tools, such as a young female student wearing a hijab or a young African American student reporting an incident of bias on public transportation.

When students arrive, we make sure that students have access to resources that are included in inclusive discussions around diversity during on-site orientation, online student guide, TODOS informational flyers in the student lounge, and our cultural mentoring program with trained on-site staff. These resources and training, which are integrated into our programming and reflective activities, cover topics around diversity including where to worship, English-speaking therapists who are experienced in culture shock, and hair salons that cater to afro hair. We start with a card game facilitated by on-site mentors. This game was devised by our on-site activities coordinator to help to go beyond “I’m doing great” or “I’m doing bad.” The game intends to help students unpack how they are dealing with issues that are affecting them that very day. The mentor program has been successful in assisting in fueling conversations around various topics including diversity. The goal is to help students reflect

after something has happened or on how they might interact if something happens. Another intervention that we have devised is the “TODOS Homestay Toolkit for Inclusion.” This training was developed to help homestay families feel better prepared to receive underrepresented students from the United States. It helps those who are not trained in cultural awareness to understand what it takes to make your home welcoming the students of all backgrounds. There are five factors in the toolkit to help families and students including learning how to listen, validate, and support before or after an incident.

On-site intervention is an important step in continuing pre-departure training, supporting students while they are with us, and giving students the tools to reflectively unpack their experiences upon return. We propose going beyond the traditional approach to addressing health and safety in pre-departure and on-site. Mental health and wellbeing creates an environment that encourages comfort within an intercultural curriculum that simultaneously pushes students out of their comfort zone so that learning can take place.



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- ✓ **Applicable to institutions and provider organizations**
- ✓ **Embed diversity & inclusive good practices systemically**
- ✓ **Leverage partnerships to support student success**
- ✓ **Recognition for efforts towards advancing inclusive excellence**



1 PASSION

- Commitment to making education abroad accessible & inclusive

2 PROCESS



- Create a baseline to measure improvement
- Systemic approach to developing inclusive practices & policies for:
 - Strategy and Communications
 - Operations
 - Academics and Student Success

3 PROGRESS



- Increased and representative participation in education abroad
- Academic, interpersonal & post-graduate success of students

Contact us to learn more
about AIDE Roadmap

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· INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE · P R O G R A M

Diversity Abroad's Inclusive Excellence Program is a comprehensive and collaborative program which guides education abroad offices and organizations through the AIDE Roadmap, recognizes their success, and promotes continued growth, operational effectiveness, and progress toward inclusive excellence.

The Inclusive Excellence program is a three-year program that provides participants with a variety of resources to support their progress toward inclusive excellence. Participating institutions/organizations are eligible to renew participation after each three year period.

The Inclusive Excellence Program is only available to Diversity Abroad members.

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- ✓ Access to Comprehensive AIDE Roadmap Workbook
- ✓ Full AIDE Roadmap Report upon Assessment Completion
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The main task of the Editorial Advisory Board is to review article submissions for the Diversity Abroad Quarterly publication. While not a peer-reviewed academic journal, the Diversity Abroad Quarterly publication compiles articles to advance domestic and international conversations around diversity, inclusion, and equity in global education with respect to the thematic focus identified each quarter.



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