Engaging the Small Group Experience: Pedagogical Challenges and Strategies in Graduate Short-Term Study Abroad Programs

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Introductions

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Session Overview

• Guiding Questions and Session Goals
• Critical Incident Reflection
• Key Concepts in Group Dynamics
• Round-Table Dialogue & Perspectives from Research & Practice
• Pedagogical Challenges & Strategies
• Summary & Follow-Up
Guiding Questions & Session Goals

• Why focus on graduate study abroad programs?

• How does the group experience influence quality of learning in short-term study abroad programs?

• What pedagogical challenges and strategies might be associated with engaging group experience in short-term study abroad programs?
Critical Incident – please identify a recent group experience and reflect on:

• What happened? Who was involved?
• What made that experience particularly challenging?
• What did you do to address the challenge, if anything, and what was the outcome?
• Please write down your reflections.
Say, Fenner, have we ever told you how much your support means to us?
Key Concepts & Ideas

- Experiential learning
- Two dimensions of group life - work & emotion
- Group development - change over time
Key Concepts & Ideas

- Orientation to process - here-and-now
- The symbolic perspective in group dynamics
- Group conflict and paradox
Paradoxes in Small Groups

- Paradoxes of Belonging
- Paradoxes of Engaging
- Paradoxes of Speaking
- Contextual Influences
Case Example: Instructions

• Identify a facilitator, a recorder / note-taker

• Read the case & discuss questions at the end

• Be prepared to share your perspectives with the larger group
Round-Table Dialogue: Case Example

Discussion questions

• Describe what you see happening here within the group.

• What is working well and what is not? Why?

• What steps could you take during this study abroad experience since there are 2 weeks remaining?

• What are things you could change for future group study abroad experiences, should you choose to lead one again?
Reflecting on the Case Example

- Reports from the small groups
- Summary of themes
- Perspectives from our research and practice
Engaging the Group Experience in Study Abroad Programs
Strategies in Engaging Group Experience

- Provide support and challenge
- Attend to group work and emotion
- Encourage group reflection but avoid analysis
- Use metaphors and analogies to interpret group behavior
Strategies (continued)

• Use pre-departure orientations to cultivate group development

• Use learning logs and reflective journaling

• Target debriefings - work & emotionality

• Use serendipitous dialogue intentionally
Strategies (continued)

- Faculty development – engage group experience
- Clarify program goals and participant roles prior and during experience abroad
- Time for reflection and debriefing
- Attend to individual behaviors
Concluding Thoughts

• Experience of difference more intense within group than within culture

• Meaning more often symbolic than literal

• Facilitating means helping make connections between inner and outer

• Faculty preparedness is essential
Questions, Comments, Follow-Up

- Handouts on conference website
- Follow-up conversations
- Join LinkedIn group: “Graduate Programs Abroad Forum”
- Feedback & Forum evaluation form
Thank you!

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Thank you!
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