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Emotional Responses upon Study Abroad Reentry

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The purpose of this study is to explore the negative emotional responses of United States college students upon return from study abroad experiences. Research has demonstrated that college students coming back from study abroad opportunities experience phases depicted in Lysgaard's original U-Curve model adjustment theory (Lysgaard's, 1955). The U-Curve theory stages of assimilation include honeymoon, culture shock, recovery, and adjustment phases upon reentry into one's previous culture. We will survey approximately 200 students at Valparaiso University, a small liberal arts college in Indiana, who have recently studied abroad. This correlational study will look at the relationship between emotional responses and reentry, and will also consider aspects such as location of program, gender, time lapse, and type of program. This study has important implications for reentry support and curriculum for returning study abroad students.

Information about the Authors:

As students from a small liberal arts college that focuses on service learning, we are often encouraged to partake in Study Abroad opportunities. Although proven to be very beneficial to academia and cultural development, traveling abroad can also be a time of significant stress and adjustment for students. As experienced first-hand by one of our group members, reentry into one's primary country after being abroad for a significant amount of time can cause some negative emotional responses. Furthermore, research has provided evidence supporting our belief that many students who study abroad for a semester or more experience difficulties re-adjusting upon return. With our findings, we hope to aid the Valpo Study Abroad Office by providing feedback from reentry students and offering suggestions for restructuring current resources and curriculum for students once they return from their time abroad.

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