

A Study of How International Travel at a Young Age **Impacts Communication as an Adult**

Allison Clark

Abstract

Background: The purpose of the study "Cross-cultural Travel: A Study of How International Travel at a Young Age Impacts Communication Skills as an Adult" is to gather the perception of the weight of impact that traveling to foreign countries throughout childhood carries upon the individual later in life. This qualitative research approach focuses upon individuals who have spent extensive periods of time in foreign cultures around the globe and with the inhabitants thereof and assessing through interviews how past intercultural experiences through childhood contribute to effective engagement and communication throughout adulthood.

This research provides insight for the audience in terms of how cross-cultural immersion throughout childhood provides valuable tools and life skills, but also displays benefits of spending time in foreign cultures, as individuals prove to walk away with an increased understanding of various global lifestyles regarding cultural norms, intercultural communication, and an applicable sense of how to integrate gained skills on a daily basis. This topic provides value through its distinctive findings regarding how intercultural engagement is beneficial for the individual growth and development of human beings, specifically within the realm of communicative behaviors, norms, and practices.

Keywords: cross-cultural experiences, intercultural communication interpersonal communication

Introduction and Research Question

The purpose of this research was to reveal accurate and informative results of the impacts that intercultural exposure has upon individuals who have been immersed in foreign cultural settings from an early age. The social learning theory, crafted by Albert Bandura (1976) is attached to this study, with the ideology that humans adapt to and learn from their surroundings (Gweon, 2021), and thus, through immersive experiences which breed familiarity, individuals are prone to adopt and maintain cultural habits and integrate them into their daily living within their culture of origin, whether this is a conscious or subconscious action.

This study aimed to answer the following research question:

RQ: How does international travel and intercultural experiences at a young age impact communication skills as an adult?

Methods

The chosen methodology to execute this research was a qualitative research method. This methodology was selected due to its capability to capture first-hand accounts and opinions of individuals who have been impacted by this specific area of research.

Research Techniques

This methodology was utilized by implementation of interviews, which were held with individuals who met the following criteria:

- 1.) Traveled to at least one country before the age of 18
- 2.) Resided in a foreign country for a total of at least one month throughout their childhood before the age of 18

Acquaintances and friends who met the criteria were asked to voluntarily participate in a recorded and transcribed interview, covering the following questions. This method was utilized because of its effectiveness to extract the most valuable and rich information regarding experiences, impacts, and connecting common themes gathered from all research participants.

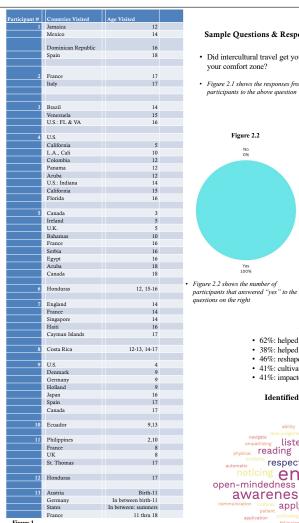


Figure 1 lists the number of participants, the corresponding countries that they have visited, and the age of when they visited each country.

Sample Questions & Responses

- · Did intercultural travel get you out of your comfort zone?
- Figure 2.1 shows the responses from participants to the above question

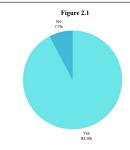




Figure 2.2

questions on the right

· Did it help you build an awareness for identifying distinct nonverbal cues?

Did it help your listening?

· Did it help you empathize?

Did you have to modify/adapt to the culture's behavior?

- · Did you adopt habits of the culture into your own
- · Do you feel more comfortable engaging with foreign individuals now?

Additional Statistics:

- · 62%: helped with becoming eventually bilingual
- · 38%: helped with speech articulation
- · 46%: reshaped the general idea of respecting others
- · 41%: cultivated applied sense of generosity
- 41%: impacted value of family

Identified Recurring Themes & Key Words:



Results and/or Conclusion

Results

Following the 14-question interview with participants, data was analyzed, with the most relevant results being displayed on the center of this poster. 100% of participants responded that the childhood experiences benefited them in the listed areas, and some participants ventured beyond the initial questions to express additional impactful takeaways from their endeavors, which are listed under "additional statistics."

Finally, circulating key themes were listed in the word cloud at the bottom of the body of the poster, indicating key themes of confidence, becoming less judgmental, increased comfortability in reading nonverbal communicative tendencies, open-mindedness and awareness for individuals on a daily basis, with consistent comments on the weight of impact that young age carried in these experiences.

Conclusions

In efforts of answering the previous research question of "How does international travel and intercultural experiences at a young age impact communication skills as an adult?", it can be established that intercultural travel throughout youth proves to carry significant impact later in adulthood. Consistent with prior research that comments on potential skills that can be obtained through immersive intercultural travel (Ting-Toomey, 2019), this study effectively extracted various life skills that emerge as a result of travel, yet furthermore, highlights the impact that such experiences pose on early developmental years of childhood (Edinyang, 2016), and the adopted habits that linger throughout adulthoo

This study relevantly contributes to the field of communication research as it served as beneficial information on the impacts of travel and the long-lasting communicative effects it may have on children who grow up with a familiarity and gradual comfortability with cross-cultural

Future Work

- 1. Conduct a mixed methods or quantitative study which compares/contrasts communicative habits of those who traveled prior to age 18 versus those who did not. This would be valuable to assess key distinctions that may evolve overtime
- Conduct a study that cross-analyzes a pool of participants from a specific region of the world, contrasted with a pool of participants from another specific region.
- Conduct a study that focuses solely on those lived overseas for X

References and Acknowledgments

Acknowledgements:

Dr. Marie Mallory: Chair of School of Strategic & Personal Communication - Faculty Sponsor

Bandura, A. (1971). Social Learning Theory. General Learning Corporation. 0/a179050/Dandum SocialLaumingTheory garndf

Edinyang, S. D. (2016). The Significance of Social Learning Theories in the Teaching of Social Studies Education. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research*, 2(1), 40–45.

Gweon, H. (2021). Inferential Social Learning: Cognitive Foundations of Human Social Learning Gweon, H. (2021). Ingerential status and continuous and teaching. Trends in Cognitive Sciences.

and teaching. Trends in Cognitive Sciences.

Section 1. (2011). Ingerential status and teaching. Trends in Cognitive Sciences.

Fing-Toomey. (2019). Communicating across cultures (Second edition.). The Guilford Press.