



Connecting Lives, Sharing Cultures

Intercultural LINK

YOUR SOURCE FOR INTERCULTURAL LEARNING IN THE AFS NETWORK

VOLUME 4 - ISSUE 1 - JANUARY/FEBRUARY/MARCH/APRIL 2013



INTERCULTURAL LEARNING The Heart and Soul of AFS

MELISSA LILES, CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER, AFS INTERNATIONAL

How many cultures did you encounter today?

Depending on where you are, the answer could be more than 50 if you're in New York like I am or five...but odds are good that it's not just one. Thanks to the exciting, at times dizzying effects of advances in technology, increased mobility, and globalization, it's old news that we are more interconnected – and more interdependent – than ever before. **Pluralism and more frequent contact with “the other” is the hallmark of the times.** The denial of differences seems harder and harder to come by.

Which is all to say that one does not have to travel far to encounter another culture. This issue of AFS Intercultural Link explores the idea of

continued on page 2

ICL in the Community Issue

Learn about culture and social change on page 3.

Explore cultural diversity in your local community on page 10.



IN THIS ISSUE

Intercultural Learning: The Heart and Soul of AFS
by Melissa Liles [Page 1](#)

Concepts & Theories: Second-Order Social Change
by Arvind Singhal, Nagesh Rao & Saumya Pant [Page 3](#)

Meet an ICL Responsible: Fran Baxter, AFS Australia [Page 4](#)

Network & Partner Initiatives: QueerExchange: Addressing LGBTQ Topics within AFS
by Ole Oberste Berghaus [Page 5](#)

Beyond AFS ICL News: Interview with Nagesh Rao
by Anna Collier [Page 6](#)

Network & Partner Initiatives: The AFS Germany Academy now has a Winter Session!
by Anna Collier [Page 8](#)

Conference Updates: Third Forum on Intercultural Learning and Exchange
[Page 9](#)

Learning Session Outline (LSO): New Local Perspectives
by Anna Collier [Page 10](#)

Conference Updates: Current “Hot Topics” in ICL [Page 11](#)

Impact of Living Abroad: What are the Best Coping Strategies?
by Anna Collier [Page 12](#)

Conference Updates: Intercultura's Body and the Web Conference [Page 13](#)

Book Review: L'Intelligence de L'Autre [Page 14](#)

intercultural learning without leaving home. There are many ways we can use the growing diversity that exists within our own communities to better understand culture and cultural differences, and to sharpen our abilities in working with these.

Whether you call them intercultural competencies, 21st century skills or education for intercultural understanding, the goals that AFS aims to impart are equally useful in these cases of cultural diversity as they are when two or more national cultures come together. After all, one doesn't work to become interculturally fluent to then sit at home and hide these capabilities. Instead, we want all of the people who touch AFS to embrace the shared responsibility of respecting others, and then to promote and practice this in all facets of our lives.

The idea that culture is not a fixed, geographically-bound construct is commonplace. Within AFS, we spend a great deal of time discussing **contextual and fluid definitions of culture** and debating how culture can center on religion, economic background, or lifestyles as much as it is place-based.

Sexual orientation is another area of cultural difference that is increasing discussed publicly as well as by AFSers. On page 5, learn about **QueerExchange, an interest group within AFS that is encouraging constructive dialogue about gender**

and sexual identity. Its members are dedicated to raising awareness and working with sojourners, host communities and AFSers worldwide to discuss this rich aspect of diversity that cuts across national boundaries.

Friend of AFS, Nagesh Rao, is interviewed on page 6. He shares his observations about intercultural learning as a concept that is increasingly appreciated around the world and how by promoting this discipline **AFS is helping to build a generation of “leaders who care.”**

Along with two of his colleagues, Professor Rao also helps us understand how **carrying out major, enduring social advancements may require us to rethink systems as we know them.** Read about second-order social change and consider what it might mean for our work to create a more just and peaceful world (page 3).

Our **New Local Perspectives activity (page 10) challenges you to go “into your backyard” with the aid of a Cultural Informant** to uncover new world-views that may be as close as next door. Lying beneath the differences we often take for granted on a daily basis are often a rich

fountain of *whys* that give us insights into the behavior of others and ourselves.

But today, exploring differences may not even require us to leave our desks or tablets or smart phones: **Technology can bring us**



How many cultures do you encounter in your everyday routines?

“together”, but what are the implications of this virtual proximity for intercultural learning?

This was the topic of the recent conference, *The Body and the Web* (page 13), organized by AFS in Italy.

Of course, thinking about difference at home – and acting as a member of a global community – is not new to AFS. The global realm of the [AFS Educational Goals](#) has, since the 1980s, emphasized this responsibility of AFSers. This year we are reviewing our educational methodology worldwide. And, as a part of this, we are exploring new ways and partnerships to help AFSers become even more engaged in their local communities and to use all of the skills, knowledge, awareness, and attitude changes they have gained on programs back at home in and amongst their local neighbors. Expect updates in the months ahead.

We hope this issue inspires you to **ask what contributions to intercultural learning you and your AFS work can make to the local community** and reaffirms ways that you can make a difference in the lives of many without ever requiring a passport.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa".

Farewells and Thank You's

2013 started off with many changes in the Education and Intercultural Learning Team, as **Laura Schaack, Stephanie Lowe and Nadiya Gladun** ended their internships and volunteer positions and turned their attention to full-time classes. We thank them for their contributions to AFS's educational initiatives.

CONCEPTS & THEORIES

Second-Order Social Change

SHARED BY
ARVIND SINGHAL, NAGESH RAO & SAUMYA PANT



The topic of second-order social change is relevant to those who are a part of or are touched by the AFS community because its premise is closely related to the AFS mission of educating to create a more just and peaceful world. The complexity of social and interpersonal issues that impact our work cannot be underestimated. Following the advice of second-order change may offer insights into effective ways to approach making systematic yet sustainable positive change.

This is an excerpt from Dr. Arvind Singhal, Dr. Nagesh Rao and Dr. Saumya Pant's article "Entertainment-Education and Possibilities for Second-Order Social Change" (2006).

Inspired by the entertainment-education radio soap opera Taru, a

family from the upper-caste brahmin community in Bihar, India, allowed men from the lower caste dalit community to serve water to guests during their daughter's wedding. While most social change projects achieve first-order change, that is, change within a system which itself remains unchanged, Taru seemed to have engendered second-order changes, that is, changing the system itself.

When searching for a solution to a problem, we often look to "best practices" by authorities in the specific area. While this may work quite successfully for simple and familiar problems, it does not necessarily help us solve more complex issues. Since the early 1970s, theorists have been publishing books on how to approach more complicated social

change (see recommended further reading list), but other great minds like Albert Einstein have also realized that focusing on the problem and what is causing it are not always the most effective way to identify a successful solution. These theorists propose two different types of change: first-order and second-order change. The table below identifies some characteristics.

Distinguishing between these two types of change can be difficult because we are so accustomed to focusing on and applying first-order change. Here are three examples to help clarify the difference:

Milton J. Bennett offers an example related to cultural adaptation, explaining that first-order change occurs when a sojourner travels to a new culture and adapts his/her behaviors to mimic what is acceptable in this new culture, such as bowing as a greeting in Japan. After years of living in or being exposed to Japanese culture, however, the sojourner may begin to change his/her values about the importance of showing respect by bowing. Behavior modification (without value modification) represents first-order change; **value modification, which is more fundamental and transformational, represents second-order change.**

Key Differences Between First- and Second-Order Change

First-Order Change	Second-Order Change
Adjustments within the existing system	Change of the existing system
Doing more, or less, of the same thing	Trying things 'outside the box'
Generally reversible	Generally irreversible
Non-transformational	Requires new learning
Not much new learning	New story is told
No fundamental shift in values or behaviors	Fundamental shift in values or behaviors
Old story can still be told	Transformational

continued on page 4

Another way to understand the difference comes from **Henry Maier**. He describes first-order change as incremental, involving a linear progression to do more or less, better, faster, or with greater accuracy, much like heating or cooling water. **Second-order change, on the other hand, involves a non-linear progression, a transformation from one state to another**, like water when it changes into steam or ice. Second-order change requires greater creativity and prolonged investment of time and contact by the person/people leading the change.

As a final example, **Dave Moursund** distinguishes between first- and second-order change by arguing that most new inventions tend to 'amplify' what already exists, or use first-order changes. For example, an electric typewriter is replaced with a word processor, and then with a modern-day computer. **Second-order change occurs, however, when there is a fundamental shift in the way a technology is used.** For example, the invention of the steam engine fundamentally changed the way mechanical power was utilized.

Going back to the quote at the beginning of this article, Entertainment-Education programs are a tool for social change used to introduce new ways of thinking and acting to their audiences. The stories provide a basis for audience members to engage in public dialogue about important community issues and encourage them to explore questions and consider other possibilities and solutions to traditional problems they may not previously have had the courage to raise within the community. *Taru*, a 52-episode entertainment-

education radio soap opera broadcast in India's Bihar State from February 2002-2003, is an example of a successful second-order social change.

A new episode of *Taru* was broadcast every Friday evening at 8:00 p.m. and rebroadcast on Sunday afternoons. Every episode ended with an epilogue encouraging listeners to write in their responses and reactions to All India Radio, a national network and radio broadcast with a large listener-base in both rural and urban areas of India.

The plot centered on the story of *Taru*, a young educated woman who works at a reproductive healthcare facility. Storylines introduced throughout the series explored issues of (un)equality between genders and social classes, family planning and reproductive health, child marriage, infanticide, and community development.

Taru's story is a great example of an entertainment-education program that aimed to create second-order change within local community viewers of the drama series through the use of simple story lines.

Recommended Further Reading List:

P. Freire (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

A. Kahane (2004). *Solving Tough Problems*.

P. Watzlawick, J. Weakland, & R. Fisch (1974). *Change: Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution*.

Meet an ICL Responsible:

Francis Baxter, AFS Australia



Fran first became involved in AFS over 20 years ago, and has had many roles in the organization since then. First as a hosting and sending family (sending 2 daughters on AFS exchanges and hosting 7 year-program participants), then as a volunteer (in support, orientations, and volunteer leadership), and now as a staff member at AFS Australia.

Her current role is Volunteer Development manager, which involves developing and facilitating training programs for volunteers across Australia and building a team of volunteers who can train and mentor other volunteers.

Fran is also a Learning Program International Qualified Trainer and trained at the 2012 AFS Academy in the Learning Program Leadership Track and the one-day demo of What Every AFSer Should Know About Intercultural Learning®.

Fran has certificates and diplomas in training and development, coaching for business and the workplace and management. Her university studies were in adult and vocational education, including topics related to inclusion and interpersonal communication.

NETWORK & PARTNER INITIATIVES

QueerExchange: Addressing LGBTQ Topics within AFS

OLE OBERSTE BERGHAUS, AFS VOLUNTEER IN GERMANY AND SWEDEN

Ole Oberste Berghaus is an AFS Germany volunteer and member of the European Federation for Intercultural Learning's (EFIL) Pool of Trainers. (EFIL is the umbrella organization for European AFS organizations.) Ole is currently pursuing a Master of Science in Environmental and Sustainability Studies at Lund University, Sweden.

QueerExchange is a working group made up of AFS Germany volunteers that **supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and queer (LGBTQ) program participants, volunteers and staff within AFS.** The group provides trainings, training materials, as well as background information on gender theory and works to spread awareness about this community.

For the last three years, QueerExchange has been working to add or reinforce points where more support and understanding about the LGBTQ community is necessary, particularly focusing on non-traditional host family placements and answering questions related to the LGBTQ experience for both secondary school and adult intercultural exchange programs.

In Germany many of LGBTQ families, as well as AFS volunteers and staff, do not know that they can become host families since the German state does not officially approve LGBTQ marriages. Despite this technicality, for AFS, LGBTQ families are welcome to apply to host exchange students. Most of the time they have great potential for making a sojourner's year abroad an amazing experience.

The QueerExchange group has developed a number of trainings and related materials, created various marketing tools, launched a website, become active on social media (Facebook, twitter), and, last but not least, written a handbook of our own collection of games for use in AFS participant and volunteer trainings.

Our goal is to raise awareness and acceptance of LGBTQ topics within AFS, where a more hetero-normative family picture has traditionally been predominant. Our games and materials have their origin mostly in previously existing AFS games that we have updated.

The theoretical background we have used comes from standard scientific publications (Judith Butler, Carolin Emcke, Heinz Jürgen Voss, Friedrich Nietzsche), which we have shortened and adapted for AFS's reality and needs.

Following the release of the German version of our handbook, AFS organizations around the global network approached us to request a translation into English which is now available. We are very thankful to all of the volunteers who helped make this request a reality!

With this initiative, the QueerExchange interest group is also **demonstrating how important and relatively easy it can be to take a topic that is currently relevant in our broader society and transfer it to the AFS context.** In this case, by not replacing existing structures, but rather by adding onto them, we



achieved quick acceptance within the German organization and are rapidly gaining recognition within the greater AFS Network as a source of support, knowledge and materials related to LGBTQ topics.

If you want to start a similar project in your AFS organization or would like to join our group, feel free to contact us. QueerExchange can be contacted directly (kontakt@queertausch.de), tweeting us ([@QueerExchange](https://twitter.com/QueerExchange)) or sending us a message on Facebook (www.facebook.com/QT.AFS). We are also very keen about getting quality feedback on our game collection, which can be ordered by emailing us or downloaded from the [AFS Digital ICL Library](#).





BEYOND AFS ICL NEWS Interview with Nagesh Rao

BASED ON AN INTERVIEW WITH ANNA COLLIER,
INTERCULTURAL LEARNING SERVICES MANAGER, AFS INTERNATIONAL

Mississippi and then at Michigan State. Janet invited me to attend the Summer Institute of Intercultural Communication, and I quickly realized that I wanted to do my PhD in Intercultural Communication. That's how the journey started.

Which aspect of intercultural learning or communication has your work focused on?

Initially, I started with the connection of intercultural communication to education focusing primarily on US undergraduate students, asking how to create a space that appreciates diversity. More specifically, we asked if undergraduate students can appreciate foreign teaching assistants coming from different contexts.

Then, in 1989, thanks to one of my mentors, Professor Jim Dearling, I got involved in a federally funded study looking at community-based interventions to address HIV/AIDS in San Francisco, California. My particular focus was on how our culture can play a role in defining our health values and beliefs and how, in fact, if we create campaigns for HIV/AIDS prevention in the health context, they have to take intercultural issues into consideration. From here, I went on to study issues

related to drinking and driving in New Mexico, US and AIDS issues in Thailand, India and Tanzania, all from

“I see a larger goal in what you [at AFS] are doing: preparing future leaders who care.”

an intercultural perspective.

For the last ten years, I have been looking at the role of intercultural communication in the hospital context, whether it be in a clinic, a village hospital, or a big city hospital.

Conceptually, my work focuses on perception, empathy and consciousness. Perception is the basis of empathy – how we understand other people in terms of their own experience – which is in turn the key to consciously communicating more effectively. The specific areas of ICC that I have focused on are international education, multicultural workforces and global leadership, and social applications.

What do you wish more people would understand about intercultural work?

It makes a difference, an important and positive difference. People's understanding varies a lot regarding the impact that intercultural learning and intercultural issues have on our daily lives in terms of creating connections, but also in reading the newspaper or listening to the news.

In my opinion, the high level of conflict in the world is due to our lack of understanding of intercultural issues. I wish more people would take

continued on page 7

Nagesh Rao is the president of Mudra Institute of Communications (MICA), in Ahmedabad, India and an instructor for the Intercultural Communications Institute in Portland, Oregon, USA. He has a PhD from Michigan State University and has held faculty teaching positions at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (India), and in the US at the University of Maryland, Ohio University and the University of New Mexico.

Nagesh has shared his expertise with AFS over the past year, volunteering his time with our Asia-Pacific organizations.

How did you get involved in the intercultural field?

This was thanks largely to Milton and Janet Bennett doing a day-long training session in 1990 at Michigan State University, where I was doing my PhD in Communication. By the end of the day, I felt transformed because they were talking about issues that resonated with the intercultural experiences I had for two years in

“...our folklore, our stories, our lullabies, everything that we do has a very strong cultural and intercultural component to it.”

intercultural issues seriously in the sense that its relevance would be understood and applied. As Edward T. Hall would say, “If we all learn to make a real friend in a culture we do not care for very much, the friendship will go a long way in bridging communities.”

What would you suggest for people new to the ICL field to read as they get started?

We could come up with a list of books and resources and things to do, but, for me, the greater issue is how you read what you read, and how you experience what you experience. We could talk about specific books that are interculturally-laden that we should read, but our folklore, our stories, our lullabies, everything that we do has a very strong cultural and intercultural component to it. So we can suggest what people should read, but also encourage them to ask themselves: What is your cultural lens as you read this book? What are your self reflections as you read it? Where do you think the actors are coming from and what is their cultural perspective? Reflect on it and talk about it. For me, this is very useful.

I do sometimes suggest a list of resources, but I have no control over how somebody is reading it or

experiencing it. If you really want to get the most out of it, there is a certain angle or perspective you need to keep in mind. It is good to be extremely open-minded about things when you read and/or experience them.

What are the hot topics in intercultural learning these days?

I am biased of course. It's not to say that others are not important, but having worked in health communication and community health, for me these will always be central issues irrespective of time.

Another significant dimension is the role of the Internet, or the mobile platform, and how intercultural learning is becoming either easier or more challenging depending on its context. Also, while the Internet is a great opportunity and it's being used wonderfully in different parts of the world, the concern is that probably a

quarter of the world's population still doesn't have access to this resource.

How has the intercultural learning field changed since you entered it?

The biggest change is the fact that we're reaching critical mass in terms of the number of people all over the world who are aware of intercultural learning and have either studied it or are playing

a key role in it. I don't think we've reached a point in which, when you're on an airplane with somebody and you say “ICL,” they will completely understand the term, but it's much easier to explain it today than it was 20 years ago. As well, there are many more resources in terms of books, journal articles, video clips, and conferences.

One indicator that I've noticed is how many of our own words are coming into mainstream media. Once in awhile, someone will mention cross-cultural communication in a news clip or an interview and I realize that some of the things we are doing are coming through and this is not only in the educational and corporate contexts, but also in the health and political environments.

“[The idea of intercultural learning] is much easier to explain today than it was 20 years ago.”



www.afs.org/blog/icl/

Stay up-to-date on AFS's take on ICL, including the latest about events and scholarships.



NETWORK & PARTNER INITIATIVES

The AFS Germany Academy now has a Winter Session!

ANNA COLLIER, INTERCULTURAL LEARNING SERVICES MANAGER,
AFS INTERNATIONAL

“It is one thing to acquire intercultural competence, but it is quite another to pass it on to others. This requires extensive knowledge and skills.”

This is the concept underlying the Winter Academy on Intercultural Competence, the newest offering of AFS Germany and its nonprofit intercultural services subsidiary InterCultur, for would-be intercultural trainers.

Developed in partnership with the prominent Jacobs University in Bremen, Germany, the first Winter Academy took place from 14 to 25 January 2013. 30 participants from 14 countries participated in one of two tracks:

The first was for people who already have a strong foundation in intercultural theories, but need more practical application support. For these students, course time focused on developing hands-on training activities and feedback sessions.

The second was for trainers who already have practical skills, yet lack the theoretical knowledge behind intercultural learning. For them, the Academy explores topics such as What is culture and on which dimensions can cultures be compared? and How does culture affect human thinking, feeling, and actions?

The Winter Academy has been designed for both students and professionals from within and outside of AFS. All participants have the possibility of earning academic credits after successful completion of the seven-day course. If they opt to take an additional three-day training,

they are also eligible to receive an Intercultural Trainer Certificate issued jointly by Jacobs University and InterCultur.

This year's courses were led by InterCultur's Annette Gisevius and Frauke Peter, together with Jacobs University's Dr. Ulrich Kühnen, a renowned professor of psychology at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The organizers have already begun planning 2014 offerings, including exploring opportunities with AFS International to integrate AFS Intercultural Link Learning Program Qualified Trainer certification into the next edition of the Winter Academy.

But you don't have to wait until next January to attend an Intercultural Academy organized by AFS Germany!

There are more Academies taking place in a few months:

Summer Academy on Sustainability from an Intercultural Perspective in Istanbul, Turkey from 22 July-2 August. www.summeracademy-istanbul.org

Summer Academy on Intercultural Experience in Karlsruhe, Germany from 5-16 August.
www.summeracademy-karlsruhe.org
** will feature an AFS Intercultural Link Learning Program International Qualifying Trainers add-on*

Asia-Europe Cross-Cultural Summer Academy in Bangi, Malaysia from 19-30 August. www.summeracademy-malaysia.org

stretch your
cultural comfort zone®

We are pleased to share new educational content from AFS.
[Download here and...](#)

Try it today!



CONFERENCE UPDATES

Third Forum on Intercultural Learning and Exchange

ADAPTED FROM AN ARTICLE BY PAUL CLAES,
SECRETARY GENERAL, EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF
INTERCULTURAL LEARNING (EFIL)

*Discussion group
session with Tom Kurz
(Experiment Germany)*



“The Contribution of Exchange to Intercultural Learning for Educational Institutions” was the theme of the Third Forum on Intercultural Learning and Exchange that took place in Vienna, Austria last October. The high-level gathering, organized by AFS Austria, Fondazione Intercultura (AFS Italy), Intercultural Development Research Institute (IDRIInstitute) and EFIL, explored how secondary schools as well as higher education institutions benefit as organizational entities from international student exchanges.

As in the first two editions (in 2009 and 2011, both in Colle di Val d’Elsa, Italy), this invitational Forum brought together 60 active academics, researchers, and practitioners. It opened with an

address from guest speaker Dr. Alvino Fantini, a renowned expert in intercultural communication and language education.

The first day featured a presentation by Dr. Milton Bennett, Director of the Intercultural Research Institute, with the title “Beyond the ABC’s in Intercultural Learning: Creating the Context for Mutual Adaptation,” followed by a series of case studies and discussion groups that explored intercultural learning at the institutional level.

In the second day, Dr. Roberto Ruffino, Secretary-General of Fondazione Intercultura and Honorary Chairman of EFIL, moderated a panel discussion on intercultural learning in school environments. Panelists included

Katerina Kapounova (European Commission), Josef Huber (Council of Europe) and Soren Kristensen (evaluator of the pilot phase of the EU Comenius Individual Pupil Mobility programme). Participants then further discussed various aspects of intercultural learning in school environments, focusing on pupils as well as teachers.

The Fourth Forum on Intercultural Learning and Exchange will take place in Italy in September 2013, focusing on assessment of student exchange learning outcomes.

The original version of this article appeared in the October 2012 issue of EFILife.

For more information:
paul.claes@afs.org



Discussion group facilitators Ingeborg Suppin-Fabisch, Darla Deardorff, Bruce La Brack, Kumiko Torikai, Melissa Liles.



Expert panel with Katerina Kapounova (European Commission), Roberto Ruffino (Fondazione Intercultura), Josef Huber (Council of Europe), Soren Kristensen (researcher).

LEARNING SESSION OUTLINE (LSO)

New Local Perspectives

ANNA COLLIER, INTERCULTURAL LEARNING SERVICES MANAGER,
AFS INTERNATIONAL

The theme of this issue is Intercultural Learning in the Community. There is a wealth of cultural diversity all around us, and it is not necessary to leave our country or even our cities and towns to encounter situations that challenge our perspectives and call our intercultural curiosity and skills into practice.

This new Learning Session Outline from our Education department allows us to gain insights into the why's behind actions, attitudes and beliefs that are different from our own using Cultural Informants.

This activity increases our knowledge of a new culture and helps develop our own ability to be a perceptive and effective cultural informant for others. What situations are you / have you been involved in that would have benefited from someone being able to take that cultural informant role? Next time, that cultural informant could be you! Try this activity with a co-worker or friend from a different background or from a part of your town that you would like to learn more about.

SESSION GOAL

To offer new perspectives on your own community and the intercultural differences that exist there.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After this session, participants will be able to:

- describe characteristics of a culture that exists in one's local community, but with which one previously has had little familiarity.
- accurately interpret artifacts (actions, expressions, attitudes) from another culture.
- adapt some of their behaviors to be more culturally appropriate in the new culture.
- consciously and effectively assume the role of a cultural informant.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

This activity is to be conducted in distinct cultural environments.

PARTICIPANTS

This activity is designed for pair-work; however, can also be done with groups of three.

NECESSARY MATERIALS

- Notebook
- Pen or pencil

STEP-BY-STEP DESCRIPTION

180 minutes: 120 minutes for activity, 60 minutes for debrief

PART 1: PREPARATION

1.1. This activity is meant to be done in pairs. The two people should be friends, colleagues, classmates, or otherwise connected to each other so that there is an existing relationship with a certain level of trust and openness.

1.2 Each should also have at least one cultural characteristic integral to their lives that is distinct, such as religious beliefs, family structure, gender, or age. For example: active members of different religions, living with a large versus small family, living in urban versus rural communities, or recent immigration versus generations living in the same community. The cultural difference could also be one that is not one of those that are most commonly considered. For instance, one's commuting culture: i.e. do you commute to work/school by bus, car - alone or by carpool, bike, or walking?

PART 2: CULTURAL FIELD TRIP (120 MINUTES)

2.1 Each member of the pair will visit the other person in their culturally distinct environment. Before experiencing either of the realities,



Take a closer look at the cultures present in your local community.

participants should record some reflections regarding what they expect to encounter (15 minutes):

- What have I heard about this reality?
- What are my personal assumptions about it and where do they come from?
- What are some questions I have about this reality, before experiencing it?

2.2 The pair decides which environment they will visit first and the person from the first reality takes the role of a Cultural Informant, explaining not only the *what* and *how*, but also the *why* behind these perceivable cultural artifacts.

Example 1*: Commuting culture differences: In riding a city bus rather than driving a personal car, the Cultural Informant could identify where to catch a specific bus and explain the process of how to pay, but also discuss the characteristics of the people who typically sit (or stand) in different parts of the bus; what kinds of activities people engage in on the bus, which activity the cultural informant prefers and why; share stories about riding the bus; and explain why s/he rides the bus versus other form of transportation, in addition to any other questions his/her partner may have.

**This LSO references differences in commuting culture to encourage readers to think of cultural differences that exist within one's community that are typically overlooked when one thinks of culture. Of course, it is*

continued on page 11

important to keep in mind that an individual preference does not necessarily indicate that there is an entire culture connected to it.

Example 2: Religious differences: Participants attend a religious service for each of the partner's religions and explain the artifacts such as appropriate behaviors, symbolism, imagery, along with the why behind their importance and related feelings (How does one feel after participating in a service or event in this religion?) as well as world-views.

After the pair has spent sufficient time in one reality (30-60 minutes, depending on the context), they then visit the other person's reality and switch roles.

PART 3: DEBRIEF (60 MINUTES)

This activity can be debriefed in a group or in pairs, depending on how many people are participating in total.

3.1 Individual reflection (20 minutes):

Each participant silently writes personal reflections about the experience – both visiting a new culture and introducing someone to their own. It should cover the following themes, in this order:

- What did you feel during these two experiences?
- What happened during the two experiences? What did you do/see?
- How does this activity relate to other elements of your life?

- What have you learned through this activity?
- How can you apply the learning and insights from this activity to future interactions and situations?
- How does this activity relate to your interactions with people of different cultural backgrounds?
- How could it improve your own skills as a Cultural Informant?

3.2 Sharing (40 minutes): Together, participants share their key insights, contributing at least one comment from each of the above-listed categories. If there are enough participants, have the pairs join with another pair to share responses and reflections.

CONFERENCE UPDATES

Current “Hot Topics” in ICL

AFS aims to stay abreast of all “hot topic” in intercultural education. If you will be attending a conference related to intercultural learning this year and would like to contribute to our updates, please contact us at icl@afs.org.

The **Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research, USA (SIETAR-USA) Annual Conference** took place from 17-20 October 2012 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. SIETAR-USA is part of a global network of national, regional and local SIETAR organizations that promote and facilitate intercultural education, training and research in a wide range of fields including environmental science, international business, healthcare and higher education.



The 2012 event theme was “**Navigating Complexity in an Intercultural World.**” Sessions and plenary presentations touched on:

- ethics in the intercultural field,
- acculturation in youth, including refugees and third-culture-kids (TCKs),
- intercultural training and coaching online,
- internationalization/multiculturalization of grade schools and universities, and
- insights on Arab, Chinese, German, Indian, and Latin American cultures.

In addition to the USA, SIETAR exists throughout Europe, in Japan, Brazil, Argentina, Canada, and India, as well as a Young SIETAR group. Look up “SIETAR” online to learn more and consider becoming an active member.

AFS Presented at 2012 SIETAR USA Annual Conference

Anna Collier (AFS International) and Carolyn Rehn (AFS USA) presented a session on the AFS Intercultural Link Learning Program at SIETAR USA 2012. They shared how the Program's content is standardized to allow AFS worldwide to develop a common understanding and language around intercultural topics, yet is adaptable in how the content is taught, applied, and distributed at the AFS member organization level.

The presentation was “sold out” with over 50 of the conference's 300 attendees at the session.

Conference presentations are part of AFS International's and AFS USA's visibility and educator outreach, highlighting the relevance of our educational focus.



Carolyn Rehn and Anna Collier after presenting at the 2012 SIETAR-USA Annual Conference.



Impact of Living Abroad What are the Best Coping Strategies?

ANNA COLLIER, INTERCULTURAL LEARNING SERVICES MANAGER, AFS INTERNATIONAL

Researchers Nicolas Geeraert and Kali Demes at the University of Essex, in collaboration with AFS, recently completed the “**Kaleidoscope Project,**” now renamed “**The**

Impact of Living Abroad.” The study lasted 18 months and involved almost 2500 sojourners enrolled in a 10-12 month AFS program, as well as 578 control group participants.

The project investigated four central components of intercultural contact: acculturative stress, cultural learning, intergroup contact, and the effect of cultural distance.

Throughout the next few issues of this publication, you will find summaries of different elements of the results and how AFS plans to incorporate findings into its educational approach. This issue will look at **coping strategies** used by exchange program participants: Which are the most effective? Which are the most harmful?

Traveling to a new country, especially for an extended period, can present a sojourner with many challenges, often of the previously unencountered sort. The way the he or she approaches these challenges can directly influence how successful and rewarding the experience is.

The AFS participants who took part in the Impact of Living Abroad study used a variety of methods, or coping mechanisms, for addressing problems throughout their year abroad.

continued on page 13

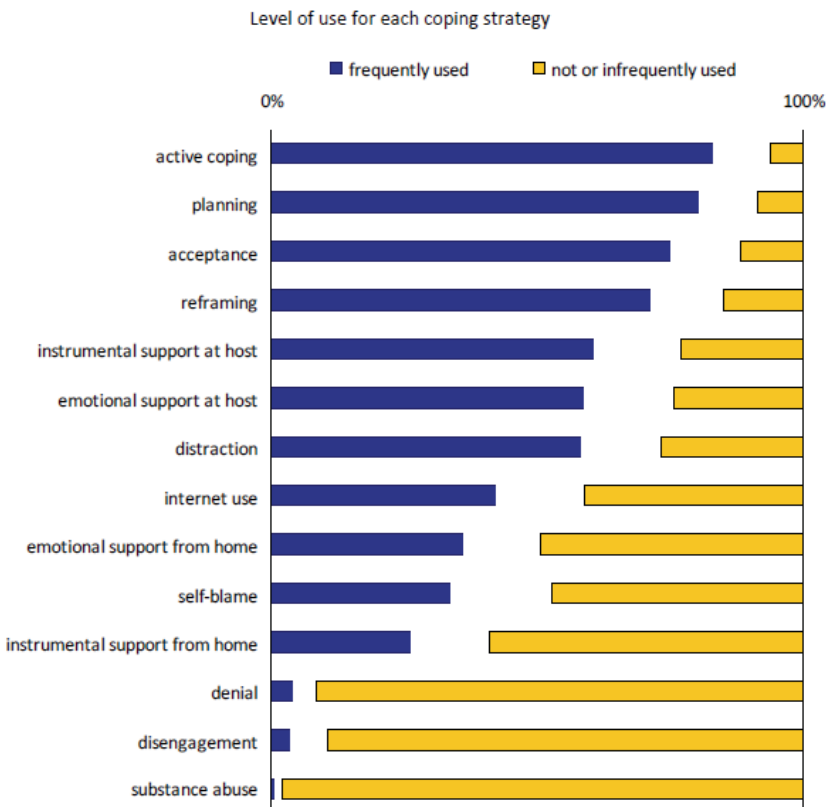


Chart image from *The Impact of Living Abroad* final report (December 2012), page 60.

COPING STRATEGIES KEY

Functional Strategies:

- seeking emotional support in host culture
- seeking help and advice (instrumental support) in host culture
- acceptance of cultural differences
- actively coping with the challenge
- planning ahead
- reframing the situation / challenge

Dysfunctional Strategies:

- seeking emotional support from home culture
- seeking help and advice (instrumental support) from home culture
- denial of cultural differences
- disengagement from host & home cultures
- distraction from facing cultural differences
- excessive Internet use
- self-blame
- substance abuse

AFS Enhances Support By:

- ✓ Using pre-departure orientations to teach sojourners which coping strategies are most beneficial, as well as which are most detrimental.
- ✓ Using post-arrival and mid-stay orientations to reinforce these messages.
- ✓ During AFS Monthly Contact check points, monitoring the strategies being most frequently used by participants and intervening if necessary.
- ✓ Coaching host families, as well as those back “home,” on how to encourage functional strategies, especially helping AFSers re-frame the would-be problem and consider various perspectives.

Strategies used were defined as either functional (beneficial) or dysfunctional (detrimental).

The study results provided clear evidence that **the choice of coping strategy directly influenced a sojourner’s cultural adaptation and well-being**. Functional strategies, specifically, seeking support in the host country and re-framing, are related to positive outcomes such as higher levels of cultural adaptation and self-esteem, and lower levels of stress. On the other hand, methods such as disengagement, denial, self-blame and excessive Internet use to communicate with home about problems or concerns were associated with lower levels of adaptation and more stress.

In general, the AFS sojourners used functional approaches to address issues throughout their exchanges and, as a result, were found to have more positive well-being and better cultural adaptation.

Nonetheless, AFS is dedicated to continuously improving its educational approach, and the study findings suggest a number of actions for our volunteers and staff in order to further support the sojourner throughout her or his intercultural experience. See side box for some of the key implications for AFSers that came from the study.

For more information about The Impact of Living Abroad study results, contact Anna Collier (anna.collier@afs.org).

CONFERENCE UPDATES

Intercultura’s Body and the Web

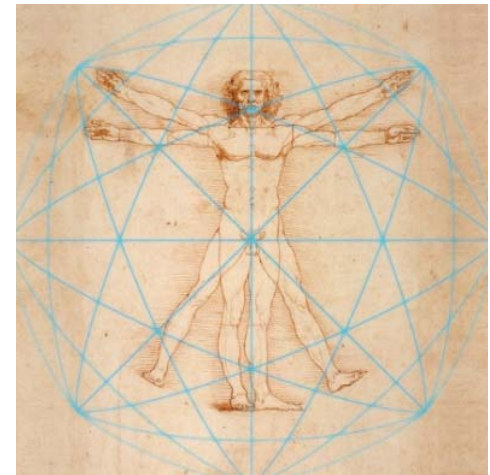
This 28 February to 2 March in Florence Italy, Fondazione Intercultura – the sister organization AFS’s Italian organization – together with the International Association for Intercultural Education (IAIE), hosted an open dialogue about technology and the global youth community in the age of cosmopolitanism.

Themed *The Body and the Web: Tools for Intercultural Learning*, the bilingual conference explored communications across cultures using digital tools, platforms and social media, and the role these technologies play in youth culture. Some of the questions included:

- How do forms of hyper-connectivity enhance or hinder physical interaction between people of differing cultures?
- Does digital connectivity affect intercultural communication and cultural emersion in the physical world? If so, how?
- Can digital connections replace the human need for physical interaction?
- And how do these tools help to integrate or separate what is real from what is imaginary?

The three day event brought together over 20 expert speakers from across Europe and North America dedicated to demystifying issues surrounding identity, intercultural encounters, and the Internet.

Professor David Buckingham of Loughborough University, UK, one of the leading international researchers in the field of media education and in youth interactions with electronic media, delivered the keynote speech titled “Beyond Binaries: Learning, Identity and the ‘Digital Generation.’ ”



The **BODY** and the **WEB**
Tools for intercultural learning



For more information visit:
<http://www.bodyandweb.org/>

BOOK REVIEW

L'Intelligence de L'Autre

Michel Sauquet wrote *L'Intelligence de l'Autre* (2007) specifically for people who engage with, or work, study or live in cultures that are not their own.

Sauquet's book stresses the need for greater empathy of the other and a deeper cultural awareness, offering many opportunities for reflection about differences, cultural misunderstandings, and culture-based disagreement. Throughout its pages, the author encourages the reader to ponder many questions. Below you will find the types of questions explored throughout the three sections of the book.

Part 1: Unity, Diversity, Globalization

This section explores definitions of "culture", which throughout history have ranged from the actions of civilized society to social movements, folklore, and many other definitions in between. It also draws attention to how cultures are in constant movement and evolution. The book then moves on to discuss words that are based on "culture", such as intercultural, multicultural, and acculturation.

Part 2: Questioning the culture of the 'other': Awareness of different frames of reference

The second part of Sauquet's book asks questions such as: *Does everyone have the same sense of time? Does everyone have similar concepts of wealth, hierarchy, and equality? Do we all have the same connection to our natural environment?* and, *How much influence should religion have in our lives?*

Part 3: Challenges of words, questions about language

In this final part, Sauquet addresses the field of linguistics, engaging readers to question *How much of our communication is verbal versus non-verbal? Does a word have the same meaning once it has been translated?* and, *Do written and oral communication have the same value in different cultures?*

L'Intelligence de l'Autre closes with a list of fifty additional questions to serve as both a reflection tool as well

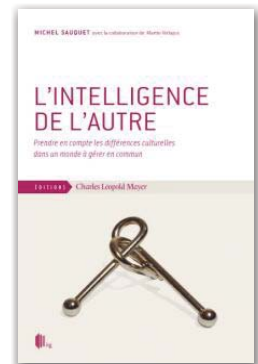


How should the relationship between traditional and modernity be managed?

as a check list to keep in mind during one's next intercultural sojourn. Included is also an excellent bibliography that not only lists the resources, but provides a short explanation of each.

Sauquet's book is published by Éditions Charles Léopold Mayer, and is available as a [free pdf download](#) at the publisher's website <http://www.eclm.fr>.

This book was recommended by AFS France.



Connecting Lives, Sharing Cultures

Our Mission & Vision

AFS Intercultural Programs is an international, voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit organization that provides intercultural learning opportunities to help people develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to create a more just and peaceful world.

We pursue our mission by providing quality intercultural learning opportunities for a growing number of young people, families, other stakeholders and wider audiences, thus developing an inclusive community of global citizens determined to build bridges between cultures.

Real life experiential learning, supported by structured reflection, is the core of our programs. We endeavor to link our intercultural learning opportunities to the defining global issues facing humanity. We reach out to past, current and future participants, volunteers, and other stakeholders using the media and technology they use.



Volunteers and volunteerism are who we are. Our organization brings about changes in lives through and for our global community of volunteers.

We are recognized as an educational organization by schools and the appropriate authorities. We work to create a regulatory environment that supports our programs.

As a learning organization, we welcome change and critical thinking. We are innovative and entrepreneurial in advancing the strategic directions, working together with others whenever appropriate.

To learn more about our global network and get involved today, visit www.afs.org.

ICL Field Conferences & Event Updates

April	May	June	July
<p>Moving Beyond It was Great: Student Learning and Development in Education Abroad. Forum on Education Abroad. 3-5 April; Chicago, USA. AFS is attending</p> <p>Intercultural Counselling and Education in the Global World. 15-18 April; Verona, Italy.</p> <p>EAIE Spring Academy 2013. 15-19 April; Birmingham, UK</p>  <p>2nd Spectrum of Education Conference. AFS Turkey – Türk Kültür Vakfı. 24-29 April; Istanbul, Turkey. AFS event</p>	<p>NAFSA Annual Conference. 26-31 May; St. Louis, MO USA. AFS is attending</p> 	<p>Global Internship Conference. Internships at a Crossroad. 11-13 June; Singapore.</p> <p>IACCP Regional Conference: "Culture in Psychology: Variation Within and Across National Borders". The International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP). 20-22 June; Los Angeles, USA.</p> <p>8th Biennial Conference of the International Academy for Intercultural Research (IAIR). Pushing the Frontiers of Intercultural Research: Asking Critical Questions. 23-27 June; Reno, NV, USA.</p> <p>NCSS International Conference: Education for Democracy and the Arab World. 25 June – 1 July; Fez, Morocco.</p>	<p>20th Annual iEARN International Conference and 17th Annual Youth Summit. 1-6 July; Doha, Qatar.</p> <p>Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication (SIIC). 10-24 July; Portland, OR, USA. AFS is attending</p>  <p>Summer Academy on Sustainability from an Intercultural Perspective. 22 July – 2 August; Istanbul, Turkey. AFS event</p>
<p>If you are aware of upcoming conferences in the intercultural area, please advise us at icl@afs.org</p>			



Connecting Lives, Sharing Cultures

YOUR SOURCE FOR INTERCULTURAL LEARNING IN THE AFS NETWORK

Call for Submissions

AFS members are invited to submit proposals for articles, news items and intercultural activities with accompanying graphics or photos for consideration in future issues of AFS Intercultural Link. Submissions can be AFS-specific or part of the larger Intercultural Learning (ICL) field. Simply send your submissions to us at AFS International: icl@afs.org

Questions or Comments

icl@afs.org

© 2013 AFS Intercultural Programs, Inc. All rights reserved.

Intercultural Learning Work Group

Johanna Nemeth (Austria)
Rosario Gutierrez (Colombia)
Sherifa Fayeze (Egypt)
Annette Gisevius (Germany)
Irid Agoes (Indonesia)
Melissa Liles, Chair (International)
Lucas Welter (International)
Roberto Ruffino (Italy)

Newsletter Editor: Melissa Liles

Newsletter Manager: Anna Collier

Design & Graphics: AFS Branding & Marketing Team

Contributing Writer: Stephanie Lowe