

2002

## An Examination of the Effects of Experiential Education in a Cross Cultural Context on the Moral Reasoning of High School Students

Jordana deZeeuw  
*University of New Hampshire*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.cortland.edu/reseoutded>



Part of the [Environmental Education Commons](#), and the [Leisure Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

deZeeuw, Jordana (2002) "An Examination of the Effects of Experiential Education in a Cross Cultural Context on the Moral Reasoning of High School Students," *Research in Outdoor Education: Vol. 6, Article 21*.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.cortland.edu/reseoutded/vol6/iss1/21>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Cortland. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research in Outdoor Education by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Cortland. For more information, please contact [DigitalCommonsSubmissions@cortland.edu](mailto:DigitalCommonsSubmissions@cortland.edu).

## AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION MODELS USED IN CROSS-CULTURAL PROGRAMS ON THE MORAL REASONING OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Jordana DeZeeuw  
University of New Hampshire

Many programs have been developed over the years to evaluate the effectiveness of developing moral reasoning and behavior in students (Rose, 1992). Dilemma discussions, role-taking activities, Just Community, service-learning programs, and reflective processing are all techniques that have evidenced moral development in their participants (Rest, et.al, 1999). The study of moral development and the conditions enhancing it have recently come to include an examination of outdoor and experiential models of education, as previous research done indicates that a fusion between "significant role-taking experiences and active reflection" positively stimulates moral development (Conrad & Hedin, 1981). The purpose of this study was to ascertain if a student's moral reasoning may be enhanced during cross-cultural immersion programs, which intentionally incorporate experiential learning (i.e., the cycle of experience reflection transfer new knowledge). Using the University of Minnesota's Center for the Study of Ethical Development Defining Issues Test - 2 (DIT-2) as a quantitative instrument, the study looked at the indicated differences in the moral reasoning of 50 students between the ages of 14 and 18 before and after their experiences on Global Routes and Interlocken travel programs. Both organizations operated four- to six-week international trips with leaders focusing on facilitating educative growth in their participants through their program's structure. Programs occurred in Western Europe, Costa Rica, St. Lucia, Ecuador, Kenya, and Tanzania. Though Garvey (1991) experienced a ceiling effect with his students' DIT pre-tests, during his doctoral examination of Semester At Sea undergraduate students' moral development, his qualitative findings (drawn from interviews and student journals) seem to indicate an increase in moral reasoning. The current study aimed at focusing on cross-cultural immersion and moral development in programs that are explicitly de-

signed toward experiential learning and reflection. Global Routes and Interlocken share a mission statement firmly focused on experiential education, and their summer program demographics are younger students who are not all necessarily self-selecting, making this study unique from previous research in moral development with similar programs, such as Semester At Sea. This study intended to contribute research detailing the program efficacy of Interlocken and Global Routes by demonstrating that their trips serve as interventions in increasing students' moral reasoning. The DIT-2 was administered during the Summer of 2002. Results show that participants' mean pre-test scores were higher than the norm P% score for senior high school students taking the DIT-1, provided as a comparison, and there was a statistically significant increase in students' DIT-2 moral reasoning scores from pre-test to post-test. Specific increases or decreases for each program are detailed further in the study, as well as correlations for gender, previous international experience, spirituality, political affiliation, and motivation.

This study is currently being supplemented with qualitative interviews, focusing on the program that had a complete data set (i.e., all participants completed both a pre- and post-test) and whose participants demonstrated the most significant increase in scores. The interviews will help provide a broader understanding of what components (i.e., group dynamic, international exposure, facilitation techniques, personal growth, etc.) may have contributed to the indicated increases in moral reasoning scores.

## REFERENCES

- Conrad, D. & Hedin, D. (1981) National assessment of experiential education: Summary & Implications. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 4 (2) 6-20
- Garvey, D. (1991) *The effects of cross-cultural experiences on the moral development of a select group of college students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Colorado: Boulder, Colorado
- Rest, J.; Narvaez, D.; Bebeau, M; & Thoma, S. (1999) *Postconventional Moral Thinking: A Neo-Kohlbergian Approach*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers
- Rose, N. (1992) Moral Development: the experiential perspective. *Journal of Moral Education*, 21 (1) 29-40