

"Long before it's in the papers"

[RETURN TO THE WORLD SCIENCE HOME PAGE](#)

Experience with different cultures may boost creativity

June 30, 2010
Courtesy of SAGE Publications
and World Science staff

Creativity can be enhanced by experiencing cultures different from one's own, according to new research.

Psychologists studied students who had lived abroad and those who hadn't, testing them on aspects of creativity. Compared to a group that hadn't experienced a different culture, participants in the different culture group provided more evidence of creativity in various standard tests of the trait, researchers said.

The results suggest multicultural learning is a critical component of the adaptation process, acting as a creativity catalyst, according to the investigators.

The researchers said the key to the enhanced creativity was related to the students' open-minded approach in adapting to the new culture. In a global world, where more people are able to acquire multicultural experiences than ever, the research, they said, indicates living abroad can be even more beneficial than previously thought.

The findings, by researchers with INSEAD, a business school with campuses in Singapore, Abu Dhabi and Fontainebleau, France, and with Northwestern University in Illinois, is published in the journal *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*.

"Given the literature on structural changes in the brain that occur during intensive learning experiences, it would be worthwhile to explore whether neurological changes occur within the creative process during intensive foreign culture experiences," wrote the authors. "That can help paint a more nuanced picture of how foreign culture experiences may not only enhance creativity but also, perhaps literally, as well as figurative, broaden the mind."