

Study Abroad and the Creation of Global Citizens: American Students in Europe Post 9-11 ANTH 411_05-01

EXPLORE

Question

What questions is your inquiry contingent upon?

University Document

For this week's assignment, I decided to look into some webpages that concern studying abroad. I am especially interested how the university is profiling itself as being "among the top ten research universities in the nation based on the number of students it sends abroad." (<http://www.uiuc.edu/overview/explore/studyabroad.html>). And I would like to investigate more specifically what that means and what it encompasses.

Browsing through the pages of several campus units, I realized that it was difficult to find something concrete about the university's objectives on this matter. The most official text was at the page of the Office of the Associate Provost for International Affairs – International Programs and Studies (<http://www.ips.uiuc.edu/ipshome.shtml>). This page presents the vision and mission of the university with regard to internationalization and the bold words "leader" and "international activities" immediately catch the eye. The word "leader" is repeated in the vision statement, where other keywords include "international education and innovation" and "global citizenship". The structure of the mission statement, with its bulletpoints, implies a more concrete outline. Although the first words are all verbs ("advancing", "enhancing", "facilitating", "fostering", "leading", and "promoting"), the description of the activities remain very broad. This webpage uses many big words, but lacks any kind of concreteness.

Interestingly, the link to "About International Programs and Studies" brings us to a page (<http://www.ips.uiuc.edu/about.shtml>) that literally repeats certain keywords and parts of sentences from the previous website, such as "leader" in bold and "International Programs and Studies (IPS) coordinates, promotes, and supports international activities on campus". Then there is a long sentence on both these pages that look strikingly similar, but after further inspection, show some minor differences in wording:

"Through its various offices and units, IPS fosters international expertise by facilitating faculty and student research abroad, coordinating international exchanges and study abroad, supporting international scholarly activities on campus, and leading public engagement in international affairs." (<http://www.ips.uiuc.edu/ipshome.shtml>).

"Through its various units, IPS fosters the development of this international expertise by facilitating faculty and student research abroad, coordinating international exchanges, supporting scholarly activities on campus, and through its Engagement & Protocol program, providing linkages to international resources for both internal and external constituents." (<http://www.ips.uiuc.edu/about.shtml>).

This makes one wonder whether the second page was at all necessary. They could have easily merged the two. Why the second page? Personally, I suspect that whoever designed the site did not really have anything substantial to say in addition to the vision and mission statements, but wanted to give the impression that there was a bit more than

just that.

And it doesn't end here! In the column on the right, there is a link to "Related International Programs" (<http://www.ips.uiuc.edu/resources.shtml>) and another one to "International Study" (<http://www.ips.uiuc.edu/study.shtml>). A very similar list of links as provided in "International Study" can be found in "Related International Programs". The second page though provides many additional links under additional headers, but again the two pages could have easily been merged.

Ok, perhaps I made my point already, but I discovered two more tiny things. I checked out the "IPS Site Map" (<http://www.ips.uiuc.edu/ipsmap.shtml>), where I found that the link with the promising name "Global Community" leads to a site that is under construction. Finally (am I starting to whine now?) the two links "Student International Academic Affairs" and "Study Abroad" both lead to the same website, namely the home page of the Study Abroad Office" (<http://www.ips.uiuc.edu/sao/>). All (intentional?) ways of presenting a seemingly large amount of information, while in fact there isn't much at all.

I thought I would also look into the more specialized study abroad pages through the policy implementing campus units. Browsing through a few such websites, I noticed that there isn't much reference to university-wide objectives or coordination. There is now more focus on defining reasons for studying abroad directed at the students, with the aim to convince them of the importance of the international experience (as well as practical aspects of deciding, planning, financing etc). For example, the Study Abroad Office, in its FAQ page (<http://www.ips.uiuc.edu/sao/faq.html>) states the following:

"Why should I study abroad? - There are many reasons to study abroad! Past participants have said that studying abroad helped them focus their academic and career goals, taught them about living and working with people of different cultures, and even taught them more about themselves. It is a great way to learn a language, or to simply learn about a culture that might interest you. Employers and graduate programs tell us that study abroad looks great on a résumé, too!"

The colleges seem to have more specialized and decentralized initiatives with regard to study abroad. For example, the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences has its own booklet as a pdf (<http://www.aces.uiuc.edu/Students/StudyAbroad/docs/ACES%20Study%20Abroad%20brochure%20-%20August%202002.pdf>). Of what I have seen so far, this is the most elaborate document in this issue. There are many pictures that illustrate the idea of cultural exchange, friendships and beautiful landscapes (and the cute little stamps and flags throughout the text). Then there are a lot of quotes and statements, mostly experiences from previous students who have gone abroad. But again, here there isn't much reference to a higher level of organization or objectives, except for the one statement on page 1: "We will encourage our undergraduate students to broaden the skills and perspectives that will permit them to flourish in an increasingly international world – from Framework for the Future, a strategic plan for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, May 1995". The introduction paragraphs do not elaborate on this at all and instead discuss the career benefits and the need to "supplement the campus-level Study Abroad Office and to provide opportunities that are tailor-made for students in many of the ACES curricular options." This document talks directly to the potential study abroad student and the writers do not seem to see the need to discuss larger institutional frameworks. Instead they try to convince the reader of the cultural and professional enrichments gained by studying abroad.

Finally, I just want to briefly contrast this with the Business Study Abroad website (<http://studyabroad.business.uiuc.edu/Study%20Abroad/whyfaq.htm>). Here are only two paragraphs that introduce the idea of studying abroad for business students. There is exclusive focus globalizing economies and the importance of insight in this phenomenon for business careers (“a huge advantage”).

Overall, I thought this was an interesting exercise and I am definitely interested to further examine this subject. Perhaps I have overlooked some essential websites that define university-wide objectives in more detail, but it seems to me that there are many separate initiatives, from campus-wide to college-specific (although they all agree that studying abroad is important for your career and/or for personal development through exposure to other cultures and languages). I wonder whether there is communication and coordination between these units and how that might be organized. So that could perhaps be a next step in my project.

Plan

How will you go about answering your inquiry?

IP#3

3/2/05

In my last post, after my interview with Shelby, I ended by saying that I wanted to focus on “institutional support and integration into the culture” for American study abroad students. Since then I browsed the internet for two authors, as suggested by Nancy (Madeleine Green and Nadine Dolby), and I found a lot of really useful information that helped me think about the “purpose” of my project.

For example, the Center for Institutional and International Initiatives of the American Council on Education offers several electronic publications on their website (<http://www.acenet.edu/bookstore/category.cfm?categoryID=6>). Two of them focus on 9/11 and the effects on the attitudes towards and the policies for international education. Then I found the essay written by Nadine Dolby (available through the EOTU website <http://www.eotu.uiuc.edu/events/dolbyessay.pdf#search='Encountering%20An%20American%20Self:%20Study%20Abroad%20and%20National%20Identity'>). The title of Dolby’s essay is “Encountering An American Self: Study Abroad and National Identity” and she specifically focused on Americans in Australia, just after 9/11. In her abstract (p 2) she states, “The study abroad experience is often understood through cross-cultural paradigms that stress understanding and appreciating others, different cultures and ways of life. In contrast, I argue that study abroad is more usefully seen as an encounter with one’s national identity and self. Drawing on a qualitative research study of American undergraduates who studied abroad, I assert that students’ American identity is challenged and, in some cases, remade, through their experiences.”

She discusses the confrontations that the students experienced with anti-American emotions and how this triggered them re-evaluating their national identity. The students were often target of political discussions and realized that some Australians knew more about their country than they did (e.g. when was president Kennedy shot, p 17). It seems like they were often seen as representatives of their country and as such had to deal with the frustrations from foreigners about the US foreign policies as if they were directly responsible. And then if it turned out that they didn’t know as much as they “should”, became the object of confirmed stereotypes and discrimination. The students often felt the urge to defend their country and some became more patriotic than they were before going abroad. Others made more effort to try to understand where the stereotypes and accusations were coming from and thus were dealing with many contradictions within

themselves.

I really liked this essay and I have been wondering how I could design a study that would be complementary without duplication. I had previously imagined that it would be interesting to contrast the US institutional goals in creating “global citizens” within the framework of international politics with the experiences that American students have abroad when they are confronted with very strong emotions from foreigners who are not happy with the US position and activities in the world today (“purpose”). I wonder if the study abroad offices prepare their students for this confrontation and what kind of advice is provided (“question”). Hostility towards Americans, complicated by language issues in countries where English is not the official language, might cause the opposite response by students as intended by the US institutions – for example, sticking together, limited integration into the culture, restricted insight into different perspectives on international and American politics etc etc (“hypothesis”). Between brackets I refer to the terms used and defined by Locke et al in table 3.1, page 47.

These are still just preliminary ideas and I need to further specify and elaborate on my questions and hypotheses. I should definitely become more familiar with the ACE-CIII documents, as well as the EOTU globalization gateway to understand the institutional standpoints and goals and objectives. Then I was thinking of interviewing someone who works for a study abroad initiative at UIUC, someone has a lot of insight in national and university policies as well as in the students’ actual experiences abroad. Hopefully that person will be able and willing to tell me more about possible contradictions, difficulties, and evaluations. Further, I will attend the Transnational Seminar this Friday when Fazal Rizvi from Education is speaking about “International education and the production of cosmopolitan identities.” I am still searching for the dissertation by Jennifer Creamer about Japanese women studying in the US (couldn’t find it through the library search, nor through dissertation abstracts, but I got her e-mail address, so I’ll just ask her directly). Anyway, plenty of fascinating leads...

OBSERVE

What observations, or findings are you encountering in your research?

Research Notes

How did you get to (end up at) the U of I?

I met Shelby in Davenport at 2 pm on Wednesday 23 February 2005, as agreed upon through e-mail. We walked together to Espresso Royale where we would do the interview, while chatting about our work. As Shelby is a friend of mine, the atmosphere was quite relaxed. At the coffee shop I asked what she wanted to drink and insisted that I would pay for it. She wasn’t very happy with it and took a few dollars from her wallet. I waved it away and ordered her orange juice and my chai latte. As it was rather crowded, we decided to go upstairs in the back. There were a few free tables there and we chose a colorful round one, right next to the stairs. We were gossiping a bit while I took out the “Informed Consent” forms. I told her that she could take a pseudoname if she wanted and she decided to wait until the end of the interview to see whether she would make statements that she would like to keep confidential.

I had chosen to interview Shelby (a 24 years old graduate student), because I knew that she had been in France as an undergrad for UIUC and, even though it was not necessary for this week’s assignment, I thought it would be good to take this opportunity to dig a

little deeper into my subject for the project already. But, of course, I started the interview by asking the main question for our assignment: “How did you end up at UIUC”. It was also an easy icebreaker to get the conversation going. She immediately answered “Good school, in-state, cheap.” And she mentioned how the private schools are more expensive and not as good. Shelby is from a small town in Illinois. Her family valued UIUC and her sister graduated here as well. She mentioned how she had written her application with a blue ink pen during a Spanish class at high school when she was bored. I asked her what this meant for her, had she not been really motivated to go at all that she hadn’t really made an effort to neatly type the application? But she said that she hadn’t been worried about getting in as her grades in high school were very high. I asked her if she applied to other schools as well and she had (Washington in Illinois and Velpairiso in Indiana – as there was no application fee there). She had been accepted, but chose Illinois. She had been in a small high school and now wanted something bigger. She said, “I wanted to be in a huge place where I would just be a number.” She referred to the relations in a small place where everyone knows everything about everyone and how that can complicate things, also in terms of dating.

She entered the undergrad in 1997 and wanted to do French and journalism. She soon dropped the idea of journalism and started taking anthropology classes. Finally she double-majored in French and anthropology. She didn’t feel that she had received good training in French, mentioned in fact “I WAS just a number”. “I could get by in French”, but it wasn’t good enough to teach the language. She recently spoke to some undergrads from Kent State, a smaller university, and noticed that they received much better guidance than she ever had. After graduation in 2001, she got a “crappy minimum-wage job that I could have gotten without a BA.” at a UIUC biological laboratory. It hadn’t really occurred to her that she could have applied for graduate school, so it took her until December 2001 to send in her applications. She had faced many difficulties with her applications to graduate school and no one had ever explained the procedure to her (how you are supposed to get in touch with a prof whose work you find interesting and how you should find a specific topic to work on). She had talked to one prof and the undergrad advisor, but they hadn’t been of much help. Finally, after her application at UIUC had been rejected, a professor that she knew from previous courses sent her an e-mail to explain everything and got her accepted as a Master student. She had sent other applications to “random places”, inc Arizona and Washington. But her husband, Peter, who she married during her undergrad, had just graduated and gotten a job here, so she didn’t really want to go somewhere else.

At this point I decided to talk a little more about the 9 months that she had studied in Paris when she was 19 years old. It had been “September 14, 1999”, the day that she left. It was part of the French program, to spend one year in France, so she had known about it all along. She said “Going to France sort of screwed me over in terms of anthropology.” She stated that, had she not gone to France, she would have been able to take more anthro courses. But she also mentioned how “I’ve never really regretted going to France.” Even though she had been terrified. “I had never been on a plane. I didn’t really want to go.” Although Peter had encouraged her to go, her mother wasn’t very supportive at all. Peter had proposed to her four days before her departure, but when she told her mother about that, her mother said “What’s the point of us spending all that money, if you’re going to get married.” – implying that she didn’t need to go to France anymore now that she would get married, and also that it would cost her family a lot of money. Her mother tried to keep her from going and “that’s why I felt I had to go.”

The preparation by the department had been good in terms of meetings, information dispersal and info on passport, visa etc. Shelby said “we were very taken care of.”, but she also mentioned that they had provided inaccurate info in terms of costs. They had

said that altogether it wouldn't cost more than a normal year at UIUC, but it had cost her \$5,000 more. Her parents didn't have many experiences in other countries, although they'd lived in East Germany for a year when her father was drafted and he was afraid that he might be sent to VietNam. Shelby wanted to prove that she could do this.

At this point I asked her whether she had had any problems transferring credits, but as this was part of the program she hadn't. She had heard of many people who had experienced that kind of problems though. She did mention that she felt misled in terms of the university in Paris. They had said that she would be taking courses at the most prestigious university, but she ended up at an affiliate university exclusively for international students where she lived in dorms (the "United States house") with other international students. She was the only American in the hallway though, but she "hung around Americans" as there were 15 other people from UIUC who had come with her. She said that this all made the experience easier "I was timid about my language abilities". Some students though lived with French families and those learned French well. Shelby mentioned that she just wanted to survive this period.

I asked her whether there were still people that she was in touch with from that time period, but that wasn't the case. She mentioned a Vietnamese girl from America and a guy from Puerto Rico who she missed and she wonders how they are doing. I asked her whether she would want to go back once and she said that she would, but that it would be difficult to face that part of her life again and also to visit the city as a tourist instead of as an inhabitant. Shelby had been really sick right before she had left for France and wasn't really well for a long time. She kept to herself a lot during those 9 months. There was an American graduate student who had been in France for a while and lived there with her husband. Shelby said that "she made sure we were ok." She sometimes gave parties or they went altogether on trips.

I asked her whether she felt they had been prepared for the culture shock. Shelby said that, because they were French majors, they were more consciousness about other countries (as compared to perhaps other study abroad students). Some students were totally into French culture, some girls just wanted to sleep around with French guys (and soon found out that that wasn't all that great after all). Some girls would dress inappropriately and then complain about the attention from men. Shelby told me that she sometimes felt unsafe and that she realized this when she was out with the guy from Puerto Rico who was quite big and spoke French very well, that had been the first time that she had felt really safe. She became more conscious about her vulnerability as a woman. Guys in France were just more assertive towards women. "Some things happened in France that wouldn't happen here" Although she did indicate that there weren't really many occasions in which she felt harassed. Sometimes, if she was reading on a bench, a guy would sit next to her, lean over and start talking in a flirting way. Shelby wondered if they would do the same to a French woman. She said "even if I bought all my clothes in France, I would still stick out as an American" and she felt vulnerable because of that. While other girls went to clubs, she stayed in her room with a book.

Her courses were in grammar, literature and art. Peter visited her during winter break and the second semester was more laid back. She traveled more and started to skip classes (which she never ever did before). Her final grade for the 9 months was based on one final exam on one grade. The other students had problems too, out of the 16, maybe 2 were more outgoing, while the others stuck together more, especially the first semester, but also still after that. She had one friend who she worried about. That girl would sometimes get a whole bottle of cheap wine and drink it alone in her room. Another girl had been in France before and was "always out there doing other stuff" Some girls slept

with French guys and others went “totally crazy” (because of the difficult experience). Shelby mentioned that she hung out with girls that would be popular in high school and that normally would never hang out with her. But here they were all dependent on each other (although they also sometimes got sick of each other because they spent so much time together).

I mentioned to Shelby the promises made in some of the flyers (study abroad is good for person & career). She mentioned that she never even put it on her CV. I was very surprised and she said “I guess it didn’t occur to me”. But she also mentioned “I’m glad that I did it” (study abroad), as it had helped her emotionally during another experience abroad for her graduate studies. About coming back home she said “It was really really hard to be back home, really really hard.” “Everything seemed so trivial” “Everything seemed so huge” (grocery store). Coming back she wondered why there is no metrosystem here and she discovered that “the stuff that they sell at the grocery store as “French” bread is just shit”, signing the quotation marks around French with her hands.

We started to talk about sharing the experience with the people back home, how they can’t have much insight in your experiences. Shelby said how she regretted that her mom had never come to visit. Her dad had been sent to England for his job for a couple of weeks and she had insisted that he would stop by. So he visited her for a weekend and at the same time her sister arrived for a week. They could perhaps better relate to her experiences than her mother. Finally, Shelby mentioned how, throughout the time she had been in France she had desperately tried to spend as little money as possible, to save money, because her mother had thought it a waste of money. Often she would buy a baguette and jam and eat that the entire day.

Here I ended the conversation, two hours later. Shelby made up her pseudoname. I thought it might be better, as she had spoken freely about some issues that had been difficult for her. We chatted and gossiped a lot more on our way out.

So what I did above was definitely the “first rush of writing” that Emerson et al discuss on p 47, not spending too much time thinking about wording, phrasing, analysis. I took my notes and wrote and added my headnotes into these fieldnotes. My phrases are not very beautiful and the text doesn’t run very smoothly yet. There are some fragments where we briefly mentioned some things and that now seem off topic. The interview provided me with a lot of interesting information and I just wanted to write it all down as quickly as possible. I noticed that, especially towards the end I got a bit sloppy as I am starting to become tired (doing it all on Wednesday, yes I know, was maybe not such a good idea).

Looking back at the interview, I think it went rather well, especially because I know Shelby for some time. I’m not sure if the notes reflect the atmosphere properly. Shelby is not very tall with a slim figure, and her eye movements sometimes betray a little shyness, especially when she is glancing down and back up again. I felt that she was very brave in telling me all this, as her trip to France had not been what one would think of a trip such as advertised in the flyers and on the websites. It had been very difficult for her and it seemed that it was again difficult to go back in her memory. But she was also eager to talk about it and towards the end she mentioned how she had never thought all this through so much, how this had been like a shrink session.

I would have really liked to have a tape recorder though. Shelby sometimes paused to give me the opportunity to write things down properly. But I felt like I didn’t pay enough attention to her body language nor to my own questions and remarks. I had prepared some main questions to lead the discussion, which were quite helpful. I don’t think I

spoke much, but sometimes I would refer to my experiences when I lived my first 6 months in Brussels and I had felt totally alienated and lonely. I thought this confession from my side would make her feel more confident towards me, as I related to her experiences. I had intended to pay attention to my own wording and whether it was sometimes leading, as in Bourdieu (because Nancy had said how it is sometimes surprising and embarrassing when you hear yourself back on a tape recorder). I don't think it was, but again, I might not have noticed that well as I never heard myself speak and was more occupied with other things.

I'm not sure whether I posted way too much, especially since I added the part on studying abroad and I included the full fieldnotes (instead of a selection). I'm sorry for the long text. I think that Shelby's story did help me in thinking about my project and I might want to focus more about the promises of the university versus the experiences by the students. I wonder whether more students experience similar difficulties and how (or whether) the university deals with that. If I would further analyze these fieldnotes, I would probably break it down into categories: the department (good support but also sometimes misleading info), the lack of interaction with French people, Shelby's experiences specifically as a woman in Paris, and pressure from her family, in particular her mother. Especially the first two will be of interest for my project (institutional support and integration into the culture).

Interview #2

For this assignment, I interviewed Assistant Dean Andrea Bohn (hereafter AB), who is in charge of the ACES study abroad program during approximately half an hour. We talked about university-wide study abroad policy, about the difficulties students face abroad in relation to US international politics and the perception of these politics in their host countries, and we talked about activities organized by ACES, the study abroad office, and students themselves to educate and inform students.

I transcribed large parts of our interview. I'm sorry for the long text, but it was an interesting exercise. And I found it was actually harder now to decide what to focus on, what sentences to pick, as compared to my interview with Shelby, when I was forced to do that on the spot because I had a notebook and no tape recorder.

University-wide policy

ME: Uuhm, I did some research and I went on the internet and I was actually looking for uuhm a university-wide sort of policy...

AB: uhum

ME: or uuhm sort of ideology behind study abroad and I couldn't actually find much. I went to the Office of the Provost for International Affairs.

AB: uhum

ME: They are the ones....

AB: uhum, uhum

ME: I think that should sort of have a policy to

AB: uhum

ME: university eehh, you are laughing....

AB: uhum

ME: Eh, well, what I found there was, uhm, what was it, uhm, a purpose statement or something like that.

AB: uhum

ME: Is there anywhere where I could find more specific [???

AB: We sometimes refer for example to the ACES strategic plan, which I'm sure is somewhere out on the web. I would have to search a little while before I find my printed copy....

ME: Ok.

AB: Uhm, that certainly eh, summarizes what motivates us in the college to have a strong study abroad program [???] you know the college pays my salary full. I don't only do study abroad related things, but it is....

ME: uhum

AB: you know, one of my main tasks here. And, ehm, so that's the rationale for us making this investment for maintaining relationships with partners overseas. We're preaching to the students wherever we can to [???] how important study abroad is, but yeah, I wouldn't... I have never seen a university-wide policy either, although it is also anchored in the strategic plan for the university... and the vice provost for international affairs, eh we have now an interim person Charles Stewart, ehm, who does that. And you may want to approach him directly. But, when it comes to students studying abroad, international [???] experiences for U of I students, it is the study abroad office which is.... If you look at the permit, you know, under the vice provost for international affairs....

ME: Ok, so you work closely together with the study abroad office.

AB: Yes, very closely, very closely.

ME: Ok.

AB: We have different types of programs, we try to avoid any kind of overlap. For example, ACES does not have any exchange agreement with universities in Australia, New Zealand or England, because the campus has so many and they provide excellent programs for students in the college of ACES.

ME: Ok.

AB: So why would I duplicate the effort.

ME: Yeah, yeah.

ME: And, uhm, you are sometimes in touch with people from from the uhm the office of the uhm provost of international affairs?

AB: Well I would like to talk about the study abroad office as such, that's mainly my contact. But I am also, I mean there are conversations that start, Charles Stewart has with me, I received a phone call from his office for example this morning, they wanted some data. But for, you know, most practical purposes, it's the study abroad office, Jeremy Geller is the director of the study abroad office, with whom I communicate most closely. There is a study abroad advisor committee that I am a member of, an advisor committee led by faculty for study abroad related issues, that I am the ex officio member of, so there are close ties, and the paperwork we use is either exactly the same as the study abroad office uses. Uhm some of it has my name, because it will be, basically, like a confirmation of participation in a certain ACES program. If I write it, then my name is on it, but it is exactly the same lay-out as the study abroad office has.

ME: Ok.

It was perhaps not so smart to start our conversation with this topic, as it was quite a difficult one. I had actually hoped that there was at least some steering from above, from the Office of the Associate Provost for International Affairs (OAPIA), and that there would be some discussions between them and the study abroad initiatives on campus about goals, to tune in the UIUC initiatives with university objectives and nation-wide ideals about creating global citizens etc. But AB's smile at the beginning indicated that perhaps there wasn't much to be said about steering from above... She focused the

conversation more towards the study abroad office, and seemed to be a little hesitant to discuss the OAPIA. The only actual exchange that she referred to was the request for data from the “interim person”.

I wonder whether this represents the relationship between the OAPIA and the campus study abroad initiatives in general. As I had hypothesized before, it seems to be a very decentralized relationship, where the study abroad initiatives have a lot of freedom to design and carry out their programs, with possibly most steering coming from the study abroad office. It would definitely be interesting to talk to people from the OAPIA, the study abroad office, and a few other college study abroad programs. I would want to find out more about the OAPIA, what exactly it is that they do, and to what extent they are familiar with all activities, issues, problems, and possible solutions related to study abroad on campus. What powers do they have in designing or investing in the campus initiatives. E.g. AB’s position is paid by the college of ACES, so that already confirms her independence. But perhaps this is an exception. Also it would be interesting to find out more about the source of money for scholarships etc.

I had identified previously, when I analyzed the OAPIA website (International Programs and Studies), that there was much use of certain key-words, such as “global citizenship”, but without any attempt to provide a definition. Although there are perhaps some ideologies around study abroad that are considered common knowledge for everyone, they are not specified, updated, linked to current politics, nation-wide objectives for creating global citizens in a globalizing world, specifically in a time period when the US seems to need large quantities of educated people sensitive to other cultures, other lifestyles and religions. Or it can still be that I haven’t found what I am looking for yet. I did discover some interesting reports written by the American Council on Education, but to what extent these are influential, I’m not sure. If I were to interview AB again, I would ask her whether she thinks it would be useful to have a more specific university policy, which would incorporate national and global developments. I would also ask her whether she is familiar with the ACE reports and how important/useful those are in her work.

Difficulties abroad & politics

ME: Well, I was actually interested mostly in looking at, uhm, study abroad within the framework sort of the current political situation of....

AB: uhum, uhum

ME: America and the perception of US international

AB: uhum, uhum

ME: policies abroad. Are you familiar with... there has been a study by Nadine Dolby on American student going to Australia.

AB: No, I have not heard that. I would love to have a copy.

ME: It is online, available online, so I could send you the link.

AB: Yes, that would be good.

ME: What she found actually, and it was when the students that she interviewed went abroad, it was right before 9/11.

AB: Oh, ok.

ME: What she found was, so when they had the interview I think it had just happened, sort of that timing...

AB: uhum, uhum

ME: ehm, that a lot of students found difficulties in Australia with, ehm, people knowing more than them about eh US eh politics, ehm

AB: uhum, right, right.

ME: For example, there was, there was even at a bar, where someone wanted to check someone’s age and he asked when was president Kennedy shot...

AB: uhum

ME: And, so the American student did not know that...

AB: uhum

ME: So there was, a lot of students found this conflict, where people were critiquing US ehm politics and they were not able to defend themselves very well.

AB: Right, right, right.

ME: Ehm, did you hear more, like, experiences from students about this, maybe?

AB: Probably never a direct statement like that, but I can very very very well relate to that. Uhm, I mean I am from Germany myself, I am a German citizen, I have worked in the States for 2.5 years now. I was an exchange student in the US in 91-92, and it is always a big topic, ehm, you know how does the world see the United States, how does the world think the United States sees itself in the world, and you know, the US is such a big global player and has an influence on the environment of politics, on all sorts of things. And ehm people feel affected by that, and they feel a little helpless at times, and they... so this is an issue. That is discussed by the more [??] than by Americans, because, I mean, it is their country and they're just doing all these things, and and often times doing them in the name of the interest of the people of the United States. So where do they have an opportunity to view themselves like in a mirror or through somebody else's eyes, it is when they study abroad, and, ehm,American students are no dumber than European, Australian, or whatever students, it's just that they have grown up in a different system and they have, they have an insular view of themselves, just like Europeans have an insular view of themselves and Australians have an insular view of themselves. In addition to ... to this aspect, there is different cultural political debate. I mean, you go to many European, Latin American countries, I don't know so much about Australia, but certainly in Latin America and Europe, the political debate is..is so much part of life. There is just more of a tradition in it. And I don't think necessarily because of differences in the educational system and that they are... taught to be more politically aware in class. It is the environment which they grow up in. And I can see how a lot of American students would be at a disadvantage, just because... take the way news is presented.... you know, what is the emphasis? Oh we had a discussion last night at my book club about how the News Gazette now starts with local news on the first page. Ehm, that's just, that is a response to what media is perceiving the general public to want to know and you can see that the general public does not listen to world news because it is not presented to them, so who is at fault? Who is to blame here? In any case,... small countries around the world, of course people want to hear local news, of course people want to hear national news, but there's much more of a tradition of also wanting to know what's going on with your neighbors, you may have visited your neighbors more often than Americans have visited their neighbors, just because... you know, the next, like I was born in Aachen, the next country is 5 minutes away, you know, you can live on one side of the street and it's Germany, and the other side of the street is the Netherlands.

ME: Where I'm from.

AB: Yeah, I thought so, yeah and, so, ehm, it's just..... they've grown up differently and this is one of the reasons I think that study abroad is so important.

[.....]

[.....]

AB: So when they go abroad they have an opportunity to go more depth into that, but it's not what really changes these students' lives. It's having to fend for themselves, in terms of how do I find my way, you know, how do I get from Amsterdam to Wageningen University. How, ehm, what do I say in response to somebody saying something critical about US politics. Ehm, it's being exposed to diversity of views, a diversity in ways of living that I think makes the key difference for these students.

[.....]

[.....]

AB: Ideally, one could argue, they should all have like a political prep course or something like that, but heck on this campus it's not like we teach a given political view. We shouldn't! What maybe we should teach to students, whether they go to study abroad or not, is to ask critical questions, to be well informed and to form an opinion, based on having done a lot of research, having read a lot of points of view and then coming to their own conclusions. But we should do that to students independent of whether they study abroad or not.

ME: Yeah, yeah, I agree with that.

AB: It's easier of course to do if there's already a tradition of doing that, if the students grew up in homes where politics, world politics, world issues, were discussed. But it doesn't mean that just because it may be hard for us, that we shouldn't be doing it.

So this second part of our interview focused mostly on the more fundamental, underlying issues related to American students, namely a different perception or understanding of "abroad" than people from many other countries. This might on one hand provide even more reason to encourage them to study abroad, but on the other hand could also complicate the experience psychologically.

I think that it would be interesting to incorporate something on the background of students in my proposal. For example, class and race issues may be really important factors here. So again a "missed opportunity" – when I heard this back, I thought I definitely should have asked about the average ACES study abroad student and their background. I would expect (given the overall impression of our campus) that most are white middle-class, but it would have been useful to hear more about this from AB.

One note, I also realized that here I started to feel that AB and me were very much on the same page regarding certain issues, which I felt convinced was related to the fact that we are both European (or both non-American). So the fact that AB is German probably plays a role in how she sees American students, as compared to European students. It will be interesting to contrast this with Americans in charge of study abroad programs. Of course, it would need a big comparative study to determine whether and to what extent nationality is important in imagining education and political awareness for the students, I just recognized it as a factor.

Activities

We talked a bit more about the ways students could deal with psychological problems. They could get in touch both with AB ("I could speak words of encouragement and recommend them to avoid situations if they feel unequipped to deal with critical questions or comments being thrown at them, to avoid situations like that. And over time maybe see that they become quite informed that they can defend their points of view. Or just listen and not react. You know. Not let themselves be cornered, because that's usually not what people will intend to do. They just, they have a need to speak about something that they feel affects them deeply."). Some of the programs have resident directors who are available for students to talk with.

We also spoke about the pre-departure orientation and the ACES Global Ambassadors (an organization by and for study abroad students):

ME: Ehm, so so this, the pre-departure orientation and perhaps also, as I saw, the the Global Ambassadors, I mean they organize a lot of event, and they go to, I think ehm... the Cosmopolitan Club.

AB: For example, yes.

ME: Yes, so the interaction between students who have already been abroad and students who go abroad might help in that sense. Do you have a...

AB: Yeah, but there could, a lot more could be done in that respect, a lot more could be done. But, I mean, you're, you're [??] outside observant. You know how, how busy American lifestyle is. It's a lot about quantity, not so much about depth. And, so, what happens is that very quickly the students who had all the best intentions when they studied abroad you know to to maintain ties with international students, to give them the kind of hospitality that they experienced when they were abroad, you know, understanding how isolated you can feel when you are in a different culture, in a new country. Well, you know, life takes over again. You know, they're back to their business schedule, they have all these assignments that are due, they have the clubs that they attend. And all of a sudden it's like almost back to their old routine. Yes, they have changed inside. And I have seen some students you know how have changed so tremendously, it is unbelievable, you know, it's just totally amazing. But, it's difficult, it's like swimming against the tide and so, ehm, they don't do as much as they would want to. I mean, when you call them individually and say, you know, "Could you take care of this incoming international student.", they will always be there, ready to do that. But, ehm, even the ACES Global Ambassadors, don't have time to do everything that they would like to do.

[.....]

[.....]

AB: What I started doing with this group of students, the 35 ACES students abroad this semester, some of them are on ACES programs, the majority are on study abroad office programs or outside provider programs, is that those who got a scholarship from the college, they have to write journals every two weeks. So that helps to reflect on things that are going on while they are there. The question that they have to answer the next journal is about ehm..... [Reading:] What stereotypes did you have of the people and culture of your host country? Do you find them confirmed or are they totally off the [??]? What do you see as typical for the people and culture now that you have lived in your host country for a little while? And then: what stereotypes do you think people in your host country have about Americans? How does that make you feel? And now that you have lived in the host country a little while, what is your impression of what generalizations people make about America and Americans? What kind of discussions, if any, does that lead into? So, this is the question they have to answer as part of their journal. And when they all come back, my plan is to have a Saturday afternoon, 3 hours together, we'll start off, you know, with an ice-breaker, like a cultural bingo, ehm, and then we'll talk about their experiences and I have, I brought back a lot of good materials from a conference that I attended, and it is not so much about, what your, the core of your research question is, but it is... letting the kids reflect, and come out you know with all the positive outcomes of study abroad, which is not to deny that negative things happened. And I think, personally I think that it is the negative things that ultimately lead to the greatest benefits, but that's a different story.

In this last part of the interview, it was fortunate the AB suddenly remembered the journal questions for the students, because those precisely address the issues in my research. It also shows that it is definitely being discussed between the students and AB. I would actually be really interested in their findings.

So as for activities, there are several initiatives or people to turn to, but I would have to interview the students themselves to determine whether they find it useful, whether they have certain questions that they might feel insecure about, they might not always be comfortable turning to certain people even though they have some serious problems. Remembering Shelby, I wonder if she really talked to anyone about her difficulties. I

could ask her specifically. From the interview, I don't have the impression that she did, but I could well be wrong.

Overall impression of the interview

When preparing for the interview, I had a hard time deciding whether I should make very specific questions in advance and read them aloud, or whether I should have a more (Alison-style) conversation-like interview. I was also concerned about leading questions or remarks, so I first started to write a list of questions. I soon found though that I could not anticipate what she would respond, which would often determine the type of question following. And, as my interviews in my previous life as a researcher for a NGO, interviewing exotic pet shop owners, reptile traders etc, concerned very limiting standard questionnaires, I thought it was time to try something wild for once. So I just had broad topics that I wanted to bring up and try to let AB decide the direction of conversation. When hearing myself back, I found that I spoke very slowly, needed time to formulate, and made long, complicated sentences that weren't all that specific. I'm not sure whether that was a good "strategy" or not, or whether it even mattered at all. I actually tend to agree with Bourdieu to some extent, about the story that is there to be told already and it just needs some incentive to get going. I know that some people strongly disagree, and there are certainly other factors that do influence the exact outcome of an interview, but I would have to do a whole lot more interviews with different strategies to get a better sense of this.

Anyway, AB did provide some very interesting thoughts and ideas. I'm still interested basically in two subjects that are strongly related (institution and individual). So on one hand I would like to know more about the larger framework, university, national, global, while on the other hand it is very intriguing to try to understand the challenges faces by American students going abroad and how specifically they deal with that. I still need to think how I can integrate the two nicely without losing focus, but I still think it would be useful to contrast institutional goals with the actual experiences of the students.

Finally, as for technique, I don't think that Duneier's Conservation Analysis would be extremely useful here, but maybe I am overlooking something. I do think it is a very interesting technique that I would certainly like to apply wherever I can. And it might be more appropriate were I to interview students about their study abroad experiences. By the way, something else I found really useful was the Seoul article and the idea of the "travel journal" as well as the "five places of personal significance". I could apply these techniques to obtain more insights into the students' activities in the city, their integration into the culture etc.

INQUIRY PAGE #5

Places of personal significance - "it can encompass places of personal, emotional importance, symbolic, civic, cultural, or historical importance or useful, well-frequented places." (Nelson, 2000).

Shelby, the student who spent about 9 months in Paris

Paris

- 1) Fondation des Etats Unis: chez moi. My room was the first place that I had called "home" since I'd left for college and my parents had moved to a different house.
- 2) Boulevard St. Michel: Everything fabulous was on this street. There were so many great places to shop. I got off the metro here to get to class, so I walked down this street every day and it became like my "turf." On my last day in Paris, I walked down this street one last time and thought about how sad it would be if I ever came back and was just a "tourist."
- 3) Eiffel Tower: I know its cliché, but I loved it. A few times I rode the metro to a nearby arrondissement and just wandered around the streets, looking at the different views of the Eiffel tower and taking photos.
- 4) La Fontaine de Medicis: in the Luxembourg Gardens (near where I had school). I think the sculpture was something out of Greek mythology. It was so beautiful to look at; I even had a cigarette sitting there looking at it at least once :)
- 5) Notre Dame: All those gargoyles... the beautiful stained glass windows... I actually went to mass there once even though I am nowhere near Catholic. The view from the top is the best view of the city.
- 6) Louvre: what can I say... Everything about it is pure wonderful. From the glass pyramid outside, to the thousands of beautiful works of art inside.... I had a student pass to get in free whenever I wanted and I went there dozens of times but still didn't even come close to seeing it all. I always just went back to the statue of Psyche and Cupid....
- 7) Conciergerie: I think this was a Renaissance prison of some type... A beautiful building with towers and turrets, bordering the Seine.
- 8) Centre Pompidou: the modern art museum. At first I thought it was an eyesore and that I hated modern art, but 2nd semester I took a class there and realized I loved it.
- 9) Arc de Triomphe: first monument I saw in Paris. We went there the first night I was there, just hours after getting off the plane.
- 10) Eglise St. Eustache: near the Forum des Halles. In the spring there were beautiful flowers all around and I sat there to write in my journal.

Champaign... I kind of combined my undergrad and grad experience for this

- 1) My house: its pretty and I'm happy here!
- 2) Mahomet trails: one of my favorite places to go running
- 3) Davenport Hall: where I had many classes as an undergrad, and where I now spend nearly all of my time on campus!
- 4) J-tree: a crooked little evergreen tree near the observatory. I sat here and studied a lot during all 4 years of undergrad.
- 5) Bread Company: freshman year I had to walk past the Bread Co to get to Peter's apartment. I loved the white lights they had for decoration. I love it when we get to go to lunch there!
- 6) Espresso Royale (Urbana): I spent so much of my undergrad sitting here and studying or writing in my journal. I loved the smell of coffee. I often went there when I was sad or lonely, which was a lot during my sophomore year.
- 7) Busey Evans: the dorm where I lived freshman and sophomore year; lots of stuff happened here!
- 8) Union: I studied here a lot during my freshman and sophomore year, sometimes with my friend Becca.
- 9) Wesley Foundation: where I met Peter (but neither of us goes there anymore!)
- 10) Foreign Language Building: where I had my first class as an undergrad, and where I had classes nearly every semester. Sometimes between classes, I would sit on the floor and study.

Shelby obviously made an effort to fill the 10 places (even though I explicitly mentioned

that that was not necessary and that I hadn't managed to come up with more than 6-9). It is even more obvious that, except for her room, all the places in Paris are monuments, places of cultural significance, but have little to do with social activities. Of course, European cities just have much more to offer in that regard. So the question is whether she would put more emphasis on such places in Champaign, if they were actually here. Or, rather, whether she would put more emphasis on social places had she been more socially active in Paris. I have a tendency to support the latter idea, I think that she would probably have added one or two bars, restaurants, etc, had she spent some fun time there.

Looking at her list for Champaign, there are many places where she spent time studying. She mentions two people, her husband and a friend, and she runs outside for exercise. But she also refers to sadness and loneliness during her sophomore year. I would say that the results are somewhat consistent for both Champaign and Paris. Although Shelby has of course made a life for herself in Champaign, is married, a graduate students, likes to run, has a house and friends, she doesn't seem to be someone who achieves this easily for herself, especially not in an entirely new environment where people speak another language.

Of course, women like her are especially vulnerable when going to study abroad and should receive more guidance at the host university, e.g. through the organization of social activities, frequent progress meetings (how's everything? any problems? etc), and, most importantly, active introduction to the culture and society. Shelby's situation was perhaps somewhat extraordinary, as the students did not have many opportunities to interact with French people, and as Shelby herself had rather special reasons for studying abroad (she needed to prove herself to her mother and she just wanted to survive).

I will do a focus group next Wednesday – I now have two students who studied abroad in the last year. I hope to get at least one more, but the timing is a bit hard. Anyway, I hope that will give me a bit more insight into these issues. I will throw out some questions about stereotypes, international politics, and integration into the culture, see what they come up with. One of them studied in France, the other in the UK. Should be interesting!

IP #6

I planned to do a focus group with students who studied abroad and I managed to find two willing students who could make it this afternoon – one who had studied in the UK and one in France. I thought that it would be interesting to learn more about students going to the UK because the barrier, or culture shock, is perhaps less as compared to other countries – both because of language and the relationship between UK and US.

Sadly, however, the girl who studied in the UK didn't show up. So instead of a focus group, I ended up doing another interview of another girl who, as Shelby, had studied in France. Emily had not gone to Paris, but to Montpellier, and not for a year, but for one semester. She was also a French major and did courses with other international students. She had explored the possibility of doing courses with French students, but these were less accessible (pre-requisites etc) as well as less interesting for her. She had chosen to live with a host family, while other options included dorms or apartments.

I spoke with Emily for about 30 to 45 minutes and there were a few parallels with Shelby's experiences. Although Emily obviously had different motivations and seemed more enthusiastic about her time abroad, she too spoke about difficulties integrating into

the culture. She had perhaps made more of an effort to find French friends and to search for suitable activities, to some extent successful, but still ended with comparable results (not having experienced much of French culture). I have transcribed certain parts of our interview.

EMILY: "I'm glad that I chose [international courses], because we got to speak a lot more in French, whereas the French like to practice their English. Either that, or you're with other American students and there's like more of, like, a barrier. Like the French students kinda stay by themselves, and the American students stay by themselves. Whereas the international students, we were all together, so we all just spoke French together."

EMILY "I had never been overseas before. And, ehm, I just wanted the experience, I wanted to see what France was like. I felt like I was kinda, like, here, just learn the language, away from the like native country, I just felt like, I was kinda hitting a ceiling in terms of how much I could actually learn here. And my speaking definitely wasn't that good. Ehm, so I really wanted to be in an environment where I would be forced to use the language on a day-to-day basis."

EMILY "It was really hard to meet French students, and I think it is just the culture. It's nothing against the culture, but it's just, I know it's not just me, others that I talked to had similar experiences. The French are kinda like, slowly warm up and become like really good friends. You would have to be there for years before like a solid friendship could actually develop."

COMMENT: Emily prepared for her trip by taking a speech com class (8 weeks), where they talked about misunderstandings between cultures. However, "It wasn't that informative." During this class, they did some research on the country they would go to and there was a panel of previous study abroad students (which on the other hand was very useful). Study abroad office here in cooperation with the one in France organized activities with French students in bars ("So you can't really speak very well, and hear.") and set everyone up with French buddies. Although Emily was in touch with her buddy, she mentioned how "it just seemed more like a sacrifice on their part". She felt like she was "bugging them down" to have someone to speak French to etc. Then about her host family:

EMILY "I didn't really talk to my host sisters that much, cause they were kinda like, doing their own thing and they had had students stay with them before, so it wasn't really a novelty anymore. They were not that interested in trying to welcome me or anything. So I definitely talked with my host mum and my host dad a lot more, than I did with my host sisters. Which was kinda sad, cause I really was looking forward to like, you know...[interact with host sisters]"

EMILY "Ehm, I guess I feel I did miss out a little bit [on French culture]. I mean, part of it can be attributed to my host family, and part of it, I was responsible for some of it. I am kinda like a quiet person. Especially, in like, really, in like, you probably know, if you come in a different country and you're gonna speak the language. It's just, like, really uncertain about yourself. You know. And there's just a lot of, you know, problems of, how can I convey what I am feeling, you know, just communicate effectively with other people. When you know it's going to be difficult, a hindrance, you're gonna stay quiet."

"Not super fluent" [in French] – COMMENT: Emily mentions two important language experiences. She joined a bible study group halfway the semester and she went out with one guy from that group – he wanted to practice English and she wanted to practice

French, so “it was kinda a cool trade-off, because you could like help each other and teach each as we were talking. It worked out really well.” The other experience was at an intimate party organized by her French buddy. Talking, listening, and interacting.”

Of course, I asked more about the bible study group. She said: “Most of them were French students, but there were some American students.” “I didn’t know about it, I wished I had known about it in the beginning of the semester.” “I figured it out from another student that was studying there, he just kinda stumbled upon it and we let the study abroad office know like, let students know about this, this is a good way to get involved.”

EMILY “We were on the tram, we were coming back from the flee market and we were speaking in English, which I mean you shouldn’t do, but we were doing it anyway. With other American students you just, it’s just so much easier to speak English. I mean, like, why practice French when like, you communicate best in English. And, so we were, and then there was this older woman that, just, all of a sudden yelled at us. And she was like ‘learn French, you need to speak the language.’ So we were, like, [...] we kept our mouths shut after that.”

ME: “I did some research on the internet and I hear from a lot of Americans that, when they go abroad, people immediately ask them about politics, American international politics.”

EMILY: [laughing] “Yeah, so many people asked me, because this was still before, this was still Bush’s first term. You know how France feels about [...] and about the whole war, and they would just ask me ‘do you know Bush?’ and I would, I would never give a response. I would just say ‘I don’t like politics, so I don’t want to talk about it’ and that was my response. Because it is so [...] getting into a political argument, when I really don’t know that much about it, you know, and I didn’t want to give them reason to argue, that is what they were looking for, to pick a fight. I saw it more as, they kinda were looking for a way to

ME: “express their anger...?” (yeah yeah I was putting words in her mouth here...)

EMILY: “express their anger about the United States, but directing it towards the individual citizens. But I wouldn’t give it to them.”

EMILY “I developed a lot more stereotypes while I was there and after, cause some of my friends and I just got really hampered about the fact that we were having such a hard time trying to find French friends, develop relationships, and seeing some of the tendencies of how cold they seem to be. And, ehm, I think we were kinda hindered also by the culture. I know that there were students who went to England and also had a hard time, like, meeting students from that culture. But, I think that, France as a rule, they’re definitely a different kind of people.” [...] “I think the more we saw... maybe it wasn’t stereotyping by that point, because it was just kinda like accurate observation.”

NOTE: Emily also traveled around a lot (Corsica, London, several places in southern France – always with someone from the group of students; and her parents came for two weeks – places they visited included Paris, Nice and Rome). Finally, I asked her how the experience has been valuable to her:

EMILY: “I think it just made me more aware, like taught me to be more understanding of differences among everybody. It helps in everyday life. Like, understanding that everyone comes from a different background, you can’t expect the same behavior, the same like mindset, the same way of like justifying your actions, you know.” “If anything, I just wanna, like, travel more. More than I ever did before. I just heard, once you go to Europe once, you’ll wanna keep going back.”

EMILY: “They changed the location of the program, cause a lot of people complained.”
NOTE: Emily explained that the city was “so international” and that there wasn’t enough of a French culture.

FINAL COMMENTS:

So this interview basically confirms some of my previous findings. It seems that, although the national and university institutions idealize study abroad as an excellent opportunity to familiarize young people with other cultures, the actual process is much more complex. I wouldn’t say that it was a failure in the cases of Shelby and Emily, but I wouldn’t call it a big success either. The way the program was set up for the both of them limited integration into the culture, especially due to classes exclusively for international students. They both had difficulties in finding French friends and faced some stereotypes against Americans.

Emily, on top of that, had to deal with people wanting to pick fights about the Bush administration. It was interesting to hear how she avoided discussions about politics altogether and admitted not knowing so much about it in the first place. In addition to this, she developed more stereotypes about the French than she had before she left (“tendencies of how cold they seem to be” and “France as a rule, they’re definitely a different kind of people”). And yet, this experience encouraged Emily to travel more. Why...??

As Assistant Dean Bohn said to me previously: perhaps “it is the negative things that ultimately lead to the greatest benefits”. Perhaps the problems encountered by Emily were somehow exactly the reason why she became interested to travel more. Maybe they stimulated her curiosity, or maybe her determination to figure it all out. But there seems to be some tension here, or even a contradiction.

Emily mentioned to me after the interview that she knew some people who had had a great time abroad. And of course I shouldn’t generalize from two interviews. But I just wonder if there is a way to “measure” success of a study abroad experience. How do the institutions know whether their programs are successful? Simply by the enthusiasm or complaints from the students? But what does that say about whether or not the students have become “global citizens”?

After this interview, I feel like I am hitting a dead end. I need to think more about my research question, how I can be more specific. I still think that comparing the experiences of students in London and Paris would be interesting. Figure out how they interact with the culture, what difficulties they face, and what they finally get out of it. How many students actually find their way into the culture and what makes them different from the others? What is the role of language and politics?

Maybe a potential title could be something like:

Study abroad and the creation of global citizens – American students in Europe post 9/11

DISCUSS

Discuss your inquiry, taking care to separate speculation from fact or data
IP#7 Summary of Findings

For the purpose of this course, I have studied university webpages, carried out three

interviews, and done exercises related to space. I also attended two lectures, established contacts, and gathered literature, all with respect to American study abroad initiatives.

I started with a strong interest for nation-wide and university-wide coordination of study abroad initiatives and I was specifically looking for justifications, objectives, goals, evaluations etc etc. My preliminary research pointed towards a decentralized system of activities. First of all, the website of the Office of the Associate Provost for International Affairs (OAPIA) – International Programs and Studies – did not offer much more than catchy phrases, key words such as “leader”, “global citizenship”, “global community”, and basically just a lot of repetition; it lacked concreteness altogether. Second, after my interview with Assistant Dean Bohn, in charge of the ACES study abroad program, I got the impression that her relationship with OAPIA was not very constructive or even relevant for her work. Bohn continuously stressed the importance of the study abroad office, but was more reluctant to speak about the OAPIA. The only actual exchange that she referred to was the request for data by the OAPIA.

I would like to follow up on this investigation by interviewing people from OAPIA, the study abroad office, and other study abroad units on campus and their conceptions of the use of study abroad: why is it important, and, especially, how can we measure its success? I would look for official documents, strategic plans, sources of scholarship and funding, to figure out more about big goals (e.g. creating global citizens), as well as concrete ways in which these will be accomplished. I would also search for links with national or international guidelines or recommendations from institutes such as the American Council on Education.

Although perhaps led by my prejudice about bureaucracy, but also certainly by the results of my preliminary research, I don't expect to find much beyond empty phrases and promises. I don't think that there are many elaborations on why study abroad, or global citizenship for that matter, is important. Instead, I think it is something that is assumed from the get-go. I also expect that evaluations are mostly based on very general measures, such as numbers of students participating in the programs, feedback of students, etc., but not on very specific measures that could help determine whether the broader goals are being accomplished. Again, how could anyone measure whether students who went abroad for a semester or an academic year have become “global citizens”?

So then the second part of my investigation was into the experiences of the students themselves. Here, I found the work by Nadine Dolby and Vazal Rizvi on national and cosmopolitan identities very useful in furthering my research focus and ideas. I decided to focus on problems related to integration into the culture, stereotypes, language barriers, and the role of US foreign politics in these regards. My interview Assistant Dean Bohn gave me some fascinating leads with regard to the background of the average American student going abroad. She referred to American insularity as compared to Europe, Latin America, where countries are smaller and culture is more diverse. She also mentioned the role of the US media and political discussions at home. Although these on one hand may form reasons why study abroad is important, they may also be the reasons why it is especially difficult for American youth.

Interestingly, both interviews with Shelby and Emily confirmed such difficulties (and both girls have had little or no previous experience overseas). Although their motivations and experiences were very different, they both returned to the US without having had many chances to interact with the French, to learn better French, to understand French culture. Of course this is an extremely small sample size of two different study abroad programs in one country, but I can imagine that this is a more widespread problem. The students probably need to be rather outgoing and assertive to find opportunities in their

host country to interact with local people, as apart from a few activities organized by the program, I have the impression that they have to fend for themselves. This is also what Bohn indicated when she spoke about the ACES Global Ambassadors, a group of students who welcome international students coming to UIUC. She stated that, despite their good intentions, they have a busy life style and they don't do as much as they would want to do.

I thought the exercise with Shelby about spaces of personal significance was extremely useful to better understand her life in Paris. However, Emily made me realize that integration into the culture, social activities in the host country, may not necessarily be required, or a guarantee, for a success story. Emily developed an interest in traveling and other cultures despite her negative experiences. She still seems to have no interest in politics, though, but that doesn't mean that she never will. I would argue that it is an ongoing process and (speaking also from personal experiences) I can imagine that study abroad does not necessarily change people into "global citizens" (yeah, I should look for a proper definition if I'm going to use this phrase myself) immediately, but that it is an ongoing longer-term process. And students may not even process the whole experience until a year or more later.

On the other hand, as I saw from Nadine Dolby's essay, some students may also change towards a stronger sense of nationalism and lack of willingness to understand other cultures. Perhaps the Iraq war contributes more to this, as Europeans will take every chance to talk to Americans about politics. As Emily indicated: "I didn't want to give them reason to argue, that is what they were looking for, to pick a fight. I saw it more as, they kinda were looking for a way to" [ME: "express their anger...?"] "express their anger about the United States, but directing it towards the individual citizens. But I wouldn't give it to them." So "picking fights" even.... In these situations Americans are basically addressed for an explanation, for a defense; they are seen as representatives of their country and as such are expected to respond. Students will respond in many different ways, but these confrontations may not always have the desired outcome (which I can imagine would be that students can provide well-informed responses and are not discouraged to engage in these kinds of discussions, unless they are not initiated in a friendly and respectful manner, in which case they better avoid).

Funny, I now just bumped into one of Bohn's sentences that hadn't really caught my eye before. It's about students after return to UIUC from their study abroad experiences: "Yes, they have changed inside. And I have seen some students you know how have changed so tremendously, it is unbelievable, you know, it's just totally amazing." People like her obviously have a good sense of the actual effects of study abroad, even though they may not theorize it or quantify it. So I think interviewing the coordinators about how students have changed in the past, both positively and negatively, would be an interesting addition to following students when they go abroad.

Ok, there's definitely a lot of intriguing stuff here. For the proposal, I was thinking of participating in a semester abroad in London and a semester abroad in Paris (jippiee!!). The rest of the time I would spend doing research and carry out interviews at UIUC institutions.

REFLECT

Link

Connect with other resources and materials.

The following pages are in some way related to my own research for this course, mostly by focusing on globalization and global dimensions to education.

EOTU Globalization and the University

<http://www.eotu.uiuc.edu/pedagogy/globuniv.htm>

<http://www.eotu.uiuc.edu/events/2003-04global.htm>

Dolby, N. (2004). Encountering an American Self: Study Abroad and National Identity. *Comparative Education Review* 48(2): 150-173.

Nelson, L.C. (2000). Special Places: Neighborhoods, Memories, Movement. In: *Measured Excess: Status, Gender, and Consumer Nationalism in South Korea*. Columbia University Press, p 60-66.

Rizvi, F. (2000). International Education and the Production of Global Imagination. In: N. Burbules and C. Torres (eds.). *Globalization and Education: Critical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge. (I HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THIS ONE)

Rizvi, F. (2005). International Education and the Production of Cosmopolitan Identities. RIHE International Publication Series 9 (in press). Available online: http://www.cgs.uiuc.edu/resources/conf_seminars_workshops/TSRizvi.pdf

Internet:

The Center for Institutional and International Initiatives of the American Council on Education offers several electronic publications on their website

<http://www.acenet.edu/bookstore/category.cfm?categoryID=6>

The exercises for this course and the use of the Inquiry Page have been very useful to me in many ways. I do think that the page set-up is rather complicated and follows a specific logic that probably does not reflect the working style or procedure of every individual researcher. It takes a lot of time to become familiar with the technical and philosophical aspects, but it is worth the effort. I appreciate the continuous thinking process and the way questions, approaches, and results are reevaluated with every new entry. It is also extremely valuable to see other students' pages and to interact through comments back and forth. The entire process is somewhat impersonal and time consuming, but in combination with in-class presentations and discussions, works quite well.

Implications

Could your findings have broader implications beyond this inquiry?

I don't feel like at this stage I can make very grounded recommendations, so these are very cautious and preliminary. It is possible that I have overlooked information that demonstrates that these activities already take place.

As noted before, it seems to me that the organization of study abroad is very decentralized at UIUC. However, this is not necessarily a bad thing, as people with most practical experience may have more freedom and knowledge to adjust the programs to fit the students' needs and suggestions. On the other hand, perhaps I just haven't searched well enough, but I haven't found much thorough information on university-wide objectives. I think that my proposed study could be a valuable one in contributing to a more detailed and concrete planning of study abroad, as well as evaluating the success of certain programs. If the goal is to create "global citizens", then it will be useful to define the term and to see what kinds of programs and activities aid this goal (or harm it). Also communication and exchange of information on national and international initiatives and recommendations is essential.

OTHER

A space for other notes, findings, comments, etc.

PROJECT PROPOSAL (I WASN'T SURE WHERE TO PUT THIS, SO I HOPE IT IS CLEAR LIKE THIS - I HAVE ALSO ATTACHED THE DOCUMENT)

Study abroad and the creation of global citizens
American students in Europe post 9/11

Statement of Research Problem

Within the current global political and corporate climate, the US is in need of citizens that are sensitive to languages, traditions, religions, morals, and values of cultures other than their own. Perhaps the only way in which institutions can promote this sensitivity is by providing undergraduate students with the opportunity to study abroad for one or two semesters. Although time spent abroad is generally assumed to contribute to a person's insight and understanding of cultural differences, this is not necessarily the outcome. For example, Dolby (2004) observed that, in the case of American students in Australia in 2001, some students felt the need to "blindly embrace the policies of the state, as a way of identifying with the nation" (p 168) in defense of attacks on US national and international policies by Australians. One student explains how she and her roommate became a lot more patriotic when they came back (p 167). Despite well-intended efforts to send large numbers of students abroad for the purpose of creating "global citizens", relatively little is known about the ways in which this could best be achieved.

Pilot data gathered from UIUC in the spring 2005 indicate that "American insularity" not only forms an important reason to promote study abroad, but also complicates the integration into the host culture for American students who have had relatively little exposure to other countries, other cultures, and other languages. Current international politics and developments may very well further obstruct this process, as foreigners are often quick to confront the American with their opinions on issues such as the war in Iraq, which may create a somewhat hostile environment. Evaluations of study abroad programs seem to be limited to counting the numbers of students participating and their responses and suggestions after the experience. However, it is a much more complex exercise to link evaluations directly to the UIUC objective of "creating global citizens". A student's positive experiences abroad do not necessarily reflect an increase cultural awareness, while more intensive struggles and confrontations may initiate a thinking process that continues well beyond return to the home country.

Statement of Proposed Research

In the proposed study, I intend to question the assumed benefits of study abroad as defined by education administrators as well as by students themselves and their families.

Through participating in study abroad programs as an observer, I will examine the students' interactions with people from the host country and their associated responses. I will continuously evaluate their opinions and standpoints on the host culture as well as their own culture. The research will contribute to an understanding of how, in addition to cultural barriers, language and political barriers play a role in shaping the students' experiences. The main questions that will be addressed in this study are: Does study abroad help to create "global citizens"? What kind of experiences and emotions during and after the time abroad contribute or obstruct the "desired" end goal?

Site Selection

It will be especially interesting to contrast students' experiences in England and France for two reasons: language and politics. In this regard, England can be expected to be a more accessible and friendly environment, while the students may encounter more problems in France. British people are perhaps less likely to confront American students with problems related to US foreign politics, in specific the war in Iraq, or will do so in a less aggressive way, due to the fact that their own government has closely cooperated with the US in these matters. In addition, the students may be better able to engage in such discussions, as they are held in their native language.

On the other hand, the French government has strongly and actively opposed the US actions in Iraq, which may provide French citizens who are in support of their government's opposition with more legitimacy and confidence to confront Americans with their opinions. A student who spent the spring 2004 semester in France, and whom I interviewed as part of the pilot project, indicated that the French people she met would very quickly start a conversation about the war in Iraq. Emily consistently avoided such confrontations by replying that she was not interested in engaging in these conversations ("But I wouldn't give it to them.").

A comparative study of the students' experiences at these two sites will prove extremely valuable in gaining insight in how the certain barriers shape the students' perception of and sensitivity to other cultures. It is possible that, for some individual students, exactly such difficulties as those possibly encountered in France will make them better "global citizens", while an easier integration into British culture might limit the lessons learned. Despite all the difficulties she encountered in France, Emily is excited to travel again ("More than I ever did before.").

Methodology

The first three months of the study will be spent at UIUC to carry out interviews with employees at the Office of the Associate Provost of International Affairs, the Study Abroad Office, other campus study abroad initiatives, and past and future study abroad students and their families. Through these interviews, I intend to gather information on objectives, goals, and expectations for institutions and individuals, as well as on sources and requirements of scholarships and measures of evaluation of the study abroad program. Interviews with students who went abroad more than two years ago will provide insight into the more long-term effects of study abroad, such as for example a slow progress of cultural sensitivity that perhaps would not have been recognized directly after the event. In this way, I can complement the short-term data collection during the semester abroad. I will not only carry out individual interviews with the students, but also focus groups with them and their families. These focus groups will enhance my understanding of the students' backgrounds and their relationships with parents and siblings through analysis of the communication patterns between them, and it will provide a different setting in which new topics may be brought up and explored in different ways (Balshem, 1993: 39-45; Morgan, 1988: 1-17).

I intend to spend one semester with UIUC students in London and one semester in Paris and participate in classes, live in dorms or host families, in accordance with the students' choices, and participate in their social activities. I will carry out interviews and focus groups once halfway through the semester and once towards the end of the semester to monitor the progress of the students' integration into the culture and their thought processes over time. During interviews and focus groups, I will pay special attention to the ways the students formulate their stories and define problems or struggles (e.g. though the use of certain keywords, loaded terms, and hesitations in speech). Another exercise that will prove especially useful towards the end of the semesters is the mapping of "places of personal significance", which has been defined by Nelson (2000) as places of personal, emotional importance, symbolic, civic, cultural, or historical importance or useful, well-frequented places. I will ask every student to construct two lists of ten places each (one for London/Paris and one for Urbana-Champaign), ranked according with importance, including a short explanation as to why they chose that particular place. This exercise will provide insight into the students' integration into the host city and the variety of their activities, as compared to their home town.

Finally, I will apply a micro-demographic ethnographic analysis as defined by Duneier (1999: 369): mapping population distributions, looking for ways in which "demographic, cultural and political data can be complemented by studies of day-to-day life which show, rather than assume, how the system works." Concretely, this means that, in addition to participant observations, interviews, focus groups, and mapping exercises, I will also investigate the histories of the specific study abroad programs in London and Paris by gathering data on the communication between the guest and host universities, on major developments in the design of the programs, on housing options and host families, and on guidance and activities organized at the host university. These data will be extremely important in order to understand the larger framework in the host countries in which the students are received.

Ethics

The most important basis of this project will be the cooperation of the students, i.e. their willingness to tolerate me as a continuous observer and to participate in several rounds of interviews and focus groups with their families. Although the benefits for them will be minimal, I don't expect problems in recruiting participants. During the pilot study, I found that many students were available for interviews to talk about their experiences. Although this project will certainly be more intrusive, I expect a similar positive attitude. The names of individuals will be replaced by pseudo names, and information provided will be treated with much caution as to avoid revealing identities. I will allow the interviewees to view and respond to my analyses and I will be respectful of any complaints or suggestions.

As I have a Dutch nationality, as I am very familiar with British, French, and American cultures, and as I have spent considerable amount of time abroad for work and study, I expect that the students will find it easy to confide in me. However, I have to be careful to avoid that I lose my objectivity. Although I have the responsibility to help the students with serious problems wherever I can, my presence should not make their time abroad significantly different. Thus, I should limit my activities to participant observation as much as possible and use individual interviews and focus groups not too frequently during the semester. It is not unlikely that such sessions would contribute to the way the students process their experiences and thus might influence the results.

Significance

The proposed study will enhance the understanding of the dynamics and processes through which American students that spent a semester abroad become more sensitive to

other cultures. This is relevant not only for study abroad programs, their evaluations, and possible improvements, but also with regard to persistent stereotypes of Americans in other countries and the representative role of the students going abroad.

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