In Pursuit of Cultural Immersion: An Anthropological Look into American Students' Study Abroad Experience

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Abstract

Jessica Sarrantonio: In Pursuit of Cultural Immersion: An Anthropological Look into American Students' Study Abroad Experience

American students are now more than ever being encouraged to study abroad. Study abroad has been praised for increasing students' cultural sensitivity, and promoting personal, professional, and intellectual development. In the spring of 2011, I personally had the chance to participant in, analyze, and reflect upon what the American students' study abroad experience is all about. After three months during the summer in India, as a participant observer in a language intensive program, and three months during the fall in Australia, as a participant observer in Union College's Partners in Global Education, I have a unique personal and cultural understanding of what happens to American students when they study abroad.

Here the focus is on the concept of cultural immersion as it relates to American students while they are studying abroad. Cultural immersion, an expressed ideal of the majority of study abroad programs, is a multifaceted concept. A common misconception is that students can go abroad and effortlessly "get immersed" into the host culture. This attitude is detrimental to a successful immersion process. However, there are many options, whether through a homestay, participation in an organization, a peer tutor or as an individual observer, for students to actively begin and propagate their immersion into a host culture. Using interviews with my co-participants, participant observation, and my own experiences, I researched how, if at all, American students immerse into the host culture. I gained insight into how students prepared for studying abroad, what they expected to gain from their international experiences, what they did in their free time while abroad and with whom, and what it means to be living in a homestay while abroad.

Whether or not students are capable of immersing themselves into the host culture is dependant upon their ability to form routines and their own personal initiative to integrate; however, in the case of the two programs being investigated here, cultural immersion was not a function of the students' previous travel experience.

I suggest how students and administrators can make cultural immersion a more available and tangible benefit of the study abroad experience. One way to do this is to facilitate a pre-departure curriculum that will prepare students by balancing their logistical, academic, and cultural preparation. As well as pre-departure initiatives, students also will have to take more personal initiative while they are studying abroad. Students can pursue being in contact more often with locals than with their co-participants, and can avoid the tourist infrastructure that they are guaranteed to encounter during their time abroad. Among other initiatives, program administrators and staff should ensure all programs are structured in such a way that students can form a routine with in the host country.

Introduction

In 1961 the President of Pan American Airways, Juan T. Trippe, wrote that "now we are on the threshold of a new educational era which, for the first time, truly makes possible new horizons in education for a large number of students" (Gardner 1961: xiii). The new educational era was the expansion of American study abroad programs, which promised to make this global experience accessible to the masses. However, the *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* reported that in the 2008-2009 academic year, 260,327 American students studied abroad, an 8 % drop from the previous year, although the report also noted that students are choosing less traditional destinations.

In 2009, President Barack Obama told the world that there will be an expansion of exchange programs, and increased scholarships for American and foreign students alike. The U.S. Congress has recognized that more American students should have the opportunity to study abroad. One piece of legislation that has passed in the House of Representatives is called the Simon Study Abroad Act. One of the most far-reaching goals of this Act is that by 2017, one million U.S. students should be studying abroad (NAFSA). Additionally, the Act hopes to encourage a broader range of student participants, to increase the number of non-traditional destinations, and to encourage institutions of higher education to expand study abroad (NAFSA).

In the report, *The American Goes Abroad*, Donald Shank describes the diversity of study abroad programs. They differ widely in duration, academic content or focus, living arrangements, and participation in the culture. The participant of a study abroad program could be an undergraduate or graduate student, a student studying academic

majors from arts to zoology, a first time traveler or a seasoned international explorer, female or male, an English-only speaker or a multilingual. Such diversity on the part of the participants, only some of which are listed above, can impact the outcomes of the students' study abroad experience and ultimately their personal and/or intellectual development (McKeown, 2009; Gullahorn, 1966; Shank, 1961; Kauffmann, 1992).

Joshua S. McKeown, after completing extensive research on eight schools' study abroad programs, showed that international travel experience (a minimum of two weeks in length) prior to the study abroad is one of the determining factors of a student's intellectual development while on a term abroad (McKeown 2009:92). The instrument that he used was the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID) (McKeown 2009:53). However, "students for whom study abroad was their first meaningful international experience caught up to their more experienced peers after one semester abroad" (McKeown 2009:92). When McKeown says "caught up," he is referring to the students having the same amount of intellectual development, which he later defines as "the process of making meaning out of experience and confrontations with diversity, [which] occurs in interaction with the environment" (Perry, 1968 & King, 1990 in McKeown 2009: 111). McKeown notes the rapid increase in short-term programs (less than a semester abroad) and the need for research on the impact that these short-term programs have on students' experiences. Though an advocate of longer study abroad programs, McKeown concludes that a short study abroad is better than no study abroad at all because, for some students, this will lead to eye-opening experiences and ultimately intellectual development (McKeown 2009: 120). He remains convinced that the

participant's prior travel experience is clearly important when assessing the benefits of study abroad.

One study, which collected interviews and questionnaires from four hundred American students in France and from over five thousand Fulbright/Smith-Mundt grantees, found that "younger students who were unencumbered by the academic requirements involved in advanced dissertation research" scored high on an overseas interaction dimension (Gullahorn, 1966: 47). The overseas interaction is what students and faculty members who sojourn abroad define as "items denoting the depth, range, and frequency of interactions with host nationals" (Gullahorn, 1966: 47). While natural science majors struggled with overseas interaction, they were still the "most likely to establish and maintain collaborative work relationships with foreign professionals" (Gullahorn: 1966: 51). Perhaps day-to-day interactions with locals, such as in a work or laboratory setting, are an effective way for some people to immerse into a culture, as opposed to more individually-oriented research in a library or classroom. This also supports the idea that students should be encouraged while they are younger and perhaps earlier rather than later in college, to study abroad.

Gullahorn concludes that personal development and professional development are two alternative outcomes to study abroad (Gullahorn, 1966: 55). He found that students claiming to have experienced personal development were "less settled in adult roles and less committed to academic goals…in search of adventure and identity…represented…by females, by younger unmarried students who had just completed their bachelor's degrees, and by those who did not earn higher degrees subsequent to their studies overseas" (Gullahorn, 1966: 56). Those who said that study abroad furthered professional

development “were more settled into their adult patterns” and while they might have been more proficient in the local language, they did not necessarily interact a lot with foreign students abroad (Gullahorn, 1966: 56).

Some researchers believe that an important question to ask is “what do students say their motivations for study abroad are?” This is one of the topics that Joan Elias Gores discusses in *Dominant Beliefs and Alternative Voices: Discourse, Belief, and Gender in American Study Abroad (2005).* In one section of the book, Gores discusses the recent academic motives and experiences articulated by students for study abroad. She noted that “Improving academic performance and improving education, both clearly stated academic motives, ranked high in three of four program modes-a finding that describes an alternative to the dominant discourse” (Gores 2005:124). Gores discusses types of dominant beliefs about study abroad: study abroad as a grand tour, study abroad as an insignificant pursuit by wealthy women, and study abroad as offering a nonprofessional course of study inferior to American education. When study abroad is portrayed as a grand tour it is seen as a “personal experience designed not to gain purposeful knowledge so much as to gain social standing and enjoy private pleasure” (Gores 2005; 32). Gores explains that one of the roots and propagation points of the grand tour attitude toward study abroad was the Sorbonne model called the “Cours de Civilisation.” It set many precedents for the way study abroad functions today; that is, students are not expected to be fluent in the language of the host country, they are allowed to study abroad without direct enrollment and integration into a foreign institute, and students studying abroad were not held to the same academic expectations as their local peers (Gores 2005; 37). Making study abroad available to the masses appears to

require sacrifices on the study abroad programs' content and depth according to this argument.

Gores also discusses a study called the CIEE/Darden market study, which found that students ranked their primary reasons for studying abroad as "learning another language (37.7%), learning about another culture (31.2%), and gaining expertise in a specific discipline (11.9%)," while only 7.1 % of students identified recreation as a reason for studying abroad (Gores 2005: 124). There is a multiplicity of reasons for studying abroad, yet the question remains as to whether motivation has a significant impact on the students' immersion into the host culture. For example, a student who is studying abroad whose primary goal is to learn a language as opposed to one whose primary goal is recreational will probably engage in activities that are more effective at integrating them into the host culture.

One popular way to measure the impact of study abroad has been through the use of pre- and post- study abroad questionnaires. For example, using these methodologies, one study found that "…there is general consistency between what students hoped to learn about the host country and what they actually did learn" (Carlson, et al. 1990: 57). The group that they surveyed was composed of 148 study abroad students from the Universities of California, the University of Colorado, Kalamazoo College and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst with a comparison group of 153 non-study abroad students from the University of California and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. The study abroad students were participating in year-long programs at universities in France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom, and Sweden. The non-study abroad students were academically comparable to those students studying abroad,

in that, they met the grade point average and academic standing that would be required for admission to the study abroad programs. From this study, many significant findings about students' responses to study abroad and their attitudes toward cultural immersion emerged. For example, there was a positive relationship found between a low level of interaction with fellow American students and international learning; lack of problems experienced abroad; integration into the host culture, and strong academic performance (Carlson, et al. 1990: Preface, xii).

I will be employing the terms "success" and "successful" when discussing a students' study abroad experience. A successful study abroad experience has been described as one that changes the way a student perceives the host culture and the home culture (Kauffmann, 1992). How this perception changes (i.e. whether the student develops a more negative or positive perspective on the host country) varies from student to student. Success for the purpose of this research will be considered from two points of view. First, it will be measured through the student's own perception of his or her study abroad experience; that is, what they said that they gained from their experience, relative to what they expected to gain. Second, success will also be measured by examining the goals of the program, as defined by information given to students pre-program and in some cases mid-program, and whether these articulated goals were actually reached by students, as evaluated by the students. So if students were able to attain their stated goals as well as the goals described by the program, then this is considered successful.

George Gmelch discusses how several American students who studied in Barbados gained a deeper understanding about issues in their own culture (Gmelch, 2006). The lessons that they took from Barbados included, but are in no way limited to,

issues of race and social class, materialism and the general value of education. While describing what new perspectives students gain about being American while abroad, Gmelch shows that this development can be both intellectual and personal. For example, one student was at first very defensive about the criticisms and stereotypes that the Barbadians had about American culture, but after spending more time in Barbados, this student was able to understand these criticisms from the point of view of the local people (2006: 54). A deeper understanding of Barbadian culture can definitely be intellectual as well as personal and emotional. We can observe the student's personal development because of his behavioral changes; that is, instead of arguing back when hearing criticisms about America, he started to listen and realize that perhaps what the locals were saying was valid.

I am particularly interested in understanding how students react to their abroad experience by focusing on the students' level of immersion in the host culture. Immersion has been shown to be an essential element while learning a language (Ladd 1990; Gordon 2010). In fact, language-learning programs such as Rosetta Stone, list one of their key principles for learning a language as "immersion in that language." Jennifer Ladd, while receiving her Master's in Human Development, wrote her thesis about taking American college students to India (Leadership & Money Coach, 2008). Her account is unique in that she left her work as a kindergarten teacher to travel for six months with a program of predominantly twenty-year-old college students. In a personal account of her semester abroad in India, she speaks of, among other topics, the language-learning process. While discussing her study of Gujarati, Ladd notes how group discussion with her fellow students brought them into a conversation about "the realms of non-verbal

communication" or body language (Ladd, 1990: 40). Verbal language, though essential for understanding a culture, is not a holistic approach, as many details would be lost if one assumed that when learning the language one was learning about the entire culture. Culture, like language, is best learned through immersion. Thus a measure of students' cultural immersion can be seen in their knowledge and, most importantly, their increase in understanding of the culture.

The literature focuses on two ways of understanding immersion in the context of study abroad. The level of immersion achieved could be considered a function of the type of study abroad program (Goodwin & Nacht 1988; Engel & Engel, 2003). Goodwin and Nacht (1988) discuss how different program structures are analogous to a student deciding how to enter a stream of water.

1). A program can be "Total Immersion: plunging into midstream," where the most authentic experience is the goal, designed for the most competitive students (i.e. those who have a high GPA, language fluency, if applicable, and who are willing to sacrifice time by going on a lengthier program).

2). "Swimming in the eddies" is characterized as less strenuous than the total immersion program because of the shorter time period and because of the increased supervision, which can be good for the less adventuresome student.

3). A variant of "Swimming in the eddies" is "Staying by the pool," where students are in a special facility abroad that filters their experience with the host nation's higher education institutions, but "the primary focus of these programs is upon culture and artifacts of the region where they are located" (Goodwin & Nacht, 1988: 42).

4). “Paddling in the Shallow” programs can be separated into two types, both of which make little use of the local environment. The first is when an American institution establishes an extension of their campus in the foreign country, and there is no effort to get involved with local cultures. The second is what the authors describe as a “study tour,” where little to no preparation is required.

5). “Wind Sprints to the raft” programs are similar to the latter programs mentioned in that this type of program only lasts for a short period of time, but these programs have a clearly designed purpose, such as a business student exploring the workings of foreign corporations.

6). The “Row your own boat” program is where work experience, not higher education, is the entry point for the student into a culture (i.e. an internship).

In general these analogies tend to be based on a few components: extent of the involvement in the local environment, the degree to which the education received abroad is similar to the host country’s educational system, and, last, where and with whom students live and interact while they are not taking classes. Depending on the desired outcome of the program, each of these program types might be viewed as viable.

Another way to understand cultural immersion has been to classify the individuals’ level of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 2001). Milton J. Bennett created a continuum called the “Development of Intercultural Sensitivity.” This scale ranges from a Denial stage, which is considered the most ethnocentric stage, to Integration (Immersion), which is deemed the most ethnorelative stage. Along the stages of the scale, students have developmental tasks that they can and should be pushed to pursue. For example, the student who is studying abroad and who is in the denial stage should eventually be able to

recognize the existence of cultural differences. Engel and Engel (2007) assert that "at whatever departure point a student begins, the goal of overseas education could be summed up as movement as far as possible forward [toward Integration]" (7).

Engel and Engel (2003) offer their own extensive classification of culture-based program types that have a language-competence component. They believe that the most important factor in their classification is "the compatibility of program components, which [they] define as the degree to which these variables work together to favor thoughtful interaction with the host culture appropriate to the participant's goals and prior preparation" (2003: 8). A program can be the ideal situation for cultural immersion, but if the student has not put enough time into learning about the culture or the language before attempting immersion, a great homestay situation might not be maximized, or worse might become a negative experience. It is not enough to just consider an individual's development or the program's structure while evaluating study abroad. The concept of individual preparedness was mentioned in an interview that I completed with Professor William Thomas of Union College, who has over thirty years experience in facilitating the study abroad programs. When asked, "What are some ways that students can maximize their abroad experience?" he replied "They need to plan enough so they know what they want and how they are going to get it" (William Thomas, 2011). Preparation is essential. Students should have an idea of what their goals are for their international experience. These goals will probably change because of the program or because a student might realize he could exceed or could not attain these goals during the duration of the program.

Culture shock is the "emotional crash that occurs when one goes from high excitement and anticipation to confusion and depression when going abroad" (Gordon, 2010: 65). Culture shock has been shown to involve a four-step process: euphoria, disillusionment, hostility, and adaptation (Gordon, 2010). The euphoric stage is characterized as one that takes place before travel or during preparation. When first arriving in the host country, students may initially be disillusioned by the new sights, smells, and sounds that may not live up to their idealized expectations, but, as many scholars have pointed out, this unfamiliarity can soon turn to a dislike and hostility towards the host culture and perhaps the perceived need to revert back to one's own culture. Lara Atkins, the Director of International Programs at Union College, believes that culture shock is a part of every abroad experience, no matter how long or short. She believes that "there is a phase of depth and despair. This is part of the process of adapting, when students start questioning" (Lara Atkins, 2011). The final phase of culture shock, adaptation, is where the person starts to immerse him or herself in the culture and begins to feel at ease, if not absolutely "at home." In this current study, an individual's experience with culture shock was useful for assessing how participants were reacting and adjusting to the host culture.

In addition to culture shock, Gordon (2010) writes about two other ways that anthropologists understand what happens to travelers when they go abroad. He explains how travel has been understood in the context of a rite of passage. During a rite of passage, a person is first separated from normal routine. In the context of study abroad, this is the preparation phase, when a student starts to learn about the destination, spreads the word of his or her travel plans to family and friends, and ultimately has some type of

a farewell ritual. In the second stage the participant is "betwixt and between, neither here nor there" (Gordon 2010: 75). Victor Turner has called this stage liminal, where participants are "stripped of status and authority…and further leveled to a homogeneous social status" (Turner 1974: 10). During the liminal stage, the known structure is no longer present; instead the participants are said to be in a state of ambiguity, which eventually creates "a strong sense of intense oneness with others going through the same process," a feeling that Turner described as "communitas" (Gordon 2010: 75). This approach makes it easy to understand why students might bond with their fellow travelers and perhaps experience less of the host culture that they are trying or not trying to immerse into. I am uncertain if the bonding that takes place during the liminal stage is one that predominantly happens among a group of Americans going abroad, or between the Americans and the people in the host country (homestay families). Study abroad programs such as the two that I will be examining, have attributes that foster a relationship among the American participants as opposed to the programs that focus on the individual in the context of their host country. The former program types are likely to cause that intense oneness among Americans, not between the locals and the American student. The third stage of a rite of passage has been described as a reincorporation into the structured society that the individual had originally separated from. Whether the communitas happens among the Americans or between the Americans and the host locals will be a determining factor in the student's reincorporation experience (return to home country). The student may experience reverse culture shock if he or she became immersed during the study abroad experience. Unlike the student who could become immersed, the student who remained close with their fellow Americans (forming

communitas with these peers) will probably look forward to going home and might be anticipating their return home.

Moreover, Gordon touches on the idea of how "liminality is destabilized by modern communication technology" (2010: 81). George Gmelch recommended that to understand the level of a student's cultural immersion I should keep track of the amount of cell phone use, emailing, video chatting, and text messaging that goes on between my peers and their friends and family at home. Gordon explains the paradoxes of technological communication: "Connectivity has made people more autonomous but also more dependent" (2010: 116). There is no doubt of the advantages of electronic communication in travelling. Electronics can facilitate communication and help record observations, but users of all of these different technologies "…become oblivious to the teeming world around them, and that can be dangerous" (Gordon 2010: 118). Understanding how my peers are using technology to contact home and each other might be a gauge for how immersed they are in the host culture.

In addition, the cultural gap between travelers and hosts might be a factor in the students' immersion. As Gordon pointed out, "the greater the contrast in everyday cultural practices, the more difficult the passage and adaptation" is (Gordon 2010: 80). While level of immersion might be correlated to the extent of the cultural difference, Gordon also believes that power and socioeconomic inequality have a larger impact on the interaction between the traveler and the host. Power might be prevalent if a student decides he or she does not like his or her homestay situation. There is no doubt that power, and socioeconomic inequality, can act as a dynamic in the homestay.

Craig Storti in *The Art of Crossing Cultures* makes important distinctions in the discourse used to talk about international experiences. For example, he distinguishes between *culture* shock and *country* shock. Adjusting to differences in climate, forms of communication and transportation, and health conditions, as well as isolation are all what Storti considers as part of the country shock. Storti defines culture as "a system of beliefs and values shared by a particular group of people…[that] is an abstraction which can be appreciated intellectually, but it is a behavior…which we must learn to live with" (1990: 14). My study requires experiencing and observing large amounts of country shock, but more importantly I hope to understand the culture shock that my peers and I may or may experience and to which we may have varying levels of adaptative success.

I have been struggling to understand if there is a difference between immersion and adaptation or adjustment. Storti offers an explanation for two types of adjustment: "we have to adjust or get used to behavior on the part of the local people which annoys, confuses, or otherwise unsettles us; and we have to adjust our own behavior so that it does not annoy, confuse or otherwise unsettle the local people" (Storti 1990: 15). Through looking at these as types of adjustment, I also found it helpful to look at the former (Type 1) as an adaptation, and the latter (Type 2) as immersion. Moreover, Storti explains that just knowing, whether from reading or watching films, that people of different cultures behave differently still allows the expatriate to assume that he is similar (in thought and behavior) to the locals in the foreign place he is traveling (1990: 50). It is through life experience of cultural differences that we begin to expect people to behave differently from us. These experiences provide insight into the culture and ultimately a key into how one can assimilate, simulate, and finally immerse.

Carlson et al. asked, “What aspects of the individual and/or the sojourn contribute to variation in the changes observed?” (1990: 75). To answer this question, the researchers investigated fifteen variables that define differences among sojourners: gender, travel while abroad, and self-efficacy are a few of them. Then researchers looked at six variables related to the sojourn itself: location of study abroad, time spent with Americans, time spent with host country nationals, time spent with other countries’ nationals, level of integration into the host country university, and level of “worthwhileness” to study abroad (1990: 77). “Worthwhileness” of the study abroad was “assessed by a 13-item omnibus question that asked the sojourners to indicate on a 5-point scale whether the experience was “extremely worthwhile” (1) or “not at all worthwhile” (5)” (1990: 84). Some of the 13-items, included, “career prospects,” foreign language proficiency,” perspective on your home country,” and “perspectives gained on your own future life.” Using these variables, the authors were able to analyze change in language proficiency, overall satisfaction with study abroad, integration into the host institution, change in knowledge about the host country, the “worthwhileness” of study abroad, and academic and integration/lifestyle problems. The study found that for language proficiency one of the most important sojourn factors for change was a student’s integration into the host country university. This factor is mostly controlled by the structure of the program. Are the students attending a university or are they enrolled in a special, stand-alone institute catering to the hosts’ perceived needs of Americans? Yet, there are factors that the individual has control of; such as what they do with their free time if they are enrolled at a University.

Since I am interested in looking at students' ability to adjust to their new environment, the results about students' integration into the host institution and culture are most pertinent. Out of five sojourn variables, only one independent variable was found to be significantly contributing to their integration: "Where the student lived while abroad" (Carlson et al. 1990:82). Most importantly, the results also suggested "living in dormitory situations while abroad contributes significantly to the sojourners' integration into the host University and culture" (1990:83). Integration is analogous to immersion and this finding is significant as it relates to the current research.

Another study that has been cited in much of the literature about study abroad is the Study Abroad Evaluation Project (Opper, et al. 1990). This study is unique in that it undertakes a cross-cultural comparison of programs offered in different host countries including the UK, France, Germany, Sweden, and the United States. Not surprisingly, the researchers reported their findings in two sections: the first detailing the recruitment, structure, curriculum, and funding of the programs and the second focusing on the responses of the participants to these programs. Responses to questionnaire items provided the data for both of these aspects. The participants responded to a pre- and post-study abroad questionnaire, a strategy that the authors say "made it possible to observe changes in self-ratings of academic competence, foreign language proficiency, knowledge of their study abroad host country and the students' international interests" (Opper et al. 1990: 12). One of the findings of this research was in the students' opinions about the culture and society of the host and home countries. The authors found that changes in these opinions during the study abroad experience were minimal (1990:122).

Edward E. Morgan assessed individuals' adaptation by focusing on learning and development using interviews and observations of students adapting in a cross-cultural context (Morgan 1975: 209). He found that there are two extreme types of individual: the cultural relativists and the cultural opposites, who "adapted differently to the cross-cultural experience in relation to the kind of learning experience it became" (1975: 209). Someone who is a cultural relativist is characterized as one who will ultimately learn more through his or her experiences. Contrastingly, the cultural opposite might begin to have an "intense nostalgia for home," soon becoming closer to the peers with whom he or she is travelling. These are two very different types of adaptation, and this assessment will be helpful for understanding types of immersion or lack of immersion on the level of the individual. One major discovery of this research was that merely sending students to a foreign country does not mean the student will have a culturally diverse experience; rather, much of this experience has to be initiated by the student (1990:214).

In their discussion about the increasing acceptance of short-term study abroad programs, that is, those less than a semester or quarter long, Chieffa and Griffith, explain that while they advocate long term study abroad, defined as a semester or more, there are benefits to short term study abroad programs. These benefits include the fact that those students who normally cannot study abroad due to a rigorous and/or highly structured academic course-load can still have an international experience, those students who have little or no travel abroad experience can get a brief taste of study abroad before committing to a long term program, and those students who are emotionally unable to handle a long term study abroad can commit to a shorter period abroad (Chieffa & Griffith 2009: 366). Though Chieffa and Griffith note the indisputable trade-offs of a

short-term study abroad versus a long-term study abroad program, such as less chance for cultural immersion, they also note that short-term study abroad is better than no study abroad at all (Chieffa & Griffith 2009: 366). Among just some of their evidence was a large study completed at the University of Delaware. The study compared 1,509 students who took a course while studying abroad, and 827 students who took a similar course while on an American campus. After the courses ended (one month) students were asked to reflect and answer questions about "their perceived changes in globally related attitudes and knowledge, as well as their frequency of engagement in globally related activities" (Chieffa & Griffith 2009: 373). The study found that those abroad were thinking more about different national and cultural perspectives (Chieffa & Griffith 2009: 373), evidence that short-term study abroad can be effective.

I have heard professors talk about the importance of study abroad; likewise, I have spoken with several of my peers about their amazing study abroad experiences. During the summer and fall, 2011, I had the personal opportunity to understand the benefits of studying abroad. While participating in two comparable programs, one in India and one in Australia, I gained a better understanding of students' reactions to studying abroad. In particular I focused on the students' interest in and ability to immerse into a foreign culture.

Much research has focused on students' responses pre-departure and post-program, but much less literature is available about what happens to students throughout their international experience. My research methods gave me a first-hand perspective of what happens to American students when they go abroad, first in a country with a drastically different culture and then in a country that is similar to the United States, and

through two very different programs. I was able to see if the ideal of cultural immersion while abroad is something that participants actually pursued and how participants tried to immerse themselves into the host countries. Cultural immersion is not something that just happened while participants were abroad, but instead was something that they needed to actively pursue.

Since study abroad is a multifaceted concept, I need multiple perspectives to truly understand what happens to a student when he or she is studying abroad. It is important for me to incorporate the students' perspective of their study abroad, my perspective of my study abroad experience, and my observations of my peers. Both of the study abroad programs had an academic component that was an important part of the experience. Placing the group of students in a broader context is essential, that is how are these groups similar to, different from, better or worse than past groups. Therefore, having the perspective of an administrator or faculty member, who has interacted with past groups and who understands if this group is extraordinary or just ordinary, will also help me understand what aspects define success.

Methods of the Research

Critical Language Scholarship: The Program and the City

It is essential to have a general understanding of the comparability of the two different programs and countries in which participants were studying. The Critical Language Scholarship (CLS), a program which sends American students abroad to learn a foreign language, is funded by the U.S. Department of State. The goals of the program are twofold: language acquisition and cultural immersion. Teachers and staff at the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) run this program the goal of which is that students learn Hindi. Weekdays from 9am to 1pm were spent learning Hindi. There was a pre-departure orientation in Washington D.C. where students in all of the language groups in India (Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, and Bengali) met and learned more about the program (from the perspective of the CLS administrators) and about their accommodations in the host country. During orientation, the CLS administrators emphasized the importance of continuation of study after the program time and encouraged students to use ExchangesConnect, an international social network, whose goal is to help them meet alumni of the program and stay up-to-date on other international opportunities. In addition to the time spent in the classroom, participants were required to spend two hours a week with peer tutors, who helped them speak and ultimately learn Hindi. Participants also had a weeklong midterm break, which was time in which they were capable of choosing what to do with this free time.

In Delhi and Jaipur there was a three-day orientation that the teachers and staff from AIIS facilitated. This was not only an introduction to India, but to the institute where we studied. During our time in Delhi we were still in a larger group of sixty

students, but eventually we travelled to our respective locations, with twenty-seven participants going to AIIS in Jaipur. Of these twenty-seven students, four were men and the rest were women. Students, once settled into their homestays, were placed in one of three language sections depending on their level of language proficiency: Beginner, Intermediate, or Advanced. Some students knew exactly where they were going to be placed. I felt I could easily be placed in beginner or in intermediate, but definitely not in advanced.

India is known to be filled with paradoxes: although media, and the news have reported that India is a booming economy (Hiscock, 2010), much of India still lives in poverty. Indeed, the Hindu-based caste system, which was abolished by the Indian government, and the caste inequalities that come with the system are still ubiquitous in India. Most of India is made up of Hindus, approximately twenty percent of the population are Muslims, and there are many other religions practiced such as Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Christianity. India is a linguistically diverse country. Though there are multiple regional languages and dialects, Hindi, a language that is written in the Devangari script, is the official language of India. However, because of British rule over India until 1947, English has become a functional language that the government also recognizes as an official language (Kolanad year: 233).

Jaipur is the largest city and capital in Rajasthan, a Northwestern state of India that borders Pakistan. Jaipur has been described as a "territory …still sustained by memories of a feudal past that is kept alive by its splendid architectural remains and deep-rooted traditional culture" (Eyewitness travel year: 179). Here one can see the

history of Indian society come to life in the architecture. I stayed with an Indian family and I studied Hindi in this city.

Partners in Global Education: The Program and the City

Partnership for Global Education (PGE) was created in 1999. The main goal of the program, as stated on the Hobart and William Smith College website, is "to explore the benefits of a consortial relationship in providing consistent, efficient, and high quality study abroad programs, and innovate new and better ways to integrate study abroad into the academic and social fabric of campus life" (About PGE). This is a joint program run by Hobart and William Smith Colleges and Union College, so many of the students met for the first time at the Los Angeles International Airport. We studied at the University of Queensland (UQ) in Brisbane, Australia. This study abroad program sponsors four excursions throughout the eleven-week time period, including North Stradbroke Island, Carnarvon Gorge, Heron Island, and Lamington National Park. At UQ the courses we took were called Australian Terrestrial Ecology, Marine Biology, Australian Culture, and Geology. Of the four courses, except for the geology course, Australian professors were the lecturers. There was a weeklong break at the end of the final exam week (week 11), when students chose whatever they wanted to do, and finally there were two weeks spent touring New Zealand for the completion of the geology course.

Though there was no official pre-departure orientation, there were two meetings during the spring term prior to the start of the program. The first week of the program students were on North Stradbroke Island where they became acquainted with each other and were introduced to "the local environment and…[attended orientation to] understand logistical arrangements with UQ". (A Student's Guide to Study Abroad in Queensland

2011: 6). Participants were settled into their homestays the second week of the program. The PGE website explains how the program is not only modeled to well prepare the students for their study abroad, but also promotes reflection after the study abroad through initiatives like The Aleph, a journal to which students are encouraged to submit poetry, photography, and journal entries about their experience abroad.

Brisbane, which is located on the east coast of Australia and is the third largest city, behind Sydney and Melbourne. Australia, unlike India, is a young country whose history is embedded in its convict past. Like America, Australia is a multicultural nation, with a lot of its modern migrants coming from Asia. Though the majority of Australia is arid, flat land, most of the population resides in the large metropolises on the shores. Australian English is the national language and is widely spoken throughout Australia.

Goodwin and Nacht: Aquatic Alternatives Analogy

To better understand both of the programs relative to each other utilizing Goodwin and Nacht's aquatic alternatives analogies is helpful. As previously explained, the most intensive form of study abroad is plunging into midstream (total immersion). These types of programs are characterized as having the "strongest and most fit" participants. The CLS participants were chosen from a competitive group of Americans while the PGE participants were chosen from competitive groups from both contributing colleges. Both had "the strongest and most fit" students going abroad in the applicant pools. Regardless of the fact that these programs would both be considered too short for total immersion, these programs also do not fit into the plunging into midstream category because both host institutions amended their ways to suite the American needs. For example, in the Australia study abroad programs, the other groups of Americans who go

do not necessarily have an American faculty member on board. In fact, the administrators at the University of Queensland said that the program can function perfectly well without the American faculty members. The Geology course is not a part of the set program that the University of Queensland facilitates and therefore the PGE program cannot be considered a total immersion program. The CLS program cannot be considered a total immersion program either because the faculty at the institute was teaching especially to the needs of the Americans, and school itself is actually an American Institute overseas. The American Institute of Indian Study's headquarters are at the University of Chicago in the United States, but in India it is based in Gurgaon. The Institute, where the Critical Language Scholars (CLS) studied, was a regional location (Jaipur, Rajasthan). Goodwin and Nacht profess that if a program utilizes an overseas campus of an American university, which is essentially what AIIS is, it is therefore classified as "staying in the pool." Yet the participants were not completely "staying in the pool" because the teachers were Indian, not American, and the Indian teachers designed the curriculum.

Moving from total immersion the next program type is the type of program identified as "swimming in the eddies." Participants in these programs are placed in programs or schools for foreigners abroad. The American Institute of Indian Studies is specifically for American students. Though UQ is located in Brisbane, it is an internationalizing University with a large portion if its undergraduates being international students. Yet the Americans' exposure to UQ was very limited to the International Programs office, the lecture hall, and perhaps one or two other buildings that we utilized to take exams. PGE participants had an advantage over CLS participants because they did have Australian students, faculty, and staff around them while they were at UQ, unlike

the CLS participants who were predominantly surrounded by Americans while they were at the institute. Like the "swimming in the eddies" program that Goodwin and Nacht explained, the CLS program is focused on language and cultural learning and is an intensive summer course. The PGE program certainly had two major cultural facets, the homestay and the Australian Culture course, but these seemed secondary to the education we were receiving about marine biology and terrestrial ecology. For example, of the four excursions, two focused on the marine biology of Australia and two focused on the terrestrial ecology. On one of the excursions our Australian Studies professor joined us and spattered us with facts about the aboriginals at Carnarvon Gorge. In this aspect the PGE program was like a study tour because of the group travel that took place. Ultimately the CLS program can be classified as a "swimming in the eddies" program and the PGE program has aspects of both a "swimming in the eddies" program and a "study tour."

Students, like anthropologists, naturally utilize the methods of participant observation and interviewing to better understand a culture (Laubscher 1994). Through my own knowledge and use of these anthropological techniques**,** I observed whether my peers actually had personal interactions with locals and to what extent these interactions took place. Since, these are the methods that anthropologists use to learn and ultimately immerse themselves into the cultures that they are studying, observing this type of behavior in a student who is studying abroad will also be a useful way to understand how immersed a student is within a particular culture. Laubscher notes the risk of students making overgeneralizations about the people they are interacting with because, in the

short period of time that students spend abroad, it is hard to make a deep personal connection with these locals (Laubscher 1994: 104).

Participant observation is an anthropologist's best friend. It is the best, if not the only, way to learn about the natives without completely "going native" on the one hand and remaining a distant outsider observer on the other. While an anthropologist participates in native work, play, and everyday living and responding to the world, he or she has a panoramic view of what it is to be native. In the case of this research, the "view" is not one that I will necessarily have to attain through rapport building; rather, it is one that I already have because of my status as a participant in both of the programs. I was not only a participant in both of these study abroad programs, I was also an observing participant. The challenge for me was maintaining my participant status among my peers. Since, I had to tell the people who I interviewed that they were part of my research, it was a top priority that I maintain a healthy peer-to-peer dynamic and hopefully not be seen by my peers as purely a researcher.

As an observing participant, I was able to capture the experience of students during their study abroad program, using my own observations as well as those of my peers. Everyday conversations and experiences are significant sources of information. Timing is also very important, as I did not want to wait until late in the program to get to know my peers. As I observed, I carefully recorded my peers' adaptation to their new cultural environments, while preserving their anonymity. These observations helped me understand the changes, or lack thereof, that the students went through.

Conversations with my fellow participants allowed me to gauge how much, and more importantly what type of preparation they undertook for their international

experience. Predeparture programs “give students the background…that allow them to create a much more enriching experience from their time abroad” (Lantis and Duplaga 2010: 41). Additionally it was interesting to see what personal initiative students took to learn about their host-country prior to arrival and the impact that such preparation ultimately had on their experience. For example, if a student were studying at a local institution, perhaps he or she looked into different organizations available at the institution and became involved with these. Or it could be as simple as purchasing a travel guide that helped to lay a basic cultural/historical understanding of the country that the student was about to walk into.

Besides having a full understanding of what changes my peers went through, a lot of my data are my own responses to my experiences. Proper reflection has been shown to enhance what students “get out of their international experience” (Lantis 2010: 41; Interview with George Gmelch). Jeffery S. Lantis and Jessica DuPlaga in their *Essential Guide to Study Abroad* provide a worksheet on questions for reflection that include the categories personal identity, cultural identity, vocational development, and global citizenship (2010: 122). My own reflections allowed me to understand the changes that I went through and from my own change I thought of additional questions to ask my peers.

The rapid succession of my travel to India followed almost immediately by the trip to Australia has an important influence on how I changed throughout my six months abroad. For example, it is possible that after being in a language intensive and cultural immersion program for three months in Jaipur, that I had more of an expectation for how my peers in Australia would behave. That is perhaps I set the bar higher for my peers in Australia. As I will later explain I went through severe culture shock while studying

abroad in India. Not only did this make me question my reasons for going to India, but it also made me extremely homesick. There is no doubt that I left India with a different mindset than when I arrived. Perhaps I was more mature, more appreciative of my family and the niceties that I have in America, and certainly more understanding of what makes India, well India. I also became more aware of myself, that is, there are limits to my comfort zone, some days I felt like pushing these limits and other days I did not. Going into Australia I was more confident in dealing with situations on my own, which may have set me a part from some of my peers, who still did not feel comfortable doing this.

One way of understanding this is to consider how my perspective would be different if I had participated in the PGE study abroad to Australia before I had participated in the CLS study abroad to India. When I reflect on both of the study abroad experiences I identify India as the one that really tested my patience and the limits of my comfort zone. An important distinction is between India testing me, and the CLS program testing me. Both the CLS and PGE programs challenged me academically: CLS with Hindi and PGE with the courses. But when it comes to the actual country and its corresponding culture, India constantly forced me out of my comfort zone. If I would have gone to Australia before I went to India it is possible that I would have gone to India with confidence (that is being a semi-experienced traveler), but soon found out that my comfort zone was not tested in Australia in such a way that it prepared me for India. When reflecting on both of my homestay experiences, I feel that I made meaningful connections in both, but certainly I learned how to be in a homestay when I was in India, that is, I had to actually spend time in my homestay to get to know and bond with my family. Before meeting my homestay family in India I was extremely nervous and I

wanted to make everything go as smoothly as possible. I was a little nervous about meeting my Australian homestay, but I had been through so many awkward situations with my Indian homestay family that I was much less concerned about offending anyone.

Objectivity, or existing without bias and emotion, is the perception that anyone doing research strives for, but it is unfortunately the perception that is impossible to attain. This thesis is no exception, I was not the same person when I returned from India nor was I the same person when I returned from Australia.

Another aspect that I found challenging was not being over critical of my peers while observing their behavior. Though I was one of the group, I certainly had my expectation for what students should be doing while studying abroad. Most of the time I was able to understand why my peers were doing what they were doing, whether or not I approved of it. But there were a few occasions when I thought my peers were being out right disrespectful, lazy, and inflexible. Therefore, if my writing comes off as overly critical, or even contemptuous, then it is not an accident; it is a reminder that I am biased.

David M. Fetterman (2010) explains in his guide to ethnography different interviewing techniques. Since one of my main objectives was to remain a participant in the eyes of my co-participants while understanding the process of entering a country through a study abroad program, informal interviews were useful for attaining information from my co-participants while maintaining my peer-to-peer relationships.

I was uncertain of the set up of both programs prior to departure; therefore, I did not have a method for selecting participants until I was in the host countries taking classes. At AIIS, once the group of twenty-seven was split up by proficiency level, there were seven beginners, nine intermediates and eleven advanced students. Since I was

placed in intermediate, I realized that most of my time (in the classroom) would be with mainly eight other participants. Informal interviews were completed with all eight students in the intermediate group. All participants in the beginner group were also interviewed during the ten weeks in India. Most of the interviews were more structured in that individuals were interviewed once in the beginning (within the first 5 weeks) and once in the end (or in some cases post-program via email), but out of the intermediates two of the participants were only interviewed once due to time constraints. Of the eleven advanced students, five were informally interviewed once and the rest were not interviewed. This was again due to time constraints.

At UQ thirty-one participants took four classes together as one group. Of those thirty-one participants, fourteen were from Hobart and William Smith College (HWS) and seventeen were from Union College. Six of the participants were men and the rest were women. Eighteen students (four men and fourteen women) were given the more formal structured interviews with one interview within the first six weeks of the program and a second interview in the last six weeks of the program. Of these eighteen students, ten were from Union College and eight were from HWS. The approximately even number of students from each institution was not a coincidence as I utilized judgment sampling to select these students. I did not want to bias my data by only having interviews from students from one institution. Going into this program I only had a prior social relationship with one other participating student. I knew of some of the other people from Union, but did not know any of the Hobart and William Smith students. As I observed the different subgroups forming within our group of thirty-one, I did my best to talk to and interview students from not only my subgroup, but the other sub-groups as

well. With that being said, many, but not most, of my interviews were with peers whom I would identify as part of my sub-group. As each sub-group had its own behaviors and patterns, my results may be biased toward my sub-group. There were no clear differences between the sub-groups that formed though one seemed to be mostly made up of Union students, another one mostly of Hobart students, and mine, a mix of students from both colleges. Yet many times there was overlap between the groups and I did not observe any behavioral differences between them. Three other interviews were also conducted but were only one session because of time constraints.

Though I was nervous at the start of both programs, as to how my peers would react toward me interviewing them about their experiences abroad, I found that in general students were receptive when I informed them of my research. During conversations about classes, excursions, etc., I would ask a student how his or her experience had been so far. I would then inform the student (in most cases the students already knew as he or she heard me interviewing our peers) that I was conducting my senior thesis research on students' cultural immersion and experiences while abroad. I continued to explain that I would greatly appreciate it if they would tell me more about their experiences. Sometimes this would instantly lead to an interview, but other times I would have to remind my peers that I would like to interview them. After all the interviews were complete, I had students sign consent forms (Appendix C) that ensured me that they had an understanding of why I had interviewed them and gave them an option to keep their anonymity.

Prior to departure I created a list of questions that my research taught me would be essential questions to understand what it was my peers and I would be going through

(Appendix A). This list was split into two parts, the first for "Early Program," and the second "Late Program." In Jaipur, I decided to read over the "Early Program" interviews before I completed the "Late Program" interviews. This was not part of what I intended to do prior to departure, but I was thinking it would not hurt to review what I had heard from each individual before interviewing him or her a second time. Additionally, I found it helpful in the case that there were facts that I needed to clarify. It was between week 4 and week 5 of the program when I started to ask myself questions, mostly because I was questioning my own reason for being in the program. These questions (in Appendix B) are focused around four areas: language and cultural learning, relationships formed with locals, students' feelings about their return to the US, and their feelings about foreigners they encountered. In Brisbane, I found myself with less time, and though I started reviewing the "Early Program" interviews, I stopped after reading through two of them as new questions were not coming to mind anyway. With that being said, all of the questions in the "Late Program" interviews were the same as they appear in Appendix A.

Ideally I would have interviewed all of my informants in the first three weeks, and then interviewed them again in the last two weeks. In reality, my "Early Program" interviews in Jaipur spanned week one to week five of the ten-week program. Also my "Late Program" interviews spanned mid-program (week five) to post program interviews. During the first week of the Jaipur program, I was admitted into the hospital for health reasons (dehydration and a bad coconut). Though this may have disrupted some of my early interviews, as my health slowly improved, it also gave me a perspective on what many of my other peers were going through or would soon experience (illness while abroad). During orientation the CLS staff warned us that it was not a matter of if you

would go to the hospital, but when you would go to the hospital. Though I kept this in mind, nothing could have prepared me for my experience in that Jaipur hospital.

Likewise, in Australia reality struck when I was unable to complete any interviews until my second week in the program because the first week of the program was spent on North Stradbroke Island, where we were conducting research in Marine Biology and time was not on my side. These "Early Program" interviews continued until week six of this thirteen-week program. The "Late Program" interviews were from week seven to week thirteen. Any interviews that were completed in weeks twelve or thirteen were held during the New Zealand portion of the program. These were the two weeks just after our final break, when students were no longer required to participate in a homestay and instead we were on a geological tour of the North and South Islands of New Zealand.

Usually when anthropologists speak of immersing into a culture, they are referring to the culture they are writing an ethnography about. Many times this is a non-Western culture that to the reader may seem exotic. A struggle that I encountered during both of my international experiences was the balance between immersion into the host country (i.e. India and Australia) and immersion into the study abroad programs (i.e. CLS and PGE, respectively). The latter is a concern that I could confidently say my peers were not thinking about. This struggle is telling in that one would expect a program that promises cultural immersion to be in harmony with the host country culture, not necessarily with the subculture of a group of American students.

Student Preparedness

"Oh boy. They have got to hit the ground running. They need to plan enough so they know what they want and how they are going to get it…then they are off and running. Going traveling is not the best reason to do this. Most of our students know what they want and how to go for it."

William Thomas, Former Director of Union College's International Programs (March, 2011)

The first phase of any study abroad program is pre-departure planning and preparing. What students do in their preparation for their program is defined by their personal interests and by the requirements of the program. This was true in the case of the PGE and the CLS programs. Some of the pre-departure plans were already explained, such as the PGE program reminding us of The Aleph, a student publication of stories, and pictures from their study abroad experiences, to which we would all have the opportunity to contribute post-program.

How else were students required or encouraged to prepare for these international endeavors? Occasionally, reminders from the CLS administrators would urge us to use our pre-departure time wisely, to study Hindi and to make sure all appropriate travel documents were in order. Staff from the Union College International Programs office would also send out emails reminding students of the deadlines for paperwork.

At Union, students attended two mandatory meetings during which the logistics of going to Australia were explained. The Director of International Programs, Lara Atkins, and the two program faculty members from Union College who would be attending the program with the students as well as teaching a joint class in geology, facilitated this meeting. Lara Atkins discussed culture shock and reminded students not to carry too much cash, as students in the past have had money stolen. Most of the students' concerns

centered on whether their cell phones would work and the kind of internet access that they would have. Lara Atkins also asked the students what their expectations were and whether they had set any goals for themselves. How would they like their study abroad experience to affect their professional and personal growth? Why do they want to go on this program? What is their greatest fear or challenge about this program? And, What are they doing to prepare for it? I knew that these were important questions to be asking myself, but I wondered how much my peers had thought about them. Though thinking about goal setting sounded important at the time, Australia was still fifteen weeks away. Though I thought of things that I wanted to do, I did not set specific goals until much closer to the departure. Soon after our mandatory meeting, we received a link to a blog from the two faculty members, which they said they would update weekly, and students were welcomed to share the blog with their family and friends.

Students were also encouraged to blog individually, but if they wanted the blog to be associated with Union College they had to fill out a contract that said " [blog] post should be oriented around the excitement of studying abroad" including cultural differences that students were encountering and challenges that they were facing ("Union College Blogging Contract, Guidelines and Tips"). Some students were blogging, but not through the Union College site, just through their own blogs. CLS participants also had guidelines that they had to follow if they planned on keeping a blog about what happens to them during the scholarship period. In general, CLS participants, were more consistent with their blogging, though a few, myself included, found lack of time to be an issue and eventually stopped blogging altogether.

To gauge students' preparedness for the program I asked them "What have you done to prepare for this international experience?" Responses to this question were grouped into the following categories: inquiry into host culture or program, took a course, purchased and packed, planned travel logistics, mental preparation, previous travel experience, physical preparation, financial preparation, and nothing.

Students' preparation for the program offers insight into their attitudes toward the program in which they are participating. The category called "inquiry into to the host country or the program" included activities such as reading the material provided by the respective programs or reading anything that informed the student, watching a film about or from the host country, and talking to people who had been to the host country before (whether in the same program or not). Fifty-seven percent of CLS participants said that they somehow inquired about the host country and forty-four percent of the PGE participants said the same. Additionally, fifty-seven percent of the CLS participants said that they studied or took courses to prepare, while only one of the PGE participants said that she took a course prior to departure (a scuba diving course). All of these results are alarming when considering how students should be preparing, that is "they need to hit the ground running" (William Thomas, March 2012). Though the majority of CLS participants, and a little less than the majority of PGE participants, took personal initiative to learn more about the host country or program, this is not enough. When considering how students might spend time preparing for an international endeavor, these results seem to indicate that some students are traveling to experience the "grand tour" and not in search of a richer cross-cultural knowledge.

In the chapter titled "*Almost There: Preparing to Study Abroad"*, Lantis and Duplaga (2010:3) discuss how preparation is multifaceted. In their opinion, preparation for study abroad should include setting academic objectives, practicing cross-cultural communication, making connections with the host culture, contacting alumni of program and other international students on the home campus, attending pre-departure orientations, researching about the host country, reflecting on one's goals and expectations of the experience, planning health and safety practices, crisis and emergency responses, and planning communication with one's family (2010: 36-53). This is a lot to think about and fortunately I felt that in both programs, facilitators were ready and willing to answer any questions that we had, but all that was required of the participants (post-acceptance into the programs) was the paperwork that we filled out for liability matters, the medical paper work, paying the deposit (in the case of Australia), and completing the goals that we created for CLS. Otherwise all other pre-departure endeavors were solely up to the participant, which in many cases requires personal initiative. Certainly participants need to have some autonomy when deciding what they should do to prepare, the program is what they make of it, but program administrators and facilitators can and should require academic and cultural preparation besides the paperwork and logistics that are necessary.

In the CLS program, the students, because of program requirements, had to know a lot about India just to be selected for the program. There was an extensive application, whereas PGE students had a less extensive application. The CLS applicants had to describe what personal initiatives they took to learn Hindi or about the host culture prior to applying for the program. They had to have two recommendations and needed to show

their ability to handle academic rigor by sending in their transcript. Applicants had three essays that they were to write, and each essay question had a theme: the participants' reason for applying and how the target language and culture related to academic and professional goals, the participants' experience working and interacting with people of diverse backgrounds and their ability to be flexible, and finally how the participants planned to continue to use their acquired language after the scholarship period.

Students who earn a Critical Language Scholarship are expected to use their language skills in their professional life: an assumption that is not at all present in the PGE program. The PGE application affords insight into what the program administrators were looking for in the applicants. Similarly, the questions students had to answer in their essay each had a theme: in what way the students' participation in the PGE program related to academic goals, the students' qualifications to participate, and in what ways the students thought they were well-prepared to live in a different culture. Both programs wanted the participants' experience to be related to either their academic or professional goals. It is not surprising that one of the CLS essay questions focused on the ability to work with other people (Americans) because it is, after all, a group language intensive program. Despite the fact that a lot of time was spent in a group throughout the entire PGE program, the ability to work in a group, surprisingly, did not seem to be a concern to those who created the application. PGE applicants were asked to identify what made them well prepared to live in a different culture, and though this question was not explicitly asked of the CLS applicants, other parts of the application inquired about students' past experience in other foreign countries as well as India. In general, administrators and facilitators from both programs were looking for participants who had

the understanding and maturity to study and live in a foreign country. To get a solid understanding of applicants' ability and desire to immerse into the culture, perhaps a question about how they planned to do so if they got accepted into the program would be beneficial.

It is clear that knowing the basics about a country, such as some of the politics and culture, is critical for how students will perceive what they are seeing and experiencing in the host country, but this knowledge is also critical for students to be ambassadors (Lantis and Duplaga, 2010: 44). When an American student goes abroad, he or she is likely to hear praise and criticism about the U.S. Locals will ask students questions; explaining one's opinions about America and the host country to a local can be challenging. Therefore, sending students abroad who have little to no idea about the host country's politics and culture, or even little depth of knowledge of their own country's politics and culture, will negatively impact the perceptions that foreigners have about America and its higher education system.

When asked what he hopes students gain from the program, the Australian manager and marketer of the PGE program said "I actually want them to become one with Australia" (Manager, 2011). How realistic is it for students to become one with Australia when they are just learning who the prime minister is or perhaps how many states are in the entire country? Arguably, it would be better to have an understanding of the basics when one first arrives in a country so that while students are there, they can experience more complex facets of the host culture. The students should autonomously want to learn this type of information. There are many ways of pursuing knowledge about a country, and pre-departure classes and studying are just two options.

In general, it did not seem that PGE students undertook much preparation so that they could optimize their learning while in Australia. Students might have been accepted to this program, attended a mandatory meeting and then forgotten about preparing for the approaching endeavor. What is more likely is that the undergraduates found themselves preparing in a different kind of way, that is, more like a tourist than a student. Andrew, a PGE participant, while discussing his preparation, said "I did not have it [going abroad] set in my mind that I was going away for a semester, rather it was more like I was going on vacation" (Andrew, September 2011). Students should not feel that they are leaving for vacation when in actuality they are endeavoring to study abroad. When people go on vacation, they pack, they buy things that they might need and they bring money to spend on gifts and to pay for recreational costs. It is therefore no surprise that twenty-eight percent considered packing part of their preparation, thirty-three percent of PGE participants found themselves buying things, and twenty-two percent said that they worked a job over the summer to save money to pay for travel or other recreational activities. None of the CLS participants mentioned finances or packing as part of their preparation. Only, two said that they bought items to prepare. This touristic mindset reinforces the idea that students were preparing as if they were going on vacation.

We cannot take these programs and their participants out of context. CLS was a scholarship and students were provided with a five hundred dollar stipend and were unencumbered by the cost of traveling, paying for housing accommodations, and schooling costs, whereas the PGE participants had to pay for their own travel expenses and of course had to pay normal tuition. Additionally a U.S. dollar in India goes a lot further than a U.S. dollar in Australia. The US dollar is equivalent 49.5 Indian rupees,

and .93 Australian cents. This could explain some of the differences between how the PGE students financially prepared and how the CLS students financially prepared.

Students who paid so much for the opportunity to study abroad were not properly preparing. Unlike the CLS participants, PGE participants did not have extensive backgrounds with the location of their study abroad. There were only two students who had travelled to Australia before. In the past, study abroad was predominantly about learning a language or about a culture. Now study abroad is being offered to a much wider range of students from countless disciplines. Students are not necessarily choosing their study abroad programs based on countries that they have a deep interest in learning about, rather they are picking based on how the program their university offers matches with their academic and professional interests. In more cases, they are choosing programs with destinations that they would like to travel to and where they can have fun.

When asked, "Why did you decide to study abroad?" six PGE participants said that they have always wanted to go to Australia. Of those six participants, when asked "What was your understanding about Australia prior to coming?" three of them confessed to not knowing much about Australia prior to studying abroad. Andrew said, "I knew vegemite. I knew it was about the same size as the US, but not nearly as many people. I knew there was a unique wildlife and that it was very flat. I also knew that this is where they put convicts and that is how it was settled" (Andrew, November 2011) He seemed to have the deepest understanding out of these six participant interviewed. When considering that students, particularly the undergraduates of the PGE program, might be choosing their study abroad based on their majors, it is sensible that students would make the assumption that it is enough to know about their academic field and perhaps not

prepare for the cultural aspect of the study abroad. Though there are many examples of PGE students deciding to study abroad because of their majors, no other response better exemplifies this idea than does the one in the following dialogue.

> Me: Why did you decide to study abroad?
>
> Lexi: It always seemed really obvious to me. If you were given that chance at school why wouldn't you take it? All the schools I looked at I made sure they had good study abroad programs.
>
> Me: Why Australia?
>
> Lexi: It was good for my major. I wanted to do the Germany program but none of them offered biology that you could take there or you had to take a biology class in German. Plus it is Australia (Lexi, November 2011).

Though Lexi had the desire to study abroad in Germany, she compromised her desire because her major matched well with the curriculum that the PGE program had to offer. Note that she did not look at schools to make sure that they had a study abroad opportunity to go to Australia, she instead made sure the colleges that she was considering had good study abroad *programs*. In the PGE program, Lexi's perspective on why she decided to study abroad in Australia is the rule not the exception.

A lot of PGE participants' decisions to go abroad seemed to be highly encouraged by their parents. Andrew said, "It [study abroad] was something I wanted to do when I got to college. To see the world. More recently my parents have been saying that I should see the world" (Andrew, September 2011) Alyssa, another PGE participant said, "…I wanted to travel a lot while I am young; my parents have given me the opportunity" (Alyssa, October 2011) It is favorable that parents, for whatever reason, are encouraging their children to study abroad. In fact, during our one-week of free time at the end of the program, two students had their parents come to Australia. Participants and their families should respect the fact that this not an opportunity to have a family vacation. Yet because

the success of study abroad is dependant upon what the individual is putting into it, parents' opinions should not be a driving force for why students study abroad. The paradox of parents as it relates to study abroad is that though parents might originally encourage students "to see the world," they might also be preventing participants from letting go of their ties at home, while they are abroad, a factor that ultimately makes it more challenging to immerse into the host culture.

What are the implications of how students are choosing and planning for their study abroad experiences? Preparedness is not something that can be assumed. International programs in American universities and colleges, and other study abroad organizations need to emphasize the importance of not just knowing about the program pre-departure, but also about understanding the host country pre-departure. One common way to do this is to offer students a course the semester or trimester before departure. An alternative is to have students research an organization at which they would like to volunteer or intern with while in the host country. One distressing result for the PGE participants is that thirty-three percent of them said that they did not do much to prepare for their study abroad. If study abroad is a privilege and a learning opportunity then students who have been accepted into the program should subsequently show their initiative to learn about the culture in which they will be living and studying.

The Faculty and Administration of the Programs

"Something I want to foster is that students do things on their own. We advise but don't do it for them. Hopefully they come away with initiative."
Chelsea, Administrator of the University of Queensland International Programs (November, 2011)

Information from interviews with teachers from the American Institute located in Jaipur, is important for understanding the participants in a broader context (that is, how applicable my findings are to past and future study abroad groups in these respective programs), and at the same time will help us understand how the goals of the program (as dictated by the pre-departure materials/websites) are similar to or different from the goals held by those who in the case of AIIS are actually facilitating the programs. The relationship between the CLS staff and the AIIS staff seemed to be an authoritative one, in which AIIS staff was accommodating the requests of the CLS staff.

The Critical Language Scholarship administrators were not interviewed, because of the lack of time, yet a lot of their opinions could be elicited from the Washington D.C. orientation. Throughout the panel discussion CLS alumni encouraged participants to engage in the host community and to avoid spending time in a cohort. Some of the CLS staff and administrators reminded participants that they were going to India to learn the language and therefore, would not have excessive time to take up a hobby or get involved with community organizations. Though I understood the focus to be on language acquisition, I was taken aback when the CLS staff deterred participants from doing activities that involved going into the community or perhaps learning a tradition of the host culture (such as sitar playing or traditional singing). The CLS staff also said that "this is not a college study abroad," and that it is a reflection of the taxpayers' money. Therefore, if participants misbehaved, did not come to class, or did anything that put their

lives in danger, they were warned that their scholarship would be revoked. Misbehaving was sort of a gray area as participants were told that they had to follow both the laws of the host country and the laws of the United States government. Participants were also told that they could not ride on two-wheelers (mopeds) because one participant in the past was killed while riding on a moped. One aspect that also stood out was the CLS program's desire to document the success of the CLS participants. Though not explicitly said, this is necessary so that the CLS program can continue to receive funding from the United States government. Participants were reminded of the requirements that they had to fulfill: completing the course work, a mid-program survey, a cultural proficiency survey, and an oral proficiency exam.

Two of the teachers who I interviewed at AIIS were predominantly teaching the intermediate section, and the third one was teaching the beginners' section. Unfortunately, these interviews were brief and very informal. No one teacher is a reflection of the faculty as a whole. Teacher #1, who was teaching the intermediate section for the first time, was impressed with the enthusiasm, and hard work that these students were putting into their language acquisition. AIIS does not only run an academic program for Critical Language Scholars; that is, while twenty-seven students were upstairs learning Hindi, about the same number of students were downstairs doing the same course of study, but not through the CLS program. The difference is that the students I interviewed were all on the same scholarship (CLS), whereas the students downstairs had different means of studying at AIIS (whether a different scholarship or paying their own way). Teacher #1 said that she did not see a difference in the CLS

students, and the other AIIS students. For some CLS participants, interactions with the other AIIS students were high (daily), but for some they were infrequent (once a week).

Teacher#2, also teaching the intermediate group, but for the past four years, said that this was the first time she felt that the students became offended by her corrections of their Hindi, and she was not sure of the reason behind this behavior. She agreed that there was no difference between the CLS students and the AIIS students. Teacher#3, who was teaching the beginners' section for the first time, but who had taught the advanced section in the past, said that the AIIS program takes 100% dedication, and that the group she taught made a lot of progress and wanted to learn. Many participants gave more than 100% dedication to the program, but of course some did not. When considering these interviews and observations I have no reason to believe that the 2011 Critical Language Scholars were exceptionally different from previous Critical Language Scholars.

All three of these teachers noted the importance of the homestay as compulsory for success. Teacher #3 was able to give me an insider's perspective on the work behind the homestays as she was one of the AIIS teachers in charge of finding these locations for the students to reside. When describing homestays she said, "It is for social security, language and cultural learning. School is just learning; when you live in a house you learn about culture. I do not know if you learn that in a flat." Without a homestay, it would be difficult to immerse into a culture, especially over a short period of time. The uncertainty she expressed about students living in a flat is a valid concern because many of the participants ended up living in homestays where their rooms were on a completely separate floor, making participant-local interaction even more difficult. I expressed my concerns to Teacher #3 about my homestay family: though they spoke Hindi amongst

themselves, they did not speak Hindi with me, instead, they would converse with me in English. The teacher explained how, obviously, the institute actually had no control over this, but still one can learn about the cultural aspects of Indian family life. She also noted that it takes a lot of patience on the host family's part, not just the participant's. Ideally the homestays would do everything the faculty at the institute asks, but actually they do not. Homestays as they relate to cultural immersion are discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

Prior to going to Australia, PGE participants from Union had the opportunity to meet with alumni of the program and Lara Atkins, the Director of International Programs at Union College. During my one-on-one interview with Lara Atkins, I asked what she hoped students would gain from study abroad experiences. She responded with a list of goals: the abilities to adapt and appreciate differences, to learn self-sufficiency, about themselves as Americans and as people, to gain a cooperative viewpoint and more confidence in their own abilities and skills, to push themselves out of their comfort zones and to make friends, to investigate the culture and to do activities with the locals. In short, Lara Atkins stressed the key themes of personal development, cultural learning, and interaction with locals and the host culture. These three objectives were also communicated by the "Student's Guide to Study Abroad in Queensland: Prepared by the Center for Global Education." The guide explained, "If you want to really learn, you'll have to go outside of your comfort zone. And going outside of your comfort zone means taking a social risk" (Queensland Guide, 2011: 28). The guide continues by warning participants of the tourist infrastructure that they are going to encounter, and alerting them to the fact that they should try to break away from the American group. All of this

was useful information for students to consider while immersing into a culture, but many participants did not actually read the guide.

At the University of Queensland (UQ) I interviewed an administrator and the manager of the International Programs Office. In response to the question, "What do Universities want out of these programs?" the manager, who has been involved with marketing study abroad opportunities to foreign institutions and students for ten years, said that he was really selling Australia on an ideal of what it can offer students, but that it is very important to strike a balance between the program being an academic one and the program being a touristic one. Because UQ facilitates many study abroad programs, I wanted to know what, if anything, made the Hobart and William Smith/Union College (HWSUC) group different from other groups. One aspect that he noted is study abroad groups, generally come from universities that are either from the West coast or the East coast of America. Moreover, he felt, but did not specify, that there was a difference between groups composed of west coast Americans and those composed of east coast Americans, a difference that has remained a mystery to me. When asked about the American faculty members that come with the students, the manager noted that the HWSUC group is unique because many of the other groups that come do not have an American faculty member who travels with the students. The largest impact that this has is that the staff from UQ does not directly interact with these students as much as they could. Besides teaching the geology course, the American faculty facilitated the two weeks that were spent in New Zealand for the continuation and ultimately completion of the geology course. In this case, I thought it would have been more beneficial for the students to have an Australian professor teach them geology. Then, not only would

students be able to experience more of an Australian teaching style, but also they would have more interaction with a local, and less with an American.

The manager, besides noting that he wanted students to become one with Australia, also said that for some people, this study abroad is about becoming more of an adult, which is why the homestay and public transportation are required. Growing as a person was not only a focus of those facilitating the program, but was also a goal of many of the participants. Personal development was a large part of many of the HWSUC students' experiences; therefore, to focus exclusively on academic enrichment would not benefit the participants overall experience; moreover, ignoring the personal growth aspect could leave some students confused as to their purpose for going abroad.

The other informant, Chelsea, a woman who was the Administrator of the University of Queensland International Programs, was able to spend more time with the students on a daily basis, except for when the students went on excursions. She noted that there were similarities and differences in all of the groups, but that our group in particular was not as good at "being on the fly." That is, we liked to have all of the information about where we were going, with whom and what to bring, which perhaps led us to be inflexible at times when plans changed. This was the second study abroad group that she organized at UQ; in short, she was new to her job. She lamented about the last group and how she was unable to interact with them frequently, because of the location of her office. At the time of this interview, her office was more centrally located so that as students went to and from class they would say hello. In her previous experience she would only see them during teatime on Wednesdays, something that was also incorporated into our program.

Chelsea said that students could feel as if they are apart of the family, when the homestay situation is ideal. More often, there are problems with the homestay that make it challenging for an administrator. For example, though she spent a lot of time ensuring that participants' homestay experiences would be positive, many times she would hear participants say that it was a negative experience. This is an aspect of her work that she does not like. Problems that I heard students complain about was that they did not have the minimum amenities that the program had promised, such as a room of their own. Many students complained about the quality and amount of food in their homestays, about the composition of their family, and the distance of their homestay from UQ.

The American professors who led the abroad program were not interviewed, but were observed throughout the program. Though they did not play a central role while in Australia, they did try to guide and advise the students when needed. The American professors were married and had a nine-month-old child who joined us in class, during excursions, and on the quad. They encouraged participants to do well in class and explore, and would sometimes share information about logistics. I do not feel the Australian professors or administrators resented the presence of the American professors. However, there did seem to be a lack of communication between the two parties, which at times made it frustrating for both parties. During our courses taught by the Australian professors, one of the two American professors usually sat in on the classes.

Administrators of the CLS program and facilitators of the PGE program all want students to have the most successful and productive experience as they possibly can. In the case of Chelsea this meant students coming away from the program with newfound personal initiative. Arguably, students who have the opportunity to study abroad could

leave with the newfound personal initiative, but more importantly they should be entering the program through their own initiative.

Expectations for India

"I was always worried that it [India] would not live up to my expectations…Because I watched thousands of Bollywood films I had a strange expectation…[but eventually I came to realize] that there would be good, bad, things that would drive me crazy, and other things that would amaze me…"
Helen, Critical Language Scholar (June 2011)

Since high school when a friend introduced me to Garba, an Indian dance form, I have been intrigued by Indian culture and language. From that moment, I knew that I wanted to go to India. During my first year of college, I completed an independent study on Hindi and I have taken a history course about South Asia, and an anthropology course about the paradoxes of contemporary Indian culture. Beyond that, my understanding of India is what I have seen in films (Bollywood and documentaries) as well as what my American-Indian friends have told me. When I learned that the Critical Language Scholarship funded participants to attend an institute in Jaipur, India, I was thrilled. Jaipur, like the rest of India, was an unfamiliar city to me, and I really did not know exactly what to expect. I purchased a travel guide, which made Jaipur seem small and easy to navigate.

A few months before departure, the CLS program sent participants a document entitled *Goal Setting For Your Program Experience*. It attempted to prepare us for the experience by showing us how to set goals for our participation in the program and then asking us to create and send to them five personal goals that we would aim to achieve during the program. The purpose of the exercise is to understand what a participant can "…contribute to a positive group language-learning environment and what actions on your part will impact the development of your own language proficiency this summer" (*Goal Setting For Your Program Experience).* My goals were 1) to improve my listening

and speaking skills, 2) to be able to confidently read a newspaper in Hindi, 3) to learn at least thirty words a day, 4) to gain a cultural understanding by putting myself in situations that I would not be able to experience in the US, and 5) ultimately to speak Hindi as effortlessly as I do my own language (language fluency). At the time, these seemed like reasonable goals and expectations for myself for ten weeks in India. Once the exercise was handed in, participants were emailed their flight information, but we did not receive feedback on our projected goals. It was never clear whether or not we were supposed to receive feedback, so I was not disappointed that I did not. The participants were not invited to share their goals, nor did I observe anyone discussing what their goals were.

From reading the program pre-departure documents, I knew that I would be learning Hindi at the American Institute of Indian Studies from 9am to 1pm Monday through Friday, but the identity and background of the faculty remained a mystery until classes started. I was expecting to be placed at either the beginner or intermediate level, but no one from the CLS administration was able to tell me; this was something that I later found out was decided by the faculty at the institute. Not knowing my placement in advance was annoying, but what was worse was that I had to take a proficiency exam within my first few days in India when I was still feeling tired from the long flight and stressed by the unfamiliarity of the culture and uncertainties about how the program would work. I had also assumed that my homestay "family" would be a middle-to-lower class family, as I had learned that seventy percent of Indians lived on less than a dollar a day. I thought that because I was to immerse myself into the culture that my homestay family would be speaking Hindi to me, but I soon realized that this expectations did not necessarily correlate with those of the local population, particularly my homestay family.

Coming into the program with that expectation was probably negative to my overall immersion experience, as I easily became frustrated with my host family's lack of effort to speak Hindi with me. It is possible, that if I knew before starting the program that my host family would be speaking in English that I would have overcome this obstacle more efficiently and ultimately had a more successful immersion into the culture.

The CLS website mentions how the program is for US citizens who are completing their undergraduate, Master's or Ph.D program; therefore, I had anticipated that my peers would fit in one of these categories and that some of them would be caught up in Ph.D research, while others would be just as uncertain about their professional future as I was. Despite the participants being in different stages of their education, I hoped that everyone would "get along," and figured that there would be less drama than there would be in a study abroad with all undergraduates. Since this is a group-based intensive language instruction and it is "part of a U.S. government effort to expand dramatically the number of Americans studying and mastering critical need foreign languages," (Homepage: CLS Website), minimizing drama amongst the group of participants was also a concern of the CLS staff. For example, during the pre-departure orientation, the staff reminded participants to communicate with one another, as some students in the past found themselves in serious verbal and physical altercations, which ultimately cut their scholarship period short. The staff explained how going to a place like India, students in the past were under a lot of stress from culture shock, homesickness, and classes. Many times they would take their aggression out on one another.

As for what I expected to gain from this international experience, language proficiency, and a cultural immersion experience were what I had my mind set on at the beginning of the program. The program directors also made it clear that there was an expectation that language acquisition would continue after the ten-week program and that participants would ultimately apply their new language skills to future professional careers. I had no problem with the former as I would not want to lose the skills that I would have worked so hard to hone over the summer, but I was not so certain that these skills would apply to my professional aspirations. I was hoping that the experience would help to guide me or lead me to potential career options, but I was skeptical about whether or not the experience would do so. Language acquisition is rather self-explanatory. I wanted to learn as much Hindi as I possibly could; I found however, that cultural immersion was not that straightforward of a concept.

In March 2011, I was caught up in program paper work, classes, and extracurricular activities at Union College. There were many forms to be completed for both programs, but one in particular stood out: the *Housing Preference Form* that I received from the CLS program. It was the content of the first question that I found surprising. Students were asked to give their preference between living in a homestay, in an apartment with other students in the program, or in a hotel. I immediately understood why students might prefer the latter two options to the first (i.e. more independence, no curfew), but why would a program that is so adamant about the importance of cultural immersion even give participants the option to live in a hotel or an apartment with other Americans? Understanding where participants decided to reside in Jaipur affords insight

into what they intend to take out of the program, an aspect that is detailed in the section about the homestay experience.

In India: Participants' expectations

After completing a content analysis on students' responses to the question "What do you hope to gain from this international experience?" I found that students' answers could be grouped in eleven thematic categories. These categories are cultural learning, learning Hindi, enhancing personal development, advancing professional development, conducting research, creating meaningful ties with locals, making meaningful ties with co-participants, traveling, having fun, and other. Most of the students were interested in the culture; in fact, many were completing graduate and masters research on various topics such as higher education in India, fertility rates, widows in northern urban India, and the media's impact on elections. Yet cultural immersion, despite it being one part of the program's two-fold mission (language acquisition and cultural immersion), was not explicitly something that students were interested in accomplishing. The ideal, students' pursuit of cultural immersion, which the program hoped to foster, was not shared amongst all of the participants.

Out of the fourteen students who were interviewed, nine said that they would like to learn more about the culture. Since only one informant used the phrase "cultural immersion" to talk about her hopes for the program, I did not find it appropriate to call that unit of analysis cultural immersion. Instead, cultural learning is more applicable, as there is a difference between wanting to "get immersed" and wanting to "learn about a culture." Cultural learning, when a student is gaining knowledge about the culture, but not necessarily through first person interactions with locals and in a setting that is

artificially structured, is different from cultural immersion when a student gains knowledge about a culture through first-hand experiences that had not been previously structured to suit their needs. The implications of these differences are significant when considering the impact of study abroad on American students. For example, if a student is under the assumption that the goal of study abroad is cultural learning, then he or she does not have any incentive to branch out from the group he or she is with, and ultimately no incentive to leave their comfort zones. Moreover, a student who hopes to immerse into the culture would have to actively be thinking about how his or her actions are facilitating first hand experiences or not. I placed phrases such as "learn about another culture," "gain a new perspective," "a different viewpoint," "being in a culture," and "gaining a better understanding of the culture," within the "cultural learning" category. Marianne, an intermediate student, who had lived in India prior to the CLS program, said that she hoped to stay in contact with friends who she had met the last time, and that "Indian culture is diverse so just learning and experiencing more of it. To have a better picture as a whole" (Marianne, July 2011). This quote is particularly interesting because the participant is also making the distinction that I previously described, except she is using the phrases "learning," and "experiencing." At first glance, it appears to be very positive that the students in the program do actually want to learn about the host culture, yet when the objectives of the program were so clearly stated, why weren't more students saying I want to "get immersed?" It is possible that I am getting caught up in word play, but why won't students use colloquial phrases such as, "I want to be part of the culture, I want to live as if I am a local or I want to participate in local culture." There is a difference

between learning and immersing, the latter being a task that takes persistence, time, and a true focus, especially when one is surrounded by easy access to home culture comforts.

Similar results were seen when students mentioned phrases pertaining to language acquisition. Though they did not say "language acquisition" per se, their stated aspirations included phrases such as "learning Hindi," "improved proficiency," and "a better understanding of the language." Of the five students who did not mention language learning, two hoped to gain insight into their specific research questions, two hoped to make meaningful ties with locals, and the last mentioned learning more about the culture. Two of the students who did not mention language acquisition also did not mention learning about the culture.

On average, CLS students mentioned two aspects that they hoped to gain from their international experience: cultural learning and language learning. Yet some of the students had alternative motives, such as personal development. For example, Marianne and Randy, two female participants who did not mention learning Hindi, did state that they wanted to make meaningful ties with the locals, a factor which can be seen as supplementing their cultural and linguistic experiences outside of the classroom and their homestays**.** Randy was an advanced Hindi student and Marianne, an intermediate, a factor that might help explain why they did not mention Hindi as one of their main objectives because they already knew a substantial amount. Cultural learning and language learning are interrelated with other goals that students had such as making meaningful ties with locals.

Of the seven beginners participating in program, all but one explicitly said that they wanted to learn Hindi. The one participant, Aria, who did not explicitly mention

learning Hindi as something that she wished to gain, did say that after figuring out what her research interest was she also realized that Hindi was very important for her research. Three other beginner participants were also learning Hindi in order to facilitate their research. Caitlin, a student who had completed her bachelors in film and video and who had minored in South Asian Studies, said that she wanted to be proficient in Hindi. She said, “I want to experience what I learned. I want to get that perspective, whether I like it or not” (Caitlin, June 2011). Caitlin seemed enthusiastic about pushing herself out of her comfort zone, despite the fact that she was entering the culture with little understanding of the language. Beginners, many of whom were driven by their research goals, expected to learn Hindi.

Expectations for Australia

"I guess I did not know what to expect. I heard it was the best one [study abroad option], but the most academically challenging. I expected it to be a hard transition. In terms of a new culture, a homestay, going to school, and I knew the transportation system. Our group is cliquey, but I expected it to be more cliquey."
Victoria, Partners in Global Education Participant (November, 2011)

I had ten days post-India and pre-Australia when I was able to stand down from one program and prepare for my next endeavor. Still I had to return home to unpack and repack my suitcases, since my group flight to Australia allotted me two suitcases! At that time my knowledge of Australia and its history and culture was minute. In general, I had the impression that it would be a lot easier to travel and communicate in Australia than it had been in India. Not only because English is the local language in Australia, but also because Australia is not as starkly different from America as India is from America. I had never taken a course about Australia before, but I still felt relatively well prepared for studying and living there because of my expectation that it would not be strikingly different from the United States.

I knew that I would be at least familiar with some participants coming from Union College, and I reasoned that the Hobart and William Smith participants were probably not all that different from us (the Union participants). We all studied at medium-sized liberal arts schools in New York State. Though we might have believed that the two sets of students came from profoundly different regions in the U.S., ultimately on a global scale we would be coming from similar cultural backgrounds. Still, I expected my peers to have varying interests and motives for studying abroad in Australia.

After reading the pre-departure material for the Australian program, I realized the vast differences in the programs, host cultures, and my own interests. In short, I had

different goals for each of the two programs. In Australia, my goals were more varied than they had been in India; I wanted to do well academically, learn about Marine Biology and Australian Culture, go scuba diving on the Great Barrier Reefs, get involved at the University of Queensland, and get connected with my homestay family. Though I received grades from both of the programs, my AIIS grades would not be making it on my transcript, whereas the grades I received from the PGE program would. My desire to get connected with my homestay family was a product of my experience with my Indian homestay family that I knew would help me immerse myself into Brisbane/Australian culture. I also imagined that there would be more opportunity to meet locals my age as I would be enrolled in classes with them and could encounter them on campus. Most of the paper work for Australia was completed at about the same time as the paperwork for India, which led me to think about the direct comparisons between the two programs. There were codes of conduct, health and medical forms, participant agreements, an alcohol and drug policy form, etc. Both pre-program processes were time consuming, that is, there was a lot of paper work, and some of it was not straightforward. I believe the paper work for the Australia program was easier because I did not have to apply for a visa.

The last few weeks in India I received an email from the UQ international programs about filling out a homestay agreement, which spelled out guidelines of the homestay and warned students that not all homestays are equal. Some participants would be living further away from the university, some participants would not be guaranteed internet access, and while some participants would be living with family households, others might be living in a single person household.

After ten weeks in India I was excited to go home, see my family and girlfriend, and rest. My mom took me shopping for a few hiking accessories, just a raincoat and a backpack that could carry my water. I repacked my suitcase and before I knew it, I was on my flight to LA.

In Australia: Participants' Expectations

A similar content analysis was completed for the Partners for Global Education students' responses to the question, "What do you hope to gain from this international experience?" The only difference between the content analysis completed using the CLS participants' responses and the PGE participants' responses consisted of answers concerning learning the biology, ecology and geology of Australia rather than learning Hindi. Some of the phrases that were placed into this category included "learning about the physical nature of Australia," "learning marine biology," and "having a unique educational experience." Of the seventeen students who were asked this question only twenty-four percent said that they hoped to learn about the biology, ecology, and geology of Australia, while fifty-three percent of the respondents said that they were interested in learning about the culture. Note that they wanted to learn about the culture and not necessarily immerse themselves into the culture.

The "other" coding category is vague, but the responses that are included in this category are quite varied, fitting neither with each other nor within one of the other named categories. The responses were: "to see some cool stuff," "to see everything I can see," "to take advantage of being here," "to do cool things," and that "this trip is once of a lifetime." Thirty-five percent of the PGE students responded with one of these phrases. Unsurprisingly, being that this was an undergraduate study abroad program, no students

were interested in research. Twenty-nine percent of them mentioned developing personally. The personal development category is characterized by phrases such as “I want to prove that I am independent,” “growing up,” and “confidence in finding my way around.”

Participants’ responses to the question, “What do you hope to gain from this international experience?” affords more insight into students’ attitude about study abroad. The appearance of an additional category, called “other,” that formed when I was completing the content analysis, is particularly interesting. For example, students’ responses that were placed in this category were focused on the “me” aspects of study abroad. That is, study abroad was being seen as an experience that benefits the individual who is studying abroad. Though having a positive experience should be an objective, having a once in a lifetime experience is not a necessity. Most importantly, the “experience” is not one that should be driven more by personal gains as it should be driven by what the students can help others gain. For example, cultural learning is something that students from both programs wanted to complete. No students mentioned that they were excited to have a cross-cultural exchange, in which the local, not just the participant, can also learn from the experience.

The PGE program is specialized in that it caters to the needs of biology and geology majors alike, yet learning these topics did not seem to be the main focus for some of these students. That is, through observation of the participants’ behavior, it was clear that some students came to Australia to have fun, and to get to know their co-participants. For example, Amanda, a female participant, while answering a question regarding her free time said, “I am here. Work is the last thing I want to be doing.

Studying, that is one of the biggest things I am not happy about" (Amanda, October 2011). Amanda shared these feelings with other participants, who felt that there was too much work for them to completely enjoy their study abroad experience. Three of the eighteen students said that they wanted to get to know their co-participants, which may not appear to be an overwhelming percentage, but consider the flip side of this perspective: only two of the eighteen students said that they wanted to make meaningful ties with the locals. These two students, along with one other student, were the same students who said that they wanted to make meaningful ties with their co-participants. Otherwise the PGE students did not mention making meaningful ties as something they hoped to gain from studying abroad. Through my observation it became clear that whether or not students wanted to make meaningful ties with their co-participants they still ended up making those connections. Perhaps participants were aware that the purpose was not to be bonding with their co-participants, hence why so many students did not mention this.

Comparison of Participants' Expectations

The CLS students' expectations of what they could gain from the experience were more in concert with their program's mission, than the PGE students' expectations of what they could gain from the experience of their program and its stated mission. This is clear by the number of CLS participants who said they wanted to learn Hindi as opposed to the number of students who said they wanted to learn biology, geology or ecology. One experience that shows this disconnect can be exemplified in the PGE students' first few days in Australia. After arriving in Brisbane, we were quickly swept away from Brisbane city on a ferry to North Stradbroke Island. Uncertainty about the schedule

caused confusion among the participants, particularly concerning why the program began anywhere other than at the University. Chelsea, one of the program administrators said that we were there to study marine biology and that it was on our schedule. Few participants seemed to know that the schedule existed, even though this was provided in our pre-departure information. At this early point in their stay, the participants really just wanted to get settled into their homestays and start classes at UQ.

The PGE students' desire to personally develop was more common than was the CLS students' desire to personally develop. This is unsurprising as the PGE program was completely composed of undergraduates, while the CLS program was a mix of undergraduate and graduate students. That is, many of the graduate students have travelled before; therefore, they now have more time to focus on other aspects of study abroad besides personal development. PGE students said that they were also interested in developing professionally, having fun, traveling, and making meaningful ties with co-participants. None of the CLS students said that they hoped to have fun, make meaningful ties with co-participants, or travel, although two hoped that this experience would help their professional development, expectations that were more aligned with the CLS program's mission.

The PGE students' interests touched on a lot of different categories. Ideally students should be focusing on their studies and learning about the culture, but one reason many undergraduates study abroad is for personal development. Personal development is the process by which a person's character or abilities are gradually changed and enhanced. Twenty-eight percent of PGE students said that they hoped to personally develop: some said they wanted to be more independent, grow up, and become self-

sufficient. Personal development should not be something that is underestimated. Similar to learning marine biology or Hindi, it takes the proper amount of time and reflection. It is not surprising to see that four out of the five students who said that they wanted in some way to personally develop also did not mention cultural learning as one of their objectives. Only one student, an undergraduate in the CLS program, was hoping to personally develop while in India. Again this is not surprising, as many of these students had traveled abroad for over two weeks prior to coming to India. This is a finding that reflects that CLS participants were not necessarily in it for the personal development, but were instead focused on the culture, a factor that makes this experience less about them and more about the host culture. Certainly PGE participants' personal development should be encouraged, but if it becomes the main object of a study abroad then we must expect less emphasis to be placed on cultural immersion.

Previous Travel

"I had a vision of what Africa would be like without realizing the variation in different parts. It was my first experience as feeling as the other… Feeling the minority was a new experience. It was my first experience with poverty. There was lack of sanitation, road planning, etc. I had an idea. At first it was discouraging because I had spent so many years learning about Africa. I think I was disappointed that I was thinking about Africa as a homogenous continent. Ethiopia has very different personality type."
Lilly, Critical Language Scholar (July 2011)

Mckeown (2009) believes that a person's prior travel experience, even as short as two weeks abroad, can be an enabler for intellectual development. In this research, previous travel experience is investigated as a factor that possibly helps the participants immerse into the host culture. One female student, Gina, mentioned that her first visit to India was part of her preparation for her current CLS international experience. Another student, Catherine, mentioned that she knew what to bring this time because she found out the last time she was in India. Students' prior international travel is evidently important to how they prepare for future international endeavors. Participants with more international travel experience were not necessarily better at adapting and ultimately immersing into the culture while studying abroad.

Participants from both programs had an array of international travel experience: from the first-time traveler to one student who had spent an extensive period (over a year) in strikingly different places (from Italy to Ethiopia). Surprisingly, through my observations, I found that these two differently travelled students when given the same opportunity to adapt and immerse into a culture had similar or the same abilities and desire to do so. Of course, having a grasp of the language beforehand gives you an edge for immersing into the culture, but whether or not students utilized these skills was not driven by their previous travel. The CLS participants, in general, had more extensive

travel experience, as I expected, because they were on average older than the PGE participants, and many of them had a particular interest for research or professional careers, which would have brought them to India before their participation at AIIS. Also only two of the eighteen interviewed PGE participants had been to Australia before, while five of the fourteen CLS participants had been to India before.

While the students who have travelled internationally before might better know how to be one with the host culture (i.e. their homestay family and other locals) cultural immersion is a choice, influenced by one's own motives and one's co-participants. For example, two CLS students, one who had been to Jaipur before for a semester (Gina), compared to one who had only travelled to Canada and Puerto Rico for a week (Helen), were both intermediate Hindi speakers. Both were rising seniors in their undergraduate institutions: Gina was an English major and Helen a South Asian Studies and English double major. Both of these students, while studying in India, were involved with local Jaipur NGOs. When asked if they felt different from other foreigners they both said that they did because they were in India to learn about the culture and already had an understanding of how to respect Indian culture. Both said that their original interest in the culture stemmed from Bollywood films and courses that they had taken. When asked, "How did the locals behave? Did you adjust to the locals? How?" both recognized that they had to exercise restraint in behavior and dress with many of the male locals, especially since Jaipur had a reputation for "eve-teasing," when men gesture and hoot at women, especially foreign women, during the night. Gina said "The locals were great once we got to know each other," and Helen said "I think I did adjust a little bit—I became more assertive in dealing with rickshawallahs [cab drivers] and shopkeepers…"

Gina had had some ties with locals from her previous stay in Jaipur and was able to better solidify and create even more meaningful ties with locals. When asked if they would remain in contact with anyone from the host country once they had completed the program, Gina said she would be facebook friends with some people, she would probably be in contact with the teachers from the institute, she might send emails to the woman that she did one-on-one cooking classes with, her peer tutor, and the guys that she met who would remain in India. Helen mentioned that she would have cursory communication with her homestay and her peer tutor, but a less superficial relationship with her Indian friend Siddharth. Though she spent time with her family and said that they treated her well, with food and company, Helen felt like they did not want her to be there. During the final week of the program she had a falling out with her family because she came home late one night and they were upset with her, a factor that she felt she could not mend before leaving within the following few days. Both of these students made meaningful ties with at least one local during their ten weeks in India.

Though Gina and Helen both ate Indian food on a regular basis, in the company of an American co-participant this daily decision to eat Indian food was not as compulsory. Helen said that when she frequented a local café, which catered to foreigners, she went with Americans for the purpose of eating American food. Gina also said that when she was with her CLS friends she would usually eat American food. Indulging in a taste of home, in order to ease one's stay in a very foreign country, was important for some students, which raises the question of how much of a taste of home is too much? Gina said that she hung out with her co-participants more than locals. She also said that there was a lot of overlap; that is, even in her homestay, a place where one would expect the

pinnacle of the cultural immersion program to occur, she had co-participants living with her. She admitted to spending most of her time with her co-participants and despite the fact that her homestay or paid guesthouse was not advantageous for consistent interaction with her family, she said that it was a great homestay. Helen said that most of her time was spent with people from the institute (Americans), but she was the only person in her homestay (i.e. less overlap than in Gina's homestay situation). Moreover, Helen also noted that she struggled to fit into her homestay, a struggle that did not exist as much as she thought it did, that is, it seems she was very self-conscious about how her family felt toward her. Her self-consciousness prevented her from making deep ties with her homestay family. Study abroad offers multiple opportunities to experience, adjust and even immerse into a foreign country, but the form of group study abroad predominantly promotes one outcome: group activities, and ultimately immersion into a program which is in a foreign culture. Students' previous international travel, though it gives them the "know how" to adapt, does not necessarily give them the motive to do so.

In a non-English speaking society, it is compulsory to know the language or be in the process of learning the language in order to adjust and immerse. Eleven of the students in the program were advanced Hindi speakers, which presumably, would give them an edge in their ability to adapt and immerse into the culture. While day-to-day activities, such as catching a rickshaw or haggling with a shopkeeper, were less of a hassle, many advanced Hindi speakers also found themselves immersed into a program in a culture. Randy when asked, "Have you learned as much Hindi as you thought you would?" replied "Probably not. I spend more time speaking English than I thought I would because I hang out with people from this program." Yet another advanced male

student (Joe), when asked, “Do you feel you immersed in the culture?” said “Yes and I believe that it is related to my ability to speak Hindi.” Joe, like Randy, spent much of his free time with other Americans from the program, so what makes him able to say that he has immersed into the culture? Joe explained, “I lived in a Hindi immersion dorm and I will be living there next year as well. I have almost had the immersion already.” Still when in a group of Americans both Randy and Joe not only spoke English (as observed by me), but they ate American food! Randy was a first-time traveler and Joe had been to Ireland and Italy.

The decision to immerse into a culture in the PGE program was also influenced by one’s own motives and one’s co-participants. Aviva, a college senior had a great deal of international experience: she had gone on a program to Fiji and Australia, a separate program to China, she spent three weeks touring around France, Italy, and Spain and participated in a Union College mini-term to Egypt. By comparison, Jade, a junior in college, had been to Brazil for a week and had spent less than two weeks in Canada. Aviva had lived with a homestay her last time in Australia before and said “even though not all of them [Australians] think highly of Americans they will still help you if you are lost.” Jade said that she did not have much of an expectation for how the locals would behave, but she assumed they would have stereotypes about Americans. When asked how much time she spent with locals she said,

> A lot. In the beginning we [two other American women in her homestay] tried to spend time watching TV with our homestay, which was easy because we did not have much work…then with Jim [a local boyfriend] I literally spent a month with him. I played soccer with locals, which was cool because I went off on my own and did it. It was 3 or 4 hours a week but it was my time with the locals. I met other people through Ben as well.

Jade, though she had little international travel experience was able to find inlets to the local culture (via her homestay, her Australian boyfriend, and the locals she met playing soccer). Though she was dating someone from home and had the intention of remaining with him, she ultimately ended up taking a break from her relationship at home in order to pursue dating an Australian. Whether or not this relationship remained intact after the program is unknown. Aviva, while assessing the time she spent with locals said that she spent approximately twenty hours a week with her homestay family; that is, eating dinner with them and occasionally watching a film with them. Aviva, like Jade, also came to Australia while in a relationship with someone in America. What makes them different is that Aviva decided to remain with her American boyfriend and did not pursue a relationship with an Australian. Still Aviva was able to find an Australian connection through in her homestay family.

While this time spent with locals sounds ideal, the reality is more clear when we consider the other side of the same coin; that being, how much time did these women report spending with their American peers. Jade said that she lived with two other women from the program so they would end up going shopping together and would go to school together. She also noted that people from the program, would meet up on the weekends. Aviva said that the majority of her time was spent with PGE students: on the field trips, at school, and every hour of the day unless she was sleeping. Though she did not say so her homestay was also with another PGE participant.

In Australia, understanding a student's previous international travel in the context of their reactions to the culture and their immersion into the culture is difficult because of the uncertainties between what is authentically Australian and what is not. The PGE

participants knew the host country language fluently, but linguistically they stood apart from the locals in accent and colloquialisms. For example, Australians say, “How are you going?” which is the equivalent of an American saying, “How are you?” PGE participants did not have as much international travel experience as the CLS participants did. Yet, many of the PGE participants had travelled to Europe, Canada, or Mexico and forty-four percent of the participants had travelled (though for 3 weeks or less) to what Che et al. (2009) classified as a less familiar destination. Less than 1% of the students, who studied abroad in 2006, had gone to one of the less familiar destinations. Note that this does not mean that the PGE participants were studying abroad in those countries, instead, they were visiting family, or doing community service.

Though previous international travel experiences do not correlate with students’ cultural immersion, it was clear to me that what I learned in India I brought with me and utilized while I was trying to immerse (i.e. get to know the locals) in Australia. For example, I learned that I had to actively try to spend time with my homestay family. It is possible that, because of my research I was thinking about immersing into the culture and what facilitated immersion, but it is not likely that my peers were actively doing the same. As one of the administrators reminded us during our pre-orientation in Australia, if you want to build a relationship with your host family then you have to actually spend time with them. Having a tool and knowing how to use it are two very different concepts.

A Note on Local Culture verse Global Culture

Assessing students’ immersion into a culture where it is evident what is part of the host culture as opposed to what is not part of the host culture such as in India, is fairly easy. Doing the same in a culture where the line between the host culture and other

cultures (American or other global cultures) is blurred such as in Australia, is not as easy. Additionally, it is pretty difficult to say whether going to McDonalds in Australia is "against" the principle of immersing into a culture because "going to McDonalds" is a popular pastime among Australians. Throughout my research, I have struggled with this concept. Even if an American student eats at McDonalds in India, is this activity not part of that culture? The answer to this question is a definite "it depends." McDonalds is an American corporation that has established many international locations. While programs that promise immersion into an entire culture cannot constantly pick and choose which parts the students will experience, the student can. Therefore, it is up to the student to decide, will she go to India to try the masalas or go to try McDonald's veggie burgers? Based on this research, most students find themselves, when in the presence of other Americans, choosing the latter.

An explanation of my struggle as well as my peers' struggle to understand what is "authentically Australian culture" as opposed to what is "American culture" or "global culture," is well reflected in the collective PGE participants' responses to "What do you consider to be Australian food? Have you eaten any of that food?" Four PGE students provide a good representation of their peers' responses: Addison (a female student from Hobart), Andrew (a male student from Hobart), Mya (a female student from Union, and Anthony (a male student from Union). Addison said that her Australian friend, whom she met in the US, suggested that meat pies were Australian; therefore, she had eaten Australian food, because she ate meat pies. Her mother suggested that British food in Australia was common, but Addison did not comment on whether she consumed such food. She also said that kangaroo meat is frequently eaten in Australia, but she did not

have the chance to eat it. She was disappointed with the food, because one thing she likes about travelling is trying different foods (that is, she felt that she did not have the opportunity to eat "differently"). Andrew noted that his homestay family was vegan, so his experience was different from his peers', because his meals are "vegan centered." He also noted the influence of the Asian population on the Australian cuisine, and that the food reminded him of American and English food. He made an interesting observation that Australian food was not all about "shrimp on the barbie" (shrimp grilled on the barbeque). His preconceived notion of Australian food was changed through his experience actually eating in Australia. Mya said that vegemite was "one of those things that you need to find," and that she has not run across Australian food, but that she ate everything that her homestay made for her. I believed that if my homestay family made the food, then it had to be Australian! Anthony, whose first answer to the question was "I don't know," further explained, "Lamb was more common…I can't find a bagel…[and] desserts is where Australia really makes its own." He concludes by saying "I have not had Australian meals…I am looking forward to a kangaroo steak." As exemplified by my peers' responses, it is not always clear what is Australian. Kangaroo seems like an easy definite, but if Australians have also been eating steak since the founding of modern Australia, then that is also part of the culture; moreover, it is arguably Australian. A handful of participants seemed disappointed with the food, some with the lack of variety and others with the taste. Deciding what is part of the host culture is many times left up to the participant and there are different degrees to which they can participate.

Culture Shock and Cultural Sensitivity

"The most frustrating part is that these things that I miss -- mostly being able to control my comfort -- are things about which only children of an opulent society can complain. And I'm no longer able to fool myself: by the world's standards, I am foolishly wealthy. It's something that people immediately know of me, too -- because I'm white and obviously not from India but fiscally able to travel. It's a scarlet dollar-sign that I want to scrape from my lapel but am too spoiled to do so.
I have so much to learn."

David, Critical Language Scholar (Blog Post: July 2011)

Lara Atkins believes that culture shock is experienced in most study abroad participants no matter the length of the program. Going through culture shock is what makes one start to question one's self, one's host country, and one's home country. It would seem clear that culture shock might be anticipated in non-Western countries, but one might wonder whether all countries cause American students the anxiety, homesickness, and feeling of displacement that is associated with culture shock. Che et al. use Vygoysky's theory of zone of proximal development to argue that less familiar study abroad destinations provoke cognitive and emotional development through dissonant experiences (2009: 99). Though they recognize the importance of nurture or having someone to talk to and confide in while abroad, they say that it is ultimately through struggle and tension created by interaction with others whose experiences differ that we learn (2009: 102). The more unfamiliar the hosts' culture, the more "potential for student development, social good, and for increasing cultural awareness and global mindedness" (2009: 104). This is important as it relates to participants' responses when they were asked, "Are you experiencing culture shock?"

In Australia only nine percent of the students said that they had experienced culture shock, nineteen percent said that they were unsure, and sixty-seven percent said

that they were not experiencing culture shock. In India, seventy-three percent of students said that they were experiencing culture shock, twenty percent said that they were unsure and only one student said she was not experiencing culture shock. Catherine, though a beginner Hindi speaker, had been to India before, but still said she was going through culture shock. She admitted that she did not have deep relationships with any locals, but day-to-day interactions were very high. Those students going through self-perceived culture shock should ultimately have developed more.

Bennett (2001) explained that the degree of student development in terms of cultural sensitivity depends on how culturally sensitive that individual was before initiating the program. That is, the more ethnocentric before leaving the U.S., the more room there was for improvement. While applying Bennett's scale of cultural sensitivity to students' responses and my observations, it became clear that this scale has its limitations for the purpose of this study. The stages from ethnocentricity to ethnorelativity are described in terms of the students' reaction to cultural differences that they encounter while abroad. For example, if a student does not experience cultural differences then the student is in the denial stage (the first stage in ethnocentricity). If a student realizes the complex differences, but does not necessarily agree or like them then he or she is in the acceptance stage (the first in ethnorelativity). While observing and interviewing the participants in India, it became clear that students were at various levels on Bennett's scale of cultural sensitivity. On the contrary, participants in Australia were hard to place on the scale of cultural sensitivity. I believe this is for two equally important reasons. First, students were not taught before departure about the cultural differences to expect in Australia, and second, the cultural differences in Australia are not nearly as overt as the

cultural differences that I experienced in India. Students' responses to "Have you had any different experiences so far while studying abroad here?" reflect the latter concept (i.e. cultural differences are not stark in Australia). For example, participants, instead of discussing cultural differences, mentioned how spending time on the mudflats or Great Barrier Reefs were different experiences. Some of the students had more culturally connected experiences such as the different teaching styles of the Australian professors, the food being slightly different, and everything being more expensive. Two students even recalled their first week on North Stradbroke Island when an aboriginal woman "attacked" them. I was actually present when the aboriginal woman approached a group of our participants who were sitting on the ground in a circle. Students were surprised as she drove her car right next to our circle in the middle of the lawn. She said that she thought we were her tribe and once she found out we were not, she was not very happy and began to curse at us. We quickly left, and our biology professor explained that many of the aboriginals were still hostile toward white people. In general, participants seemed to take it well, but mostly they just called her "crazy."

Most of the students said that they had had similar experiences, some of which could have happened in the United States. For example, one student said she was overwhelmed by the big city and big university, another said that having to cook her own food was different and finally many students reported commuting and getting lost as different experiences that they had while in Brisbane. A few students also mentioned snorkeling on the Great Barrier Reefs, or visiting Carnarvon Gorge. Note that they did not mention the opportunity to research at these locations as a different experience,

rather, it was just the ability to be there, a factor that reflects the touristic nature of this study abroad program.

Are these the types of experiences students go abroad for? Riall W. Nolan wrote that the purpose of study abroad is to make American students realize that "there are people beyond the shoreline who think just as well as they do, but who think somewhat differently" (Nolan, 267). In other words, students should be trying to become more culturally sensitive as it will prepare them for success in a continually globalizing world. Unlike the PGE participants, the CLS participants had much to say about cultural differences that they experienced while in India. For example, one student told me about local women who were commenting on how fair her skin color was, as fair skin is prestigious in India. She explained,

> We were waiting to go to Bapu Bazaar. We were waiting for the rickshaw. I stood as far away from the group as I could, but I think it was bad choice. They were curious in an invasive and uncomfortable way. They were commenting on my skin color. They were poking my face and some lady had my hand and was passing it around…They were saying things that I could not understand. Some men at the institute tried to rescue me… Americans have this thing about not being rude**.** If someone did that to you in the U.S. it would not be acceptable. Even if it is acceptable in this culture, if you are not comfortable then you should say something (Helen, July 2011).

Helen, an intermediate Hindi speaker, struggled to express her discomfort with the locals, but her experience exemplifies what many of my peers and I experienced while in India: the inability to understand and control what was happening. What is challenging to identify is if you are being pushed out of your comfort zone in such a way that you will grow and learn or if it is in such a way that you are putting yourself in a dangerous situation. Though Helen sees this experience as one in which she had the right to tell the

locals to stop, she also made an important realization about American culture and the boundaries of her comfort zone.

CLS participants shared many other experiences that they considered to be different. Steve mentioned that during his first day in India gypsies tried to hypnotize him. Gina discussed how the questions that locals ask sometimes seemed so much more personal and unexpected than what she would consider appropriate to ask in the United States. For example, some students explained the discomfort they felt when answering questions about their income, what their acne was, or in the case of Helen, why their skin was so fair. Students in India may or may not have been trying harder to immerse into the culture, but one thing is for certain: "being in India you have no choice but to let things happen to you" (David, August 2011). Such was not the case in Australia.

From the journals that I kept, I could tell that I was questioning myself in India more so than in Australia. I went through culture shock in India, but not in Australia and ultimately I feel that I learned more about the host country, my home country, and myself while I was in India. Perhaps it was because studying abroad in India was the longest I had ever gone abroad for; in fact, one might argue that the culture shock that I went through in India I could easily have experienced in Australia had I gone to Australia prior to going to India. Yet, the culture shock that my peers went through in the case of India or did not go through in the case of Australia should be enough evidence to show that I was the rule, not the exception.

My encounter with the aboriginal woman on North Stradbroke Island was the extent of discomfort that I experienced in Australia. Besides this one encounter, I was able to adjust rather quickly to the differences that were present in Australia. For

instance, I found the public transport to be similar to what I experienced on the bus I took to high school. Moreover, I was not afraid of getting lost because I would ask someone for help in English. Knowledge of the language was useful not only logistically, but also academically. For example, the Australian professors taught differently, but they were speaking English, and if I needed to clarify anything I could always email them just as I could email my professors at Union. In India, I predominantly rode rickshaws to move around Jaipur, which were sometimes challenging to find and even more challenging to get a fair price from. I got lost all the time, but it was not as simple as going up to anyone and asking for directions. There was doubt about whom I should ask, and of course there was doubt in my ability to speak Hindi in such a way that I would actually be able to find my way home. Though the teachers at AIIS were catering toward the needs of the American students, they still spoke in Hindi and were constantly pushing participants out of their comfort zones. Everyday I was tested; whether it was my Hindi skills, my patience, or my level of comfort, I was pushed and when I was not in my bedroom alone, I had no choice but to "let things happen to" me.

As an Alumni Ambassador of the CLS Program, I have had many opportunities to reflect upon my experiences as I receive questions from people who are interested in applying. Recently, I have been working on "Share Your Story," an initiative of the online international social network that I am apart of because of the CLS program. After answering the questions, I sent in my responses and waited to hear. More recently, I have heard back from the network manager, who had some follow-up questions as my "story" was being considered for publication. One of the questions and the subsequent answer is pertinent to the current study.

Questions from website manager: The feeling of being an "outsider" is probably

> one of the most difficult challenges to deal with abroad. How did you overcome that language and cultural barrier? What would you tell other American exchange students who feel the same way? Is there anything one can do to prepare, or do you think that feeling is unavoidable?
>
> My response: My understanding of the purpose of study abroad is ultimately to make the unfamiliar more familiar. The idea of making a foreign culture familiar is not just a process that happens to the individual who is abroad, but is also something the hosts and other locals are a part of. The increased familiarity is not something that starts happening when you go abroad and stops happening when you return home, rather, it can be a lifelong experience. So first off understanding an international endeavor, such as CLS, as a cross-cultural exchange in which both parties (foreigner and local) can benefit, somehow makes the "outsider complex" a little less daunting. Of course there were days (in India) in which I wished I could change my race to better "fit in" and not feel like an outsider, but that is impossible. I found myself focusing on what I did have control over as opposed to what I had little or no control over. I put a lot of blood sweat and tears into learning Hindi and trying to understand (as opposed to deny) the differences that exist between *them* and *I*. With that being said there are also a surprising amount of similarities. For example, though I watch ice hockey and they watch cricket we still both enjoy the spirit and competition that takes place in these respective sports.
>
> There are going to be times when feeling an outsider is unavoidable, but that is a feeling that can happen in an American high school or university setting. It is certainly not a fear that should deter an individual from studying and/or living abroad, in fact, it is feelings like this that make us struggle, think, understand, and learn from these experiences. So the question is why would you avoid it? Eeekkks! I know that sounds silly, but why bother going abroad if you want to avoid the differences that you allegedly came abroad to experience in the first place? Of course there are right and wrong ways to "jump" into this. Realizing one's limitation is important and proper reflection is compulsory. Keep a journal, or a blog! This will give you a space to collect your thoughts and emotions, which will ultimately help you fully appreciate the changing that you go through during your international experience!"

Feeling like the outsider is definitely uncomfortable, but students need to be encouraged to overcome what makes them feel uncomfortable so that they can better immerse themselves into the culture. This brings me back to the distinction that Storti made between two types of adaptation. The first adaptation was about the individual getting used to the locals' behavior and the second adaptation was when the individual adjusted his or her behavior so that they do not cause any discomfort for the locals. Many students quickly found ways to avoid being uncomfortable (spending time with Americans, going

to a western style mall, or eating American food), but seemed to be less focused on the form of adaptation that considers the comfort of the local.

Free Time: Insight into What Students Do While Abroad

"I think that cultural immersion is about constantly putting one's self just beyond one's comfort zone, because otherwise we are not forced to interact…Today I made a pact with myself that I would not enter a Western style mall unless it is absolutely necessary."
Jessica Sarrantonio (June 28, 2011)

When an idea goes from being just an idea to being an action, there are disconnects which can lead to unanticipated and sometimes undesired outcomes. These outcomes, in the case of study abroad, can be reflected in what students say they gain from their study abroad experience. Survey studies and pre- and post-program interviews assume that the students will put proper reflection into their surveys and interviews, but also that they care or feel comfortable to share. My interviews could have attained honest insight into what my peers were thinking, but it was my observations that make my understanding a holistic perspective of what happened to participants while they were abroad. To understand and solidify this, it is important to take a look at what my peers say they did in their free time while studying abroad as opposed to what I actually observed them doing.

While studying at AIIS, I asked thirteen students, "How much free time do you have? And what do you usually find yourself doing in that free time?" Later, in Australia, I asked the same questions to eighteen participants. The answers led to an unorganized list of the words and phrases students used to describe the activities that filled their free time. These words and phrases fit into eleven categories: computer related-activities, spending time with American students, seeing places (local), contacting home, studying, blogging, cultural activities, spending time with locals, travel, miscellaneous and American things. American things is actually a phrase that two participants used to describe what they did while abroad. Some of the activities that students said they were

doing were specific such as going to Lone Pines (an animal sanctuary in Brisbane), but other times they were rather vague, for example, many students responded that they "go out." Go out with whom? To where? And how often? Through observations and my own behavior it became obvious that "go out" in Australia and India meant the same thing that it does in America: imbibing alcoholic drinks, clubbing, and/or bar hopping, but in almost all cases it means in the company of fellow Americans. Though content analysis is a proven way to organize and analyze data, there are limitations, such as activities that can fit into two or more of the categories that were made. No categories reflect this concern more than the ones called "seeing places" and "miscellaneous." In the "seeing places" category activities included "wandering," "sightseeing," "exploring," "buying things," "chilling around the city," "going to the mall," "going to Lone Pines," and "checking something out." Miscellaneous activities included a wider range, which varied from reading to relaxing, or from watching television (alone) to playing sports.

These eleven categories were then organized into one of three groups: Study Abroad, Neither, and Non-Study Abroad. Categories placed under Study Abroad included spending time with locals, studying, and cultural activities. Neither included travel, seeing places, blogging, and miscellaneous. Non-Study Abroad included spending time with Americans, American things, computer related activities, and contacting home. Each of these activities was placed into one of the three more general categories because I classified them as activities that students should ideally partake in while studying abroad (Study Abroad), activities that students happen to partake in, but are not clearly a detriment or a benefit to the success of study abroad (Neither), and activities that are seen as a detriment to the success of study abroad, specifically to cultural immersion (Non-

Study Abroad). Students' activities during their free time was then calculated; the outcome of this calculation is in Figure 1.

Figure1. Participants' Responses to What do you find yourself doing in your free time?

Participants	Non-study abroad	Neither	Study Abroad
CLS (India)	Spending Time with Americans **46%**		Time with Locals **38%**
	American Things **15%**	Seeing Places **54%**	Study **54%**
	Computer-related activities **15%**	Miscellaneous **62%**	Cultural Activity **54%**
	Contacting Home**31%**	Blogging **7.7 %**	Travel **15%**
PGE (Australia)	Spending Time with Americans **72%**		Time with Locals **39%**
	American Things **0%**	Seeing Places **67%**	Study **44%**
	Computer-related activities **27%**	Miscellaneous **78%**	Cultural Activity **28%**
	Contacting Home **0%**	Blogging **0%**	Travel **11%**

The first aspect of these data that are of interest is that only four students said that they contacted home in their free time (all four in the India program). Perhaps students do not see contacting home as something that they do in free time and rather as something they have to do like going to class and eating. Students could also be grossly underestimating how much free time is spent video chatting and calling home. In fact, I know through direct observation that students were in fact video chatting on weekly and, in some cases, on a daily basis. My observations are backed by the responses that I received when I asked students in their first interview "How often did you plan on contacting home?" and in their second interview "Who did you contact and how?" How often students planned on contacting home varied. Some said that they did not know how much internet they would have, while others said that they had a plan. Eleven of the eighteen students indicated that they at the very least thought about how/who they would contact while they were abroad. In general, once students figured out their phones and

internet access, twelve out of the eighteen students said they were contacting home at least once a week (parents and significant others). Similar results were found for the students in India; nine of the fourteen students said that they contacted home at least once a week. Students were undeniably contacting home, but did not seem to be actively aware of how often. In fact, only one student, Lilly, from CLS offered the information that she skyped with her family on a daily basis for about an hour.

I attempted to keep track of how much I contacted home, both in India and in Australia. Prior to leaving for India I had expected to contact my family about once every week or every other week depending on the internet. I expected to contact my girlfriend about once a week, again depending on the internet. In so far as contacting my family, my expectations were correct, but I found myself calling my girlfriend a lot more than I had expected. I attribute this to my experience with culture shock. The first three weeks I was in India was when I experienced culture shock, which was characterized by severe homesickness, doubt, and at times a dislike for the host country. The latter was a feeling that I truly did not think I could feel toward a country I had learned so much about. I knew there was poverty, but poverty looks different when it is tapping you on the knee asking for food. I knew that parts of India were polluted, but pollution is different when it is in your lungs and on your clothes. I knew that women were treated differently, but when you are walking on the streets and notice you are the only woman in sight, it makes you feel different.

Another factor that some students underestimated, did not consider part of their free time, or neglected to mention in their responses was how much of their free time was with their fellow Americans. Forty-six percent of the CLS students said that they spent

free time with Americans, but in reality all students were at some point spending free time with Americans, as I observed at the institute during our free time and from what people told me. Some students were in shared homestays so spending time studying or exploring with other Americans was inevitable. In my case, my homestay, though about a ten-minute rickshaw ride to the institute, was a five-minute walk to one other co-participant's house. In Australia, students seem to be more aware of the amount of time that they were with Americans; in fact, seventy-two percent of participants said that some of their free time was spent with co-participants. Does this mean that these participants were more aware of the how they were using their free time? Perhaps, but what is more likely is how the PGE participants were spending time together. That is, in Australia four of the eleven weeks we were on group excursions, which meant traveling on buses and ferries for hours together and then lodging, learning, and eating together. The same was true for the two weeks spent in New Zealand. In India, there were a few occasions when students participated in cultural activities together such as visiting a pottery store and a print making shop, but the only other time we traveled together was on the bus ride from Delhi to Jaipur in the first week and then back again the last week. The free time that Americans in Australia spent with each other was day-to-day as well as in large portions on excursions, whereas the Americans in India it was mostly day-to-day.

CLS students were supplied lunch and chai on weekdays and on Wednesdays some students would remain at the institute after lunch to watch a Bollywood film. Also on any given day students were meeting with peer tutors after class hours. Students at the institute were at a disadvantage because there they really could only interact with each other at lunch. Occasionally lunch with the teachers was possible, but usually they ate in

a separate room. In Australia, though participants were not enrolled as students at the University of Queensland, they had the option of interacting with Australians on campus, during lunch, and after class. A few students took advantage of the opportunity and approached other local students on the quad, but most of the time we found ourselves staying in our comfort zones, gathered in one or two American circles. Yes, we would be out on the quad, but minimal effort was made to approach other University of Queensland students. Still, many participants claimed that they did not have the chance to meet locals. In fact, one female student, Taylor, said that "I knew we would have about the amount of free time that we did," and later said "I met a few locals, but did not get the chance to meet that many locals." Additionally when asked, "How did the locals behave?" Taylor said, "I do not even know if most of the people I spoke with were locals. Most people I spoke to were from different places." Like Taylor, many of the students found themselves socializing with other foreigners. This fact speaks to the idea that they were caught, whether on purpose or not, in routine that was not as locally influenced, as it should be, but instead was guided by a tourism infrastructure, despite the warnings in the pre-departure material. On Wednesdays, there was teatime when students, UQ faculty, staff, and administrators, and the American faculty would meet. On two occasions the participants who I was studying abroad with would be joined by other groups of Americans, from different colleges and universities, who were essentially completing the same study abroad program. Much of PGE students' free time was spent with other Americans. Some of this time was inevitable, such as in the homestay, but other times students decided that they were going to, and ultimately they did, spend time with one another. Even in students' free time alone they would find themselves doing things that

were not related to the host country, such as watching televisions shows from home. Perhaps making a list of books and films about the host country that students can read and watch in their free time might help students occupy this time with other activities that are related to where they are studying or living.

Forming a Routine

"One thing that was nice for me was when we were at a coffee shop drinking coffee and we walked out and I realized that I was in India. Doing things in my everyday life and doing them here."
Aria, Critical Language Scholar (June 2011)

While in India and Australia I started to have a routine. In India I would wake up, feel sick, eat breakfast, catch my rickshaw (if it came on time), go to classes, eat lunch, meet with my peer tutors, or go to Katputlii Colony (where I taught children English), go home for chai with Dadi[1], take a shower, and study Hindi. In Australia I would wake up, eat breakfast, catch my bus, go to classes, eat lunch, attend more classes, perhaps do something with American peers, then head home, study, eat dinner, study, and sleep. These routines are similar in function to the routine that I would have followed at college or at home.

Besides the mundane tasks that I did every day, in India I was trying to distinguish myself from the other foreigners. I, like most of my CLS peers, did not want to be associated with the tourists; therefore, I wore Indian clothes, ate Indian food, and spoke in Hindi with the locals. I noticed this pattern and I began to ask my peers, "Do you feel you are different from other foreigners you have seen/met in India? If so, why?" As suspected, students in India did perceive themselves as different from the other foreigners and some even explained their feeling as being a "better" foreigner. For example, Catherine, a beginner, said;

> …We're not in India just to do a tour, or see temples, or strictly to conduct a business deal, or hike the Himalayas…we're here to learn the language. That is different to many videshis[2]. And unlike many people

[1] Dadi is the word Hindi speakers use to identify their paternal grandmother.
[2] Videshi is the Hindi word for foreigner. "Videshis" is a Hindi-English word that many students used in casual conversation. In Hindi videshi means foreigner, but to make a

> who may view India as a "trip in a life time" experience, I have every intention to keep coming back here…I also study India, so I have more perspective on issues that other foreigners may not even care to learn about (Catherine, June 2011).

Catherine felt that the time she had put into learning about the host country made her more capable of understanding India. Unlike someone who is a tourist in a country, she discusses her desire to come back, a common feeling that many CLS participants expressed. Steve said that not only do we make an effort to dress more conservatively, speak the language, and eat the food; we also "try to stay out of the tourist areas like in the kingdom of dreams" (Steve, July 2011). Male and female CLS participants were making the effort on a daily basis to distinguish themselves from the *other* foreigners whom they encountered in India. Gina explains how this can be a challenge: "For me culture shock is adapting to challenges and the challenges that arise when you are trying to live in the host culture. I had the realization that no matter how well I speak Hindi, I will always be a foreigner" (Gina, July 2011). Though Gina genuinely wanted to be one with Indian culture she found it challenging because her physical appearance stopped her from doing so.

Ellen, an advanced female CLS participant who had been living in Jaipur, India for a year prior to the CLS summer program had some insightful observations about her American peers in India. She said that while students are abroad here, it is not that they necessarily immerse themselves into a purebred Indian culture, rather they end up making their own hybrid form of the culture. She said this could include wearing clothes that are not necessarily Indian, but that are not something that you would ever wear in your own country. This might also mean developing a pseudo Hindi form (Hindi-English) that

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plural in Hindi one does not add an "s," a characteristic, which is taken from English grammar plural rules.

really only you and your American friends could understand. I have observed some of this behavior in my fellow students. For example, using Hindi-English phrases such as "it's kio baat nahi" (it does not matter), and wearing the "foreign-looking" skirts, pants, and tops that students bought in America and brought to India. Students were trying to assimilate local dress and language, but it is not a process that participants are naturally adept at.

Together Ellen and I decided that the analogy of immersion into a culture as the process of going into a pool is inaccurate because culture is more like a river's current, constantly changing. As much as the culture is changing, the individual who is trying to understand it is also changing. A better phrase to understand what I observed happening to my American peers could be called cross-cultural learning. Though a participant is picking up useful information about the host country, their own interpretations of how something is worn, eaten, said, or danced will be driven by their own cultural backgrounds and understandings.

It is difficult to draw a line between what is "authentic" culture and what is the pseudo-culture that is either a result of the globalizing world or of the tourist industry. An easy way around this problem is for participants to spend time with locals. This time should be as frequent and as routine as possible, and hopefully an individual endeavor as opposed to a group one. Though "getting to know a local" can be a challenging task, programs and participants have many options. Both programs incorporated homestays whose members the participants had the choice to interact with as much as they would like. Of course, some participants "had" to eat meals with their homestays, but they could have just as easily eaten out with a group of Americans. Also, being in a homestay and

interacting with one's homestay are two completely different actions. For example, in Australia and India there were many times that I had the option to either stay in my room and do work or go to a more central part of the house where I was likely to encounter and talk with my homestay family members. This is a balance that is difficult to find, but making the distinction is the first step in finding that balance.

The staff at AIIS, for the first time, was trying to implement a peer tutor program, in which each student was matched up with a local student (of the same gender). Students were required to meet with their peer tutors at least two hours a week, but there were a lot of limitations as to how, when, and where these students could meet. The main purpose of the peer tutors was to allow students to speak and listen in Hindi without the fear and tension that comes with doing so outside of the classroom. Unfortunately, despite consistent effort and hard work from the AIIS staff, many times it was unorganized and hard to find space for students to meet. The institute was already really a tight space; therefore, adding an additional fifteen bodies every other day, made it that much more uncomfortable. By mid-program the AIIS staff organized rickshaw rides to a different building about five minutes away. Many CLS participants stated that they did not like that the required time with the peer tutor had to either be at the institute or at the new building. Some students believed that it was an awkward set-up to begin with and that it would be better if students could go exploring the city with their peer tutors. Time spent with peer tutors, outside of that required, was not highly encouraged, but as long as participants were not breaking any rules, nothing could be done about it.

From observation, it seemed that a handful of participants benefitted from their peer tutors. It was evident that in most cases, the advanced students and intermediate

students, reaped most of these benefits because conversation in Hindi flowed better than it did between the beginners and their peer tutors who were most of the time conversing in English. My peer tutor experience was unique in that I had to switch my peer tutor about half-way through the program. When I met my first peer tutor, I was uncertain if it was a good match. Unfortunately, she was not very patient and I found myself reminding her countless times throughout our sessions to only speak in Hindi. Though there were times when she was helpful, there were also times when she would get frustrated with me. During one session she was constantly texting on her phone. I had asked her to repeat something because I had forgotten how to say it. She replied "what is the point, you are just going to forget it in ten minutes anyway." Part of learning a language is dedication, but a lot of it has to do with self-confidence. Having a local say something like that, was discouraging and I was fed up. When I explained the situation to one of the staff members, she was quick to get me a new peer tutor and said that she did not like my peer tutor's attitude to begin with. My new peer tutor was patient and encouraged me to try despite how many times I said something wrong. I wish she had been my peer tutor from the start because she actually spoke in Hindi with me and I think my listening skills would have been that much better. Having a peer tutor is a wonderful idea, and should not be excluded from programs where language acquisition is not a goal. That is, the PGE participants could have also benefitted from meeting with peer tutors. As exemplified by my two very different experiences, there is a lot of variation in the benefits of peer tutors. More of an effort needs to be made to select local students who respect that the participant is trying to learn the local language because speaking to them in English, and demeaning them can actually be detrimental to their language acquisition.

Students' routines while studying abroad offer insight into their attitude as to whether they saw themselves as students who are there to learn about and be apart of the culture or as students who are tourists there to view the culture. Additionally, reflection on these daily activities is crucial because activities on the surface can seem to be "Indian" or "Australian," but might instead be a variant, whether large or small, of the actual host culture.

Students' motives for studying abroad are evident when we look at their actions. For example, during the CLS orientation program in Gurgoan (just outside of Delhi), the entire group of sixty rode in our "Tour" bus to the "Kingdom of Dreams," a place that later many participants deemed the "Kingdom of Nightmares." The "Kingdom of Dreams" is a large building with all of the states of India represented through cuisine and gift shops. Though the other visitors in the "Kingdom of Dreams" were Indian (locals), it was still clearly a tourist attraction as many of the visitors were upper-class Indians who were traveling. Participants were complaining and wondering why the AIIS staff thought that this would be an excursion that we would enjoy. One student said it was the ultimate form of the commoditization of a culture. By the end of the night, the students, myself included, were tired and disgusted by the attempt to put all of India's splendors into a warehouse. In fact, in my journal I wrote that "it was a strange feeling, having that form of cultural entertainment even though the actual culture was literally all around the building that contained the "Kingdom of Dreams." Though our "Tour" bus said otherwise, the participants of CLS did not want to be tourists. Their outrage and disgust that they expressed at the "Kingdom of Nightmares" was an early observation that I made that exemplified that CLS participants were distinguishing themselves from tourists.

Early program observations also afford understanding about the PGE participants' attitude toward their study abroad experience. Our first week was spent on North Stradbroke Island at one of the University of Queensland's research centers. Unlike our introduction to India where we lived in top hotels during orientation, on North Stradbroke we were treated like students with eight women to each room and the six male participants sharing a room. One of the first patterns that I noticed was that the PGE students complained about many things, from the food that the research center staff prepared, to the sound that the birds made in the morning, to the unfortunately close living situation. Another factor that I noted was that "a lot of students seemed genuinely excited to learn, and meet the people in their homestays, but many of them have packed a lot of belongings…" Classes started on North Stradbroke Island, but students did not seem to be in the mood to be in class, even though they were saying they were excited to learn. In fact, while on North Stradbroke, one group of participants was particularly interested in "getting their drink on" or "going out," a desire that seemed to be the focus of a lot of free time while abroad. Perhaps because the students were just returning from summer break or they were tired from jet lag, they could have thought they were going to be learning in a different way so sitting in a classroom did not fit their expectations. Perhaps we were in a vacation mode. It is as if these participants were driven by the dominant discourse that Gores discussed, that is study abroad as being a Grand Tour, when the experience is favored over genuine learning, both outside and inside the classroom. Whether the behavior was due to this mindset or not, the PGE participants discontent with the amount of time they spent studying was prevalent.

The marine biology and ecology professors from UQ lectured while we were on North Stradbroke Island. Out of all the staff and professors, the terrestrial ecology professor captured the students' attention the most, and one student said that the professor was what he had expected a typical Australian to be like. He shared with the students his passion for plants and really made me enjoy terrestrial ecology, a course that I originally was not thrilled to take. On a few occasions, he took us on walking tours to show us the landscape, the birds, and, of course, the koalas. Students, especially women, were excited and happy to see their first koala. These sightings, whether of koalas, kangaroos, or wallabies, never became old. In fact, after the first week of classes at UQ, students, along with their American faculty, went to Lone Pines, a local koala sanctuary. I turned down the offer, knowing that being in a group would not be beneficial to gaining positive reactions from locals, and I had no desire to hold a koala. These students, though engaged by what was around them, definitely had tourist-like expectations of what they were going to see and do.

In my introduction, I pondered whether the bonding that takes place in Turner's liminal phase is one that happens between the Americans and the locals or the Americans and the Americans. In both cases, unless the participant knew someone from the host country before the study abroad experience, I observed a deep bonding between the participants of the program. Donna, an intermediate Hindi speaker who had been to India before, when explaining why she wanted to stay in contact with people from the program she said, "You live with these people, puck together, and learn together." Participants in both programs were going through a liminal phase together; therefore, though sometimes an unspoken goal, many participants were in pursuit of making ties with one another. I

also claimed that at the end of a program a participant who does not want to go home has likely integrated into the host country and those that are anticipating their return home are likely the ones who did not integrate well or perhaps spent most of their time bonding with Americans. In some cases this was true, but overall a participant's attitude about returning is not a legitimate gauge of their immersion into the host country. For example, one PGE participant, Jade, who was one of the most integrated students in the entire program, was missing home and kept imagining a reunion with her family at the airport. She also discussed how much she was going to miss Australia. Many participants had mixed feelings about returning home. These observations, such as the bonding that I observed between my peers, remind me of Morgan's two extreme individual types. The students who bonded with their co-participants could be called cultural opposites as they might be trying to experience what it is that they have back home through the company of their co-participants.

The Homestay Experience

"Well I live with an older couple in their 60s and they have two kids living in the house…They are a blue collar family and I am not saying my family is rich…It is a different experience living in the house. This is their 19th year [hosting an international student] and they are super nice. They do everything for me and I can be out to whenever. I have freedoms, facilities, and internet."

Andrew, Partners in Global Education Participant (November, 2011)

The reality of study abroad is clear when observing what students do while abroad. Though pre- and post- program surveys have been a tool that institutions use to measure the effect of study abroad this method has many shortcomings that does not allow for a transparent evaluation of study abroad. One particular aspect of study abroad that is challenging to evaluate is the homestay experience. The homestay is a critical part of both programs, particularly when considering the participants' interactions with the locals. Even though it is a planned way for participants to be involved with the local culture, it can still lead to other unplanned encounters with the host country. As previously explained, CLS participants had the option to live in a homestay, apartment, or hotel. Unfortunately, it is unclear to me whether some of the locations in which my co-participants were residing should be classified as homestays or apartments. Of the fourteen students whom I interviewed, only two of them were in homestays as the sole American The rest of the participants that I interviewed had either one or more co-participants living in the same homestay. None of the participants were living in a hotel, but many of the "homestays" were more like guesthouses in which students would share a floor with their fellow Americans and the family would reside on a different floor. Though these participants would occasionally have interaction with their homestay families, they were, for the most part, on their own. PGE participants were required to

reside in a homestay, but again some students explained how they had their own private space, away from the family. In fact, in my Australian homestay, a male co-participant and I slept on a separate floor with our own bathroom. Still, we would go up stairs to eat meals, watch television, and chat with our host parents.

Students in both programs had the opportunity to switch their homestays if they felt uncomfortable or if their homestay did not meet the minimum requirements. The minimum requirements in India were that students needed a room of their own, to be fed breakfast and dinner on weekdays and three meals on weekends, and have access to an air conditioner in their room. Students, therefore, were placed in homestays that by default were wealthier than the average Indian family. That is, most Indian families do not have access to an air conditioner. In Australia, students could get all of their meals from their homestays, and also had to have a room of their own. Neither program required that the homestays have internet access, but in India if the homestay did not have internet the program administrators would give the student money to make sure tthat he or she did have access. In Australia, a student had to pay out of his or her own pocket access to the internet.

Both programs had some form of evaluation of the homestay experience, which the programs would use to decide whether or not to place future participants in the same homes. Just as students should be prepared to study abroad culturally, they should also be properly prepared for living in homestay. CLS participants were not required to live in homestays, but PGE students did face that requirement. Participants in both programs were given homestay guidelines. Since I had never experienced a homestay before I arrived in India, I had no idea what to expect prior to departure for India. Though we are

told to not have any expectations, I did have a "hope" for what both of my homestays would be like. I wanted a family, perhaps with a sibling around my age with whom I could "hang out" and hopefully build a strong friendship. It is difficult not having some type of expectation or ideal of what your homestay will be like when you study abroad. My co-participants also had expectations of what their homestays would be like, but were soon faced with the reality of the situation.

I thought that I would be one of the first Americans that my host family had ever met, making me as foreign to them as they were to me (a level playing field). I was shocked to find out that my Indian homestay family had hosted over three-dozen other Americans prior to hosting me. In fact, there was a moment when I thought that "my homestay mom understands what I am going through more than I understand" because she had seen it all happen before with other participants (illness, culture shock, homesickness, etc.) Having an understanding homestay family is important because students will have problems while abroad; therefore, having a local to rely on is helpful. But what happens when a host family starts to change its own behavior in order to accommodate the needs/wants of the student? Students are not experiencing the life of an Indian family or an Australian household. Instead, they are staying with locals who are already culturally prepared to host an American. This becomes detrimental to future students' cultural immersion, as they are not being forced out of their comfort zones to the degree that they would be in a homestay that is hosting for the first time. For example, in India my host family decided that in the morning I would eat cornflakes, as I would not become ill as often as I would if I had eaten an Indian breakfast every morning. Additionally, I felt that there was not much about the United States that I could

teach my host family with the exception of my local community and my college. Though my fellow students did not seem surprised by their hosts' previous experience with Americans, they did have certain ideals for their homestays, such as the level of independence they would have, the number and kinds of people in the household, the kinds of food available, etc.

Grace, a participant in Australia who said her American family had been a host to foreigners, expected her host family to be, well, a family. She explained, "I like my homestay mom, she is outgoing. I wish she had more of a family to get more of the cultural aspect." Though she enjoyed her homestay experience, Grace's understanding of what a homestay should be was not the reality. The fact that the student believes she could "get more of a cultural aspect" if she were in a family as opposed to just living with a single woman in a household is a critical misunderstanding of what her homestay could offer her: insight into the cultural aspect of a single woman living in Australia. What constitutes a "valuable" homestay experience is driven by what the student perceives as valuable, not what the program defines as an enriching experience. Gina, a CLS participant who had lived in a homestay in India prior to the CLS program said, "The first one was easy because the person had hosted American students before and she was not home that much." Whether or not a homestay is conducive to cultural immersion is not just a matter of the student's physical location in the homestay, but is also a factor of the homestay's previous experiences (negative or positive) with American or other foreign students; therefore, students should preemptively be prepared for these variations.

A student's physical location in the home can have a large impact on his or her ability to interact with their homestay family. If enough effort is not put forth by a student

who is not located in the core of the household, this can make the experience very inefficient for the purpose of spending time with locals. Aria, a beginner student at AIIS, when asked, "How do you feel about the homestay experience?" said "Well actually it is a guest house and the family lives downstairs…It is kind of an ideal situation for me because I am not in the family space the whole time." Aria was explaining her "guest house" situation as if it was abnormal, but in actuality many of the CLS participants had similar situations. Their attitudes toward their "guest house" living prove that they do believe that certain qualities in a homestay are more ideal than others. Students, while they might want to learn about the culture, also highly valued having their own space, separated from the family. Gina, the student who deemed her first homestay "easy" because of the hosts' prior experience with Americans continued to explain her current homestay situation: "my current homestay is great and I live on a separate floor so I only interact with them during meal times." If a student is pursuing cultural immersion, he or she should be in the family space as much as possible, not when they feel like it.

Steve, a male AIIS participant, lived in a flat-style homestay with two other Americans from the program. These three students were responsible for making their own food. Steve explained why his homestay was the "best ever," because "they are not orthodox." When asked, "Do you feel being in a more orthodox household would be beneficial?" He replied

> You know I am here to learn the language. I think living in my homestay…is beneficial. We share similar viewpoints and it is actually a stress free environment. I do not think living in a more orthodox homestay would be beneficial for me (Steve, August 2011).

If having mutual viewpoints and a stress-free environment were conducive to cultural immersion then why not just stay at the local hotel? Steve believes that this was the ideal

situation for him, which might have been case. Steve, a very outgoing CLS participant, had no problems starting conversations with locals or making close ties with male locals with whom he interacted on a daily basis. For other participants who were not as extroverted, this was detrimental for their time spent with locals and ultimately their cultural immersion. For example, Caitlin, one of the students with whom Steve was sharing the suite, had never been to India before and struggled to spend time with her homestay family. The only time Caitlin interacted with her host family was when her host family took the CLS participants to dinner a few times. Caitlin, unlike her suitemate, was not nearly as extroverted and a lot of her time was spent with her fellow Americans. As this example shows, a homestay that is ideal for one student could be unsuccessful for another student.

Participants in both programs were told to talk to administrators if there were a problem in the homestay. Such action could lead to loss of hosting opportunity, and for some host families this meant less income. Though I do not feel socioeconomic status played a role in India, that is the host families could do without the money because they were from the upper class, such was not the case in Australia. One pattern I observed in Australia was that many participants would complain about the food that their homestay families would serve them. Most participants would get a packed lunch for school. I would hear them complain about the amount of food and the actual make-up of their meal. Another common complaint was lack of variety; perhaps we just have too many choices in America. Additionally, some participants would outwardly complain that they did not like Australian food in front of the locals. Obviously it is acceptable not to like the taste of something, but to start drawing comparisons about how American food is so

much better can be insulting. One female participant, Jenna, seemed to dislike her host mom for all the wrong reasons. When describing her homestay experience she said:

> …She does not make a lot of money and she complains about the kids. She is pretty stingy. The food is not that fresh and she puts butter on everything and the sandwiches are made out of left over food. The good news is I do not have a curfew so she does not care what time I come home…We went to the farmers market the other day…I think she was appalled/shocked at how much money I was spending (Jenna, November 2011).

Jenna's feelings about her homestay were at an extreme. However, most participants had nice comments even if there were certain aspects that they did not like. Though her host mom could not provide the best of food, Jenna also discussed how they would eat dinner together, a factor that I would also consider "good news." PGE and CLS participants alike, were enthusiastic about getting to know their homestays, but in some cases were insensitive about their homestays and did not seem to realize that this was not just their experience. While engaged in a study abroad, students should embrace that it is a cross-cultural exchange.

Conclusion

In an ideal study abroad experience Americans, regardless of discipline, race, socioeconomic status, gender, etc. would study abroad for at least a year. For many students this is not possible because of time constraints, other academic requirements, and their personal ability and willingness to make a drastic life change. In a time when American students are encouraged to study abroad, there is an odd disconnect between what study abroad programs claim as their primary goals and what the students are actually seeking from their study abroad experiences. To increase the number of students studying abroad, we have to be careful to adjust the structure as well as the length, to fit the purpose of the program and the needs of the participant.

After thorough thought and analysis of the PGE and CLS study abroad experiences, I truly believe that study abroad in a less familiar destination, because of rather than despite how challenging it can be, is what undergraduates and graduates should be encouraged to do. Careful thought must be given as to how to prepare participants to study abroad in a destination that is starkly different from the United States. Whether the student is learning the local language or taking a course about the host country, learning about the host country prior to participation in study abroad will be critical for his or her understanding of and ultimately his or her successful completion of the program. Preparation is also necessary from a safety and comfort standpoint for a student who is traveling to a less familiar destination.

Students who are going to popular study abroad destinations, such as England or Australia, should also be required to have the same amount of academic preparation. Otherwise it is easy for students and administrators alike to be comfortable with the

mindset of study abroad as the grand tour of a lifetime. Of course there are many cases where students are studying abroad not strictly for the purpose of learning about a culture or a language, but in the case of PGE, learning about Australian culture was an overt goal of the program and students should be required to educate themselves about the different facets of Australian culture beforehand. All programs, regardless of the main objective(s), should prepare participants by increasing their depth of knowledge of the host country.

Requiring students to take courses prior to departure probably sounds like a time-consuming and somewhat impossible endeavor. Who is going to teach the course? Will all the students attend and pass the course? What should the topic of the course be? There are a lot of questions to ask and I am only touching the surface. An alternative option is to have students write a pre-departure journal. Students would be given a journal upon acceptance of their admittance into the program and be asked to write about their understanding of the host country to which they will soon travel and should also be highly encouraged to share personal feelings such as fear or excitement.

Bernhard T. Streitwieser (2010) discusses that there is little support for undergraduate research in study abroad programming, in fact, this is a factor that the *Open Doors Report* has never even considered. Research, he argues, that can only be conducted in another culture, requires a deeper engagement and integration of activities with reflection during time abroad (2010: 404). Research will make students reflect more about their experiences and will also get participants thinking about their host country before departure: the same is true in regards to internships while abroad. Depending on the focus of the research, this could be an opportunity for participants to talk to and work with locals with whom they would otherwise have no interactions. Undergraduate

research during study abroad programming should be a focus of future research about cultural immersion in study abroad as it is possible that this will help participants integrate into the host culture. If anything it will give participants something intellectual and academic to do in their free time.

While considering preparation for study abroad, it is critical to understand how study abroad today is different from the time when participants did not have access to the internet and cell phones. Now, with modern technology, study abroad participants have the opportunity to stay connected with their family and friends at home on a regular basis, an action that is arguably the same as "leaving" the host country. CLS and PGE participants alike had access to internet while studying at AIIS and UQ, respectively. Some students did not have internet available at their homestays, but most students did. Even if a student did not have internet at their homestays, there were plenty of options in both countries. For example, we could buy hours on the internet through a private company or we could visit a local cyber café. Though I could access the internet in my homestay in India, I rarely used it because I knew this was an expense for my family. Instead, some days I would remain at the institute and utilize the internet there. No matter how students got their internet fixes, when they did they were usually answering emails, skyping, sitting on facebook, or completing assignments for classes.

More research needs to be completed on what students do on the internet while abroad and for how long. Most of my observations of my peers' internet use took place while we were in New Zealand for the last two weeks of the PGE program. The participants were constantly with one another moving from city to town to village, every one, two, and sometimes three days after arriving. In some instances, all participants had

to share one computer, which was constantly occupied in such a way that other hostel guests could barely use it. Participants became angry if others were on the computer for too long, or especially if they were on facebook, an action which some students deemed as an illegitimate use of computer time. It is not exactly clear why facebook was considered illegitimate, but one could hypothesize that students believe that the activities they do on facebook are not as critical as what they do in their email accounts. Students, prior to study abroad should be aware of the importance of using their time wisely, a factor that administrators can help to advocate. Many Americans are attached to their laptops, cellphones, ipads, mp3 players, etc., especially college-aged students. With that being said, students will not like that study abroad could mean less access to these electronics. Still students should be made aware that overuse or even abuse of these technologies could be a detriment to their ability to immerse themselves into the host culture. Depending on the host culture, being technologically savvy might be beneficial for networking with locals, another possibility for exploration.

What participants do in their free time impacts their general routine while they are abroad, which ultimately makes or breaks successful immersion into a host culture. Prior to departure participants should be required to plan their time in such away that their free time, because it is so precious, is used to meet locals, not to hang out with one another or bond as a study abroad group. This is especially true in the process of group learning, when Americans are essentially always in a group for required classes and excursions, as is true in both PGE and CLS.

Explicitness of the program's objectives should be the goal of program administrators, because telling participants that they are going to immerse themselves

into a culture is not enough to ensure that such immersion takes place. Just as time management is important for any college student to have a successful college career, the same applies for taking advantage of the time that participants have while abroad. It is a common misconception that a person will go abroad and effortlessly "get immersed." Realizing this misconception and teaching students the "how to" of cultural immersion is another topic that should be addressed prior to departure, and not just found as one topic or memo in a pre-departure packet.

Preparation becomes even more important when considering that study abroad programs are becoming shorter in duration. Since many programs have excursions that are an important aspect related to one of the purposes of the study abroad, structure should not be taken lightly. That is, instead of having four excursions spread throughout a ten-week period, perhaps these trips could be consolidated toward the end or the very beginning of program. This way going on excursions will not become the participants' routine, but instead, the participants will be able to spend a consistent amount of time in one location with their homestay. In programs like PGE, where an individual makes routines in the program rather than within the host country students are at a disadvantage when it comes to their ability to form a routine and ultimately immerse into the culture.

What currently happens to Americans when they study abroad can be classified as cross-cultural learning. If most study abroad experiences are similar to the two programs in which I participated, then it is likely that other American students who are studying abroad are not immersing in the host cultures. This outcome sounds bleak, but there are steps that can be taken to improve this process. Moreover, students should not be fooled into thinking that within a ten-week program, when they are on excursions for four

weeks, immersing into a culture is going to be easy; in fact, in many cases it is not realistic. For example, in a month-long program in which the students are touring around the country and never really settled in one location, immersion is not a possibility.

Participants need to put proper thought into what they will feel comfortable sharing with their homestay family and perhaps what their homestay family wants to know. For example, while in India, I did not tell my homestay family that I am a lesbian. Because of my understanding of the culture, I knew that it would not be well received and did not want to make my homestay family feel uncomfortable around me. On the contrary, I told my Australian family within the first week of being in Australia that I was in a relationship with a woman. Putting thought into these decisions can make the difference between a positive and a negative experience, a process in which prior knowledge of the hosts' cultural norms are compulsory.

Homestays, one major tactic that these programs use to benefit the participants of the program, might not be the most conducive accommodation when considering the participants' ability to immerse into the local culture. The reality of the "homestay" is that many of the participants end up being placed in flats with other co-participants. Though there is the exceptional participant, such as Steve, who can meet locals without the help of their homestay, many students cannot; therefore, having an inroad into the host culture is critical for the success of the program objectives. Though not every participant hopes to immerse into the culture, it is important that the participants who are attempting to immerse into the culture have the opportunity to do so. When participants are living in a homestay, ensuring that they are living there without any other Americans and that they are not separated from the core of the household is important. If the case is

that the students are attending a university, then they should reside in a university residential hall. Since my first year at Union College I have met and befriended many international and exchange students and I have seen them become a part of the campus community. Placing participants into this type of community, where they are living amongst locals, is not only less fabricated than a homestay situation, but also the student has the opportunity to meet many different locals. In my house in India the living arrangement was great for making me interact with my homestay family. My Australian homestay family was a good living arrangement because I was able to meet many more locals through the members of my family. More time and effort is necessary for making homestays the ideal situation that we would like them to be.

In both programs, I was disappointed with the lack of attention that participants gave to their homestay experiences. Subsequently, I was dissatisfied by the programs' lack of initiative to start a dialogue about the students' homestay experiences. The CLS administration attempted such an initiative when it sent out a Mid-Program Participant Check-in. This survey covered a wide range of program aspects, including what students were doing to push themselves out of their comfort zones. Participants did not receive this check-in with a positive attitude, rather they saw it as CLS "reminding us what we should be doing." I personally found it to be a helpful reminder of things that I could be doing to improve my CLS experience. Both programs need to embrace the homestay experience, whether positive or negative, which means before assuming that a homestay is not suitable for a participant, the participant has to offer evidence that an effort is being made to get to know the family members before they have the opportunity to switch. Most of the switches in homestay that I heard about occurred within the first week of the

program. Indeed, some of their reasons were related to aspects that would not change over time such as not having enough privacy because of where their room was located in the house, but most of the time, I think participants were too quick to say that they needed a new homestay. That is, if the participants would have given some situations more time they could have adapted. One way to avoid this is to have a preliminary period, in which participants cannot switch unless the situation is putting them in danger.

As government officials and college administrators endeavor to increase the number of students who are studying abroad, caution is critical. Before pursuing the ambitious goal to having at least one million Americans studying abroad by 2017, one must stop and consider: who are we sending abroad and why are we sending them there? How do they represent America? What is their understanding of the purpose of study abroad? And to what extent do their reasons for study abroad match the program objectives? That is, a more extensive application process, when considering the PGE program, would be beneficial for selecting students who are interested for reasons that are in harmony with the objectives of the program.

Another aspect of study abroad that needs to be researched and discussed in further detail is how and why students are selecting the particular study abroad programs in which they are participating. Are students selecting their study abroad experience by program (i.e. course selection and types of excursions), duration, comfort level and/or country? If students are predominantly thinking about the program, it is possible that a lot of thought is not going into how the country they are going to is preparing them for a globalizing world. In addition to preparation, a closer look into the post-program procedure will also be necessary. It is evident that, similar to the ideal attitude we have

toward program procedures (homestay, peer tutors, etc.), we also hold an ideal attitude toward what happens upon return to the home country. Little effort was made by either program to help participants with reverse culture shock. CLS participants do have the opportunity to become apart of an online international network, where they can stay in contact with their co-participants or get connected to past and future participants.

One struggle I faced in my research was trying to gauge how much my peers actually learned from being abroad and how that relates to cultural immersion. I attempted to make a scale on which I quantified participants' depth of understanding in the beginning of the program and compared it to their depth of understanding at the end of the program. Though I concluded that, in general, CLS participants entered the program with a deeper understanding of the culture than did the PGE participants, I was unable to see and understand the progression or lack thereof in this depth. I believe, though it is sad to say, that in both programs there were no participants who actually immersed themselves into the host culture, myself included; therefore, I would deem them unsuccessful. Still there was a lot I could learn through observation and interaction, things that I would otherwise not have learned if I just took a course at my home institute (in America). For example, in Australia, I was able to understand how Australians feel about their country's relationship with England. And, in India, I was able to understand what real Indian food tastes and feels like. This seems to be something that many assessments of study abroad programs struggle to measure. I believe that this is tied to the idea that when you go abroad what you learn or what you have the opportunity to learn depends highly on the individual's experience. Ultimately it is the individual who is assessing how much he or she learned; moreover, an unbiased quantification of this

learning is impossible. Trying to assess this will remain a challenge, but encouraging, or better, requiring participants to consistently reflect upon their experiences is a critical aspect of study abroad that must not be overlooked. Morgan raised the issue that sending students to a foreign country does not mean the student will have a culturally diverse experience; rather, much of this experience has to be initiated by the student (1990:214). In the case of cultural immersion, it is also clear that much of immersion is possible only when initiated by the participant.

Hopefully it has become clear that to make the ideal of cultural immersion a reality in study abroad, staff, but most importantly, program participants will have to change their attitudes and actions in study abroad. Students, despite the bleak possibility of immersing into a culture, should still study abroad, as it can still be a good learning opportunity, and they might discover new inlets for immersing into foreign countries. With the rise of short term study abroad programs (less than a quarter long), program staff can encourage students to get a taste of less traditional destinations; moreover, an effort should be made to offer longer study abroad options to these less familiar destinations. Because a student feels that he or she would be too overwhelmed by a certain culture does not mean that he or she should be guided to go to a more traditional destination. Study abroad programs should not only have a variety of destinations, but a variety of program types to those destinations. It is one option to study the language and culture of India, but India, similarly to other developing countries, also has a lot to offer in fields such as science, mathematics, and engineering; therefore, study abroad offices should diversify program options. Finally, administrators and staff should brainstorm

ways the participants' study abroad experience and cultural immersion process are evaluated.

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Appendix A

Early Program

Have you ever travelled internationally before (whether for leisure, community service, or study)?

What have you done to prepare for this international experience?

Why did you decide to study abroad?

What do you expect to gain from this international experience?

What do you know about Indian/Australian culture?

How often do you plan on contacting home?

Where do you plan on visiting?

How do you expect the locals to behave?
Have you had any different experience so far while studying here?

Are you experiencing culture shock?

How much free time do you have? What do you usually do during this free time?

How do you feel about the homestay experience?

Later Program

Was the program what you expected?

Who did you contact and how?

How much time have you spent with the locals?

Have you eaten any of the food?

How much time do you spend with Union & Hobart students?

Who are the members of your homestay? How do you like your homestay?

Do you feel as if you have learned a lot about Australian/India culture?

How would it be different from if you took this course at home (Union or Hobart)?

Where have you visited since you have been here?

Do you plan on doing anything differently once you return to the US and perhaps when you return to Union?

How did the locals behave?

What have you gained from this international experience?

Appendix B: Questions Added Mid-Program

Has any of your understanding of India (culturally, socially, etc.) changed since you have been here? How?

Have your options of America changed at all?

Have you made any changes in what you plan on studying in the future or perhaps career/professional options?

When are you going back to America?

Will you stay in contact with anyone from the host country once you have completed the program? Who? Why?

Did you learn as much Hindi as you thought you would?

When you go back America what will you tell your friends and family about your experience?

At what point are you in your education? What have you studied before? What are you studying now? How old are you? Do you have professional goals?

Where does you interest in learning about Hindi and Indian culture come from?

How have your outside of the classroom experiences helped you reach your goals?

How did you feel about leaving India toward the end of the program? Is this different from how you felt in other points during the duration of this program?

Did you feel that you were different from other foreigners who you have seen/met in India? If so, why?

Looking back on the program would you have done anything differently? Would you have planned differently?

Appendix C: Participant's Agreement

I, _____, am aware that Jessica Sarrantonio is conducting a research project on students responses to study abroad and the impact of study abroad on students and that conversations that she and I have had during the program may be helpful for her research project.

I allow the conversations to be used for this research (circle one): YES NO

If I answered YES to the above, and my conversations are used, I would like my identity to remain anonymous (circle one): YES NO

_____ _____

Signature Date