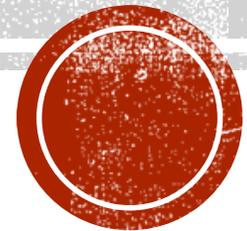


EDUCATION ABROAD AS COMMODITY WHERE ARE WE NOW?



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Katie DeGuzman, University of Central Florida

A BIT OF CONTEXT

- Terminology of Education Abroad: Global Citizen/ship, Cosmopolitanism, etc.
- Desire to package Education Abroad
- Outcomes that are clean, simple and attractive
- Why? To market and sell Education Abroad
- Commercialization of Education Abroad
- Alarms have been raised about this topic for a decade and a half:
 - Alarms continue to be raised, most recently on SECUSS-L
 - Very little has changed and in fact, education abroad is more commercialized than ever



A BIT OF HISTORY

- “Consumerism and U.S. Study Abroad” by Mel Bolen:
 - Published in 2001
 - Situates this issue within growth trends in higher education in the US: targeting a mass market
 - Points to link between consumerism and identity
 - Connects the issue to the conception of leisure time in the US
 - Points to a general increase and sophistication of advertising
 - Highlights the passivity of the EA student who consumes the experience



A BIT OF HISTORY

- Later articles reiterate many of Bolen's points and bring up other aspects of this issue:
 - Link between consumerism and colonial attitudes (Ogden)
 - Rise in consumer terminology/imagery used in Education Abroad (Feinberg, Reilly & Senders, Zemach-Bersin)
 - Education Abroad produces social capital: students see the experience as an investment in themselves (Ogden)

Ogden, Anthony, "The View from the Veranda: Understanding Today's Colonial Student." *Frontiers: the Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* XV (2007-2008): 35-55.

Feinberg, Ben. "What Students Don't Learn Abroad." *The Chronicle of Higher Education: The Chronicle Review*. May 3 2002.

Reilly, Doug and Senders, Stefan. "Becoming the Change We Want to See: Critical Study Abroad for a Tumultuous World." *Frontiers: the Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* XVIII (2009): 241-267.

Zemach-Bersin, Tayla. "Selling the World." *The Handbook of Practice and Research in Study Abroad: Higher Education and the Quest for Global Citizenship*. Ed. Ross Lewin. New York: Routledge, 2009. 303-320.



WHERE ARE WE NOW AND WHY?

- International Educators do not seek to create experiences for students that are:
 - Passive
 - Consumer-driven
 - Packaged
 - Colonial
- Yes, commercial rhetoric and practices continue to infuse Education Abroad...
- We must understand why if we want to change this pattern



CONSUMER CULTURE

- Debt to income ratio statistics
- Vocabulary associated with consumerism has expanded as well as "consumer disorders"
- Terminology such as "shopaholic, retail therapy, and compulsive buyers" has become mainstream.
- According to a Stanford University study, it is estimated that approximately 24 million individuals in the United States alone suffer from compulsive buying (Trussell).

O'Guinn, Thomas C., and Ronald J. Faber. "Compulsive Buying: A Phenomenological Exploration." *Journal of Consumer Research* 16.2 (1989): 147-57. Web.

Trussell, Tait. "Confessions of an Oniomanic." *Saturday Evening Post* 279.6 (2007): 16-. Web.

The Shopaholic, Consumer Culture, and Identity: Danielle Todd, English 370, Spring 2011, UHH



CONSUMER CULTURE

- Debt to income ratio statistics continued- The Almighty Dollar!!!
- Current as of March 2014
- U.S. household consumer debt profile:

Average credit card debt: \$15,252
Average mortgage debt: \$152,209
Average student loan debt: \$32,986
In total, American consumers owe:

\$11.52 trillion in debt
An increase of 1.6% from last year
\$856.5 billion in credit card debt
\$8.05 trillion in mortgages
\$1,080.0 billion in student loans
An increase of 11.8% from last year



<http://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/credit-card-data/average-credit-card-debt-household/>
<http://www.statisticbrain.com/credit-card-debt-statistics/>



CONSUMER CULTURE AND IDENTITY: BRANDING

- The process: Branding:
 - The person transfers the "values" they believe they are purchasing to the product itself, and in purchasing the product, believe they will somehow inherit those values.
- Issue: values are intangible. Products are tangible.

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/WhosWho/AcademicStaff/SoniaLivingstone/pdf/Mass%20Consumption%20and%20Identity.pdf>

YOUTH IDENTITIES AND CONSUMER CULTURE: NAVIGATING LOCAL LANDSCAPES OF GLOBAL SYMBOLS, Advances in Consumer Research Volume 29, 2002 Pages 387-392, Dannie Kjeldgaard, SDU Odense University



CONSUMER CULTURE AND IDENTITY: RELATIONSHIP

- Relationship defined- Mass Consumption & Personal Identity:
 - "The material conditions of consumer society constitute the context within which people work out their identities. People's involvement with material culture is such that mass consumption infiltrates everyday life not only at the levels of economic processes, social activities and household structures, but also at the level of meaningful psychological experience- affecting the construction of identities, the formation of relationships, the framing of events."

<http://en.allexperts.com/q/Marketing-1090/selling-product-vs-service.htm>

<http://www.scoutiegirl.com/product-vs-experience-are-you-selling-coffee-or-seats-to-the-dog-parade-2>

<http://smallbusiness.chron.com/service-marketing-different-product-marketing-3309.html>



CONSUMER CULTURE & HIGHER EDUCATION

- Understand that Higher Education overall and thus study abroad is often considered a product.
- Example- Jonathan Ivy: A New Higher Education Marketing Mix: the 7Ps for MBA Marketing says:
 - " The product is what is being sold. It is more than a simple set of tangible features, it is a complex bundle of benefits that satisfy customer needs. In the case of a university, what is being sold is widely debated..."
- But that something is being *sold* is obvious. The issue is you can't sell a value system and you can't sell a learning experience as product:
 - Learning is not a one-way transaction



STUDENT DEVELOPMENT THEORIES

Perry: Scheme of Intellectual and Ethical Development

- A.** Dualism/Received Knowledge
- B.** Multiplicity/Subjective Knowledge
- C.** Relativism/Procedural Knowledge
- D.** Commitment/Constructed Knowledge

Baxter Magolda: Theory of Self-Authorship

- **3 Questions:**
 - How do I know?
 - Who am I?
 - How do I construct relationships with others?
- **Phase 1:** Following Formulas
- **Phase 2:** Crossroads
- **Phase 3:** Becoming the Author of One's Life
- **Phase 4:** Internal Foundation

Perry, W. G. (1981). Cognitive and ethical growth: The making of meaning. In A. W. Chickering & Associates (Eds). *The modern American college: Responding to the new realities of diverse students and a changing society*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2001). *Making their own way: Narratives for transforming higher education to promote self development*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.



STUDENT DEVELOPMENT THEORIES

King and Baxter Magolda: Developmental Model of Intercultural Maturity

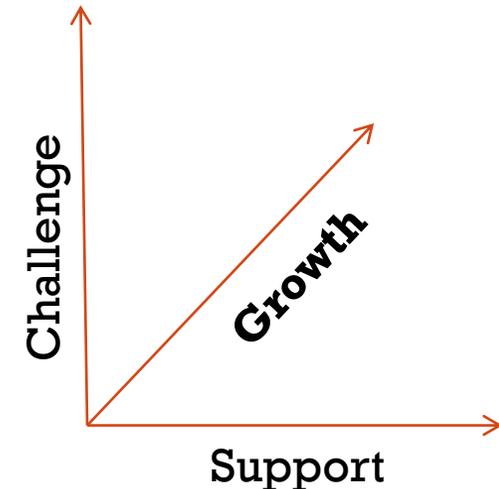
- Cognitive: Initial, Intermediate and Mature
- Intrapersonal: Initial, Intermediate and Mature
- Interpersonal: Initial, Intermediate and Mature

King, P. M., & Baxter Magolda, M. (2005). A developmental model of intercultural maturity. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46, 571-592.

Sanford, N. (1966). *Self and society: Social change and individual development*. New York: Atherton.

Sanford: Psychosocial Development Model

- Challenge
- Support
- Readiness



CONNECTIONS TO EDUCATION ABROAD

- How does study abroad fit in?
- Passive consumption
 - Bolen
 - Zemach-Bersin: Handbook of Practice and Research
- Optimal stages for growth
 - Che, Spearman, and Manizade: Handbook of Practice and Research
 - McKeown: First Time Effect
- Encouragement of first year programs
- Where is the institution “developmentally”?



ASSESSMENT & ACCREDITATION

- The twenty-first century has seen an increased emphasis on assessment and accreditation focused on accountability
- 2006 Report from the Commission on the Future of Higher Education led by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings
 - Targeted accreditation agencies for failing to make institutions accountable and for failing to provide comparative information about academic quality
- Continued federal emphasis on accountability in higher education 2008-2010
- Resulted in an expanded federal role in the accreditation process
- During this same time period institutions also began investing more substantially in assessment and accountability (Eaton)



ASSESSMENT, ACCREDITATION, & CONSUMERISM

- Prove effectiveness so that students (and parents) can make informed choices as consumers (Katz)
- Emphasis on career and job placement
- Emphasis on retention and graduation rates
- Challenges associated with measuring holistic learning
- “It should come as no surprise that spaces on accreditation bodies and within administrative ranks are eagerly filled by those for whom budgetary and curricular decisions are driven by marketplace factors, such as student test scores, transfer and graduation rates, and costs associated with education.” (Gilbert)

Katz, Stanley. “Beyond Crude Measurement and Consumerism.” *Academe*. Vol. 96 No. 5 (2010).

Gilbert, Greg. “Making Faculty Count in Higher Education Assessment.” *Academe*. Vol. 96 No. 5 (2010).



ASSESSMENT, EDUCATION ABROAD & CONSUMERISM

- These shifts put pressure on assessment in Education Abroad
- Parallels commercial language: learning outcomes are the product(s) students purchase
- Emphasizes the passive: learning is the responsibility of the institution rather than the responsibility of the student
- Federal and organizational emphasis on increasing numbers of students studying abroad (100,000 Strong initiatives, IIE Generation Abroad Project)
- ...And some of the same potential issues that arise in higher education broadly:
 - Prove effectiveness so that consumers can make informed decisions
 - Emphasis on career and job placement
 - Challenges associated with measuring holistic learning



POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

- Purge commercial language and images from EA materials, events and sessions and replace with rhetoric that makes implicit values explicit
- Help students interact with diverse populations in the US before departure
- Develop programs that:
 - Encourage students to explore contact zones and liminal spaces abroad
 - Emphasize the local community: how does the local community react to, view and interact with EA and other global forces; examine local cultures and (mis)representations of local cultures; and examine local solutions to local problems
 - Have more class time and more structured co-curricular time



POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

- Emphasize student responsibility:
 - Guided research and reflection
 - Consider not just what you are given but what you owe
 - Student-led teaching and learning
- Set and maintain standards within the field
- Prepare students for discomfort and difficulty and manage student expectations
- Prepare students for social norms within local culture to allow them to better integrate/interact with locals
- Commitment to having faculty and administrators with background to guide experiences



DISCUSSION

- What is stopping us from making Education Abroad less commercial?
- Are there other strategies we can use to combat this issue?
- Can you come up with a sentence that informs students about a program but doesn't use commercial language?
- (How) can we purge commercial language from Education Abroad?
- Is quantity always a good thing? Should every student go abroad and if so, how does that happen without commercialization?

