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Statecraft and study abroad: Imagining, narrating and reproducing the state

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Abstract

Study abroad in higher education is on the rise, marketed as an effective way to produce global citizens and undermine international boundaries. In practice, however, programmes frequently reify rather than challenge states: participants 'study Morocco' rather than 'exploring Marrakech'. This framing reproduces real and imagined realities of the nation-state, presented as externally distinct and internally homogeneous. This article considers how study abroad discourses and practices in North America and Europe 'sell' developing states as abstract 'goods' embodying an authentic 'other'. A case study from Dar Si Hmad's Ethnographic Field School in southwest Morocco considers how various stakeholders reinforce and challenge this approach. The paper concludes by calling for a more nuanced conversation about the utility and impact of states as the predominant lens of overseas study.

Keywords: global education; study abroad; Morocco; the state; curriculum development

Introduction

For many universities worldwide, study abroad has become an essential component of fulfilling global education benchmarks and educating global citizens (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2017; Lewin, 2009; Dolby, 2007). Increasingly over the last two decades, public and private initiatives have sought to expand and diversify study abroad opportunities. These programmes are posited as an effective way to learn to communicate in other languages (Kline, 1998; Coleman, 1996; Brecht *et al.*, 1995), build intercultural competency (Williams, 2005; Dwyer and Peters, 2004; Opper *et al.*, 1990) and enhance openness to diversity (Clarke *et al.*, 2009; Ismail *et al.*, 2006; Wortman, 2002). Host states have been actively engaged in supporting and increasing programmes in their territories, interested in the economic growth, brain power and diplomatic benefits international students can bring (see, for example, Careers360, 2016).

Globalization and study abroad are generally assumed to undermine the Westphalian system (Goldmann 2001), erasing state boundaries and drawing communities together. In practice, though, American and European study abroad programmes often reify states – rather than local or transnational contexts and communities – as the central framework of global education, especially in developing contexts. In marketing and implementation, study abroad is generally framed as experiencing a national reality, affirming states and state imaginaries as the

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appropriate lens for encounters with the foreign, 'rather than the geohistorical and political making and re-making of (already hybrid) cultures' (Andreotti *et al.*, 2010: 15). Participants 'discover Morocco' rather than exploring middle-class Marrakechi culture or investigating Mediterranean continuities and variances. This approach encourages students to interpret their experiences as reflective of a 'state': an imagined national culture, community, value system and ideological space, externally distinct and internally homogeneous.

While the marketing and content of study abroad programmes (and thus, the sector's predominant state-centrism) are primarily the domain of universities and practitioners, host states also have a stake in which narrative about their territory and society is told. States often curate a specific set of uncontested and quintessential experiences for foreign visitors' consumption. The rare programme seeking to undermine state-centric frameworks confronts administrative, security and logistical hurdles from home institutions and host states.

Research shows that intentionality (Pedersen, 2010), pedagogy (Vande Berg *et al.*, 2009; Engle and Engle, 2002) and programme duration (Vande Berg *et al.*, 2012) affect whether study abroad experiences have transformative impacts on participants' intercultural competencies. When these factors are not considered, programme takeaways may be negligible or negative, despite the good-faith efforts of practitioners. However, limited critical research addresses how the framing of study abroad programmes impacts participants' takeaways. This paper addresses this gap by examining how states and state imaginaries are used by study abroad programme providers, students and sending universities, and to what end. The article will argue that the developing state has become an abstract 'good' sold as the embodiment of an authentic 'other' in mainstream study abroad discourse and practice in North America and Europe. This framing can be harmful to both participants and hosting communities, resulting in programming that inadvertently reinforces national biases, undermines critical thinking and tacitly supports global inequalities (Andreotti and de Souza, 2012; Andreotti *et al.*, 2010; Jefferess, 2008).

This paper will examine the role of the state in global education as carried out in study abroad contexts, focusing on the state-centrism of North American and European university-level programmes in the global South. A literature review puts various understandings of global education, globalization and states in conversation with emerging scholarship around study abroad. A case study of Morocco as a study abroad destination considers the experiences of a local non-governmental organization in the southwest of the country. Particular emphasis is given to the dominance of state-centric narratives and how assumed and ordained perceptions about what 'is Morocco' constrain possibilities for local practitioners. The article concludes by arguing for more nuanced consideration of states as the predominant lens of study in international contexts.

Reflexive methodology

'Study abroad' includes a broad swath of overseas education initiatives, from year-long immersion programmes to two-day excursions, and the practice of study abroad varies widely between universities and regions. This analysis considers American and European higher education industries, with a focus on programmes conducted in and about developing countries. While not presuming to represent all study abroad practices worldwide, reflections from a case study in southwest Morocco illuminate some of the potential pitfalls – and prospects – of international educational exchange as it is predominantly framed.

This article is based on extensive field experience as well as marketing analysis and qualitative interviews with stakeholders. Through an analysis of the various actors involved in American and European study abroad programmes to Morocco, it highlights common themes in narration and media. Fifteen of the oldest and most highly attended study abroad programmes were analysed and 20 stakeholders were interviewed, including students and practitioners from both sending and receiving contexts.

The authors spent a cumulative two years working and conducting research at Dar Si Hmad's Ethnographic Field School based in Agadir, Morocco. One author managed the school for roughly two years, a position requiring regular review of other providers and industry best practices as well as daily interaction with visiting students and facilitation of programme orientations and evaluations. The other author chose the field school as a case study for research on environmental diplomacy, with three rounds of fieldwork in Agadir, Sidi Ifni and Marrakech focused on Dar Si Hmad's vision and implementation of intercultural exchange.

Globalization and study abroad: Selling 'the state'

(State)crafting 'global education' through study abroad

'Global education' has been used since the 1990s to denote globally minded pedagogies (Bjerstedt, 1994), including curricular integration of international perspectives at home schools and universities as well as overseas study. The 2002 European Union led Maastricht Declaration defines the term as 'education that opens people's eyes and minds to the realities of the globalized world and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all' (O'Loughlin and Wegimont, 2002: 10–11). It is an 'active learning process' that seeks change by raising awareness about poverty and inequalities (Global Education Network, 2017: n.p.). These paradigms 'advocate that people throughout the world are agents in interconnected, sustainable and thoughtful living' (Hunt, 2012: 14).

The phrase refers to both (1) a particular approach to learning that highlights global interconnectedness, international cultures, histories and traditions, and/or transnational challenges; and/or (2) education in international contexts. Global education has been adopted by many study abroad stakeholders: at Georgetown University, study abroad is administered by the Office of Global Education, and the Global Education Programme at the University of New England aims to 'foster global citizenship by providing the opportunity for all students to study abroad' (University of New England, 2017: n.p.). Multiple for-profit programme providers also employ the term, such as SAGE Global Education and CAPA: The Global Education Network. Study abroad and global education actors have diverse (sometimes contradictory) goals – including peace and justice as well as profit and strategic goals (Shubert, 2008; Redden, 2007; Nye, 2004). This article posits study abroad as a particular practice and discourse within global education, with many overlapping aims, curricular framings and stakeholders.

Paradoxically, global citizenship education curricula endorse interconnectedness and trans-border humanism while often reinforcing patriotic and nationalistic sentiments (Jefferess, 2008). At first glance, study abroad programmes appear to advance cosmopolitanism and transboundary outlooks, undermining the nation-state by 'motivat[ing] and empower[ing] people to become active, responsible global citizens' (Global Education Network, 2017: n.p.). Yet states and state imaginaries remain

the primary and unquestioned framework of the vast majority of opportunities. State governments are themselves substantive players and arbiters of students' experiences abroad: as home states, they determine which programmes are funded and accredited; as host states, they define who can enter their territory, for how long and in which spaces. As emphasized in the Maastricht Conference Proceedings, civil society and local authorities participated but the Declaration 'was negotiated by Governments' and calls 'on member states of the Council of Europe' for implementation (O'Loughlin and Wegimont, 2002: 10–11).

Global education has not emerged passively, an unintended byproduct of globalization and blurred borders. Rather, countries and formal intergovernmental institutions are actively creating and (re-)shaping the paradigm alongside educators and programme providers. Study abroad and global education are themselves forms of statecraft, with practices entwined with (though certainly not exclusive to) national governments and systems of power (Freire, 1970).

Packaging the developing state as a 'good' for sale

Though travelling for education is not a new phenomenon, the term 'study abroad' was not used until 1923, when the University of Delaware used it to describe a faculty-led student trip to France. Since then, the term has come to mean something rather particular. 'Study abroad' generally denotes North American and European students going overseas for coursework, while individuals from the global South enrolled in Western universities are simply 'pursuing education' (Handler, 2016).

Developing states in particular have become *objects* of study abroad. Programmes are publicized with titles such as the Nka Project's 'Experience Rural Africa' and Experiential Learning International's 'Philippines: Work with Street Children' (Education Dynamics, 2017). While students are physically in particular localities, programmes often speak in generic terms about studying 'development in India', 'healthcare in Brazil', and 'tropical agriculture in Sri Lanka' (Michigan State University, 2016). Rather than emphasizing diversity within countries and the variety of possible experiences in new environs, the predominant discourse in the study abroad sector has come to frame the developing state (and industries within it) as a concrete unit. The physical borders of modern nation-states are symbolically replicated in the clear-cut 'packaging' of country programmes.

This state-centrism applies to both the state (the nebulous geophysical borders and institutions creating a 'country' in the modern world) and the state imaginary (an intangible compilation of cultural, political and economic institutions and practices that construct how the 'nation' is conceptualized and articulated) (for more on these terms see Chernilo, 2007; Meyer *et al.*, 1997; Anderson, 1983). Study abroad marketing and programming both shape and are shaped by these entities, particularly in their efforts to study 'states' and in the absence of critical reflection on how borders, institutions and ideas come to be packaged together. Via checkpoints, legal regimes, funding packages and diplomatic representatives, states continue to be substantial actors and stakeholders in American and European study abroad industries. Bundles of notions about common cultures and characteristics that form state imaginaries likewise construct and constrain the possibilities of study abroad, especially as they impact student experiences and assumptions. Both overlapping and divergent, the state and state imaginary are thus foundational to mainstream study abroad as presently practised.

This state-centric framework of study abroad programmes is not inherently problematic. All scholars, like photographers, struggle with scope and must inevitably

choose what to emphasize and include. But these categorizations matter more than current discourse around study abroad recognizes. They shape students' perspectives, implying dichotomies and boundaries, constructing sameness and difference, and leaving a lasting impression on student minds (Paige *et al.*, 2009; Douglas and Jones-Rikkers, 2001). When developing states are presented as discrete objects that can be studied, participants come to understand their trip as reflective of an entire country and/or region rather than their own lived experience (as subsequent examples will make clear). This is reinforced by the realities of international travel, with states as major entities of interaction. The necessity of applying for a visa, the physical infrastructure of border control, and potential restrictions for non-citizens (on rights to work, rent property, access services etc.) all serve as overt reminders of the state's power and position. Study abroad programmes may be many students' first direct encounter with such mechanisms. Uncritical state-centrism means that an isolated mishap during arrival translates into 'this country is corrupt' without nuance. These framings become the worldviews shaping public perception, voting patterns and global relations.

The developing state in particular has become an abstract 'good' in many framings of study abroad. Students are drawn to the theoretical concept for study even as the physical institution and imaginary they have been sold shape research and cultural experiences. Subsequent experiences and interactions become embodiments of this 'othered' national package. With the increasing commercialization of study abroad (Vande Berg *et al.*, 2012), these intangible state-goods are for sale, with providers capitalizing on the idea of the 'authentic developing state'. A 2015/16 Fulbright English teaching assistant (ETA) recalled how stakeholders engaged in this marketing during their placement in Morocco:

> Host families get paid by study abroad programmes who are paid by wide-eyed American students looking for an 'authentic' Moroccan experience … The placement in the *medina* [historic walled sector of the city] and the emphasis that the host family is where we're guaranteed to have a 'true Moroccan experience' perpetuates the image of Morocco as 'exotic' or 'different'. I'm wondering if [the programme provider] would have pressed this image as much if, say, we were staying in a trendy apartment next to the Morocco Mall ...

The developing state as a good for sale and study in global education is further examined through a case study of study abroad trends in Morocco in the following section. This case highlights the challenges created in a particular national context and the impacts of state-centric frameworks on students and local practitioners.

Studying (in) Morocco

Morocco has become an increasingly popular destination for students from the USA, Europe and Western Africa, particularly in the wake of instabilities making study in other regional destinations less accessible. For a relatively small country (both in terms of geography and demography), Morocco is a major study abroad destination: in 2015, more American students studied in Morocco than any other Arabic-speaking country (IIE, 2016a). Of the roughly 68 countries in the Middle East and Africa, only Israel and South Africa receive more study abroad participants annually (IIE, 2016a).

We highlight Morocco in this article in part because it is a developing country and a major study abroad host, two factors allowing for compelling analysis. The authors' experience with local practitioners in the country also lends depth to the investigation.

Trends in Morocco do not mirror those of other regions exactly, and this case study is intended merely to provide qualitative insight into the trend of framing and narrating study abroad as 'experiencing' a state. It also highlights the various roles played by the Moroccan state, sending universities, programme practitioners and study abroad participants in reinforcing particular narratives of 'Morocco' at the expense of other possibilities.

Marketing Morocco as a study abroad destination

Study abroad programmes in Morocco are generally concentrated in northern urban centres with a heavy focus on Arabic studies: the majority of local programme hosts are language centres offering courses in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Moroccan Colloquial Arabic (MCA). Both international and local programme providers use four recurring conceptual images in the marketing of Morocco as a study abroad destination: (1) a tolerant 'mosaic' of diverse cultures, languages and religions; (2) a geographical and cultural bridge between Europe, Africa and the Arab region; (3) a developing country grappling with the artificial dichotomy between tradition and modernity; and (4) an impoverished African country in need of aid. These enduring frameworks are provided to the vast majority of Western students studying abroad in Morocco as 'hooks' on which to hang their experiences.

In an overview of their study abroad programme in the Moroccan capital of Rabat, the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) describes the programme location thus:

> A long-time symbol of tolerance, Morocco [has] established a precedence [sic] of openness and cooperation [with] the Western world … As a strategic gateway between Europe, Africa, and the Arab world, Morocco has a rich identity forged by a complicated history of cross-cultural interactions. The result is a multicultural and multilingual society full of contrasts and harmony.
>
> (CIEE, 2017: n.p.)

AMIDEAST mirrors these motifs in their overview of their programme, also based in Rabat:

> Rabat exemplifies Morocco's unique cultural blend of Arab, the indigenous Amazigh (Berber), and European influences … Despite the pervasiveness of Western influences, Amazigh and Arab identity continue to play a crucial role in Morocco's traditional, yet, modern society … From the twisting streets of the medina to the French-inspired cafés, studying in Morocco exposes students to a deeply traditional society strongly influenced by growing globalization.
>
> (AMIDEAST, 2017: n.p.)

Emily, an American undergraduate who studied abroad at three centres in Marrakech, Agadir and Fes in 2017, highlighted:

> What's been really weird is that every single one of our professors has been like 'Morocco is a schizophrenic country', talking about the way that all the different components just don't make sense together in terms of there being so many different parts that don't really talk to each other, that don't make sense together, but still form this country … [Professors say,] it's a very traditional society, but also a very new society; it's moving

> forward, but also moving backwards. I'm not entirely sure what they meant by it, but every single professor we've had has said that.

Fellow participant Sarah reiterated: 'Even in educational videos [about Morocco, they use the same vocabulary]. It's really weird. Everyone has the same words for it.' This is reflective of a cohesive national narrative espoused for foreign students' consumption.

A third Rabat-based local programme provider's slogan proclaims 'Learn Arabic and live the culture of Morocco' (MCAS, 2016: n.p.). Their programme description states that through immersive Arabic curriculum 'students gain significant insight into Moroccan society, politics, literature, and religion, as well as Morocco's relationships with the West and within the Arab world. We equip our students ... to deepen their understanding not only of Morocco but of the wider Arab world' (MCAS, 2017: n.p.).

The vast majority of programmes available in Morocco focus on the humanities: anthropology, Arabic and French linguistics, history, and religious studies (GoAbroad, 2013). These foci, as well as statements like 'traditional customs that are part of life here' (GoAbroad, 2013: n.p.) encourage students to frame their experiences in Morocco as reflections of a nationally cohesive set of exceptionally traditional practices. These discourses may be in conflict with participants' actual experience, yet continue to be pervasive – and often start to actively create students' opinions despite observed contradictions. Recalling their programme orientation, a 2015/16 Fulbright ETA reflected: 'The orientation emphasized so many of the stark differences between student life in the US and in Morocco, but what I observed was that the two are actually more similar than they are different'. Activities often focus on 'Arabic, Islam, gender, the histories, and cultures of the area from North Africa to the Middle East' (Center for Study Abroad, 2017: n.p.), topics that portray Morocco as internally homogeneous and emphasize the 'otherness' of the region. For many students, this is their first visit to an Arabic-speaking or Muslim-majority country, and their experiences in Morocco become generalizations about an imagined Arab/Muslim culture, belief system or way of life.

Given the pervasiveness of these lenses, there is little room for experiences challenging the concept of a diverse, tolerant, multicultural, 'deeply traditional' Morocco. Describing roughly 33,655,786 people over 446,550 km^2 (CIA, 2013) of land as 'traditional' or 'tolerant' serves to render some critiques of Moroccan societies possible, while rendering others unquestioned and unquestionable. This narrative framework also establishes 'Morocco' as a relevant object of study, homogeneous in its diversity, multiculturalism and traditionalism. It erases distinctions between regions, classes and communities, creating a single imagined national reality.

In curating narratives of these images, there are a number of destinations that appear on nearly all study abroad programmes to Morocco: the bureaucratic capital of Rabat, cosmopolitan Casablanca, buzzing Marrakech, the historic religious and political hubs of Fes and Meknes, green Tetouan and the northern port of Tangier. Excursions generally include trips to the ancient Roman ruins of Volubilis, the Sahara Desert, mountainous Chefchaouen, windy seaside Essaouira and a homestay in a rural Amazigh village. Together, these points on the map make a loose circuit where programme providers and local enforcers of the state are generally at ease with the presence of visiting students. Outside these bounds, where experiences for foreign students are less curated, both home universities and state representatives express discomfort through questions and bureaucratic hurdles.

Locals are likewise surprised to see student groups in non-traditional spaces. An American student who studied in Morocco in 2017 recalled that 'When we walked on

the further end of the *souq* (market) it was mostly Moroccans selling to Moroccans. And then there would be us, and they were like, "What on Earth are you doing here?!" So it was very obvious that that was a weird place for us to be.' Outside of defined 'tourist spaces', her colleague said, 'People seemed surprised to see us, wherever we were.'

A non-state provider: Dar Si Hmad's Ethnographic Field School

Dar Si Hmad for Development, Education and Culture is a small non-governmental organization that 'promotes local culture and creates sustainable initiatives through education and the integration and use of scientific ingenuity, within the communities of Southwest Morocco' (Dar Si Hmad, 2016: n.p.). The organization's premier project uses cutting-edge technology to harvest potable water from fog, which is then piped to rural Amazigh communities. Shortly after its founding in 2010, Dar Si Hmad created an ethnographic field school, inviting international students to visit the organization in support of critical research and international study in a relatively underrepresented region of Morocco, while encouraging equitable exchange with direct benefits to local host communities.

As a local provider with goals that are off the beaten path both topically and geographically, Dar Si Hmad's field school is challenged to organize the kind of programmes marketed by universities, international organizations and the Moroccan state. Students, faculty and university administrators alike frequently espouse commitment to the imaginaries of Morocco highlighted in marketing; satisfying 'customers' requires making concessions to appeal to these narratives. Three byproducts of this positionality that pose particular threats to the aims of study abroad are as follows: (1) preconceptions of Moroccan communities as beneficiaries rather than bearers of global expertise; (2) scheduling and time constraints; and (3) course loads imposed by home universities. Offering a study abroad experience that is empowering to both students and host communities requires careful balancing acts, long-term partnerships and participatory conversations between all stakeholders.

Building and running the largest operational fog harvesting system in the world puts Dar Si Hmad in a unique position to provide insight on water technologies, field engineering and local development. However, many students and researchers have come to the organization with the idea of unilaterally providing their expertise already embedded in what it means to 'study' [in] Morocco. After conducting interviews and site visits at a local non-profit organization for over two months, a visiting postgraduate student submitted a list of recommendations for how the organization could improve. When asked if there was anything they had learned from the organization to take back to their community, the response was one of shock: *What could an established organization in a developed country possibly learn from a non-profit with limited means confronting social taboos and legal regimes?* Such ingrained ideas about where valuable knowledge is produced powerfully impact how research is conducted and narrated as well as students' takeaways from field experience.

Time and scheduling constraints during study abroad likewise undermine local providers' ability to create and deliver programmes challenging hegemonic frameworks and offering students the requisite time to critically process and analyse experiences. Most American students study abroad for between two weeks and three months (IIE, 2016b). Short-term (shorter than eight weeks) programmes with chock-full schedules are currently in highest demand (Chieffo and Griffiths, 2004: 166–7), particularly for students in rigorous STEM programmes with little room for 'extracurricular' study (Omachinski, 2013). These programmes pose challenges for Dar Si Hmad: learning local languages, adjusting to new ways of life, and establishing bonds across cultural

and linguistic differences is a hefty bundle of objectives to accomplish in such short periods of time. In programme evaluations, students' resounding feedback is that they needed more time, as packed schedules meant they were unable to digest everything they learned and encountered.

Curricular demands from home universities offering credit generally require a set number of classroom hours distributed in set ways, prioritizing topics and activities deemed critical to studying [in] Morocco. Participants often come to the programme with predetermined images of what is 'worth learning' about 'Morocco', limiting programme scope to topics that students and universities have deemed valuable. Most programmes centre on the well-trafficked themes of Moroccan cultural traditions, history, gender and religious practice, with Dar Si Hmad's water engineering, sustainable development and rural agriculture foci less sought-after topics. Students are often surprised to learn about technological innovation and climate change adaptation from a small rural organization in the global South, but it is exactly these kinds of programmes that defy categorizations and challenge preconceptions. This serves the larger goals of study abroad and benefits both the local community and the study participants.

The prioritization of home university schedules and curricula also sends a message to students about what and whose knowledge is most valuable. Incorporating study abroad into rigid university course schedules indirectly suggests that local communities' rhythms of life should be adapted to semester timelines, while giving students the impression that local timelines work around their objectives abroad rather than the reverse. Dar Si Hmad frequently encounters the crossover between the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and Western universities' summer holidays, when the majority of students study abroad. Local flows of life, work and study change drastically during Ramadan, and nearly all community members (including organizational staff) are less available to host and interact with foreign students. Nonetheless, programmes are scheduled during this time, as this is when students are available and universities are seeking local hosts.

While the tensions described above are particular to Dar Si Hmad's experience, they point to wider concerns of power relations, epistemology and state-centrism prevalent in study abroad. The extent to which these issues impact outcomes and undermine the goals of study abroad warrants careful consideration.

Global citizens from local experiences? Stakeholder impacts of state-centrism

Study abroad has been heralded by practitioners, participants and politicians alike as a critical component of university education. The sentiment that globalization 'makes it imperative that more students study abroad' is widely accepted (IIE, 2017: n.p.). Many in the study abroad industry portray the experience as a unique 'milestone along the way to developing the all-important global mindset necessary to thrive in today's global world' enhancing skillsets and career opportunities (IIE, 2017: n.p.). Many researchers reiterate this rhetoric, with findings suggesting that even short-term programmes have 'lasting educational effects on students' (Omachinski, 2013: 45; see also Ritz, 2011; Ismail *et al.*, 2006).

A growing counternarrative pushes for greater clarity on how the specifics of programme structure and curriculum are impacting students' learning abroad and dialogue about the core aims of sending students overseas for study (Coleman, 2013; Vande Berg *et al.*, 2012). In this narrative, the value of study abroad lies in challenging

students to critically interpret how their localized experiences fit into broader global trends and 'question the very structure and processes that have afforded them the opportunity to participate in the study experience' (Davies and Pike, 2009: 74).

Unfortunately, with noteworthy exceptions, too few programmes encourage this critical approach. Part of the presumed worth of study abroad is in teaching students to adapt to foreign and multicultural environments (Haddad, 1997), yet much programming is structured in ways that reflect sending universities' expectations more than local contexts. Limited or unnuanced exposure to other cultures may cause substantial bias when interacting with host communities (Lee and Krugly-Smolska, 1999). Study abroad practitioners must provide the context and theory necessary for students to turn base observations into thoughtful questions and reflections that nourish critical analysis of the inherent assumptions and biases that frame worldviews. To paraphrase gender theory, education should seek 'not the study of what is evident' but rather 'an analysis of how what is evident came to be' (Mikdashi, 2012: n.p.). Critical approaches to global education should encourage students to deconstruct their own experiences as well as narratives of how states are formed, by who and for what purposes, presenting a dynamic – rather than self-evident – world.

Who speaks for the state?

Study abroad's framing of the state as an abstract good raises questions about who has authority to speak for that state and what the implications of state-centric framing are. The politics of naming spaces, beliefs, actions and peoples are powerful and historically specific (Lockman, 2004; White, 1987). Ideological regimes limit the possibilities of ideas, categories and identities, silencing less powerful voices by forcing them into narratives and categorizations that speak for them and do not reflect their realities (Spivak, 1988). The uncritical use of terminology inextricably embedded in Western hegemonic discourses of 'the other' can reify and legitimize imperialist frameworks enabling pervasive political, social and economic inequalities (Spivak, 1988).

Too often in study abroad and global education curricula, well-intended discourses serve to other, control, demonize or flatten dynamic regions (Andreotti *et al*., 2010; Andreotti and de Souza, 2012; Jefferess, 2008). Instead of making local hosts recognizably individual in narrations of time abroad, they render them stand-ins for state poverty and the ugly underbelly of global inequalities (Woolf, 2013; Lewin, 2009). In order to live up to their potential, study abroad programmes must avoid these missteps by giving further voice to host communities in the narration of their cultures and livelihoods: via programme schedules, yes, but just as critically through their naming, framing and underlying value systems. Educational exchange has been intending and claiming this powerful shift for decades (Fulbright, 1986), but this does not happen automatically.

'Speaking with': Community interactions as intentional pedagogy

In her 1998 piece 'Rethinking power', Allen posits three forms of power: power *over* (domination and control), power *to* (the capacity to create an outcome) and power *with* (collective action and solidarity). A similar approach can be taken to study abroad discourse: we can speak *over* (about 'the other'), speak *to* (unilaterally address), or speak *with* (engage in equitable exchange and honest conversation). This last has the greatest potential in shaping conscientious, global citizens out of both visiting students and the people they encounter overseas.

Through equitable exchange, study abroad programmes positively impact not only the visiting students but also the host communities (Stephenson, 1999). Dar Si Hmad employs local youth as speaking partners for its field school, providing diverse opportunities for interpersonal exchange that push visitors beyond abstract state expectations. One such speaking partner, Abdelkrim, understands this problem as one of stereotypes, which 'are more likely to be the only source of knowledge about one given group or nation when not many social contacts happen with that group'. Abdelkrim thus seeks opportunities to enhance 'social contacts' by facilitating small group conversations between visiting and local students exploring contemporary issues. A Fulbright ETA said of their experience that 'an open space to discuss and ask questions about preconceived notions … with Moroccan students was perhaps when the most tangible moments of cross-cultural exchange and education occurred'.

While the idea that stereotypes can be reduced through honest and intentional interactions is hardly new, it is worth noting that study abroad experiences do not necessarily include such interactions or dismantle preconceptions. One of this article's authors undertook three study abroad programmes sponsored by American universities, none of which included time spent with locals beyond guest lectures in the formal schedule. Instead, they followed the common framework of speaking in general terms about patterns of culture and policy while observing – on the ground, but from a distance.

Reflecting on the weaknesses of state-centric study abroad frameworks, Davies and Pike (2009: 73) suggest 'bringing learning to life with systems that facilitate collaboration and mutual respect' by creating structural opportunities for engagement and interaction. Far from being mere off-timetable breaks or wastes of course time, planned interactions of 'speaking with' (rather than about or to) local communities, whether in informal settings or facilitated group discussions, should merit study abroad practitioners' consideration as critical pedagogical tools, at least as valuable a use of study abroad time as tours, lectures and field visits.

Conclusion

If practitioners truly intend to meet the stated goals of study abroad, it is not enough to push students out the door with a 'just do it' attitude, assuming any international experience will have a positive impact upon students' values and behaviours. Such approaches lead to student reflections such as 'I know beyond a shadow of doubt that Morocco has been such a life-changing experience for me' (NSLI, 2014: n.p.), without further critical reflection about how one 'experiences' a state or how this framing has shaped their learning overseas.

At its best, the experience of living and studying surrounded by a different way of life, under a different legal system, perhaps in a different language, is humbling. It is interdisciplinary and reflexive, pushing students to reflect on their communities of origin, mainstream narratives of other cultures portrayed in the media and the predetermined categories that have hitherto shaped how they see the world. At its worst, though, study abroad reinforces biases and stereotypes and reproduces global power imbalances (see Andreotti *et al.*, 2010; Vande Berg *et al.*, 2009; Jefferess, 2008; Lee and Krugly-Smolska, 1999; Boatler, 1992; Furnham and Bochner, 1986).

This article argues not that states should be removed from study abroad, or that study abroad cannot be a beneficial experience for all stakeholders, but rather that international study practitioners must think critically about how to frame student experiences and encourage students to question those framings. As Vande Berg

suggests, 'Students learn effectively only if we intervene before, during and after their experiences abroad' (quoted in Lederman, 2007: n.p.; see also Rowan-Kenyon and Niehaus, 2011). Further critical reflection is needed on the powerful and problematic possibilities of state-centric study abroad and the lasting impact of particular framings on all stakeholders.

Additional consideration should also be given to who makes decisions about programme curriculum, activities and scheduling (Davies and Pike, 2009: 73). Study abroad sector realities mean that practitioners are often pressured to build programmes based on the interests of foreign students, the administrative requirements of home universities and foreign policy agendas. Inclusive discussion among study abroad providers, educational administrators, host communities and participants is vital to maximizing potential and ensuring that practices and takeaways are in dialogue *with* host communities.

Challenging the state-centric nature of study abroad could mean increasing transnational programme options exploring continuities and ruptures across borders or thematic programmes pushing the boundaries of established knowledge hierarchies. Critical programmes and research of this nature are happening; these efforts should be amplified and made central to discourses about the value of study abroad. They might also emphasize how the state imaginary being sold is, essentially, 'an artifact, not a fiction, but a continual reconstruction of prior reconstructions of prior reconstructions' (Margolis, 1998: 59). Such programmes would push young learners beyond affirmations of existing narratives to seek new questions and break down hegemonic centres of knowledge production.

Study abroad gives cause for cautious optimism (Vande Berg *et al.*, 2012). As the world becomes increasingly globalized and the fates of the world's citizens ever more connected, the need for pedagogy exposing students to different cultures, languages and ways of life is pressing. But exposure in and of itself does not challenge the global hierarchies, inequalities, biases and hostilities that confront today's world. Creating programmes that allow students to address these realities with openness and authenticity is difficult, and 'must be earned, not purchased' (Engle and Engle, 2002: 37). For the impact of study abroad on students and the societies in which they live to be truly transformative, programmes must shift from packaging and selling 'states' to encouraging participants to challenge the very borders and categorizations shaping their experiences. Study abroad has the potential to stimulate the kind of questions and actions necessary to move towards a more equitable and peaceful global future; they simply need be asked.

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