Beyond

The ISI Florence & Umbra Institute
Studies in International Education

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A Message from the Editor

Daniel Tartaglia, *President, Academic Centers Abroad (ACA)*

It is my great pleasure to introduce the first issue of *BEYOND*, a journal on international education from ISI Florence and Umbra Institute.

As professionals working in the field of international education, we all know that study abroad is a transformative experience for young adults. Such an experience takes them to a place—geographical, cultural, and intellectual—that is far *BEYOND* their everyday life and enables them to go *BEYOND* what they ever imagined themselves capable of. Every year, thousands of young adults entrust their study abroad experience to us. It is vital that we never stop exploring and challenging the way we develop and deliver these life-changing programs: we too must go *BEYOND* what we think we know in order to achieve excellence and maintain best practices in the field of international education.

This journal has been created to facilitate the open exchange of ideas, research, experiences, and opinions on the subject of international education. *BEYOND* aims to update readers on the evolving needs/wants of students, assess the current issues affecting our programs, and anticipate the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead of us. This journal recognizes that our learning is continuous. In preparing the launch of this first issue, I often thought about the words of the great Michelangelo, which he supposedly uttered at the tender age of 87: "*ancora imparo*," meaning "I am still learning."

We are honored to have such an illustrious array of contributors, whom we thank sincerely for this inaugural issue of *BEYOND*. As you will see from the table of contents, the wide-ranging and fascinating topics are grouped in sections:

Academics: Teaching practice, research, and pedagogy.
Administrators: Delivering programs and services to students.

Alumni/Students: Testimonials from students past and present about the study abroad experience.

The next issue of *BEYOND* will feature a section of resources, too, including book reviews and useful information.

I speak for the entire editorial team when I say we hope you find this journal enlightening and inspirational, and thank you for being our first readers. We look forward to seeing how this publication develops during the years to come, but it cannot grow without you. So, if you have a unique perspective on international education, please bring it to our attention and contribute to *BEYOND*.

Finally, in the spirit of learning, I would like to share one of the many things I have learned over the past twenty years in administering international education programs. It was taught to me by a friend and mentor, Dr. David Larsen (Director of Arcadia University College of Global Education at the time). He told me, *"In everything you do, just ask yourself one fundamental question, 'Is what I am doing in best interest of the students?' If after careful consideration you can honestly answer 'yes,' then your choice will almost certainly be correct."* That is sound advice that we can all use every day, and it is ultimately for our students' benefit that this inaugural edition of *BEYOND* is now in your hands.

Enjoy!
Daniel Tartaglia
Editor-in-Chief

academics

Archaeologia Magistra Vitae?

Digging Ancient Artifacts: A Metaphor for Knowledge

Giampiero Bevagna

Abstract

Finding a path, connecting the dots, and recognizing patterns in the complex maze of information is our job as affective scholars and teachers. Providing the right tools to navigate and understand all this information is the key to gaining knowledge. Using archaeology as a metaphor, the analysis of archaeological findings from digs are not only valued per se, but are also used as a window into the world they came from. Just like in any modern scholarly discipline, only logical reasoning based on data retrieved through rigorous research can be assumed true gain. Archaeology might not bring one to the ultimate "truth", but we always learn something about ourselves as people and as a part of a long trail of human lives. Setting up an archaeology program abroad helps students gain a more in-depth understanding of the reality of the territory.

Keywords: archaeology, *sapientia*, study abroad programs, classical studies

We live in a world where oversimplification is valued as an advantage; this is the world of the Internet. Gaining knowledge is seemingly easy: you "Google it" and whatever you need to know is there "at the click of a mouse". But is that really the case? Of course not.

The job of intellectuals, scholars, and teachers is to find a path in a labyrinth, discern a pattern in the chaos, and ultimately turn the complex into the easy in order to make it comprehensible for the masses.

Yet, chaos and complexity do exist, and whether we like it or not, we must learn to cope with them. Denying this is just denying reality. The real world is intricate, chaotic, complex and complicated.

What should good teachers do, then? In my opinion, they should

make their students aware of the real world and provide them with the right tools in the tough challenge of understanding it and facing its difficulties.

All this may sound like a tremendous effort. As a matter of fact, it is. But teachers should also explain what their students will gain: knowledge, or *sapientia* – if I may use this word.

At this point, I know that I owe an apology: I am a classicist, and my brain has been trained in the "old classicial" way. Among my models I still – stubbornly – mention Sophocles, Plato, Cicero, Horace, Lucretius, and the like.

It is from this "classical" approach that I cooperate with a team of great archaeologists. Our task (a difficult one, I must admit) is to organize and manage an archaeological field-school that The Umbra Institute created and has been offering for four years now.

Here I must ask my readers for a little patience. They will soon find the connection between the opening lines in this article and an archaeology summer course. But I don't have much space and I don't want to bore anyone by explaining in detail what an archeological project implies. So, I must oversimplify!

Archaeology is no longer about revealing hidden treasures and secret civilizations. It was something like that a century or more ago: in the 1700s and early 1800s nobody was really an "archaeologist" in the current sense of the word but rather an adventurer seeking beautiful or valuable artifacts to be sold in the profitable market of antiquities. Exceptions can be named, but they were extremely rare in those days. Only in time, gradually (with ups and downs, and many tries), a new vision and a different approach to the discipline of archaeology emerged. It was then that the earliest true archaeologists started to define the "right" methods and theories of archaeological research. They did so with the help of and in comparison to other scientific disciplines that were already well advanced (geology and anthropology, for instance).

What appeared clear to these first scholars was that only a well-defined, scientifically-organized, and meticulous method was capable of

yielding results that could be considered valid. Just like in any other modern scholarly discipline, only logical reasoning based on data retrieved through rigorous research can be assumed a true gain.

Archaeology has to do with the material remains and traces of human activities. Whatever object is found during an archaeological excavation, it is valued not only *per se*, but moreover for its being a potential window into the world it comes from. A pot, a sword, a wall, a tomb, a temple, and so on – small or big, well preserved or not, valuable or coarse – are documents. As such, they represent small pieces in the vast puzzle that is history.

We need to remember two things though. First, whatever section or aspect of any past society we are investigating, the whole picture – in its full entirety – is lost forever. We will never retrieve all the pieces of the puzzle. Some are just destroyed and lost forever. Second, no matter how close we are to putting together all the pieces, there is no way to see, think, or feel in the exact same way people did in the past (and that is valid for the recent past, too).

So … why bother with archaeology? Isn't it just frustrating? It might be, sometimes. But just like in many other fields of knowledge, the research is valuable in itself, and even if we don't arrive at the ultimate "truth", we always learn something about ourselves as people, about ourselves as part of a long trail of human lives.

This is part of the fascination that archaeology still holds over us. In the end, archaeology is about people, and not about objects. We work with material things, but we want to search for, look at, and talk to the people who "are beyond those objects".

"Findings" is the easy term we sometimes use to label the archaeological material found in a dig. Yet, this word makes it seem just a casual discovery. This is not true. Any serious archaeological campaign implies background research that prepares and forms a basis for the following steps, which is just as meticulous and scrupulous as the actual excavation process.

But what about all that comes after the digging? This is where the *real*

study starts! The actual work is processing every single piece of information the excavation has produced, and, most importantly, interpreting that data against scientific analysis and in light of logically-reasoned hypotheses.

Well, here we are: back to the complexity and chaotic/labyrinthine reality that all humans live in, contemporary societies as well as ancient ones. Someone may say that our modern world is more complex (complicated, if you will), and rightly so. But this is not to say that, for example, the Roman Empire was an easy and straightforward world. Each period, each human community, each culture is "difficult" to understand. The archaeological field-school aspires to be – are we perhaps a little ambitious? – a place where students learn to be aware of such complexity. This is why we tried to build a program as complete as possible (of course, considering the amount of time a summer program can last).

One of the first issues is that we wanted the program to be open to any student who was willing to approach this field (basically, we want it to be a no-prerequisites course); so, we have to talk to students with different degrees of knowledge in the field, including absolute beginners. That means we have to offer them essential background information and "training" in order to enjoy the learning process.

Another fundamental issue is the duality of such a program: including both theoretical and practical components. This is a big challenge. Let's be more specific on this matter.

Our project deals with the remains of a Roman structure on the Umbrian shores of the tiny Lake Chiusi. (More precisely: in the vicinity of Gioiella in the "Comune" of Castiglione del Lago.) The area sits within the territory that was, in antiquity, part of the "state" of the once powerful Etruscan city of Chiusi, whose control stretched as far as the western shores of the much bigger Lake Trasimeno. "Our" site, which is situated on a hill overlooking Lake Chiusi, comprises a large villa complex spread out over at least three terraces. The 2017 campaign focused on two areas: the central terrace, where a series of features dating from various times were uncovered (including a flight of steps connected with some vaulted rooms), and part of a bath complex on a lower level. All in all, the site looks very

promising from an archaeological point of view. As a matter of fact, it can be considered the only recognizable Roman structure to be scientifically investigated in the whole area. The territory of Chiusi has always been of interest to archaeologists for its Etruscan monuments, above all the beautiful painted tombs. For centuries, amateurs and scholars alike have been looking for the so-called "Tomb of Porsenna", a myth that still attracts followers. Hardly anyone, however, has cared for post-Etruscan material. As a consequence, very little is known today about Roman *Clusium*.

This is why the Gioiella Villa is not just another Roman villa; the research we started intends to broaden the area of investigation and use any possible tool from different fields to shed light on the reality of this region under Roman rule. The scope is wide, and the plan implies work over many years to come. We don't need a few more artifacts from a Roman building *per se*. What we want to understand is how – and why – the inhabitants of this place in Roman times exploited and changed the territory they inhabited. Using labels for disciplines (labels that sometimes have a restricted and somewhat caging definition), we can say that it is not just archaeology at stake here, but so are history, anthropology, and geology, etc.

Here we go again: complexity. Scholars have to analyze a multi-layered, multi-faceted reality, and they have to do it using many different research tools.

As previously said, digging is just one part of the whole program (certainly the most physically trying!). Students also need to learn the fundamentals of many other disciplines, and see the big variety of approaches that modern archaeology requires. The spectrum is so ample that each student might find her/his own field of interest in the broader quest for knowledge.

What were the challenges in launching such a program? It all depends on what sort of teaching structure one wants to create. We opted for a holistic approach. As mentioned above, we wanted our students to gain a whole understanding of the reality of the territory we are investigating together. That means that students need to know about the history of the place, before and after Roman times; they need to know about the geolo-

gy of the territory and how this affects the local economy and society; but they also need to know about the techniques of archaeological research before, during, and after the excavation itself. Above all, students must know the way to combine all these fields and gain knowledge from all of them. Hence, the duality of this program, joining theoretical and practical components, as I said above.

Is this too much to do in six weeks? First of all, it depends on our ability (as instructors) to communicate with students in the right way. What I think is fundamental here is to make students know and understand that it is a matter of cooperation: it cannot just be the funneling of information from above, nor the simple passive fulfillment of duties on the students' part. A good program must create a common ground for both teachers and students where each is doing her/his own part. That is why it is vital to have the students feel strongly that they can only gain from such an effort; and that is *their* gain, for them to treasure forever. No such program should ever start (nor would it have any positive results) if it did not state very clearly from the beginning this sort of "contract" between faculty and students. The latter must be assured that their efforts will pay off.

This is probably one (maybe the biggest?) difficulty for our students. Sometimes they do not see the results right away; it takes time for them to cash in. Nor should this come as a surprise; we all know that this is true of many other disciplines. Once the students have the necessary background, they can fully and deeply appreciate the importance and the beauty of what they do. One thing is the fleeting thrill of taking some object from the ground that has been buried there for centuries; it is another thing is to fully understand the meaning of that object, appreciate its value as a testimony of its period and as a witness of the lives of the people who made and used it, thus evaluating its importance as a document of a society and civilization that disappeared a long time ago.

If we can make a young student see the result of her/his efforts and feel the joy of an intellectual discovery, our program has served its purpose as a little victory over the idea that knowledge is just a click away.

Anyone can dig (unfortunately many in Italy still do it illegally), but only the prepared ones can do it in the right way and can intellectually cash in on their hard work. This is not just windfall gain; this is a gain that lasts forever, that can be shared with the others. In one word, this is *sapientia*.

Rites of Passage towards Adulthood and Global Citizenship:
Transitions and Liminalities

Pierluca Birindelli

Abstract

Studying abroad is a growing and institutionalized practice that seems to constitute a liminal and transitional space-time: a rite of passage towards adulthood and global citizenship. However, the apparently uncontested global meaning of such double transitional passage is questioned by local and national cultures. The analysis of autobiographical essays written by a group of young Italian and American students highlights the significance given to the passage toward adulthood: the "limen" between youth and adulthood is drawn in a different vein and accompanied by different rituals. Becoming an adult and a citizen of the world follows different cultural paths, thus giving shape to heterogeneous identities under a homogenous global semantic umbrella.

Keywords: Youth, Adulthood, Culture, Transition, Ritual, Liminality, Italy, Globalization, United States

1. Introduction

Studying the values, lifestyles and cultural attitudes of young people is of crucial importance both for social sciences and for governments. The models of behavior of the young, the exploration of the areas of life in which they invest their identity resources, and the type of expectations they have of the world can help us understand the conditions and potential directions that the evolution of society takes as a whole. The way

in which the crossing of Conrad's "shadow-line"[1] between the developmental stages of youth and adulthood is achieved (or not), impacts the construction of personal identity.

In addition to offering insight particularly useful for understanding the young, interpretation of this critical passage also casts light on the adult world. Furthermore, exploring the liminal area between youth and adulthood allows us to discern the continuity and discontinuity of certain socio-psycho-anthropological features of the Western cultural heritage.

I see this study as even more useful in the light of cultural globalization[2] processes and the construction of a European identity, from the aspect of comparative research. What kinds of adults will today's young Italians, young Europeans and young Americans be? Will they have the economic, moral and cultural resources to ensure the process of social reproduction? And again, given that the sense of personal and collective identity is built through a dynamic of self-recognition and hetero-recognition, what will happen when the non-European/American Other[3] comes knocking harder on the door of the Old and New World?

Young people today face a double transitional challenge: 1) in the dimension of their individual and generational identity (youth – adulthood); 2) in the dimension of their collective identity (national – global). In recent decades, a growing number of contributions in the social science field has addressed how ongoing globalization processes affect socio-cultural chang-

1 Joseph Conrad's tale *The Shadow Line* (1917) addresses the transition from boyhood to adulthood, in which the 'shadow-line' is a threshold: "One goes on. And the time, too, goes on – till one perceives ahead a shadow-line warning one that the region of early youth, too, must be left behind." As we shall see, for young people in the twenty-first century the shadow-line has tended to become murky and blurred: the threshold between youth and adulthood is less distinct, precisely because today's adults do not offer clear and firm examples of what it means to be on the other side of the fence. For an updated and comprehensive international and multi-disciplinary collection of essays about youth and young adulthood, see Furlong, A., ed. 2009. *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood: New Perspectives and Agendas.* London: Routledge. For an overview of contemporary social and cultural analysis, see Furlong, A. and D. Woodman, eds. 2014. *Youth and Young Adulthood: Critical Concepts in Sociology*. Routledge: London.

2 See, among others, Tomlinson (1999).

3 The Other is the term of dialogue and of conflict of the Self. Without otherness there can be no understanding or identification, in the same way as identity cannot be recognised without difference; see Ricoeur (1990/1992). 'Other' is understood as another person, but also as another nation, people, social group or culture.

es and the construction of individual and collective identities.[4] A growing number of people in more areas of the world, through travel and symbolic media figures, dream and consider a greater range of possible lives than ever before: the core meaning of Self-identity (Giddens 1991) has been reshaped because of the closer relation (prevalently mediated) to a cultural Other. One of the most common denominators in the diverse dimensions of cultural globalization is the subversion of the cardinal assumption of early modernity, namely the idea that citizens live, act, and think in a self-enclosed space: the national state. Hence, it has become necessary to examine space and time compression and its effects on social as well as cultural dynamics, both at a collective level (nations, groups) and at an individual level. The convergence of global culture – the greater uniformity of models of consumption, lifestyles, cultural symbols, and transnational modes of behavior – has been both posited and critically tackled.

The analysis of autobiographies written by Italian and American youths[5] can shed sociological and anthropological light on the ongoing cultural sameness *vs.* difference debate in globalization studies (Robertson 1995). American and Italian youths follow different cultural paths toward adulthood: the "two roads diverge in a wood" of cultural practices and symbols. Thus the shared meaning of becoming an adult and a global citizen stands out.

2. Prolongation of Youth

Sociological investigations carried out in youth studies over the last thirty years concur in stressing the prolongation of the "youth phase", especially in Italy and Southern European countries. Economic and socio-cultural factors have generated and continue to foster a lengthening of

4 For a cultural approach to globalization, see Nederveen (2004) and Inglis (2005). For a communicative approach, see Meyrowitz (1985).

5 I collected and analysed 60 autobiographical essays written by young Italian university students aged 22-29 and 50 more self-narratives from young Americans (age 21) during their semester abroad in Florence. An extensive explanation of the method developed in this study is given in the first chapter "Mapping the Land of the Young: Developing a Method" of the book *The Passage from Youth to Adulthood: Narrative and Cultural Thresholds* (Birindelli 2014).

the youth phase in the life cycle, contributing to the creation of an amorphous existential period, a sort of no-man's-land of life. Numerous elements have contributed to the emergence of this condition. One of the most significant is linked to changes in a series of culturally-endorsed milestones in the transition to adult life: finishing education, finding a steady job, leaving home to live on one's own, getting married or living together, having children. These crucial steps were and are being postponed, and sometimes are not accomplished at all.

The protracted sojourn of Italian daughters and sons in the family home is an obvious indicator of the larger phenomenon of the prolongation of the youth phase. In 1995, 47% of Dutch and English young people between ages 20 and 24 were still living with their parents; the percentage was 52% in France and 55% in Germany; 87% of young Italians in the same age bracket had not yet flown the nest (Eurostat 1997). Significantly, the Eurostat report did not include data on the residential situation of young adults aged between 25 and 29 at the time. Surveys of young people at the European level stopped at 25 years of age, while the Italian studies went up to 35. This reflected a telling difference of a whole ten years in the age at which one leaves youth status behind. The fourth IARD report[6] on the condition of young people in Italy, based on a sample interviewed in 1996, recorded that 64% of young people between ages 25 and 29 were still living with their parents. This percentage had gone up by 3 points since the IARD report of 1992. The 2000 report showed that the percentage of young Italians still in the condition of residential dependency was continuing to rise and had reached 70%: a growth of 1.5 percentage points a year.

In 2016, another European survey (Eurostat 2018) reported that 66% of young Italians between 25 and 29 years of age were still living at home. The percentage of Danish young people in the same social condition was 4%, in Finland 6%, in Sweden 6% and Norway 9%. Moving south, French young adults still living with their parents accounted for 20% of their co-

6 The IARD is a research institute in Milan that periodically performs research on young people. See: Cavalli (1984); Cavalli and De Lillo (1988 and 1993); Buzzi, Cavalli and De Lillo (1997, 2002, 2007).

hort, German 27%. In the Mediterranean area the only country that superseded Italy was Greece, in the grip of a profound economic, cultural and social crisis, at 70%. The same source records the average percentage of young people living with their parents in the 27 countries of the European Union as 38%. Pew Research Center (2016) analysis of census data reveals that 25% of young American 25-29 year olds were living with their parents in 2014, ten points below the EU average.

The processes of construction of youth identity are currently the focus of intense debate in both the social sciences and in public opinion. It is in relation to young people that the concept of identity crops up most frequently, along with references to the identity crises lying in ambush throughout the long transition to adulthood. Understanding the path that leads towards adulthood, and the assumption of the roles and responsibilities connected with it, is a complex and perplexing matter for both policy makers and academics: as a result, representing, analyzing, furnishing theories and constructing identity types is a multi-faceted issue. Furthermore, in western society, and especially in Italy, this passage has become nebulous and variegated: the rituals that sanctioned entry into the adult world have become rarefied. Analyzing young American students' autobiographies abroad, this consideration does not apply to American culture and society, which I would define as "hyper-ritualized." From elementary school to high school graduation, and in college for those who continue to study, we can find, for both adolescents and young people, a smorgasbord of rites of passage. As far as our investigation is concerned, the graduation ceremony and prom night are two of the most significant.

In Italy, besides rituals, even the tangible stages marking the acquisition of the social status of adult have been complicated, with the result that the ford has grown wider. Moreover, the observers of the world of youth formulate their considerations from the other side of the divide between these two life stages. Generally speaking, they are not even close to the limen – from the Latin word *līmen*, meaning "threshold" – and hence are at a conspicuous hermeneutic as well as a generational distance from the subject of study.

> Young people are elusive, in search of identity, of landmarks. They're disorientated by the media suggesting to them (me included) what "our" identity is, telling us what our landmarks should be. It seems ridiculous, but as I see it, it's a vicious circle. We are what someone else wants us to be. (Filippo, age 24)

The point of view adopted in sociological studies of youth is frequently adult-centric. If we also factor in the considerable difficulty that each individual has to address when moving through today's segmented social universe, in which every sphere of life has its own distinct language, then deep chasms can emerge between the territories of the adult and those of the young.

> Maybe with a good dose of courage, patience and identification, someone will succeed in "classifying" us (it drives me mad!); and then, perhaps, he will write about us as the hidden generation. The one that was always there but no-one ever wanted to know. (Matteo, age 24)

The difficulties that sociologists come up against are of two kinds: 1) the real changes in the relations between the individual and the social system: swift and vast, certainly; regarding their depth, caution is perhaps best, especially in the light of anthropological analyses underscoring the slowness of cultural change; 2) the hermeneutic crisis generated by recourse to conceptual instruments incapable of comprehending the processes inherent in the complexity of late modern life. The new visibility and objective vocality of the differences, combined with an enhanced subjective perception of them, build up a cognitive map outlined with great precision and abundance of detail, which charts as new and unknown a territory that has in reality changed less than its map.

The passage from youth to adulthood traverses different spaces and times, often staggered: one can still be young in terms of physical age and have already developed typically adult attitudes; similarly, one can be chronologically adult while persisting in lifestyles that are commonly con-

sidered typically juvenile. As a result, researchers are forced to invent new categories to cast light on new processes and different life patterns; thus a new category of individuals has emerged: that of young adults, who are no longer young but not yet adults; or the other category of "emerging adulthood", coined by the American psychologist Arnett (2004).

To investigate the prolongation of the youth phase, scholars have constructed the following classification: adolescents, 15 to 19; young people, 20 to 24; young adults, 25 to 29; adult-young, 30 to 34. The beginning and the end of secondary school are the passages delimiting the adolescent phase of the life cycle. The education axis is thus the pivot around which the representations of the world of youth are constructed. In the western social imaginary, youth and student status are one and the same thing: it is taken for granted that, at least up to legal age, young people will be engaged in some sort of educational activity, generally secondary school: so much so that being a student has come to represent a structural element of young people's identity. The end of secondary school marks the beginning of the youth phase. In general, the subjects taken into consideration in the sociological surveys are those that prolong their studies beyond compulsory schooling; those who stop studying appear to enter a sort of sociological shadow cone (probably due to the fact they are harder to trace), unless they experience some form of hardship or maladjustment. Around the age of 25, when in theory the individual ought to have completed university training, we arrive at young adult status. Then, in a telling reversal of the terms, the new subject that appears in the age bracket between 29-30 and 34-35 is defined as "adult-young." While attendance at secondary school offers a fairly effective demarcation of the beginning and end of adolescence, the focusing of the transitions between the other phases is more difficult; the characteristic aspects of adolescence are mingled with other traits considered typical of youth and of adulthood.

3. Sociological Thresholds: Eternal Adolescents

In Italy the transit through the culturally-endorsed thresholds considered essential in marking the passage to adult life (completing education, finding a steady job, leaving home to live on one's own, getting

married or going to live together, having children) has stalled. In contemporary societies, transition is marked by milestones, stages that have to be passed through in order to become firmly established in the social positions that distinguish the adult and differentiate him/her from the adolescent. This itinerary has two main yardsticks – the scholastic-professional sphere and that of family-marriage – within which five symbolic stages can be identified that progressively introduce the young person to new roles and social responsibilities. Although not strictly mandatory in terms of the psychological maturity of the individual, the crossing of all five thresholds appears to be essential for the reproduction of a society. The failure to cross these thresholds generates feelings of inadequacy that impede the psychological maturation of the individual.

The results of the IARD reports (Buzzi, Cavalli and De Lillo 2002, 2007)[7] on the condition of young people in Italy relative to the 25-29 age bracket[8] illustrate the crossing of the five thresholds marking the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The first step is the completion of education: in 2004, 35% of the survey sample had not yet completed university or an analogous course of study. This percentage was higher than the 24% recorded in 1996 and the 30% of 2000. The second step is entry into the world of employment: 35% of the 2004 interviewees were not in permanent employment, down from the 43% of the 2000 report and the 56% of 1996. The third step is the previously mentioned departure from the parental home to live on one's own: this is a crucial milestone for the individual who wishes to achieve not only economic but existential independence, freeing himself from daily dependence on parents. While in 1996, 36% of young people aged 25–29 were living independently, by 2000 the figure had fallen to 30%, equivalent to a drop of 1.5 percentage

7 The information gathered in the IARD report published in 2007 derives from a survey conducted in 2004; the publication of 2002 refers to interviews carried out in 2000; the data of the 1997 publication comes from a survey conducted in 1996.

8 I chose the age bracket from 25 to 29 because this is the age when the tension towards the acquisition of adult status strengthens, and the failure to overcome the significant hurdles starts to be perceived as a problem.

points a year. In 2004 the trend seems to be inverted (31%). Marriage (or living together) is the fourth step. It is significant to compare the figures for crossing this threshold with those related to living independently: in 1996, 68% of young people were not married or cohabiting. In 2000 this percentage had risen to 76%. So it seems that, for young Italians, living independently tends to coincide with cohabitation as a couple. The fifth step, the birth of a child, had been achieved by 22% of this age bracket in 1996, but by only 12% in 2000 and 15% in 2004.

The passages endorsing entry to adulthood are clearly being postponed. Almost 20% of the young people between 25 and 29 years of age have not overcome a single stage and can be considered as still in a state of full adolescence (students without work living with their parents). If, for the sake of approximation, we were to take the achievement of just three steps as the sign of having acquired adult status, then we should have to consider as not yet adult 98% of young Italians aged 18 to 20, 94% of those aged 21-24, 73% of the 25-29 year-olds and 35% of the 30-34 age bracket (Buzzi 2002, 27). Pooling the data, it emerges that more than 8 out of 10 Italians aged 21 to 29 can, from a social point of view, be considered adolescents to all effects and purposes.

The presence of a supplementary phase between adolescence and adulthood – the psychosocial moratorium (Erikson 1968) – is typical of modernized western societies: it is a period in which the young person trains to take on responsibilities connected with the role and status of adult. On the other hand, if this phase is lived as a postponement of the assumption of responsibility in terms of emotional, operational and professional decisions, then the young person can enter into a state of stalemate or impasse and get tangled up in a stationary condition: not youth but prolonged adolescence.

The narrative investigations that I conducted confirm the sociological theory from two angles: 1) the five stages identified as tangible signs of the acquisition of an adult identity were also recognized by young people; 2) like the subjects in the IARD report, they too find themselves in an adolescent condition.

> You become an adult through a series of processes, ranging from finishing school and university to finding a steady job, living on your own, getting married, having a child. In this process, your responsibilities progressively increase and are legitimized by the degree of maturity acquired with the passage of time. (Carlo, age 24)

4. Being Young and Being Adult

> As it turns out, I find myself facing this reflection precisely at the age of 25, an age in the middle, a sort of limbo, a period of transition from a post-adolescent situation to a pre-adult one. (Franco, age 25)

What are the meanings attributed to the two phases of the life cycle by the young Italians I met in my study? As one might imagine, there was initially a certain difficulty in the attempt to define (this was the term most used) "being young" and "being adult". The obstacle lay in the fact that they had never even thought about it. And beyond that, the absence of first-person experience – and the resulting difficulty of constructing independent criteria to circumscribe the sense of identity – forced many of them to resort to hearsay, to what is generally said about young people and about adults. It is a mediated experience. I shall come back to this point later on.

> I find myself living in the middle of that time when a young person approaches becoming adult. And so I ought to have a fair baggage of personal experience behind me to be able to describe what being young means to me, and what it has meant up to now. On the contrary, to be able to express what being adult means, I have to resort to expedients – what I've seen and hearsay – and the ideas I've formed about it as a result over the course of nearly twenty-three years. (Sonia, age 23)

The fact that these youngsters have never carried out any analysis of their own condition gives us an idea of the infrequency of that reflection

or self-reflection, which is crucial to the processes of identity construction for youths living in the late modern age. In late-modern societies the narration of the self becomes increasingly important, not only for prominent public figures but for all social actors. Therefore, the sense of individual identity can no longer be inherited or given, as it normally happened in traditional societies.

> Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography. Identity here still presumes continuity across time and space: but self-identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent… . To be a 'person' is not just to be reflexive actor, but to have a concept of a person (as applied both to the self and others)… . A person with a reasonably stable sense of self-identity has a feeling of biographical continuity which she is able to grasp reflexively and, to a greater or lesser degree, communicate to other people. (Giddens 1991, 53-54)

The major obstacle to reflection on the self, on young people and on adults, can be summed up in the statement: it's hard to think about yourself on your own. The young people I met do not see themselves as a generation or even as a group, but as individuals. The practice of comparison and dialogue necessary to map out the boundaries of one's own persona is situated in the microcosm, in the everyday relations – lived moreover in a manner one might call automatic – which the young appear unable to transcend. The abstraction necessary to construct a scaffolding for the interpretation of self is weak: for them, speaking about young people and adults means talking about oneself, and maybe about those few adults with whom they have significant relations. Paraphrasing Ricoeur (1990/1992) *Self without the Other* – apart from parents and those accommodating others who are willing to clear the obstacles off the life path, satisfy desires, keep fears at bay – also implies a low level of awareness of the identity of other young people and adults, whether

Italian, European or American. It means an incapacity to place your own biography within a collective story and thus build up your own field of identity: "Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both" (Mills 1959, p. 3). Hence the exercise of self-reflection proves anemic, coiling around one's own story, one's own sacred individuality.

For the majority of the participants in the study, being young has to do with expressive and emotional aspects, with the freedom to experiment in many different areas of life, with so much time ahead of them. The awareness that, at a certain point, one has to choose between different options, using this phase of life to discover and relate criteria, is one of the first elements that closes the gap between the youth and the adult.

> The main feature of this phase of life is freedom from ties of a family nature – because you don't yet have a family of your own – different from the one you were born into; for those who study, freedom from restrictions related to work as well. This freedom has to be exploited to the fullest, to discover your potential, your gifts, to cultivate your interests, so that you can steer your choices towards specific targets, those that lead to self-realization. In fact, I think the crux of the life of a young person lies in having to make choices, in both the professional and the emotional fields; choices that will be the basis of their entire future life, in the sense that they will have a profound effect on how it evolves. (Irene, age 24)

The passage from youth to adulthood is not simply a question of physical age: almost all the young people stress the fact that being adult means being mature. Such maturity is conceived essentially as an awareness of and responsibility for one's own actions in relation to oneself and to others. If we tried to find the crux, the buzzword for being adult, according to the young people in the study, it would no doubt be *responsibility*: "The first requisite that comes to mind is that of responsibility, understood as the ability to answer for your own actions" (Daniele, age

24). Even those who admit that they are far from acquiring a responsible way of being and acting stress the fact that it is the watershed dividing adulthood from youth.

> Since I don't feel adult yet, and I'm not, I can't express sensations based on personal experience, through which I could formulate an evaluation of what it means to belong to the category of adults. Nevertheless I feel that the keywords on this subject are: responsibility, maturity, conscience, awareness, reality… The adult has arrived at a point where he knows himself, his limitations and his role in society, and so he is able to take on his responsibilities: this is something the young person can't do, because as well as being immature he also has less experience. Maturity makes it possible to be less impulsive, which is a typical characteristic of young people, and to address the problems that crop up with greater precision, thus finding the answer to one's difficulties and uncertainties more simply. (Luca, age 26)

It is fundamental to detach oneself from the protection of the family and become economically self-supporting through work, which is the indispensable means towards emotional, psychological and social autonomy. Indeed, it seems that it is precisely the passage from *expressive dimensions* to *tangible conquests* that launches the journey towards adulthood, if for no other reason than because the process of construction of the identity is that of self- and hetero-recognition, a process that cannot leave out social aspects such as economic independence.[9]

> The aspect that I want to underscore is the passage that takes place between an abstract approach, that gives precedence to research of a

9 It would be strange to maintain the opposite in the face of a widespread social culture – internalized by the young people encountered in this study – based on consumption as the criterion for definition of self and other. One of the reasons why many young Italians remain at length in the family home is because they are loath to do without various consumer goods that they would not be able to afford if they lived on their own.

> spiritual kind and values such as love and friendship, and a concrete approach in which you become a 100% social subject, with all the duties that brings with it. In my book, someone is a 100% social subject when he has an income and electricity, gas, water and phone bills made out in his name, his own means of transportation and a house that he lives in, alone or with people he's chosen to live with. If you fall into this category, then you can say you're adult and be seen as such. Otherwise you come into the other category, that of the kids. (Paolo, age 25)

In the statements of some participants in the study we discern the need to learn how to move in the external world, like an actor on the stage. The game of life has rules that cannot be transgressed, and it is necessary to be able to act in different contexts and roles that cannot be freely chosen. Such roles cannot simply be abandoned the moment problems arise. The subjects conceive arrival in adult life as spelling the end of casual mobility, experimentation, and zapping: "Perhaps being adult means acting within a number of scenarios where you have to abide by precise rules, independent of your personality or wishes. There are rules we have to follow on that stage: don't shout, don't run away, don't escape" (Marco, age 24).

Those who prolong the youth phase do so for instrumental reasons connected with the convenience of remaining in the family, continuing to have emotional protection and being exonerated from the responsibilities that inevitably accompany the moment of abandoning the nest. It seems that this continuing dependence is consciously and voluntarily pursued and that the ostensible reasons (work, rent etc.) are not really perceived as obstacles. In a word, we might say that youngsters stay at home because it allows them to consume more. Moreover, the parents do nothing to encourage the young to leave the nest.

> Why do we remain young for so long? Simply because it's much more convenient to have everything laid out for you, or at least it's much easier to go on living in a situation where there are always other people to take care of us and our needs, even when all the

> possibilities exist for making a life of your own, independent of your parents. Nowadays the idea of taking on the responsibility of a house and a family of your own, thinking about someone else apart from yourself (or at most your girlfriend), seems to be an increasingly difficult and demanding objective. (Fabio, age 24)

> The parents-adults – one of whose fundamental duties is to educate young people emotionally –frequently don't help their children to grow up. They rarely spur them on; instead, they keep them tied to themselves, transforming the parent/child relationship into one of friendship. They don't pack the kids off because they're afraid of being left alone, afraid of what might happen to their kids or simply because they want to go on controlling them. (Sara, age 24)

Relations between the young people and the adults are difficult. In the first place, during the youth phase there are very few significant relations with adults other than parents and relatives. Secondly, we can observe that, on the whole, the young people in this study are treated as children for far too long, even in school and work environments.

5. Anthropological Thresholds: Rites of Passage

In order to understand the transition from the youth phase to the adult phase, it is helpful to consider the concept of the rite of passage: the absence of collective rituals that can tie in the existential turning-points of the young individual with those of a generation, and with the acknowledgement of the adult world, represents one of the major stumbling-blocks to the crossing of the "shadow-line." According to Jung (1938/1969), ritual helps the individual at a time when their psychic equilibrium is threatened in the transition from one way of being to another. If there are no rituals available, the subject invents their own to safeguard their personality. These are the rites of passage that we are interested in here – more specifically, the rites of initiation into the adult world: a series of ceremonies and tests through which a young individu-

al becomes part of the group of adults. In pre-modern societies, in order to be admitted to the adult world, the adolescent had to address a series of initiatory trials.

> To gain the right to be admitted among adults, the adolescent has to pass through a series of initiatory ordeals: it is by virtue of these rites, and of the revelations that they entail, that he will be recognized as a responsible member of the society. Initiation introduces the candidate into the human community and into the world of spiritual and cultural values. (Eliade 1958, p. x)

The expression "rite of passage" was coined by Van Gennep (1909/1960) in the early twentieth century; he identified three crucial stages in each rite of passage:

1. a preliminary phase of separation from or abandonment of the previous state;
2. a liminal phase, a period of transition marked by ritual discrimination;
3. a post-liminal phase of aggregation and readmission to society in a new condition.

The purpose of the initiation is to endorse the passage of the individual from one defined situation to another that is also defined. This is why rites of passage have a recurrent structure, a real pattern that guides, controls and regulates the transformations of each individual and of a group, fostering the changes without violently arresting personal and collective life. The incompatibility between the initial and the final condition is overcome by means of the intermediate stage, the *threshold*. The three stages identified by Van Gennep in the rite of passage are separate in both the space-time dimension and in structural terms. He also stresses the fact that the change in social status involves not only the individual who performs the ritual, but other subjects too. It is indeed precisely the public

celebration that renders the moment of passage sacred and endorses the collective recognition of the new social position acquired.

The function of the separation is to sever the links with the world experienced up to that time, introducing the novice into an unknown world. This passage from the profane world to the sacred world implies the experience of death: the youth has to die symbolically in order to become adult (Eliade 1958). Thus the individual enters into the liminal marginal phase, characterized by a series of trials that have the function of introducing the youth into the mythology of the adult world: a set of beliefs and values regarding human beings and the world that establish the common ground for the coexistence of a group or a society, which are preserved and handed down to the new generations. In this way the novice learns the behaviors, the techniques, the strategies and the institutions typical of the adult world. In the third phase, after having learned how to take on the responsibilities connected with being adult, the youth is readmitted to society.

The initiatory death of the liminal phase has symbolically killed the youth, clearing the field of all the characteristics typical of infancy and adolescence. This phase is indispensable in initiatory rituals: it is only through the symbolic death of the youth that a new birth is made possible. According to Eliade (1958) the initiatory death, transiting through the marginal phase which represents a temporary return to chaos, is therefore the exemplary expression of the end of a way of being: that of the ignorance and irresponsibility of the child. The myth-ritual is crucial both for the young person and for the adult community; it triggers and forges the disposition to action of the youth necessary for a re-generation of society, while at the same time exerting a normative effect that engenders social cohesion and instills a feeling of belonging and of collective identity. The ceremonial, and hence choral and collective, expression of such sentiments serves both to maintain them at the required level of intensity in the mind of the individual, and to transmit them from one generation to the next. Without this expression the sentiments in question could not be handed down (Campbell 1960). The ritual installs and institutionalizes an individual-group dialectic, thus placing the subject in relation with the

collectivity. This interaction implies a strong symbolic charge, sparked by adherence to a common sphere of values: the ritual becomes the catalyst of the transmission of values of a community to which the members belong ethically, emotionally and conatively,[10] and not merely instrumentally. For all these reasons, the ritual produces solidarity and holds the group together, as stressed by Durkheim (1912/1995).

In late-modern society, and particularly in Italy, the rituals of initiation into adulthood have become rarefied; without capes to be rounded, the young people are disoriented. Not wishing to do without rites of passage, they create some of their own, alone or in small groups. But these are rituals in which the adult figure is absent, so that the approach to the adult world becomes opaque as well. In the liminal phase the novice was able to count on the assistance of his tutor: the figure of the old initiate, who accompanies the novice through the difficulties characterizing the marginal period, is a topos of the rite of passage. The absence of rites is felt above all by the contemporary young male: the postmodern male, born and reared after the Second World War, is the first in all male history who has not had a father, teacher or initiator to tell him what a man must do (apart from develop his muscles). Thus, disenchanted modern society has thrown out the rites and myths along with the masters who were their custodians. The field of identity of the youth has not only been swept clear of the ceremonies, symbols and initiations so important for pre-modern and modern societies, but also of the seriousness with which man in archaic societies took his responsibility to receive and transmit the spiritual values to the new generations (Eliade 1958). Nevertheless, the master and the rite still seem necessary even to today's youngsters.

> In terms of building character, I attribute great importance to the acquaintance of certain adults. There have been several people who have "captivated" me and have had a major influence on the decisions I've taken in my life: my primary school teacher, my first foot-

10 The ritual has a perlocutionary character (Austin 1962); its strength resides in the effect it produces.

> ball coach and so on. I feel that my math teacher in secondary school was very important to me, and it was thanks to her that I decided to study economics; it was she who set me in the direction of what I think I really want to do[11]. (Alessandro, age 23)

From my research it emerged that the rites were personal, or performed in pairs or at most among small groups of friends. Instead, there was no collective marking of the crucial benchmarks: the first day of school; the first vacation with friends; the scooter; the first evening outing; the driving license. Even on the three occasions most appropriate for celebration (coming of age, the final exams for finishing high school, and graduation from university)[12] sharing of the significance between the young people and the adults was decidedly absent; from the way they were described they appeared to be the simulacra of a rite of passage.

> For me, finishing secondary school was definitely a passage. It was a sudden passage, that I felt the very moment it happened. During the frenzy of preparation in the two months leading up to the final exams, none of us had given a thought to what was actually happening … We hadn't realized that achieving that goal would wipe away, in one fell swoop, all those special times spent together: all that remain are the memories that allow you to look back over them. We celebrated that moment in the best possible way: we locked ourselves in a communal embrace right there in our classroom, and couldn't resist the temptation to scrawl some phrases on our desks, sign our names on the walls, almost as if we had at all costs to leave some indelible sign amidst those walls. The actual exam certificate

11 For both Italian males and females, the few significant adults are women. A continuity is set up between the central role of the mother in the family and external reality, in which, if things go well, there is an encounter with another woman who points the way. The father figure and the adult males are nowhere to be found.

12 In Italy the degree certificate is not awarded at the time, but several years later in a totally bureaucratic manner: a mere piece of paper, for all intents and purposes.

> meant little or nothing: for me that piece of paper had no interest or significance. Partly because I only got it over two years after the actual exam, and partly because in this day and age it's a qualification that's worth little or nothing on its own, and so you find yourself on the treadmill again heading for another goal and you don't even pause to savor what you have just achieved, with the risk – as happened in my case – that you attribute only a temporary and precarious value to it. (Gabriele, age 22)

Fulfilling a rite of passage, when it is of a collective and shared character, means more or less consciously placing yourself within a tradition; in this sense, the ritual becomes a mechanism linking the worlds of youth and adulthood, the formalization of a symbolic bridge to be crossed. The difficulty in discerning such bridges, and the absence of ceremonials endowing them with a dense symbolic charge, contributes to making the crossing of the shadow-line a lonely business. To return to Van Gennep's three stages, the results of the research allow us to confirm that:

1. the first phase of abandonment of the previous state has not been accomplished;
2. the second liminal phase never even began, since the tasks characterizing the first were still in abeyance;
3. the third phase of readmission to the world as an adult person is far-off in the distant future, hampered by obstacles of a structural and cultural nature (the difficulties of the job market, lifelong learning, confusion between the attitudes and behaviour typical of the youth phase and those of adulthood).

6. Travel and adulthood: sheltered journeys

In the collected autobiographies I was able to trace a recurrent rite of passage: *the first holiday on your own*. However, it lacks the educational value of traveling or of a prolonged visit: it seems rather the simulacrum, the fetish of a journey. For Giovanni, his first holiday in Rimini was an au-

thentic rite of sexual and social initiation. He went to the place in Italy that is the epitome of youthful recreation: a sort of Land of Toys, as referred to in *Pinocchio*. But you do not need the persuasion of Candlewick to go to Rimini: it is a cliché. If anything, you would need the opposite of Candlewick to persuade you to go somewhere else; but there is not the faintest shadow of such figures in the lives of these young people. Giovanni spent a week hanging out in the discos. Making out in the discos of Rimini – where it is very easy to end up having sex (the sought-after rite of initiation) – is tantamount to becoming a man. Another thing one notes is the total absence of any difficulty. It is an easy, comfortable holiday that presents Giovanni with no problem of any kind.

> A very important experience, and one that I have lots of fond memories of, was my first holiday on my own, without my parents. Of all the goals I have reached, this was the one that gave me the greatest satisfaction, even more than being able to drive a scooter or a car… Rimini is something of a status symbol for this sort of thing; it made me feel that I'd finally managed to make it into the ranks of the grown-ups. During that holiday I also had my first sexual experience, which I'd been totally keyed-up about. Coming home after that holiday, that had left such a mark on my life, was almost like the return to the tribe of a young warrior who had been sent alone into the jungle for a while so that he could prove he was a real man. (Giovanni, age 23)

Franco experienced slightly more difficulty in Viareggio, since he and his friends had to agree about shopping and cooking and other household chores. These were the biggest worries that the youngsters in my study had to address during their first vacations on their own: "It was an important experience because it made us face problems that we had always avoided up until then, like preparing food and all the other things that made it possible to live amicably together" (Franco, age 22). Comfortable and sheltered as they are, such trips are still the most formative expe-

rience in the histories of these young people. It is only when you leave the nest and have to address practical problems, without Mom and Dad to count on, that you become aware of your condition as a youth-adolescent.

In Italy, the classic study vacation in England is a common example of this separation from the family. It usually takes the form of about a month spent in London or its environs with the ostensible intention of improving one's English. The learning of the language – which will not actually take place, since everyone will just gang up with all the other Italians present – is the pretext for convincing the parents.

> Understanding as always, Mom and Dad packed me off to Oxford with my friends for three weeks to attend the famous language courses. We learned a bit of Milanese dialect, which always comes in handy, and a bit of Verona dialect, which… well, you never know.… English language or English people? Not a trace. (Filippo, age 23)

Another typical trip is that taken under the umbrella of the Erasmus Programme. The young people describe it as a sort of Disneyland. The organization is so smooth that when they get to wherever they're going, the accommodation is already arranged and the courses already chosen. All they have to plan are the parties.

> In 2002 I went on an Erasmus Programme for five months. It was really great: I had very few courses to attend and no problems to deal with. All I had to do was organize the giddy round of parties, welcome dinners with other foreign students, afternoon and evening outings. In short, pure fun! (Sara, age 23)

From the descriptions made by those who have taken part in them, it seems that the Erasmus Programme is very similar to a package holiday in some club: places where the chances that the young person may in some way be put to the test are extremely rare. These "trips", like the non-study holidays spent in England, are extremely sheltered experiences: a

fitting metaphor for the biographical careers of the young Italians. There is no sign of the trans-European Interrail trips. This type of journey was quite common up to about ten years ago, but no longer.

The solitary journey followed by a lengthy sojourn in another country, or in another Italian city, is a crucial opportunity for acquiring self-awareness only for a tiny minority of young people. People frequently acquire self-knowledge by addressing tests that bring their strategic capacities to the fore. But young people no longer actively seek out the challenges of traveling; on the contrary, they carefully avoid them. If our youngsters do find themselves in a sticky situation, they have at their disposal a whole series of therapeutic tools and painkillers to muffle their consciousness: the journey of *Erfahrung* that could be triggered by certain episodes is cushioned, under control. *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis*[13] both mean experience in German, but in a different sense. *Erfahrung* emphasizes the notion of a wisdom drawn and communicated from experience, while *Erlebnis* refers to experience as something lived or witnessed.

In order to travel there have to be two movements, a push and a pull working in the same direction. The movement of separation, abandonment, and emancipation takes place when something from the extra-familial world attracts and, at the same time, something else propels one away from home. In my study I found no trace either of the desire to "see what's round the corner" or of a centrifugal force originating in the family – generated by educational motives or by some form of acute suffering that drives the young person away. As I said, only for a handful of the young people in my study did traveling function as a sort of identity catalyst, setting in motion a reflective process that expands the horizons of life and fosters self-awareness. After a genuine travel experience, these youngsters were able to map out the contours of their city, of the socio-cultural milieu they belonged to, and the position of the family in the social stratification. Gabriele brought together two essential elements

13 In English the distinction can be expressed by contrasting experience (in the sense of wisdom handed on from one person to another) with experiences (Ferris 2008). See Benjamin (1927-1930/1999) and Gadamer (1960/1989).

in the self-identity construction process: traveling and work. He implemented this synthesis for a reason symbolic of freedom: to buy his first motorbike. Consequently, this desire was not satisfied by the parents but achieved personally through his own work, and in another city to boot. That motorbike became an important Self-object pervaded by meanings that straddled adolescence and adulthood. On his return from his time in Rome, Gabriele saw his own city with new eyes.

> When I was sixteen I had this overwhelming desire to have a motorbike: I decided to spend the whole summer in Rome working for my aunt, who ran a bar and ice-cream parlor. It was a fantastic period: as well as the satisfaction of earning money, I also got to know a wonderful city that I remained attached to for many years. For me the motorbike marked an irreversible passage: it was the key to fully grasping the sense of freedom that only the road, the wind and speed can give you. It's as if, as you travel, you leave everything behind you: the only thing that matters is what's ahead, and you try to get there as soon as possible… Rome was my first real experience with a metropolis, in the sense that I was able to live there for a while. That time came to an end, but it left its mark, because from that moment on I looked at Pisa with different eyes, almost with intolerance. (Gabriele, age 22)

Traveling is an efficacious way of constructing identity: entering into contact with the Other can reveal personal traits that could not be observed previously, given one's lack of perspective. It is as if young people were still too close to the Self. This is a carefully preserved, protected and adorned Self: a Self-Idol, a *facticius* that prevents the young person from growing, relegating him or her to a sort of limbo of identity. Limbo is not paradise or hell or even purgatory: limbo is a borderline, a marginal place, an absence. But there is no awareness of this condition in those who inhabit it. The instrument of the journey, which could help rip open the condition of vital immobility, is dulled and distorted by its mediatization:

it is deprived of its emancipatory power. When young people feel that they could get their hands or their heart dirty, that something alien could get under their skin and contaminate them so that they would no longer be themselves, then they will opt for self-defense rather than potential enrichment. This defensive mechanism is also activated through a hotchpotch of technological devices that prevent the individual from seeing, feeling and – at a later time – fishing up from their memory the experiences lived elsewhere. For example, we frequently see young people walking round with their ears and eyes glued to the epitome of the Self-device, the smartphone (with its video and photo functions). It is a reverse prosthesis, a fetish that keeps them separate from whatever they encounter. Through these protective prostheses the individual does not approach a different reality with their five senses but – at that very moment when it could be experienced – represents it, portrays it and saves it, to be viewed away from danger back in a protected environment. The experience of the other is an exercise in decentralization, an undermining of our closure within ourselves. The individual who is unwilling to lose, who refuses to abandon protection for fear of suffering, will be offered few insights.

For our grandparents, things, people and events were still something to be felt, generating an interior experience that was joyful or painful, in which they participated with their senses, emotionally and spiritually, or conversely that they either failed or refused to notice. For us, on the other hand, things, people, and events are like something that has already been felt, and the sensory, emotional or spiritual tone with which we address them is already determined (Perniola 2012). The distinction is not between emotional participation and indifference, but rather between something that is to be felt and something already felt. The feeling has acquired an anonymous, impersonal, socialized dimension, asking to be imitated.

Nowadays the possibilities of a genuine travel experience have been narrowed down, and liberating estrangement is eliminated from young peoples' lives. The journey is edulcorated, rendered safe and predictable. But without detachment the attachment itself becomes false. The young

person is bound to the family and the local community; but as a permanent resident the individual does not really know exactly what they are bound to: they click on themselves.

The compression of space and time that we are living through actually erodes the space for experience: the speed of travel has eliminated the lengthy periods of waiting and reflection. Today's young people are increasingly on the move and moving faster all the time, but they travel less. The traveller develops sensitivity and depth towards the Other because they have genuinely encountered the Other, putting themselves on the line. Conversely, the tourist trip is just another fantasy ticket that stands in the way between young people and the real facts of life: an illusory experience.

The autobiographies of the young people do not reveal moments of rupture, painful experiences that dictate a necessarily different "before" and "after". It is not a question of seeking a trial by fire for the young Italians to undergo; nevertheless, the absence of tough moments is striking. Reading the autobiographies, I had the feeling of being catapulted into cocooned, padded, soundproofed worlds, bubbles that never burst. Some of the young people I met are aware of this and comment on it: "I realize that I haven't experienced any difficult periods in my life" (Riccardo, age 24).

The young people do not have inner strength because they have never suffered. In their stories there are no particularly harsh or painful episodes: focal events that trigger change (Heatherton and Nichols 1994). The hardest challenge they have had to address is generally no more than having to take a university exam. The youngster has no nasty stories to flee from and thus discover reality and himself. But as I have already said, the place the youngsters appear to inhabit is limbo. It is a place where experience is always edulcorated. This means that one of the most potent spurs for generating change, for forging ahead, is lacking. The personality tends towards stability, so that setting in motion a process of change calls for a very powerful incentive, which can take the form of suffering or anxiety. In a word: the catalyst of change is a form of malaise. Without the experience of loss we cannot acquire an adult identity, and we become

incapable of bearing narcissistic wounds. Negation of the interior reality and escape into external reality was a way of life for previous generations (Klein 1935/1975). Nowadays it is the other way around: the negation of external reality and escape into interior reality. We have gone from a centrifugal to a centripetal force that leads to the construction of a "minimal Self": a contracted and defensive Self, entirely intent on protecting itself from the adversities of modern daily life (Lasch 1984), a Self that is incapable of supporting pain.

> I was greatly struck by an article I read by the Italian psychologist Umberto Galimberti called "Gli analfabeti delle emozioni" (The Emotional Illiterates). He argued that, since their families – and society as a whole – fail to give young people an emotional education, they have no emotional resonance before the events they see or the gestures they make. They move through the world with an aggressive vigilance that leads them to see their neighbor as a potential enemy. They are increasingly fragile; the slightest gesture can call their identity profoundly into question, provoking them to react violently. It is primarily the family that can avert these catastrophic consequences; it must educate the child and explain that there are limits, that it is possible to feel pain… in other words, you have to emotionally educate your children. (Pamela, age 24)

7. Conclusion: heterogeneity under apparent homogeneity

Since the cultural revolution of the 1970s youth has always had a transnational profile; consequently, the pinpointing of national differences has to go hand in hand with reconstructing cultural similarities. There are certain transcultural features that a young Italian shares with their European and American peers. For the last ten years I have been teaching young American college students in their junior semester abroad, here in Florence. When I first met them, I realized that they were not the young Americans I had known when I was an exchange student in New York in the 80s, although they belonged to the same social class: upper or

upper-middle. The young Americans I met in Italy seemed much more "protected" by Mom and Dad. So, in a certain sense, I found them "Italianized"; on the other hand, certain features of the Atlantic cultural divide were still evident.

One of the first questions I always ask my American students is: "Do you live on your own or with your parents?" And, every semester, the whole class answers: "With my parents." Coming to Florence in their junior year means that they have been living on a college campus – usually far away from home – for two years, generally going back to stay with their parents over the summer and for the Christmas vacation. A young Italian who lives ten months per year outside the nest would answer without hesitation: "I live on my own." The attribution of the *opposite cultural meaning to the same life condition* is striking. But the interpretation is relatively easy if we follow the hermeneutic path we have trodden so far. For the young American, living by yourself means being 100% independent, that is, supporting yourself with the money you earn. Autonomy is a cultural value in the US – and in Northern Europe – but it is not that much of a value in Italy, or when it is, it is pursued in a different way (the cultural difference).

When I ask my American students what the most important things in their lives are, they put family first, then friends, just like the young Italians. However, the young Americans are talking about a family that saved money to send them to college and also allowed them to travel, rather than a family that gave them money to buy fashionable clothes to look smart.

American students know that graduation will spell the end of their youth game: "Returning to the United States will ultimately represent a return to reality. In many ways we spent a semester in a Fantasy World. In this Fantasy World, we are free to follow our whims and passions without any real consequences or repercussions" (Helen, age 21). The young Italian, on the other hand, does not know either when the game started or when it will finish (the absence of thresholds and rituals). This is a striking difference from an anthropological, psychosocial and sociological point of view.

With regard to travel as a rite of passage towards adulthood and global citizenship, I found some similarities between Italian and American young people. The analysis of autobiographical papers written by American youngsters during their study semester abroad in Florence indicates how their life experiences in Italy and Europe can be heuristically read through the concept of "play". The extra-ordinary, precise meaning, exhibiting few consequences beyond the event itself – one of the core characteristics of play activities recognized by Huizinga (1938/1950) – attributed by many students to social and cultural practices seems to fall into a conceptualization of experience as *Erlebnis* rather than *Erfahrung*. We might say that both Americans and Italians share an idea of travel as *Erlebnis*.

Furthermore, some of the favored weekend travel destinations fuel a particular experience of the chosen places: Venice during Carnival, Dublin on St. Patrick's Day, Munich during Oktoberfest. It is something like an extra-extraordinary experience (out of the United States, out of everyday life), and it seems closer to a conception of experience as *Erlebnis* – more isolated and categorical, something you do, a *carpe diem* event – rather than experience as *Erfahrung*, which is more profound, ongoing and cumulative, something you undergo: an event of meaning. "Our traveling was extensive and very demanding, but we rarely stayed anywhere long enough to get a real sense of the culture" (Mark, age 21).

As we have seen, the double transitional passage towards adulthood and global citizenship takes different shapes: the apparently uncontested global meaning is questioned by local and national cultures. My in-depth analysis of autobiographical essays written by a group of young Italians, and their comparison with essays written by American students, has highlighted the significance of the passage toward adulthood: the "limen" between youth and adulthood is drawn in a different vein and accompanied by different rituals – or rather, a lack of rituals for the Italian youngsters. Becoming an adult and citizen of the world follows different cultural paths, thus giving shape to heterogeneous identities under an apparently homogenous global semantic umbrella.

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Global versus Local: Linguistic and Cultural Variation in Study Abroad Programs

Federico Damonte

Abstract

The role of language in study abroad is paradoxically central and yet problematic: the pressure from increasing numbers of students and shorter programs make it difficult for language courses to enable students to reach their desired goal of having informal conversations in the language of the host country. In this paper I argue that language courses can be expanded and complemented in simple ways, so as to partially address this large issue. In particular, I propose that the teaching of pragmatics can help students better negotiate common everyday interactions. In turn, pragmatic notions can be framed within the larger phenomenon of linguistic and cultural variation. While this is not a traditional topic in foreign language courses, I argue that familiarity with this notion is a fundamental step in the process of understanding other cultures. I propose that it can be practically and successfully taught in separate courses in English about the target language. All together, these measures have the potential to raise students' linguistic and cultural awareness, which should be the main goals of language teaching in study abroad.

Keywords: language teaching, pragmatics, linguistic awareness, cultural awareness

1. The problem: "Ciao professore"*

I do not even need to look at the sender's name. The first line of the email is visible in my mailbox, right after the object of the message, and the opening greeting can be read in its entirety. I glance at the now familiar "ciao professore" and automatically assume that the email comes from one of my American students. So far, my assumption has never been wrong. This example of the Italian used by American stu-

dents in Florence, Italy, is actually rather common and well-known to many teachers in study abroad programs based in this city. It is, therefore, a good starting point for a discussion about the challenges of language learning in a study abroad context, as well as the specific features of Italian as the target language.

The "mistake" in this phrase is indeed subtle. The famous "ciao" is known even outside Italy as an informal greeting, but this is not the problem in this case. In our program (International Studies Institute Florence, or ISI Florence), as in most such programs, we have an informal approach with our students, so that an informal greeting is entirely appropriate in an email sent to a professor. The error lies in the title "Professor" used after "ciao": the formality of using that title is completely at odds with the informality of the greeting. In Italian, the two cannot possibly occur together. Please note that the "mistake" is purely pragmatic (hence the quotes), no grammatical or linguistic rule (in the strict sense) is violated, yet the resulting phrase sounds definitely wrong to a native speaker, so much so that no Italian – no matter their level of education – would ever use it. If a student were to use this greeting in an email to a professor they do not know, the inevitable impression on the receiver would be one of rudeness and ignorance of the basic rules of politeness in the language.

The larger problem behind this case for Italian language teachers is that there is no easy alternative way to address a professor in an informal email: "ciao" used alone would sound too informal in most cases, while "ciao Federico" implies the level of familiarity of a personal friendship. The only feasible alternative would be to teach students how to write a formal letter, including the fixed greeting "gentile professore". Since it is unlikely that American students studying abroad would need that skill, Italian language teachers – correctly – focus on conversational informal language in their courses, even at the expense of serious communicative errors in some other cases, such as the ubiquitous "ciao professore".

I think that this innocent-looking mistake reveals many problems related to teaching the language of the host country in study abroad programs. There is now a considerable amount of literature by scholars and

administrators involved in these programs that stresses the importance of language learning in order to reach the stated goal of a truly immersive experience, in which the student can understand a foreign culture in depth, and engage in significant conversations[1]. The main problem in this endeavor is, simply put, the nature of language itself. Reaching a level of linguistic proficiency that native speakers deem comparable to theirs usually requires years of intensive study at dedicated institutions, accompanied by prolonged and extensive contact with native speakers in their own countries. This is largely incompatible with the format of most study abroad programs that are not aimed at language students. As Chieffo and Griffiths (2009) show, short-term study abroad programs, as short as three weeks, are increasingly popular, and are an indispensable tool to achieve the vast expansion in the number of American students going abroad during their education, as officially put forward in the Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Foundation Act (2007). The objective of this law is to bring the number of American students spending a period of their studies abroad from 325.339 in the academic year 2015/2016[2] to 1.000.000. Clearly, if study abroad must become more accessible (both academically and financially,) to a much larger number of students, short-term programs are the best option, and indeed, such programs now form the most common choice for American students[3].

Nonetheless, if knowledge of the foreign language is a necessary condition for the students' real and meaningful contact with a different culture, it's hard not to conclude that only the "maximal" model of study abroad – with long stays and extensive contact with the host culture – can provide that outcome, as proposed by Wanner (2009). Surely a student who cannot utter or understand a single word of the language of the host country has *not* experienced the deep and transformative contact with the

1 For a thorough introduction to the field, see Lewin (2009). For language in study abroad, see especially the chapters by Charles Kolb and Dieter Wanner.

2 Data taken from the Open Doors database (Institute of International Education, 2017).

3 Open Doors database (Institute of International Education, 2017).

other, which is the main reason why these programs are considered beneficial even for students whose studies do not involve foreign languages or cultures at all.

2. Possible solutions: pragmatics and multicultural awareness

The literature on international education discusses several possible ways out of this impasse, from a redefinition of the goals of short-term programs, which could therefore be decoupled from the whole language issue entirely, to new ways of teaching foreign languages at institutions in the host country. In this paper I discuss some of the issues related to this latter case, as they are found in the Italian cultural and linguistic situation. More precisely, I want to propose that if language courses are supposed to work as a "bridge" to the host culture, a more specific focus on pragmatics as a linguistic discipline (and not just "practical language") could be very useful for both teachers and staff involved in study abroad programs. I will try to show, in particular, how the existing linguistic literature on the teaching and testing of pragmatics can provide a practical model to tailoring language courses to the needs of the study abroad students. In this way, by changing and complementing the language curriculum in relatively simple ways, some communicative "mistakes" such as the one described above can be successfully addressed.

I will also deal with a larger issue strictly connected to the problems of teaching pragmatics, one which is very prominent in the Italian case: the vast and deep variability of both "Italian language" and "Italian culture". As I will try to show below, by discussing the problems of language teaching in study abroad programs in general terms, scholars have missed the inherent, ancient, and pervasive variation found in the languages and cultures of Italy, a type of variation which is in turn rather common across the world. This fundamental fact calls into question the very universal claim to internationalization and global citizenship voiced by those arguing for the benefits of study abroad. While I agree on those benefits being real, from the point of view of a teacher in one such program in Florence, or indeed in any other part of the country, our culture is

very much a local affair, and experiencing our culture "for real" definitely entails understanding how a "culture" is far from being a single uniform and predictable entity. In short, I claim that understanding Italian languages and cultures entails understanding multilingualism and multiculturalism in a way that is not commonly found even in such a large and diverse country as the United States.

Since we lack much data concerning language and study abroad, this is a preliminary exploratory work, whose main aim is to put forward its working hypotheses as clearly as possible[4]. The cases discussed will be mainly drawn from my own personal teaching experience at ISI Florence, as well as those of David Marini and Serena Baldini, Italian language teachers at ISI Florence, who have provided detailed information from their vast experience in two extensive interviews.

3. The challenge: the bubble

In my courses at ISI Florence I talk a lot about "the bubble" with students. Sometimes they also choose it as the topic for their final essays, where they provide more details about this phenomenon. By "bubble" we mean "the American bubble", which refers to the fact that it is entirely possible to spend a period of time abroad while remaining constantly in contact with fellow Americans and American culture, with little to almost no interaction with locals. Most American study abroad students in Florence attend courses in English at local campuses of their own universities or at partner institutions, which provide courses specially designed for them. Naturally, the teachers of these courses are very experienced in teaching American students, and the courses themselves are based on the curricula of the American partner institutions. Florence has one of the highest concentrations of American universities and study abroad programs in the

4 For the same reason, no attempt has been made to make the bibliography exhaustive. The only works found in the final selected references are those directly quoted in the text of this article. The reader is referred to the references in the works cited for a more complete description of the existing literature.

world, with more than 50 such institutions[5]. The resulting scenario is therefore very similar to that described by Wanner, namely "the accumulation of a relatively large number of U.S. students in one small expatriate institute". This, he adds, "might also be seen as problematic, possibly leading to social coagulation of the non-locals and thereby jeopardizing the central study abroad benefit of meeting the other" (Wanner 2009, 92). Indeed, there is a whole industry in Florence that caters to the needs of American students, from American-style diners (which offer hamburgers and onion rings) to English language cinemas and news weeklies.

Based on my personal experience, while some students settle down comfortably inside the bubble and spend most of their time watching Netflix and chatting with friends back home, many others do their best to get into contact with the local culture: they attend soccer matches, try to buy clothes that would make them look "more Italian" and volunteer as English teachers in local schools. They are disappointed when their efforts to speak Italian are answered in English. All students are always enthusiastic to meet Italian peers and exchange stories about, for instance, the differences in their school systems. Breaking out of the bubble these days is *hard*, and requires a conscious effort by both students and teachers.

4. The premise: the need for teaching pragmatics

While we lack specific and reliable data about how much contact and interaction these students have with native Italian speakers, I will claim that in order for language teaching in this context to be effective, it has to assume that its operational hypothesis is that such contact is indeed very reduced. What this means, in practical terms, is that teachers and staff should think of language courses in study abroad programs as more similar to foreign language (FL) classes in the US than to second language classes (2L) in the country of the target language. While this may sound provocative, I think it is a necessary precondition to empirically ascertain

5 Data drawn from the website of the Association of American College and University Programs in Italy (AACUPI): https://aacupi.org.

the communicative needs of these students and test how these needs are best served. For sure, teachers at study abroad institutions cannot assume that students will leave the classroom and immediately start using the linguistic notions they learned in class.

There are several features that students in FL classes miss, compared to 2L students, but for the purpose of this article it is enough to underline that the input FL students receive is reduced, simplified and uniform. By this I mean that the linguistic material they are typically exposed to lacks any differences in terms of style or register, such as the formal/informal distinction, which in turn causes mistakes like the inappropriate email greeting discussed above[6]. More generally, FL learners lack opportunities to participate in authentic communicative situations outside the classroom, and therefore fail to acquire the experience necessary to participate in different communicative interactions effectively (Rose 1999).

This is where the branch of linguistics known as "pragmatics" can be helpful and provide useful models for language courses in study abroad programs. For our purposes, it will be enough to define pragmatics as the study of "how to do things with words"[7]. More generally, it is the study of how linguistic meaning is transmitted from speaker to listener (or from writer to reader) in a specific context. Pragmatics is the study of many linguistic notions, which are of great practical value to language learners: politeness, respect, paying compliments, agreeing, disagreeing, and so on. Native speakers' pragmatic knowledge consists of two components, according to Leech (1983): a more linguistic part, that deals with linguistic conventions, and a more social one, that deals with social norms that operate in a given society[8]. There is, by now, a good amount

6 In the case of Italian, this statement is a simplification: given the existence of two different pronouns in the grammar to address another person – informal "tu" (you, singular) and formal "Lei" (she) – the difference in register is usually taught right from the beginning. It remains true, though, that many other linguistic correlates of this difference beyond pronouns are not taught at this level.

7 The title of Austin's (1962) seminal work, which collects lectures given in 1955.

8 In Leech's terminology these are the *pragmalinguistic* and the *sociopragmatic* components, respectively.

of literature that shows that teaching pragmatics notions in a FL context, that is to say, in the absence of significant natural linguistic input, is both possible and useful (Ishihara and Cohen, 2010; Tatsuki and Huock 2011). The crucial point is that there is also enough evidence to conclude that in the absence of explicit teaching, various important pragmatic notions are learned slowly or not at all (Rose and Kasper, 2001).

5. The myth of "practical" language learning

At this point, the reader may legitimately wonder where the originality is in all this: do not all language courses and textbooks include instructions and exercises on how to say "thanks" and "please", accept or deny an invitation, and so on?

One crucial difference between this practical approach to students' communicative needs and the more general one found in the study of pragmatics is its relationship to grammar, the core component in traditional language curricula. In this traditional approach the communicative knowledge of the learner is constrained by the grammatical and linguistic notions they have acquired: the learner is not usually required to use grammatical forms and constructions that were not taught to them, no matter how useful they could be in practice[9]. Grammatical learning, in turn, follows a pre-established path from simpler to more complex rules. While this is a perfectly sound principle in general, it becomes more problematic when external constraints, such as those found in most study abroad formats, make it impossible to teach all the grammatical rules and structures needed for basic informal conversation.

As Wanner (2009) points out, language is a unitary phenomenon.

9 Notice that the teaching of linguistic rules need not be explicit: modern 2L teaching methods systematically include *implicit* teaching, in which a linguistic structure, such as a relative clause, is presented to the student but not explained. The distinction may actually be relevant for language learning in study abroad programs, in that the constraints of this special context could require a greater reliance on implicit teaching. For the limited purposes of this article, since implicit teaching should still result in the acquisition of the rule by the learner, it will be considered as functionally equivalent to explicit teaching, and "teaching" will be used to refer to both implicit and explicit instruction; see example (1) below for a case in point.

The fact that a conversation is simple in content and communicative purpose does not in any way entail that the linguistic structures used in it are equally basic and simple. On the contrary, in the case of Italian, for instance, it is common for a simple request to contain the conditional mood, or for a simple conversation about personal preferences to use the so called "left dislocation" construction, exemplified below:

(1) L'America, la voglio proprio visitare, un giorno
(literally) "America, I very much want to visit it one day"

(2) Fiori, preferisco le rose
(lit.) "Flowers, I prefer roses"

(3) Gianni, non ci parlo più con quel matto
(lit.) "John, I don't speak any more to that madman"

Such a structure is very common in spoken and written Italian, both modern and old, but is not taught in most Italian language courses, not even at the advanced level. In these constructions (there are several types) a subject of the verb is "dislocated" from its normal position before (in the case of the subject) or after the verb (in the case of other topics), to a position at the beginning of the clause. Notice that while it could be argued that a sentence like (1) is clear to beginner students of Italian, even if it is not explicitly taught to them, a construction like (2), with a single transitive verb apparently having two distinct objects, is much more likely to be difficult to interpret. Finally the "hanging topic" construction in (3) – a *nominativus pendens* in the traditional terminology – is actually incompatible with traditional normative grammatical teaching, as the indirect object "Gianni" is not preceded by the preposition "con" (to). Despite its normative ungrammaticality, the construction is extremely common in both spoken and written Italian and perfectly natural for native speakers.

This fundamental fact about language creates a tension between students' expectations and the actual results of language learning: on

one hand, modern language methods promise to enable informal conversation in a very short time, while, on the other hand, spoken informal language inevitably contains linguistic structures that are taught only at the most advanced levels – if they are taught at all. The problem is made worse by the common marketing strategy of selling "business Chinese" or "tourist Italian" courses and books, as if a natural language could be carved up into separate sections according to topic or function.

The standard practical solution is to make the most out of a limited linguistic knowledge, and teach students how to communicate with it. This often involves simplifying more complex structures into simpler ones, resulting in what many language learners feel is a kind of awkward and inelegant "baby talk". As Wanner (2009) points out, though, one problem with this approach is that the native speakers involved in the conversation will not restrict themselves to such limited grammar and vocabulary. As any language learner knows, the real challenge when asking a question in a foreign language is understanding the answer. In my opinion, though, the *real* problem is that attempting a complex communicative interaction – such as an informal conversation – without a complete grasp of pragmatic rules and conventions will very likely result in major communicative failures, in which the learner's attempts at being polite will come out as rude, her jokes as sarcastic and her offers of help condescending.

Thus, despite the apparent simplicity and practicality of this approach, the result is often frustrating for the language learner, who may end up judging the whole enterprise of learning the language of the host country futile, useful only to carry out the most trivial of conversations.

6. Grammar as a pragmatic resource

In the approach we are advocating, grammar is not supposed to define the range of communicative practice and learning. On the contrary, it is viewed as a resource to help the language leaner carry out those pragmatic acts that are fundamental in everyday life. In practical terms, this means that grammatical forms such as conjugations and tenses are not learned in isolation, but are associated with a significant pragmatic func-

tion. While this is a fairly common (but unfortunately, still not universal) way to teach grammar, other implications of this approach are still rare in language courses[10].

One such consequence I will discuss in greater detail here is the change in the traditional order in which grammar is taught in Italian language courses, and in particular, the teaching of pragmatically basic forms right at the start of beginners courses, even if these forms are traditionally taught at later stages. As a concrete example, I will look at the conditional mood, and its use as a teaching tool to provide students with an important pragmatic skill. The examples will be drawn from the Italian textbook designed at ISI Florence by David Marini and Serena Baldini (2016), which is called significantly *Vorrei* ("I would like", with the verb in the conditional mood). The course is based on the authors' extensive teaching experiences and all the material in it has been thoroughly tested with students. In this work, the authors have done away with some deeply entrenched conventions in Italian language teaching, by using implicit instruction to teach complex points of grammar (e.g. direct and indirect pronouns, the "passato prossimo"), and simultaneously moving those topics to the beginning of the course [11].

As a simple case in point, right from the first lesson, the form "vorrei" (literally: I would want) is introduced in the following dialogue:

(4) (excerpt)
Rachel: Ah … e che cosa studi?

10 For a much more detailed illustration of this approach, see Félix-Brasdefer and Cohen (2012) on the teaching of pragmatics to students of Spanish. Many of the points the authors make about Spanish could be applied to Italian as well.

11 Needless to say, a complete survey of the textbooks and learning material used in study abroad programs in Italy is necessary before the originality of such an approach can be established conclusively. The alternative "traditional approach" discussed in this section must be taken to refer to a hypothetical course or textbook that strictly adheres to the principle of gradual presentation of grammar, and does not use isolated forms and constructions belonging to later stages because of their pragmatic value. Of course, real learning material could follow this principle in different degrees: in my experience, such an approach is rather common in university FL courses, where grammatical correctness is given high priority.

Enrico: Studio legge … ma tu parli molto bene l'italiano? Perché?
Rachel: L'ho studiato a scuola in America, per cinque anni.
Enrico: Brava! Io *vorrei* imparare bene l'inglese. (…)

Rachel: Ah … and what do you study?
Enrico: I study law … but you speak Italian very well? How come?
Rachel: I studied it in America, for five years.
Enrico: Well done! I *would like* to learn English well.

The conditional is not usually taught in Italian language courses at the beginner level. This, in turn, has the consequence of making students unable to express such a basic pragmatic meaning as a wish. The usual strategy concerning the verb "volere" (to want) is to introduce the indicative form at the beginning of an elementary course, but usually not in the very first class (the verb is irregular). Notice, though, that "voglio" (I want) is pragmatically associated with the expression of intentions, not wishes. Later on in an elementary course, when the imperfect tense is introduced, the student is also taught its modal use, as in the following example:

(5) Volevo fare una domanda
"I have a question/May I ask a question?"

Again, the associated pragmatic function is polite request, not wish. Students will eventually learn how to say what they would like to do or be in more advanced stages. In this case the disadvantage of sticking to the "progressive" exposition of grammar is very clear: a major pragmatic aspect is sacrificed without much in return, since the first person indicative "voglio" is as irregular as the first person conditional "vorrei". But from the grammatical point of view "vorrei" is conditional, and the conditional mood must be taught only after the student has learned the main indicative tenses. In practice, though, expressing a wish is a very common and useful pragmatic function, so it often happens that American students use the pragmatically inappropriate "voglio" (which mistakenly conveys a desire as a determined intention).

A more subtle mistake is the use of the form "volevo". Sometimes "volevo" and "vorrei" are interchangeable ("vorrei" is also used for polite requests), but in most cases they are not. Consider the following examples.

(6) Volevo imparare bene l'inglese
"I wanted to learn English well"

(7) Volevo chiederti il numero di telefono
"Could I have your phone number?"

In the former example, the imperfect has a clearly past temporal meaning, and does not express a wish at all. The second case is more complex: the modal meaning of polite request would be appropriate in the case of someone asking for the telephone number of a colleague, but it would sound rather weird if the speaker were asking for the number of a person he/she would like to go out with.

The *Vorrei* textbook moves from "vorrei" in the first lesson to modal "volevo" in the third, so that the difference between their associated functions of wish and polite request, respectively, is clear to the student. The course then returns to the conditional in the last lesson, where an exercise introduces the conditional form "mi piacerebbe" (I would like) and asks students what is it they would like to do before leaving Italy:

(8) Che cosa ti piacerebbe fare prima di partire? Rispondete alle domande con frasi complete.
1. Quali città ti piacerebbe visitare in Italia? E in Europa?
2. Quale museo vorresti visitare a Firenze?

What would you like to do before leaving? Answer the questions with complete sentences.
1. Which cities would you like to visit in Italy? And in Europe?
2. Which museum would you like to visit in Florence?

Clearly, the approach used in these examples not only provides students with a wider pragmatic input than the alternative traditional approach, but it also gives them a solid foundation upon which to learn other functions of the conditional in Italian, such as giving advice, suggestions, expressing opinions and so on. In this sense, it answers the needs of a student population that may not have extensive linguistic input from native speakers, as discussed above.

Finally, another feature of teaching pragmatics that should be interesting to teachers and staff is the increasing literature on the testing of pragmatic knowledge. Skills, like saying thanks and being able to make a polite request, can be thoroughly tested through questionnaires and activities as any other grammatical or linguistic skill, and detailed analyses of the results of real life 2L or FL courses are now available[12]. This is especially significant in the light of the importance attached to language as a "bridge" to a significant encounter with another culture[13].

7. Pragmatics and variation

One problem that, as far as I know, is completely absent in discussions of the language issue in study abroad is that, in many cases, the target language is far from being a fixed target. With this I am not referring to the basic observation that language is perpetually changing and evolving, but rather to the fact that social norms concerning language-use change drastically from one part of a language community to the other (the sociopragmatic component of pragmatic knowledge).

To illustrate this point, let us consider the case of the imperative[14]. It is usually taught in beginner courses and it has an associated pragmatic function, which is pretty straightforward (conveying an order). Naturally, any class about the imperative mood must make clear to

12 The reader is referred to Roever's (2011) survey and the literature quoted there.

13 And in light of the need of sending institutions to test the results of study abroad programs independently from students' self-evaluations (Wanner 2009).

14 I am referring here to the affirmative imperative mood, as in the forms "Mangia! Mangiate" (eat singular! Eat plural!).

students that such a pragmatic function is not always appropriate, and could sound rude and aggressive. Yet, the imperative is acceptable as a way of conveying instructions in some parts of Italy, but crucially not in others. In Florence, for instance, an informal register (with second-person singular "tu" instead of the polite third-person feminine pronoun "Lei") is very common and widely accepted, and within this register, and in the appropriate context, it is not impolite to convey instructions in the imperative. Thus, a teacher could instruct a colleague how to use the new photocopying machine with sentences using a verb in the imperative. Even among strangers, in an informal context, a waiter could instruct a client on how to move a table or open a window through imperative sentences, that might sound rude and disrespectful to an Italian from another region.

The question for language teachers in study abroad programs is then whether to teach this variation and, if so, how to teach it. The "safe" answer to this question would, at first glance, be "no" – do not teach it. Better to stick to the standard variety, or to the variety spoken in the place where the program is hosted, than to load students with too much information they might never need. This might be short-sighted, though, as American students in Italy are famously mobile: they travel widely across Europe and are certainly able to spot meaningful differences between countries, or regions within the same country. There is also a deeper argument in favor of trying to teach that variation, namely that the pragmatic knowledge of native speakers includes specific and detailed information about it. From this point of view, teaching this kind of variation is similar to teaching (apparent) exceptions to politeness rules, such as the fact that it is not impolite to address a clerk in a shop with the confidential "tu" if the clerk and the speaker are both young.

Even if the most common organization of language teaching deems this type of variation to be an "advanced" topic, on the basis of the discussion in the preceding section, it does not necessarily follow that it must be confined to advanced courses, provided its effective acquisition by beginner learners is tested empirically in the classroom. If it

turns out that beginner students have no problem grasping the idea that politeness rules vary, a conscious decision can be made to use the imperative in a beginner course to illustrate this general point. The lesson could include some other basic facts about regional variation in politeness, for instance, the fact that the pronoun "voi" (second-person plural) is used in the South as the polite pronoun instead of the pronoun "Lei" (third-person feminine singular) used in the North and in the standard language. Such a piece of information could be reinforced by showing students real life examples where that difference is observed. The comedy film *Welcome to the South*, for instance, is often used by teachers in study abroad programs in Italy to show the differences between the South and the North, and it contains a gag about a southern lady not understanding who is the "she" her northern guest keeps referring to. The fundamental point is whether students can separate linguistic information that must be *acquired* (i.e. standard Italian "Lei") from information which must only be *learned*, but not acquired (i.e. southern Italian "voi"): the former is information the learner has to understand and use, the latter is information they must only remember and recognize. This is an empirical question, but in principle there should be no reason why this is impossible, if the language teaching is organized in order to clearly distinguish the two types of information. One practical solution could be to complement language courses with separate classes, or even whole courses, to be taught in English, about specific points of language use. Such a solution would be similar to standard practices in FL teaching at the university level, the differences being only the language of instruction and a more narrow focus.

In the context of study abroad programs, this type of pragmatic knowledge might be easily labeled as an optional "extra" in busy foreign language courses with tight syllabi, but it has a clear practical value and is crucial in many real-life scenarios outside the classroom: surely the student who has spent a summer term studying in Florence should know, if she ever comes back to Italy to work in Rome, that the rules of politeness, as much as the language itself, are substantially different there.

8. Which Italian language? Which Italian culture? Localism and cultural variation

Of course, linguistic variations in Italy go far beyond different levels of politeness in different regions. The variations in standard Italian usage discussed in the previous section are but the tip of the iceberg of a much deeper and older linguistic diversity. Linguists have concluded long ago that "dialects" such as Sicilian or Venetian are full-fledged natural languages, with a fully natural grammar and vocabulary. Some of them are also written languages with a tradition that is sometimes older than that of Italian (which is based on Florentine), as in the case of Sicilian. As sociolinguists like to say, the only significant difference between a language and a dialect is that the language has an army and a navy[15].

The local cultures conveyed by these languages are also very much alive and are, to a certain degree, autonomous from Italian culture. As historians point out, this is not surprising, given the peninsula's long history of political and cultural disunity. Many university courses about Italy aimed at non-Italians actually use the phrase "Italie" (Italys, plural) in their titles, to stress this point.

As in the preceding section, the problem is again whether all this should find a place or not in courses of study abroad programs. Host institutions in Italy sometimes offer non-language courses that deal in part with this diversity, especially in the case of the North versus South divide. So, it is possible to find history courses about "la questione del Mezzogiorno" (the southern question) and its relevance to Italian history and culture in general. On the other hand, to the best of my knowledge, no study abroad program includes information about dialects in their Italian language courses, and no course book known to me, either foreign or Italian, includes systematic linguistic information on Italian dialects.

This state of affairs is perfectly understandable: for all practical purposes – grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc. – dialects are different

15 A saying usually attributed to the great sociolinguist and Yiddish scholar Max Weinreich (1894 – 1969), who in turn heard it from a member of the audience at one of his lectures.

languages. In my experience, even students of Italian at Italian departments are often puzzled when they are faced with examples from dialects in their language courses. Sometimes it is not clear to them why they have to study these funny-looking languages: for them it is as if an Italian language course suddenly switched to another foreign language, like French or Spanish. The crucial point is that, yes, these are different languages, but foreign they are not, in Italy.

More generally, the reality behind the notion that there is a single well-defined Italian language and culture – a view which seems dominant in public opinion outside Italy – is that of a multilingual and multicultural country[16]. For readers unfamiliar with this fundamental characteristic of modern Italy, it is important to underline that this vast diversity is not just a relic from the past that manifests itself occasionally in local fairs and pageants, but a pervasive cultural trait that informs Italians' own sense of identity. Italians are first and foremost Florentines, Venetians, Romans, Neapolitans … and only secondly Italian. Local identity is much stronger than national identity, and has deeper roots. Similarly, "dialects" are still the mother tongues of many Italians, who only begin using the standard language more often (or at all) when they start school.

Furthermore, the ways in which these local cultures and languages coexist with the standard language and national culture make sure that neither side is likely to overtake the other. The complex relationship between dialects and the national standard language in Italy has long been fruitfully understood in terms of "diglossia"[17], that is to say, the separation of functions between the two. The standard language is used as a high register in formal and official contexts, and as the written language, while the local language, the "dialect", serves as a low – but by no means vulgar –

16 I prefer the phrase "cultural and linguistic variation", since the much used notions of multiculturalism and multilingualism are often often refer to the co-existence of several separate and uniform linguistic / cultural communities. In the Italian case, some cultural and linguistic facts can be used to draw borders between different areas, but the type of variation I describe in this section can be found even within smaller areas, all the way down to the most local level , such as two neighborning villages or city neighborhoods.

17 See the seminal work of Ferguson (1959).

register in all informal and personal contexts, including the family. Switching between the standard and the dialect is therefore something that occurs constantly in conversations among Italians. Most of the linguistic facts taught in Italian textbooks and courses involve the use of the local dialect in real life. For instance, in the case of polite requests with the imperfect, many Italian speakers would prefer to use the corresponding construction in the dialect, as in many cases standard Italian would sound too formal and impersonal. In a way, this makes the relationship between standard language and dialect a reciprocally enriching one. For this and other reasons, dialects in Italy are not likely to disappear any time soon. Dialects are not "dying languages", with fewer and fewer speakers with each passing generation, as it is often wrongly assumed inside and outside Italy.

The introduction of these issues in the non-language courses about "Italy" offered to American students need not result in radical changes to their curricula. After all, many courses already mention this diversity or even deal with it directly, as in the case of courses about the South. Yet, a more explicit discussion of multilingualism and multiculturalism across courses would certainly help students grasp this fundamental point.

The real challenge is what to do with the linguistic side of this diversity. Should study abroad programs in Italy teach Italian dialects? To ground that question in the wider reality of Italian studies outside Italy, note that the exclusion of Italian linguistic diversity from the curriculum usually goes all the way up to graduate courses in departments of Italian at research universities. To make a not-so-hypothetical example, the young scholar who has just published her Ph.D thesis on Carlo Goldoni's comedies had to learn the Venetian language in which some of them were written entirely by herself. Quite likely, she had to rely on Venetian grammar books and dictionaries written in Italian, or on the help of an Italian professor who is also fluent in the language. Usually in these cases, a prolonged stay in the city where the dialect is spoken is an integral part of the post-graduate student's training. The exclusion of all but the most basic information about dialects from even the post-graduate curriculum in foreign universities inevitably results in their absence in most English language textbooks and curricula on Italian language and culture, so

it is certainly not surprising that study abroad programs in Italy, which largely rely on those textbooks and curricula, should follow suit.

In my opinion, this state of affairs, far from justifying a complete absence of linguistic diversity in study abroad programs, makes it more urgent to find a feasible solution in order to teach it. After all, if it is natural that departments of Italian outside Italy should concentrate on the literature and culture conveyed through the standard language, there is no reason why such a narrow focus should be imposed on students whose studies and personal interests do not involve Italy *per se*. The crucial point here is that the diglossic situation found in Italy has been observed in several other countries in Europe and outside, such as Greece and Switzerland, as well as in the Arabic speaking countries, among others. Indeed, variations on this basic diglossic pattern are very common across the cultures of the world, since many countries have official and literary languages that are not the native tongue of the majorities of their populations. The American case, with a vast and uniform language community and a standard variety that is very close to the spoken language, is definitely the exception, not the norm. If study abroad programs aim to make students live an immersive experience in a foreign culture and meet other people in ways which would be difficult outside of a dedicated period of study abroad, then surely an acknowledgement of this common pattern of language and cultural variation is a necessary pre-condition. Indeed, many of the communicative mistakes made by American students are explained by a lack of multicultural awareness, that sensitivity which reminds you that cultures and languages vary in different contexts or places. Many Italians have the impression that American students simply assume that whatever behavior is acceptable at home, linguistic or otherwise, should be fine in Italy as well. In my view, learning that this is not true is one of the most important lessons students can take away from their study abroad.

9. A proposal: linguistic landscapes

Given the constraints of study abroad programs, explicit linguistic instruction in a specific Italian dialect is not an option, especially since these programs in Italy are concentrated – not by chance – in Florence and

Rome, two places where the difference between the high register in Italian and the low one in the dialect is less visible to foreigners[18].

I would like to propose here that a feasible alternative is to adopt courses *about* the foreign language in English. In a course about "multilingual Italy", for instance, students would read introductory texts (in English) about Italian dialects, their origin and geographical distribution, and how dialects are specialized for certain contexts, including the personal context of family and friends. They would then study several examples of dialect usage, across the whole spectrum of everyday language and popular culture. These and many other topics can be taught *without* explicit linguistic teaching of the dialects, by using English translations or subtitled material. Yet, as sociolinguistics courses at universities across the globe demonstrate, such type of instruction can succeed in making students aware of the fundamental and common phenomenon of diglossic variation.

The inevitable objection to such a course is that it would run directly against the students' wishes. As Wanner (2009) points out, students want to be able to speak the language, and are definitely not interested in learning about it. In particular, what the students want is to have significant conversations in informal contexts. Even Wanner, who advocates for creativity and ingenuity in the planning of study abroad formats, rejects the idea of courses about language. The inescapable problem is, as discussed above, that conversational fluency in informal contexts is not a realistic goal for most education abroad programs, specially short-term ones. The correction suggested in this paper is to help students improve their communicative skills by explicitly instructing them how to carry out basic pragmatic functions. While this approach can significantly help language learners better negotiate their interactions in everyday life, it will not automatically result in wider conversational skills without improvements in grammar and vocabulary that are usually reached at more advanced stages. Clearly, if conversational fluency is not a realistic goal, this fact must be recognized by administrators and teachers.

18 Note that the common view, even inside Italy, that Florentine is not a dialect is – quite simply – wrong, as any attempt to understand a play written in the "vernacolo" can quickly confirm.

The overall goal of language courses in study abroad programs, I claim, has to shift away from the students' general and informal desire to *speak* the language to the much more specific and useful goal of learning how to *use* the linguistic notions they acquire during their studies abroad. For this, I have claimed that the explicit teaching of pragmatics is a necessary addition to the language curriculum, and can be taught in courses separate from language ones, to clarify that this is information that only needs to be *learned*, not *acquired*. The hypothetical course proposed here about multilingualism in Italy would be one such course. It would be in sync with the pace of language courses in Italian, but would be taught in English. It would also cover all the dialectal material that is already normally present in courses about Italian culture: from films in Neapolitan (*Gomorrah*) or Venetian dialects (*Shun Li and the Poet*), to rap bands like the *Sud Sound System* singing in Salentino (a southern dialect), to modern and older writers who incorporate dialects in their Italian works, local cultures and languages are already abundantly present in courses in study-abroad programs. Such a course could even expand its reach beyond Italy and show the long history of dialects in Italian-American culture, for instance.

More innovative alternatives are conceivable. A real case I would like to briefly mention here is the "linguistic landscapes" approach developed by professor Benjamin Hary at the New York University – Tel Aviv campus[19]. The overall goal of the course is to question the common assumption that Israel is a monolingual country. Language laws and policies are studied, together with the ideology that informs those policies. A core activity in the course is the learning of the Hebrew and Arabic alphabet, followed by tours of Tel Aviv's Jaffa urban area, in order to look at "signs, advertisements, instructions, buildings, streets, and billboards" and observe whether they are written in Hebrew or Arabic. Of course, this material could also be written in English and Russian, two other common languages in Israel, which also have their own easily recognizable alphabets. The teacher would then stop in front of the most

19 Description based on the syllabus of the course, and personal communication with Prof. Hary.

interesting cases and show how the text mixes Hebrew and Russian, or contains Hebrew words even if it is written in Arabic. By implementing a few changes, such an approach could be applied in Italy, with guided trips to Naples, for instance, looking for all the dialectal words present in signs, graffiti and billboards.

The bigger picture, though, is that there is a complex "linguistic landscape" out there which is literally invisible to anyone who has not been explicitly taught about it. While such an activity does not help stop American students from complaining about the absence of dryers in Italian apartments or commenting on how crowded Florence is, it does make them aware of the complexity of the linguistic and cultural scenario around them. In Italy, that would be the predominant role of localism, that is, local language and culture. Students would then be in the position to link this basic fact to many other things they have heard about in class, such as political parties having strong regional roots in Italy, or to their own personal experience outside class, such as the fact that all Italians they meet keep asking where they are from. "I know, you are American, but where are you from, *exactly*?"

10. Conclusions

As stated at the beginning, this is an exploratory and preliminary work. Many empirical questions must be answered fully in order to see whether the proposals made here are realistic and beneficial. Yet I think that part of the task of making language courses more useful for our students is to rethink the role of language in study abroad programs in its entirety, and propose creative alternatives to more established approaches, as convincingly argued by Wanner (2008).

I hope to have shown that there are good reasons to assume that the traditional way of teaching language, and especially grammar, from simpler to more complex topics could do students in shorter study abroad programs, who are not interested in language per se, a disservice. I have tried to show that the linguistic field of pragmatics has much to teach us in the ways in which vital communicative functions can be taught and tested. I have also claimed that separate courses *about* language could

provide a useful complement to language courses. These courses could introduce students to related important notions, such as cultural and linguistic diglossia, and act as a bridge to lots of material which is already present in the curriculum.

Naturally, all of these proposals could very well be rejected for empirically grounded reasons, but I would like to argue that if language study is not to be completely eliminated from study abroad programs, the option of indefinitely maintaining the current approach to language teaching is not a viable alternative, in the face of the massive increase in the number of students and short-term programs to be expected in the future. In that context, traditional gradual teaching will cover pretty few basic features of the language, and the teaching of conversational skills will necessarily be based on set phrases and model dialogues, without explaining their grammatical and linguistic features. There is only so much language learning you can do in three weeks, after all. On the other hand, there is a lot of learning *about* language that you can do in three weeks, including important and general notions such as diglossia. Remember that the "linguistic landscapes" activity described above, for instance, only requires the ability to distinguish the Hebrew and Arabic scripts. Teachers and officers might want to argue in favor of the opposite view, that whatever little time students spend studying the language, it must be "real" language study, leading to the acquisition and correct use of linguistic structures. Even so, the choice of *what* to teach will necessarily have to be answered again from scratch, carefully considering the pragmatic value of each linguistic feature to be taught: it will not be justified to teach superlatives, for instance, only because of their traditional presence in beginner courses.

The more general point I am trying to make is the unitary nature of language, which does not seem to be fully grasped in the literature on study abroad. Exactly as the grammar of a natural language cannot be split up into "study abroad Italian" or "telephone business English", the usage of language cannot be split up into "polite ways to ask for a coffee" or "appropriate ways to pay a compliment". When we teach students to use "volevo" to make polite requests, a vast universe of linguistic and

social facts is implied in this instruction, including, for native Italians, the alternative use of the dialectal form. Which of these facts to teach, and how, must be the result of a conscious and deliberate choice, aimed at maximizing not only the linguistic skills of the students, but also their cultural and linguistic awareness.

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Developing Intercultural Sensitivity in Study Abroad Programs

Christian Tarchi, Alessio Surian, Colette Daiute

Abstract

Promoting intercultural sensitivity is a key objective in a world characterized by increased mobility and social interaction within multicultural environments. Study abroad programs represent an opportunity to develop intercultural communication competences and intercultural sensitivity, if students' reflective processes are effectively prompted. In this article, we will present acculturation and intercultural sensitivity as important theoretical frameworks to promote students' growth while studying abroad. We also discuss the use of narratives produced through video-logs as an assessment and reflection tool that can be implemented by educators involved in study abroad programs.

Keywords: intercultural competence, intercultural sensitivity, acculturation, study abroad, narratives, video-logs

Promoting sensitivity about cultural differences (i.e., intercultural sensitivity) is a key objective in a world characterized by increased mobility and social interaction within multicultural environments (Olson & Kroeger, 2001). Study abroad programs are a voluntary opportunity to develop intercultural communication competencies and intercultural sensitivity, compared to different types of cross-national mobility, such as migration or displacement. Universities all over the world have a long tradition of promoting internalization and cultural exchange, in order to have students improve cross-cultural knowledge and skills (see a recent special issue on study abroad, Adams & de Wit, 2011). However, study abroad programs, and the related exposure to cultural differences do not automatically lead to increased intercultural understanding and in-

tercultural communication competence, unless students' acculturative strategy is taken into account (Berry, 1997), and their reflective processes are explicitly prompted (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Deardoff, 2009; Vande Berg, 2007; Vande Berg, Paige, & Hemming Lou, 2012). For this reason, assessing students' acculturative strategies and intercultural sensitivity development and including these assessments as a form of reflection on their experiences with cultural differences are of paramount importance. In this contribution, first we will present two main theoretical models for acculturative strategies and intercultural sensitivity; then, we will discuss narratives as a way to prompt students' reflections on their study abroad experiences. We will discuss narrating as a measure that gives students the opportunity to speak from experience, ideally focusing on critical incidents, in the form of a video-log (narrative). Because our narrative analysis process including plot analysis is systematic and qualitative as well as quantitative, the results can be related to the other self-report measures.

Acculturation

When there is a continuous and prolonged contact between two cultural groups, individuals within the groups must adapt to the new cultural situation (Huynh, Howell, & Benet-Martinez, 2009). Migrating people are asked to adapt and adjust to a new culture, with the former term referring to behavioral changes (i.e., learning a new language) and the latter term referring to the psychological changes (i.e., acquiring a different perspective on relationships). The adjustment process has been called *culture shock*, *acculturation*, or *acculturative stress*. *Culture shock* is the term most frequently used: originally proposed by Oberg (Oberg, 1960), it refers to anxious reactions to the loss of familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. However, this term is characterized by a strong negative connotation, and it refers to a historical period in which cultural exchanges were less frequent, migrating people had less prior knowledge about the host culture, and the host culture was less prepared to welcome migrating people. Nowadays, the term *acculturation* is preferable,

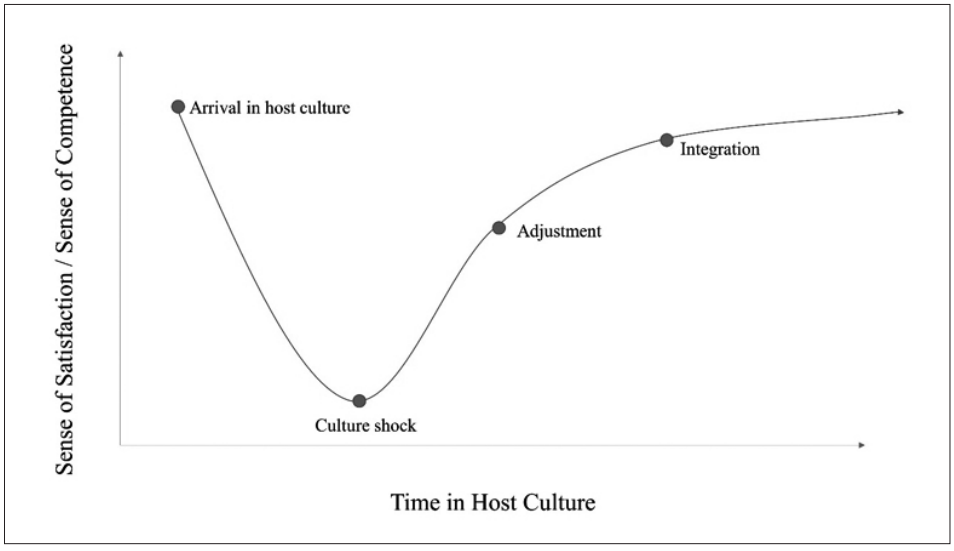

Figure 1. The acculturation curve

as it attributes to cultural contact a neutral connotation, and occasionally can become stressful for the individual, with different degrees of intensity (*acculturative stress*).

In the early days of research, acculturation was interpreted through a one-dimensional model (see Figure 1): The more time people spend in a culture, the more oriented they become toward the host culture, and, at the same time, they relinquish their heritage culture (Cuellar, Harris, & Jasso, 1980).

The classic acculturation curve, or "culture shock" curve, represents the changes in study abroad students' sense of satisfaction and sense of competence as a function of time spent in the host culture. Generally, at the arrival in the host culture scores are high (the "honeymoon stage"). Soon enough, students' sense of satisfaction and competence begin to decrease when they start interacting with the host culture, until reaching a very low score (the culture shock stage). Through experimentation the students start adjusting their ways of thinking and behaving to the host culture ones (the experimenting stage), until they feel integrated in the

host culture (the mastery stage). However, such a graphic and theoretical representation of students is affected by two main problems: it standardizes students' experiences to one pattern only, whereas students could show different adaptation patterns as a function of their background; it represents adaptation as an exclusive process: one can identify themselves with either the heritage or the host culture.

Recently, a bi-dimensional model for acculturation has been proposed (Celenk & Van de Vijver, 2011; Heine, 2008; Huynh et al., 2009; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999), based on Berry's theory (Berry, 1974). Individuals can have interdependent but separate orientations towards their origin and host culture. From the interaction between these two dimensions (orientation towards origin culture, and orientation towards host culture) four acculturative strategies can be derived: Integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization (see Figure 2).

People with high identification with their original culture and high interest in intergroup relations approach cross-cultural experiences with an integration strategy. Those with high identification with their original culture but low interest in intergroup relations approach cross-cultural

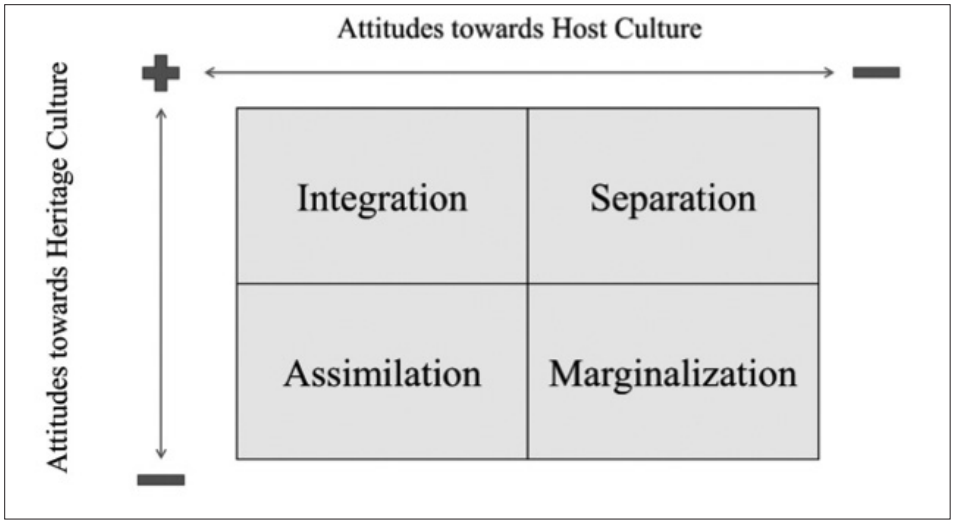

Figure 2. Acculturative strategies.

experiences with a separation strategy. People with low identification with their original culture but high interest in intergroup relations approach cross-cultural experiences with an assimilation strategy. Finally, those with low identification with their original culture and a low interest in intergroup relations approach cross-cultural experiences with a marginalization strategy. These strategies are not intended to be individual characteristics, but rather relational, and enacted in specific cultural contexts. Past studies have found that marginalization and separation strategies are generally associated with higher levels of acculturative stress, as compared to integration and assimilation strategies (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987).

Measuring acculturation. Some questionnaires allow us to assess people's orientation towards origin and host culture, and identify their main acculturative strategy. There are two main approaches: typological and dimensional. Typological instruments include four separate scales to measure each acculturative strategy separately (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). For instance, "We're living in Canada, and that means giving up our traditional way of life and adopting a Canadian lifestyle, thinking and acting like Canadians" represents an item to test people's assimilation strategy levels. Alternatively, dimensional approaches allow us to assess acculturation through two scales, i.e., relationship to culture of origin and relationship to culture of contact, and have used a bipartite split to allow the investigation of the four acculturation strategies (see for instance the Vancouver Index of Acculturation by Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000, or the Acculturation Index by Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). For instance, "I often behave in ways that are typical of my *origin* culture" and "I often behave in ways that are typical of my *host* culture" represent items that test individual orientation towards, their origin and host culture respectively. Interestingly, acculturation scales differ also by the format of questions they employ (Kang, 2006). People's orientations towards origin and host scales can be assessed in terms of frequency of behavior (e.g., "How much Italian do you speak at home?"), or in terms of proficiency (e.g., "How well can you speak Italian?"), or in terms of endorsement (e.g., "I am proud of my

Italian roots"). The Acculturation Index (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999) represents an example of acculturative scale employing a bi-dimensional approach to acculturation through endorsement questions. The Acculturation Index includes 20 cognitive and behavioral items, such as clothing, pace of life, food, friendship, and the like. For each item, students are asked to consider two questions about their lifestyle in Italy: "Are your experiences and behaviors similar to those of people from your country of origin (co-nationals)?" and "Are your experiences and behaviors similar to those of Italians (host nationals)?" Students are asked to rate each of the two questions on a scale from 1 to 7, in which (1) corresponds to 'not at all', and (7) corresponds to 'extremely'. Students obtain two scores, a co-national identification and a host identification score (range 20-140 in each scale).

Intercultural sensitivity

Intercultural sensitivity, a term sometimes used interchangeably with intercultural competence, refers to individuals' ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences (Bennett, 1986; Hammer, 2015). In general, people can approach cultural differences with two main worldviews: an ethnocentric one, in which people experience their own culture as central, as "the right one", and an ethno-relative one, in which people experience their own culture as just a worldview possible among many other alternatives (Bennett, 1986). In the 1980s, a seminal model for intercultural sensitivity was proposed, focusing on the developmental progression from less to greater levels of intercultural competence: the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS, Bennett, 1986). The DMIS is a constructivist-grounded model viewing intercultural sensitivity as complex and developmental in nature. The DMIS conceptualizes intercultural sensitivity on a linear continuum from three ethnocentric (denial, defense, and minimization) to three ethno-relative stages (acceptance, adaptation, and integration). In Denial, one's own culture is experienced as the only real one, and consideration of other cultures is avoided by maintaining psychological isolation from differences. In Defense, one's own/adopted culture is experienced as the only good one, and cultural difference is denigrated. In Minimization,

elements of one's own cultural worldview are experienced as universal, so that cultures are seen as essentially similar to one's own, despite acceptable surface differences. In Acceptance, other cultures are experienced as equally complex but different constructions of reality. In Adaptation, one attains the ability to shift perspective in and out of another cultural worldview; thus, one's experience potentially includes the different cultural experience of someone from another culture. In Integration, one's experience of self is expanded to include the movement in and out of different cultural worldviews. In a recent development of the DMIS model, minimization was conceptualized as a transition from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism, rather than an ethnocentric stage, and integration was conceptualized as a construction of an intercultural identity, rather than a development of intercultural competence (Hammer, 2015). One of the aims of studying abroad is to promote a development in intercultural sensitivity, but the outcome greatly depends on individual and contextual factors. In terms of individual variables, students' acculturation orientation, prior exposure and experiences with cultural differences might influence their development in intercultural sensitivity (Pedersen, 2010). In terms of contextual variables, "cultural mentoring" and direct contact with host culture influence development in intercultural sensitivity (Engle & Engle, 2004; Pedersen, 2010).

Measuring intercultural sensitivity. Development in intercultural sensitivity is generally measured with standardized tests (e.g., the Intercultural Development Inventory, Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003) administered to students before they leave for study abroad, and after their return home. Thus, development in intercultural sensitivity is operationalized as pre-departure and post-return differences. However, study abroad students process cultural experiences as they are occurring; thus an assessment of intercultural sensitivity should be contingent to the study abroad experience (Pedersen, 2010).

Personal Experiences

While measures of intercultural sensitivity and acculturation provide statements from previous research and thus opportunities for

study participants to indicate their connection to those predetermined statements, narratives of experience offer opportunities to attend to and interpret events in self-determined ways. Narratives may enact critical incidents, which are also concepts relevant to cultural studies. A critical incident is "*any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act. To be critical, an incident must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer and where its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects*" (Flanagan, 1954). Critical incidents have previously been used in intercultural learning settings (Busse & Krause, 2015, 2016; Vande Berg et al., 2012) students engaged with critical incidents. These were either analysed (analytical focus, being "*brief descriptions of situations in which there is a misunderstanding, problem or conflict arising from cultural differences between interacting parties or where there is a problem of cross-cultural adaptation*" (Wight, 1995, p. 128). Critical incidents require people to reflect on themselves and their viewpoint, and go beyond the observation of cultural differences (Fitzgerald, 2001).

Critical incidents were introduced into intercultural training at the beginning of the 1960s (de Frankrijker, 1998), and display misunderstandings that derive from cultural differences, which are left unexplained to the participant (Busse & Krause, 2015). Generally, critical incidents provide some contextual information to "set the stage" and some comments about feelings and reactions by the people involved. The critical incidents should end with a question encouraging participants to provide their view on what has happened. This technique encourages participants to identify cultural standards and expectations and generate potential operational scenarios in response to the incident (Wight, 1995). Working with critical incidents can promote study abroad students' self-reflection (Fitzgerald, 2001) and help them to de-construct cultural stereotypes. Critical incidents have a long tradition as an intercultural learning activity, but students are always asked to reflect on incidents that have happened to someone else, affecting their ability to construct empathy with the situ-

ation. Some authors have tried to reduce this gap by choosing cultural incidents produced by individuals who were included in the same intercultural situation (e.g., past study abroad students). This stratagem might be effective in reducing variance due to contextual factors, but it does not contribute to reducing variance due to individual differences. Research should point towards ways of using personal narratives as critical incidents to be treated as objects of intercultural reflection.

Narratives as Measures

Narrating in daily life is typically an oral activity involving spoken words and gestures. Narratives are an important means of communication, but they also represent a sophisticated decontextualized form of reflection and meaning making (Spencer, Kajian, Petersen, & Bilyk, 2013). Meaning making is a blend of material and cultural life. It integrates biological qualities (like vocalization and hearing) with culture (like agreements about when we share stories and which stories are worth telling.) The quality of connecting with others and the world through narratives is defined as dynamic storytelling. This concept explains how symbolic media can be used for making sense of activities in its context (Daiute, 2014). As such, asking people to recount everyday interactions through narration allows them to assess and develop meaning in relational contexts. One way to increase students' reflection on their own narrative is to focus on how the story was told. Recent theory-based research has developed and implemented rigorous narrative analyses methods that can offer insights to compare individuals' narratives over time, individuals' narrated experiences to their responses on surveys, and more. One such method that is relevant to narrating experience in a foreign culture is plot analysis (Daiute, 2014).

Plot analysis offers the theory and method to assess (and improve) a study from a cultural point of view. Each narrative should include three main structural elements: initiating action (the sentence depicting the event that sets the story in motion), the high point/turning point/climax (the plot conflict, that is the central pivot or point of the story, building from the ini-

tiating action and shifting toward resolving actions), and the ending. While these three elements represent the overall structure of a story, most narratives also include some additional elements: the setting (physical and psychological background of the story), complicating actions (sentences advancing the story from the initiating action), resolution strategies (attempts to resolve the plot pivoted from the high point/turning point, climax), and coda. Complicating actions and resolution strategies are relevant to intercultural conflict escalations and attempts to address the conflicts, as narrated. Both complicating actions and resolution strategies express cause-and-effect relations in intercultural conflict narratives.

Video-logs. The use of video-logs as a specific form of narrative is useful for promoting students' reflection on their own critical incidents. The use of video-log has been proposed for fostering deliberate and scaffolded reflection on experiences that involve cultural diversity (Wong & Webster, 2012). A video-log is a form of blog in which the medium is the video. Video-logs can help students develop narratives about cultural incidents that have happened to them. Through narratives they can express, become aware of, and reflect *on the person performing the act* (Flanagan, 1954). In study abroad programs, video-logs could be used as an assessment instrument, to reveal students' worldviews, and as a training instrument, to have students reflect on their own cultural analysis of events. More specifically: 1) students' video-logs should be used in combination with acculturation scores, in order to interpret misunderstanding in light of the specific acculturation strategy used; 2) students' video-logs could be used as a way to assess their intercultural sensitive worldview enacted in a situation; 3) students' video-logs are a form of visually-produced narratives, and can be analyzed through narrative theory and analysis approaches (see next paragraph).

Examples of study abroad students' narratives

In the previous paragraphs we described two main theoretical frameworks (acculturation and intercultural sensitivity), and one method (analysis of narratives as expressed through video-logs) that can be implemented in study abroad contexts to promote students' reflection on

their cultural experiences. Following, we will provide some examples of past students' narratives while spending a study abroad semester in Italy. Narratives are categorized by intercultural sensitivity worldview represented, and coded with a plot analysis approach.

A "Denial" Narrative	**Plot Analysis Element**
My culture incident happened about six months ago in Rome / during my work experience	SETTING
It was just a normal day at the canteen	SETTING
And I ordered some pasta with tuna	SETTING
And I also wanted some parmigiano on top	SETTING
And I was wondering why the woman didn't ask me if I wanted some parmigiano with my pasta like she usually does with risotto or with soup	INITIATING ACTION
And for me it's very unusual to have cheese in my soup because this is something we don't do in Slovenia	SETTING
And instead of just adding the cheese and passing me over the plate the woman just started laughing at me so much that everybody turned around and stared at me	COMPLICATING ACTION
And the situation was obviously very embarrassing and very very confusing for me	COMPLICATING ACTION
And um / yeah so I decided to go for an afternoon coffee with my Italian colleagues	COMPLICATING ACTION
And I asked them why would people laugh at me what is so weird about it	HIGH POINT
And uh / they answered they laughed all at the same time	COMPLICATING ACTION
And they were like // how could you how could you even think of having fish with cheese and it's so disgusting	COMPLICATING ACTION
And it's just like having your cappuccino at four in the afternoon / pointing at my cappuccino	COMPLICATING ACTION
And um so the question still remained unanswered	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
And I just assumed it's one of those many rules that I've learned in Italy during my stay	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
Such as / no cappuccino after 10 am no pizza for lunch no wine with pizza only beer	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
And um / yah so all those rules for me they don't make sense There's no reason in my opinion	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
And uh / and I just keep having cheese with my fish	RESOLUTION STRATEGY

In this example, the Denial student is listing a series of complicating actions, and a list of resolution strategies that are disconnected to the complicating actions. The high point of the narrative is not focused on the cultural differences, but more on other peoples' behavior.

A "Defense" Narrative	**Plot Analysis Element**
The first Saturday I was with four other friends	SETTING
and we decided to go to Assisi	INITIATING ACTION
We arrived at the train station a good twenty minutes before.	SETTING
I thought this would be plenty of time.	SETTING
First I had to try to navigate those machines.	COMPLICATING ACTION
This went okay but I had also been warned that I HAD to validate my train ticket before going on the train.	COMPLICATING ACTION
This was definitely different from the United States but we were certain that we had to do this.	COMPLICATING ACTION
So we went to the validation machines.	COMPLICATING ACTION
It took me about five minutes to figure out how to use the machines.	COMPLICATING ACTION
It was really (giggle) embarrassing,	COMPLICATING ACTION
and I don't know why I had trouble with it	COMPLICATING ACTION
but it was definitely a little different from the United States.	COMPLICATING ACTION
You don't have to do that to get on the trains.	COMPLICATING ACTION
But then when we all looked at our train tickets,	COMPLICATING ACTION
we could not figure out which platform to go to.	COMPLICATING ACTION
We had about ten minutes but still we were a little nervous	COMPLICATING ACTION
and none of us could even remember the word FOR "platform".	COMPLICATING ACTION
We later learned it was "binario".	COMPLICATING ACTION
But still it was a little worrying.	COMPLICATING ACTION
Everyone started freaking out "Oh no, oh no, where's our train, where's our train?"	COMPLICATING ACTION
Worse yet, there were no maps AROUND for us to figure out WHERE our train was going.	COMPLICATING ACTION
We couldn't find any sign or anything that said Assisi,	COMPLICATING ACTION
so we all got a little nervous, a little freaked out.	COMPLICATING ACTION
We had to wait in line to ask someone WHERE our train was.	COMPLICATING ACTION

Now that left us five minutes (giggle) to get our train.	COMPLICATING ACTION
so we all had to RUN to get our train.	COMPLICATING ACTION
it was a little frantic and worrying and a little stressed out	COMPLICATING ACTION
but we did it. We eventually made our train.	HIGH POINT
For me, this showed how like everything is different, um not everything, but the train system and the whole idea of having to validate your ticket	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
and it also showed the different modernization of Italy.	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
I think in the U.S., there definitely would have been clear signs,	COMPLICATING ACTION
there would have been a map,	COMPLICATING ACTION
there would have been computerized signs showing us where to go, specific step-by-step instructions	COMPLICATING ACTION
but in Italy this was not the case.	COMPLICATING ACTION
It was a good cultural experience though because at first, once I learned how to do it,	CODA
I now know how to use the train system very easily	ENDING

In this example, the Defense student is just listing a series of complicating actions, whose frequency is not balanced with resolution strategies.

A "Minimization" Narrative	**Plot Analysis Element**
So coming to Florence we really didn't know what to expect, what we would have, what we would be missing	SETTING
So we decided one of the first weekends here to take a trip to Ikea.	SETTING
So one of the things that I love about home is my bed,	SETTING
And I tried to make my bed here as comfortable as it is at home and give me a little piece of home while I'm in my apartment here.	SETTING
So I've been to Ikea in America countless times,	SETTING
My mom is obsessed with Ikea, we always go.	SETTING
So I thought that getting sheets would be a no-brainer, very easy.	SETTING
But it turns out that was not the case at all.	INITIATING ACTION
So, one of the first things that was troublesome was in America we use size like "Twin" "Queen," and "King", while in Italy they just show the dimensions in centimeters on the package which is completely different from how we do it at home and especially because I don't, we didn't really read Italian at all, I really had no idea at all how to read it.	COMPLICATING ACTION

So looking at the package at Ikea, I had no idea what was going on.	COMPLICATING ACTION
So I decided to go up to one of the people that was working there and hopefully they would speak English	COMPLICATING ACTION
And they didn't.	COMPLICATING ACTION
Uhum, we talked to about four people,	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
And none of them spoke English very well,	COMPLICATING ACTION
So we decided to draw a picture	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
So I get out um a scrap piece of paper	COMPLICATING ACTION
and I'm trying to draw stick figures of twins	COMPLICATING ACTION
So I tried it out in stick figures, I'm not very good at drawing at all	COMPLICATING ACTION
And finally one of the employees finally understands what I'm saying and she says "twin"?	HIGH POINT
And I've never been so excited to hear a word in my entire life.	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
And I was like "Yes, yes!"	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
So she brings the right package.	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
And it was really great to kind of, even though we don't speak Italian, it was nice to still communicate to someone who is from a different culture from another language, like that had universal language between the two of us using gestures and pictures.	CODA
It was nice to think that even though I don't speak Italian I will be able to get along in Italy.	ENDING

In this example, the Minimization student presents a more balanced ratio between complicating actions and resolution strategies than the Defense student did, but the high point is not focused on cultural differences, and the coda reduces the analysis of the experience to a mere communication problem.

An "Acceptance" Narrative	**Plot Analysis Element**
Hello, I want to talk about a cultural incident, which uh had happened the first time I went for a swim here in Padova.	SETTING
So, when I'm done with swimming, I entered the showering room, the public showering room,	SETTING
and there to my surprise, I am each time confronted with um a couple of women who are showering over there completely naked,	INITIATING ACTION

and who are not hiding themselves behind a curtain but doing it openly and naturally	COMPLICATING ACTION
and my first impression when I uh was in that situation was to apologize and to take a step back to go away because I had the feeling that I entered a room where I was not allowed	COMPLICATING ACTION
but of course after a while I realized that for them it is apparently normal to do it like that	HIGH POINT
and I am allowed in the room	COMPLICATING ACTION
and they have no problem with me seeing them uh naked	COMPLICATING ACTION
So yea, of course I'm not used to it	COMPLICATING ACTION
in Belgium where I live I have never experienced that before	SETTING
We are yea, we are think more shy and more ashamed of ourselves	COMPLICATING ACTION
and when we go for a shower in a public showering room, we always use our own little cabin	COMPLICATING ACTION
and we close the curtain because NObody should see us	COMPLICATING ACTION
And here, the atmosphere is open and you can behave naturally without being ashamed of yourself;	COMPLICATING ACTION
you can even talk to each other	COMPLICATING ACTION
so I like it very much	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
but I don't know if at the end of my stay here in Padova, I will do it myself, I will behave like an Italian,	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
I don't know, I don't think that I am capable of doing that um	CODA
but still it yea, it's really interesting to be in a situation like this.	CODA

In this example, the "acceptance" student focuses the narrative on the cultural difference, with the high point of the stories being a realization that something that is uncomfortable for a culture could be normal for another culture.

An "Adaptation" Narrative	**Plot Analysis Element**
Hi, so I was initially going to do my video about a cultural incident here in Padova regarding my helmet.	SETTING
I'm one of the very few people who wear a helmet here in the city and that has actually gotten me a lot of funny looks and stares.	SETTING
But I actually have a better story for you today, also regarding my bicycle and how I acted like an Italian because of it.	SETTING

Um, so my bicycle broke down again yesterday	INITIATING ACTION
and so I decided I would walk it down to the train station, park it there, and then on my way back from school, I'd ah, bring it to the bicycle repair shop by the station and then ride it home afterwards.	COMPLICATING ACTION
Um but on my way back from school today, as I was passing the Giardino di Larena, um, I saw some guy selling my bicycle!	HIGH POINT
So I walked up to him,	COMPLICATING ACTION
and he said "Oh, you want to buy this bicycle for 20E?"	COMPLICATING ACTION
and I said, "Uh, excuse me sir, but this is my bicycle that you stole and are trying to sell to me".	COMPLICATING ACTION
and he says "Oh, 10 euros, buy it for 10 euros".	COMPLICATING ACTION
Oh, and I was being kind of Canadian and trying to reason with him and I said "Signore, questa è la mia bicicletta" [Sir, this is my bicycle"]	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
and I'm being polite, and I said "I'm a student, I don't have enough money to pay for a new lock, which you cut, and buy my bicycle back"	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
Um and he wouldn't, and he said "Cinque, take it, cinque" ["Five, take it, five"]	COMPLICATING ACTION
And after that, I got a little bit flustered,	COMPLICATING ACTION
and I think, because I was trying to speak to him in Italian, as well, I was feeling like an Italian, and so I took out the hands, and it's like, "Signore, questa è la mia bicicletta, no vado pagare dieci o cinque per la mia bicicletta" ["Sir, this is my bicycle, I am not going to spend ten or five for my bicycle"].	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
and I even threatened to call the police	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
and um, I think he started thinking,	RESOLUTION STRATEGY
Probably back in Canada, I would have tried to negotiate a little bit more	SETTING
but it has never happened that somebody stole my bicycle and tried to sell it back to me.	SETTING
but, um, regardless, this is my story of how I acted like an Italian today, "ciao".	CODA

In this example, the Adaptation student presents a high point focused on the cultural difference, and a well-balanced ratio between complicating actions and resolution strategies. The coda reflects the ability of responding to the critical situation in a culturally-appropriate way.

Conclusion

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) defined Intercultural Knowledge and Competence as:

> *a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts*.

Student mobility allows college and higher education students to come into continuous and first-hand contact with individuals of the host culture. However, students could have dysfunctional adjustment, for many reasons: differentiation between host cultures; cultural distance; unsatisfying relations with host country individuals; weak host country identification; and poor language proficiency (Pedersen, 2010). Thus, it is important to include specific attention to students' acculturation processes in study abroad. At the same time, it is important to foster a reflective approach to cultural differences. If students adopt an ethnocentric approach, they will avoid cultural difference (by denying its existence, by raising defenses against it, or by minimizing its importance), thus reducing the opportunities for growth in intercultural competence. Conversely, we need to foster an ethno-relative worldview, in which students seek cultural difference (by accepting its importance, by adapting one's perspective to take it into account, or by integrating the whole concept into a definition of one's identity). From an educational perspective, narratives produced through video-logs seem a promising tool to have teachers assess students' worldview on differences and students reflect on their own critical incidents. The instruments discussed in this contribution should be used in interaction, in order to understand students' intercultural sensitivity as displayed by their narratives, and in light of their acculturative strategy.

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How an Unexpected Case of Sexual Assault Can Lead to Global Competence

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Abstract

This paper relates an experience shared with a group of American students studying the Bertolucci-Benigni film *Berlinguer ti voglio bene* (1977; *Berlinguer I Love You* in English). It traces the surprising outcomes when students reacted in a brand-new way to old material – old given that the movie was made over forty years ago, and also in the sense that I had used it numerous times in my course on comic Italian performers. Never before had students classified the action as sexual assault, referring to the scene in which Mario Cioni's friend, Bozzone, arrives to spend the night with Cioni's mother, with winnings he had earned in a card game. The students' response prompted us to carry out "the Berlinguer research project," in which they explored five key topics relating to the scene: 1) The Movie Itself, 2) Italian Feminism in the 1970s, 3) Roberto Benigni and Feminism, 4) Sexual Assault and the Law (Italy and US), 5) Sexual Assault and Film.

My students did not produce the literary analysis of the scene I had envisioned, but instead moved in directions consonant with the acquisition of certain global competencies. This was an unexpected but rewarding outcome from a pedagogical perspective. I describe how their work led to gains in global competence, and also advocate that professors also strive to become more globally competent, in terms of appreciating contexts relevant to today's university students. In particular, the issues of sexual violence and mistreatment of women call us all to become more globally aware and proficient.

Keywords: sexual assault, global competence, Benigni, *Berlinguer ti voglio bene*

Author's Note

This essay is dedicated to the ten students who participated in the "Berlinguer film project" for my 2017 spring semester course *Acting Italian: Benigni, Goldoni, Fo.* Their responses and engagement in the course assignment stimulated this reflection and I am grateful to them for pushing me toward new ideas and more humane perspectives. They are quoted throughout the work, but in the interests of privacy their comments will be kept anonymous.

I didn't see it coming. A scene sequence in a film I've shown regularly to students over the past five or six years, part of a popular course on Italian comic performance, provoked an entirely unanticipated response.[1] The movie: Roberto Benigni's 1977 *Berlinguer ti voglio bene* (hereafter *BTVB*), a cinematic elaboration of the pathetic Mario Cioni character familiar to Italian theater audiences from the actor's earlier stand-up performances (Avati, Minervini & Bertolucci, 1977). The sequence: Bozzone, Cioni's best friend, shows up at his house to claim the debt Cioni owes him from a previous card game – a night with Cioni's mother. After a few words with Cioni, Bozzone heads to *la mamma*, who is washing up the dinner dishes with her back to the camera. Upon seeing her swaying backside, Bozzone drops his pants -- when she turns and sees him, she appears frightened and moves away. Hulking over her, he follows as she distances herself, worrying aloud. Bozzone stops for an instant to address Cioni, who vocally objects to the action, but when Bozzone challenges him to instead come through with the money and Cioni cannot, the pursuit continues. A close-up of Bozzone shows him voicing an obscenity "Close your mouth and open your cun*, hippopotamus!" But Mrs. Cioni has already fled up the stairs, where Bozzone follows her. Cioni stands by passively, muttering his disapproval.

A few scenes later we see *la mamma* opening the shutters to the new day, presumably the morning after her encounter with Bozzone. She looks like a different woman compared to the unkempt hag she has been until now. Made-up, hair styled, softened in expression, she is attractive and beaming, looking out on the blue sky and sunny countryside. She opens window after window, singing, smiling, fluffing her hair, playing with the curtains – and commenting on how she hasn't slept this well since she was a little girl, that it is a beautiful day, she has so many things to do, but "Che sarà?" ("What might this day bring?"). A short while later the film shows a Sunday lunch in the Cioni home, where Bozzone now presides at the table and Mrs. Cioni happily waits on him, as if they are husband and wife.

1 The course, ITTR 3775 Acting Italian: Benigni, Goldoni, Fo studies the core elements of Italian literary, performative, and cultural traditions in the comic vein. It is taught in English, therefore students see the movie *Berlinguer ti voglio bene* in its English subtitled version, entitled *Berlinguer I Love You*.

Granted, the premise is bizarre. Even for American students used to the term "MILF", and accustomed to laughing at comic renditions of young men desiring and even coupling with friends' mothers (in movies such as *American Pie* [1999], and *MILF* [2010]), the idea that one's buddy would propose such a romp as betting currency stretches credulity and strains most people's comfort-zones (Rimawi & Wheeler, 2010; Weitz & Weitz, 1999). But the card-playing Mario doesn't seem to fully understand the bargain as it is happening, consistent with his role as the out-of-sync dupe among his band of male friends. To prepare for the film the class reads and views a few of the Mario Cioni theater monologues, focusing on Cioni as emblem of a lost generation, and the character's essential grounding in Tuscan politics, cultural legacy, and a particular brand of Tuscan peasant humor (Benigni & Ambrogi, 1992; Bertolucci, 2012; 2014; Celli, 2001, pp. 23-31). Before students see the film, I provide what I can to fill in socio-historic context and help decipher Bertolucci's and Benigni's wacky narrative and stylistic choices (Brodo & Brugnolo, 2014; Celli, 2001, pp. 23-31; Celli & Cottino-Jones, 2007; Palmiro, 2009). *BTVB* is a challenging movie, nonetheless. Today's college students, so attuned to the "random," usually see both the stage Cioni and *BTVB* as "super-random," and Cioni and his life as alternately absurd, depraved, and/or inscrutable. But the movie had never elicited this reaction, pinpointed precisely on this scene.

Students voiced their shock at what they named blatant sexual assault. More chimed in, professing a mixture of dismay, confusion, and anger. Bozzone's predatory behavior toward Mrs. Cioni, her clear victimization, and the equally upsetting message that women might be liberated through rough, aggressive man-handling was enormously problematic for them. Even more disturbing: the scene "where Bozzone rapes Cioni's mother" (a student's words) seemed to communicate that men have the right to assault women and that women ultimately desire it -- indeed, they are, after the fact, glad to be abused. As far as I could recall, the scene had never gotten this kind of notice. My students were engaged in a way I'd not seen before; now it was my turn to pounce.

I gave students the option to address their concerns in a group re-

search project, which would serve as an alternative to the original choices offered for the required final assignment. We would explore this scene, and the culture surrounding it, from different perspectives. I explained that we would have to work together to determine the structure and parameters of the project, creating as we went. It would definitely involve some extra time outside of class, since there would now be two distinct groups: those students pursuing the traditional project topics, and those in the "Berlinguer" group. Ten of eighteen students chose to do so, eight women and two men. They divided into pairs, each concentrating on one of five topics that had emerged most noticeably in our discussion: 1) The Movie Itself, 2) Italian Feminism in the 1970s, 3) Roberto Benigni and Feminism, 4) Sexual Assault and the Law (Italy and US), 5) Sexual Assault and Film. Over the course of the seven weeks remaining in the term (the film didn't appear on the syllabus until nearly midway through the semester), they assembled bibliographies, took notes, and wrote up their findings, posting them on a single blog created for the project. They worked individually and with their partner. We met periodically to share and exchange research, and at the end gathered to determine the content and format for their final presentation to the class.

Expectations

Before discussing the actual outcomes of that presentation, it will be useful to touch on expectations, namely mine. I had grand visions of light-bulb moments as students examined this sliver of the film's larger whole. Surely the team researching "The Movie Itself" would alight on the rich backlog of literary antecedents: they would see Bozzone's sadistic treatment of Mrs. Cioni in this scene, together with her overall portrayal as a shrieking, critical, oppressive woman/mother, as belonging to a larger canon of misogynist representations. They might see her ancestors in some of the notorious wives, mothers, and daughters in works such as Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1349-51), Rabelais' *Pantagruel* (1532) and *Gargantua* (1534), or Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* (1590 ca.).

The outcome I took most for granted was that students would read

the scene in light of conventional comedic strategies. Given that before the film we had spent weeks on comic mainstays in medieval and early modern Italian literature (parodic sonnets and other mocking or subversive comic-realist poetry, archetypal buffoons, lewd language use, *commedia dell'arte* masks and plots, etc.), I assumed the students were primed to discern classic tropes and caricatures. They'd easily identify in Bozzone the insatiable satyr, household tyrant or primitive brute. His bestial behavior could be decoded as an indictment of men's general nature, and possibly as striking a blow to Tuscan pretensions of artistic, intellectual, and cultural refinement, and/or economic, political, and social progress. Cioni's mother, *la mamma*, plays a truly unique role: for most of the film she is ruthlessly harsh with her son. In the scene she turns erratic, moving from crazed, raving matron to defenseless, terrorized prey to enraptured and obsequious domestic slave. Her very volubility should have belied her victimhood. A woman so pathologically domineering was not likely to be cowed by anyone, male or female. Finally, the character of Mario Cioni evoked the lost, fatherless child, the disempowered outsider, the village idiot – the inevitable fall guy. My students would recognize the irony, the tongue-in-cheek aspect of the scenes' content. I could not expect them to know the history and connotations associated with the actors Carlo Monni (Bozzone) and Alida Valli (*la mamma*), which might also have inflected their understanding of the sequence, but they would surely appreciate the host of essential cultural-literary *topoi* animating it.

As for students working on the other topics, they would see connections between the socio-historical context and aspects of the scene that fall into a broader category of the comic, with its focus on disruption, instability, and the underside of the normal or socially acceptable. For example, students working on 1970s Feminism would relate the sexual revolution and women's movement of the time to the movie's frequent instances of absurd interaction between men and women. They might explore the cultural history behind the term *motherf***er*, or consider the mother-son-Bozzone triad from an Oedipal perspective. There was also the central theme of homosociality, in terms of Cioni and his group of guy-friends (his *brigata*).

Wouldn't my students pick up on how Bozzone's role now as family patriarch destabilizes his friendship with Cioni, and results in a new (a)normal, that of paternal oppression and fraternal abandonment?

My students would ultimately see through the post-supper drama and be able to laugh at its subtext: the exaggeration, the intensity, the in-your-face contrasts – in short, the *grotesque* essence of the scene, in a class where I had taken pains to teach that grotesque in the field of comic literature does not mean gross, disgusting, or vile, but rather the unnatural, *and meaningful, allusive mashup* of elements (italics mine). Alas – almost none of these scintillating insights made their way into my students' posts.

Outcomes: Reality Strikes

I did not push hard to coax the above readings from my students. If anything, it seemed more important to allow them time to discover what was there and follow their own impulses. A small proportion of the group seemed aware of a potential play of meanings:

> It was difficult to piece out the intended comedic nature of this scene. One scenario is that it's simply a distasteful and outdated comedic bit, but … it is worthwhile to ponder the possibility of it existing as a satirical commentary on sexual assault, violence against women, and the foolishness of those resisting the progressive nature of the women's movement during this time period.

> The rape scene and the final scene in which Cioni's mother falls in love with Bozzuto [sic] could show [that] these archaic laws and politics [do not] match [any longer] with a society that is becoming more progressive.

Other students made connections that tantalized, insofar as they hinted at the critical evaluation I envisioned. They paid close attention to detail and aptly cited historical contingency, as these comments from the team studying Italian feminism suggest: "…feminists [at the time of

the film] especially contested the use of sexual violence by men in order to discipline women, and the scene points explicitly to that practice;" "… the hostility toward women in the community center/Bingo scene might indicate a problematic social scenario, e.g. difficulties Italian feminism faced in gaining ground, taking root." But the reflections stopped there, and did not explore more deeply.

Or – they did go further, but in less productive directions. For example, interpretations often veered toward the ultra-literal: "…with this scene Roberto Benigni is overtly defying the feminist demands and advocating male control over the woman's body;" "The film…belittles feminism and depicts it as ineffectual…[it] can be considered an attack on the values of Italian feminists." Some of these attitudes may have stemmed from what students perceived as Benigni's flippant response when asked in an interview at the time of the film's release if he was feminist:

> Q: On that subject, what do you think of feminists? Of feminists in general?
> A: I wish I was one.
> Q: What?
> A: A feminist…but I can't be. I'm a young guy. How can I be feminist? Right? Besides, I've always had bad experiences with feminists. In Carpi, where they had invited me, they assaulted me. Before starting my monologue I had greeted them ironically. "Good evening ugly pigs." Many of them didn't get the irony and they went crazy. I had to run, actually escape, to Modena. I don't mean by that that I'm anti-feminist. On the contrary! I'm against anti-feminism. Women, in my view, are a little like men. They have to be re-introduced.
> Q: So you are not against feminism. Then why is your character Cioni such a male chauvinist?
> A: No. I'm not against feminism. Why should I be? If I were a woman I would be a feminist. For me women are a little like pigs. As an old Tuscan saying goes, "Don't throw anything away." It's true. (Brusati, 1977, p. 15; translation mine)

My students' comprehension of news articles in the Italian popular press had its own hurdles. Although I translated journalistic excerpts for them, there were limits on how much I could produce, and thus on how much material they could access. As for interpretation, after reading the above interview one student stated:

> Throughout this short interview, the way in which Benigni presents his views seem contradictory to his character's actions in the film. If he truly believes men and women are similar and should have similar rights, one would think he would have issues with how the women are treated and presented in this film.

It was clear they were not yet sufficiently versed in Italian comic irony (not to mention Benigni's unique brand of rebelliousness) to bridge the opinions of his authorial self in the interview with Cioni's character portrayal in the film.

When I did not find any Italian sources that remarked on the particular scene, and students looking for commentary in English also came up dry, they made some rather reductive conclusions. They found the silence incomprehensible, even appalling, given the act of criminal violence. Many reasoned that zero discussion meant sexual assault was normal at the time. For them the scene simply mirrored an archaic status quo, not to mention barbaric Italian laws. It comprised a "straightforward representation of the misogynistic norms of the time." "Portraying the victim of rape as an overjoyed woman not only demoralizes victims' post-traumatic instability, but further promotes the idea that men know best." Mrs. Cioni's dramatic mood shift after sleeping with Bozzone is "not only jarring, but disgusting."

Even more disappointing than the knee-jerk credulity of some students was the way they quickly identified and clinched on worn stereotypes. Their statements that Benigni was misogynist and supportive of violence against women paralleled similar findings on Italy in general. The team researching sexual assault legislation landed on sources that

reinforced ideas about overall Italian backwardness, especially with respect to sex and gender relations. Their study of the evolution of Italy's rape laws brought honor killings into the mix and led to their discovery of reparative marriage. Its repeal only in 1981 constituted proof positive that Italy trails far behind the rest of the world, or at least the United States. Tracing Italian legal history on sex violence helped explain "why Mario Cioni's mother did not report her rape," and one student cast Mrs. Cioni's domestic union with Bozzone at the end of the film as a *de facto* reparatory marriage. In short, the scene and its aftermath stood as clear evidence of Italy's "misogynist cultural views" and "older sexist traditions," as it "normalized sexual assault and continued to promote the patriarchy."

That the students were largely unable to read the scene's hyperbole as comic code, and instead responded so viscerally to its physical and psychological aggression made me wonder about an American academic culture predicated on trigger warnings and safe spaces. My students' university experience overlaps with the rise of these phenomena. Detractors of the "new campus politics of sexual paranoia" might see in my students' initial reaction to the *BTVB* scene that same "fragile collegiate psyche" that the new measures seek to so "vindictively protect" (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2015). Are they right? Are my students overly sensitive and, in the words of some long-time comedians irritated by the new campus climate, "Can't they take a joke?" (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2015).

And yet, there is something to be learned from not automatically discounting their response. It may be that my students' assessments of Italian sex and gender norms, especially those of the film's period, are not so off-base. Filmmaker Alina Marazzi's award-winning 2007 documentary *Vogliamo anche le rose* (*We Want Roses Too*) expresses many of the same sentiments in its investigation of the women's movement in the 1960s-70s (Pedote, Virga & Marazzi, 2007). Its conclusions regarding real progress in gender parity are at best ambivalent – the film ends with a chronological list of Italian laws that point up the inequity, sluggishness, and bigoted character of national legislation and social norms where women are concerned. And Marazzi's is only one voice in a chorus of social and cultural

critics disparaging the state-of-affairs in Italy over gender, then but especially now: Lorella Zanardo, Laura Boldrini, Giulia Blasi, Caterina Soffici, and others.

Thus, while the students' thoughts may have been somewhat overstated, they were also somewhat in line with contemporary perceptions. When they noted that the card game and its outcome presents women as currency exchanged among men-at-play, or that Mrs. Cioni has traded sex for financial stability, obtained through her new husband's (Bozzone's) income, they are touching on discrete issues that in the age of Berlusconi (and beyond) still plague Italian citizens. One student noted that Bozzone's violence and greed may emblematize the character of Italian consumerism and industrialization at the time. Interestingly, this interpretation aligns with the analysis of *BTVB* by Brodo and Brugnolo, who highlight the destabilizing and debilitating effects of the new sexual consumerism arising in Italy in the 1970s. The speed, intensity and pervasiveness of a "globalizing consumer ideology" are ultimately devastating for postmodern men and women, at all social levels (pp. 477-85).

Global Competence – Theirs

The students' work seemed to engage them in a conversation with global implications, pivoting on sex and gender dynamics, justice and morality, and their intersections with a world market economy. The Berlinguer film project began to look like an occasion for increased global competence. Two elements common to the numerous definitions of global competence swirling in public, corporate and educational spheres appear in the National Education Association (NEA)'s version as "International Awareness" and "Appreciation of Cultural Diversity" ("Global Competence," 2010). These labels imply, respectively, a learning process, i.e., the acquisition of knowledge about global realities, and an attitudinal openness, i.e., acknowledgement of and curiosity about differing ways of being in the world. The Association of International Educators (NAFSA), in collaboration with the Asia Society and the Center for Global Education (CGE), phrases it this way: globally competent students are able to "Investigate the World" and

"Recognize Perspectives" ("What is Global Competence?," 2018). My own institution includes very similar aims in the learning outcomes it assesses in students studying abroad ("University of Virginia," 2010, p. 1). Despite my disillusionment with the missing literary textual interpretation, the Berlinguer film project contributed significantly to these other goals.

Historical and Social Studies Proficiency is one of six pillars in the Center for Global Education's understanding of global competence ("History and Social Studies," 2018). My students excelled here, digging into sources to report on various aspects of Italian history and social development. Those treating the 1970s women's movement noted the multiple and evolving concerns of Italian feminists, including labor and workplace equality, agency over one's body, and domestic and sexual violence. They discussed the women's movement in the context of the Communist party, citing Operaismo, Lotta Femminista, Wages for Housework, and other landmark campaigns of the time. They articulated in nuanced ways the politics of the personal, as expressed by significant Italian feminist theorists and activists, and pointed out the special attention Italian feminists paid to sexual difference rather than equality. Students not only juxtaposed the progress of the Italian feminist movement with its American counterpart, but they also situated it among international feminist movements and transnational feminisms. Based on the history of Italian feminism in the 70s-80s, and in relation to other scenes in *BTVB* focusing more squarely on women's bid for power, one student proposed multiple ways to read the scene. Benigni's depiction might reflect specific tensions in the movement, such as the disconnect between generations, or its parabolic trajectory, or its woeful impotence, especially next to other national feminist achievements.

The students investigating Italian legal policy on sexual and family violence dug deep as well. They covered jurisprudential details regarding Italy's historical definition of rape, and controversies over non-mandated prosecution. Along with their study of *il delitto d'onore* (honor crimes), reparatory marriage, and a historical tendency toward victim-blaming in rape cases, they introduced the Italian legal requirement of the *querela*, and discussed legislation biased in favor of criminal perpetrators. They considered

how cultural notions of gender, shame, and honor historically inflect a nation's society, especially as born out in criminal and legal systems.

The students who took up sex assault portrayals in film evaluated scenes of sexual harassment and violence in Italian, French and U.S. movies, in the 1970s and currently. They traced changes in the quantity and quality of on-screen sexual violence over time. Their study led them to deliberate on the broader issue of consent and its representation. They conducted an in-depth exam of the various notions and depictions of consent, relating these in turn to conceptions of ideal masculinity. They further considered the tensions between "responsible" cinematic representations of consent and incentives for commercial success in a global film industry. They wrestled with determinations of films' nature and purpose – are they merely reflective of their times or do they have agency as well, producing social mores? Should movies communicate an evaluative judgement on the content they present? They concluded that films featuring sexual assault should always show its negative consequences, to clearly convey its injury and injustice.

It's important also to mention the global competence gains inhering in our process. At the end of the term, after the teams had worked independently for a time, we came together to share findings and determine how best to present the project to the rest of the class. Students realized their conclusions diverged in some significant ways – those few who thought the scene could possibly be satirical conflicted with the majority who instead thought it was an indisputable nod to male chauvinism and a barefaced putdown of women and/or feminist interests. I proposed presenting team by team, letting the various conclusions stand alone, but the students wanted to find a way to reconcile their views, or at least relate them in a more connective whole. They admitted that after reading the others' conclusions, they were affected by them and learned from them. Students became amenable to the idea that the scene may not have a clear-cut interpretation, and admitted both uncertainty and acceptance of possible multiple meanings. "Tolerance of Ambiguity" is another marker for global competence (Herman, Stevens, Bird, Mendenhall & Oddou, 2010; "Tolerance of Ambiguity," n.d.; "Univer-

sity of Virginia," 2010). My students' willingness to contemplate ways to accommodate their divergent thoughts attests to the efficacy of the Berlinguer film project as an exercise in acquisition of world skills.

Global Competence - Ours

Easy as it is to lament our students' ignorance of the literary, cultural and comedic tropes propping up the Bozzone-Mamma scenes, we too cannot ignore context. Our students belong to their milieu as surely as we do ours. As academic professionals, many of us are distant from our students by at least a generation; thus we also are challenged "to acknowledge other points of view about pressing world issues," to become aware of and appreciate cross-cultural differences, and be willing "to accept those differences, …[as] opportunities to engage in *productive and respectful cross-cultural relations*" ("Global Competence," 2010, p. 1; italics mine). The enterprise of teaching should surely encompass at least some fundamental knowledge of the world one's students inhabit.

My students' world, and, I would venture to say, that of the majority of college and university students in the United States today, includes a focus on social issues entirely ignored in an earlier era. Zeroing in on sexual violence, most schools now offer some kind of educational component to their pupils, and some institutions make it mandatory. These efforts derive from recent developments in national legislation that seek to better address incidents of campus sexual harassment and violence. Originating in Title IX of the Educational Amendments (1972), the Clery Act (1990), and the Violence Against Women Act (1994), the new measures obligate schools to "respond to and remedy hostile educational environments" rising especially from sexual misconduct ("Title IX," n.d.; "Title IX and Sex Discrimination," 2015; "Twenty Years," 2016; Lynch, 2018). They include installation of a Title IX coordinator on all campuses, regular reporting of campus crime statistics, and more rigorous modes of effecting school compliance with federal laws ("Q&A," 2017; "New Requirements," 2014). Given the activism and awareness campaigns of recent years, in combination with the current contentious climate in the political sphere over

policies on campus sexual violence (Obama-era mandates vs. Trump-era rollbacks), few students are likely to not be aware of and sensitive to these issues (Nilsen & Sitrin, 2017; Saul & Taylor, 2017).

At my university, many steps are taken to educate and equip students on the subject (R. Kiliany, personal communication, March 19, 2018). Incoming students receive information about sexual violence and its prevention in their summer orientation period, in sessions with both student orientation leaders and the Dean of Students. They are also required to complete an hour-long online module put out by the university's Title IX office. The penalty for not completing the module by the end of the first month of the term (Sept.) includes restrictions on access to essential university Internet sites; it may account for the nearly 100% completion rate. The web program is designed to be a baseline resource for students, and treats topics including consent, bystander intervention, survivor support and sexual violence prevention. During Fall orientation, new students are also expected to participate in the Green Dot Overview Talk, a one-and-a-half-hour session led by employees of the eponymous national non-profit organization ("Green Dot," n.d.). Dormitory meetings introduce the topics yet again, folding sexual violence prevention into a larger discussion of community safety and unity. All of these initiatives aimed at first-year and transfer students are reinforced by additional programs, often peer-led and offered in residence halls and in sorority and fraternity houses. The sessions, workshops, trainings, official lectures and informal talks run through the academic year and are open to all students.[2] What's more, this range of efforts is likely replicated at most colleges and universities, given that nearly all follow the American College Health Association's 2016 Guidelines geared to the issue of preventing sexual violence on college campuses ("Addressing Sexual and Relationship Violence," 2016).[3]

2 And this does not include the programs instituted by affiliated university offices (such as the UVA Women's Center), as well as those initiatives and agencies active in the surrounding community (SARA, SHE, the Hoos Got Your Back campaign).

3 I thank Rachel Kiliany, MPH, CHES, Program Coordinator for Prevention, Office of Health Promotion in Student Health, at the University of Virginia, for all the information in the above paragraph.

All the students in my ITTR 3775 class would have been exposed to the gamut of the above experiences. Moreover, UVA Prevention Coordinator Rachel Kiliany reminded me that the third-year students in my Berlinguer group (half) might have been especially sensitive to incidents of sexual violence, given that they lived through a particular tragedy in their first months at the university. In mid-September 2014, second-year student Hannah Graham disappeared. Little more than a month later her remains were found on an abandoned property not far from the campus; she had been sexually violated and murdered. Unfortunately, this case was only the last in a series of very public crises turning on male-on-female violence at UVA.[4] However, the rising tide of American institutions with their own similar high-publicity episodes dilutes my school's celebrity. Statistics spell out a fairly ominous landscape outside the educational environment as well ("The Scope," 2018; Vagianos, 2017). The range of the provisions and remediary programs can be taken as instructive about the scale of the problem.

And still we haven't touched on the personal experiences our students may count as part of their individual private formations and which inevitably shape their outlooks. This takes us back to trigger warnings: it must be obvious by now that it never occurred to me to issue any sort of alert for the movie scene. I wasn't for or against, I simply hadn't given it much thought. Or perhaps it's more accurate to say that if and when I reflected on things like safe spaces, micro-aggressions, trigger warnings and the like, I sided with those who had some distaste for the outsized sensitivity of today's students. One of the reasons against the new regime is the worry that giving cautions before challenging texts allows students to opt out of reading, or watching. Eventually, it's feared, whole lists of

4 Morgan Harrington, a Virginia Tech college student, was abducted from a concert held at UVA in October 2009, and her remains were found in a nearby farm field three months later – her murderer was not discovered until the Hannah Graham investigation, when the same man was found guilty for both killings; less than a year later, in May 2010, Yeardley Love, a UVA student-athlete was murdered in her apartment by her on-again off-again boyfriend and fellow UVA student-athlete; in November 2014 *Rolling Stone* magazine published "A Rape on Campus," a long article detailing an alleged sexual assault perpetrated by a group of fraternity brothers on a UVA female student during a frat house party. The story could not be substantiated and was entirely retracted by the magazine in April 2015, though not without months-long community-wide distress.

works will be off-limits to teachers. Critics of trigger warnings claim that they block freedom (Stone, 2016; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2015). But other voices in the fray speak about the freedom that's gained when all participants in the conversation feel acknowledged, respected and supported (Holm 2017). When assigning a work to her class Kate Manne considers the students "with relevant sensitivities," and views her trigger warning as helping to create a community environment "that supports people to engage rationally, fully, and calmly" (2016; 2015). Rather than shelter students from the inevitable rough and tumble of "real life," safe spaces and trigger warnings offer those who have already experienced plenty of real life an environment of security, dignity, and welcome. Cameron Okeke states: "They allow people to feel okay about speaking," especially those without privileged identities and who therefore have not traditionally enjoyed institutional backing (2016b, 2016a). For many, trigger warnings don't stifle but encourage involvement, as they challenge the academy on precisely those topics it has not been open to (Okeke, 2016b). They shine a light on the power dynamics that have allowed only one story to prevail. They draw attention to the fact that master narrative(s) coexist with other, alternate narratives.

The impulse behind trigger warnings points to the bleaker realities of humanity, but also to an interest in rectifying those ills. Such an impetus can be felt in exciting new scholarship that re-investigates long-studied works or examines those long-unstudied, to illuminate contexts crucial to meaningful new understandings of the past. As I specialize in eighteenth-century literature, works that come to mind include Mary Trouille's analysis of wife abuse in France (2009), Larry Wolff's exploration of child abuse in Italy (2012), and Simon Dickie's exposition of the cruel comic underbelly of English society (2011). These studies join a tidal wave of new research on slavery, disability, racism, servant abuse, sexual and domestic violence in British and American history and letters.

An example more germane to *BTVB* involves the 1972 film *Last Tango in Paris,* which I encouraged students to research, given its chronology and storyline containing sexual assault. Students themselves discov-

ered the fairly recent public outcry over how well Maria Schneider, who played the young woman involved with the protagonist Marlon Brando, had been informed ahead of time by directors about the rape scene they planned to shoot (Izadi, 2016; Moore, 2016). Issues of consent, gendered violence, abusive masculinity and industry sexism have come to the fore, and great interest was piqued in my students when they learned the directors of the two films were brothers: Bernardo (*Last Tango*), and Giuseppe Bertolucci (*BTVB*). The movies are quite different in genre, but headlines that read "Why We Should No Longer Consider *Last Tango in Paris* 'a Classic,' " (Torres & Golding, 2016) lend legitimacy to a re-examination of Benigni's film.

Thus, my students' general response to the *Berlinguer* scene makes me pause and re-evaluate. The fact is, whether due to private, individual trauma a student or someone s/he loves may have suffered, or mere exposure to the collective cultural apparatus built up in relation to those experiences, our students consume and produce worlds that are often quite foreign to those of us of an older generation, or a more remote geographic location. Pop-quiz! Define the following: VAWA, "blurred lines," "bystander effect," *The Hunting Ground*, safeporting, "rapey."[5] The world of sexual and gender-based violence along with new, updated responses to it has generated a vernacular that American students are versed in more often than not. They implement this vocabulary and these concepts in their interpretive work with the materials we professors bring to the classroom. For example, several students connected the behavior of the passive Mario to

5 VAWA is the commonly-used acronym for the Violence Against Women Act, US federal legislation first enacted in 1994; "blurred lines" refers to an eponymous 2013 pop song by Robin Thicke which suggests women are deliberately disingenuous when it comes to communicating desire for sexual activity; the "bystander effect" or "bystander apathy" is a social psychological phenomenon whereby individuals are less likely to offer help to a victim when other people are present; *The Hunting Ground* is a 2015 documentary film focusing on the pressing problem of sexual assault on US college campuses; "safeporting" is a method of being sexually intimate with another, in which the active partner tells the other exactly what s/he is going to do before doing it, as a way of establishing a safe and mutually-paced connection; "rapey" is an adjective meaning "suggestive of or characterized by rape," but its multifarious usages and meanings are problematic for many. See https://newrepublic.com/article/115070/we-need-replace-rapey.

contemporary theory on the bystander effect. The students drawn to issues of consent referenced definitions of it from the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network Organization (RAINN), unveiling new facets of the film scene's content. Others identified the coarse, animalesque Bozzone and the submissive, ineffectual Mario as ways in which the scene itself assaults different kinds of failed masculinity. Again, while the group didn't approach the sequence from a strict comic literature or cinema perspective, they analyzed it from within a framework of pressing contemporary debates on practices and ideologies that are extremely relevant to them.

It's not only college students who evince new sensibilities regarding old(er) artefacts, either. An American friend tells of taking her two young sons to an American neighborhood pizzeria that runs old black and white Italian films silently on the back wall to add to the "authentic Neapolitan" atmosphere. Her boys were puzzled and distressed at images of a husband roughly shoving his wife in a domestic scene. Clearly, these boys know little of the artistic heights of Italian 1950s cinema, but they do have a feel for mutual respect and fair treatment, and showed curiosity and concern for what looked to them like mistreatment of a fellow being. That's global competence one can get behind.

Conclusions

The Berlinguer film project provided a lesson in global competence that calls all of us to be learners. If my students had been studying in Italy as they viewed this film, what would have transpired had they brought their concerns to their Italian instructor? Or their Italian home-stay family? Italian roommates and/or peers? How would a European context impact the reaction aroused by the film scene? Do we consider sexual violence a pressing world issue? How does one reconcile manifold and conflicting cultural understandings of private vs. public, personal rights, propriety, consent, seduction, sexual preference and other social relations phenomena?

Consider the immediate response to the Harvey Weinstein sex scandal from major European voices: Catherine Deneuve and nearly a hundred other French women immediately issued a letter criticizing the an-

ti-sexual harassment faction, including the French rendition of the *#metoo* movement, *#Balancetonporc* (*#Exposeyourpig*), for its excessive "puritanical" sweep and threats to sexual freedom (Deneuve, 2017; Poirier, 2018). The accusation campaigns are controversial in Germany as well, where detractors speak of "*#metoo* propagandists" and lament the "execution by media" of those falsely accused (Hild, 2018; Luyken, 2018). In Italy, one of the dominant accusers of Weinstein, Italian actor Asia Argento, faced a strident backlash from men and women alike ("Caso Weinstein," 2017). Meanwhile, the Italian version of the *#metoo* movement *(#quellavoltache*, or "that time that") has run into much more friction than its American counterpart (Codacci-Pisanelli, 2018; Horowitz, 2017; Poggioli, 2018; Siri, 2017; Tammaro, 2017; Trinchella, 2017).

Had we had more time, I would have had my students delve more fully into Italian perceptions of *violenza sessuale* (sexual assault), to invite a better sense of the differences and similarities among global communities and ideologies. I would have countered the temptation to see Italy as a retrograde inferior by making sure students examined areas in which Italian public policy bests or equals its American equivalent (Phelan, 2018). These areas include maternity leave ("Maternity Leaves," 2015), number of women in government positions ("Women in U.S. Congress," 2017), the gender pay gap by women ("The Simple Truth," 2018), and percent of higher education degrees earned (Wilson, 2017; "Women Earn More," 2013).[6] I would have invited them to learn more about variegated responses to *#metoo* in the United States, not to mention the imperfect facets of the women's movement overall in their homeland (Stan, 2018).

As for reading the scene in a comic context, I would definitely have had them read Danielle Bobker's article "Toward a Humor-Positive Feminism: Lessons from the Sex Wars" (2017). Bobker makes an incisive case for approaching comedy from a "humor-positive" stance, parallel to that

6 Maternity leave: Italy, 5 months paid leave, US, 12 weeks; Women in national government posts: Italy, women occupy 30% of Parliament, US women hold ca. 20% seats in Congress; Pay disparity: Italy, working women make nearly 95% of what men earn, US ca. 80%; Degree earners: Italian women get almost 59% of undergraduate degrees, US 58%.

of sex-positive proponents, who advocate that consumers have a "prerogative in shaping their reception of any sexual representation, regardless of its intended public." In the same way, people – including my students, and the feminists among them – can shape their own response to humor and decide what it means. They can look for nuances in power relations, and consider that "Amusement [comedy, humor] does not necessarily degrade its objects but may imaginatively reframe or transform them, circulating power between tellers, laughers, and their objects in any number of ways." Bobker exhorts feminists to remember language's polysemic quality and humor's theatricality, layers, and artifice. Part of the fun is determining what is "true," what is "play," and where/how/when those lines and layers intersect. The superiority theory of comedy, which operates on a one-up one-down relationship, is not the only way in which humor works. Bobker recommends that we "stay open to the possibility that surprise or relief rather than aggression may be the primary affect or intention …[and doing so will] better equip us to see the various, potentially contradictory, facets of any comic provocation." Had we used this article as a guide to the *BTVB* scene (and the film as a whole), my students might have parsed its social and gender dynamics in quite different ways.

And then again, perhaps not. Their sentiments were strong while we were working on the Berlinguer project last spring, and the Harvey Weinstein affair was still months from exploding onto the world stage. *BTVB* is now over forty years old, and the gender-based power imbalance it spotlighted still holds sway among many. There is much to be noticed, and much to act on, in all parts of the world. Steve Bannon, avowed nationalist and reputed misogynist, only a short time ago spoke in Rome saying "I've come to Europe to learn from your global movement. I am thinking of spending a lot of time on your continent this spring and summer, and afterward I'll be in Asia" (Guerrera, 2018; translation mine). The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women states, "violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women" and "violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a sub-

ordinate position compared with men" ("United Nations Declaration," 1993). I judge it a success that my students sought and uncovered the information they reported on; they evidenced real project-based learning. They showed a sincere desire to investigate, and stretched their own thinking as well as mine, about the cultural work a film performs, and its global repercussions. At the same time, the need for higher levels of global competence seems more urgent than ever.

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administrators

What to Learn from a Tale of Building a "Campus" and Academic Program in Italy

Richard Bonanno

Some five years ago, I was invited to serve as the founding Program Director of what would soon become the Assumption College Rome Program. The opportunity of changing my decades-long teaching routine was nothing short of inviting as I entertained grand visions of sipping *espresso* and discussing art and politics in what would quickly become my local café, while quietly and efficiently teaching one course and attending to the manageable affairs of our study abroad program and its students.

My knowledge of Italian made me the administration's candidate of choice when the time came to recruit a director, a position that I eventually accepted without a clear understanding of the requisite skills. My work quickly began, and with the passing days I learned that the countless hours I had spent in the classroom had done little to prepare me for the reality of program-building and the grueling administrative work that lay before me. We eventually opened the doors of our Rome Campus to a cohort of seven eager students now affectionately known as the "pioneers". On that day, the superior general of the Augustinians of the Assumption, the College's founding Congregation, bestowed a solemn blessing upon both the pioneers and Villino Dufault, the multi-purpose building that would become the center of academic and residential life in a sleepy neighborhood just outside the city's historic center.

Blessings were indeed in order, as the creation of Assumption College's academic facility and program came into being all too quickly. In less than a year we had managed not only to completely renovate and retrofit an aging building but also to build what would become a signature program for our Catholic liberal arts college. Meeting the goal of opening

our doors in such a short period of time was indeed astonishing, and the Rome pioneers and staff auspiciously embraced both the Spartan facilities and our tendency to improvise everything from class meetings to dining services. Despite the great strides we had made, there was still a tremendous amount of work to do and even more to be learned.

Our semester-long programs now operate at capacity just five years removed from the opening of our facility, which is now well equipped and comfortable. The benefits of our presence have been numerous for several stakeholders and have indeed exceeded the expectations of many, among them the most ardent architects of the initiative. The Congregation has profited from the partnership while the College has met several strategic goals, among them the enhancement of its curricular offerings. If you include the immediate uptick in our national ranking as well as the unique development opportunities that our presence in Rome has offered to the faculty, then the rewards appear to greatly outweigh the shortcomings, but establishing a physical presence in a foreign country and building academic programs around it are not easy tasks.

The Rome pioneers have since completed their undergraduate degrees, and evidence suggests that their no-frills experience was as rewarding as that of the more than 100 students that have succeeded them. My time on the frontlines in Rome also came to an end after a two-year commitment during which the foundational cornerstone was set. Our study-abroad facility and programs have indeed come a long way.

I am often asked if the experience has been worthwhile. My decision to continue involvement in the development of our Rome Campus, at which I have been involved in different capacities, might be better explained by the anointment with the holy water on that special day along with my wife, my two-month-old son, my Italian in-laws, college staff, students and members of the Congregation. In retrospect, as I ponder the countless legal, fiscal and practical obstacles that continue to surface with astounding regularity, the successful inauguration and the rapid subsequent growth of our semester-long programs seem as miraculous as my psychological well-being and the overall happiness of my marriage and

family life in the wake of what has been an extraordinarily taxing personal and professional commitment.

I had never imagined that I would transition mid-career from my position as Associate Professor of Italian to one of the key players in building the college's signature academic program in Italy. Fortunately, I am no stranger to on-the-job training, although I am convinced that the task would have been challenging for even a highly skilled individual with years of experience.

Those hesitant to believe in miracles might be more inclined to attribute the success of our Herculean efforts to unwavering institutional support and fervid collaboration among several key constituents, above all the highly dedicated members of the home institution ranging from sympathetic faculty advisors to high-level administrators and trustees. Uniting key stakeholders is critical to the success of international expansion, especially at a time in which the traditional notions concerning study abroad and its inherent value appear to be shifting.

All indications are that the college has met its short-term goals, but we are in it for the long haul. Whether you believe in the force of miracles, in the power of hard work, or in both, the decision to build a study-abroad program necessitates a great deal of forethought and discussion, which are as essential as the startup funds.

Strategic goals must be well formulated with a clear understanding of the potential return on what amounts to a significant investment of finances and resources, especially for a tuition-dependent institution with a modest endowment. In the midst of increasing competition in the shrinking market of Catholic liberal arts colleges, resources will also undoubtedly amount to the hidden potential of faculty and staff, like me, whose workloads in the areas of teaching and service are already bursting at the seams.

Before asking if you and your institution are prepared to expand internationally, be it in Italy or elsewhere, you would be wise to elaborate a detailed strategic plan and a conservative budget. In Italy, for example, I recommend compiling a list from A to Z including even the most intricate

detail in the planning stage of your project, and once you have formulated a pro-forma budget, be sure to multiply projected costs by at least 1.5 to absorb the Byzantine underlying costs associated with doing business there.

Nonetheless, for every dotted I and crossed T that go into planning and projection, the **P**s and **Q**s that bear continuous minding are many more than those of the upper- and lower-case variety; manifold and mysterious – and often arriving at the most inopportune moments – they range from the **P**rocedures for registering students and staff for the Italian ***P****ermesso di soggiorno* (permit of stay) at the local ***Q****uestura* (the Italian Police headquarters) to the **Q**uizzical new **P**rotocol for the removal of grease from your facility's kitchen.

An ability to mitigate various cultural differences is absolutely crucial to the success of any venture in a foreign land, especially a long-term academic program that involves the hiring of personnel abroad, the reliance on specific services, the necessity of effective property management, etc. The Italian alphabet and language provide particularly apt metaphors that underscore the divide existing between the common practices and general ethos in the realm of American higher education and the shared customs and mindset of Italians. While the English alphabet consists of 27 characters, the Italian one includes only 21, but the presumption that the highly phonetic nature of the Italian language might reflect a similar straightforwardness in practical affairs will dash hopes of clarity and ease even further.

The apparent concision and neatly foundational nature of Italian is illusory at best, and I have a strong suspicion that Cyrillic, Arabic, and Chinese scripts and their corresponding languages conceal similar obscurities and ironies that could cause a hiccup or two when creating an international startup. Italians, nonetheless, manage to accomplish a great deal despite a plethora of rules and regulations in the workplace and in society at large. The way in which Italians thrive offers a lesson that I eventually learned, one that we must also impart to our students so that they may gain the most of their time in Italy.

The first step towards overcoming the inherent intricacies of doing

business in Italy is to peacefully resign yourself to the beautiful confusion that is Italian bureaucracy, taking heart, above all, that standing behind the ubiquitous rolls and reams of green-white-and-red tape are battle-tested individuals who, for the most part, will help you find your way.

This *regola d'oro* of Italian life will go a long way towards overcoming the vicissitudes that lie ahead while also offering a much greater general lesson; I remain convinced that this rule is applicable in virtually every corner of the globe. Networking on all levels, therefore, becomes an important next step. In our case (and in that of most every other successful program in Italy), affiliation with the Association of American College and University Programs in Italy (AACUPI) has been a vital part of our development and success. As AACUPI President Portia Prebys aptly points out in reference to the association's continued involvement in advancing the interests of its members in the areas of fiscal and legal management, "a new arrival [in Italy] would be hard-pressed to find particular niche legislation to follow without AACUPI's guiding hand and collective experience." Similar associations exist in other popular host countries, such as AASAPUK in the United Kingdom, APUNE in Spain, and AUCS in Switzerland, to name only a few.

While membership in a representative association is paramount within the grand scheme, let's not underestimate the importance of becoming a part of the local economy. Getting to know the Marcos, the Stefanias, and the Gianfrancos behind hitherto nameless faces has gone a long way towards making treacherous waters more navigable. And learning to regularly use such key terms as *buongiorno*, *grazie*, and *arrivederci*, while displaying *un bel sorriso*, has helped turn my odyssey into a more enjoyable experience.

It takes dedicated individuals to build a program and meet important institutional goals. However, if you were called on to serve, what would be in it for you? It took me a great deal of time to realize my visions of sipping *caffé espresso* in pleasant company, sometimes with Lorenzo, the technician with whom I would discuss the functionality of our building's HVAC system, or with Carolina, the director of our part-

nering language school in Rome, who would offer reports on the progress of our students. Each fortuitously happens to share an interest in art and politics, which ultimately has helped make my continued work and commitment worthwhile.

Your Mental Health Matters While Studying Abroad

Elizabeth Connolly

When many of you ventured off to university, you dreamt that part of your experience would include studying abroad. You worked hard to make your study abroad dream come true, either by obtaining a scholarship or taking on a summer job.

As you land in the airport of the country you will be studying in, you will realize that finally your dream has come true. Many of you will be very excited as you are plunged into a country that is very different from where you grew up. You will find yourself surrounded by beautiful architecture like nothing you have ever seen before, you will experience the delicious food from another culture, and you will be intrigued by a new language and way of life.

Before embarking on your study abroad adventure, many of you will create a checklist of *To Dos* to ensure that your experience is a success. This list will likely include carefully choosing the courses you will be taking, making sure you don't forget your computer, figuring out how you will have cell phone and Internet access, and packing all of your favorite clothes. What most likely will not have made your *To Do* list was considering your mental health, and how the transition and living in a new country may affect it. Because your mental health affects your day-to-day functioning, it very much impacts your study abroad experience and, therefore, should not get lost in your excitement. Considering your mental health needs should, in fact, be at the top of your *To Do* list. Why? Because often following on the heels of the excitement of being in a new and beautiful country, where you meet new people and have new experiences, is *culture shock*. For some of you culture shock will sneak up and surprise you on the first day of your arrival, while for others it may take a few weeks before it sets in.

Culture shock is a "normal" phenomenon to experience when one embarks upon living in a new environment and culture. It can be described as a sense of disorientation – you feel like a fish out of water. Know that, when culture shock sets in, you are not alone. Many of your fellow students will also be experiencing it. On one hand, you are enjoying new experiences and meeting new people. On the other hand, you find yourself feeling isolated from your support system of parents and friends back home, and feeling a loss of your sense of independence because you do not know the local language. On top of this, everything seems like a challenge each time you walk out of your apartment, because all that surrounds you is different from what you are used to. This combination can lead to a roller coaster of emotions. While you will have moments of excitement and happiness, they may be followed by feelings of frustration, loneliness, anxiety, stress, irritability and depression. You may find yourself laughing at one point in the day, and then overtaken by tears later on, feeling homesick for familiarity.

The key to successfully working through culture shock is to consciously face the negative feelings associated with the challenges of studying abroad head-on by taking steps to integrate and ground yourself in the country you will call "home" for the next few months. To do this you must let go of how you think life should be in your new home, and instead embrace how it actually is. When you set the goal of studying abroad you did so because you felt that experiencing a new country, and all that comes with that, would be good for you. Trust in your intuition; it is not wrong. Rather than looking at culture shock as a negative experience, embrace it as an opportunity to grow.

> One of the greatest ironies of my life is that I found my true self in a foreign place. I was the girl who Googled flights back to the United States, while waiting for my luggage in the Florence (Italy) airport. I cried and stayed in bed for my first days abroad, wishing I could go home. It was hard, but I slowly embraced the next four months

> in Florence. Acknowledge that by simply being here, you are brave. My decision to stay in Florence allowed me to better understand others, because it forced me to embrace myself. Do not go home; it gets better. You are rightfully afraid, but choose to view your fear as an invitation for personal growth. I am grateful that I made that choice every day of my life.
> *– The wise words of a study abroad student (Florence, Italy).*

Tips for Successfully Dealing with Culture Shock:

1) Do some research before your study abroad program begins. Take time, before getting on the plane, to learn about your new home country, its customs, and the people you will be interacting with. You don't need to be fluent in the language when you arrive in your new country, but take some time to learn some basic conversational words that you will be using regularly to help you feel more at ease.

2) Be mindful of your mental health. Don't be afraid to disclose if you have a history of a mental health issue. Study abroad programs know that approximately 1 in 5 youths experience a mental health issue at some point during their life, and approximately 1 in 5 adults experience a mental illness in a given year (National Alliance on Mental Illness – www.nami.org). Disclosing a mental health issue does not mean that you will be prevented from being accepted into a program. By being open about your mental health needs, your study abroad program can assist in making sure that you have adequate mental health support in place from day one, to help ensure that your experience is a success. If you take medication, be sure to either bring enough medication to last over the course of your study abroad stay, or confirm that you can obtain that same medication in the country you are studying in. Maintaining your medication regimen is important for your mental health. If you find yourself struggling with culture shock, don't be afraid to reach out for help. A mental health professional experienced in assisting students in navigating their way through culture shock can be helpful in assisting you to adjust to your new surroundings, and

support you in the emotional growth that takes place when you step outside of your comfort zone.

3) Put down roots. While staying in touch with parents and friends at home is important to your sense of security, dare to take some steps to let go of your life back home, so that you can embrace your life in your new country. If you are constantly checking into life back home through technology, you can't possibly be fully checked into life in your new study abroad country. Consciously take time in your day to tune out from social media interaction to focus on your current surroundings and people.

4) Be wise, while embracing the new sense of freedom that comes with being so far away from your parents. There is just something about putting an ocean between you and your parents that can lead to impulsive - and sometimes dangerous - behavior. While studying abroad, stay true to your core beliefs, values, and goals. Stop and think whether a choice that you are making while studying abroad is something you will feel proud about the next day, and consider if the choice impacts on your personal safety.

5) Be safe. A major factor that puts you at risk while studying abroad is your access to alcohol. Many of you have limited access to alcohol in the United States because the legal drinking age is 21. Alcohol can kill. Excessive drinking is responsible for 1 in 10 deaths (individuals age 20-64 years) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - www.cdc.gov). While you have been warned about date rape drugs like Rohypnol, you need to be mindful that alcohol is considered by many to be the #1 date rape drug. You have grown up in an era of reality television shows where excessive alcohol consumption is often celebrated, but in "the real world" excessive alcohol consumption can have traumatic or deadly consequences. In the excitement of studying abroad, be mindful of your safety.

6) Make new friends. While many of you are embarking on studying abroad with the security of having a friend accompany you, spending too much time with the same person, or close group of friends, can actually become a source of stress. Be open-minded when meeting new people. Dare to talk to new people in your classes. Your classes are full of new friends just waiting to meet you. Engage in the numerous activities

organized by your study abroad program. While participating in an activity that interests you, it is likely you will meet a like-minded person that has the potential to be a new friend. While being open-minded to meeting new people is important, equally important is being open to taking time for being on your own. Doing things on your own is an opportunity to build self-confidence.

7) Ground yourself. Explore your new surroundings. Wander the streets of your new neighborhood and city to familiarize yourself with your new home. Find your grocery store and a favorite café to enjoy your morning coffee and become a regular. Dare to say good morning to your new neighbors and shop-keepers that you pass on your way to class. Find your local gym or running route. Make sure you balance enjoying new experiences with eating healthy and getting proper sleep. By creating a routine, you will feel more at home in your new city. Creating structure for yourself is very important for sound mental health.

8) Take time each day to stop and appreciate where you are studying and how fortunate you are - even if it has been a challenging day. Take the time to journal, or create a memory scrapbook, about your positive experiences and successes. By doing this, at the end of your study abroad experience you will have a wonderful souvenir of not only the places that you visited, but also of the growth that you accomplished while studying abroad.

9) Bring touches of home with you for your room, such as photos. When you arrive in your new city, purchase small items that will make the room you are staying in over the next several months YOUR room.

10) Embrace the unknown. Approach your days with curiosity, instead of fear. Be willing to learn from your experiences. Maintain a sense of humor. There is no "perfect" study abroad experience or "right" way to do it. You have much to learn over the course of the next several months. Embrace the learning process, being kind and patient with yourself. Be able to laugh at your mistakes, viewing them as an opportunity to grow. When you get that feeling of anxiousness, instead of seeing it as bad, see it as a sign that you are stepping outside of your comfort zone and growing.

11) Be proud. You have embarked on this once in a lifetime study abroad experience. Be proud of yourself for embarking on a journey of personal growth.

> It is good to have an end to journey toward;
> but it is the journey that matters, in the end.
> – *Ernest Hemingway*

Spotlight on… Jan Kieling

Nina Peci[1]

Please introduce yourself with a short bio. Expand a bit on your 35-year career in Education Abroad. Where did you start and what was your role before you retired?

I grew up in a military family in the United States, so we moved every 12 to 18 months. I was always "the new kid" so it was up to me to make friends. Fortunately, I wasn't shy and I was curious about people from different backgrounds. We were stationed in Northern Virginia; and my father would bring foreign Navy officers who were in DC on training assignments to our home for dinner. I developed a taste for different cuisines, was fascinated by other languages and cultures, and knew I wanted to travel the world someday.

My first study abroad experience was a summer program in Durham, England when I was sixteen. I came home sure that I would go for a year abroad in a place where they spoke a different language. I had studied Spanish for six years by the time I got to college, but I made the switch to Italian as a freshman. I loved the sound of the language, and was attracted to the cuisine, Renaissance art, films by Fellini, Antonioni, and Bertolucci, distinctive Italian industrial design, and stylish clothing. I just thought Italian was a lot cooler than Spanish. I attended the University of California, Berkeley (Cal) and spent my junior year abroad at the University of Padua in Northern Italy, sponsored by the UC Education Abroad Program (EAP). I graduated with a degree in journalism in December 1973, which unfortunately coincided with an economic reces-

1 Nina Peci is Coordinator for Program Development & Marketing at ISI Florence. She spent her junior abroad in Italy (at the Università di Padova and the Università di Venezia) from UCLA during Jan Kieling's tenure as EAP director.

sion in the United States. Look up the 1974 Oil Crisis on Wikipedia—no one was hiring. For nearly a year, I worked as a temp, unable to get a full time job.

I finally landed an EAP advising position at Cal in September 1974 in the Office of International Education, thinking I would stay a couple of years until I figured out what I wanted to do for a career. My two-year commitment turned into a long career in study abroad at Cal. It's fair to say that I fell into that line of work by accident. I started out at the front desk, handling intake of visitors, coordinated the application and admission process for EAP students, organized the pre-departure orientation, stayed in touch with students during their programs, and guided them through their re-entry to Berkeley. I discovered that I really enjoyed the student contact and felt that I was helping them have meaningful cross-cultural and successful academic experiences. At that time, UC students had to study abroad for an academic year. At foreign language sites, there was a mandatory intensive language program before the school year began, so many students ended up spending a calendar year away from home.

As study abroad opportunities expanded, our office moved to bigger on-campus space and added advising and administrative staff. I was promoted to Assistant Director and then Administrative Director of Berkeley Programs for Study Abroad, overseeing the entire operation including fundraising. We increased participation numbers, especially after UC added semester and short-term summer programs. I retired in 2009. I live in Oakland, California with my partner, Victoria (an EAP Bordeaux alumna and UCLA graduate) with our two cats, Dani and Nils.

What are you doing now?

I wanted to stay connected to the field without being chained to a desk and a computer again. I was only 58 but I wasn't interested in another high stress job with huge responsibilities. After two years of sleeping late, going to weekday movie matinees, reading novels, and traveling, I was ready to take on new challenges. I joined two boards of non-profit educa-

tional organizations. The first was the Board of Trustees for the Institute for Study Abroad (IFSA) based in Indianapolis, Indiana; I joined its Board in 2011. IFSA is a program provider I knew well since I had worked with them for over 20 years. They offer study abroad opportunities all over the world for students from US colleges and universities. IFSA does not have a center in Italy but I hope that will change. According to the most recent IIE Open Doors Survey, Italy is the second most popular country for American students going abroad. The United Kingdom is first.

In 2015, I started serving on the the board of directors of the Fund for Education Abroad (FEA) headquartered in Washington, DC. FEA provides scholarships to under-represented students from all over the United States. Most are first-generation college students. FEA Scholars are minority students, military veterans, mature students, students with disabilities, and students enrolled in community colleges. Established in 2010, FEA just launched a major fundraising campaign to create an endowment in order to help many more students.

I have continued to attend professional conferences to stay informed about current issues and spread the word about FEA. Every other year, IFSA holds one of our quarterly Board meetings at an overseas locations. Over the past seven years, I have revisited Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, Cuba and Mexico. We are going to Shanghai for our April Board meeting. I find this work very fulfilling and hope to keep going as long as I feel that I am contributing to the success of these great organizations.

You were an EAP student yourself. How did that experience change your life, your career choice, your world vision?

When I studied abroad, Richard Nixon was President, and the country was mired in the Vietnam war. It was a time of great social and political upheaval in the United States as well as in Europe. As an American abroad, I found myself in a difficult position, being asked to explain US foreign policy and engage in conversations (in Italian!) about subjects I knew little about. I didn't pay a lot of attention to politics before Italy,

but I got quite an education during that year. The men's dorm in Padua was occupied by anarchists for months and ended with a huge, tear gas infused confrontation with the police.

There were frequent student strikes (I learned the word *sciopero* on arrival), so we were forced to make up missed class time with independent study. I got a different perspective about the Middle East conflict from a Palestinian engineering student, traveling with a Jordanian passport since Palestine did not exist as a sovereign nation. South African medical students told us stories about the effect of apartheid governmental policies on the lives of everyday people. For the first time, I understood that the United States was *not* the center of the universe, that we had a lot to learn from other cultures, the importance of listening to different points of view, and be willing to engage in uncomfortable conversations about why people feel and think the way that they do. I discovered the value of reading foreign press coverage of the United States to find out what was really happening back home. I think I returned to California a more empathetic and humble person. My career choice may have been serendipitous, but my vision of the world was forever changed by those 11 months abroad.

What were the biggest surprises and disappointments in your career? What aspects were the most rewarding?

I loved working with Cal students and I really miss that. They were (and I hope still are) incredibly diverse, interesting, self-sufficient, and open-minded. My colleagues at private liberal arts colleges and Ivy League institutions would describe a level of student entitlement I rarely saw at Berkeley. Cal students expected to be ignored and abused by the vast and impersonal bureaucracy. Once students found out you knew how to navigate the system and would connect them with helpful and knowledgeable people on campus, they were incredibly appreciative. I loved finding solutions to administrative problems on behalf of my students, especially when the problems were caused by intractable bureaucrats or inflexible regulations.

Seeing the personal growth and increased confidence of returning students was really rewarding. I was moved by the personal journeys of heritage students who decided to study in the country where their parents and grandparents were from. One young man left for Yonsei University with the Korean vocabulary of a 10-year-old child. He came back after a year with advanced language skills and told me with pride about the first adult conversation in Korean he had ever had with his grandfather.

I took an interest in my students' post-Cal trajectories, and stayed connected with quite a few on social media. Some of my favorite students went on to do big things: Jennifer Granholm went to law school, got married, and moved to Michigan. She was elected Michigan's Attorney General, served one term as the first female Governor of Michigan. She had a show on MSNBC, was a senior adviser to Hillary Clinton, and now teaches at Berkeley's School of Public Policy. Dan Gordon, an alumnus of EAP Germany, was the first American in more than 40 years to graduate from the prestigious five-year brewing program at the world-renowned Technical University of Munich in Weihenstephanthen. He owns the Gordon-Biersch brewery and its chain of brew pubs. Maz Jobrani, an Iranian American studied in Italy and became a successful stand up comedian.

He has a new comedy show on Netflix called *Immigrant*. It makes me smile to think I knew them in their youth before they made their mark in the world.

Looking back at my career, I really have few disappointments. I wish I could have done more to secure financial stability for my office. The year after I left UC, my office got a large budget cut. I was afraid that Berkeley Study Abroad might disappear. Fortunately, it was absorbed by a larger unit running Summer Sessions the following year. All study abroad activity is under one roof. Today there are robust and innovative program offerings including the option to complete a minor in several disciplines over the summer. Most of my former staff are still working there.

Student financial need continues to outpace the growth in scholarship funds. Berkeley has a higher percentage of Pell Grant recipients than all the Ivies combined. Those students cannot afford to take on more student debt to go abroad. I fantasize sometimes about winning the Powerball lottery, and using most of the money to establish a huge endowment for study abroad scholarships. The mission of increased access to education abroad I consider to be my life's work. That is why I am so supportive of the Fund for Education Abroad.

What is the importance/value in education abroad in your opinion?

Google W*hat is the value of study abroad?* You will find lists and articles pointing out the many advantages and benefits of study abroad. Here are several that I like to cite in defense of EA:

- You will meet a diverse range of people – not just other students – but people from the local community.
- You will improve your foreign language skills because you are surrounded by people speaking it, and you're reading signs, watching television, going to movies, using it in daily life.
- You can make deep connections with people who will become lifelong friends.

- You can become more self-reliant and independent.
- You can get better at solving problems in unpredictable situations and become more comfortable dealing with ambiguity.
- You can observe your own culture with new eyes.
- You can learn to appreciate the little things in life.
- You can slow the pace of your life. In most other cultures, mealtimes are longer, and everyday transactions in shops and in cafes have certain social rituals that you will come to appreciate. (If you live in France for a while, your relationship with cheese will change dramatically.)
- You will appreciate your family more. "Absence makes the heart grow fonder" turned out to be true in my experience.
- You will have more free time to explore new places and experiences, especially if you put down your phone and limit your time on social media.
- It will look good on your résumé (kind of crass but true).
- It will increase your job prospects, especially if you want to work internationally.

A lot of these are no-brainers. But the ability to handle ambiguity and work well with people from different backgrounds are qualities that employers tell us they value when hiring. Students who have studied abroad and can articulate the skills they gained during their time away have a clear advantage over students who stayed home.

Your career expanded from Baby Boomers to Millennials. What are the significant generational changes in attitudes toward becoming active "observers" and how has EA helped maintain its vision and importance?

I am not sure how to respond to this question. I can tell you that managing a multi-generational staff was extremely challenging, especially when I had so little money to work with in the pool for merit pay. Staff had different expectations of their jobs, different perspectives about

whether the compensation was commensurate with their efforts. For the Millennials, they wanted to know how quickly they could move up the ladder. Baby Boomers like me believed in paying your dues and waiting your turn for advancement. Different generations and personalities are motivated by different things: More time off? Professional development opportunities? A chance to reduce hours and go back to school? Work from home one or two days a week? I used different incentives depending on the person to encourage their best work. In the end, we were all committed to doing a good job, we worked hard, kept long hours when needed, yet managed to have a lot of fun together when we came up for air. I miss that sometimes – the camaraderie and the joy from working as a team. I made a promise to myself to retire before the grandchildren of my first group of students show up as freshmen. I made it out just in time.

How has the role of EA changed over time?

For decades, EA was considered a wonderful but optional enhancement to one's collegiate career. Students went abroad to "broaden their horizons" and improve language skills. The majority came from the humanities and social sciences. Very few STEM students even considered study abroad, much less tried to make it work. Some departments were reluctant to send their undergraduates abroad and were stingy with credit. A lot of STEM students simply gave up when discouraged by major advisers. These days, it is much easier for STEM students to have an education abroad experience during college and not delay graduation. There are curricula designed especially for science and technology majors; more universities abroad offer courses taught in English. There are now EA programs organized around a theme, drawing students from a variety of majors. The range of backgrounds make for dynamic student cohorts with shared interest in the topic.

For many years, potential study abroad students based their choice of program on the location. The conversation began with *"I want to study in Italy, preferably in Florence"* for example. Marketing materials were organized by country and city. Students would research course offerings in

their major or take care of breadth requirements while abroad.

Today's students are more likely to choose programs based on the field of study or curriculum offered in English that will fulfill major or minor requirements. The conversation begins with "I want to study Economics in Europe; where should I go?" Very few (less than 3% nationally) choose to study abroad for a year. Ten years ago, the national average was 6%. We took pride in the fact that Berkeley's academic year percentage was 12%. I understand it's dropped down to the national average.

There is now a proliferation of short term programs. I was discouraged to see students go abroad for four to six weeks instead of choosing a full-immersion, direct enrollment semester program. Students were attracted to faculty-led short term opportunities because they seemed safer, less daunting, accepted students with lower GPAs, and wouldn't interrupt required course sequences. Students traveling together from the same school with a faculty group leader – how could it be more than educational tourism?

What changed my thinking was a conversation I had with a colleague on the IFSA Board who teaches French at a small college in Pennsylvania. He takes small groups of his students abroad for two weeks during J-term and the summer. He teaches a short pre-departure course to help prepare them for the experience. The group has regular discussions during the program about what they are observing, learning, and feeling. They keep journals and share their thoughts with each other. After returning home, they are guided to reflect upon their experience at a deeper level in a re-entry seminar. Guided reflection and connecting students with a local community abroad makes all the difference in the quality and depth of the experience. The program evaluations the students submit prove to him and his Dean the value of well thought out short-term programming. The traditional semester abroad isn't feasible for everyone for financial, academic, or psychological reasons. One size does *not* fit all. I have been able to ditch my rather elitist point of view and have embraced new program models like his. Susquehanna University where he teaches now requires all undergraduates to complete a Global Opportunity program before graduation. They can fulfill the GO requirement by participating in a traditional semes-

ter-long study abroad program, or a shorter study away trip that puts them in an unfamiliar cultural context, including other parts of the United States.

One of the best developments in study abroad has been the establishment and recognition of a career track for study abroad professionals. There are now graduate degree programs in international higher education that include a six-month practicum in an EA office. The gold standard I think is the School for International Training Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, VT. There are several tracks but the most relevant are the M.A. programs:

- Intercultural Service, Leadership, and Management;
- International Education.

You have continued your dedication to EA through your Board of Director positions. What are some of the current pressing issues being addressed?

Diversity: There is a serious and sustained effort to recruit more minority and first generation college students, and to achieve greater gender balance in participants. As long as I can remember, the split has been 70%

female to 30% male. I believe that young men that age are socially risk averse compared to young women who are more adventurous. It's common for guys to go abroad as a group of fraternity brothers or athletes from the same sports team. It is a slow process to shift the demographics of EA. Because I live and work in California with a large and diverse population, moving the needle on this is critically important.

Safety and Security: Parental and institutional concerns about whether students will be safe abroad are at an all time high. The 24-hour news cycle can notify people about political crises and natural disasters but can also spike anxiety and fear because the media outlets are low on information and high on sounding the alarm. Emergency response planning is an essential part of risk management. I knew this was a major concern of lots of people in the study-abroad field when college risk managers and campus attorneys started attending conferences. Workshops for EA staff and campus risk managers, faculty group leaders, and resident directors are available year round, sponsored by NAFSA, the Forum on Education Abroad, and the Institute for Study Abroad (IFSA) – leaders in the field.

Student mental health issues: I remember hearing one of the senior staff members at Cal's Student Health Center telling me and my staff that more than 40% of students entering UC Berkeley were on medication for depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD, bi-polar disorder, or schizophrenia. That was some years ago and I'll bet this has gone up at Berkeley and across the country. Providing support to students with mental health issues while they prepare to go abroad and when they are there is incredibly time consuming and emotionally draining. Some need crisis intervention; occasionally we had to airlift someone out and bring them home. I am sorry to say over my 35 years at Berkeley, we lost several students to suicide abroad. That is a study abroad director's worst nightmare. I don't have to deal with that anymore, thank God. But all of my colleagues still working in the field have to be prepared for that dreaded phone call, the trauma to the family, and make sure the other students on the program are being cared for.

Technology: The Upside. Online videos show study center facilities,

Sather Tower, UC Berkeley campus. *(photo: Adobe Stock)*

student housing, the campus medical center, tours of the city, student travel video logs and blogs (with high production values, music and narration added). These are powerful tools for marketing, recruitment, and student orientations. Today's "helicopter parents" are reassured by these images of places where their kids will be. The availability of high-speed Internet abroad and excellent cell phone coverage is expected by students and their families. Skype, Facetime, and WeChat applications connect students easily with family, friends, academic advisers. Students receiving mental health services at home have been able to continue therapy sessions while abroad with their therapist over Skype.

The application and admission process for EA takes place almost entirely online. EA Offices use specially designed software that can be customized. Terra Dotta is the largest vendor. They offer TDS for Study Abroad, formerly known as StudioAbroad, as web-based software designed to save time and money. Processes are automated making it easy to ensure that applicants, staff, administrators, and parents receive the important information they need. College EA offices can maintain their own website, keep program brochures online and up-to-date, accept applications online, organize data, and mitigate the risks associated with international travel and living. Many conference sessions are devoted to sharing best practices in the use of technology to enhance student experiences.

Course offerings with content descriptions, syllabi, and other academic planning tools are available online where students can access them 24/7. Pre-registration for courses often takes place online before students depart.

Technology: The Downside. At the risk of sounding cranky and out of step, I think today's students abroad who stay constantly connected with people back home via social media, on their devices all the time instead of being present in the moment – they are missing out. Before we were all connected all the time, you were really cut off from the familiar and the comfortable while abroad. International calls were prohibitively expensive and you had to book a call in advance at the central telephone office

if you absolutely had to talk to someone back home. We wrote letters and exchanged taped conversations on cassettes. Mail took forever so you just had to wait. It was lonely and isolating at times and you had to figure stuff out on your own.

But there was a real freedom in this isolation. No one from home was watching or judging. You could make mistakes, have adventures, try new things, reimagine yourself if you wanted.

There was uninterrupted time to think, to dream, to plan, to imagine. Today's students are digital natives. They have never lived without devices everywhere. They seem to prefer to text than talk to someone face to face. They are not alone – it's the same everywhere in the world. How can we encourage them to experience life off screen in real time?

What advice would you give current administrators?

I would say don't get discouraged by current events and the perceived decline in the United States' standing in the world. I think this turning inward and rising nationalism will have the opposite effect on the popularity of education abroad. Most people in other countries can separate their opinions about US foreign policy from how they feel about individual American people. Our students are still welcomed abroad. We need to send a group of students abroad who truly reflect the ethnic, racial, and gender diversity of our nation.

It's useful to track student interest trends but don't try to chase them in your enrollment management planning. Cities hosting the Olympic Games may see a temporary boost in EA student numbers but it doesn't last long. China was *the* place to go to study business five or six years ago, but interest has really dropped off. Chinese language course enrollment is way down at US universities; no one seems to know why.

Stay innovative in program design and content. Be willing to try new things. Collaborate when possible with other colleges, program providers, encourage joint faculty ventures. Engage in and/or support research about study abroad. We still rely too much on anecdotal "evidence" to back up

our opinions. We need to be able to define and measure success. Outcomes Assessment is still important to help make the case to budget officers and provosts for adequate funding of our operations but I think it has become a fetish. I would like to see the research go in a new direction.

Since US popular culture and American media sources are obsessed with celebrities, can we not get some of the movie and TV stars who have studied abroad to film public service announcements in support of going abroad? How about recruiting a few well-known directors to film them? Here's my list to start with:

Bradley Cooper,
Matthew McConaughey,
Kerri Washington,
Rachel Maddow,
Darren Criss,
Paul Rudd,
Julie Bowen,
Maggie Gyllenhaal,
Chris Pine,
Olivia Wilde,
Gwyneth Paltrow.

alumni/students

Abroad and Beyond

Dominique Brigham

I am no stranger to travel. Truthfully, I have been very fortunate to grow up in a family that values international experience, a family that is quite international itself: my mother was born to a Mexican father and a Filipina mother, and my father's parents were English and Belgian-French in origin. They were the products of international living as well, so I suppose it was only natural that they sought to bring those experiences to my brother and me when we were old enough to appreciate them. The ends of my school years as a child were marked by mad scrambles to pack two months' worth of clothes, and I would return to classes in August with the Spanish sun kissed across my face. This lucky trend has continued throughout my life until this past August, when I graduated with a master's degree and no longer have the good fortune of school holidays—sadly, now that I am no longer in academia, I must *work* for my holiday.

All that said, it came as no surprise to anyone in my family that I chose to study abroad in my university years, spent at Arizona State University. Almost all of my family members spent some time during their schooling studying abroad, and it was a foregone conclusion that I would do the same. Having earned a scholarship that could be applied to study abroad programs, there was no price barrier to spending a semester or even a year in a foreign country. If anything, it turned out to be (at the time) more affordable for me to live elsewhere for an academic year, which is what I had planned to do. I could say quite honestly that my first two years in university were organized from the outset to allow for a year abroad—my course load was above the average necessary for me to keep my scholarship, to the point where I might have graduated a year early had I not decided to study abroad.

Being the massive university that it is, Arizona State offered a wide range of programs to choose from; the last time I checked, I believe there were over two hundred available courses and programs, ranging from

short summer excursions of a few weeks to the year-long sojourns like the one I ended up taking. Having spent much time in Europe in my youth, I was interested in exploring other options, and my love affair with Japan and Japanese culture pushed me to consider studying in Asia as an alternative. I had even taken two years of Japanese to prepare for the possibility. The fact that I had the chance to choose is certainly not lost on me. While I had planned studying abroad into my university experience, a number of my friends were unable to do the same, but I will come back to this shortly.

My decision ultimately took me to Florence, where a few of my aunts and uncles had studied before me. They promised me a good experience, and I knew from my time in Europe previously that the European Union is unique in the amount of traveling that one can do while there. The wealth of disparate cultures in Europe allows for visitors—tourists, students, and immigrants, short term or long term alike—to explore their wants and desires more thoroughly. My journey to Italy did not seem such a strange decision to me, and after visiting Spain periodically throughout my life, seeing family in France and the United Kingdom, I felt that Italy would be familiar enough that I could settle in to life there without much difficulty.

Of course, holidaying abroad as a child, unencumbered by more adult concerns, is quite different from a study abroad experience, just as studying abroad is quite different from immigration. I had been to Florence before, but juggling the studying experience at ISI Florence with adjusting to a new country was one I had not encountered before. It was not so much the coursework that I found intimidating – if anything, my schedule was incredibly light in comparison to what I was taking back in Arizona. Nor was it being so far from home—previous frequent travel has rendered my definition of *home* to quite a fluid state, and I chose to go to university in a city that is eleven hours away from my home town by car. No, it was the sense of boundlessness that comes from existing outside the normal state of study and living. Study abroad is not like attending ordinary university. It is not for the faint of heart. It is a hyper-charged period of time in which a student's mind is exposed to a multitude of viewpoints from a multitude

of locations. There is the perception of limitlessness, an excitement that permeates the entire experience that comes with feeling joyfully out of place.

One of the things I most enjoy telling new friends about my study abroad experience is how our first orientation days were filled with those awkward meet-and-greet, ice-breaking moments. The playing field was leveled among us all, and we shared the common bond of wanting to travel. We all came for various other reasons, of course—ISI Florence organizes a phenomenal number of specialized programs—but that was the core of it: travel, international experience, newness. Florence became our home base, to where we could retreat after a weekend spent investigating the cold of Scandinavia or the heat of northern Africa. Our central location in Italy provided us with a means of going back in time, not just in history books but in the architecture, art, and language of the country itself. It was a playground of knowledge and experience.

In fact, I believe this feeling of boundlessness was referred to as *Disneyland Syndrome* by one of our orientation speakers. I heard his talk twice, once in fall semester and again in spring, and I cannot agree with the analogy more, even after leaving ISI Florence and continuing my education back in Arizona. This sense of excited fervor was not only a chance to see and feel and do new things, but it also was the first instance in which we would learn restraint, good judgment, and proper planning. We had to learn that being abroad, being part of a new culture, is a privilege that must be treated with the appropriate respect. We represented our country, more so than the television shows or products that flowed from the United States to Italy. It was a sense of responsibility that felt more grounded than when holidaying or passing through on the way to someplace else. Our purpose was to study, but the impact we made with our presence could affect how Italians viewed our country forever.

My academic experience at ISI Florence was such that I could focus on my cultural ones. As stated above, I found my particular course load to be rather light in comparison to the one I had in the United States, but as a result, I was able to spend more time on traveling Italy and Europe as a whole. With a trusty backpack and a few adventurous friends, through-

out the year, I managed to visit seven new countries, sample dozens of regional cuisines, and snap an easy 16GBs' worth of photographs. I hesitate to say that studying abroad concerned less studying than I anticipated—it did not—but I must admit to the fact that the *studying* aspect of my academic year was not one that ever gave me much trouble. My courses were chosen out of a desire to learn new things that were sometimes radically unrelated to my degree (English Literature) and therefore more a source of free interest than academic rigor. This is not to say that my experience was the norm, of course. ISI Florence provided program tracks for the purpose of intensive study in architecture, sustainability, and food systems, and since I studied there, these programs have attracted more and more attention for their superb standards. I was simply in the position of not needing university credits or any particular courses to finish my degree, and so I could enjoy my time in Italy as a cultural growth experience more than as an academic one.

When my study abroad year came to a close and I returned to Arizona to complete my literature degree, I was already of the mind to return to Europe, first as a member of the workforce then to continue my education in a graduate program. Working in Europe began for me first in Italy, once again with ISI Florence but in an administrative capacity as student services intern, and then progressed to teaching English in Cartagena, Spain through the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Culture. This short stint of two years spent in the working world put academia into perspective for me as a sort of haven, one that I was rather eager to return to with the promise of a graduate degree just on the horizon. Being in a classroom, facilitating and participating in discussion, held far more appeal to me than organizing events or giving grammar lessons, and so it was not long before I was applying for my master's degree at the University of Amsterdam in The Netherlands.

The distinctions between studying abroad at ISI Florence and engaging in my graduate studies at the University of Amsterdam were immediately and starkly apparent. As I have stated, my time spent in Florence was one devoted more to cultural growth than to intense academic study, but

the same cannot be said for the years I spent in Amsterdam. Of course, one looks at the purposes behind the programs and sees the differences easily enough. Studying abroad, in the ISI Florence sense, was an academic program of disparate experiences, exploratory in nature. My cohort came from across the United States with a variety of reasons for participating in the program. We all sought out cultural experiences in addition to (and sometimes in spite of) our academics. Following the program's completion, we returned to the United States to complete our degrees and graduate into the next phases of our studies or enter the workforce, as I did.

My graduate study, in contrast, was built upon the premise of direct and intensive work in a single subject with the end goal of producing a publication-worthy product. It was an international cohort, as well, with students from the United Kingdom, Austria, Lithuania, and more, all of us aiming to dig deep into one discipline – though, of course, our angles of attack differed depending on our theses. I found that working on a master's degree was unsurprisingly more grueling than spending a year abroad during my undergraduate years. My time was spent buried in books, articles, and discussion readers, rather than planning any international trips, and while my social life did not suffer, it certainly was not as robust.

The decision to travel to Amsterdam for this master's degree was based on a number of factors. During my study abroad time at ISI Florence, I'd been lucky enough to visit Amsterdam for a weekend trip and found the city so beautiful and rich in history that I wanted the opportunity to live there at some point. The price of a graduate education at the University of Amsterdam was significantly lower than in the United States, even as an international student, though I had the benefit of being an EU citizen and therefore qualified for European tuition. The quality of the education on offer at the University of Amsterdam was excellent, placing the university's humanities programs in the top 100 in the world, and I found the diversity of the student body quite attractive. Making the move once I received my acceptance letter in the Literary Studies Research Masters was an easy decision.

Studying for a graduate degree in an international environment, as

Amsterdam. *(photo: kirkandmimi, Pixabay)*

I've stated previously, required a different mindset from studying abroad. The demand on my mental acuity and dedication was much higher and deservedly so. Course loads were heavier and conversation revolved around the next assignment and discussion topic rather than our weekend plans. After two years outside the academic environment, returning to such intensity was something of a shock to me, and I struggled to acclimate again, which was not the case with studying abroad. There was a pressure to produce that did not, for me, exist when I was at ISI Florence, but I believe this was to be expected. All of us chose to participate in graduate education for the purpose of deepening our knowledge in particular subject areas with particular people.

It was for this reason that I ended up shifting my own focus a quarter of the way through my two-year degree. My bachelor's degree in English Literature evidenced my deep love of literature and, more importantly, stories and storytelling. I came to realize that the medium through which story is told did not necessarily matter to me, but the origins, context, and impacts of those stories did, and I eventually decided to change research tracts from Literary Studies to Cultural Analysis. My colleagues changed from a seven-student group to a twenty-student cohort, who naturally came with their own perspectives and interests outside the literary sphere. The widening of my academic peer group and the increased exposure to varying content and academic interests ultimately influenced my own research methods for the better. Over the following year and a half, I learned about the projects of my fellow students, applied a dizzying number of theories to my own work, and came out of it with a final thesis on cultural and linguistic translation between the United States and Japan, using the phenomenon of *Pokémon* as the center of research.

The attention necessary to accomplish this thesis far eclipsed what I devoted my year spent in Italy to, but, as it was directed to one specific topic and endeavor, the attention itself was different. The study abroad model is not engineered to prepare students for PhD programs or high-level work environments, unlike graduate school. While there are elements of exploration inherent in graduate study—such as the de-

velopment of research skills, exposure to a broad range of theorists, and debate and discussion—the emphasis of a study abroad program falls heavily on personal growth. That being said, everyone's experiences of both studying abroad and international study are different. My time at ISI Florence and at the University of Amsterdam was colored by intention, and I would not presume to know the intentions of every individual who chooses to travel outside their home countries to pursue their education. However, I will venture to make a few assumptions:

- Any individual who chooses to go abroad for the purpose of study is willing to go out of their comfort zone.
- Any individual looking to study abroad does so in order to discover some aspect of themselves that home study does not otherwise uncover.
- Any individual going abroad returns with a changed set of priorities, small or large.

I cannot begin to guess what the priorities of my colleagues in graduate school following our graduation this past June were, nor do I know how those students I studied with at ISI Florence were ultimately changed by their experiences. I would wager, though, that they remember their time in Amsterdam and in Florence with a clarity that may not be applied to the rest of their academic experiences. Study abroad and international study are not undertaken lightly, under any circumstance, and whether or not the ultimate goals of an individual are fulfilled, their experiences allow them the chance to formulate new goals and explore their identities in fascinating and sometimes frightening environments.

I have yet to return from studying abroad. Following my master's degree, I chose to stay in Amsterdam to look for work and was lucky enough to participate in the Hyper Island Digital Innovation program. Hyper Island, a digital creative business school, focuses on preparing individuals and companies for the future, and thus far, my time in the program and the subsequent traineeship with a creative transformation company here

in Amsterdam have been radically different from both study abroad at ISI Florence and graduate study at the University of Amsterdam. Learning in the workplace is less forgiving than learning in academia and subsequently requires a different mindset. My priorities are ever-changing, aspects of my self forever emerging, and the limits of my comfort zone tested on a daily basis. While I cannot say where this traineeship will lead me, I admit that it has been a form of intensity that both makes me crave the academic bubble I left behind and rejoice in having left it in the first place. I might even call it a new, strange form of study abroad, albeit from a place of disciplines, academia being "home" and the creative industries being a foreign culture. With this in mind, I continue to explore my options and this new territory, looking for what I might bring back or what I might take with me to the next place, wherever that may be.

If I could tell anyone considering a study abroad program or an international study experience one thing, it would be to consider, deeply, what you want from the time spent abroad. Whether or not those goals and desires are fulfilled is irrelevant, but having those thoughts in mind at all is key to pushing oneself to building significant bonds and lasting memories. I return to Florence every year, and if I did not live and work in Amsterdam, I would endeavor to return here just as frequently. These places and the people I met there have made such a profound impact on my life that I cannot bring myself to let them go entirely. While I cannot recapture the excited fervor of my first orientation days at ISI Florence or the dedication of my master's study at the University of Amsterdam—a PhD is in my future, but that is a whole different game—I can look back fondly and only encourage others to take the plunge. Do so sensibly and with intent, but do so. The chance to know yourself abroad is not one to be missed.

Dominique Brigham is a strategic researcher and copywriter at creative transformation company Nomads in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. She holds a master's degree in Cultural Analysis from the Universiteit van Amsterdam and spends most of her free time writing fantasy and science fiction novels or playing video games. Currently, she is co-authoring a five book fantasy series and working on a framework for a podcast around the concept of the unspoken conversations we all replay in our heads.

Above and Beyond

Carla Hill Galfano

I am writing this article from the quiet car on Amtrak Acela Express speeding away from Boston's South Station towards New Haven, Connecticut. This is my last trip as a courier – a museum professional, usually a registrar but sometimes a conservator, who accompanies a work of art when it travels – for the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts where I am an assistant registrar, at least through tomorrow at 5pm. When I arrive in New Haven, I will be examining a sixteenth-century lacquer portable shrine from Japan with mother-of-pearl inlays and a panel painting of the Madonna and Child that I carefully put into a crate and loaded onto a truck last week. Once determined that it is stable, hopefully with condition unchanged, I will help fit it into its custom mount and watch the Plexiglas bonnet be fitted and secured. A few quick pictures to send to the folks back home, and I will leave the shrine in the capable hands of the Yale University Art Gallery until someone else returns to retrieve it in May.

I had intended to write this article before now – studying abroad in Florence at Palazzo Rucellai (now ISI Florence) was one of the defining experiences of my life – but in January I was offered a new position as Museum Registrar at American University in Washington DC. The last several weeks have been a whirlwind of bringing as many work projects as possible to a close (including this one in New Haven), finding a place to live, and packing the two bedroom apartment where I live with my husband, two small boys, and a cat. This new position represents a significant career advancement for me, but most importantly, it allows me to rejoin a university community with its dynamic mix of students and faculty. In no small way, I feel that my experience abroad in Florence – first as an undergraduate at Palazzo Rucellai and again as a student at the Istituto per l'Arte e il Restauro (more on that later) – has

not only prepared me for new challenges, but also drives me to search for them, always excited about how far I can push myself to do new and interesting things.

When I arrived in Florence in January 2004, I was starting the second half of my junior year at the University of Connecticut where I was an art history major. I had spent the last few semesters studying the Italian language at UConn in preparation for immersing myself in Italian culture. In fact, so convinced was I of this necessity that I flippantly remarked at our information session before leaving the States that I could not believe someone who had never studied the language would be allowed to participate. Little did I know that a certain Nita Beeman (now Vitaliano) was sitting behind me. Having never studied a word before her first introductory class in Italian with David Marini at Palazzo Rucellai (now coordinator of the Italian language courses at ISI Florence), she nevertheless started speaking that very same day using freshly-minted vocabulary with enthusiasm and good humor punctuated by emphatic hand gestures. It was her fearlessness, linguistic and otherwise, that helped me find the courage to use the Italian that I knew despite its imperfections. We became best friends and remain so to this day, and, luckily, she never held my ignorant comment against me. From her and my time abroad, I also learned tolerance and patience as both were demonstrated by others towards me.

The first few days in Florence were tough. Apartments and roommates were assigned at random (unlike today) and I found myself on the *pianterreno* sharing a room with a girl whose hours differed significantly from mine. There was a nice sitting room with access to a garden in the back, but the rest of the apartment saw little light. The windows were situated very high on the walls and they faced a narrow driveway. I had trouble getting the key to work in the front door. We also had unreliable hot water for the first week. Once the water issue was resolved, I had some practice with the key, the weather started to warm, and roommates were shuffled, I really began to enjoy my stay at Via Gino Capponi. I also spent little time there, preferring the common areas at Palazzo Rucellai on

Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Door of Paradise*, Florence, Italy.

the richly decorated *piano nobile* and the open piazzas throughout the city.

My walk to school was a veritable textbook of Italian art history starting with Piazza Santissima Annunziata, bordered on one side by the Ospedale degli Innocenti, whose loggia was decorated with blue and white glazed terracotta medallions by Andrea della Robbia. Down Via dei Servi, with its dramatic views of Brunelleschi's dome, an architectural and engineering wonder, I passed between the polychrome marble facade of Santa Maria del Fiore flanked by Giotto's campanile and Ghiberti's gilded bronze Baptistery doors (a reproduction installed after the original bas reliefs were damaged in the 1966 flood and then moved to the Opera del Duomo Museum). I walked down Via dei Calzaiuoli, window shopping along the way, with an especially long and longing look at the confectionary creations in Caffé Gilli before arriving at Piazza della Repubblica, a large open square that traces its origins to the Roman city of *Fiorenza*. Passing under the oversized *Arcone* arch constructed at the end of the nineteenth century, I continued down Via degli Strozzi, named for the wealthy Florentine family whose palazzo is a masterpiece of Renaissance architecture. I crossed Via de' Tornabuoni laden with the best of Italian luxury fashion (Ferragamo, Gucci, Emilio Pucci, and more) to Via della Vigna Nuova where Leon Battista Alberti's façade unified the various structures that came together to become Palazzo Rucellai. The entrance to the school, at the time, was from the side street intoxicatingly close to the delicious aromas of *Il Latini*, a Florentine culinary institution, and up a winding stone staircase. I have yet to have another morning commute to match the grandeur of this one.

I cannot remember a time in which I did not want to study abroad in Italy. As soon as I had the opportunity, I crafted it inextricably into a plan of study for my final three semesters at UConn, a University Scholar Project on art theft in Italy during World War II. I would write a short novel, I decided, on a work of art lost during WWII and rediscovered in present day. Toggling between Florence in August 1944 when the German occupying forces abruptly and violently vacated Florence and the contemporary city, my story was informed both by research on

art theft and destruction in war and also by my own experiences living and studying in Florence. Thanks to the research office at the Uffizi and the patient guidance of Serena Giorgi (now Community Engagement Coordinator at ISI Florence), I was able to obtain the photograph of a painting that had truly gone missing – a portrait of a young girl that is reminiscent of the work of Agnolo di Cosimo (better known as Bronzino). The last entry on the painting's object card was Villa Cisterna, dated 1944. The photograph was given a simple gold frame by the *corniciaio* on Via dei Servi in the shadow of the Duomo. Until I wrapped it carefully in bubble and nestled it into a box last week, it hung on my bedroom wall.

Under the tutelage of Maia Ghatan, then professor of art history at ISI Florence, I was introduced to the *Archivio dell'Opera del Duomo* where her husband was curator (and still is to this day). She pointed me in the direction of a fresco by Andrea Castagno that had been removed from its original position in the cathedral and repositioned in the nineteenth century. I found documents describing the complicated process by which this was achieved – a series of operations that I would later perform myself while a student of art conservation at the Istituto per l'Arte e il Restauro. The goal of the operation was to "restore" a more harmonious appearance to the interior of the cathedral to make it congruent with the nineteenth-century conception of what was appropriate for a medieval building. This idea of restoration informed less by historical reality and more by nostalgia for a past that might not have really existed would become a theme of my graduate research. It was also through Maia that I discovered the competition to complete the unfinished façade of Santa Maria del Fiore in the years around the unification of Italy (*il Risorgimento*) at the time when Florence served briefly as the capital of the newly established nation-state. This topic would become my master's thesis.

To continue the research for my University Scholar project, UConn awarded me a Summer Undergraduate Research Fund (SURF) grant. I moved out of my apartment on Via Gino Capponi and into another on Via della Pergola on an upper floor as suffused with light as the first apartment had been with darkness. From my investigations of art during


VIA
GINO CAPPONI

WWII in Italy, I had learned that the priceless collections of Florence – those of the Uffizi and the Palazzo Pitti among others – had been spirited out of the city and ensconced in countryside villas. Despite Florence's reputation as a city of art and its designation as an open city (that is one not to be used for military ends), officials were not confident that the art would be safe within the urban walls. When the character of the war shifted to that of a slow march by the Allies from the south, liberating city after city from the Germans, it was too late to reverse the decision that had put the country's cultural heritage in the field of battle. Luckily, the Allies were accompanied by art historians and scholars (the Monuments Men of recent film fame) who helped identify and secure the art when soldiers happened upon it, but sometimes it was too late. I used my SURF-funded time in Florence to wander the hills taking pictures as inspiration for my writing.

In addition to her friendship and fearlessness, Nita is also to thank for introducing me to Foto Locchi, an optical and photography store in the center of Florence where she brought the film from her Pentax K1000 – a much-loved, fully manual, 35mm SLR – to be developed. She made friends with the proprietors, who, as it turns out, also had an historic photography archive. From them, I obtained prints of photographs taken during the visit made by Mussolini and Hitler in 1938 of the two leaders in Piazza della Repubblica (at the time still known as Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II for the King of Italy) and Piazza della Signoria. I then replicated the same shots myself and displayed the two images side-by-side when presenting my research back at UConn. My interest in the 1938 visit, however, was much more than photographic. Legend has it that it was during this tour of *Florenz*, that Hitler expressed his admiration for the Ponte Vecchio, which allegedly saved it from destruction when the retreating Germans destroyed all the other Florentine bridges. One of these, the Ponte Santa Trinita, was reconstructed after the war on the original plans by Bartolomeo Ammannati from the original stone dredged from the Arno; I wrote a paper on that for a graduate conference in 2011.

One final Florentine discovery during my time at Palazzo Rucel-

lai that would prove prophetic was that of the Istituto per l'Arte e il Restauro, known also by the name of the main building where it is located, Palazzo Spinelli. In search of information on how a painting could be obscured and then restored, I was directed to the preeminent school for conservation training in Florence. If I remember correctly, Serena accompanied me (my Italian was not sophisticated enough to convey my questions) and we met briefly with Gastone Tognaccini, a veteran art restorer who had personally treated the crucifix by Cimabue that had been all but destroyed when the flood waters of 1966 invaded the church of Santa Croce. From him I learned that spit (technically a weak enzymatic solution) is an ideal cleaning agent for oil on canvas. Not only did he confirm the plausibility of my fictional account, but more importantly, he was the tangible embodiment of the possibility of studying art conservation. It was on that visit, I later realized, that I decided to study at Palazzo Spinelli. It took me a few years, but in January 2007, I moved back to Florence to train as an art conservator. Although ultimately this would not be the career for me – after completing the two-year program, I returned to UConn to pursue an MA – living and learning abroad, this time entirely on my own, taught me self-reliance and creative problem-solving, skills for which I am grateful every day.

Not only did ISI Florence inform my professional choices, it also had a profound impact on my personal life. It was while studying at Palazzo Spinelli that I met my husband, an Italian from Marsala working in Florence. My children - accidentally - share their names with members of the Medici family, a fact I only discovered while visiting a recent Botticelli exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston when I happened upon paintings of both San Lorenzo (Laurence) and San Giuliano (Julian). In other words, it seems that Florence – its art, culture, and history – is part of my subconscious. It is not hyperbole to say that I am who I am today because of ISI Florence.

The train conductor has just announced our imminent arrival in New Haven, which also means the imminent end of this article. There are, of course, countless other moments and memories from spring 2004 that


FIRENZE
DESIDERIO DA SETTIGNANO
LVCA FANCELLI
MEO DEL CAPRINA
SIMONE MOSCA
MICHELANGIOLO
I JVSTES DI TOVRS
NICCOLO TOMMASEO
GABRIELE D'ANNVNZIO
ELEONORA DVSE
DIVIETO
DI
CACCIA

changed my life forever – spring break with my grandmother's cousin in Asti is certainly one – but I hope to have communicated something of the lasting power of my study abroad experience in what is written here. Before I gather up my belongings, including the portable Bluetooth keyboard on which I am typing these words, I would like to thank the staff and faculty at ISI Florence who made it all possible for me and thousands of other students. Grazie mille!

Explore What Interests You

Alexandra Garey

The best advice that I can give is to explore what interests you.

With my dual degree in Italian Literature and European Studies, I pursued American "startup" life. I currently work at a water company with the very Italian name of "Bevi". Here I work in logistics and supply chain. I have no background experience at all in this field. However, start-ups provide wonderful opportunities to learn and grow in new roles. At Bevi, we provide tech-based water coolers to offices across the country. The hope is to have a positive impact on the world by reducing the number of plastic water bottles in work and leisure environments. Businesses and facilities have found sustainable and financial benefits from having our Bevi machines in their offices. It has been interesting to see the stages of the product life cycle as we expand into new businesses and endeavor into new markets. But how did I get here?

In high school I always enjoyed Italian class and was fascinated by world history. Through that, I determined that I wanted to go in to some type of international field i.e., working for the United Nations or European Union.

As I grew more familiar with the responsibilities of these roles and requirements, I knew I wasn't up to par with the quality of knowledge and language proficiency that was necessary.

I decided to pursue a different path. After finishing a majority of my credits for both college majors in two years, I had the opportunity to study abroad to cap off my degree. I rightly chose ISI in Florence.

My time abroad was well spent and the location was well chosen. The subject matter, the teachers, and the location were paramount to my growth and development. I find myself still connecting with strangers or colleagues in business meetings about my time in Italy. Only a week ago, I spoke with our new HR manager about Hadrian's legacy and my

time at his villa on my birthday weekend. While on the bus commuting to Manhattan, I've chatted with a high school friend about all the places he should see in Rome and Florence. I shared my favorite Florentine restaurant dishes and locations. (Trattoria al Trebbio, *crespelle alla fiorentina* and *pappa al pomodoro*). Just yesterday, I spoke with a stranger at my favorite bookstore in Manhattan, Strand, about Boccaccio's *Decameron*…

After graduating from college, I did a business program in Northern Italy where I worked with a family-owned company. I was able to apply my invaluable experience while in Florence to this new opportunity.

While I'm uncertain where I'll be in five to ten years, I can say that keeping an open mind, pursuing my interests, and remaining curious have led me to where I am today. I loved Italy and although it hasn't brought me directly to my current position, it developed the foundation for all that I've accomplished so far. While abroad, I was able to explore new locations both with new friends and alone. This included soccer games in Milan and Rome, the Lamborghini factory and showroom, Ferrari's Maranello, the city of Genoa, the *biscotti* in Prato, and many new and unique places.

I was able to follow my curiosity and build my independence. Studying abroad helped shape me into the person I am today, and I can't encourage it enough.

My time in Italy was invaluable and I look forward to the time I can return.

Re-Adapting and Re-Integrating: Life After Study Abroad

Christine Staton

We were prepared to go. Between advisors, orientations, and meeting with alumni, we were over-prepared for arriving in Florence. I was made aware of the differences in culture such as tipping, greeting, and meal times. I knew which museums I wanted to visit, and which cities I wanted to travel to and when. I even searched the Palazzo Rucellai and the Palazzo Bargagli on Google Maps and practiced walking through Florence to go in between the buildings. To say the least, I knew what to expect when leaving for Italy.

I was not prepared to return home. ISI Florence provided a great resource: a workshop on reverse culture shock. We talked about what to expect when we returned to our families and how to combat the effects of reverse culture shock. That combined with the support from my family and friends helped my transition back into life as a resident of New Jersey. My jet-lag slowly faded, my sleep schedule found a pattern again, and I fought off the blues from missing Florence. What has been harder to re-adjust to, however, are the things to which I became attached in Florence and the culture of my home university.

My family spent Christmas Eve at my uncle Tom's house. Thoughtfully, Uncle Tom bought prosciutto, mozzarella, and sweet red wine for me because he knew they were my favorites. One sip of the wine and I almost spit it out and with one bite of the mozzarella wrapped in prosciutto, I nearly cried. I realized all that I had become attached to in Florence--Chianti, fresh cheeses, and raw prosciutto di Parma--was either unavailable or inaccessible in New Jersey.

Even so, my study abroad experience taught me to be brave and never get discouraged. When I missed drinking Chianti, I drove to the local bottle shop and asked about their collection of Italian reds. To my de-

light, the store carried my favorite: Vignamaggio Mona Lisa. Then, when I craved raw prosciutto, I asked the butcher to sample his selection and found a brand that was similar (not perfect, but close enough) to what I enjoyed in Florence. I even asked around and found the grocery store with the best cheese selection. Not only did I return home with new tastes and preferences, but I now have a determination to make myself feel at home anywhere.

The idea of "home" for me has changed drastically. I felt just as at home in Florence as I do at my home university or walking through my hometown. So now when I think of home--that is, a place where I feel comfortable, loved, and safe--there comes to mind a place which is a combination of both places. At this new home, I can watch my favorite American television shows while enjoying fresh-made spaghetti and pesto and I can catch-up with American friends on a leisurely walk through campus. Walking was one of my favorite activities in Florence, but back on campus, it is just one of the difficulties I have faced.

My home university, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, is so large that even driving in between our campuses takes up to fifteen to twenty minutes. I could walk across Florence in the same amount of time! Add the cold weather to the equation and walking is out of the question. Not only is this, but the campus I left four months ago is not the campus to which I have returned. When I returned to Rutgers University, I moved into an unfamiliar part of campus, started working with new and different people, and did not see my friends from ISI Florence, people that I saw every day, at all. Rutgers had changed and while I changed as well, it was in a different way and for different reasons. I have been back in school for a month and I am just now feeling like I have adjusted and can get comfortable again. Interestingly, this is approximately the same amount of time that it took to adjust to life in Florence. So, while it has been challenging, it clearly is possible and this is what I have learned from both of these experiences.

Change is hard. In the last year I have changed my country of residence twice and I have faced cultural shock three times (including a va-

cation to London after the semester ended). As hard as it may be, it is possible to get through a period of inconsistency as a stronger and wiser person. Studying abroad taught me not just how to adjust to new situations, but how to adapt to them--to new languages, cultures, customs, and cities--and how to thrive in them; how to find your best self in each situation and accept the changes as a part of your own growth and maturity.

Transitioning back into American life has been as hard as it was transitioning into Italian life. I do not know what that says about each culture, but it does say a lot about me and my experience at ISI Florence. I was able to integrate so fully into Italian life that I must now do the same in my own native country. From this I know that with time, effort, and patience I can find my best self here again and thrive even more. Study abroad taught me to adapt, adjust, and integrate into every environment in which I find myself and nothing else could have done the same.

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