

Martini Memories: Reflections of a Retired American Study Abroad Office Director, with an Occasional Digression

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Thanks very much. I'd like to thank the APUAF Board; President, Loren Ringer; Secretary Thomas Roman; Treasurer Chris Edwards; and the APUAF Birthday Committee for your kind invitation to speak here this morning. It is an honor and it's nice to be back in Paris. And I congratulate you all on APUAF's 10th anniversary. Thank you for your tireless work with American students. Were it not for your engagement as educators, the partnerships at the heart of study abroad would collapse faster than a bad soufflé.

Before I begin, let me assure you that I've not come here because I think I have all the answers. I'm not even sure I have all the questions. What I offer is a retiree's perspective: a distilled look at a few noteworthy trends in international education—a field whose importance has never been greater. I'll share some concerns, some thoughts on the future—and along the way, expect a few digressions.

I confess I was a little surprised when Thomas contacted me last fall about speaking today. Even when I was still in the field, I never had the sense that anyone listened to a damned thing I said. But if nothing else, when I've finished, you'll know how to make the elegant American cocktail, the 6:1 gin martini. “And why the martini?” you ask. Well, as my friend, the Australian author, Frank Moorhouse, writes in his book, *Martini, a Memoir*, Paris is a martini city, one of a few metropolises suited to a martini conversation, especially given the importance of French Vermouth for the proper dry martini.

Speaking of martinis, let me tell you a story my father-in-law told about 40 years ago after a business trip to Paris. A corporate vice president, he described an important business lunch in Paris, when his French business partners asked him to make a *typical* American cocktail. “That would be a martini,” (I was aghast. What about French wine? My God, I thought, the Ugly American.) My father-in-law mimicked his French colleagues' chorus: “Ohhh-la-la..” as he poured a bottle of gin into a pitcher. In went the ice, followed by a splash of French Vermouth. More “Ohhh-la-la's.” First came toasts from the Americans, then the French and then, ...not much later, he said, requests for a second martini! What a horror: this was American imperialism at its worst. My father-in-law said the decibel level of the conversation rose with each martini; then, to his amazement, his French colleagues sat down for lunch and drank French wine as if they hadn't a care in the world. Which they probably didn't. I forgot whether the meeting was a business success, but it wasn't until years later, that I understood far from being an “ugly American,” my father-in-law was simply reenacting every cultural exchange since humans began wandering out of Africa. The lesson I learned? Sometimes you don't get the right perspective until time has passed: Like the way you need to step back 5 paces from a Jackson Pollack painting to really see it.

That same way, over time, I began to adjust my preconceptions about cultural education, especially after I entered the field in 1997. Even then, I still harbored the preconceptions of my youth. You see, between 1966-1967, as a high school graduate, I was an exchange student on what is now called a Gap Year, living with a German family, representing my American high school at a German Gymnasium. There was no pre-departure orientation. I left by boat from New York, unaccompanied on a German liner, already had my first drink—as one does when you're 17—as we passed the Statue of Liberty, and arrived days later in Bremerhafen, alone, with only the address and phone number of my German family 400

miles to the south. My goal that year was simple: to survive. You see a year earlier, two exchange students from my school ran away to Paris, so I was chosen as the next exchange representative because my German would only get me as far as Saarbruecken. By year's end, I was more German than American and had spoken so little English all year that I failed a college placement exam and was put in a remedial English class with a Nigerian and a Tibetan. This youthful immersive experience was behind many of my assumptions when I entered study abroad 30 years later.

The Trends

Most of the changes we've seen in study abroad over the past decade or more are positive. But a few are cause for concern. What I find particularly interesting now, as I reflect on these changes, is that many are the product of students' choices. Let's be honest, university administrative structures don't lend themselves to the nimble implementation of bold new ideas and change. And some academics seem particularly resistant to change.

Am I concerned about the rising cost of study abroad? And accessibility for all students? Of course. Am I concerned about the growth of larger urban study abroad centers? Yes. Do I think we need to collect more data for analysis? Hell yes. The list of my concerns is long and my time limited. Nevertheless, I'm actually optimistic—cautiously hopeful that international education will continue to meet the challenges that these trends present. The 3 study abroad trends I'd like to discuss briefly here today are:

- (1) Changes in study abroad participation;
- (2) Professionalization of the field; and
- (3) Second language education.

I'll conclude with a few brain-storm suggestions about where study abroad might go in the future—then I'll demonstrate how to make a proper martini.

Changes in study abroad participation

Certainly, many study abroad trends started long before I entered the field in 1997. Dropping enrollments in full academic year programs (formerly “Junior Year abroad”), for example, and dwindling enrollments in language programs started in the late 1980's. The “professionalization” of the field probably started in the 90's, but by the turn of the century, with the founding of the Forum on Education Abroad, professionalization was well under way.

Many are reassured by the fact that the number of US students studying abroad for credit has grown from 48,000 in 1985 to 325,000 30 years later in 2016. But the fact is that only 1 in 10 US college graduates had studied abroad for credit in 2016. Participation at select private colleges remains as high as 80-90%, while at major research universities participation ranges from around 33% up to 60% or more. (Last year 700 Northwestern students enrolled in for-credit study abroad; but that same year, over 500 students engaged in non-credit, short-term, university sponsored study abroad—in many cases faculty led. (Again, data collection and analysis needs serious attention in study abroad—so that micro-trends such as non-credit study abroad can be analyzed.

The most discouraging trend for many is the national data regarding the full academic year study abroad experience. There is no doubt: the old traditional full academic year abroad is dying. About 2% of all US students abroad spent a full academic year abroad in 2015-16—half as many as a decade earlier. If 98% of US students abroad study for a semester or

shorter, do we really need any more proof that full-year study abroad is dead? In a recent conversation, the head of a major US study abroad provider told me, in her experience, even students who study abroad for a full academic year, study in multiple locations.

Most startling: in 2015-16, 16% of all study abroad students studied abroad for less than 2 weeks! This raises serious questions about how we define “study abroad.” How one can possibly assess the outcomes of what some unfairly, I think, call study abroad “lite?” And I ask, how can one possibly begin to learn or practice a second language in such brief programs? (And *reductio ad absurdum*: one colleague in NY told me that she’d taken students who’d never been abroad across the border by bus into Canada for what I presume was a day or so “abroad.” She said it opened their eyes.)

While foreign language study has languished, real strides have been made in STEM fields abroad: 25% of all courses taken abroad in 2015/16 were STEM courses! And we’ve seen an explosion of interest in work-related internships and experiential learning. According to the National Association of College and Employers survey of students in 4-year institutions: each graduating class since 2013 has had at least 60 percent of students participate in an internship and/or co-op at some point in their college career.

Evidence suggests that rising tuition increases the financial pressure on students’ families—which leads to increased pressure on students to make practical use of their study abroad experience, which leads to increased student demand for internships and hands-on work-related volunteer opportunities during their study abroad period. Which means US universities need to demonstrate their value in terms of employability and future earnings.

So GEN Z students now expect their university to be a partner, helping them map a career plan. The head of Northwestern’s Career Services Center—this too, is a new and expanding area of university services—told me he’s seen more private firms competing to interview students on campus earlier in their studies at Northwestern for domestic summer internships: these interviews being conducted not during junior year, but in sophomore year. About 70% of Northwestern students do an internship or have a “career related experience” by graduation. (I’ve no figures how many of them are carried out abroad.) Surveys reveal that GEN Z students want practical hands-on experience. 77% want to volunteer to get work experience. (Of 3,400 US student volunteers in Europe in 2015-16, Germany 2.8%; UK 2.6; Italy 2.5; France 2.3%; Spain 2.2%.) For some GEN Z-ers, study abroad is a means to get pre-professional and experiential learning.

It’s difficult to assess whether GEN Z’s interest in these practical avenues is self-determined or due to external pressures of an increasingly competitive market for entry level positions with growth potential. Whatever is the case, this extra-curricular practical engagement is an opportunity for meaningful contact outside the bubble, what I’ll call “micro-experiences” later here, even in a short-term program. One thing’s certain: the changes we’ve seen in students’ study abroad participation over the past 20 or more years collectively challenge the very definition of what we think we mean by study abroad—and our goals as educators.

Professionalization of the field (standards, ethics)

At the same time many of us celebrate the overall growth of study abroad, many in the field privately voice serious concerns about study abroad becoming a business, a commodified product and the students (and their parents) the “customers.” This expansion leads some inspired senior administrators and savvy university development officers to focus on “branding,” in an effort to raise the institution’s public profile. This is sometimes accompanied by the assumption that a long list of exchange partnerships or major extension campuses abroad are the best way to push the university brand and raise a university’s international ranking. (I’ve nothing against exchange relationships, but they require collaboration, or they will simply devolve into one-way streets.)

One recent conference speaker in Washington, addressing the “corporatization” of US higher education, explained that diminished funding from federal, state and local or private sources strains all US institutions of higher education—resulting in soaring tuition.

The founding of the Forum on Education Abroad in 2001-02 certainly marks the formal beginning of the “professionalization” of the field of international education, when leading senior study abroad administrators created an entity separate from NAFSA in order to tackle issues central to this growing field. The Forum swiftly launched its first survey of the field, resulting in the identification of 5 so-called “pillars” of the Forum: advocacy; curriculum (integration); data collection/analysis; outcomes assessment and research; and standards (And in 2007, the US Department of Justice recognized the Forum as the official US standards-setting organization for US study abroad). The Forum has grown fast but our beginnings were humble.

I remember sitting in a room in Indianapolis in 2002 with the other members of the Forum Council and the newly established Standards Committee, each of us wondering, “Ok, how do we create standards for the field without writing prescriptive standards—as in: “All study abroad offices must have one advisor for every 100 students...”? Absurd.) We needed standards without standardization that could be adapted to different equally legitimate programs that had different academic goals. At some point that day it occurred to me that Quakers (the small pacifist Christian sect) use “Queries” to gently prompt an individual (or organization) to reflect on certain issues, without prescribing precisely what action to take. When I asked the 5-6 colleagues around the table with me if they knew of the Quaker Queries, it turns out that four of us were Quakers. So the truth is that the Queries that you see in the Forum’s Standards were actually adapted from those Quaker meditations! Of course, there’s no religious intent behind them, but there’s no doubt in my mind that the question and reflection approach helped defray early criticism that the Forum’s Standards might be too rigid. Our goal then was, and still is, to set standards without standardizing the program variety (homogenizing them, like so many McDonalds). The queries nevertheless draw attention to critical areas for consideration regarding study abroad.

A corollary professional initiative, with which I was also involved—this was in 2007—was setting up a code of professional ethics for the field. As the field grew, questions arose about professional behavior; for example, who pays for site visits? What are the expectations for a program evaluation? How transparent should an organization be?

In both respects, the standards of good practice and the code of ethics, the study abroad field has benefitted greatly by the dissemination of these “best practices.” (And I think we could do more.)

Perhaps the most significant trend in professionalization over the past 10-15 years was in the area of health and safety, prompted in part by 9-11 as well as health scares of the period and study abroad incidents in the news. Concerns about litigation prompted those of us in the field to work more closely with our legal advisors on waivers and contracts as well as with our risk management officers about monitoring world events. When Northwestern hired one of the leading US study abroad safety and emergency response experts in 2012, there were about a dozen such full-time positions in the country. When I retired four years later, there were at least 60-70 such positions nationwide.

Other evidence of “professionalization” is the changing academic background of new leaders in the field, not only senior study abroad administrators, but entry and mid-level staff as well. Simply put, the PhD is no longer the degree needed either for entering the field or for career advancement. My successor has a terminal master’s degree—and at my last meeting with Ivy League colleagues, I was one of only two PhD’s at the table. Some propose that the MBA, a master’s in business administration, should be the preferred background for overseeing what has become, for better or worse, business. Why not? At least 50% of my work in the field related to budgets, finances, annual reports, policies, legal issues, health issues, my work with faculty, and staffing issues: hiring, firing, and most important, mentoring and cultivating promising younger staff. New programs are no longer based on handshakes and informal agreements and offices no longer mom and pop operations.

Second Language Education

The third trend I’d like to discuss is second language acquisition—a subject close to my heart and doubtless an area of interest for many of you, too. In my view, it is absurd to discuss international education in the American context without addressing the critical need for comprehensive second language education. Once the centerpiece, the very rationale for academic year-long study abroad, now only 23% of all US universities require foreign language study for the bachelor’s degree and some leading US universities have begun to rethink this requirement. There are fewer and fewer language majors and minors—and even students majoring in a language are probably double majoring—which means, understandably, their primary major tends to influence their choices in study abroad, if they study abroad at all.

Between 2005-2013 the percentage of students abroad who were foreign language majors dropped from 8% to 5%. And in a report by the Modern Language Association just published in *Inside Higher Education*, foreign language enrollments (in all courses on home campuses) dropped 9.2% between 2013 and 2016—the second largest drop since MLA started tracking in 1958. It reports that “many smaller language programs have found themselves targets of elimination...” And French language enrollments at the college level, which have been on the decline since 2006, declined 11% between 2013-16!

The decline at the college level is steady and the conclusion foreseeable—if we do nothing. And if pre-collegiate trends are any predictor: these discouraging post-secondary trends will only continue. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language reports that only about 20% of all K-12 students take a foreign language in school (Spanish = 7.3 mil; French 1.3 mil). By comparison, more than 50% of all European students learn a second language.

Let's stay with French a moment: Of all foreign language teachers in the US (over 40 states report second language teacher shortages) only about 21% teach French. Of these pre-collegiate French programs, 70% are in traditional classrooms, while 21% are taught on line and 9% are hybrid—on line and in person—perhaps a harbinger of future trends in language learning. ACTFL predicts a 1-2% annual drop in French course enrollments at the high school level. And the American Academy of Arts and Sciences reports that Spanish is the most commonly taught language at the university level (54% of all language students); with French a distant second, at 14%. (In the 1960s-70s French was above 35%.) In other words, students either start French in college—or are placed in essentially remedial French classes because their high school French doesn't meet college standards. Neither group is likely to take upper level literature courses. And we've no data on whether they study abroad—or where.

And what about France as a study abroad destination? According to Open Doors (2017), of all European study abroad destinations, study in the UK and Italy are up 3%; Spain is up 6%; and Germany is up 8%. France, on the other hand, is DOWN 5%. In short, looking at the Big Picture, a large and expanding pool of US students are not exposed to serious foreign language classes until they're in college. If at all. And if they are, the proficiency they attain is such that they are not, or do not feel, qualified or confident enough to take university level courses abroad.

Not surprisingly, there are serious discussions at some US universities now, rethinking their foreign language requirements, where language instructors face smaller enrollments and are reluctant to change. Let's face it, the old model of language departments in which language and literature are combined is antiquated. (The fact that fewer students are capable of reading primary literature that is not in translation further underscores the trends and the need for serious rethinking here.)

In the end, English is the clear “winner” in globalization. And if you already speak the lingua franca of globalization, what's the motivation for learning a second language? As a result, most US study abroad students study either in English-speaking countries or in English-based programs in countries where English is not the host language.

And what does the future hold for US universities, per se? Pressure due to the rising cost of higher education mentioned earlier has prompted some institutions to review their graduation requirements with an eye to reducing the time required on campus—possibly threatening the concept of the 4-year bachelor's degree—and which would certainly raise questions about the value or place of study abroad. Some futurists even predict that the traditional 2-semester system will disappear, replaced by year-round learning.

In future, technologies won't supplant teachers, but they will facilitate teaching. This will be a “blended” approach, with as one futurist sees it, universities providing only about 30% of what students need in their careers; the remaining 70% coming from informal specialized training. If the undergraduate degree is foundational for future life-long learning, the field of international education must contribute to the cultivation of these practical skills. Study abroad has got to get its story out there, demonstrate its practical value, or risk irrelevance.

Futurists also predict an increased emphasis on partnerships, networks and collaboration among universities around the world. Study abroad will morph into an international

experience, with students seeking multiple short-term experiences that include internships and/or close focus on global issues such as climate change or migration. But I digress.

LOOKING AHEAD

Based on trends currently in motion, let's look at 2 areas where US study abroad might grow over the next 10-15 years. Some of my ideas may be off the wall, but I think some of them might be applied to any type of program. (I refer to Lilli Engle's, excellent 2003 article in *Forum Frontiers*, "Toward a Classification of Program Types" in which she describes 5 program types ranging in duration from a few days, to 8 weeks, to a semester or a year, with different levels of immersion.)

SLOW STUDY ABROAD

First, I think the field should adapt the Slow Food philosophy for study abroad. Started in 1986 in Rome in response to a McDonalds opening near the Spanish Steps, this movement was formally signed in Paris in 1989. Slow Food philosophy is: go local and go slow. This approach can be applied to study abroad by finding creative ways to direct students' attention to local daily life.

As Milton Bennett says, cultural learning is developmental; it takes place over time and involves an increase in particular cognitive capacities over time. If so, we need to find ways to slow time down. Take the martini ratio of 6:1—can we not find one day each week, at least part of one day, to encourage students to go slow—a splash of French vermouth, if you will? As Joseph Shaules writes in *A Beginner's Guide to the Deep Culture Experience*, "The guiding principle for a deep culture sojourn is to go local. It's anti-exotic. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't see famous sights, but ...we should seek out the experiences and point of view of people who live in the place we're visiting."

What separates the rushed tourist, the visitor, from the deeper understanding of a more seasoned traveler, the short-term resident, is time—and personal contact. Slow time permits us to move from observer, collecting photos of places, to interlocutor and participant, with a growing sense of place.

So how to do that?

(1) Why not go local and adopt the French concept of the *flâneur*? the slow, casual, but attentive and observant stroller of the boulevard. For Baudelaire, the perfect *flâneur* is a passionate spectator. The German writer, Walter Benjamin, saw the *flâneur* as an amateur detective and investigator of the city. (I once told a student in London, who was upset with his housing location, to become a *flâneur*. A week later he emailed: "I thought a lot about what you said in reference to just wandering the city without any particular aim being the best way to get to know it, have already started trying it, and it's working pretty well.") As the architect Mies van de Rohe wrote in his book, *The Scope of Total Architecture*, "...the best education is self-education and the best that educators can do is to provide students opportunities for self-education." The *Flâneur* approach provides just that opportunity for self-education—and the *flâneur* approach has the potential to deepen even the short-term study abroad experience with brief "micro-experiences." This is the drip-hose method. What do I mean, specifically? Why not give students walking maps of neighborhoods where they might wander like a *flâneur*, or sit in a café and simply observe? A more robust form of this is the

“drop-off” which SIT may still use. My colleague in Chicago uses this for his program in Vilnius. And students share notes, draw their maps, at day’s end, reflecting on their varied experiences. Find a way to include 2-3 “micro experiences” over the course of a semester and you’ve opened the possibility of a “deeper” cultural experience.

(2) Another suggestion for Slow Study abroad: Why not adopt the “It’s Only Lunch” approach to dating and organize an “It’s Only Dinner” (or “It’s Only a Weekend”) for a student to meet and share a meal with a local family—any kind of family, single mom, gay, straight, multi-generational. Voluntary, of course. Truth is, we remember most the relationships we make. And there’s always the possibility that the student and family connect and something more grows of this. And if it doesn’t exactly click, no worries, It’s Only Dinner! But this is how they might learn about how to eat and how to drink and how to actually have a conversation. And they’ll need preparation for how to converse because they don’t know how. And a word of warning: this solo experience may entail some discomfort. A new place, a new language...But in fact, the optimal micro-experience I visualize is one which actually does cause discomfort for the individual.

Permit me a brief digression on the matter of discomfort. Study abroad should not be a protected bubble world like Disneyland, where everything is safe and the German brass band is really a bunch of friendly guys from Atlanta in Lederhosen. Taking students out of their comfort zone is not the same as putting them at risk. We Americans live in a comfort-seeking culture, we only walk if it’s part of an exercise program. And US universities molly-coddle students: in final exam week, some universities offer free massages, late night breakfast, miniature horses to pet, free “smart cookies”, bagel breaks, bubble-wrap rooms, comfort dogs to cuddle, and candle light yoga. This, all to reduce the stress on students.

But here’s the kicker: I can’t tell you how many students told me, upon return to campus after study abroad, that they felt like they were treated like adults abroad, often for the first time. Have we “infantilized” our young people? Sheltered them in comfort from reality? Genuine self-reliance isn’t gained in group work or a place where mistakes can’t be made and errors corrected or where perfection is the goal. Self-reliance is gained over time, solo, slowly, and it’s messy. But I digress.

(3) There are many other ways to encourage slow, solo, growth, too many to list here, but I suggest that even one-day volunteer opportunities, though they may resemble “drive through” volunteerism, if carried out over several weeks, one day or half day at a time, can be productive for both parties. The basic point is to offer the solo student a glimpse behind the scenes, in the hope that it might engender curiosity and further exploration. And, hopefully, to give something back to the host culture.

(4) Another way to slow things down would be to use technology to enhance students’ engagement. Why don’t study abroad leaders create an APP—together with sociologists and anthropologists—which sends students daily cultural queries which prompt students to consider aspects of daily life or issues they might otherwise miss, if left entirely to their own devices? These prompts should start the first week asking for descriptions (“Do you see any graffiti in your neighborhood or

on your way to classes?") then move to deeper questions, speculative questions, requiring deeper thought and reflection. A few years ago Goucher College (which requires study abroad) developed an APP that permitted students to ask questions on line—which were then answered by professors at home—or returnees, sharing their insights, creating a small community of culture scholars. I'd go a step further: why don't study abroad administrators and sociologists and anthropologists develop an on-line (or book based) culture/social study course with a research component—that could be used in the context of any program? And while we're at it, why not create a Study Abroad YouTube channel—exclusively for and by study abroad participants, students, faculty and administrators—and internship sponsors, host families—to tell the study abroad story?

SECOND LANGUAGES

Finally, the field needs to refocus serious attention on foreign language acquisition or we risk losing all credibility as international educators as we watch second language education slowly fade away, a relic of the pre-global world. Research says there's a strong rationale for including the expertise of language educators in the choice, design and use of study abroad. So, if we are seriously concerned about disappearing second language enrollments, and if we believe there's a natural nexus between language acquisition and study abroad, then US language faculty have got to start collaborating with their counterparts abroad to develop accelerated language courses. Why not try "bridge" or "jumpstart" courses: a 2-semester intensive sequence that starts in the US—and is completed abroad, in one academic year?

It's fine to continue offering traditional 4-semester, 2-year, language courses, but we need to offer intensive courses, without the "museum grammar," to motivated students (from all fields) and to busy students who haven't the time for the traditional 2-year beginner to intermediate "seat time" sequence. It is absolutely feasible for motivated students to achieve intermediate proficiency in a European language in less than a calendar year—under the right circumstances. Intensive language courses will draw students outside the liberal arts from fields which have no language requirement. This means using technology like Mango on-line language support to enhance students' language skills and prepare pre-departure novices with basic survival skills. Languages have to be lived and that means classroom based language acquisition has to be integrated with study abroad. And let's be clear: we're not talking about fluency. Just proficiency.

Shaules writes in, *A Beginner's Guide to the Deep Culture Experience*, "Few people achieve a truly high level of deep culture understanding without having learned a foreign language....But learning a language does more than allow you to shop and explain things, it also gives access to the mental world of people who speak that language."

Not surprisingly, futurists predict the expanding use of technology in language education, which will be influenced by advances in artificial intelligence, translation assistance and voice recognition—in a support role, but nonetheless more prominent. Virtual reality is already here; it's only a matter of time before someone adapts it to second language education—or "study abroad" in your college dorm room...

As we rethink the delivery of second language curriculum, why not consider the growth of non-traditional study abroad, with growing numbers of sophomores and even freshman study abroad, pre-term study abroad, or, dare I say it, high school students, or those students engaged in non-credit study abroad? Can we not visualize a fast-track second language option for these students, too? Can we get students plugged into local podcasts and social media in the language of the host country? We need to tap the existing student interest in language learning, a latent demand which is simply not met by current curricula. If second language learning is no longer the core of study abroad, it should at least be a component.

CONCLUSION

How often have we all heard students claim their study abroad experience “changed their life”? No matter the duration of their study abroad experience, the program type, or the location, we’ve all heard this, repeatedly. I believe that “deep transformation” is at least one of our students’ implicit goals for study abroad—and just as for the person leaving the Cave, in “The Cave Allegory,” this transformation is a solitary, not a group experience.

Let’s be honest, students learn more outside the classroom (outside the Cave) than in it. Truly “transformative experiences” are an accumulation of separate individual (solo) experiences, the collective impact of which changes our behavior and our way of thinking, and give us some understanding of the reality our hosts live in: their values, their way of life.

To that end, permit me to digress a moment because one of the new growth areas on many campuses, as well as in study abroad (and in business) is leadership development. And it is there that I find wording which might be useful for the study abroad field. What a student might call a “life-changing” or “transformational” experience, leadership calls a “crucible” experience.

In an article in the Harvard Business Review, “Crucibles of Leadership” Robert Thomas writes: “We...call the experiences that shape leaders “crucibles,” after the vessels medieval alchemists used in their attempts to turn base metals into gold. For the leaders we interviewed, the crucible experience was a trial and a test, a point of deep self-reflection that forced them to question who they were and what mattered to them. It required them to examine their values, question their assumptions, hone their judgment. And, invariably, they emerged from the crucible stronger and more sure of themselves and their purpose—changed in some fundamental way.” Thomas describes three types of crucible experiences: the reversal (a negative experience); a suspension (or a transitional experience, like graduate school); and new territory, in which the individual is thrust into a new social role or takes an overseas assignment in an unfamiliar country. As Adam Goodman, director of Northwestern’s Center for Student Leadership, points out: “Some crucibles can be deliberately set up, managed, and exploited to help develop leaders...” When I asked how one is to measure the impact of this kind of transformational experience, Goodman answered, “...[if] the insight or perspective...guide[s] future behavior...[that is] evidential proof that the experience was, indeed, transformational.... He adds: “...there is broad agreement that the person should perceive the experience as challenging for them. The experience itself should be novel, not routine....The experience itself does not need to be positive or negative for learning to be transformational....Learning can be accelerated and deepened by reflecting with others in a structured way....I think you can design

experiences that challenge or stretch people. They can also be unplanned, and [these are] often the most powerful. The key insight is that you're not going to get transformational impact from expected or routine experiences. And the student has to want to reflect on and learn from the experience because the work comes from within if it's going to change future behavior." This raises another possibility: might we adopt "leadership development" as a practical framework for a new study abroad course, which intentionally incorporates "crucibles"—for solo micro-experiences and builds on blogging or journaling for reflection on new experiences?

In conclusion, we have no choice but to embrace the changes afoot. GEN Z students, like all good students, want to be challenged. And let's be honest, the old full year abroad wasn't really very efficient. Sure, we had time then, but a lot of it was wasted. So less really can be more. We just need to find ways to create micro-experiences. Because real education is a continuum. There's always a delay between our learning experiences and our awareness, consciousness, that we've learned something. If students have meaningful human contact—optimally in the host language, however flawed—in micro-experiences, it really doesn't matter if the program is a two-week intensive study of refugees on location or a large center-based semester program with multiple curricular options. There is, in spite of our efforts to package education, an unpredictable disconcerting randomness inherent in real education. Reality based education is an imperfect discontinuous process. There is no perfect program. No perfect student. No perfect study abroad experience.

One student will resemble a summer water-bug happily skimming along the surface of a lake in Maine, enveloped in a silver bubble of air. Some will only swim in safe schools of fish. Another student will resemble a cormorant, plunging deep into tidal waters, swim, immersed, then pop up to the surface for air, far from the entry point.

In the end, all I wish for our students is that they find the opportunity, however briefly, to experience the small gestures of daily life in their host culture, on their own. This is what they will remember, long after the last examination. And these are the stories they will tell. And sometime, perhaps a year, but most likely many years from now, your students will reflect on these stories and realize only then, the impact—which **you all** have helped create—that these experiences have had on their lives. That is the nature of education. I wish you all the very best as you and the APUAF embark on your second decade of collaboration in France, continued success. Do not for once doubt whether your work is important. You are the guides who'll help students find their way out of the Cave. "Audax esto=be bold." Merci beaucoup. And now, my friends, let me demonstrate the mixing of a proper martini, 6:1.