



EXL 300 Cross Cultural Learning: Theory and Practice

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Quick Flashback: A selection of thought provoking, funny, and insightful posts from Allegheny College students in the Spring 2007 Study Abroad/Study Away programs.

BLOG ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS:

BEING AMERICAN: Having talked to some of the people in your host culture, what are some of the ideas they have about Americans and American culture?

CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS: Reflect upon your first week in your host culture. Relate one key experience that, according to you, makes this space 'foreign' or "not home."

FOOD: What dining customs or food in your new culture reflect insights about the culture you are in? Remember, your account of the customs or food should be an explanation from your host-culture's point-of-view, and not through the lens of your own culture.

ETIQUETTE: As you settle into your new home-away-from-home, what are some of the non-verbal forms of communication (not necessarily food related) that strike you as different? These could be specific hand gestures, facial expressions, body language, etc. Explain with examples.

LOCAL CUSTOMS: Describe one cultural feast or tradition that you have been introduced to. What is the myth or story behind this celebration? How has it evolved since the past because of the influence of globalization and/or technology?

MEDIA: Pretend that you are a journalist. Choose a local story of interest that you would like to cover and write a brief article that will give readers a look into your host culture through this story.

BLOG ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS (Contd.):

CULTURAL AMBASSADORSHIP: As you return home, what will be the most important lesson that you would like to share with those back home about education through travel? Does this tie in, do you think, with the goals of a liberal arts education? Explain.

REFLECTIONS: It's been an entire semester of a different kind of learning experience. What have you learned about yourself as you have traveled to other cities, met new people, and learned new things? If you had to reflect on any single pre-conception you had before you made this trip, tell us how that's changed.

BEING AMERICAN:

Now we are the ones with the accents! Every time I open my mouth to talk to someone, I am instantly aware of my status as a foreigner. While in Britain they speak English (thank goodness,) the American students still stick out (especially by wearing sweats...because everyone dresses up here!) There are the usual questions about where you are from in the States, but that is basically all I have come across here at Lancaster. Many people ask how things work in America, especially the educational system, since it is a bit different from the English (especially the University system). Most people I have met have not asked me a lot of questions about America. When I have spoken to some people that have been there, they said they liked it, and it obviously was a lot different than Britain.

(Kim Luperi, Britain)

I would say that Bermudians have a clear idea of Americans and the American culture. The island is constantly filled with tourists, and the majority are from the States. I would especially believe that most Bermudians see Americans as walking moneybags. Despite everything being very expensive here, the Americans that can afford to stay here for an extended period of time have no issue buying anything they want, including expansive vacation homes. Being a British colony (although colony is no longer politically correct in Bermuda, now the correct term is "commonwealth,") there are a number of Brits who live here, and they tend to have a different view of the American culture. From my experience, they tend to be more straightforward with their dislikes of many things American, which can range from politics to

...capitalism. However, since there are consistently so many Americans here, I don't think there are too many misconceptions about our culture or us as Americans. (*Marcy McNamara, Bermuda*)

One of the awkward things about coming to a foreign country is the acute awareness that one is different, in a way that will be noticed by everyone. Nothing is a more obvious than speech. Here in England, I found myself supremely self-conscious while speaking to anyone, because of the knowledge that as soon as I opened my mouth, everyone would know I was American. That made me uncomfortable, not because I am ashamed of being American, but because I knew that others would

form subconscious assumptions about me based on my nationality. To come to terms with this, I needed to know what kinds of pre-conceived notions of Americans I could expect to encounter. One of my new roommates explained that when she thought of Americans, her first mental image was someone extremely arrogant, and overweight from eating every meal at McDonalds. However, she went on to say that every American she or any of her acquaintances ever met did not fit that description at all. In fact, in her experience with Americans she has found them to be very "normal." Less straightforward conversations have also revealed something of my British acquaintances' preconceptions of America. One acquaintance spoke to

me at length of his views on American politics, sports, and socio-economics. He appeared surprised that I was not very familiar with baseball. (*Kerry Fitzgerald, Britain*)



There is one main thing that the people in Kenya associate with Americans and that is money. One of the reasons for this attitude is because many of the Americans that come to Kenya are white and being white is associated with having money. When the colonists first arrived in this country they set up a class system where the white people were at the top, other foreigners, those with Asian or Middle Eastern background, were in

...the middle and then the native Kenyans were at the bottom. This class system has been removed but the idea that the white person has more money than an average Kenyan has not died. In this country, I have experienced this thought process while walking around the market. Street vendors target me and I am charged more for items than the average Kenyan. I find that I regularly tell people who ask me to buy from them that I have no money because I am a student. However the people here are generally friendly and I am lucky to be here. (*Amy Fischer, Kenya*)



Having been here in Spain for just about a week it is still hard to say how the "Sevillanos" feel about Americans.

Initially, I have two basic impressions: there are some who embrace the Americans, and some who have a very stereotypical view. This past weekend, we went out for the first time, and as advised, my friends and I all went out in a group of about eight. We quickly found out this was not the best idea because it accentuates the fact that we with some locals in various

places I learned that in fact many people view Americans (mostly younger women) as party animals. This became more apparent as we walked into an American establishment and were immediately surrounded by the inquisitive nature of Spanish men. I am not saying that all people hold this view, nor am I attacking Spanish men, as I have met plenty that are equally as nice. (*LeeAnn Corsi, Spain*)

CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS:

I often walk or run outside in my hometown and there are some nearby parks with baseball fields and picnic benches. Not much to see really; some trees, little flowers and few animals here and there. The parks in Ecuador, however, do not even compare. Last Sunday, I went to a national park close the home of my family

...here in order to take the dog for a walk and I saw a lot more than small trees, flowers and animals. The park was huge had people walking and running in all different directions, children playing soccer and basketball. Nothing was much different than a large national park in the United States. But, then I reached the edge of the park and was faced with beautifully green, rolling mountains and a large valley encompassing the surrounding city. Not to mention, a great view of the world's largest active volcano, Cotapaxi. I looked down and noticed, I am not at sea level, but am thousands of kilometers above it. I stood there for a minute, took in some fresh air, looked around me at the natural beauty and realized I was anywhere but home. (*Jennifer Estes, Ecuador*)

Suddenly becoming a member of someone else's family is quite a strange experience. After less than 24 hours in Quito, I was being hugged and kissed by complete strangers who wanted to know everything about me. They were introduced to me as my mom and dad, but they drew little resemblance to the mom and dad I had known for the past 20 years of my life. I am still trying to get used to the instant affection they have for me and the rules I have to abide by. In the past two weeks I have kissed more people on the cheek in greeting than I ever imagined possible. It is amazing how something so simple and common to them is, at the same time, something I struggle with. You meet a stranger and the first thing you do is kiss them on the cheek. Then perhaps you tell them your name. Constantly being faced with this foreign way

of greeting reminds me that this place is not home. I am in a different world with different cultural expectations that I am faced with daily. (*Christina Baldy, Ecuador*)



I always thought it was a big joke or a myth that in Africa, monkeys are everywhere. Well in reality it's true, they really are everywhere. Being in Africa opens up this whole new world of plant and animal life that I have never seen before nor had right outside my window. There are lions, hippos, rhinos, a bird called a hardee-dar, snakes, and lots of monkeys. Even though I am in a city there is still quite a



...variety of interesting things to see. While the lions, rhinos, and hippos are safely stowed away in game reserves the fact that these animals are so close amazes me. A monkey has actually awakened me outside my window. This experience makes South Africa very foreign to me, but in a pleasant way. In Virginia or Pennsylvania, these creatures are locked far away and you must pay money to see them. I can't tell you how wonderful it is to pet a zebra that lives next door! *(Elizabeth Bontrager, South Africa)*

My first week in my host culture didn't make me feel as if I was in a foreign place. Bermuda has its own unique feel, and aside from being generally more laid back than most places back home, what made it feel most "not home" was the variety of people I met. The program here is through Duke University, so about half of the students attend there, and the rest are from all over the country (the Duke students are from a variety of states as well). The staff of the station is split between being from the States, Canada, or the UK. It's great to be around people with different perspectives, and that has been the key experience in making this not feel like "home" throughout this semester thus far. *(Marcy McNamara, Bermuda)*

FOOD:

The food here has been good and interesting. The main thing that sticks out for me is the meat, I'm not used to the texture, it is bony and tough and fatty. At least the little that I have had has been this way. My professor talked about the meat in class and he said that he treated his nephew to an Ethiopian restaurant, but the nephew didn't like the meat because it was too tender and not what he was used to. I found that interesting because I thought of the meat in only one perspective and not two. Eating with your hands is also interesting, but I kind of enjoy it, and the food that we eat

...with our hands is pretty good. Breakfast for me is different than in the states, I have bread and butter sandwiches with tea almost every day. I haven't really noticed a difference with my host family in dining customs but other people in the program have said that their families pray before every meal and that was something they were not used too. Overall the food is good and I'm learning new recipes that I can take back to the states with me. *(Amy Fischer, Kenya)*

Yesterday was Pancake Day here in England. My friends and I had a big party and made loads of pancakes and ate them with all sorts of toppings. I quickly learned that British food is different from American food! When my one British friend said he never had chocolate chip pancakes, I just had to make them with him. Soon enough though, I found that

they make pancakes here more like crepes - and they put lime (or lemon) juice and sugar on them! It was still tasty, but I miss my fluffy pancakes! Everyone told me the food would be bland here. Let's face it, England is not very well known for their cuisine. Some foods could definitely use some flavor, but I have found food that tastes basically the same as American food. Some things are definitely different though - they have milk and eggs that you don't need to refrigerate! And the British make everything in a pastry / pie form. Meat and potato pie, steak bakes, shepherd's

pie, minced onion pie, pork pies...basically any meat in a fluffy pastry, they have. Meat and potatoes, of course, are staples of their diet. Sausage and mash is a good traditional meal here. The Indian influence is also quite evident as curry is all over the place, and usually quite good! And you can't forget fish and chips! (and the fact that chips are french fries and crisps are potato chips). Any place that serves fish and chips usually serves pizza, burgers, and kebabs as well. You find those 4 combinations all the time. *(Kim Luperi, Britain)*



The cultural Vegemite that everyone thinks as the one gross food staple that Australians have does not really have all the hype here that I originally thought it would. In fact, most of the Australians I have met do not even like Vegemite, although some do claim it can be good on toast in the morning. The thing that I notice most is that you cannot purchase pretzels, pop tarts, or ramen noodles. In Rotary International, we have to supply our own food, and these key cheap college food items are unavailable. Yet, there is a healthy way to keep the cost of food down: Kangaroo meat. Kangaroo meat tends to be cheaper than both beef and chicken. The meat is a little on the chewy side but it has wonderful nutritional value: very lean, high in protein, and high in iron. At five

Aussie dollars for three steaks, Kangaroo meat is the way to go. (*Maria Kennihan, Australia*)

Durban, South Africa is an ethnic mix. Like I said before there are Indians, Black South Africaners, Afrikaaners, and British imports who just stayed in South Africa. Because of this, the food here is so different. Traditional African tribal food is a lot of corn and boiled root and meat. I don't particularly enjoy this but the locals do so I am attempting to like it. The specialty of the region is called bunny chow, which is a hallowed out chunk of bread filled with curry and various vegetables or meat. There are pies, which is like a piecrust filled with meat or cheese or vegetables, which is the British side of food. But a dominant food here is

Indian and almost anything you get is filled with curry. Even the British pies have curry in them. On our campus, there are 5 Indian food carts to wet your palate. Samosas and soji are a basic snack. My favorite snack here so far is juice and mangoes. There is so much fresh juice everywhere. I love it! Every kind of fruit in the area has been freshly squeezed. I feel so healthy here. Sun, good food, and lots of walking. It will be sad to go back to the U.S., where the food is less fresh and more sedentary. The most common question I get about America is, "Is everyone fat?" (*Elizabeth Bontrager, South Africa*)

Food in Spain and the dining customs are quite different than the customs in America, which are characterized as fast, cheap and fattening. This is evident in the mass

...amount of fast food restaurants throughout the US. Here, food is viewed and valued more by quality instead of quantity. Tapas, or small snacks served at bars along with a glass of wine, beer or coffee, are a part of the daily Spanish lifestyle. Several times a day, people will stop at a tapas bar to sit or stand at the street tables and chat and relax with friends while enjoying a quick snack and beverage of choice. Food is not merely viewed as a necessity for survival but a cultural art form. Each region of Spain each has distinct characteristics within their favorite dishes that make the food almost owned by the culture of the region. (*Andrea Kessler, Spain*)



ETIQUETTE:

Some of the biggest confusion with nonverbal communication I have experienced was the act of handshakes. Kenyans take their handshakes very seriously. Sometimes they are very gentle and they will keep a hold of your hands during the whole greeting, so it is basically like holding hands. Also, some people want to show some level of closeness or warmth, so they will elaborately shake by moving the hands and tapping fists. I've also had a waiter greet me with a closed fist and I was a little clueless as to why he was holding his closed fist out to me, so I just held my open hand out for him to grab. Then when I felt his hands, they were wet from wiping tables clean and it would have been considered rude of him to offer me his wet hand, so

he wanted me to grab his wrist. This is also the case when eating. Since traditionally most food is eaten with your hands in Kenya, you'd never greet them with an open hand that you've been eating with. In addition, before and after eating hand washing is taken seriously. In places where there aren't facilities to wash your hands, they will serve you foods like chapati, which is always eaten with a fork. (*Ashlee Hoffman, Kenya*)

Nonverbal forms of communication in Australia are not vastly different from those in America. I've given it some serious thought, and still did not come up with much. However, one thing that I notice is that Australians walk with their head raised during the day. I've noticed most Americans look at the ground all day. The sun is so bright, that instead of being yellow like

...at home, it seems to be actually white. So, instead of having the sunrays beam down on us, we are actually in the sunrays. While the Australians are smart enough to wear hats, sunglasses, or even bring an umbrella to shield them from the sun, Americans, such as myself, are usually not prepared for the intense sun, causing us to look down. (*Maria Kennihan, Australia*)

You know, it's kind of funny. Although I'm living in Beijing, I'm living in an international dorm and taking classes with international students, so the only people I really know so far are not Chinese. The population of the international community here is (by my guess) overwhelmingly Thai, Korean and Indonesian, with a few Italians and some French and

Americans scattered here and there. And between us international students, familiar types of non-verbal communication usually prevail. When greeting someone for the first time, a handshake is usually exchanged. When leaving someone, it's often a wave of the hand and a smile. I've only observed the traditional, formal bow once or twice between a hostess and customers at a fancier restaurant. Interaction around here is usually pretty casual, although I might venture to say that I see a bit more personal contact between those in the Asian population than the Western population. This observation might be skewed, however, since there are far fewer Westerners to observe and I see friends interact much more than strangers. One curious thing over here, which I hardly ever saw

back in the US, is for younger girls, like in their teens and twenties, to hold hands or walk arm-in-arm together when out. It's really common, and has no implication of anything more than friendship. (*Peter Grella, China*)



Overall, the general etiquette here is not much different from the US, although perhaps a bit more polite and reserved public behavior. However, one thing that is actually less formal are student-professor relationships. Instead of being addressed as "Doctor" or "Professor," many of the course instructors go by their first names and expect students to address them as

...students, but I'm still surprised when they ask me to call them "Chris" or "Jenny." Another small but noticeable act of politeness is the habit of thanking the public bus-drivers after a short trip. It's not just one or two people, but everyone who gets off the bus at the main downtown stop adds a cheerful "thank you" as they pass the driver on the way out. In the states, people just pile out to and about their business without a second thought, while a simple acknowledgement of service common in a restaurant and most other public places is forgotten. (*Julie Mach, Britain*)

In the United States, cell phones are permanent fixtures in one's hand, pocket or purse. You don't leave home without it because every single incoming or outgoing call might be important. When you walk to class, you call someone and talk to them. When you go



out at night, you call all your friends to see where the best party is, who's there, and how to get there. In the middle of the night, your phone will ring because someone has a last minute homework problem that they need help with. Even during classes, you will send text message and pretend that your teacher doesn't see you. In Australia, cell phones, though purchased, paid for and numbers assigned, sit in drawers or on desks. I've seen my roommate on his phone once, and it was a phone call to his mother. Another dorm friend will openly admit that his cell phone lives on its charger on his desk. Even those people I have seen openly brandishing their cell phones will text instead of call people because it's

cheaper and even that is a rare occurrence. People meet you when and where they say they will, they find you at the clubs in town or at class. The most widely used form of non-direct communication is the internal phone system that JCU has. Each dorm room has a phone and a number. This is how people get a hold of each other regardless of whether or not they have a cell phone. I have had people come into my room to ask to borrow my room phone and they are holding a cell phone in their hand. (*Sara Curtiss, Australia*)



South Africans are very nice people and rudeness is considered quite an awful thing. I was in a tricky part of town last week and I asked this woman if she knew how to get to my destination. She did not, but she proceeded to ask various other people how to get there and once she found out she walked me there. While yes this could have just been a very nice woman, other people help out whenever they can. Rudeness occurs as it does everywhere but, in general, you can talk to anyone here and a smile goes a long way. I appreciate this so much when I think back to the "cold" U.S., where if a stranger smiles at you, you really wonder what they want. The etiquette here is basically about treating everyone as you want to be treated. *(Elizabeth Bontrager, South Africa)*

Bermuda utilizes a perfect example of non-verbal communication that could easily confuse a tourist. Walking down the road, day or night, people of all ages will honk as they drive by. As a New Yorker, this makes me feel like I have done something wrong or that these people are angry, but Bermudians honk just to say hello. They honk to passing cars if they recognize an old friend, or will honk quickly at a

large group of people to send a general greeting. This can especially be hectic in Hamilton, a "city" by Bermuda standards, where it seems like the honking never stops. After coming back to the States, honking has become almost a nostalgic sound. This honking really represents how Bermudians are in general, typically very friendly and quick to say hello to a stranger. *(Marcy McNamara, Bermuda)*



LOCAL CUSTOMS:

One cultural tradition I have been introduced to here in Townsville is the Full Moon Party. Now there is something about Townsville and full moons as there is not one, but two, full moon parties. One is full of drunken kids gathering on nearby Magnetic Island to dance and party the night away. The other, however, is much more interesting. Alex Salvador of JCU's International Student Centre started the Full Moon Party I'm referring to three years ago. It is a drum circle, to which all

are invited, that occurs on the first night of the new full moon. The meeting location is the Strand, specifically the Gregory Street Headland, looking out towards Magnetic Island and the Cleveland Bay. Around 300 people show up to this event, and therefore the multiple rhythms can be heard kilometers away. While this event is relatively new, the effects of globalization can be seen. A drum circle is not necessarily indigenous to Australia. If I'm not mistaken, the origins reside within the continent of Africa. But

Ecuador, Brazil, Tunisia, Cuba, Guinea, Morocco, USA and parts of Europe to learn more about their versions of drum circles to enrich Townsville's own. The popularity of the drum circle has been brought outside of African to all over the world, and hence through globalization, Townsville has its own tradition of pounding out rhythms to celebrate the new lunar cycle under a crisp tropical sky. (*Mindy Milby, Australia*)

It's Easter. A day normally filled with going to church, searching for eggs that were hidden by the Easter bunny, big family meals and chocolate eggs. But the only thing that is the same about Easter in Australia is the chocolate eggs. Religion isn't a very important thing here. There are a few churches scattered around but the emphasis is not there. The main reason I think that



...people even remembered that it was Easter was because all the bars and clubs close at midnight on the eve of a public holiday. People were reminded that it was Good Friday because no alcohol was served or available for purchase and the clubs didn't open till midnight. Easter is filled with a longing for chocolate eggs, rather than God or family. And even though it was a long weekend here at James Cook, most people stayed here instead of going home or spending it with family. "Bars are Australia's churches," said a friend of mine while we were discussing the lack of religion on Easter and I have to agree. (*Sara Curtiss, Australia*)

MEDIA:

You honestly could not make this up if you tried. I read in the *Townsville Bulletin* yesterday that a calf, bound for a trip to Indonesia to be

someone's dinner, escaped the convoy. The calf, in a desperate attempt for freedom, ran through Flinder's Street (our popular tourist street on the way to the beach) and into the local newspaper's parking lot. It took several Aussie cowboys to capture it and return it back to submission. It even made a second escape from the experienced farm hands to avoid being dinner. I think where you can see the local culture. I mean cows running loose...this doesn't even happen in Meadville. However, in Townsville, with a population of 150,000, a cow runs rampant in the streets. Townsville is an interesting city in that it has all the big city attractions, and in the meanwhile is considered country bumpkin. Amidst the corporate offices, and areas of heavy business (due to the souvenir shops), we have the country (in the



form of a bold cattle.) Townsville may have a high population, but in Australian culture that doesn't hold much water. To be a large city in Australian terms, not only must you be near a beach, but also have the population, a successful amount of tourism, and lots of attractions. Townsville falls short in that it doesn't have high enough numbers of population and not enough events viewed as exciting. Thus I think this article in the *Townsville Bulletin* reveals that while it seems like a large city in my world, this is just a country town where cattle run wild, and cowboys still ride in to save the day. (*Mindy Milby, Australia*)

Media, especially written, is a bit different in England. It is funny how many posters and fliers are around campus, half of them for drink specials at clubs, and the other half for campus involvement and awareness. Lancaster has a college system, which includes 9 separate colleges under the university name. When one of the colleges, Pendle, was in danger of losing their bar, fliers were put up all around campus to get the community together to support the bar, which is an important social outlet here in England. I went to the general meeting, as they called it, and I was stunned at how many people came out, by word of mouth and the written media that was put around campus, to support the cause. *(Kim Luperi, Britain)*



In the city of Quito, the capital of Ecuador, there exists a major traffic problem. However, the problem does not concern heavy traffic or traffic accidents. The issue is with the pedestrians. Pedestrians do not have the right away, cars do not yield for fellow walkers and the number of pedestrian and vehicle crashes is increasing. The question is, why is this occurring? There are few to none yellow crosswalks. Therefore, the government is looking into increasing the number of crosswalks in order to reduce the risk of pedestrian deaths. Along

with increasing the number of crosswalks for security, the fellow citizens are being informed of this grave problem. There is hope that the driving conditions within the city limits will improve, insuring the safety of its people in the near future. *(Jennifer Estes, Ecuador)*

CULTURAL AMBASSADORSHIP:

Education is one of the most important factors in a person's life. However, education is not just categorized as a high school or college education. One should be educated about the world around them, other people and cultures,

...traditions and lifestyles. Everyone in the world is different and if someone does not learn to respect another person's way of life and continues to be judgmental and hold biases, then this is the lack of education and a display of ignorance. This should be eliminated. Everyone should take the opportunity to learn about the world and expand his or her knowledge. This is a huge part of a liberal arts education, which focuses on learning about a variety of topics. Education should be broad and one should allow him or herself to take in the world around them, learning from other people and other worlds. Once this has been achieved, one can say he or she is truly educated.
(Jennifer Estes, Ecuador)

I think that the thing I most want to take home to my family and friends is my new sense of understanding. Since coming to Australia I've been blessed with amazing friends and unique experiences. I've learned immensely about myself, and for the first time been 100% on my own- it was the best growing up experience I could ever have. But the most important thing I believe I need to take home is the idea of being open. America is not the center of the universe- we have a lot of flaws, some you don't even realize until you leave its borders. Through this experience I've been able to meet people who all have impacted my life and an impression. Many of these interactions were brief in hostels with people who were young Europe students taking a year

off of school to travel the world alone. They were intelligent and savvy, but more importantly they were open to new cultures and new ideas. They were willing to discuss anything with you, and learn from your point of view. *(Mindy Milby, Australia)*



Taking marine biology classes at JCU made me realize that I had made a good career choice. I used to think that marine biology was glamorous and fun, but instead it was actually quite boring and tedious. I have come to think the purple and brown fuzzies on an agar plate are in a way more interesting than coral and sandy habitats. It is a good change from my usual workload, but secures my

...decision of my major. But not many people are given the chance to experience a new field of study without spending extra years in college trying to finish a degree. It was a wonderful opportunity, one that I think is so easy to get while studying abroad. Not only do you get to experience a different culture and country, but also different classes and different ways of learning. Travel and being away from home forces you to grow and learn about yourself, which will eventually help you figure out a career and a goal for college. Liberal arts educations are all about letting people grow and learn through college. I chose Allegheny because, unlike many other schools, they would let me major in Biology and minor in Theatre. In fact, they encouraged it. (*Sara Curtiss, Australia*)



By offering study abroad programs, Allegheny is challenging students to reach beyond their comfort zones to see the world at a greater angle I think that traveling abroad has been the most significant aspect of my liberal arts education. At Allegheny the professors are able to teach me the theories and rules behind my major, but they are not able to give me the same experience I gained in Kenya. I learned a lot about people and I have learned a lot about game parks and wildlife. Everything I learned I did on my own and when a person discovers something on his or her own, instead of learning it on an exam they retain it for a longer period of time.

Studying abroad is also able to teach a person more about a country than books are able to. (*Amy Fischer, Kenya*)

REFLECTIONS:

So after four months travelling around in a foreign country where I struggled through the native language, I think I can say that I have learned a lot about myself. I learned that you can not be afraid to open to other people because it is only when you let your guard down that you can really get to know someone or someplace. I have learned that it is okay to let go of things back home. People will change and so will you, and there is nothing that you can do to stop it. I know that although I am so far away from people that I love right now, when I go home they will still be there for me. I have learned to ignore fear, whether it's the fear of physically jumping off a bridge or



...if it's a fear of jumping into a new situation. Fear is useless. I learned that first impressions are not always what they seem. I came to Ecuador expecting to be living a simple life, with a poor family, but in Quito my host family was well off more so than my family in the States. At first I was frustrated by this and I did not think I would get the real cultural experience, but what I came to realize was that it was just a different type of cultural experience. They let me into their lives and showed me a part of Ecuador I did not know existed before. (*Christina Baldy, Ecuador*)

The single most surprising thing I've learned about myself is how difficult it has been for me to tear myself from the American culture. I constantly find myself not just on time, but early, waiting as patiently as possible for others. Frustrated that that stores are closed, that it takes an unreasonable amount of time to post a letter, and that the buses do not, in fact, go to the lake on Sunday. The relaxed lifestyle here has been trying for me at times. I feel like I need to be accomplishing things and spending my time wisely, however it's just not always (or even often) possible.

After spending two hours at dinner, I panic as I realize I haven't done my homework yet, but in fact, it's not really a problem because if even I had any homework no one would really expect it to be done. While it might sound like I'm complaining, I'm not; I just have some concerns about returning to Allegheny life. Although I'm not quite sure the lessons have been driven home yet, perhaps the most important thing I'll learn here is how to take my time, get to know people, and enjoy life. (*Stacy Shaffer, FO Program*)



I have learned a lot about people while I have been abroad because I had to. I lived and worked with the people in my community. I helped milk a cow, although not very well. I learned how to cook ugali and chapatti, and I have walked with the giraffes. I admit that before I came to Kenya I new very little about the country and I had many of the misconceptions that many people make. However after spending time in the country, I was able to see that the people are much better off than people can see because they are not used to the area. *(Amy Fischer, Kenya)*



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