

Study Abroad and Tourism: US American Students in France, 1945–1970

Whitney Walton

RESÜMEE

Tourismusforschung beinhaltet oft Auslandsstudien, aber ihre Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede im Vergleich zu kommerziellem Tourismus und ihre Interdependenzen mit den Themenfeldern Gender und Sexualität verdienen eine genauere Untersuchung und Analyse. Dieser Aufsatz beschäftigt sich zu Beginn mit zwei wichtigen Themen in der Forschung zur Geschichte des Tourismus, die hinsichtlich Auslandsstudien maßgeblich sind: erstens mit der Unterscheidung zwischen elitärem (oder „sachkundigem“) Reisen und Massentourismus, und zweitens mit der Annahme, dass Tourismus eine Flucht aus dem Alltag darstellt. Ausgehend von Briefen, Archivmaterialien und mündlichen Interviews hauptsächlich von amerikanischen Frauen, die in Frankreich studierten, bestätigt diese Forschungsarbeit die Arbeiten von Harvey Levenstein und John Urry, die Selbstfindung als den Hauptantriebsgrund für und die Hauptfolge von Jugendreisen einschließlich Auslandsstudien betonen. Sie stellt zudem fest, dass andere Faktoren des nationalen Vergleichs, Gender und das Verständnis des „Andersartigen“ diese Selbstfindung inhaltlich bestimmen und zusätzliche Wirkungen von Auslandsstudien darstellen.

Introduction

Scholarship on tourism is extensive, and it has established, among other things, the explosion of commercial tourism linked to capitalism in the modern era, as well as the different ways that tourists make individual and collective meanings of travel even within the confines of often overdetermined mass tourism.¹ Within the broad category of tour-

1 H. Levenstein, *Seductive Journey: American Tourists in France from Jefferson to the Jazz Age*, Chicago 1998; Id., *We'll Always Have Paris: American Tourists in France Since 1930*, Chicago 2004; C. Endy, *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France*, Chapel Hill 2004; J. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd ed., London 2002; S. Baranowski and E.

ism, study abroad needs further investigation, for example, as a form of international relations, its similarities to and differences from commercial tourism, and its intersections with gender and sexuality.² In this article I analyze US American students in France from 1945 to 1970 to draw out some issues related to tourism scholarship and as a means of reassessing youth, gender, and sexuality in the West in the decades following World War II. Women constitute my main source base, and they provide important insights into the gendering of public spaces, cultural norms and differences in heterosocial and sexual relations, and the play of gender in personal and national identities that developed from study abroad. Through young American women's encounters with French people, their navigation of social and sexual relations in France, and their adaptations to French higher education, a new appreciation for cultural difference and a skeptical but profound sense of American identity emerged.

I want to engage at the outset two important issues in the scholarship on the history of tourism relevant to study abroad: one, the distinction between elite or "informed" travel, and mass tourism, and two, the presumption that tourism represents an escape from the everyday.³ To some extent study abroad throughout much of the twentieth century perpetuated the distinction between traveller and tourist, in the sense that young people who studied abroad often came from privileged backgrounds. Indeed, as we will see below, French diplomats argued in favor of Americans studying in France precisely because, as adults, they would constitute the social and economic elite of the United States. Yet, just as tourism became accessible to "the masses," especially since World War II, and higher education increasingly became an avenue for upward social and economic mobility in the United States, study abroad appealed to an increasingly diverse social base, aided in part by the GI Bill (Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944) and the Fulbright Act (Public Law 584 of 1946). Study abroad thus became available to the same constituency as did mass tourism, but students stayed longer in the host country and

Furlough, eds., *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America*, Ann Arbor 2001; R. Koshar, *Seeing, Traveling, and Consuming: An Introduction*, in: *Histories of Leisure*, ed. R. Koshar, New York 2002, 1-24; E. J. Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism*, New York 1991. A superb analysis of youth travel in the construction of European integration is R. I. Jobs, *Youth Movements: Travel, Protest, and Europe in 1968*, in: *American Historical Review* 114, 2 (April 2009): 376-404.

- 2 On educational exchanges and international relations, see R. Garlitz and L. Jarvinen, eds., *Teaching America to the World and the World to America: Education and Foreign Relations since 1870*, New York 2012. Much scholarship on tourism addresses sexuality and gender in terms of sex tourism and the employment of women in tourist industries: A. Pritchard, N. Morgan, I. Ateljevic, C. Harris, eds., *Tourism and Gender: Embodiment, Sensuality and Experience*, Wallingford, UK 2008. Historians are beginning to address women as tourists and other types of sexuality related to tourism, see for example: S. L. Harp, *Au Naturel: Naturism, Nudism, and Tourism in Twentieth-Century France*, Baton Rouge 2014.
- 3 For some historians travel involves individual agency and profound sensory responses in contrast to tourism characterised by passivity and minimal disruption of daily habits. This distinction also divided the leisured and privileged from the less affluent, though for Paul Fussell, travel was no longer possible in the age of mass tourism since World War II. P. Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars*, New York 1980; J. Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800–1918*, Oxford 1993. On tourism and escape from the everyday, see S. Baranowski, *Common Ground: Linking Transport and Tourism History*, in: *Journal of Transport History* 28, 1 (March 2007): 120-124; Id., *An Alternative to Everyday Life? The Politics of Leisure and Tourism*, in: *Contemporary European History* 12, 4 (November 2003): 561-72.

interacted more extensively with host nationals than did most tourists. Related to this is a distinctive feature of study abroad that I wish to explore, namely its unique combination of being elsewhere and participating in everyday life prior to the era of mobilities systems that John Urry locates in the 1970s in his 2007 book, *Mobilities*.⁴ In the case of study abroad presented here, Americans left their everyday lives of family, friends, and a familiar higher education system to live the everyday lives of French people for one year. In the process, most of them became fairly fluent in the language, learned about and usually appreciated French social and cultural practices, and adapted to a new educational system. It is useful to think of study abroad as within a spectrum bounded by tourism and permanent migration at each end, as A. M. Williams and C. M. Hall have suggested, since students stayed longer in the host country and interacted with host nationals more than did most tourists, and the construction of that study abroad experience included significant insights into French culture as well as American national identity.⁵ Students sought adventure and escape from the everyday, and they almost always returned home after one year, yet they also experienced a transformation through close engagement with French people and adaptation to French institutions.

The sources that I consulted include letters, reports, oral interviews, and archival and published documentation regarding study abroad. US Americans who studied in France between 1945 and 1970 often felt aware of the privilege and opportunity study abroad represented. They wrote long letters home to their families describing their discoveries, frustrations, and achievements, and some were explicit that the letters should be preserved as a record of an extraordinary experience. Another source is reports by American Fulbright students, scholars, and teachers who were required to submit completed forms that assessed the educational experience in France, including questions about French and American stereotypes of one another, what information or preparation might help future Fulbrighters, and how each individual might have contributed to better international relations. In addition to letters, archival materials, and Fulbright reports, this article also refers to oral interviews that I conducted with individuals who studied in France between 1945 and 1970. The selection of all these materials is somewhat arbitrary, based largely on personal contacts and a limited and randomly selected cache of reports located in the basement of the Franco-American Commission office in Paris. And there are inherent biases in the sources, including a positive outlook on an exciting time of one's youth, gratitude toward the providers (families and institutions) of an extraordinary learning and travel experience, and an oft-rehearsed repertoire of stories integrated into an individual life narrative on the part of those whom I interviewed. Yet these sources are valuable for conveying the meanings of study abroad in the words of the individual, rather than those of the organisers and promoters. And indeed, much of what I present here regarding youth sociability, gender, and sexuality is not exactly what organisers and

4 J. Urry, *Mobilities*, Cambridge 2007.

5 A. M. Williams and C. M. Hall, *Tourism and Migration: New Relationships between Production and Consumption*, in: *Tourism Geographies* 2, 1 (2000): 5-27.

promoters of study abroad had in mind, for they were more concerned with spreading American economic practices and political values, or improving France's reputation through study abroad.

A Brief History of US Americans Studying in France

US Americans studying in France has a long history, dating at least from the early nineteenth century when medical students sought education and training at French institutions.⁶ Artists constituted another significant foreign and American student population in France.⁷ In the late nineteenth century Germany was a preferred destination for American postgraduates who sought doctorates in German universities to advance their academic careers in the US, and many of these students also spent some time in France.⁸ Moreover, during the early Third Republic (1870–1940) French academics bemoaned German influence in American higher education, and proposed ways to draw Americans away from Germany and into French universities, for example, by creating new degrees that were easier for foreigners to earn and that did not threaten French advanced degree holders.⁹ World War I represented an opportunity to further this quest for American students in French universities, since France and the US were allies against Germany. Indeed, as a result of French universities offering courses to American soldiers in France in 1919 before demobilisation, an American veteran, Raymond Kirkbride, launched the first junior year abroad program in 1923 from the University of Delaware.¹⁰ Other non-governmental organisations started in the aftermath of World War I to encourage study abroad generally, though largely between European nations and the United States, including the Institute of International Education (IIE) and the American Field Service, and the French government also provided a small amount of funding for student exchanges between France and the US.

A steady stream of American undergraduates and graduate students travelled to France to study between the wars, though numbers declined during the Depression; the IIE counted 5, 584 American students in France during the academic year 1928–29, and

6 R. M. Jones, *American Doctors in Paris, 1820–1861: A Statistical Profile*, in: *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 25 (April 1970): 143–57; P. Moulinier, *La Naissance de l'étudiant moderne (XIXe siècle)*, Paris 2002; N. L. Green, *The Comparative Gaze: Travelers in France Before the Era of Mass Tourism*, in: *French Historical Studies* 25 (Summer 2002): 423–40.

7 G. P. Weisberg and J. R. Becker, eds., *Overcoming All Obstacles: The Women of the Académie Julian*, New York/New Brunswick, NJ 1999; J. Rotily, *Artistes américains à Paris, 1914–1939*, Paris 1998.

8 J. Herbst, *The German Historical School in American Scholarship: A Study in the Transfer of Culture*, Ithaca, NY 1965; C. Diehl, *Americans and German Scholarship, 1770–1870*, New Haven, CT 1978. See also B. G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice*, Cambridge, Mass. 1998.

9 G. Weisz, *The Emergence of Modern Universities in France, 1863–1914*, Princeton, NJ, 1983; W. Walton, *Internationalism, National I, and Study Abroad: France and the United States, 1890–1970*, Stanford, Calif., 2010, esp. ch. 1.

10 Walton, *Internationalism*, chs. 1 and 3.

2,400 in 1933-34.¹¹ Following World War II numbers of Americans studying in France increased dramatically, from 967 in 1954-55, to 2,420 in 1959-60, and 6,219 in 1969-70.¹² Additionally, study abroad expanded globally especially during the 1960s. According to UNESCO the total number of students abroad worldwide reached 429,000 in 1968, representing an increase of 300 percent over nineteen years. The UNESCO report also noted an increase in the number and proportion of women students (“girls”) in the 1960s, and a shift toward more students from developing countries than from developed countries seeking education abroad. While the United States was the top host country for all foreign students in 1962 and 1968 (64,705 and 121,362 foreign students, respectively), France and the Federal Republic of Germany competed for second and third place behind the US.¹³

The history of Americans studying in Europe paralleled the history of American tourists in Europe in that numbers of both increased with improvements in transportation, and gradually encompassed more middle-class Americans, in addition to wealthy elites.¹⁴ According to Harvey Levenstein, American tourists flocked to France in the modern era because it represented both entertaining pleasure (including sexual licentiousness) and cultural improvement. These promises even overcame France’s reputation for hostility toward Americans and primitive hygienic facilities in the interwar years and following World War II.¹⁵ Another significant feature of the history of both American tourism and study abroad in France is the preponderance of women involved. Levenstein attributes this to France’s iconic status as an arbiter of taste and civilisation, Paris as a center for fashion, and romantic movies of the post-World War II era located in France.¹⁶ While the bohemianism of expatriate artists like Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway might have contributed to France’s appeal, students rarely mentioned this explicitly, though see note 17 below. This may have been because students intended to convince parents and study abroad promoters of their seriousness of purpose, or because other factors were more salient in motivating them to study abroad, for example, family connections to France, the influence of particular teachers in school, or the opportunity for something new.

For many Americans, women and men alike, France represented freedom from a variety of social constraints, especially during the conservative 1950s. As author James Baldwin

11 H. S. Krans, *The American University Union in Europe*, in: Institute of International Education, 17th series, bulletin No. 4, October 1, 1936: 11.

12 Institute of International Education, *Open Doors. Report on International Educational Exchange, 1948–2004*, New York 2005.

13 In 1962 the Federal Republic of Germany hosted 24,177 foreign students; France hosted 23,089. In 1968 France hosted 36,500 foreign students; the Federal Republic of Germany hosted 26,783. UNESCO, *Statistics of Students Abroad, 1962–1968/Statistiques des étudiants à l'étranger*, Paris, 1972, 19-20, 24-25, 27, 43.

14 M. Rennella and W. Walton, *Planned Serendipity: American Travelers and the Transatlantic Voyage in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, in: *Journal of Social History* 38 (Winter 2004): 365-383.

15 Levenstein, *We'll Always Have Paris*.

16 *Ibid.*. See also C. Anderson, *Cold War Consumer Diplomacy and Movie-induced Roman Holidays*, in: *Journal of Tourism History* 3, 1 (April 2011): 1-19.

wrote from observing American students in Paris in the early 1950s: “Paris is, according to its legend, the city where everyone loses his head, and his morals, lives through at least one *histoire d’amour*, ceases, quite to arrive anywhere on time, and thumbs his nose at the Puritans – the city, in brief, where all become drunken on the fine, old air of freedom.”¹⁷ The legend of freedom, including sexual freedom, persisted into the 1970s as literary scholar Alice Kaplan wrote in her memoir regarding her year of studying in France as an undergraduate: “everyone knew that liberty really meant liberty to have sex, and life in France without sex was inconceivable to me.”¹⁸ Mythologies of France figured in both American tourists’ and students’ imaginings of and motivations to travel to France, but students’ language capability, adaptation to university routines and everyday life, and interactions with French people fostered an alternative understanding of France, as well as of themselves.

Students as Tourists and Not

Several commentators involved in study abroad contrasted it favorably to tourism as a means of improving US-French relations. In 1950 Albert Chambon, the French consul general in Boston, made the case to Henri Bonnet, the French ambassador to the United States, that study abroad was more successful than tourism in terms of improving American attitudes toward France. Complaining that tourists often left France with erroneous impressions, Chambon asserted that by living with French families, circulating among a broader spectrum of French society, and “understanding, in general, our language and being interested in our culture,” students “become the best artisans of Franco-American friendship, that is the most enlightened,” after they returned to the United States.¹⁹ Similarly, Joseph E. Baker, a Fulbright lecturer of American literature and civilisation in France from 1954-55, extolled the merits of spending a year in France and assessing the United States from a French perspective. In contrast, he suggested that American tourists were an impediment to good relations between France and the US, since he described them as “arrogant” and claimed that they “complain like spoiled children.”²⁰

17 J. Baldwin, Paris Letter: A Question of Identity, in: *Partisan Review* 21 (July 1954): 404. See also this account by a Fulbright scholar from 1962-63: “There is a certain romantic aura in the States surrounding France and the French way of life. This is greatly due, I feel, to the image of Parisian life created by the American writers of the 1920s who lived there, to the well-founded popularity of French films in the States and to many other less concrete factors. According to this myth, the French have reached the pinnacle of sophistication in regard to matters of sex, manners, gastronomy, art, and generally, ‘joie de vivre.’” US Grantees 1963-64 TF-2 TO Students A-C, Franco American Commission Archives, Paris. This individual requested and received an extension of his stay, hence the file includes documents from 1962-63 as well as 1963-64.

18 A. Kaplan, *French Lessons: A Memoir*, Chicago 1993, 89.

19 Albert Chambon to Henri Bonnet, December 30, 1950, forwarded from Bonnet to Robert Schuman, minister of Foreign Affairs, General Direction of Cultural Relations, January 12, 1951, file: Etats-Unis 163-3, 1951, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères (MAE), Paris, Direction Générale des Relations Culturelles, 1948-59, Enseignement, Etats-Unis, 513, 163-3, Bourses.

20 J. E. Baker, *Les yeux de la France*, in: Rives. Bulletin de l’Association Amicale Universitaire France-Amérique, 1 (July 1957): 27.

So much of scholarship on tourism presents the media or promoters' perspectives that it is hard to know exactly what tourists thought about their experiences. Some students offered thoughtful considerations of differences and similarities between tourism and study abroad. Miriam Halbert, who studied in France in 1947-48 on an IIE scholarship, considered the difference between experiencing France as a student and a tourist in a letter to a family member in the US in 1948:

In response to your question about seeing Paris as a student as against seeing it as a tourist, perhaps I'm idealistic, or maybe it's youth, but I feel the average tourist can't come as close to the throb of Parisian life as a student. I feel I am here under the ideal conditions, even if they are the most d ur [food shortages, scarce hot water and heat were among the challenges she confronted in postwar Paris]. I often wonder what my impression would be if I were not a student. I wouldn't be able to touch Paris in the same way.²¹

Halbert's letters from her year studying in France reveal that she had a French roommate in the Cit  universitaire, she cultivated several French friends, she became romantically attached to a Frenchman, and she studied assiduously at the Sorbonne, earning a *mention bien* on her final exams at the end of the academic year; thus, she might be referring to these experiences as allowing her to feel "close[r] to the throb of Parisian life," than a tourist might. Barbara Boonstoppel suggested an interesting contradiction and complementarity between study abroad and tourism when she wrote to her family in 1966 about the routine of study in Pau and the diversion of weekend excursions to tourist sites:

you get the feeling during a week of dull (classes – meals – study – sleep) routine that you're really not in Europe at all; and then yesterday, as soon as we got outside the city limits of Pau, everything seemed so much more exciting and real. And we could truly appreciate what we saw because our senses weren't dulled by weeks of sight-seeing and travel.²²

At the same time, she also wrote of the many differences she encountered in everyday French life:

so far the things I have noticed that are different in this foreign clime are small changes that all add up to another way of life. It's things like no napkins at meals (or maybe that's what the constant supply of bread is for); it's learning to eat with your knife and fork poised constantly over the plate, it's learning that you can't try to sleep under a bolster – and there are no pillows; it's learning that notebooks come only in graph paper; it's also things like explaining to another American girl that the French would probably be very offended if they knew she used her bidet to shave her legs ...²³

21 Letter of January 15, 1948 from Miriam Halbert to her mother; typescript given to author by Miriam Bales.

22 Letter of September 11, 1966 from Barbara Boonstoppel to her family; typescript given to author by Barbara Diefendorf.

23 Letter of September 9, 1966 from Barbara Boonstoppel to her family; typescript given to author by Barbara Diefendorf.

Study abroad provided students with the opportunity to be tourists, and they invariably took advantage of it, yet at the same time students aspired to participate in the everyday life of French people, and this presented some challenges.

A common problem American students confronted in France was difficulty meeting French people. When Martha Churchill, a Smith College junior in France in 1948-49, was invited to dinner with a French family, she wrote to her parents that it was “quite a thrill.” She was self-conscious about how little food was served and noted how shabby the apartment was where the French family lived, yet she also commented upon how the family seemed “to make up in their interest in things and their family spirit what they lack materially.”²⁴ Shortly thereafter, she described in detail a delightful evening she spent with another French family, and she confessed that she did not study as much as she did at Smith because she thought it was more important for her to interact with French people, which was difficult since she lived with other Americans at Reid Hall.²⁵ Social scientists John and Jeanne Gullahorn conducted a survey in 1954 to assess the effects of a year of study in France upon American students, and French attitudes toward American students. They found that both groups acknowledged the challenges of social integration due to different cultural practices and expectations regarding social relations. According to the Gullahorns: “Once the American students learned to respond to French citizens in terms appropriate to French culture, then closer relationships became possible.”²⁶

Further evidence from students bears out this observation that adaptation to French ways of life helped Americans in their interactions with French people, and enhanced the study abroad experience. The wife of an American Fulbright student detailed her frustrations about living in Dijon in 1956-57 with a small child and on a limited budget, despite having spent her junior year in France as an undergraduate. She learned to economise and to live more like a French housewife – washing clothes by hand, shopping every day, hauling the groceries home, and cooking everything since little could be bought pre-cooked. She wrote: “And blissfully exiled as I was from all advice on How to Rear My Child, I learned a little about relaxing and enjoying Helen.” After the family adopted French practices, husband and wife enjoyed living in France and gained acceptance from their neighbors: “we noticed a slight but definite show on the part of our friends and acquaintances that they liked us.” Learning to live differently was challenging but rewarding:

*Here [in Dijon] we had known a new way of living, often difficult or impossible to grasp and make satisfying. Yet perhaps due to that struggle for meaning, this French year would remain for us unforgettable and sharply alive.*²⁷

24 Letter of December 14, 1948 from Martha Churchill to her family, Smith College Archives, Martha Churchill, Class of 1950 A-Z, box 2172.

25 Martha Churchill to her family, January 18, 1949, Smith College Archives, box 2172.

26 J. T. and J. E. Gullahorn, American Students in France: A Perspective on Cultural Interchange, in: Rives: Bulletin de l'Association Amicale Universitaire France-Amérique 9 (April 1959): 4.

27 Mrs. E. H. Benton, Year in France, in: Rives: Bulletin de l'Association Amicale Universitaire France-Amérique 10 (July 1959): 27, 28.

Another Fulbright student from 1963-64 wrote that she had been warned about the impenetrability of French society, but she offered the following corrective after spending a year in Aix:

The TRADITION of hospitality is less in France than in the states, but in effect I found my French classmates as receptive and pleasant as those I left at home. The complication is that the Frenchman – the French student included – is the ‘victim’ of a whole formation based on formality. Once one has been FORMALLY brought into the midst of a group, one is accepted – really accepted. The rubrics, however, must not be violated. Recognising this, the menacing factor of the ‘unfriendly Frenchman’ looms much less ominously before the foreigner, and becomes even understandable.²⁸

Students consistently described a personal transformation that included understanding and appreciation of French social conventions, cultural values, and material conditions, in contrast to the more narcissistic travel for self-discovery that Levenstein identifies. Frances Stokes, a Smith College junior in France in 1958-59 claimed that the year in France generated:

a greater understanding of a quick, irascible, loving and lovable nation; a deeper insight into a different way of life which brings one’s own into more critical focus; an appreciation of a restrained language and rich literature The list is a long one and for no two girls is it identical.²⁹

Fulbright grantee Jonathan H. Ebbets explained a similar process of adaptation and personal change regarding his experience at the University of Caen in 1964-65. He asserted that students, like tourists, arrived in France with romantic fantasies; referring to James Baldwin’s essay on American students in Paris, Ebbets writes: “One arrives in search of the *Belle Epoque* and finds instead bad accommodations, poor plumbing, and worse telephones.” In contrast to “the average vacationer” who travels through France while “preserving, at unheard-of prices, his native customs, comforts, and language,” the student must “establish a new way of life” that involves not only adjusting to different conditions but also appreciating them. Ebbets notes:

there is a moment when one finally feels that a performance of The Bourgeois Gentleman at the Comédie Française, that the music of Rameau and Poulenc is more important than a daily bath or an elevator that runs.

Ebbets concludes:

28 Folder: Pinell, Lauren C.[pseud.], US Grantees 1963-64 TF-2 TO students A-C, Franco-American Commission Archives, Paris.

29 F. Stokes, *The Moi in Me*, in: *Smith Alumnae Quarterly* (November 1960): 13.

*[The student's] success is more than an appreciation of France. It is at once a new way of seeing himself in relation to another world and to his own. It is the beginning of an education and a way of life.*³⁰

A Fulbright student reached this conclusion in her final report of 1968-69 spent at the University of Dijon:

*Most of all, it has been good to see a different way of doing things, which works also and to realise that one can reach the same goal in different ways which do not necessarily have to be 'better' or 'worse' but simply different.*³¹

Study abroad offered students a unique opportunity both to be tourists, and to emigrate temporarily. American students travelled within France and to other parts of Europe during school vacations; Italy, England, Germany, Switzerland, and Spain were common destinations for winter or holiday breaks. These journeys were escapes from classes, routines, and French families or residence halls which had become “home” for the study abroad duration. Adapting to this home was a long process that continued before and after the touristic breaks of travel, and included the navigation of French heterosocial and sexual practices.

Youth sociability in another language and culture

Relations between the sexes were particularly fraught, for American women tried to understand youth sociability in order to interact with peers, and especially men. As American Fulbright students Carolyn Washer and Marilyn Ganetsky reported in 1961 regarding how they might meet French men, “It is not considered good form, in Bordeaux at least, to approach a man on the street or in a café and announce, ‘I am here to further Franco-American relations.’” They concluded: “Given present-day French society, we found that the best approach is to wait passively; i.e., let the man come to you!”³² Writing home to her mother while spending her junior year in Pau and Bordeaux in 1966-67 Barbara Boonstoppel poignantly explained her anxiety over communication and etiquette while having coffee in a café with another American woman and two French men. When the check arrived, she argued with herself: “shall I pay, yes (I’m reaching for my purse); no, better not, he’ll think I’m one of those Americans flaunting my money; but yes, I’d better, French girls always pay their own way.” She captured the agony of negotiating cultural differences with burgeoning language skills, writing, “And so the mental battle goes on as you sit there with one hand in your purse and the other foot in your mouth.”³³

30 J. H. Ebbets, *A Little More than Four Months Later*, in: *Rives* 29 (Spring-summer 1965): 33-35.

31 Geneviève Arlington [pseud.], *US Grantees 1968-69 Students*, A-C, Franco-American Commission Archives, Paris.

32 C. Washer and M. Ganetsky, *What Happened in Bordeaux*, in: *Rives* 17 (Winter 1961): 37.

33 Letter of September 15, 1966 from Barbara Boonstoppel to her family.

A significant component of study abroad for young Americans was learning a different set of norms involved in heterosocial interactions. In general, Americans dated in couples and commonly engaged in kissing and caressing (petting), while French young women and men socialised in groups, and reserved such intimacies for engaged couples. These different practices and expectations often led to misunderstandings; according to a report on study abroad in several different European countries published in 1959:

Some American girls, conditioned by kissing games at adolescent parties, consider osculation a casual and mildly enjoyable game or part of the ritual of thanking a boy for taking them to the movies. When they submit to the embraces of a European who has never played [adolescent kissing games like] Post Office or Spin-the-Bottle, they are sometimes rudely shocked by what follows.³⁴

In her final report to the Fulbright Commission at the end of a year spent in Nancy in 1961–1962 student Karen Stedtfeld elaborated upon social norms in an effort to prepare future Fulbrighters for different heterosocial and heterosexual practices in France:

Dating habits are not as developed as in the US, and the social patterns observed here are the following: you're either with a group mixed, paying your own way, or damn near engaged. In many respects, the level of mixed-sex relationships here is on the par with ours in junior high school. And if you are a gal, and are invited somewhere by one guy alone, watch out, because the "je t'aime's" can flow pretty fast and don't mean much. If you are a guy, investigate the philosophy of dating practices with the local French boys before you invite that cute jeune fille to go to the cinema. You just might pull a terrible boo-boo and not even realise it.³⁵

Different social norms and practices led to both satisfying encounters with French people, and to consternation. Reflecting upon her junior year in Paris in 1960–61 Lucy Carr explained how her freedom of movement and wearing of casual attire in public spaces contributed to potential romance, as when she met a French man of similar social background in one of her courses on French theater. He found her behavior unorthodox by French standards but attractive for that reason. Carr recalled:

he took me to the Champs-Élysées, to a bar there, and I didn't think twice about going into a bar on the Champs-Élysées in jeans, and he thought it was totally out of this world, that it was fabulous that I would ever do such a thing.³⁶

Similarly, Anne Rittershofer wrote to her parents in 1957 about her delight at being treated with respect by a French man, in contrast to more juvenile behavior she expe-

34 J. A. Garraty and W. Adams, *From Main Street to the Left Bank: Students and Scholars Abroad* (East Lansing, Michigan 1959), 121.

35 Copy of Karen Stedtfeld's final report to the Fulbright Commission, 1962, in author's possession.

36 Telephone interview with Lucy Carr [pseudonym], January 13, 2006.

rienced in the US: “He treats me like a queen & yet respects me for the intellectual & spiritual. I am *not* a silly ‘girlfriend’! Je suis une *femme* [I am a *woman*].”³⁷

Of course that same independence and freedom of movement also entailed certain risks. Discussing how she was approached on the streets by African men in Paris, Carr explained how she thought it was her unchaperoned appearance in public as a white woman, which was not common for French women of her social class, that precipitated these interactions: “they’re preying on me because nobody else is available and that lack of availability had something to do with color.”³⁸

Race is an important subject that many students abroad addressed, and further research on this is necessary. Richard Robbins, who studied in France as a Fulbright Fellow in 1949, noted that racial tolerance in France, in terms of mixed-race couples circulating in public, was belied by discrimination in “more mundane matters of jobs and housing.” Robbins claimed that “the writer James Baldwin, a close friend, and other blacks in France both American and from the colonies, spoke of serious problems.”³⁹ On the other hand, Baldwin and other African Americans like Richard Wright and others had chosen Paris as their home because they felt more freedom in France than in the United States at that time.⁴⁰ Provisionally, I will mention that observing both racial tolerance, usually in the form of mixed-race couples, and racism in France prompted white American women to reflect upon the issue in France and in the United States. For example, initially impressed by seeing “black boys with *good looking* white girls” in Paris in 1961, Karen Stedtfeld learned more about race relations in France after living in Nancy for a few weeks. She wrote to her family:

*We have an Algerian quarter here in Nancy which is strictly taboo – just like in the USA, good white girls don’t go out with black goys, here in France a good French girl doesn’t go out with Algerians – if she does, the social consequences are exactly the same.*⁴¹

American women students reported a wide range of responses to heterosocial and heterosexual interactions in France. Some were shocked and dismayed that French men presumed that white American women were sexually available, while others characterised their relations with French men as respectful, egalitarian, and mature. In all cases they learned that social norms were different among American and French youth, a lesson that only engaged participation and openmindedness made possible. While tourism scholarship often emphasises sexuality as a spectacle, usually with women as objects or

37 Anne Rittershofer to her parents, February 12, 1957, Smith College Archives, Class of 1958, box 2214.

38 Telephone interview with Lucy Carr [pseudonym], January 13, 2006.

39 R. Robbins, *Other Cultures and Singular Pluralisms*, in: *The Fulbright Difference, 1948–1992*, ed. R. T. Arndt and D. L. Rubin, New Brunswick/New Jersey 1993, 32. See also Alice Kaplan’s study of black activist Angela Davis’s experience as a student in France in 1963–1964. A. Kaplan, *Dreaming in French: The Paris Years of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, Susan Sontag, and Angela Davis*, Chicago 2012.

40 J. Campbell, *Exiled in Paris: Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Samuel Beckett, and Others on the Left Bank*, Berkeley 2003; T. E. Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light*, Boston 1996.

41 Letter from Karen Stedtfeld to her family, November 7, 1961.

passive observers, study abroad reveals women as agents in heterosocial relations that they deciphered to themselves and to families and friends.⁴²

Learning about France, Learning about Oneself

Students reported both frustration and satisfaction with their academic work and revealed the challenges of adapting to a different educational system. Among Fulbright students, who were almost all pursuing specific projects related to post-graduate study, many were disappointed that they were not able to fulfill their original plans of study, due to lack of appropriate specialists at a regional university, to the absence of relevant courses in a particular year, or to disruptions like the events of May 1968. A student of music composition criticised the courses at the Conservatoire Nationale de Musique in Paris at the end of the academic year 1968-69:

I will elaborate on problems encountered at the Conservatoire: 1) antiquated subject matter and methods of teaching, 2) entrance exams and requirements ridiculously impractical and politics and intrigue involved among students, faculty and administration in regards to admission, 3) lack of communication between the professor and myself because of barriers of nationality, personality and language, 4) routine class system of teaching for subject that should be on a personal level, 5) system of prize competitions that is nearly worthless outside of France (this has now been eliminated in composition).⁴³

Others enumerated academic and professional benefits that could come only from France, like Mary Rattner who spent 1967-68 at the University of Caen to study twelfth-century monastic life. In addition to valuing her course work in Latin and paleography “both of which are necessary tools for medieval research,” she also wrote:

with specific interest in Norman history, I have been especially interested to see as much of the region as possible, to become acquainted with large medieval monuments, such as the two Caen abbeys, as well as the magnificent Romanesque architecture of some of the parish churches.⁴⁴

A notable feature of Americans’ accounts of studying and living in France is the effort to understand French practices and interact with French people both academically and socially. This was not easy, and overcoming loneliness and cultural barriers was an important part of studying abroad. Many students wrote that the experience banished the mythologies or stereotypes that they entertained before studying in France. Literature student Diane Beckman wrote after completing a year of study in Paris in 1969:

42 See, for example, B. L. Blower, *Becoming Americans in Paris: Transatlantic Politics and Culture between the World Wars*, New York 2011, ch. 4.

43 David Atkinson [pseud.], in *US Grantees 1968-69 Students* Anderson-Carroll, Franco-American Commission Archives, Paris.

44 Mary Rattner [pseud.], *US Grantees 67-68 Students* Moses-Schorer, Franco American Commission Archives, Paris.

*Many of my illusions or images about France and Europe have been destroyed or modified when faced with actual situations. The realities were sometimes less pleasant than the illusions but presumably accuracy is more valuable to understanding than palatability.*⁴⁵

As Urry and Levenstein have claimed, self-discovery was an increasingly important meaning of youth travel, including study abroad, in the second half of the twentieth century; by this they mean that travel constitutes a rite of passage or maturation of the individual, irrespective of the destination. Levenstein in particular insists that youth travelled in the 1970s solely for “personal development” rather than to encounter specific sites, and that France had lost its allure because popular culture and the sexual revolution were not distinctively French.⁴⁶ However, I contend that for most students abroad the discovery of the self was indeed tied to adapting to French social practices and higher education. As Mary Ann Hoberman said of her junior year in France in 1949–50:

*something had happened over there that had freed me to just be much more myself and that I had different outlooks from other people, I had different experiences, and I didn't have to conform as much.*⁴⁷

Such self-discovery resulted from learning a different language and engaging on a daily basis with French practices and people. Vivian Scanlon described this process in detail:

*In the beginning of the year, I found myself making constant comparisons between French and American students to justify my disillusionment with what I considered the superficiality of the French. ... When I grew out of the defensive critical stage after the first few months, and became more analytical, asking myself what it was in the structures of the two societies which made their youth so different, I was led to some very interesting conclusions concerning the unstable nature of a relatively new society in America, as compared with that of France, which is so rooted in the past. I ceased making value judgments, made more of an effort to understand and to see through French eyes, and at that point all unhappiness vanished.*⁴⁸

Conclusion

Located between tourism and permanent migration, study abroad participates in both phenomena, and it provides a valuable source of information on individual experiences of mobility from 1945 to 1970, notably from the perspective of women as active subjects. American women students' accounts of adapting to French daily life, navigating

45 Diane Beckman [pseud.], US Grantees 1968–69 Students Anderson-Carroll, Franco-American commission Archives, Paris.

46 Levenstein, We'll Always Have Paris, 227–230, 234. Urry writes that youth travel was a “rite of passage” that included visiting “civilisational centres.” Urry, *Mobilities*, 10.

47 Telephone interview with Mary Ann Hoberman, September 10, 2004.

48 Vivian Scanlon [pseud.], US Grantees 1967–68 Students, Franco American Commission Archives, Paris.

heterosocial norms, and learning in French universities reveal a year-long process of comparing and mostly contrasting one's own and a foreign culture with the result of an examined appreciation for both.

I would like to end with some suggestions regarding the implications of study abroad for tourism scholarship. Youth culture, popular protests, feminism, and changing attitudes toward sexuality were common in the west during the 1960s and 1970s especially, and study abroad offers a means of understanding both transnational similarities and national differences in these historical developments.⁴⁹ While Levenstein and Urry emphasise self-discovery as the main impulse behind and consequence of youth travel, including study abroad, there are other elements of national comparison, gender, and sexuality that also merit examination. Elsewhere I have framed the history of study abroad as contributing to the history of international relations, serving both the national interests of sending and host nations, and developing a cosmopolitanism that coexists with national identity.⁵⁰ More research on how this process occurs between developed and developing nations and in a post-Cold War world is necessary. This study ends in the 1970s, and much about study abroad has changed since that time. Student protests in both France and the US in the late 1960s were hardly detrimental to study abroad, though in the short term they precipitated a cut in US contributions to Fulbright exchanges with France, resulting in fewer awards to Americans in 1969-70.⁵¹ Funding was restored, but US foreign policy interests shifted from Europe to the developing world, and study abroad generally expanded globally from the 1970s on. Transportation and communication technologies have dramatically altered tourism and study abroad. Travelling to France on a ship is an experience of the past; many students today spend a semester or a few weeks rather than a year abroad; modern technologies allow students to remain in constant contact with friends and family at home. Urry observes that a modern "mobility turn" has allowed vastly more people to travel and has opened up possibilities for redefining and multiplying identities and citizenships, and I hope that study abroad figures prominently in research related to mobilities.⁵²

49 Histories of youth, protest, feminism, and sexuality in both France and the US are many, and I will not include them here. Some helpful transnational work includes A. Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c. 1958–1974*, New York 1998; B. Davis, W. Mausbach, M. Klimke, and C. MacDougall, eds., *Changing the World, Changing Oneself: Political Protest and Collective Identities in West Germany and the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s*, New York 2010; S. Chaperon, *Kinsey en France: les sexualités féminine et masculine en débat*, in: *Le Mouvement social* 198 (2002): 91-110; Jobs, "Youth Movements."

50 Walton, *Internationalism*. See also N. Snow, *International Exchanges and the U.S. Image*, in: *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 198-222; Garlitz and Jarvinen, *Teaching America*.

51 Walton, *Internationalism*, 165-167.

52 J. Urry, *Mobilities*, Cambridge 2007.