

## ABSTRACT

### Exploring the Progression of US Students' Goals In Three Study and Internship Abroad Programs in the UK

Rebekah de Wit  
Doctor of Philosophy, 2004

Dissertation directed by Dr. JoAnn Crandall  
Professor and Director, Language, Literacy, and Culture PhD Program

This qualitative study examines the progression of participants' goals in US study abroad in the UK through an exploration of the perceptions and experiences of 22 US students participating in three different study and internship abroad programs. All three programs were administered in the spring 2003 semester by one study abroad office at a university in Wales. Specifically, the study examines how the US students both perceived and pursued their pre-program goals at various stages abroad, with particular attention to (1) cross-cultural goals and (2) how internship placements, a prominent component of two of the three programs examined, might serve as a means to facilitate the students' interaction with and deeper understanding of the host community and culture. Related data on the entire body of student participants in the three programs during the same semester (N=148) provide a rich context for the findings on the 22 primary participants. Data comprise a series of interviews with and written documents gathered from the 22 primary participants over a period of eight months, as well as field observations, numerous types of written documents from the whole student population, written documents produced by the study abroad office, and interviews with various administrators and professionals associated with the three programs.

The most significant issue that emerged across all three programs and across program contexts (internships, academics, and extracurricular life) was the degree to which students' expectations of and reactions to their study abroad experiences seemed to have been shaped by their experiences within the US academic system. Other important findings across the three programs included many students' limited learning about Wales and Britain, the prominence of the US peer group, and prevalent problematic notions about the nature of cross-cultural development in study abroad. Variations in students' experiences abroad across the three programs suggest that certain study abroad program structures as well as pre-departure preparation in several key areas might facilitate and enhance US students' learning and developmental outcomes from semester-long study or internship abroad in the UK.