

Kimberly James

Psychology Major/ History Minor

Study Aboard Program: Winchester, England

Other Travels: Germany and Denmark

Date of Experience: January 8, 2015 to April 13, 2015

Expected Graduation: May 2017

Support for UW-Eau Claire: Wisconsin Scholarship for International Study for \$2000

Critically Reflective Assignment

1. The place that I chose to study abroad was the University of Winchester, which is located in the city of Winchester in the England. I was located an hour south of London and an hour north of the shore by train. The school itself was rather small compared to UW-Eau Claire, with only approximately 6,000 students to our 10,000 students. It was also different because only first year students lived on campus while at UW-Eau Claire, any level can live on campus. But to say the least, I do miss it there already.

Going to England was my first time out of the country, and only my third time on a plane. Even though the flight was long, and I felt like I ran into a brick wall named jet lag, it did not put a damper on my time. However, the hardest adjustment at first was the lack of ways to communicate. Living in a world with technology and not being able to contact people using a cell phone was quite difficult, until we got the internet password of course.

Yet, it was more of how the university was different that shocked me. First, students only attend University for three years to acquire their degree while in the U.S., students usually spend four or five years at undergraduate universities. Secondly, the classes were not held every day and there were no such thing as homework assignments. In addition, the students did not take classes outside their major so it was hard for them to understand why I did not have class every day. It took a lot of time to adjust to the students' personalities and living habits as well. What they did for fun and how they interacted was different from what we do in the U.S. even though much of it was similar.

I also spent a week and a half traveling through Germany and Denmark as part of my travels. I did not leave England much other than this one trip. This was due to money requirements that it takes to travel. It was not until Germany that I realized how globalized some nations are compared to others. It was not until I got out of England to see how similar it was to the U.S.

2. When I was at the University of Winchester, I took a Religions class that allowed me to see some of the different religious centers near the city. While many Europeans now choose not to practice any sort of religion, it was a great experience to see what is all around. Growing up in the middle of northern Wisconsin, most of the people you meet are Catholic or Lutheran Christians. Winchester is also the home of a famous cathedral, which still holds church services to this day. Not only did my class get to tour the cathedral, we also got a tour of a mosque and Hindu temple in the city of Southampton.

When going to the mosque, it was in light of the French terrorist attacks. Not only are Americans become prejudice against the Islamic community, so are other European nations. When getting our tour it was explained that many times Muslims buy old buildings that are turned into mosques. It is just a stereotype that they are these extravagant colored tile buildings. Some are of course, but these only appear in bigger cities with much larger congregations. The one we went to was an old school building. Not only did we get to witness a prayer, we also learned more about the religion itself, such as it is based on loving those around you. This was really a sign that the world uses a few instances to represent a whole group of people as terrible.

The Hindu temple was also a great sight to see. This really showed that Hinduism accepts all other religions unlike others. The decorations were all very colorful as well as bright. Around the

room, pictures hung that represented different gods and goddesses, those who helped with the temple donated many of the pictures, this even includes some of Mary and Jesus. Again, the class also got to see a prayer service and given an explanation for the meaning behind certain practices such as leaving food for the statues.

This was an eye opening experience when it came to other religions and their culture because in northern Wisconsin you do not have that much diversity. The trips were full of information that increased our knowledge base but also seeing the people practice their religions gave the students a chance to see how the other religions really worked and what it really meant to them.

3. Studying abroad in England really showed me how much globalization affects the world, especially with the United States. When it comes to England, there are many things that they have adapted from the U.S. when it comes to food, more specifically, fast food. While there, you could find many common fast food stops such as McDonald's, Burger King, KFC, and even Subway. Now I did my best to avoid these places, however I did go to Subway once in London. What was surprising was not only the few different items they offered for their sandwiches, but the fact that even though England uses the metric system, the Subway still measured their sandwiches as 6 inch or a foot. This is not the only time that the American measurement system is used, it also appears that, when driving, they measure the distance in miles instead of kilometers.

Even this small example shows how things that we do can affect others. The countries are all interconnected, not only in a political way but also in a cultural way. Politically, the United States and the United Kingdom have been related on many different levels. This includes visiting the other country when it comes to global related things as well as allowing embassies to reside in the other country. This brings about the importance of the United Nations. Both the United States and the United Kingdom are both part of the United Nations, and help support the growing process of globalization as well as supporting other countries that are not considered power countries in the world.

4. According to a BBC article, the United States seems to be upsetting not only the United Kingdom but also other parts of the world. According to them, it seems that American law makers are extending their laws to areas outside the United States soil. This causes other countries who interact with those that disagree or do not coincide with the U.S. laws to be breaking the laws themselves. Americans have the apparent mentality that is money is involved with any of the so-called "scandals", it will somehow affect the United States. This raises the question of why companies outside of the U.S. who operate outside the U.S. and simply just do business with them, should be following all the U.S. laws.

This extension of the U.S. has affected not only British companies but also individuals. The article I read explained that even though one man's website was run outside the U.S., because a U.S. citizen gamble online, the owner of the website was jailed for it. The U.S. is also sanctioning anything that remotely involves Iran, even though other countries may have nothing to hold against trading, selling, or buying things from Iran. This is not only upsetting the United Kingdom but also other countries. When it comes to the U.S. being involved with matters outside, the U.S. people feel that the U.S. laws are somehow taking precedence over their own home laws.

5. Studying Abroad in England has also improved my outlook on my future career goals. Since I want to be a psychologist, I have to be in tune with people's feelings and reactions as well as do my best to understand what is bothering them. This experience allowed me to go into a different culture and adapt to their way of life. To make friends you have to be welcoming and friendly, and to all honesty, you have to do as the natives do. There were phrases that you could say that could be an offense, like commenting on someone's pants. To us this seems normal; to them it is rude because pants mean underwear in the UK while we use the word to indicate their trousers. Therefore, this experience just furthered my skills when it comes to adjusting to how people behave differently.

Another way it has improved my skills is how I adjust to answering a problem. At Winchester, the schoolwork was much different than it is here. At university level, the students complete two essays that are usually their entire grade. While in the U.S., students often complete numerous assignments, have a few exams, and possibly an essay that is all scored for a final grade in a class. This meant that not only how I approached the class was different, but writing the essays as well. I may have not done all that well with the essays for my classes; however, it was a learning experience in attempting to change how I learned content for a class and how I displayed what I learned to a professor. Not only do I feel I improved my critical thinking skills, I think this also helped me change how I address a problem.

Overall, I feel like this experience helped me gain more knowledge about the people who also share this world. That I feel is one of the most important things when you are a psychologist. The whole existence of the science of psychology was to better understand people. There is no way to get to know people when you are always living around those with the same culture and habits. I also feel that in a workplace, I will be more understanding of differences, which helps me in my current job at home. I see no downfall in getting to know and live with people who are different from you.

6. a. The most disorienting experience for me was when I was traveling in Germany with a friend of mine who also was studying abroad. When we planned our trip, we looked up train and bus routes in between cities so we knew when to get off trains and such. However, parts of the tracks were out and the train schedule website did not tell us this in advance. Therefore, we were stuck in at a train station where we did not speak German. This was probably the worst part of traveling because we could not speak the native tongue. We were also in the region of Bavaria, which meant that English speakers were also less common. Not being able to speak the native tongue also became an issue when we went on the alternative route to get where we were going because it was hard for us to know when we needed to switch trains or buses.

b. While studying in England and even traveling to Denmark and Berlin, it is hard to hold back the assumption that everyone in the industrialized world speaks English. Even at public service places such as the train station, not everyone who worked there spoke English. Nevertheless, speaking German is a strong part of their culture that they really depend on. Just like Denmark, even though much of the younger population is fluent in both German and English, they choose to speak German and everything remains in German. Moreover, people joke about how rough the sound of German is, yet as we listened to native speakers of German, it actually flowed quite

well together and was not as gruff as everyone makes it seem to be. Therefore, I began to appreciate that people use of different languages to communicate.

c. This experience also affected how I think about America not having a national language. Many times people believe that those who speak English should only be allowed into the country; however, this is wrong on so many levels. If this were so, I probably would not exist because I have German and Norwegian descent. But because the U.S. is such a large country along with the U.K. being quite powerful, many European countries believe it is important for its citizens to also know English. Undoubtedly, this is a result of globalization.

7.



This is a picture of the Winchester Cathedral from the inside. I feel that this is an important part of my experience because this is a very important part of the city and its history. Getting a tour

here provided me with a lot of background knowledge about the historic city I was living in.



This is picture of downtown Winchester. I feel this is important to include because this represents some of the culture shock. In America, all of our stores are large and you drive in between them, while here they are all close together and many people use walking and biking as their means for transportation.