

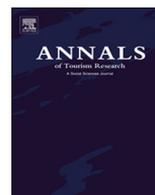


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Beyond the production of tourism imaginaries: Student-travellers in Australia and their reception of media representations of their host nation

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ABSTRACT

As with many nations seeking significant tourism income, Australian tourism marketing encourages imaginaries steeped in nostalgic romanticism. Australia is presented to international audiences as a place of grand landscape, filled with unique bounding animals and peopled by simple, happy-go-lucky, pre-modern folk. Defying the realities of a highly urbanized, post-industrial society, this paradisiacal imagery has proven to be highly successful. Reporting the first stage of research evaluating responses of study abroad students to a course in Australian Studies, the findings demonstrate strong correspondence between the imagery of Australia circulated by tourism marketers and the imaginaries inscribed into these student tourists. Travel can disrupt such circles of representation; indeed, the rationale behind student-tourism presents a productive moral imperative to do so.

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Introduction: Students as educational travellers and moral tourists

Taking a lead from Salazar (2010, p. 10), we examine the movement of translocal ideas and discourses in terms of statics and dynamics; of how things change and how they stay the same. In the spotlight are North American visions of Australia and the ways in which these imaginaries *travel* in the minds and bodies (not that they are separable) of young and middle class North Americans. As we will argue, these young people are a particular kind of “moral tourist”; they are all study abroad students carrying with them their sending institutions’ idealised visions of widening their experiences, broadening their minds, through travel. We take no particular issue with these propositions;

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indeed, our experiences as teachers of large numbers of North American students in Australia suggest a need for expanded visions of their host nation, but we do want to move beyond the simple moralising and the posturing that captures so much of the educational discourse (Forsey, Broomhall, & Davis, 2012).

Presented here is an empirical study of a tourist imaginary—a vision, a version, of a nation formed by marketers, filmmakers, television production companies, academics and so on. Under scrutiny is the version of a nation produced largely by the Australian Tourism Commission, a collective that sometimes acts in concert with the Australian film industry (see Beeton, 2008; Frost, 2010); a convergence evident in a number of nations (Månsson, 2011). We show a re-presentation of Australia and Australianness embedded into the imaginations of the young people from big and small screens, an imagination largely untroubled by counter-visions or arguments. As dyed-in-the-wool practice theorists (following Bourdieu, 1977), committed to comprehending the cultured, structured agency practiced by every individual (Forsey, 2010) we know the reproduction of a dominant ideology or imaginary is never perfectly congruent. Individual agents do not have exact and complete recall; they will absorb and interpret and interrupt ideas, they will ignore them, according to their culturally inscribed dispositions and personal proclivities. Nonetheless, there are patterns to the re-presentations, configurations of ideas, which Forsey has been observing and experiencing through more than a decade of teaching Australian Studies at his home university.

Study abroad is a 'quest to prepare the next generation to be global citizens' (Goodman, 2009, p. x), pursuing mutual respect and understanding (Lyons, Hanley, Wearing, & Neil, 2011, p. 362), to be both in the world and for it (Slimbach, 2010, p. 8). Such assertions emphasise the requirement that study abroad students become *moral* travelers—simultaneously 'thinking' and 'ethical', as well as 'educated', 'independent of mind', 'aware' and focused on social justice (Butcher, 2003, pp. 7–8; Poon, 1993; Slimbach, 2010). Breen (2012, p. 85) captures this well, citing assertions by Joseph Aoun, the President of Northeastern University in Boston, about study abroad students from his university not just "seeing the world" but "living it". Full immersion in different cultures is Aoun's aim; his students must not be mere academic tourists. As *educational tourist-travelers* (see Gibson, 1998), the students' institutions of origin expect study abroad students to bolster their international awareness, increase their cultural competency and contribute to national competitiveness as a consequence of their overseas experiences (Doyle et al., 2010; Forsey et al., 2012).

Such moral imperatives fit well with an agenda suggested by Salazar (2012, p. 878) in urging tourism scholars to create and operationalize 'new images and discourses that contest and replace tenacious imaginaries'. The study abroad experience offers productive opportunities to document and analyse the distribution of tourism discourses within circuits of tourism and their ensuing practices (Salazar, 2012, p. 867). It also creates an arena in which scholars and educators can test and implement challenges they may wish to pursue to the cultural misunderstandings and entrenched cultural stereotypes so often highlighted by international tourism.

Tourism Imaginaries

We report the first stage of a study aimed at evaluating the response of study abroad and exchange students to the course *Australian Culture: Myths and Realities* taught more or less continuously by Forsey since 2001 at The University of Western Australia to domestic and overseas students. Utilizing Morley's (1974) productive binary highlighting the producer of media messages and those who receive and consume these messages, we reach beyond production. It is not just a study of the ways in which Australia's national image is projected to international audiences through television, film and tourism advertising (Frost, 2010; Greiner, 2001; Riley & Van Doren, 1992; White, 1981); it is a study of the reception of these images, of the imaginaries they produce.

We focus on the initial stages of the study primarily because this is when we are best able to gauge how students imagine their host nation. Having captured these imaginaries as best we could through survey and interview, we discuss and analyse this particular audience reception of the idea of Australianness, enabling us to better appreciate the ideas we are dealing with as teacher and researcher. As we will show, images of Australia presented in often decades-old feature films and tourism advertisements continue to weave their way through the imaginations of the young people we surveyed and

interviewed. Most of them were eager to experience the “real Australia” created for them by generations of image-makers intent on inscribing a desirable ‘personality’ on to the continent (White, 1981).

Moving beyond the usual representation of representations punctuating much of the tourism literature (Ateljevic, 2000; Månsson, 2011; Salazar, 2012, p. 867), we consider how the portraits of a nation and its people are received, absorbed and transmitted. We point to the challenges and disruptions a well-focused education can bring, particularly in using the insights wrought by a recent (re)turn towards ‘tourism imaginaries’ (Chronis, 2012; Corderio, 2011; Hennig, 2001; Salazar, 2010, 2012). In proceeding, we set the scene via a brief sketch from the opening lecture of the *Australian Culture* course. The research findings will proceed from a discussion of key theoretical issues.

Lecture Room Imaginaries

Each year Forsey teaches the course he opens by asking students how they imagine Australia and Australians to be. The patterns emerging from this informal research prompted a more systematic study. In 2012 Low was commissioned to administer a short qualitative survey at the beginning and end of the unit, to do some follow up interviews, and to co-analyse the data. The class attracts significant numbers of overseas students, most of whom are visiting Perth (the capital of Western Australia) for a semester as study abroad students. The class of 2012 was no exception to this rule.

The initial survey was administered at the beginning of the first lecture by Low, through which he recruited individuals for follow-up interviews. He remained in the room to take notes on the ensuing conversation, which was also recorded in the university’s lecture capture system. It proceeded as follows:

Forsey When you think of Australia, what immediately comes to mind?—(clicking his fingers as he asked the question).

The lecture theatre erupts with noise as students with a variety of North American accents exclaimed:

Beach!
Outback!
Kangaroos!

Forsey: Now I’ve gotta tell you, whenever I ask this question in this class, Kangaroos is always first, or close to first, beach and bush is never far behind. Anything else?

A voice booms from the back row:
Venomous deadly things!

Forsey: Ok...so it’s a place full of dangerous wildlife. Yep, blue ringed octopus, snakes, spiders and sharks... All things considered, it’s a wonder you’re here at all!

The next question invited students to identify what they thought the ‘typical Australian to look like’. It drew an immediate response:

“Crocodile” Dundee!

This reference to a character featured in a film first screened in 1986, was followed immediately with a reference to Steve Irwin, the once larger than life television presenter who was known as ‘the Crocodile Hunter’ and for his unconventional commitments to wildlife conservation.

These two ‘bush legends’ were rapidly countered by an Australian student portraying the more typical “Aussie” as a patriotic, uncouth youth. Following some discussion and a slight pause Forsey asked for other responses, drawing two quick responses from young women with North American accents:

Tanned and athletic!
Blonde hair!

Forsey: Blonde hair, tanned and athletic. The grand Aryan Race
[Laughter in the lecture theatre]

Forsey: Not an unusual response.... There’s something interesting going on here, which we’ll start to unpick, but have you noticed something?

I have been asking these questions for more than a decade now and the response to questions about the typical Australian are always male. I can recall only one occasion when, very late in the piece, an Australian student suggested she had better “throw a woman into the mix”.

The standard response to the questions asked in this class for over a decade reflect an imaginary Australia that is wild and arid, surrounded by enticing beaches, and peopled, very congruently, by rugged men of the bush or the surf. Despite Australia being one of the most urbanized nations on the planet, overseas students never identify spaces or people between the outback and the coast. If the gaps are highlighted it is by local students, often in disparaging terms.

The representations of Australia and Australianness outlined above are analysed in various strands of the academic literature—most notably in cultural studies and tourism journals (Federici, 2011; Frost, 2010; Greiner, 2001; Waitt, 1997; White, 1981). They tend to focus on the production side of the equation, in the case of tourism on the travel brochures and advertisements and other cultural artefacts that are so often used to highlight the production of tourism imaginaries (Salazar, 2012, p. 867). Situating the tourist-traveller imaginary as the focal point of analysis allows us to build on Greiner's (2001) and Riley and Van Doren's (1992) insights into the nostalgic desires driving televisual and filmic representations of Australia in the USA, which remain deeply influential even in this era of online social networking. It offers a glimpse of the ways in which representations of culture promulgated through various media forms are received and embedded into the imaginations of individual tourists and how they are interpreted from there.

Receiving and Translating Images

For Morley (1974) media audiences are involved in culturally patterned decoding of media messages. He describes a communications chain connecting the sender/producer and the receiver/consumer. Reception theory is a productive umbrella term to use for this sender-receiver relationship (see Iser, 1971; Jauss, 1982), conceptualizing various types of text as the result of ‘a dialectical process of production and reception’ (Holub, 1984, p. 57). Though media discourse tends to flow more from producer to consumer than the other way round, the flow is neither closed or fully determined (Morley, 1974, p. 9). Reflecting a world in which the dominant cultural order is neither univocal nor uncontested (Hall, 1973) ‘structured polysemy’ is how Morley described the production of the message (1974, p. 10), aiding understanding of the confluence of media power and individual responses to this power (Morley in Jin, 2011, p. 128). Conceptualizing tourism as a ‘mutually negotiated relationship between consumers and producers’ (Salazar, 2012, p. 867) allows us to productively explore various acts of tourism re-production as an embodied practice.

The power located at the centre of these processes shapes consumer responses on a continuum from full acceptance of the dominant ideas, to those who challenge the hegemonic “wisdom” of the message’s producers (Hall, 1973). However, it is not only about power; the social location of the receiver-consumer is clearly vital to her positioning on this continuum. Simultaneously material and abstract, geographic and conceptual, social positions and positioning significantly shapes one’s readiness and ability to respond in meaningful ways to mediated representations of reality.

Social location reflects a number of aspects, including social class, gender and ethnicity, variables that are relatively controlled in our sample space. The research participants are mainly Euro-American, and economically privileged, the costs involved more or less ensure this is the case (Breen, 2012; Lewin, 2009). In addition to these various social locations, simple geography is also significant to the reception of re-presentations of Australianness by the research participants; the physical distance from Australia in which the various media messages are initially received makes an important difference.

Anticipating future discussion, the re-productive dialectic between production and consumption that the ‘circuits of culture’ create within the tourist-industrial complex (Ateljevic, 2000; Du Gay, Hall, Janes, MacKay, & Negus, 1997; Jenkins, 2003; Månsson, 2011; Salazar, 2012) are evident in a limited, or muted manner. These consumers of “brand Australia” were not engaged in any significant form of critical analysis of media production prior to their arrival in Perth. In addressing this lack, the study abroad project would benefit greatly from the relatively recent (re)turn to imaginaries in the tourism literature.

Creating Imaginaries

According to Kant ([1781] 1990), the imagination is built from cognitive schema that enable the translation of percepts into concepts; thus, providing the mental faculties necessary for judgment (Oakley, 2007, p. 215). These schematic imaginaries fuel the expectations and desires driving many a human activity, with tourism offering poignant arenas for exploring such phenomena (Chronis, 2012; Skinner & Theodosopoulos, 2011). Salazar (2012), a leading figure in current concerns with tourism imaginaries, defines them as implicit, 'unspoken schemas of interpretation' of other places and other people (p. 864). In outlining the important links between tourism and imagination, he alerts us to the 'socially transmitted representational assemblages' that are simultaneously 'meaning-making and world-shaping devices' (pp. 864–865).

The importance of "othering" a place and its people is a vital element of creating the motivational desire for travel (Corderio, 2011, p. 249; Hollinshead, 1998, p. 121). This often involves the imaginative creation of a spatio-temporal slope that places the sites of desire in a space and time removed from Western modernity (Fabian, 1983). Invocations of *vanished Edens* occupied by *pre-industrial humanity* are part of well-established cultural scripts employed by marketers to 'sell dreams of the world's limitless destinations' (Salazar, 2012, pp. 865–866). Salazar focuses his attention on "developing countries", but as Corderio (2011) points out, it is not just the "Global South" depicted as a premodern paradise, 'frozen in time'. Writing of a nation described in guidebooks as,

a new tourist land, full of white spots and hidden treasures, deserted and secluded beaches, and 'off-the beaten track' places which are supposedly not even signalled in the official cartography... therefore untouched by the destructive impulses of the tourist industry (p. 251).

Corderio is describing Portugal, but it would not take very much of a shift for this to become a description of Australia as idealized in guide books, tourist brochures, films and various other imaginative texts.

The 'identity messages' (Ateljevic, 2000, p. 379) of globalized tourism markets are remarkably similar, spanning East/West and North/South dichotomies. Europe still apparently has its 'exotic savages' (Urbain, 2002), which Corderio (2011, p. 252) describes in terms of a 'gallery of manual workers and skillful craftsmen' in which fishermen have pride of place in an idealized pre-modern world. This fetishized paragon of a 'carefree existence unburdened by the pressures of civilisation' (Hennig, 2001, p. 176) reaches beyond Portuguese beaches to the Breton coast, to Swiss mountains and the Italian countryside. It also stretches south to both sides of the Sahara, into the Indian and Pacific Oceans and across to Australia where we find a "double bonus" of an Aboriginal "primitive" and a European version of "pre-industrial man" - most frequently located in the legendary Australian "bushman" (see Ward, 1958).

Hennig (2001, p. 176) describes 'paradisiacal man' as 'simple and undemanding, cheerful and communicative' living 'spontaneously and guided by his instincts' knowing neither 'ambition, competition or the desire for power' and living 'a carefree existence, unburdened by the pressures of civilization'. This portrait matches Crocodile Dundee very well, a character who represents a noble savage in the urban jungle. His wry humour, and rough and ready style equip him to deal equally well with the challenges of the Australian bush and the "wilds" of New York. The curious mix of naive innocence and knowing parody embodied in Mick Dundee creates a distinctive mythic representation of Australia, particularly for North Americans (Abbey & Crawford, 1990; Cao, 2010; Riley & Van Doren, 1992).

We invited the young North Americans surveyed to nominate three words or phrases capturing their image of Australia. In a post-survey interview, one young woman recalled writing 'kangaroos', 'laid-back and friendly' and 'sun'. Reflecting upon what influenced these particular images, she readily identified Crocodile Dundee, Steve Irwin and various commercials: "I can't really say exactly where I got these images. It wasn't from any personal experiences".

One time Managing Director of the Australian Tourist Commission, John Morse, argues that Australia was the first nation to sell itself as a brand. The comment, made in a documentary series titled *Selling Australia* (Redwood, 2001), was followed by an observation from one of Morse's colleagues about the Australian brand not having much dimension:

As little as 20 years ago, it was rural; there was a strong emphasis on kangaroos and koalas. We were seen as a simple people in some parts of the world. There was a very limited perception... that we even had cities (Catriona Fraser—Australian Tourist Commission. Cited in Redwood, 2001).

The success of such branding is evident in the comments of a 21 year old student from one of Canada's leading universities in an interview with Low, about expecting "something a little bit more outback, not as modern. Not as sophisticated maybe. I was expecting more tumble weeds, more desert".

A study by Greiner (2001) of the representations of Australia located in late 1990s American television advertising shows how the images projected onto the small screens of Northern USA presented a people who are naïve, lucky, safe and relaxed. According to Greiner (p. 192) these myths of 'national innocence' reveal more about America than they do about Australia, uncovering 'a longing for that which we do not have or that which we imagine we once were'. Writing at a similar time about the influence of key Australian films on the US tourist market, Riley & Van Doren (1992, pp. 273–274) deliberate on the use of spectacular natural environments as backdrops to the action in the likes of *Mad Max* (1979), *The Man from Snowy River* (1982), and "*Crocodile*" *Dundee* (1986). They argue that 'the struggle between Americans and the environment, and its subsequent conquering, may be an underlying motive for a quest to seek out the unconquered environments portrayed in Australian films' (p. 274). Both studies speak of a longing for a return to a pre-modern state.

These popular images of Australia have embedded themselves as photograph-like images into the imaginations of the individuals surveyed and interviewed for this report. Particular *ideas* about Australian lifestyle also circulate, and do so in similar ways to those reported by Jenkins (2003) in her study of the photographic behaviours and preferences of backpackers visiting Australia. She documents the tendencies for the visitors to ensure they have the Sydney Opera House, red dirt, pristine beaches and various marsupials in their photographic portfolio. Employing Urry's (2002) concept of the 'hermeneutic circle'—the tendency for individual tourists to prove they had really "been there" by photographing the famous images they have been exposed to—Jenkins describes 'the circles of representation' inherent to contemporary tourism experiences. Those returning from their overseas trips present these images and the accompanying stories to their various audiences at home, further reinforcing the collectively held, culturally instilled imaginaries of the distant place. In our case-study it is the *idea* of a relaxed, "laid-back" approach to life that Australians are purported to enjoy that is most clearly swirling around the representations of Australianness that are discussed in the following section.

Interrogating imaginaries

As already indicated the Australian Studies class from which the participants in this research were drawn has always included a significant proportion of study abroad students. The initial research was conducted in two stages, involving firstly a survey administered in class by Low immediately before Forsey began his first lecture. Low invited individuals to volunteer to participate in a follow-up interview by putting their contact details on a separate sheet. 77 individuals completed the survey, representing 76 percent of enrolled students. 44 of these respondents were from a North American university (30 from US, 14 from Canada). Of the 19 individuals later interviewed by Low, 11 were on exchange from North America.

The survey set three tasks:

1. "Use up to three words or phrases to describe Australia as you perceive it to be";
2. "Briefly describe the imagery that you most associate with Australia. In other words, when you think of Australia, what images come immediately to mind to you?"; and,
3. "Can you please briefly describe how you imagine the typical Australian? In other words, when you think of someone as Australian, what images or ideas come immediately to mind to you?"

The follow-up interviews, conducted within two weeks of the first survey, invited students to reflect upon the sources of the impressions of Australia they carried with them from their home nations.

Canvassing all of the interviewee responses would stretch the discussion too thinly. In the spirit of avoiding reducing the subjects' often exciting stories into atomistic quotes and isolated variables' (Kvale, 1996, p. 254), we focus initially on two individuals, who we call Ted and Mary. Both are Euro-Americans from middle class families. Each went to a North East US university and both arrived in Australia on study abroad programs at around the same time in early 2012. In these dimensions at least, they are typical enough representatives of the overall group of North American students.

Ted, 22, grew up in the American Midwest. His father is a lawyer and his mother an office worker with an insurance company. The Australian trip was his first away from "the Americas". The only other two countries he had visited were Canada and Mexico. When asked about what he knew about Australia before arriving there, he commented that everything came through the mass-media, particularly through Steve Irwin's, *The Crocodile Hunter*, and *Crocodile Dundee*.

As an anthropology major, Ted expressed interest in learning more about Aboriginal people and their culture. He was enrolled in a number of Aboriginal studies units; yet, in the interview he did not pursue any discussion of indigenous relationships in Australia. However, his descriptions of mainstream Australian cultural values would not be completely out of place in an anthropological portrait of a hunter-gather society. Contrary to earlier statements, Ted's vision of Australia was not exclusively formed from the mass media, as he called it. Friends who had recently returned to his home university following a study abroad term in Perth, described in glowing terms a "laid-back people" who were nowhere near as materialistic as Americans. This made a strong impression on Ted, who reported wanting to see a society that was "based on something more than getting as much as you possibly can".

As one of the world's leading share-owning nations (ASX, 2010), whose population live in some of the largest houses in the world (Southphommansane, 2011, p. 12), the idea that Australians are not particularly materialistic would be news to most. As to being "laid-back" and relaxed, to take one simple measure of this, on average Australians do work less hours than most other national groups in the OECD. However, the proportion of persons working more than 50 hours per week, is significantly higher than the OECD average (OECD, 2012). Perhaps Australia is not as happily, naively pre-modern as some might hope it to be.

Mary, 21 came from a similar social background to Ted. She grew up in New York and was attending a well-known North East US university. Mary's father works on Wall Street and her mother is, in Mary's words, 'a homemaker'. Both parents are university graduates. Mary originally wanted to travel to South America on exchange, but chose Australia because of concerns about the effects studying in a second language might have on her grades. Mary readily admitted to knowing very little about her second choice nation.

Identifying the sources of what she knew about Australia, proved difficult for Mary to address. Some of her cousins had reported doing a number of exciting, adventurous things when they visited, which certainly whetted Mary's interest. But that was about the limit of her personal experiences with Australia. According to Mary her university town was deeply conservative, and her conversations with others circled around national issues—the market, Wall Street and religion. 'Australia just seeps in once in a while, just in passing'. YouTube became the main source of information on her host-nation to be, exposing an inordinate number of "very large insects and exotic animals and stuff". It was not clear to Mary why she did not seek out other sources of information, but she did acknowledge that on the few occasions when those around her spoke of Australia they asked her about the dangerous creatures she would encounter. And that was it as far as she could remember.

Other interviewees mentioned a combination of factors influencing their choice of host nation. These included the fact that English is the official language, its apparent lack of development, its exoticness, its unique natural environment, and the promise of outdoor adventure. No interviewee chose Australia because of its academic reputation. For most, Australia is primarily a tourism destination; formal education is a lesser priority. The survey responses discussed below reflect these observations in some interesting ways.

Student Imaginings of Australia

Fig. 1 is a word cloud. It depicts word frequency data by emphasizing the most popular words and phrases captured in the survey. Using the qualitative data analysis software, NVivo, word frequency

Table 1

Part A – International Student Response to Question 2: Can you please briefly describe the imagery that you most associate with Australia?. Part B – Coding of Initial Responses Into Selected Categories.

Rank	Category (c) or Word (w) used	Count
<i>Part A</i>		
1	kangaroo/s (w)	33
2	Beaches (w)	21
3	dangerous fauna (sharks, crocodiles, animal attacks, poisonous animals etc.) (c)	21
4	desert/arid imagery (c)	20
5	Other, non-dangerous native animals (except for koalas and kangaroos) (c)	20
6	outback (w)	19
7	koala/s (w)	16
8	surfing (w)	16
9	Aboriginal people or artefacts (e.g. didgeridoo) (c)	18
10	other ocean imagery (c)	12
11	sun (w)	12
12	Sydney Opera House (w)	11
13	Ayers Rock/Uluru (w)	11
14	Great Barrier Reef (w)	10
15	sports imagery other than surfing	8
Category #2		Count
<i>Part B</i>		
	Australian Wildlife	90
	Ocean and beach related images (incl. surfing)	49
	Desert/arid or outback imagery.	39
	Key landmarks, sites	32
	Aboriginal People or Artefacts	18
	Sun	12

in close to equal numbers (Table 1—Part A). If the categories are further condensed (Table 1—Part B), we see that after images of unique Australian wildlife, oceans and beaches were the next most likely to be recalled by students.

Ted went for the kangaroo when asked about his most prevalent images of Australia: ‘it just pops into my head every single time’. Other students noted geographical vastness and various landscapes, including ‘the outback’ ‘beaches’, ‘deserts’ and ‘wilderness’. Mary explained her choice of ‘outback’ by referring to the TV commercials for “the Outback Steakhouse”, a chain of Australian themed restaurants. A number of US students highlighted these advertisements, describing how they open with the background drone of a didgeridoo accompanying a four wheel drive car as it is driven around the outback, arriving finally at the ultimate goal of the steakhouse. Mary reflected on how these sorts of images are often stripped of context before reaching their audience, pointing out how “we’re not given the distinction between what is *Australian* and what is *Aboriginal* culture, you know, what’s coming from where? . . . It’s *all* just Australian”.

The backgrounded didgeridoo is emblematic of the hidden presence of Aboriginal people in the North American imaginary captured in this research (see Waitt, 1997, p. 51). The only time Aboriginal people were mentioned multiple times in the survey was in response to this second question, as an *image*, an impression, of the nation. The next question asking about ‘typical Australians’ (Fig. 2) drew only one response denoting Aboriginality in some way.

The Typical Australian

The most frequent responses to question 3 were “friendly”, “athletic”, “tanned”, and “laid-back”. The sun appears to be the main determinant of the Australian lifestyle, with the bush and beach the main arenas in which this life is “lived”. Two main archetypes are evident in the responses to this question, “the surfer” and “the bushman”, the former linked clearly to the beach, while the latter was

Walk through London or Florence, suggests Lewin (2009, p. xvii), and it is obvious these cities are as littered with chain stores as any American city. The same applies to Perth, Sydney, Auckland, Johannesburg or any other metropolis in any settler nation. As editor of an important text on the practice of study abroad in the USA, the point Lewin is making is that,

'study abroad's search for "authentic culture" has tried to deny globalization—read mass production—either by isolating students in a mythical historical bubble in larger cities or by taking them to ever more remote locations, from smaller towns to rural settings in Europe, to more exotic lands'.

Students are set up for the discovery of the sorts of 'magical past' that is available through this mythic 'authentic culture', where 'culture becomes the end in and of itself rather than a means for understanding its relationship to the global forces surrounding it'.

Let us be clear; holidays are essentially 'experiences in fantasy' (Dann, 1976, cited in Salazar, 2010, p. 79). As Forsey has commented often to Australian Studies students in unpacking the mythological representations of Australia, tourism marketers are not going to entice visitors to a country framed as a grand epicentre of global capitalism. Slogans such as "come to one of the most urbanised nations on the planet" will not work in promoting Australia as a tourist destination. We have already highlighted the importance of "othering" a place and its people in creating desire for this other place; homogenisation is unlikely to be effective. As already pointed out, Australia is one of a number of nations benefiting from the tourist dollars generated by promoting itself as spatially and temporally removed from the allegedly grim grind of the industrialized "North".

The 2008 Tourism Australia campaign captured this approach well. It developed alongside Luhrmann's epic outback adventure film *Australia*, a mythic portrayal of British aristocrats and native drovers—both Aboriginal and Settler—their struggles with each other, and the land. Nick Baker, the Executive General Manager of Tourism Australia, described the use of short-film-like stories depicting stressed 'contemporary people [from New York and Shanghai] ... disconnected from their loved ones and their true selves, who find their centre and their release in Australia' (Tourism Australia, 2008). The advertisement used the child actor at the centre of the action in *Australia*, who, dressed only in a loincloth, magically called the anxious adults to various places of relaxation in the bush and on the coast. Baker's observations about *contemporary* people finding their true self captures the earlier mentioned conceptual tool of the 'temporal slope' (Fabian, 1983), a structure which promises to carry individuals back to how they were meant to be, before the industrial "rat race" took over. The effects of this sort of time-sloping are apparent in much of what the overseas students had to say to us. They too wanted to find an unhurried, laid-back people, simple, lean and friendly. That these folk are also white probably adds to the charm.

Australian historian Richard White (1981) was correct in pointing out that the "real Australia" projected by various national image-makers over several generations does not *really* exist. Like any destination, Australia as a tourist-scape is best understood as a set of ideas that we "carry around in our heads" (p. 13). Implicit to White's analysis is the idea that the projections of the "real Australia" are all too readily, and often unreflectively, internalised by their audiences. Our research findings indicate a strong correspondence between the imagery of Australia put into circulation by national image-makers, and the imaginaries inscribed into, and recalled by, these student traveller-tourists. The shared conceptual maps depicted in the previous section are consistent with Greiner's (2001) portrait of a media-scape focused on a national innocence, on a people and land that is naïve, lucky, safe and relaxed. It also corresponds with Riley & Van Doren's (1992) description of a film-scape emphasizing the myth of wilderness and a population of uncomplicated 'natives'.

We noted earlier our commitment to practice theory, focusing on the cultured, structured agency that is part of our every living moment (Forsey, 2010). We are highly sympathetic to moving beyond the kinds of passivity Månsson (2011) claims is evident in 'circles of representation' analyses of tourism experiences (c.f. Jenkins, 2003). Structured polysemy, marked by the 'mutually negotiated relationship between consumers and producers' (Salazar, 2012, p. 867) is part of the lived reality of tourism practice and, clearly, we need to keep developing practice analyses of the tourism field. Hall (1973) locates consumer responses on a continuum from full acceptance of the ideas encoded in media messages to oppositional challenges of these messages, attributing the various responses to the power located at the centre of production processes. However, as already highlighted, it is not just

the relativities of power evident in all social relations at issue here; matters of social and geographic positioning, as well as simpler matters of opportunities and necessity, are also significant.

As the highly educated daughters and sons of Wall Street financiers, corporate managers, doctors, lawyers and other professionals, who have experienced some of the best of what a North American liberal education has to offer (Lewin, 2009), the research participants cited here are not devoid of cultural power. Yet, in this examination of this particular type of North American media audience, we see few signs of opposition, contestation or questioning of the dominant representations of Australia. Rather, the type of reception we have detailed reflects an acceptance of the hegemonic discourses produced by various image-makers. There is little by way of a dialectical co-production at play here.

But why should there be? The ideas circulating about Australia hardly required active interrogation by North Americans living their day-to-day lives. Shifts away from the dominant images of Australia occurred only when the students began to re-organise their ideas about the continent in response to their changing relationship with it. Sometimes the orthodoxies of the co-production thesis cause researchers to overemphasize the agency of their subjects. When a well-educated Canadian student comments that in coming to Australia she was expecting more tumbleweeds and desert, she has been duped, a duping carried out mostly by Australians with the express aim of attracting her, among others, to the continent.

The selling of the sorts of fantasies we report on here is possible precisely because reception of media forms by individuals is relational and situational. In this case, individual positioning on the continuum from opposition to acceptance of media messages is less about power relations and more about location and the ways this affects the need and the opportunity to engage meaningfully and/or critically with these messages. When this location shifts, either physically through travel, or conceptually via education, transformational shifts are possible. Salazar (2012) suggests a moral role for tourism scholars and educators in transforming stubbornly dominant images of variously “othered” people that tend to temporally “freeze” people into a historical period that is not their own. The cultural phenomenon that is study abroad, as a project aimed at shifting students’ physical and conceptual positioning in relation to a host nation, offers close to an ideal “laboratory” for tourism scholars interested in this transformative pursuit.

Transforming Tourism Imaginaries

Student traveller/tourists are significant group for tourism scholars to consider. Recent figures show that student traveller/tourists to Australia comprised 7 percent of all international visitors, bringing an estimated (Aust) \$4 billion to the market (Tourism Australia, 2007). Meanwhile in North America Lewin (2009) documents a rapidly growing interest among students, parents and university administrators in the internationalization of higher education. Recently the US congress agreed to the goal of one million students studying abroad annually by 2017 (p. xiii). The numbers alone should convince tourism scholars that this is a cultural phenomenon worth studying.

To date, studies of the practice and effects of study abroad are not only rare (Doerr, 2013), they are opportunistic and idiosyncratic (McLeod & Wainwright, 2009), this study being a case in point (see also Forsey et al., 2012; Asaoka & Yano, 2009; Doerr, 2013; Freestone & Geldens, 2008; Gibson, 1998; Woolf, 2007). There is a growing concern with the pedagogy of study abroad emerging from a recognition that “going there: and “being there” does not guarantee an adequate education (Slimbach, 2010; Vande Berg, Paige, & Lou, 2012). We need to know more about what students are learning in and through their experiences overseas. The rapid uptake of interest in the internationalization of higher education almost demands more systematic research than is currently evident.

The fact that students travel to a wide and diverse range of places, that they offer a relatively controlled population sample, driven by similar manifest and latent motivations and functions and are subject to similar sorts of interventions in their arenas of practice, suggests a highly productive research field. That they are representative of a generational view of the world, adds extra piquancy. There is much to be learned about tourism imaginaries and ensuing practices in these “laboratories”.

For activist researchers, study abroad offers a more ideal setting than most for testing out the ideas and theories aimed at transforming ill-informed imaginaries. Study abroad students are obliged it

seems to better understand the places and the people they visit (see Freestone & Geldens, 2008; Nyaupane, Teye, & Paris, 2008). They are expected to develop the attitudes, knowledge and skills necessary for enhanced participation in global marketplaces, and/or helping solve problems of global significance (Lewin, 2009, p. xiv). Achieving this requires significant transformation of the pedagogy of internationalization emanating from universities. Study abroad should be pushing students beyond stereotypes and fantasies of place and people towards experiencing and comprehending the day-to-day realities of their host place and nation. Transforming tourism imaginaries requires a commitment to understanding what is in a globalised world, rather than pursuing what is *different*. This is the stuff of a barely articulated cultural pedagogy for which tourism scholars have much to offer.

That Australia hardly needs egalitarian intervention in these processes adds an interesting dimension to the usefulness of this particular study. The overall economic and social equality shared between the students and their host society allows us to look more calmly at the effects of so-called “false imaginaries” than we might otherwise do. Australia continues to benefit from the simplistic othering that has taken place in the pursuit of tourist dollars, and, for the White Euro-Australian majority at least, the effects of this process are barely discernable, helping make the issues pursued more conceptual, and less emotional, than they might otherwise be.

This research helps inform our local pedagogical practices, enabling us to join with our students in pursuing a more rigorous understanding of cultural processes and for jumping ‘full force’ into the mass culture of globalization (Lewin, 2009). It opens up conceptual spaces for all of us to think more productively about how this actually functions. Such understandings are key to unlocking the ‘tenacious tourism imaginaries’ identified by Salazar (2012), and which are amply demonstrated in this study. Replacements are to be found in more nuanced imagery delivered by more critical deconstruction and new well-grounded theoretical discourses that are better suited to the forms of global (and ethical) cultural engagement that is so clearly expected from this generation of mobile, educated young people.

Towards the end of his initial interview, Ted observed that he is no longer “a blank slate”:

I've already attended two lectures. It's supposed to change the way that we think about Australia. I guess we have been discussing stereotypes and symbols of Australians, but just the fact that I already talked to an Australian student. And I know that my view of Australia is severely skewed. Just talking about Crocodile Dundee and Steve Irwin, I was kinda like... I know I'm wrong.

Student traveller-tourists are good to think with, allowing ready enough access to ways of interrogating the tourist imaginary as a dynamic, changeable practice. Circular representations of cultural practices are simultaneously useful and limiting as the links between producers and consumers of touristic imagery is never simply, or purely circular. A sense of place among tourists is never ‘a silent text’; it is generated through a tourism practice that is derived from ‘engagement with the physicality of the site’ (Chronis, 2012, p. 1800). Student-travellers can help demonstrate the pitfalls of cultural (mis)representation with which the tourist industry is replete. At the same time they can highlight the potential for travel to challenge and reshape these same cultural products, allowing for the repatriation of fresh insights through the next stages of the swirling, spiralling tourism circuits. All of which awaits further and more systematic research projects and more knowing forms of pedagogical engagement.

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