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### The Tyranny of Home

For many American students, the borders between the notions of nation and home are blurry, if not nonexistent. Nonetheless, home is securely connected to concrete and distinct elements of place, person and culture. As a result, when students study abroad, the host country is necessarily defined as not home. Even the language used commonly in the field of education abroad, that of the host country and host institution versus the home country and home institution, emphasizes the transient nature of the stay and the role of student as visitor. Establishing this false dichotomy between home and host does our students a disservice.

Benedict Anderson's work on nations as "imagined communities" focuses on the constructed nature of our patriotic allegiances and arbitrary borders. If nations are imagined communities, who is to say what constitutes a nation? In a world where identities are complex and layered, and global movements increasingly common, one might then belong to multiple communities, and be a citizen of many "nations." Since nation and home are closely connected, and the study abroad experience emphasizes this relationship, the concept of home becomes implicated in this network of imagined communities. Home, like nation, is a constructed reality. Our students, bound by this limiting concept and encouraged by American culture to understand home and away as antonyms, are likely to cling to home as a comprehensible and immutable concept during this time of upheaval.

We must shatter the tyranny of home, exposing home as an imagined space that is specific to the individual and can be carried from place to place and re-imagined in myriad ways. Home becomes then a vehicle for possibility and integrates the other, the host country, and the cultural elements, habits and values that resonate for the student. This changed perspective on home allows the individual student to more easily acknowledge a multi-faceted understanding of nation as a web of overlapping communities. If we begin at home, we might succeed in disrupting our borders, the divisions that exist between countries and individuals.