

AFS RESEARCH THROUGH 1975

All of the hypotheses that have been tested and all the systems of the AFS organization that have been researched cannot be reported in a few pages. Topics range from the number of applications received in the office on any given date to the effects of foreign exchange students on the population of Cook County, Minnesota, in 1968. Methods range from folder reviews to attitude instruments. Some reports present univariate data in raw form while others intercorrelate all factors possible within the study. Our files contain "quick and dirty" studies, some based on half-guess and half-data inputs, as well as refined statistical studies presented as PHD theses.

The purpose of the paper, therefore, is not to give a complete summary of AFS research but rather to provide a sense of the breadth of this research, to provide a summary of the major hypotheses which have been explored, to point out some of the methods used in the past, and to present any hypotheses which past research indicates would be of interest for future study.

All research materials from the last few years have been collected from various departments and are centralized in the Organizational Development Department for reference. Some of the materials were reviewed in 1971 by Karen Eisele or in 1974 by Craig Brown. This report incorporates their observations but also includes a number of projects not previously reviewed.

The Nature of AFS Research

Research on AFS falls into three categories: (1) Reports on the operational systems of AFS, or control research. These are not bound to specific hypotheses but rather present snapshot surveys of, for example, the number of applications received in the current year versus the previous year, or the number of family changes in a specific program. Although these control statistics often provide the impetus for further research into a problem which they may bring to light, they are not the major subject presently under review.

More directly addressed in this paper are (2) small-scale surveys, and (3) full-scale research projects. Small scale surveys, which are carried out periodically, are rarely based on specific hypotheses and explore, for example, the life expectancy of chapters or the socio-economic background of Winter Program candidates. Full-scale projects are more esoteric and specific and tend generally to pursue problems with much more sophisticated methodology, often cross-correlating a number of variables.

It should be realized that each of the projects undertaken fulfilled a need at a specific time. Operational needs and esoteric or academic needs resulted in projects differing significantly in their validity, reliability, and sophistication. It would be unfair to judge the projects surveyed here as "good" or "bad", for their applicability and allowable error depend upon the nature of the questions they were designed to answer. It is for the person actually using the historical research to interpret the data to add a perspective to the problem he is currently considering.

Major Topical Areas of Research

Results of past research have been grouped into thirteen categories. Categories I-VII reflect program processes, following the normal flow of the year for the scholarship program. Categories VIII-X concentrate on U.S. field units, international field units, and the internal workings of the office respectively. Area XI looks at the external environment within which AFS operates, and Category XII concerns itself with the finances of the organization, although this summary includes no financial data specific to the Treasurer's office. Finally, Category XIII presents a short bibliography of the books written about the AFS experience. The Appendix displays a listing of the projects falling into each of these areas.

I. RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

A. Areas Researched

Within this area we would expect to find reports dealing with potential sources of participants and/or a description of the participants who have been involved in the program. Theoretically, we would have sixteen areas which the research could cover.

	Family-Student-School-Chapter	
WP	x	x
AA	x	
DP		
MNP		

To date the research falls only into the three areas checked with an X above. More research on the Americans Abroad program students may have been done abroad, but we have no evidence of such projects in our files.

B. Major Topics and Findings

Research on Winter Program families has probably been the most extensive. The Family Application Survey for the Program Years, 1968-69 and 1973-74 (6)* shows the demographics of Winter Program families, their motivation for applying, and the restrictions which families have made on placement. From this survey, for example, we know that applying families tend to be larger than the national average, that they live in relatively large houses (which may indicate a perceived need for sufficient housing as a program prerequisite), and that they tend more often to come from the professional or highly educated circles of American society. The profile of the family has changed only slightly over the last five years and includes only slightly more blue collar workers. This survey also questions the families as to their motivation, at least in retrospect.

A second area of research on Winter Program families has been directed at the difficulties in finding families in the United States. In a number of projects (3,4,5,8) this is cited as a cause for poor chapter performance, but very little

* numbers in parentheses refer to the specific projects listed in the appendix.

research has been done on reasons behind difficulties in family finding; a subjective list of difficulties was cited in the Rep Conference Evaluations, 1974 (3) which indicates that family structure, economic problems, and the perception of risk in taking a student may be influencing a family's willingness to host. Currently we are undertaking a study with the help of an outside consultant which will provide more detailed information about the perceived difficulties of hosting.

Research into the sources of WP candidates also has received cursory treatment in the past. The data, however, is complete only for European countries for the year 1970 (1). Comparisons were made between the Winter Program student populations and the comparable age-group populations within specific countries using various measure, and results indicate that students chosen for the Winter Program do not necessarily represent a cross-section of the population. In some countries the distribution by socio-economic levels differs significantly from that of the general population. No specific trends emerge, however, as it is impossible to compare the projects on a country by country basis because of the different definition of variables used in the projects.

Americans Abroad families were studied in Italy in 1970 using a psychosociological study of professional design (2). Differences were found between families that host school program students and those that hosted summer program students (although the extent of these differences was not assessed statistically), and recommendations were made to concentrate family finding activities in southern Italy and in medium or small towns, etc. As mentioned above, similar research unknown to us might exist in other countries.

C. Research Needs

The demographics of families in the U.S. have been sufficiently treated but could now be broken down into partial tables and cross-correlated. Such an effort would allow us to focus more exactly on the types of families we are involving in AFS, delineated by section of the country, size of urban environment, and motivations typical of each group. Such information would be of specific value to chapters faced with family finding in the U.S. and might encourage parallel research in overseas countries. This is an esoteric area but one which might become valuable in the future.

Similar information collected abroad would provide a better target group focus for family finding in specific countries. Though such projects need not be so energetic as the Italian survey mentioned above, basic demographics collected from past files and/or current applications would be of value.

Beyond the demographics of families and students investigation into the psychographics and motivation patterns of families and students would provide more precise recruiting tools and would allow AFS to develop more appropriate material for use in placement, selection, and orientation to meet participants' needs.

Finally, having established that family finding difficulties often lead to the dissolution of chapters, research into the causes of these difficulties (done on a basis of first-hand knowledge) would seem to be the highest priority. Specifically, we need to know whether the deficiencies in family finding stem from lack of knowledge on family finding and/or from difficulties arising from environmental influences.

II. SELECTION AND PLACEMENT

A. Areas Researched

	Family-Student-School-Chapter
WP	x
AA	x
DP	
MNP	

B. Major Topics and Findings

Of the ten reports in these two areas, nine concern themselves with selection. The diversity of European candidates for the Winter Program has been studied in several countries (3, results reported above). In Denmark and Austria information exists on the association between the initial ratings, final ratings, and final gradings (2,8). In both countries, the correlation between initial selection and final selection ratings were extremely high. Some attempts have also been made to see if the candidates that are actually placed represent a cross-section of those who apply. There are, however, no studies of statistical significance in this area, excepting the study made in Austria in 1974 which showed no significant differences between the two groups with regard to variables such as sex, grade in school, urban/rural distributions, and financial status.

Young Pai carried out a specific study in 1967 using three hundred students from all world areas going to all United States regions and concluded that performance in the U.S. schools was most dependent on the cultural distance of the home country from the U.S. (1), i.e. the greater the cultural difference, the poorer the school performance.

The second area of selection which has been researched deals mostly with the number of applications at each step in the selection process and the number of man hours used to complete these processes (1). Selection and placement in 1974 required around 20,000 man hours of staff time to process 4,700 applications, or 4¼ hours per application. An additional 20,000 man hours of volunteer time was calculated to have been spent on the same processes.

Feedback on the selection process in the U.S. was offered by an Italian study of one year's AAs., indicating a wide variety in the completeness and applicability of screening methods used in the U.S. (5); 33% were said to have had no personal interview at the chapter level, 25% had no personal interview at all. The appropriate size of the interview committee and the length of interview were also questioned as well as the necessity of discussing family life during the interview. Admittedly, the sample was very small and research ex post facto.

The only study directly related to placement was completed in 1973 using Americans Abroad as the subject group for a random placement experiment (6). Unfortunately, the sample was insufficient to provide any statistical analysis, and the study was contaminated by a previous knowledge on the part of some of the key persons dealing with students. A number of ethical questions further complicated the validity of the study.

C. Further Research Topics

The necessity of evaluating the effect of selection and placement on the experience is a comment often found in the research contained in this section. Since no appropriate measures have yet been applied to determine the "success" of the experience, the evaluation of the procedures used remains incomplete. Thus it seems appropriate to contact experts in the field of psychology and sociology - in the international field especially - to find measures for evaluating the AFS experience. Were this information available, evaluation of selection and placement might be completed and further reductions in the time spent on these processes might be realized.

No research has been conducted on the selection of families; in fact, the need to "exclude" families through selection has not arisen, for families are still the limiting factor. An evaluation of the necessity and appropriateness of the family selection criteria currently in use might be appropriate if this need is felt.

III. ORIENTATION

A. Areas Researched

	Family-Student-School-Chapter
WP	x
AA	
DP	
MNP	

B. Major Topics and Findings

Only one study deals specifically with orientation and consists of a collection of comments by twenty-one Australian returnees on the effect and adequacy of their orientation (1). Information on overseas orientation has been collected also at Gateways from both Americans Abroad and Winter Program students, but no analysis of that material has been undertaken. Questions included on general surveys for the whole program year tend to be answered with an indication that orientation is "sufficient", but no specific analysis has been made of the applicability of the content of orientation.

C. Further Research Topics

Orientation is an integral part of all AFS programs. WPs are oriented before they leave, and they usually participate in a language and orientation camp upon their arrival overseas. Evaluation of the goals of these sessions and of how well these goals are being met (along with suggestions for alternate measures) is a high priority item for control research in the coming years.

Although some attention is paid to families, schools, and communities, there exists only fragmentary evidence of any evaluative research concerning the effectiveness of their orientation. Materials should be gathered and reported to establish where orientation is taking place, what it includes, and what the participants think of such orientation. Given such information more concrete orientation materials, specifically for families can be developed. The families in turn should help build rapport with the "other" participants in AFS, thereby increasing their involvement in the organization.

IV. ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

A. Areas Researched

	Family	Student	School	Chapter
WP		X		
AA				
DP				
MNP				

B. Major Topics and Findings

As part of a larger study conducted by Dr. Kale in 1967 (1), Indian students were asked whether they had participated in extra-curricular activities during their year abroad. A significant number of those surveyed were involved in multiple extra-curricular activities (5 activities on the average per student), the greatest participation being in AFS clubs, school government, and sports.

In the 1974 WP Evaluation Survey (2) one item was directed toward enrichment activities, and it was found that nearly half the students participated in some type of AFS enrichment experience, such as short-term exchange.

C. Further Research Topics

There have been no specific studies dealing with enrichment activities for Americans Abroad participants' families, schools or communities, although one would suspect that such activities are taking place. Again the effects of these enrichment activities on the program are difficult to assess; certain types of "enrichment activities" may indeed be serving to prevent counselling problems from becoming severe, but the actual impact of "enrichment" has yet to be explored.

V. COUNSELLING

A. Areas Researched

	Family	Student	School	Chapter
WP		x		x
AA				
DP				
MNP				

B. Major Research Topics and Findings

Hinrichs' Study of Student Family Moves 1961-62 (1) provides the number of moves by geographical area in the United States but does not delve into the reasons for moves. The WP Evaluation Survey 1973-74 (2) provides some information about the perceived quality of counselling in the field, but this material is extremely subjective. Returns indicate a discrepancy between the chapters' and the families' concepts of adequate support from the chapter. Around 45% of all chapters felt they were giving "much support" to families and students, while families judged only 33% of the chapters as providing "much support".

Statistics are currently tabulated on the number of moves in each country, and a rough estimate is made of the reasons for these moves, but this material has not been analysed in its entirety.

C. Further Research Topics

From a research standpoint, the contribution of counselling to the success of the program is an untouched area; we may well question the value of doing research on counselling alone, for it is integrally connected to all other parts of the program.

VI. DEBRIEFING AND REORIENTATION

A. Areas Researched

	Family	Student	School	Chapter
WP		x		
AA				
DP				
MNP				

B. Major Topics and Findings, Further Research Areas

The only existing survey in this section, Lurie-Barker on Reorientation, (1), unfortunately does not provide a representative enough sample to make any definite statements on the extent of reorientation or on its content. In the United States the reorientation process has not received any attention, specifically with regard to family reorientation or the effects of a student's departure on the community (either in the U.S. or abroad).

VI. PROGRAM EVALUATION

A. Areas Researched

	Family	Student	School	Chapter
WP	x	x	x	x
AA		x		
DP				
MNP				

B. Major Topics and Findings

Although program evaluation is the most extensively explored area in AFS research, few studies address themselves to evaluation per se; just as scientists must construct their knowledge of the universe by observing many celestial bodies individually, so too are we limited to making a composite picture out of a variety of studies.

Control research, i.e. end of the year evaluation, has been undertaken on a yearly basis. In the research files we have definite evidence of analysis for the 1970 and 1974 Winter Program (15,23). In both of these years students' perceptions of the program were overwhelmingly positive as were their opinions of the program systems. In 1974 families, chapters, and schools also were surveyed and similar patterns found. In all cases there were occasional comments on areas to be improved, but there seem to be no consistently negative attitudes toward the program.

Winter Program returnees have been the subject of research in a number of European countries (2,8,17,19) as well as in the 1972 Survey of WP Returnees From the Program Years 1947 Through 1963 (22). This major study, based on a 10% survey representing 14 countries, gives us a profile of the educational goals, career involvements, international involvement, and impact of the program on the returnees personally. The purpose of such returnee surveys has usually been both evaluative and projective; it has been found that AFS returnees tend to involve themselves in teaching and international business to an extent much above what would be expected of the general populations in their countries. A number of returnees also provide excellent assistance in fundraising and propagation of the AFS programs at high levels within their countries.

A third major area in program evaluation has been attitude changes of participants. These studies are necessarily more specific in their design and work with much smaller groups, e.g. Norwegian students in 1970 or WP students in Missouri in 1967. These attitude surveys (3,5,7,11,13,14,18), using a variety of instruments developed by psychologists and sociologists usually indicate that students gain a better understanding of their host culture, although attitudes may change positively or negatively within specific areas. As an example, it is concluded in The American Teenager and Europe that cultural awareness increases for American students in Europe, while their confidence in political systems decreases. Stewart also did research on attitude change for New Zealand returnees using conservatism as the indicator and found that the AFS students tend to be more conservative than the control group he used. They also tend to be less ethno-centric and more conventional compared to the control. AFS returnees in New Zealand were also more theoretical and less social (in which sense the survey didn't say).

The use of attitude tests as a measure of program success has meant a number of difficulties in all studies. Obviously attitudes are affected by things other than the AFS experience, and it is also extremely difficult to find a closely-matched control group with which to work. While interesting in the population studied, these studies of specific groups cannot be used to indicate attitude changes in students as a whole. Studies to date indicate that cultural awareness (by whatever definition the researcher may use) tends to increase, but other attitudes are affected in a variety of ways.

C. Further Research Needs

Appropriate evaluation of the program remains a "sticky wicket". As mentioned in the beginning of this section, evaluations necessarily cover only one or two facets of the program. Evaluation of control systems, using the annual end-of-year evaluations, should continue with the results being distributed to those dealing with the program; this type of survey will remain on a superficial level (since only questionnaires are used), but these could be enhanced by breaking down questions according to geographical areas or any number of other criteria.

Research in attitude change as measure of program success should continue on a sporadic basis. As was mentioned under Selection and Placement, the development of a standard measure or measures acceptable to all parties involved in evaluating the experience would assist greatly in the comparative assessment of program units both in the U.S. and abroad.

VIII. U.S. FIELD UNIT

Studies of the difficulties in expanding field systems have been undertaken in the U.S. (4,5,10). The three major reasons cited for these difficulties are: family finding, fund raising and maintenance of volunteer support. As would be expected, the impact of these factors varies greatly throughout the United States, but no partial tables have been constructed to pinpoint geographical areas which are experiencing specific difficulties.

The office staff has been surveyed as to its views on the field, and it indicates similar difficulties (6). A significant aid in understanding the field was the preparation of a large map showing the distribution of structural systems of the various field units and the strength of those systems (by structure) in specific geographic areas(7). From this we know that 87% of all chapters are covered by a volunteer field representative. Of these reps, 40% are considered excellent, 33% adequate, and the remaining 25% are either poor or have strengths in particular areas only.

One study exists on the longevity of chapters (4) indicating that active chapter life is 6 years on the average. Hosting statistics are brought up in various studies; the average chapter seems to host 3-4 WPs during its lifetime and to send one AA.

B. Further Research Topics

More representative data on the field, especially in the areas of chapter composition and activity, is needed. Ideally, we should be able to construct a "demographic" profile of the U.S. field, including membership, types of local structures, hosting statistics, etc. Given such a profile, it would be possible to construct a representative but small sample which could be readily surveyed to assess changes in the external influences on the field, for use as a pilot population for new ideas and, in general, to offer a rapid feed back mechanism of the program. Thus far we have often had to rely on second-hand information about the field; such a representative group would offer first-hand feedback.

No research has been undertaken to isolate those factors most influencing chapter development under specific circumstances. Though such a project would fall into "wish book" thinking, the implications for building alternate models for starting and maintaining chapters make such a possibility at least worthy of future consideration.

IX. INTERNATIONAL FIELD UNITS.

A. Major Topics and Results

The World Survey of AFS Resources (6), conducted in 1973, provides the bulk of the information on international field units and contains material on the size of returnee membership, the sources of income for national units, and the legal status of about 75% of AFS's countries. This material is in raw form but will provide us with a base line for comparison in the future.

Other material which could fall into this area has been described under program evaluation, namely the current careers and education of returnees.

B. Further Research Needs

Much of the research accomplished in the U.S. would be valuable to overseas national organizations as well; numerous studies have undoubtedly been done abroad of which we have no record in our files. Specifically, research is needed on the types of local structures abroad, the membership of such structures, the success of these structures in dealing with specific circumstances. From such a project would come, just as in U.S. field development, models which would be applied in various ways throughout the international. It also might be interesting to cross-correlate a number of factors such as size of program with type of structure or increase in program with type of structure, etc.

A survey of trends in the international field seems even more essential. Although each individual is acutely aware of the happenings in specific areas, a composite picture on paper for the international structure is missing.

X. INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

Most of the material for this section is contained in the AFS Planning Workbook, consisting of those reports on the office systems. Again, much more information may exist in particular departments which would give us a better picture of systems operations within AFS.

XI. EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Although numerous articles, books and studies could be included in this area, our files contain only three studies which give us a feeling for the world "outside AFS". A 1968 paper by Rowena Compton provides a descriptive analysis of AFS, YFU, ICYE, and EIL, citing the advantages, disadvantages, and unique features of each program, but this remains purely in the descriptive realm (1). A study using YFU students in 1969 provides information which suggests that participation in YFU improves attitudes towards minority and ethnic groups (2), but we have no information for comparison with AFS. The Santya Paul Duggal Evaluation of Outcome of Interna-

tional Exchange Programs (2) gives a very superficial picture of the impact of exchange student presence in a geographically defined area but offers little additional information which could be used to help us improve our approach in the field.

XII. ORGANIZATIONAL FINANCE

A. Major Topics and Results

(NB This report does not concern itself with materials developed or used by the Treasurer.)

Though data exists in various forms throughout the research files, a composite picture of domestic and international local fundraising has not been presented in report form. Results from countries in Europe (1,2) indicate funds in amounts up to \$28,000 are raised locally every year in the larger European countries, but we do not have complete data in our files.

Fundraising in the U.S. was reported to be \$1,700 per chapter per year (3), but this survey was based on a very small sample.

B. Further Research Needs

A survey giving a composite picture of the sources and amounts of local fundraising does exist and is being updated. For international use, a similar survey would provide a "benchmark" against which individual countries could measure their efforts and would provide additional fundraising ideas.

XIII. OUTSIDE LITERATURE ABOUT AFS

Books about AFS include a history of the organizational development (1), a description of the methods used in the program (2), and two novels reflecting the experiences of AFS students during their years abroad (3,4).

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

This research on AFS leaves us with a variety of perspectives on the organization. We have, at least in my opinion, a great deal of univariate information. Research priorities therefore lie not with increasing the breadth of the research but with increasing its practical impact by using the data more effectively.

This is not to say, however, that the complete breadth of research has been explored. More information is needed on the demographics and psychographics of field units, for example. In a number of areas we seem to lack the family or community perspective on the program although we would need more money, patience, and care in choosing a sample than we do for surveying students, a group which we can survey often in its totality with relative ease. We are slowly reaching the limits of univariate studies of AFS, and these need be repeated only for purposes of comparison or further sophistication.

We will soon need information on new programs such as the Domestic Program, which is only three years old and until now not large enough to warrant research. We can assume, however, that the same questions that have arisen concerning the Winter Program and Americans Abroad will need to be answered for the Domestic Program, and here we can learn from the past. Research undertaken should be more than univariate, as the marginal cost of adding additional variables for cross-correlation will benefit us in the long run.

Additional ideas and needs most probably exist throughout the organization. We must not only commit ourselves to "cleaning up" the research needs from the historical perspective but also devote a large part of our research for the coming year to helping persons dealing directly with the program to gather data needed for decision making. The real benefit of research to AFS comes not from esoteric projects of academic interest but from information valid for setting goals and forming action plans. For this reason we would expect to spend 95% of our time on individual projects designed to help us pinpoint those areas most in need of corporate attention. This is not to deny an interest in adding to the general body of knowledge concerning voluntarism or the necessity of exploring further the effects of the program on its participants; it is rather to realistically assess our research resources.

Research Resources

Internal research offers us the most controllable and rapid approach. Its limitations are the sophistication of our research staff and the difficulty of handling large amounts of data without the assistance of mechanical or electronic data processing systems. For this reason we can undertake only projects with carefully chosen, small samples and must limit ourselves to intercorrelating a minimal amount of data.

External sources provide us with greater data processing capabilities and more sophisticated treatment of the data. They, for a price, can also be controllable and rapid, but we as a non-profit organization cannot invest large sums of money in such projects without the guarantee of an adequate return, which is seldom guaranteed. A source of free outside help might be universities or groups dealing in areas related to AFS. Here we face, however, possible conflict in the goals of the research and the deadlines not being in our control.

We can conclude, then, that realities dictate an approach to research which differs very little from that of the past. Research which is not paramount to the continuing operation of the organization should be undertaken by more academically oriented outside sources. We benefit from this type of research and are glad to be party to it, but we cannot devote the time necessary to oversee the complete project. Internal research can be undertaken on organizational projects, for which it must be decided at the outset if (a) the sophistication of the research design and (b) the data processing capabilities of the organization are sufficient to provide the information needed within an appropriate form and time frame.

The direction of such internal research should be based on a consensus of the needs felt by different departments within the organization. Thus, the first step in formulating internal research priorities will be always to survey the needs of the various departments.