Introduction:
A Virtual Issue on Diversity and Inclusion in Education Abroad

Eduardo Contreras, Jr.
University of Portland

Lily López-McGee
Howard University

David Wick
Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey

Tasha Willis
California State University, Los Angeles

As guest editors of the first "virtual issue" of *Frontiers*, we step into this brave new world with gratitude for the opportunity to reflect on three critical realities of our field and to offer a virtual collection of writing from the annals of *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*. Before introducing our curated virtual collection of 11 articles, we offer the realities in which we operate.

First, there is the reality that the topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion have been largely neglected by the field prior to the twenty-first century.[1] While discussions of access, diversity, and inclusion exist, scholarly inquiry into how these issues manifest themselves in the education abroad experience are sparse. For example, in the context of *Frontiers*, the focus of this small, but growing, body of work has centered primarily on articulating barriers to access, considering mechanisms for attracting more diverse students, and documenting the participation rates among a wide range of identity groups.

---

[1] Although the terms "diversity," "inclusion," and "equity" are often contested and can be defined in different ways, for the purposes of clarity, we utilize the AACU definitions for this review:

Diversity: Individual differences (e.g., personality, prior knowledge, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations).

Inclusion: The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.

Equity: The creation of opportunities for historically underrepresented populations to have equal access to and participate in educational programs that are capable of closing the achievement gaps in student success and completion.

Available at: https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive

Although there were early voices like Charles Gliozzo, Barbara Burn, Johnnetta B. Cole, and Margery Ganz who advocated for and wrote about access and diversity in the late twentieth century, few others in the field were actively considering the demographic makeup of education abroad programs. In this collection, Susan Twombly (1995) is the sole voice from within *Frontiers* from the 1990s. More recently, there have been scholars featured in *Frontiers* who have broken from this paradigm (Sweeny, 2013; Bryant & Soria, 2015; Willis, 2015; Lee & Green, 2016), though research has primarily focused on quantitative measures of diversity in education abroad (e.g., demographics, participation rates). Still, there has been far less attention to understanding the nuances in expectations, learning experiences, and identity formation abroad for students from underrepresented groups (Lopez-McGee, Comp, & Contreras, 2018). In short, there has been less attention on inclusion and equity than on access and compositional diversity.

Another reality we face today is the changing composition of the United States and higher education, which means that previously underrepresented minority students are making up increasingly larger proportions of enrolled student bodies in U.S. colleges and universities. These minority and minoritized students eagerly and rightfully seek opportunities to study abroad, so it is important that practitioners understand the role of power and privilege in exclusion, and know institutional histories in order to support the widest array of students.

Finally, there is the present-day reality that the field, despite sincere efforts by some, has areas for improvement when it comes to supporting a diverse array of students. In this regard, we consider a critical lens toward education abroad to be a productive perspective that we endeavor to highlight in different ways. In these ways, our contemporary reality has guided our retrospective analysis of this virtual issue.

Frontiers is taking a two-pronged approach to address these gaps by 1) highlighting its prior authors' work that addresses such matters, and 2) publishing a special issue that provides a more complete view of research and inquiry that extend beyond access. We have prepared this virtual issue to highlight key scholarship on diversity, equity, and inclusion that has appeared in *Frontiers*, in support of our call for articles.

Why *Frontiers* and Why This Topic Now?

As co-editors we agree that *Frontiers* must publish more work on diversity, equity, and inclusion due to persistent disparities between student demographics in higher education (NCES, 2018) and in education abroad (IIE Open Doors, 2018). These disparities have been the subject of writing, conference presentations, program development, scholarship, and other efforts for many years.

From a social justice perspective, these disparities are troubling given that the value of education abroad appears to be more essential than ever to student learning in college. Calls from government on both sides of the aisle (Obama 2014; Pompeo 2018), industry (IIE, 2018; Molony, Sowter, & Davina, 2011), and others insist that students need to be prepared to navigate complex issues locally and globally with diverse communities and collaborators.

As we work to address the persistent gap in participation, we also believe that we must increase the knowledge base about the diversity, equity, and inclusion impacts of these experiences. Inclusive

practices will only be possible if we establish a more robust understanding of how EA experiences might differ for students and how the field can improve learning and experiences for all students.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in *Frontiers* 1995 to 2019

This introduction to this series will offer exemplars that address varying methodological approaches, the experiences of specific demographic populations, and case studies of unique curricular models.

Methods for Article Selection

In order to select 11 articles from the twenty-four-year history of *Frontiers,* we operated under the following guiding principles. First, we understand that within the field, most work on diversity, equity, and inclusion has focused on identifying barriers to access, assessing recruitment strategies, and documenting participation rates of students from different backgrounds who study abroad. With this in mind, we have largely omitted articles that have touched on academic access, disciplinary identity, or purely demographic data collection. For example, we understand that Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) students have at times been identified as an underrepresented group in education abroad; however, we have not included these disciplinary perspectives in our analysis. With regard to STEM, recent data from IIE Open Doors demonstrates growth in participation of STEM students. In 2016-17, more than 25% of U.S. study abroad students were in STEM fields, which represented an 18% increase from ten years prior (Redden, 2018).

Instead, we focused on pieces that examine how inclusion and equity impact the learning experiences and identity formation abroad for students from historically underrepresented groups with regard to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, religion/spirituality, nationality, and socioeconomic status in all their myriad intersectional forms (including first-generation students and other underserved/marginalized populations). Thus, we have focused on articles from the *Frontiers* catalogue that relate to student identity when it intersects with systems of privilege and power. Finally, we considered articles that take a critical perspective on education abroad specifically (or international education more broadly). We also prioritized articles that examined the field from a social justice lens, where equity and inclusion are the focuses of research rather than secondary considerations. While these may not always address differences in access and outcomes, they still inform the thinking about what international education does and how it works for historically underrepresented students.

Once we established these guiding principles, each guest editor reviewed all articles from a specific five- to six-year period: 1995 to 2000, 2001 to 2006, 2007 to 2012, and 2013 to Present. We then selected articles from our respective periods to include in the next round of reviews. To provide a degree of inter-rater reliability, we shuffled the periods and then each evaluated all articles from a different era of *Frontiers*. Again, within that new range of years, we selected articles to submit for the next round of review. In the end, we identified 33 articles for consideration for the virtual issue. Even when we disagreed on individual articles to include in the virtual issue, we agreed to be transparent in sharing the entire collection of articles that we selected in the hopes that readers would seek out the pieces that did not appear in the virtual issue. This extended digital list is available [here in chronological order](#). After discussing the list of 33 articles, we considered our

guiding principles and decided upon 11 articles for the virtual issue. The earliest article is from 1995, but most of the work in this collection comes from the most recent decade. Indeed, there are seven articles included here from 2013 to 2019. We understand that our own positionality and intersectional identities will have also played a part in our decision-making process, but we feel that the collection is an accurate reflection of the strongest writing on diversity, equity, and inclusion that has appeared in *Frontiers* over the last twenty-four years.

Key Themes and Article Highlights

The 11 articles we selected explore the intersection of race and/or gender (Landau & Moore, 2001; Twombly, 1995; Willis, 2015), sexual orientation (Bryant & Soria, 2015), (dis)ability (Shames & Alden, 2005), undocumented status (Butler et al., 2018), and/or outcomes among underrepresented students including academic (Sutton & Rubin, 2004), identity (Lee & Green, 2016), and spiritual (Dinani, 2018). We have also included two pieces that are relevant due to their capacity to shape practice in the field in terms of inclusive excellence overall (Sweeny 2013) and through a specific case example (Onyenekwu, Angeli, Pinto, & Douglas, 2017). Table 1 presents the selected articles by thematic category, and what we found in the pieces we identified as having some focus on diversity, equity, and/or inclusion.

Table 1. Thematic Categories of Selected Articles on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in *Frontiers* from 1995-2019

Theme	Through Line	Selected Articles
On-site Experience or Intersectionality of Identities	Focus on the lived experiences of underrepresented students during their time abroad and discussion of the impact of intersections in identity (e.g., race and gender).	Landau and Moore (2001) Twombly (1995) Willis (2015)
Identity Development	Focus on students' identity development from EA experiences.	Shames and Alden (2005) Bryant and Soria (2015)
Outcomes	Emphasis on identifying differentiated outcomes for students from underrepresented backgrounds following EA experiences.	Sutton and Rubin (2004) Lee and Green (2016) Dinani (2018)
Modeling Inclusive Practices	Centered discussion on developing inclusive practices before and during the EA experience for specific student populations.	Butler et al. (2018) Onyenekwu, Angeli, Pinto, and Douglas (2018)
Critical Thought	Focus on practical implications for embedding diversity, inclusion, and equity into EA scholarship and practice.	Sweeney (2013)

Call to Action/Call for Articles

We are indebted to the work of those included in this virtual issue for addressing the realities of diversity, equity, and inclusion in education abroad over the last twenty-four years, yet we acknowledge that there is more work to be done. To that end, we are grateful that *Frontiers* has issued

a Call for Articles for a new, less virtual, issue of original content on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Education Abroad. We urge students, practitioners, scholars, and practitioner-scholars to review this CFA and submit articles for the next issue. We hope that with increasing attention to these matters, the field can support a wider array of meaningful learning opportunities for students of all backgrounds in ways that reflect the reality of the day.

References

Butler, P. E., Madden, M., & Smith, N. (2018). Undocumented student participation in education abroad: An institutional analysis. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 30*(2), 1-31.

Bryant, K. M., & Soria, K. M. (2015). College students' sexual orientation, gender identity, and participation in study abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 25*, 91-106.

Dinani, T. (2018). Faith development while abroad amongst African American students. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 30*(1), 8-19.

Institute of International Education. (2018). *Study abroad matters: Linking higher education to the contemporary workforce through international experience*. Retrieved from https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Publications/Study-Abroad-Matters

Institute of International Education. (2018). Open Doors U.S. study abroad. Retrieved from https://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data/US-Study-Abroad

Landau, J., & Chioni Moore, D. (2001). Towards reconciliation in the motherland: Race, class, nationality, gender, and the complexities of American student presence at the University of Ghana, Legon. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 7*, 25-59.

Lee, J., & Green, Q. (2016). Unique opportunities: Influence of study abroad on Black students. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 28*, 61-77.

Lopez-McGee, L., Comp, D., & Contreras, E. (2018). Underrepresentation in education abroad: A review of contemporary research and future opportunities. In H. Barclay Hamir, & N. Gozik (Eds.), *Promoting inclusion in education abroad: A handbook of research and practice*. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus.

Molony, J. S., Sowter, B., & Potts, D. (2011). *QS global employer survey report 2011*. Retrieved from http://www.iu.qs.com/product/qs-global-employer-survey-report-2011/

National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level of enrollment, sex, attendance status, and race/ethnicity or nonresident alien status of student: Selected years, 1976 through 2017. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_306.10.asp?current=yes

Obama, M. (2014, March 22). *Remarks by the First Lady at Stanford Center at Peking University* [Transcript]. Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/22/remarks-first-lady-stanford-center-peking-university

Onyenekwu, I., Angeli, J. M., Pinto, R., & Douglas, T. R. (2017). Programs traveling to the African continent: A critical content analysis of a Teach Abroad program. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 29*(1), 68-84.

Pompeo, M. (2018). U.*S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo kicks off International Education Week 2018*. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=35&v=akTbm2NR-D0

Redden, E. (2018, November 12). Study abroad numbers grow. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/11/13/study-abroad-numbers-continue-grow-driven-continued-growth-short-term-programs

Shames, W., & Alden, P. (2005). The impact of short-term study abroad on the identity development of college students with learning disabilities and/or AD/HD. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 11*, 1-31.

Sutton, R. C., & Rubin, D. L. (2004). The GLOSSARI project: Initial findings from a system-wide

research initiative on study abroad learning outcomes. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 10*, 65-82.

Sweeney, K. (2013). Inclusive excellence and underrepresentation of students of color in study abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 23*, 1-21.

Twombly, S. B. (1995). Piropos and friendships: Gender and culture clash in study abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 1*, 1-27.

Willis, T. Y. (2015). 'And still we rise': Microaggressions and intersectionality in the study abroad experiences of Black women. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 26*, 209-230.