

## Introduction

This volume of *Frontiers* contains through-provoking articles, essays and book reviews that span a number of important areas in the field of education abroad. The authors provide useful insights into critical topics and deepen our understanding of the experience of our student sojourners.

Shames and Alden of The Landmark School provide an overview of and present their own research on a critically important topic for education abroad: the impact of study abroad on identity development in students with learning disabilities and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The number of students with learning disabilities participating in study abroad has grown dramatically in recent years, and it is essential that we better understand these students and the nature of their study abroad experience. The authors suggest that some of the distinctive features of study abroad programs may contribute to positive identity development in these students.

A study of North American students in Israel and the relationship between various aspects of their experience presents useful data not only for understanding Israel as a study abroad destination, but also other areas of the world where heritage study abroad, language learning, and ethnic identity interrelate. Donitsa-Schmidt and Vadish explore important relationships between study abroad elements that often influence student learning, and in so doing shed light on how the study abroad experience in Israel influences students' identities, attitudes, and Hebrew language proficiency.

In his article examining returning study abroad students, Hadis present his research on the determinants of "academic focusing" gains that we often observe in students returning from abroad, thereby contributing to our understanding of the experience of re-entry. Utilizing multiple regression and path analyses, he describes and analyzes student growth in terms of "Academic maturation" and the cluster of factors that contribute to their placing a priority on their academic work when they return from abroad.

Using US models for understanding the international student experience, Grayson examines the experience of international students in Canada in his pilot for a three-year research study. This valuable study compares the experiences of domestic students with those of international students, and also the relationship between their experiences and outcomes. This research provides useful information regarding the factors that impact student success in another culture.

The controversial decision by the US government to restrict educational travel to Cuba has meant that only a few US academic programs have been able to operate in Cuba. Bond, Koont, and Stephenson present data from their survey of students participating on three different short-term programs in Cuba with a focus on what they describe as the promotion of a "culture of peace," alerting us to an important but often overlooked potential outcome of study abroad. Their article provides evidence for the value of short-term programs to Cuba.

The Institute for International Education of Students continues to mine its extensive alumni database for important results on study abroad outcomes. In their article,

Mohajeri Norris and Dwyer provide evidence that refutes the commonly-held assumption that direct enrollment, or so-called “full immersion programs,” lead to a fuller range of student learning outcomes than other program models. Drawing on IES alumni who studied abroad on both direct enrollment and hybrid programs, this study helps to inform this debate.

In his article, Peppas addresses the outcomes for non-traditional students participating in short-term business tours abroad. Increasingly, students in fields such as the natural sciences, engineering, and business, all of which have been traditionally underrepresented, are participating in greater numbers in study abroad programs. Peppas offers insights into non-traditional adult study abroad students, many for whom the only option for study abroad is the short-term tour.

Jane Jackson’s study provides further analysis of short-term study abroad through employing a qualitative measure: an analysis of students’ introspective accounts of their experience. Her use of diaries with her Hong Kong Chinese students studying abroad for five weeks in England suggests a model for both encouraging reflective learning and assessing it. The themes that emerge in the students’ reflections provide evidence of the value of short-term study.

For the first time in our history, we are pleased to include in this volume an institutional case study. Drake University’s approach to campus internationalization and education abroad has received much attention. In this case study, Skidmore, Marston and Olson report on how this effort has progressed, and in doing so provide information that should prove useful for our work on our own campuses.

This volume of *Frontiers* contains two essays that examine study abroad learning from broad perspectives. Slimbach presents a philosophical framework for understanding the “transcultural journey” that deepens our understanding of how students may be transformed by their sojourns. He draws upon a variety of sources to describe the psychological processes that, in many respects, are the most powerful and lasting aspects of study abroad.

We hope that our readers appreciate the opportunity to read essays from faculty colleagues who have served as directors of abroad programs. After directing a program in China, Byrnes has developed his ideas concerning what he labels “other-regarding travel,” and in doing so provides a valuable faculty perspective on the study abroad learning process.

This volume of *Frontiers* contains provocative book reviews that should inspire us to broaden our consideration of resources that can provide insights into our work. We are indeed fortunate to be in a profession that relates to so many intellectual traditions that inform our field. Our book reviews not only inspire us to read and consider a multiplicity of sources to make education abroad more meaningful, but also opens doors for discussions with faculty colleagues in related disciplines.

In November, 2005, we will publish a Special Issue presenting seven outstanding student research projects completed as part of study abroad programs, along with faculty essays that reflect on the context for and the purposes of this research within their discipline, and within undergraduate education as a whole. These manuscripts were selected as part of the Forum on Education Abroad’s Undergraduate Research Award competition. The student articles were each blind-reviewed by the *Frontiers* Editorial

Board. The resulting articles themselves are an exciting mix of high quality research that span several academic fields and geographic regions of the world. This Special Issue, made possible in part through a grant from the IFSA Foundation, we hope will be influential in shaping student learning in education abroad.

With this volume, we welcome new sponsors to *Frontiers* and extend our thanks to them. The support of these new and of our continuing sponsoring institutions is testimony to their strong commitment to study abroad and their belief in the mission of *Frontiers*.

*Brian Whalen, Dickinson College*