

Introduction

No collection of essays dedicated to the assessment of student learning abroad, like the fifteen published here, could have appeared two decades ago. Study abroad then appealed to a much smaller and narrower student and faculty audience than it does now, and it was assumed that those students who did go abroad—social science, foreign language, art history and other humanities majors, for the most part—were as a matter of course improving their second language skills and learning useful things about living in another culture. Outside of a growing interest in documenting second language acquisition abroad, there was relatively little interest in the 1980s in focusing on the presumed benefits of studying abroad. By the mid-1990s a growing body of study abroad-based research was beginning to challenge some of the old assumptions. Research journals focusing on study abroad were emerging: *Frontiers* for example published its first issue in 1995. The proliferation of studies exploring the impact of study abroad that have appeared since that time underscore the fact that study abroad has been going through profound changes. Considered together, the growing body of study abroad research, especially studies carried out during the past decade, reveal the contours of a newly-emerging study abroad paradigm.

Thomas Kuhn's concept of a "paradigm shift" is apt here (1962). For study abroad professionals who have been sending students abroad in the past two decades, the ways we have come to think about study abroad—the kinds of questions we now ask ourselves, the sorts of answers we provide, even the basic terms we use to describe our students' activities—have been rapidly evolving. The older paradigm that still held sway twenty years ago—the organizing vision that sustained a set of assumptions about and gave a particular meaning to the phenomenon—looked back to study abroad's historical roots. A descendant of the nineteenth-century's European Grand Tour, study abroad, even in the 1980s, was very often more elitist, in intention and in practice, than it is today. The use of the term "Junior Year Abroad," more current in the mid-1980s than it is now, hearkened back to that age when Henry James' privileged young men and women traveled by ship to The Continent and stayed in Paris, Rome and Florence long enough for the sojourn to work the desired effects. The faintly exotic term "foreign study," which, like "Junior Year Abroad," was more common in the 1980s than now, sounded another echo of that earlier time when students thought of London and Madrid as adventurous—rather than well-worn—destinations.

The Junior Year paradigm, in embracing the values of the Grand Tour, offered a unified vision of study abroad that informed decisions both about what sorts of students should study abroad and what kinds of things they should study. While some programs lasted for weeks, rather than a year, they too tended to reflect the norms of the Junior Year paradigm. Study abroad was for many an expensive proposition, and even in the 1980s many programs still appealed to the sons—and especially the daughters—of relatively

well-heeled families. Not surprisingly, fewer than 49,000 students earned credits abroad in 1985-86—fewer than one-third the number of students who are going abroad today (Chin, 17). The typical Junior Year paradigm participant, female, white, and upper-middle class, was likely to be majoring in the social sciences or the humanities (Chin, 61). Whether enrolling directly in a host university or studying within a U.S. academic island, whether studying abroad for a semester or a year, she was assumed to be pursuing two goals: sharpening her foreign language skills, and getting to know another culture. Chances were high that she had studied the target language of the host culture before departing her home institution, and it was widely assumed—though not at all demonstrated—that when she returned to the home campus, she would perform better in the language, and would somehow have benefited too from her exposure to another culture. In short, the Junior Year paradigm offered a simple, unified vision of study abroad.

A number of developments have served to transform the Junior Year paradigm. A new Student Learning paradigm has emerged, as program types abroad have diversified in order to serve a widening range of student needs and interests, and as interest in student learning has rapidly shifted from the academic margin to the center at many of our institutions. Social attitudes about traveling and studying abroad have continued to evolve. Study abroad is being democratized, with many institutions aiming to broaden access to study abroad by encouraging greater participation of so-called non-traditional students. Against the backdrop of soaring enrollments—more than 160,000 U.S. students earned credit abroad in 2001-02, an increase of more than 230% since 1986 (Chin, 17)—study abroad is rapidly being demystified. International travel has come into easy reach of more students, faculty and parents, and more students are studying outside of the once-favored Junior Year destinations. In 1986, almost 80% of students were still attending programs in Western Europe. By 2002, fewer than 63% were traveling to the old Grand Tour countries, opting instead for destinations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and elsewhere (Chin, 58). In 1986, more than one in six U.S. students still studied abroad for a year; in 2002, fewer than one in thirteen were spending a year abroad, and few institutions still referred to the “Junior Year Abroad.” More students from academic disciplines under-represented in the mid-1980s, including business, the sciences and engineering, were now studying abroad: by 2002 business majors made up 17.6% of all participants and constituted the second-largest cohort studying abroad, and physical sciences majors made up 8.5 % of all participants (Chin, 61).

Many of the programs designed today for the growing numbers of business, science, engineering and other non-traditional students do not promote either second language or culture learning—neither goal has traditionally made up a part of the curricula of professional and technical schools. The growing perception that U.S. business people, engineers and scientists can easily function abroad in English—a perception

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driven both by the fact that nearly one-fourth of the planet is now said “to speak English to some level of competence” (British Council), and by students and faculty who return from abroad reporting that “everyone over there speaks English”—has undermined an interest in language and culture study. While many programs continue to promote second language and culture study, programs with discipline-specific learning goals have become increasingly common. The growing interest in experiential education has contributed to the diversification of program types as well, and students increasingly earn credit through completing internships, field research and service-learning.

The growing importance of the assessment movement in higher education, coupled with the unprecedented growth in student numbers, has served to shift study abroad from the marginal activity it had been in the mid-1980s to a more central part of the undergraduate experience at an increasing number of our institutions. College and university presidents, promoting the view that a world-class education means that students should be educated “out in the world” as well as on the home campus, are at some institutions challenging their colleagues to meet study abroad enrollment targets of 25%, 40% and even 50% of graduating classes. Department chairs, facing drops in on-campus course enrollments in some disciplines, now have to cope with cancellation of under-enrolled courses and with budget losses. Faculty who had once relegated study abroad to the margins of academic activity, now faced with larger numbers of returning students whose reports about “life-changing” experiences do not seem to connect with the courses they have taken while abroad, are asking what it is that their students are in fact learning over there. Other faculty and growing numbers of education abroad professionals, in the face of demands for greater accountability, seek to identify and document the added values they believe study abroad can bring to their students’ education.

The fifteen assessment studies described in this special issue share an interest in exploring the values of study abroad through challenging a number of widely-held ideas about the impact of student learning. The Junior Year paradigm had assumed that simply being in another country would somehow allow students to acquire a second language to a greater extent than they would at home, and would allow them to return home having learned valuable things about another culture. The new Student Learning paradigm encourages the exploration of these and other widely-held assumptions about learning in a study abroad context. The questions that the authors explore are organized into five categories: Second Language Acquisition Abroad, Accounting for Learning across Several Domains, Non-Traditional Students and Programs, The Impact of Program Duration, and Assessing Curricular Interventions.

It is fitting that the first three articles in this special issue should focus on Second Language Acquisition Abroad. Second-language study abroad research has been conducted since the 1960s, and the results of much of that research, especially from the

past fifteen years or so, have important implications for program design—more so than research focusing on any other topic associated with study abroad. It is especially fitting that the first article, “A Comparison of the Acquisition of Spanish as a Second Language in Two Different Contexts of Learning: Study Abroad versus the Regular Academic Classroom,” should be authored by Norman Segalowitz, Barbara Freed, and four co-authors. Freed was Guest Editor of the fall 1998 special *Frontiers* issue, “Language Learning in a Study Abroad Context (1998a),” and the study that Segalowitz, Freed and their co-authors describes here traces a clear line of descent from the research that Freed had described in that earlier special issue.

The article’s six authors explore the widely-held belief that students make progress in language learning abroad because they are immersed in a rich linguistic environment. Their study, which relied on two questionnaires, the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), the SAT II Spanish Test, and computer-based cognitive tests, compares the performance of university students enrolled in a study abroad program in Alicante, Spain with another group enrolled in a Spanish-language class in a university in Colorado. Theirs is an unusually comprehensive study, focusing on students’ oral proficiency, oral fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and communication strategies. They examine whether different levels of grammatical ability prior to departure can serve to predict variable gains in oral proficiency and other skills abroad, and whether there are specific environmental factors abroad—contact with a home stay family and other types of out-of-class contact, for example—that contribute to students’ language progress.

The authors of the second article in the Second Language Acquisition Abroad category, Celeste Kinginger and Kathleen Farrell, continue to explore the social contact assumption—that students who form active social connections while abroad make more linguistic progress than students who engage less with the host community—through analyzing student awareness of the appropriateness of using “*tu*” or “*vous*” in different social contexts. In “Assessing Development of Meta-Pragmatic Awareness in Study Abroad,” the authors suggest that learning the meaning of these two forms of “you” in French, and thus the development of the ability to choose between the two, can only be accomplished through experiencing them in various authentic social contexts, and not by studying a set of rules in a classroom. The authors approached this question qualitatively, conducting case studies of eight students who were enrolled in a variety of study abroad programs in France. The students participated in a Language Awareness Interview during which each responded to six hypothetical interpersonal situations that required them to address the interviewer with “*tu*” or “*vous*,” and share with the interviewer the reasons for their choices. The authors analyze responses to these role-plays in order to shed light on the personal interpretations that students make with the two

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forms, and demonstrate that reaching advanced-level abilities in a second language depends on students' development of what Freed had earlier referred to as the "meta-cognitive awareness of sociolinguistic differences and potentially conflicting pragmatic demands" (1995, 27).

In the third article in this category, "Hindsight is 20/20': Student Perceptions of Language Learning and the Study Abroad Experience," Vija Mendelson speaks explicitly to the necessity of challenging the widely-held belief that students inevitably make second language progress through studying abroad. Through administering a series of pre- and post-tests, quantitative and qualitative, to students enrolled in three different programs of varying lengths in Spain, Mendelson investigates whether students do as a matter of course take advantage of available opportunities to integrate into the host culture while they are abroad, and whether they do make "miraculous" progress in acquiring the target language. She relies significantly on student perceptions about their own language proficiency and documents patterns of student cultural contact in exploring a series of research questions, including the extent to which student language proficiency at the end of a program correlates with the amount of their out-of-class social contact, and how different types of out-of-class contact affect beginning and intermediate-level language learners. Her comparison of student pre-program beliefs about what they would learn through studying abroad, and how they would learn, with their post-program awareness about what they had actually learned, and how they seemed to have learned it, are striking.

The second category, *Accounting for Learning across Several Domains*, features studies that broaden the scope of research to include several different learning domains. The authors of the three ongoing studies reported here work at institutions that are national leaders in the number and/or percentage of students who study abroad, and each of their research studies was motivated by an interest in exploring the accuracy of various assumptions that have informed past program development. In the first article, "The GLOSSARI Project: Initial Findings from a System-Wide Research Initiative on Learning Outcomes from Study Abroad," Richard Sutton and Donald Rubin describe and interpret the data they have collected in Phase I of a six-phase, multi-year University System of Georgia project that is now annually collecting data from more than 4,000 students. The authors trace the growth of the assessment movement in higher education and point out that institutions often define success in study abroad through such things as increases in study abroad participation or through post-program surveys that attempt to measure student satisfaction with their study abroad experience. They argue that neither these nor other sorts of measures now commonly in use provide direct evidence either of students' curricular content knowledge gained abroad or the cognitive understanding that they are presumed to have acquired. In Phase I of the study that they

describe here, they compare the self-reported learning outcomes of some 500 students from sixteen public institutions from the University System of Georgia, approximately half of them studying at a variety of programs abroad, and the other half enrolling at their home institutions. Phase I relied on a questionnaire designed to measure learning outcomes that students might be assumed to achieve while abroad, and that were generic enough to apply to a diverse array of academic disciplines.

Edward Ingraham and Debra Peterson authored the second article in this category, “Assessing the Impact of Study Abroad on Student Learning at Michigan State University.” They report the results of a part of an ongoing, multi-phase project that Michigan State University (MSU) has been pursuing since 2000. The project seeks to understand the impact of study abroad on MSU students, faculty and departments, as well as on the wider University; the article here reports preliminary results of Phase I and II, which explore study abroad’s impact on students. The study provides an example of research motivated by a desire to investigate the viability of the educational assumptions of a single institution. Noting that MSU is committed to the view that study abroad supports the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes that its students will need after graduation, they identify the six goals that the University believes its study abroad programs should meet. Seeking evidence that MSU students going abroad are achieving these learning goals, the study uses a variety of instruments and methods, qualitative and quantitative. These include student self-assessment—post-program questionnaires, pre- and post-program surveys, journal entries, focus groups of past participants, and student articles—faculty case study reports, data in MSU’s central student database, and additional surveys about study abroad conducted by various MSU offices.

The third article in this category, by Michael Vande Berg, Al Balkcum, Mark Scheid and Brian Whalen, “The Georgetown University Consortium Project: A Report at the Halfway Mark,” describes a study designed to document the learning abroad of students from Georgetown University, The University of Minnesota, Rice University, and Dickinson College. Funded by two Department of Education Title VI grants, this ongoing three-year study seeks evidence of student learning at fifty programs abroad, many of them organized by the four consortial institutions, and others by study abroad providers, including programs operated by the Council on International Education, the International Institute for the Education of Students and the American University Center of Provence. The study seeks evidence of student learning from, and across, three learning domains: oral second-language acquisition, gains in intercultural sensitivity, and learning within four broad disciplinary contexts. It incorporates a version of Engle and Engle’s program classification system (described in *Frontiers* Vol.9 (2003)) in which programs are defined by characteristics that have the greatest impact on student learning. In incorporating most of these—including duration of program,

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student housing, structured experiential learning opportunities on site, and more—the Georgetown consortium study seeks to test a widely-held belief, one that the three articles on language abroad also tested: that there are environmental factors at sites abroad that can significantly impact student learning. The study, through its development of an interview guide that asks returned students to respond to three hypothetical scenarios, also seeks to provide evidence of learning, beyond oral language acquisition and gains in intercultural sensitivity, that will appeal to faculty from three broad disciplinary areas whose students have traditionally been under-represented in study abroad: business, engineering and the sciences.

The Georgetown consortium study provides a segue to the third category, “Non-Traditional Students and Programs,” which features two articles that together underscore the importance of meeting the needs and interests of those students and faculty whose learning goals may not focus primarily on second language and intercultural learning. The first article, by Tammy Orahood, Larisa Kruze, and Denise Pearson, seeks to document the perceptions of Indiana University Business students about the impact of study abroad on their post-graduation job search and career plans. In “The Impact of Study Abroad on Business Students’ Career Goals,” the authors explain that the global competition for culturally-competent employees is increasing. The authors designed a study that tests the belief that business students will acquire desired international and cross-cultural perspectives through studying abroad. They administered a survey, designed for this study, both to students who had, and who had not, studied abroad, and use the results of the survey to propose strategies to aid business students in articulating the pragmatic value of their study abroad experience

The second article, by Humphrey Tonkin and Diego Quiroga, “A Qualitative Approach to the Assessment of International Service-Learning,” focuses on the first of three Ford Foundation-funded studies that are assessing the impact of the International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership on its three separate constituencies: the students participating in Partnership programs, the in-country agencies that sponsor the students, and the in-country universities that house Partnership programs. Tonkin and Quiroga’s article describes the first study, qualitative in nature, which sought to document the impact of the Partnership on student goals and attitudes through conducting interviews and focus groups with seventeen former participants. The study sought to explore two assumptions about student learning. The first is that study abroad provides students with rich environmental opportunities that allow them to interact and learn in ways not often available on their home campuses. The second is specific to the Partnership’s own programs: that service-learning provides special opportunities for cultural integration, and that such experience broadens students’ horizons and prepares them to be global citizens.

The fourth category offers three articles that report on attempts to understand The Impact of Program Duration on student learning. Among education abroad professionals, convictions about duration rank among the most deeply-held. The first, Mary Dwyer's "More is Better: The Impact of Study Abroad Program Duration," explores the strong version of this belief, one that recalls the assumptions underpinning the Junior Year Abroad paradigm. The conventional wisdom inherited from that paradigm maintains that if study abroad is to be meaningful, it needs to last at least a year. This study is an outstanding example of the type of study made possible through retrospective longitudinal research. As Dwyer reports, the Institute of International Education of Students developed a questionnaire to document the long-range impact of study abroad on participants who had studied in various types of study abroad programs over a period of fifty years. More than 3,700 former participants responded to the survey, providing data that Dwyer and her colleagues are using in several studies. The research reported here measures the impact of program duration on five learning outcomes: student academic choices, career development, personal and social development, foreign language commitment and use, and intercultural competence and intercultural awareness.

The second article in the Duration category, by Lisa Chieffo and Lesa Griffith, calls attention to the fact that while beliefs about short-term programs are deeply entrenched, relatively little research has focused on the relative value of such programs. "Large-Scale Assessment of Student Attitudes after a Short-Term Study Abroad Program," describes their research, which explores whether students enrolled in courses abroad during five-week University of Delaware January-term programs acquire more "global awareness" than those who studied at home and enrolled in similar course in the same January term. Chieffo and Griffith developed a survey instrument designed to measure student perceptions and recollections about their attitudes toward four categories they identify as the essential elements of "cultural awareness": intercultural awareness, personal growth and development, awareness of global interdependence, and functional knowledge of world geography and language. They base their conclusions about the value of short-term study abroad on the nearly 1,200 students who completed the survey.

The third article in the Duration category, Adriana Medina-López-Portillo's "Intercultural Learning Assessment: The Link Between Program Duration and The Development of Intercultural Sensitivity," reports on the results of her study measuring changes in the intercultural sensitivity of University of Maryland students who studied abroad in two language-based programs in Mexico, one lasting seven, and the other sixteen, weeks. Relying on pre- and post-testing featuring both qualitative and quantitative measures—the Intercultural Development Inventory, face-to-face

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interviews, and a guided journal—the case studies that she describes explore whether students enrolled in a semester-long program will show greater gains in intercultural sensitivity than those enrolled in a short-term program.

The four articles that make up the fifth and final category, *Assessing Curricular Interventions*, assess the effectiveness of several different kinds of curricular strategies, each intended to improve student performance abroad. In the first article, “Does Study Abroad Grading Motivate Students?” Stevan Trooboff, William Cressey and Susan Monty present the results of a study that examines the belief that institutional grade reporting practices affect the motivation, and hence the performance, of students enrolled in programs abroad. Their study explores a widely-held belief that how grades are counted at home directly affects student performance abroad: that students whose institutions record grades earned abroad on the students’ transcripts, and factor those grades into the cumulative grade point average (GPA), more diligently apply themselves to their coursework abroad. Faculty and education abroad professionals and faculty who assume that there exists a link between grades and motivation argue, then, that institutions can improve student performance abroad through a simple curricular intervention—changing their home grade reporting practices. Trooboff, Cressey and Monty’s study, conducted through an analysis of grades earned by students enrolled at Council on International Exchange study centers in Fall semester of 2003, moves beyond anecdote and argument. It offers statistical evidence about the relative impact of different grade reporting practices on student motivation and performance, and points the way to future research. The authors’ discussion about various types of motivation serves to re-frame the terms of the ongoing debate about the likely impact of institutional grading practices.

In the second article in the *Program Interventions* category, “Assessing Language Acquisition and Intercultural Sensitivity Development in Relation to Study Abroad Program Design,” Lilli Engle and John Engle offer a perspective from a study abroad provider whose program was designed with specific student learning goals in mind. The authors argue that there is a strong relationship between a program’s curricular design and the performance of students enrolled in it. The American University Center of Provence, which the authors inaugurated in 1990, offers an example of a program that was designed by moving from desired learning outcomes to program design. In designing the program, the authors identified the two primary learning outcomes they believe students should acquire while abroad in France—significant improvement in their proficiency in French and meaningful integration into the cultural life of France and Aix-en-Provence, where the program is located. They designed a program whose specific features are calculated to serve these learning goals. Engle and Engle’s study assesses the extent to which students enrolling in this program are meeting the two primary goals of language and intercultural learning and explores as well the relationship between the

two, relying on the Intercultural Development Inventory and on a language testing instrument developed by the *Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Paris*, the *Test d'Evaluation de Français*. The authors' observations about the ways that some of the language and cultural assumptions of U.S. higher education impact student learning in France are provocative and suggest future directions for research.

The third article in this category, by David DiBiasio and Natalie Mello, offers a more radical intervention: the design of an entire institutional curriculum around a set of pre-determined learning outcomes. "Assessing a Nontraditional Study Abroad Program in the Engineering Disciplines" describes Worcester Polytechnic Institute's (WPI) innovative curriculum design, the Global Perspective Program (GPP) that deeply imbeds study abroad within the curriculum, around learning outcomes first identified by WPI itself, and later mandated by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). WPI designed the GPP curriculum proceeding from pre-identified—and since 2000, ABET-mandated—learning outcomes to an instructional design that replaces traditional courses and credits with integrative real-life projects, and places students in authentic global contexts and activities in order to meet those outcomes. GPP students in WPI project centers abroad work in teams for two months with faculty advisors, investigating problems proposed by local agencies. DeBiasio and Mello describe the unusually comprehensive process that assesses students, faculty, and the program itself. The assessment process uses a variety of tools and methods to understand and document the social, professional and cognitive progress that students make through participating in the projects. The assessment process that the authors describe continuously challenges their institution to demonstrate that its curriculum, in its design and delivery, is in fact meeting ABET standards, and in doing so, preparing WPI graduates for a career in engineering that is, in its nature, now global.

In the last article in this special issue, R. Michael Paige, Andrew Cohen, and Rachel Shively present a research project designed to measure the impact of a "curricular intervention"—the authors coined the term—on the intercultural development, second language acquisition, and culture and language learning strategies of 86 study abroad participants from seven Minnesota colleges and universities. The curricular intervention that the authors describe in "Assessing the Impact of a Strategies-Based Curriculum on Language and Culture Learning Abroad" consists of a newly published guidebook that students are trained to use while abroad. This guidebook, *Maximizing Study Abroad: A Students' Guide to Language and Culture Strategies and Use*, whose senior authors are Paige and Cohen, aims to prepare students to take advantage of the second language and intercultural learning opportunities they will find abroad. Paige, Cohen and Shively are assessing the effectiveness of the guidebook through a testing program that relies on two instruments to collect demographic information and on four other instruments,

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administered on a pre- and post-test basis, to measure language and culture learning.

The fifteen studies that follow represent only a part of the study abroad research that my co-guest editors and I considered in organizing this special issue. A number of other authors submitted articles describing well-designed studies; we made difficult decisions in leaving a few of these out. Both considerations of space and a commitment to put together an issue that represented the broad scope and diversity of current assessment research—and that therefore argued against including some studies that addressed questions already explored in other articles—led to our decision to prune out otherwise deserving articles. While editing the articles that do appear here, we also learned about other promising assessment studies that are just beginning, including some that are being carried out as doctoral research. In short, the research that appears here represents the tip of a rapidly growing assessment iceberg. The growing diversification of study abroad students, programs and learning goals; the growing interest in exploring whether, and how, those goals can be met; and an interest in applying research results in order to improve student learning abroad—these and related themes recur in the fifteen articles printed here, and serve to define what I have called the outlines of the emerging Student Learning paradigm.

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