

Introduction

This volume of *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* offers a wide variety of approaches and topics in international education research. First, readers will note the geographic diversity that the articles represent; they examine study abroad topics in Africa, Argentina, Costa Rica, France, Nepal, Thailand, and Vietnam. Second, the articles cover a wide-range of issues, including language acquisition, risk management, recruitment of minority students for study abroad, evaluation of cultural integration, and financial inequities in study abroad. Third, this volume contains articles by a variety of authors, including U.S.-based study abroad administrators, faculty members, and on-site resident directors. Finally, the modes of inquiry are as varied as the topics and authors. Research approaches in this volume include survey instruments, interviews, participant observation, case studies, literature review, as well as analytical essays.

This diversity of geography, issues, authors, and modes of inquiry has from the beginning characterized the content of *Frontiers* and been one of its chief strengths. When the first volume of *Frontiers* appeared in 1995, one was hard pressed to find many research-based and analytical studies in the field, let alone the diversity of such work that this volume represents. In this regard, *Frontiers* has matured along with the field of international education, and today, almost ten years later, this volume reflects the growing importance being placed on research on the critical aspects of our work.

The opening article by Lilli Engle and John Engle, "Study Abroad Levels: Toward a Classification of Program Types," offers a revolutionary perspective by which international educators may categorize and judge study abroad programs. Their proposed typology makes qualitative distinctions between study abroad program models based on their view of a spectrum of cultural immersion. *Frontiers* readers will find their analysis provocative, stimulating study abroad professionals to examine programming in useful ways.

In "Women and Cultural Learning in Costa Rica: Reading the

Introduction

Contexts,” Adele Anderson reviews research on Costa Rica’s cultural context, student adjustment and tourism theory, relating them to American student experiences, and she includes data from ethnographic observations and interviews collected during three years as a resident director of short-term programs. Anderson introduces a tool that may be used by resident directors to guide student cultural adjustment more systematically.

Mark Ritchie, an on-site resident director in Thailand, provides a very useful analysis of study abroad risk management in his article, “Risk Management in Study Abroad: Lessons from the Wilderness.” Ritchie draws upon the principles of wilderness education, especially as it is conducted in developing countries, in offering recommendations for study abroad risk management. Readers will appreciate his suggestions for reducing risk by applying the experiential techniques of wilderness education.

J. Scott Van Der Meid’s study, “Asian Americans: Factors Influencing the Decision to Study Abroad,” examines the factors that influence Asian American students’ decision to study abroad, and provides useful suggestions for considering ways to increase study abroad participation among this population. As the field of study abroad continues to seek ways to increase minority participation in study abroad, Van Der Meid’s study offers a model for examining this question among all ethnic groups.

In their analysis of an innovative Vietnam study abroad program, “History Lived and Learned: Students and Vietnam Veterans in an Integrative Study Abroad Course,” Raymond Scurfield, Leslie Root, and Andrew Wiest et al, analyze the collaborative learning experience of students and Vietnam veterans in a program that combined the teaching of Vietnam culture and military history with an exploration of the mental health aspects of combat and post-war recovery of the veterans. This article discusses the lessons learned from the experience of designing and implementing a study abroad program that integrates history education with therapeutic objectives.

Jennifer Coffman and Kevin Brennan analyze the economic imbalance of African educational exchange with the United States in their article, “African Studies Abroad: Meaning and Impact of America’s Burgeoning Export Industry.” Coffman and Brennan rec-

commend developing more equitable models of reciprocity by examining the economics of U.S. – African exchanges, and by reconsidering the ways in which African study abroad programs are conceived and implemented in light of their social and intellectual impact.

“Development of Oral Communication Skills Abroad” by Christina Isabelli-Garcia examines the impact of a semester study abroad program in Argentina on the second language acquisition of three American university Spanish learners. Isabelli-Garcia’s study measures the development of two aspects of communications skills: first, fluency and performance in the oral functions of narration, and, second, description and supporting an opinion. Her study provides insight into the conditions of a study abroad program that best promote the acquisition of improved oral communication skills in a target language.

In “Studying Abroad in Nepal: Assessing Impact,” Patricia Farrell and Murari Suvedi present the perceived impact of studying in Nepal on students’ academic program, personal development, and intellectual development. Using a survey instrument as well as interviews and case studies, the authors link the reported outcomes to the objectives of the study abroad program.

We are pleased to include in this volume of *Frontiers* an essay by Patti McGill Peterson, “New Directions for the Global Century.” McGill Peterson’s analysis of the changing and challenging context for global education inspires us to meet the demands of the 21st century with determination, creativity, and enhanced global collaboration.

This volume of *Frontiers* concludes with reviews of books of interest to international educators, each relating to diverse intellectual foundations of the field: Jean-Philippe Mathy’s *Extrême-Occident: French Intellectuals and America*, Louis Menand’s *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America*, and *First Great Triumph: How Five Americans Made Their Country a World Power* by Warren Zimmermann. We encourage our readers to continue to suggest books of interest, and to submit reviews for consideration.

The update on the Forum on Education Abroad that appears at the back of this volume reflects the continuing fruitful collaboration between *Frontiers* and the Forum. Together with the Forum, *Frontiers* will continue to encourage and support research studies on study abroad topics, and to disseminate this research as widely as possible.

The next volume of *Frontiers*, due to be published in November,

Introduction

2004, will be our tenth anniversary volume. It is appropriate that this anniversary volume will be a Special Issue that focuses on the assessment of the learning outcomes of study abroad, a topic that reflects the maturation of a field that is now beginning to document the results of its activity. Other Special Issues that are in the planning stages include: curriculum integration and study abroad, the arts and study abroad, and student development and study abroad.

Finally, I want to thank the new sponsors of *Frontiers* who, together with our existing sponsors, make the publication of this journal possible. The sponsors of *Frontiers* are institutions with a strong commitment to international education, and we are proud to be supported by them. The editorial board takes seriously its responsibility to provide the very best writing about and research on study abroad to our readers, and the support of our sponsors makes this mission possible.

Brian J. Whalen
Editor