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Welcome to the second issue of BEYOND
A journal that explores the many facets of the study abroad experience

The most enjoyable part of editing BEYOND is that each article I read reminds me that the work we do as international educators is enormously valuable, which can sometimes be forgotten during the hustle and bustle of everyday program management. As you read this journal, I hope you share that same sense of job satisfaction and a renewed enthusiasm for making a difference in students' lives.

Contributors to this issue include former students, teaching professionals, academics and artists, and their pieces cover a diverse range of topics pertinent to students as well as teachers. There are the joys of study abroad, including the wonder of living in a different culture and the positive impact on students' personal and professional futures. But there are also the challenges, such as protecting students' well-being and mental health, and teaching language skills effectively.

As I read this year's articles, two themes emerged from the topics the authors addressed.

The first theme is **students as immigrants**. In this age of heightened emotions about mass migration and ill-informed assumptions about who immigrants are, it's easy to forget that foreign students are a category of immigrants – perhaps the most privileged kind. Contributors to this journal argue that with great privilege, comes great responsibility for the students: the responsibility to reach BEYOND what they thought themselves capable of during their time abroad, to embrace the host's culture and customs, and return home a more rounded and grounded global citizen.

The second theme is **teacher as artisan**. Any good teacher strives to find new ways to engage learners, but in a study abroad context, teachers have only one or two semesters to make a difference, so there's pressure

to go above and BEYOND rote teaching methods. Several contributors explore the various ways our teachers are being more creative in this endeavor. One contributor, Serena Baldini, says it best: "I believe we can be considered similar to artisans who, despite having a stable approach and reference models, modulate their work with creativity and flexibility, always using strategies and procedures that can be adapted on a case-by-case basis."

It is my wish that, through the insights offered within these pages, you will gain a broader perspective of the work you're doing, a perspective that will, hopefully, inform the way you develop programs and support students and staff going forward. I also hope that you will be inspired to contribute your own unique take on the study abroad experience for next year's issue; if so, please get in touch!

Daniel Tartaglia, *President, Academic Centers Abroad (ACA)*

academics

Teaching Italian to North American Students

Serena Baldini

ABSTRACT

In a humanistic language learning approach, the learning-teaching process is centered around the student. It is therefore essential, for the teacher who guides the learning process, to consider a fundamental psychological and emotional dimension in the mechanisms of linguistic acquisition: motivation. Motivation or, more precisely, the motivational framework, is a complex and dynamic system that is formed and evolves thanks to the interaction of factors related both to the student's subjective characteristics and to the specific coordinates of the learning context.

In this article, we briefly analyze some traits present in the motivational framework of our students and then describe the interventions proposed in the management of the classroom and in everyday teaching. The interventions aim to improve the students' motivational framework by developing instrumental and extrinsic motivation (which are always present in formal learning environments), integrative and cultural motivation and, in particular, intrinsic motivation.

KEYWORDS: Italian language, skills, communication, university teaching, culture

Firstly, I would like to begin with some brief considerations on motivation, an essential factor in determining and influencing the language acquisition process. Secondly, I would like to illustrate in greater detail some of the interventions proposed in class management and daily teaching.

In a humanistic approach to language learning, the learning–teaching process is centered around the student. For this reason, the instructor who guides the teaching must consider one following fundamental

psychological and emotional dimension in the mechanisms of language acquisition: motivation.

When we speak of motivation, we should (more precisely) speak of a framework consisting of various kinds of motivations. Their different natures often co-exist and tend to accumulate, since each subject usually pursues multiple goals at the same time. Motivation is a complex system that is formed and evolves thanks to the interaction of multiple, inter-twined factors. First of all, motivation is connected to the student's subjective characteristics on the one hand and to the specific learning context on the other. For this reason, the teacher (who acts as the facilitator and director of language acquisition) can also take on the role of motivator. In doing so, they build and prepare (by means of targeted strategies) a series of educational conditions that can positively influence the existing motivational frameworks.

As we shall see, it is a matter of developing motivation that stems from a desire to integrate with the host community. In addition to these factors (which we may call a cultural and intrinsic kind of motivation), there exist instrumental and extrinsic motivations, which are always present in formal learning environments. Motivation in young adult learners is a complex and dynamic reality. However, we can highlight some features present in the motivational framework of our students, who are in Italy for academic reasons. First, let us focus on a good initial motivation: students spend a whole semester in Florence. Consequently, they wish to interact with the host community. We also observe a good cultural motivation, which stems from an interest in Italian culture (understood as everyday lifestyle) and from the curiosity to discover the new environment in which they are living. There is also an intrinsic motivation, particularly in students who have a strong interest in language and culture and who want to major in either Italian or literature.

Having said this, I would like to pause for a moment on intrinsic motivation. This is a dimension based on desire and interest, linked to the pleasure that comes from the activity of studying a language in itself. It proves to be the most stable motivational dimension over time and the

most effective for the purposes of language acquisition. The reason for it is that the drive to learn both comes upon the subject and depends on the subject. In other words, it is not dictated by external elements, such as positive or negative judgments. Moreover, this motivation is linked to the development of higher levels of autonomy and awareness of the students' own educational path.

Another key component that we have observed is a poor instru-mental motivation for studying languages in learners with majors that are not related to Italian studies.

Finally, some individuals possess a strong extrinsic motivation, which is typical of formal learning contexts; I'm speaking of the desire to achieve specific results, such as receiving good grades and academic credits. Since at our Institute (ISI Florence) the Italian language course is compulsory, this type of motivation can be predominant at the beginning of the semester.

As teachers, therefore, we asked ourselves what methods of inter-vention we could use to make positive and significant changes to our teaching practice, thus improving our students' motivational framework. Basically, we identified three areas of intervention and proposals, whose aims are as follows:

a. Creating a positive atmosphere in class and encouraging students to be active participants in their studies.

b. Strengthening both the motivation to integrate with the host com-munity and cultural motivation.

c. Developing the intrinsic dimension of motivation.

With regard to the first point, in order to create a learning context that allows students to experience positive emotions and (consequently) reduce emotional filters, we focus a lot on the atmosphere and on how we manage the class. This is particularly true in the preliminary stages

and the initial meetings with the class, i.e., the first two weeks of the semester. As already mentioned, we immediately explain that, the purpose of any language is mainly to communicate and act in a social context. In our course we do not pursue an ideal of grammatical perfection; making mistakes is an integral part of language acquisition. We emphasize that learning a language requires both time and commitment.

In the classroom we prefer cooperative learning, so students often work in pairs, groups, and teams. Their learning activities are meant to create meaningful relationships among them. In this way it is the group as a whole that becomes the "learner." Also, this methodology can help reassure shy or less self-confident students. In an activity like discovering grammatical mechanisms, students are not alone, as they share ideas and collaborate with their peers to build what is – at once – new and mutual knowledge.

Another crucial point I would like to talk about is the negotiation process, which is the basis for establishing a meaningful relationship between teacher and group / class. One of its benefits is to effectively involve students (from the very beginning) in the decisions that define their own educational path. Our students are young adults in a university context. Therefore, a fundamental educational goal in their case is precisely to develop greater autonomy and a stronger ability to manage their own educational project.

So, what do we do in practice? Together with our students we analyze their needs, we present and discuss methodological principles, we explain the linguistic objectives of the course as well as the aims of the didactic activities. All of this is done at the beginning of the semester and then repeated throughout the semester. To better illustrate this, I shall use an example relating to linguistic objectives. Considering the peculiarity of the class group, it is certainly possible to negotiate some competences to be acquired, while remaining within a consolidated program. For example, in a class of architecture students, part of the vocabulary activities can concentrate on the development of a sectorial language that is of immediate interest to the students.

Now we come to the second point, concerning strategies that can be used to strengthen motivation towards the external environment. In this case we intervene substantially by creating new linguistic needs, such as the need to interact with the environment outside the classroom. To create a significant interrelationship between the study of Italian in the classroom and the external context, we have developed multiple opportunities for cultural and linguistic exchange. An example of this is conversations between our students and Italian university peers; these meetings are an integral part of the semester program.

It is important to emphasize that, during these activities, the attention and energy of the students is focused on interacting with the group of native speakers. As such, this experience loses (at least in part) the meaning traditionally associated with a teaching activity. It becomes, instead, an opportunity to communicate with peers, to receive useful information (names of restaurants, places and shops where to go) and to begin discovering some cultural aspects (e.g., the lifestyle of the peer group, the Italian university system, and the role of the family in our society).

Cultural motivation is a valuable resource for the teacher. How can we make the most of it? Through our experience we have understood that it is essential to create a contact between the students and the city where they live for a semester. To this end, in the first two weeks we present simple yet not banal information about Florence, the main monuments and places of interest (squares, districts of the historic center, and markets). All of this information is accompanied by an essential thematic lexicon, suitable for an elementary level.

To keep this motivation alive throughout the semester, Florence becomes a linguistic and cultural laboratory. Among other activities, we propose interviews with native speakers, visits to university departments, markets, significant places in the urban context, and treasure hunts with different tasks to perform. In this way, students must" communicate and interact in a real context, respecting social rules and using an appropriate linguistic register (for instance, formal vs. informal).

With regard to the third area of intervention, i.e., the development

of intrinsic motivation, we work in two main directions: on the one hand, by intervening on the materials, the activities, and the methodologies we propose, while on the other hand, by trying to develop greater autonomy for the students, so that they can improve their ability to analyze needs and objectives and manage their own educational path.

If we consider the materials, activities, and methodologies proposed, it becomes of fundamental importance to stimulate pleasant emotions linked to the daily practice in the classroom. From our experience, these are the strategies we recommend: expanding and varying the typology of exercises; assigning tasks that involve different learning styles; carrying out new and interesting activities; exposing students to various kinds of feedback and materials; using forms of cooperative work and providing a playful method that offers fun challenges, which all work towards creating a more relaxed atmosphere.

At this point I would like to consider an absolutely key area in educational activities, namely, the sphere of conversation and oral production. In this case, to carry out pleasant and meaningful activities, it is important to replace the type of conversation often present in teaching situations (structured according to start-response-comment sequences, which do not allow for a real exchange of information) with more communicative activities and interactions similar to forms of spontaneous conversation. In the classroom we try, as far as possible, to avoid false pragmatism and to propose a more authentic conversation, for example by asking "real" questions, questions to which the teacher and other students do not know the answer. In concrete terms, we propose two types of interaction, in which language regains its natural value as a *medium* of communication and meanings, i.e., the general discussions and questions that students ask teachers.

Discussions on a specific topic can be enjoyable because they convey useful information and improve communication skills. In elementary level courses (as opposed to more advanced levels), conversation generally focuses on students relating personal experiences, such as travels, meetings, "adventures", and discoveries. Being stimulated by curiosity

and an interest in the teacher, the student-teacher interaction can produce a real exchange of information. Likewise, it can contribute to building a positive relationship between the teacher and the class group.

As for ideas to stimulate higher levels of autonomy, this is what we try to achieve:

> have students develop a real sense of participation in their studies, as noticed when talking about the "sphere of negotiation"; encourage learners to reflect on their own learning path, guiding them to become aware of the progress they make and the results they achieve; empower learners by delegating to them certain tasks traditionally performed by the teacher. In this last regard, for instance, we often prefer to provide the solutions to the assigned questions instead of correcting the answers in class. It is then the students' responsibility to compare them with their own answers and consult with the teacher in case they are having difficulties. We could say that when the teacher turns away, the student can and must take control of the situation.

I would like to conclude with a brief thought for your consideration. As teachers, by testing ourselves through daily practice and in the reality of the classroom, we have begun to understand that our work can and should always be guided by a handcrafted *modus operandi*. I believe we can be considered similar to artisans who, despite having a stable approach and reference models, modulate their work with creativity and flexibility, always using strategies and procedures that can be adapted on a case-by-case basis. In my opinion, a "handcrafted modus operandi" has a twofold advantage. On the one hand, it makes it possible to respect the peculiarities of the various subjects in the class group. On the other hand, it helps teachers break away from standard and pre-packaged teaching practices, favoring (on the contrary) personal qualities, strategies, styles, and resources, all of which contribute to sustain their own motivation.

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(Digital) Narrow Streets of Cobblestone:
Video Game-Based Learning as a Preparatory Device and Simulation Strategies for Study Abroad Programs*

Simone Bregni

Abstract

For decades now, video games have been a pervasive part of our culture (NBC-News.com, 2013). About half of all American adults play video games (Duggan, 2015), while 97% of teen boys and 83% of teen girls also play video games (Anderson & Jiang, 2018).

The potential for utilizing gaming in learning has been explored in a variety of fields, including language acquisition (e.g., Reinders, 2012). Some commercially available cinematic video games are fully-interactive multimedia experiences. Thus, including such games in the curriculum as *realia* (Spurr, 1942; Dlaska, 2003) can help students reinforce, and expand upon, materials they learn through traditional methods. *Realia* reinforce second/foreign language (F/L2) acquisition by developing specific personal interests. Cinematic games, similar in nature to movies, also add agency, which improves learning (Deters et al., 2014). They also involve problem-solving and critical thinking that can be applied to group interaction, all of which is particularly conducive to learning (Wenger, 1998) and F/L2 acquisition (Nunan, 1992). Video games can contribute to the goal of transforming our students into life-long learners of (a) F/L2 language(s), a process explored by CALL (e.g., Smith, 1997).

This article is a case study on teaching practices with video game-based learning, its benefits in the foreign language classroom and, in a more general sense, in second/foreign language and culture acquisition (F/L2). I argue that utilizing video games as part of F/L2 experiences, including the different phases of the study abroad experience (pre-departure, during the program, and post-depar-

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ture), can enhance the learning of F/L2 language and culture. Video games are simulations that challenge, based on repetition, which involve players at a deep level, thus affording agency. In recent cinematic "AAA" commercial video game titles, the simulation aspect engages players in a dialogue-based, narrative context that can prepare students for real-life conversations. This article also serves as a practicum, by providing suggestions on how to use commercial video games to enhance language and culture acquisition as part of independent, autonomous students' learning that educators and administrators can foster, structured learning experiences such as study abroad (including pre- and post-departure), and courses.

For decades now, video games have been a pervasive part of our culture (NBCNews.com, 2013). The rise in popularity of gaming on consoles, computers, mobile devices, and even "casual gaming" on social networks, have contributed to make video games an integral facet of our lives. The Pew Research Center recently stated that about half of American adults play videogames, with no substantial differences between male and female players (Duggan, 2015). That percentage rises exponentially among teens, where 97% of teen boys and 83% of teen girls play video games (Anderson & Jiang, 2018).

Given the implication of such numbers, this article is a case study on teaching practices with video game-based learning (VGBL), its benefits in the foreign language classroom and, in a more general sense, in second/foreign language and culture acquisition (F/L2). I argue that utilizing video games as part of F/L2 experiences, including in the different phases of the study abroad experience (pre-departure, during the pro-

gram, and post-departure), can enhance the learning of F/L2 language and culture. Video games are simulations that challenge players, based on repetition, which involve them at a deep level, thus affording agency. In recent cinematic "AAA" commercial video game titles, the simulation aspect engages players in a dialogue-based, narrative context that can prepare students for real-life conversations. The article also serves as a practicum, by providing suggestions on how to use commercial video games to enhance language and culture acquisition as part of independent, autonomous students' learning that educators and administrators can foster, structured learning experiences such as study abroad (including pre- and post-departure), and courses.

      As a professor of Italian language, literature and culture, I have been experimenting with VGBL since 1998. In recent years, I have found that some highly communication-oriented, cinematic, commercially-available video games are effective in my classroom as supplements to traditional teaching techniques, as tools to reinforce vocabulary and grammatical forms, as a means for presenting authentic cultural data, and as a challenge for students to problem-solve in their target language (TL). They are "AAA" big budget video game titles that can be purchased wherever video games are sold, such as the *Assassin's Creed* series (Ubisoft, 2007-2018), Square Enix's *Tomb Raider* series (2015-2018), and Quantic Dream's exclusives on PlayStation 4 (*Heavy Rain*, *Beyond: Two Souls* and *Detroit: Become Human*) to name a few of the more relevant ones. They are fully interactive cinematic experiences combining real-time animation, speech/dialogue, subtitles, writing (textual interaction) and even, in some cases, spoken interactions in the form of audio/video chats with other users. As a form of digital *realia*, artifacts in the TL that help enhance language acquisition, such video games can be used to reinforce and expand materials that have been previously learned through traditional methods (Bregni, 2018 & 2017).

      My own experiences as a F/L2 learner have always played an essential role in guiding my pedagogical approach to the teaching of F/L2 and culture. Also, they supported the importance of *realia* that informed

my teaching. During the home computer revolution of the mid-1980s, I realized that playing text-based adventure games such as Activision's *Alter Ego* over extended periods of time would rapidly improve my foreign language skills. By experiencing narrative-oriented (text-based only, at the time) quests in video games, not only was I reading in a foreign language, I was also applying my reading comprehension to problem-solving and attaining goals and solutions.

It was with the advent of high-budget, more sophisticated, and fully voice-acted cinematic games released from 2007 onwards that my classroom experiences began producing more interesting results. In my teaching practices, the use of video games has proven to be an effective didactic tool for reinforcing linguistic skills (Bregni, 2018 & 2017).

"AAA" Video Games as Learning Devices

Can a video game motivate more than a lesson? Laurence Schmoll, professor of French as a Foreign Language (FLE) and researcher in foreign language acquisition at the University of Strasbourg, believes this to be true, as she argues in her article on integrating video games in the language classroom (Schmoll, 2017). In an interview with *Agence France Press* (Billing, 2018), she commented: "The fictional nature [of the video game experience with 'AAA' titles] makes it possible to forget the anxiety of learning [...]. The challenge is that students really think of it as a game and not as an exercise." Like other F/L2 instructors, including myself, Schmoll uses big budget, "AAA" commercial games rather than "serious games," which include software that is specifically created by educators for the purpose of language learning. Schmoll believes, like I do, that "AAA" titles are more fun, more engaging and more "polished" products than current "serious", educational games. "Video games are not here to replace the teachers," clarifies Schmoll (Billing, 2018). However, video games as *realia* provide exposure to the spoken language within the context of engaging digital narratives and have several additional positive features. In video games, "mistakes are not stigmatizing. They are just an invitation to try again," says Alexis Hassler, a young teacher

in FLE (Billing, 2018). American scholar Jonathon Reinhardt (2017) points out that several key principles of a well-designed video game find their equivalent in F/L2 acquisition. Interaction, which is essential in learning a new language, is also central to the player's experience in a video game, as well as the pursuit of goals (task-based learning), an engaging narrative context, and the presence of feedback systems.

A Foreign Language & Culture Course for Gamers

My experimentation with video games as a learning device in the F/L2 language classroom has led me to explore the option of developing a video game-based language course that utilizes "AAA" commercial video game titles. In fall 2016, as the recipient of a Saint Louis University (SLU) Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning Fellowship, I further developed language acquisition strategies, methodologies, materials (worksheets, projects and assignments), as well as assessment practices based on video games and related media (magazines, online and in print; websites; YouTube videos, etc.). In spring 2017, I utilized the SLU state-of-the-art learning studio to offer *Intensive Italian for Gamers,* a course that combines "traditional" intensive language instruction with game-based learning. Following the pedagogical premise that language acquisition is a process that involves, and benefits from, daily interactions with the language both in and out of the classroom, the course targeted the specific segment of the student population that self-identifies as gamers. Self-identified gamers are approximately 10% of American adults according to the 2015 PEW research (Duggan, 2015). Based on my teaching practices and experiences, I believed that a strong, shared interest/passion for gaming would stimulate and enhance the students' learning process, thus justifying the intensive nature of the course (Bregni, 2018 & 2017).

Why Video Games? What Interaction with the Research Literature Tells Us

Why should educators consider using video games either in their teaching or, in more general terms, as part of learning experiences, such as study abroad?

Video Games as Digital *Realia*. The potential of gaming in learning has been explored in a variety of fields, including language acquisition (e.g., Reinders, 2012). Literature on video game in F/L2 acquisition mainly focuses on "serious gaming," and is focused on the concept of player agency and the creation of specific games for F/L2 acquisition (Sykes & Reinhardt, 2012; Neville, 2009 & 2010, Sørensen & Meyer, 2007). Research on F/L2 acquisition in commercially available video games is gaining momentum (for example, Ye, et al., 2008; Chen & Young, 2013, Reinhardt, 2017). In my research and teaching experience (Bregni, 2018 & 2017), particular commercially available cinematic video games are fully-interactive multimedia experiences that show positive results in terms of F/L2 (and, in some cases, culture) acquisition. Including such games in the curriculum as *realia* (Spurr, 1942; Dlaska, 2003) can help students improve their skills. *Realia* afford F/L2 acquisition through development of specific personal interests. Cinematic games, similar in nature to movies (ones that include verbal and non-verbal communication), also add the additional layer of agency, which improves learning (Deters, et al., 2014). They also involve problem-solving and critical thinking that can be applied to group interaction, all of which are particularly conducive to learning (Wenger, 1998) and F/L2 acquisition (Nunan, 1992).

Additionally, video games as digital *realia* can contribute to the goal of transforming students into life-long learners of (a) F/L2 language(s), a process explored by CALL (e.g., Smith, 1997).

I have always combined traditional teaching methods (grammar; syntax; and, of course, the interactive method) with *realia*, authentic cultural artifacts in a foreign language that can be used to improve linguistic skills. Using realia in the second/foreign language classroom allows the reinforcement and expansion of vocabulary and grammar structures that have already been previously acquired through traditional learning methods. They also encourage autonomous, independent exploration and learning of the foreign language(s) and related culture(s). Thus, my students, from elementary through advanced, are exposed to literature, poetry, cinema, comics and graphic novels, TV series, songs, traditional

language-classroom word games, board games, learning apps on mobile devices, and "serious" games (that is, games specifically created for learning purposes).

Realia, including video games, cannot be used by themselves; that would be "flaky." But they can be effectively used to reinforce materials that have been learned through traditional methods. Reinforcing materials (grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and style) that have been recently learned through traditional methods are the most effective use of *realia*, as scholarship shows (Spurr, 1942; Dlaska, 2003).

Language learning is a complex reality that requires multiple investigations and multi-focused approaches. *Realia* enhance learning by providing opportunities for multi-focused approaches. I know that my students very much appreciate the fact that I constantly try new approaches and expose them to new challenges through *realia*. They also contribute to making my teaching more dynamic and interesting. I firmly believe that learning should be fun and that game-based learning is effective (Farber, 2017).

Video Game-Based Learning vs. Gamification. Is using video games in the foreign language classroom simply an instance of gamification? It is necessary to delineate a distinction between gamification and game-based learning (GBL), two concepts that are often confused. Gamification (teachers turning lessons into a game they designed) is merely a revamped reward system, not an actual teaching method. It is a motivational tool. Motivation is important to encourage learning, but it does not actually do the teaching. GBL is pedagogy, which is closely connected to play theory. In GBL learners apply critical thinking (Farber, 2017).

"Affinity Spaces," Learning Groups and Social Experiences. Why create a course specifically targeting self-professed gamers, as I have? Why should educators and institutions consider creating specific gaming spaces in our colleges and study abroad programs? With my Intensive Italian for Gamers course, I aimed to create an "affinity space." According to Gee, "An affinity space is a place or set of places where people

affiliate with others based primarily on shared activities, interests, and goals, not shared race, class culture, ethnicity, or gender" (Gee, 2004, p. 77). Affinity learning groups, whether formal or informal, as research indicates, enhance learning (Gee, 2005b). Such affinity spaces can also take place virtually, in online video games or online spaces (forums, groups, etc.) for gamers (Gee & Hayes, 2009). Playing games is often a collective experience. Our students typically gather to play together, or even just watch each other play. They communicate about the shared experience, exchanging tips and suggestions, expressing encouragement, disappointment or triumph. The creation of spaces specifically reserved for gaming in a learning institution, such as a campus and/or study abroad program can foster the natural development of such an "affinity space" for shared learning experiences and collective learning. In order to foster meaningful independent learning, specific guidelines should be established that encourage students to play exclusively in the TL, with subtitles in the TL, and accessing digital dictionaries such as Wordreference.com on their portable devices to identify unfamiliar words as they play (see "Autonomous Learning," below).

Narratives in Cinematic Video Games. Certain cinematic, highly communicative, commercially-available games (such as the Assassin's Creed series) are particularly conducive to foreign language acquisition because they include the important additional learning component of a detailed narrative. These games have fairly complex story lines involving a quest that unfolds as the player interacts with gameplay. Narrative approaches to F/L2 language acquisition research stem from the premise that human beings are storytellers (Polkinghorne 1988). Bruner (1991) states that people apprehend reality and organize knowledge by means of narrative structures. Narratives in F/L2 have the benefit of engaging the learner by adding an additional layer of context that challenges the reader to follow characters and events as they unfold throughout the story. In cinematic video games, such challenges are heightened by the interactive nature of the medium. While there is a solid body of research on nar-

ratives in commercially available video games (Juul 2001; Gee 2003 and 2005a; and several others in the publications of DiGRA, the Digital Game Research Association, http://www.digra.org), at present scholarship focusing on the role and use of narratives in commercial video games for language acquisition is limited (Chen & Young, 2013; Bregni, 2017).

The Challenge of Video Games. Video games are effective not because they are fun, but because they are challenging, says Uruguayan software engineer Gonzalo Frasca, creator of DragonBox School, a video game series designed to teach Math in K-12 (Rosario3, 2018). They are difficult, and the repetition enhances comprehension and memorization. Playing video games also involves the body at a physical level. This role of physical involvement in learning is analyzed in Total Physical Response theory (TPR) (Asher, 1996; Byram, 2000, pp. 631-633; Cook, 2008). Also, playing video games causes adrenaline production (Mitchell & Savill-Smith, 2004, p. 17). It modifies the perception of surrounding reality, which was taken into consideration in Flow Theory (FT) (Csikszentmihályi 1997), which states that the best learning happens when we become oblivious to the passing of time. Gamers often refer to "being in the zone" when they play effectively: "Time distortion indicates the degree to which a student loses the sense of time during a learning activity" (Lee, 2015). TPR, adrenaline production and FT, all point in the direction of video games being particularly effective for learning.

Video Games as Life Simulation. Video games are simulations (of fictional or real experiences and events, if not a combination of both) that are challenging, based on repetition, and that involve players at a deep level, thus affording agency. The simulation aspect engages players in an immersive, dialogue-based narrative context that can prepare students for real-life conversations. (Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al., 2016). For example, through observing Ezio Auditore engage citizens of Renaissance Florence in conversations on different topics (from casual chit-chat about everyday errands to elaborate political discussion with historical characters such

as Leonardo Da Vinci, Niccolò Machiavelli and Lorenzo de' Medici) students are afforded the opportunity to practice, in a simulation of real-life conversation, a variety of conversational forms, from basics such as salutations and take-leaves, to complex, advanced hypothetical structures.

Utilizing Video Games as *Realia* in F/L2 Acquisition

While similar in nature to movies, cinematic games such as *Assassin's Creed II* and *Brotherhood*, *Rise of the Tomb Raider,* and *Heavy Rain and Beyond: Two Souls*, possess additional interactive components. They contain materials diverse enough to contribute to reinforcing vocabulary, grammar and syntax through listening and reading comprehension, lexical expansion, and problem solving. They can be used at all levels, in one form or another, and as a lab or classroom activity. They present in-game text and subtitles in multiple languages, including Italian[1]. Games can also supplement the learning of culture. Particularly notable in that sense for Italian as F/L2, are two main chapters in the *Assassin's Creed* series set in Renaissance Italy, *Assassin's Creed II* and *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*. The *Assassin's Creed* games, with their outstanding re-creation of everyday life and culture of the specific era and the setting of its geographical location, allow educators in languages and cultures to explore first-hand several aspects of life in various locations of Renaissance Italy in dynamic, immersive, and interactive ways. Thus, a "AAA" game such as *Assassin's Creed II* can also effectively enhance the learning of Italian culture in literature courses.

As I said above, in order for VGBL to be effective, there must be solid preliminary work done (such as the creation of vocabulary worksheets, listening and reading comprehension exercises complete with follow-up activities) before each video game-based class activity (Bregni 2018 & 2017). There are currently no textbooks (or scholarly articles, for that matter) that could provide a "data bank" of suitable games and exercises for

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1   Italian content, however, is available only in physical disc copies purchased in European territories. I typically buy games for my courses directly from Amazon Italy, which ships to the US.

F/L2 acquisition. I have had to create my own such materials for my *Intensive Language for Gamers* course, and other courses. The process was very time-consuming, and I would very much like to share my work with other colleagues (a game-based textbook is currently in the works, in cooperation with colleagues in the field of F/L2 and linguistics). Each gaming session was combined with preliminary and follow-up worksheets centered on scaffolding (Sawyer 2006) and task-based learning (Thomas & Reinders 2010).

Video Games in the Study Abroad Experience

For all the reasons indicated above, I believe that fostering the creation of spaces in learning institutions, including study abroad programs (and also foreign language immersion spaces on US campuses), where students could explore gaming in the TL, could enhance their learning experience. Setting up a specific gaming space in a atudy abroad center would be relatively easy and inexpensive: one or two joypads, a large flat-screen TV set; a gaming system (I recommend PlayStation 4, which currently has the widest selection of cinematic narrative games, including the excellent exclusives by Quantic Dream.) Such a space can provide access to digital video game-based *realia* that can be utilized by informal groups of learners. While on sabbatical in spring 2018, I visited two study abroad programs in Italy and two in Spain. Some had large facilities, others had small but quaint spaces. A gaming area would be easy to set up in all of them, and I believe that it would contribute to turning even a relatively small room into a social shared space for out-of-classroom, continuous game-based learning. In terms of games, I believe that ease of access is the key for such shared social spaces in the Study Abroad experience. Since the more gamer-oriented products like *Assassin's Creed* and *Tomb Raider*, are also, typically, one-player games, the shared communal gaming space should also be equipped with multiplayer casual games that are easily accessible to anyone, including non-gamers. I recommend the fun and engaging casual party games in the Sony PlayLink series, such as *Dimmi chi sei!* (*That's you!*) and *Sapere è potere* (*Knowledge is Power*), which use mobile

apps (Apple or Android, tablets or cellular phones) instead of controllers, allowing up to six player groups to interact. These games are simple, fun trivia and "what if?" type of games, and they are very accessible when played in the TL, even at the elementary level.

We have created such a learning gaming space in the Language Resource Center in the Department of Languages, Literatures & Cultures at Saint Louis University. Students can access a specific study/relax room in the language lab that has been equipped with chairs, armchairs, a sofa, a PS4 gaming system and games in multiple languages. Besides Italian, we also have games in French, Spanish and German. Games for Italian were purchased online from Amazon Italy. Students in the department are welcome to use the space at any time during lab hours (from 9a.m. through 9p.m.) either individually or in small groups, informally or as part of a course. Additionally, the PS4 is relatively small and light, so it can be easily transported to the classrooms or language labs for course-based gaming activities.

Learning with Games – Autonomous Learning. Setting up a specific gaming space in study abroad programs (and also in foreign language immersion housing on US campuses) affords students the opportunity to explore informal, autonomous learning in the TL, on their own free time, individually or as part of a small group. Educators, for their part, can assist by guiding students to meaningful autonomous learning. For example, they can encourage students to do the following:

- Play the games in Italian, with Italian subtitles and menus. From the gaming console settings, the language can be set to Italian. Language options for each individual game are often set from within the game itself.
- Access Wordreference.com (as a website, or as an app) on their mobile devices when playing. When encountering words with which they are unfamiliar, guide them to look at the context. Are they capable of assigning a plausible meaning to that word from context? If so, then move on. Is that word, on the other hand, un-

familiar? If so, then check its meaning on Wordreference. As an alternative, students could access google.it on their mobile devices to access Google Images. Thus, for example, if the game asked players to look for a *ponte*, and the students were unfamiliar with the meaning of that word, a simple search on Google Images would reveal within a few seconds pictures of bridges.

Also, students who enjoy games could be asked to write reflections on, or discuss, their gaming experiences as part of a traditional course. Even at the elementary level, students are able to describe their experiences in short sentences or paragraphs.

Learning Italian with Video Games: Course-Based. Study Abroad courses, including pre-departure or post-departure courses, could easily include a video gaming component. At the most basic level, instructors could simply provide opportunities for students to discuss their passion for gaming and/or their on-site/at home gaming experiences. Student-driven gaming activities could be incorporated as part of written and oral assignments, as topics of compositions and conversations. For example, within the setting of an oral presentation, instructors could provide the opportunity for student gamers to present on their favorite game, by including primary and secondary sources in the TL (i.e., gaming websites; video game magazines; YouTube channels) and quoting them. This is a basic "show and tell" type scenario. Alternatively, a first-semester Italian language course could reinforce interrogative pronouns (*Chi, quando, cosa, dove, quale, perché,* etc.) by playing a ten-minute session of *Sapere è Potere* on PS4, or *Trivial Pursuit Live!* on the Nintendo Switch (set in Italian). The advantage of the PS4 PlayLink series is that they are easy-to-pick up, fun casual games with no learning curve for up to six players, or six small groups, can participate through a mobile app.

In pre-departure courses, (taught in either Italian or English), students who will be leaving for their study abroad experience in Italy could be invited to play (outside class), or view on YouTube playthrough videos from, *Assassin's Creed II* and *Brotherhood*, observe the digital re-creations

of Renaissance cities (Florence, Venice and Rome), and then research what the in-game locations look like today. While Ubisoft has taken some liberties, the digital re-creation of the Italian cityscapes and landmarks is convincing enough to provide students with a comforting sense of preliminary digital exploration of the places that they will soon explore physically. Although playing *Assassin's Creed II* would not teach students how to get from the Duomo to Ponte Vecchio in Florence, it would give them a general sense of their location in relation to one another (as distances have been "edited" for practical in-game purposes). Above all, though, it would show them the splendor that was Florence under the Medici. Such is the power of digital simulations, and game-based learning.

Learning Italian Literature & Culture with Video Games. The *Assassin's Creed* series is a convergent medium that generates interest about the Italian Renaissance. While not perfect, it is well-researched and, as a re-creation, it is appealing and engaging. For instruction at all levels, from the senior year of high school (according to the suggested ESRB and PEGI ratings of Mature/17) to university, the series lends itself to being used as a learning device, provided some general rules about using digital *realia* as supplements to standard instruction are followed (Bregni 2018 & 2017). As I mentioned, since 2013 I have been using the *Assassin's Creed* series in my Medieval and Renaissance Literature courses (taught in English and Italian) in a series of video game-based activities that are designed to enhance and expand upon traditional learning. Such activities involve selecting approximately ten to twenty minutes of gameplay from specific sections *Assassin's Creed II* or *Brotherhood* that are relevant to the topic (Leonardo Da Vinci, Niccolò Machiavelli, Girolamo Savonarola, Lorenzo de' Medici, etc.), and creating worksheets with preliminary and post-activity questions. Activities take place in a classroom that is equipped with a PS4 system and a projection screen. Like I do in all my language courses, I elicit volunteers. Each student volunteer will play for a few minutes, then pass the controller to another, while the rest of the class participates by providing advice on how to proceed and what actions to take in the game.

Each worksheet includes pre- and post-activity questions. In the pre-VG-BL activity section, the first set of questions aims at verifying students' already-acquired knowledge of the subject (for example, on the Medici's role in fostering the arts in the Renaissance) based on "traditional" learning conducted prior to this point (from lectures, PowerPoints and assigned readings); the second set aims at preparing students to observe specific elements of the video game narrative that they are about to access. In the post-activity section, exercises are designed to first verify what has been learned through the VGBL activity, and second require students to compare elements from the game narrative with actual facts, events, and data.

In my Survey of Medieval and Renaissance Literature course, we also use the video game *Dante's Inferno* (Visceral Games, 2010) as a means to explore visual re-creations of Dante's poem. While the storyline and visual interpretations often differ from the letter of the *Commedia* (but at the same time Vergil's authentic words from the poem are used), the game can effectively be utilized to assist students to reflect critically on the narrative choices that Dante makes, as the author, and how the game's interpretations can shed light on Dante's view of life and the afterlife in the poem. For example, the game's representation of those damned by love in *Inferno* V, with its emphasis on audiovisual representations of human sexuality, can be compared to Dante's choice not to focus on the carnality of their sin. Dr. Brandon Essary at Elon University has created an entire course centered on the convergence between Dante's *Inferno*, the poem, and the video game. Through VGBL, we both also teach our students about fact-checking. Dr. Brandon Essary has successfully incorporated the *Assassin's Creed* series in his courses at Elon University, including a study abroad pre-departure course, entitled "Renaissance Italy: Video Games versus Reality".

Learning Italian with Video Games: VGBL Courses. In creating the *Intensive Italian for Gamers* course, I was fully aware that I was exploring new territories, so to speak; but I also hoped that my pioneering efforts could pave the way for other Italian F/L1 educators to follow in my

footsteps, possibly utilizing my methods and the materials I was developing. While not for everyone, some instructors may have strong interest in the medium and would like to explore my methodology. That is why, in fall 2018, with the assistance of the SLU Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning, I created an effective VGBL hands-on workshop format that I delivered to several European institutions in spring 2018, and why I created a textbook proposal that is currently being evaluated by US publishers. My *Intensive Italian for Gamers* course is a mixed/hybrid course, connected to the textbook *Percorsi* by Pearson (Italiano & Marchegiani, 3rd, 2015) and the online program *MyItalianLab*. Each of the fifty-minute periods (three times a week) is divided in two parts: thirty minutes for "regular" instruction, while the last twenty minutes are devoted to game-based learning. Each week, a game-based module is presented. Each module is centered around a section of a game that I select, which specifically allows me to reinforce the structures and vocabulary that students have just learned through their textbook and modeled in class (covering approximately one chapter of *Percorsi* every week; twice as many as in our traditional language core requirement courses). Games are played fully in Italian, with Italian subtitles.

  Each gaming session is combined with preliminary and follow-up worksheets centered on scaffolding and task-based learning. My typical worksheet first presents general gaming vocabulary and a brief overview of the game in the TL, focusing on cognates, i.e., words that are similar among languages that share common roots. Pictures are used to introduce new vocabulary as presented in the game. The video cut-scene sections are used for fill-in-the-gaps and word-matching exercises, to guide students to identify new words, verbs and idioms in context. Additional exercises assist students' listening comprehension (with YouTube links to users' play-through videos that students can use for follow-up exercises). Through hyperlinks, students can learn more about the context (for instance, Renaissance Italy). The game can be paused at any time, and students can engage in answering questions, group repetition, and pair role-play exercises. All these exercises are designed to help student ac-

quire the new vocabulary, verbs, and idioms. The final creative phase includes follow-up exercises focused on the expansion of written and oral production, partially done in class and partially assigned as homework (Bregni, 2017).

Students take turns to physically hold the controller (for five-minute sessions each), while the rest of the class provides suggestions, approval or disappointment in the TL (*Jump! Turn right! Open that door!* and so on), using vocabulary and structures that were introduced on a preliminary worksheet. Task-based group interaction centered on problem-solving improves learning (Wenger, 1998) and language acquisition in particular (Nunan, 1992).

While we only cover the initial thirty to forty minutes of each given game, this provides students with the vocabulary and the context to continue playing the game on their own.

Is Video Game-Based Learning Effective?

I have performed outcomes assessment for the *Intensive Italian for Gamers* course using both direct measures (testing: initial test; midterm exam; and final exam) and indirect measures (an exit survey and an intercultural competence survey). The experience of teaching *Intensive Italian for Gamers* was (and is, since I am currently teaching the course in spring 2019), very positive. Although students came from very different backgrounds in terms of linguistic abilities, they all successfully attained second-semester competency in the language. With active, continuous involvement in the play mechanics all students in the course, by the third week of the semester, could effectively give commands and express success or disappointment, all of which are essential communicative structures normally acquired towards the end of the first/early second semester.

Most interestingly, all students autonomously continued to explore gaming in the TL outside the classroom, by playing their own games in the language, or meeting as a group to play in our language lab. As a result, by the end of the semester students were showing knowledge of the language and culture (including idioms, interjections and fillers, expressions

of joy, excitement and frustration – all markers of fluency in foreign language acquisition) that exceeded normative standards. While additional long-term research must be done, preliminary analysis does show some interesting facts that are worthy of further study. In the language course for gamers, the mid term grade approximates the final grade that students would achieve in the first semester of the two-semester sequence. Likewise, their final grade approximates the final grade that students would achieve in the second semester of the two-semester sequence. A perusal of our current data shows that students in the gaming course were almost four points lower, on average, when comparing the midterm grade with the final first semester student grades. When one looks at the final grades for the gamers, as compared to regular second semester students, the relationship reverses. Here the students in this new course rank two points higher, on average, than their counterparts in the regular program. What this seems to indicate is that the "initial shock" of the intensity of the course might well have a dampening effect on grades but by the end of the semester, the students are doing better than their counterparts in regular courses. The intensity and immersion may be confusing initially but can be overcome, yielding better results in the end.

Outcomes assessment performed in my Renaissance Italian Literature courses show positive results as well. Students commented that they appreciated the visual appeal and digital reconstruction of Renaissance Italy in *Assassin's Creed II* and *Brotherhood* (Bregni, 2018 & 2017). In the post-VGBL activity exit survey, students commented that the games helped them visualize Renaissance Italy not only in terms of famous monuments and historical characters, but also in terms of everyday life and society (Bregni, 2017). The *Assassin's Creed* series allowed students to experience, not merely observe, the Italian Renaissance through a visually-appealing, plausible digital scenario where they could place the historical figures of Leonardo Da Vinci, Niccolò Machiavelli and Lorenzo de' Medici.

In terms of study abroad experiences, the hands-on VGBL workshops that I delivered at undergraduate and graduate programs in Italy

and Spain in spring 2018 were very well received. I delivered workshops that included sample language and culture activities to students from the joint M.A. program in Spanish and English at NYU Madrid, and to undergraduate students in Italian at the elementary and intermediate level at the Spring Hill College program in Bologna. Post-activity surveys show that all respondents enjoyed the VGBL activities, including non-gamers (circa 94% enjoyed them very much. Respondents were approximately 40% of the total participants); they felt that the workshop provided them with an opportunity to learn about new approaches to the learning of foreign languages. Lastly, they felt that the workshop provided them with practical ideas and suggestions for new approaches/new materials to use in their own foreign language learning.

Students' comments also indicated an intention to further develop their Italian by continuing to explore the language autonomously, some with games, some in other ways:

> "I really enjoyed the opportunity to learn Italian through video games. I look forward to using the same technique on my own to continue my Italian studies after this semester."
> "[…] Such an interesting and new perspective on language! It makes me want to do more activities in Italian, as well as learn more about how video games are made."
> "Many don't consider learning a language through something they use every day, such as playing video games and I think this will be crucial for the evolution of language learning in the near future."
> "[…] It is definitely something that I will continue to research in the future in order to apply in my teaching style.

As such, this yields the desired outcome of turning students into life long learners.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank NYU Madrid and Spring Hill College in Bologna for the opportunity to share my scholarship and teaching practices with their students and faculty.

Conclusions and Future Study

Particularly interesting, and worthy of further study, are students' comments related to their feeling "safe" in expressing themselves in the TL in my video game-based courses. The "affinity space" of, and for, gamers seems to be producing positive results, in that sense.

Students also expressed feeling safe in exploring communicative modes in the TL in the video game simulation. For study abroad experiences, in particular, I believe that this element of feeling safe in the simulation of the digital exploration of physical spaces and dialogue plays an important role. Video games as simulations can assist our students in preparing them to not only "visualize" their future (pre-departure), present (while studying abroad and traveling around Italy) and past (post-departure) Italian experience, but also provide them with "survival" elements that can help them feel well-equipped for the experience. For example, when in *Assassin's Creed II* students see a young Leonardo da Vinci greeting his friend Madonna Lucrezia (the protagonist's mother) by kissing her on both cheeks, from left to right, with the lips not physically touching the other person's face, they are given the opportunity to "safely" observe a digital reconstruction of a striking cultural difference (and a potentially awkward one, in real life) at play. Do they not get similar opportunities to experience cultural differences at play from movies, also? Of course. But agency is what makes the difference. Agency, by putting the students/players in the protagonist's shoes, simulates the experience of actually being present in the specific situation.

Furthermore, interviewed students mentioned that they continued to play games or exploring other media in Italian even after the course had finished. Their motivation continued beyond the end of the course.

While more long-term research must be done, initial results of this course do, in fact, provide an answer to the question of whether the use of video game *realia* improves language acquisition. Given those preliminary results, I do believe that video games are an effective didactic tool for reinforcing linguistic skills, thanks to the immersive nature of the medium (TPR; FT); agency; and, last but not least, to the fun component of the me-

dium itself, when it is represented by engaging, high-budget "AAA" commercial gaming titles, such as the *Assassin's Creed* series, the Quantic Dream games, and the more recent entries in the *Tomb Raider* series, all of which involve gamers at a deep level, engaging them to complete these quests.

　　　　Video games are a pervasive part of our culture; they can offer many advantages to learners. Among such benefits, I believe, is turning that which, in some cases, is a substantial part of our students' extra-curricular activities into an out-of-classroom/continuing (and ubiquitous, thanks to mobile gaming) learning experience.

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The Convergence of Study Abroad Phrasing:
The Imagined Space of Globalization and the Isomorphism of Higher Education in an Expanding World Culture

Sarah Fuller

*"The mission of the student exchange program is to help students gain **understanding**, acquire **knowledge**, and develop **skills** for living in **a globally interdependent and culturally diverse world**… The student exchange program is a key component of the international profile of [the] university [and its] partners… to further the **internationalization** of their campuses. University students experience **intellectual, social, and personal growth** through **immersion** into another culture."*
– Study abroad program description

Abstract

This paper is intended to highlight the case of how study abroad programs are portrayed online by universities. Despite great variety in location, structure, funding, length, and a number of other factors, the programs sound very similar in the way they are described by their websites. This isomorphism speaks to a trend that extends well beyond study abroad and into higher education in general, reflecting the perpetuation of a rapidly expanding world-culture, which despite its seeming anonymity emerges from the influence of supranational and international organizations and then is given local meaning that legitimizes its existence. In presenting this analysis and the network map as a visual example, I aim to bring attention to how universities are partaking in this world culture and the imagined global space through study abroad programming. I recognize the limitations of such a preliminary overview and call for further studies to explore this topic in greater depth.

Keywords: study abroad, phrasing, higher education, globalization, world economy, university web sites, academics

Introduction

Study abroad programs (used as a general term herein to mean out-bound student mobility sponsored by universities) continue to proliferate as research has aimed to answer questions regarding the programs' content, the internationalization of higher education, and the effects of student exchange. While some of the existing literature attempts to answer how well the expected outcomes – such as language learning, cultural understanding, and global competence – are measured and to what extent they are achieved, there remains thus far, a lack of an exploration of the similarities among the websites of university study abroad programs. At first glance it may appear that these study abroad websites are advertising the programs uniquely sponsored in part by their universities, but closer review reveals a high degree of convergence in phrasing. This convergence is just one of many examples of the increasing isomorphism in higher education that is associated with globalization and internationalization. This paper thus aims to analyze the isomorphism of study abroad phrasing by acknowledging the role of universities in the spatialization of globalization and the capitalist world-economy. This demands an understanding of globalization and internationalization, which I argue is more complete when viewed through the lenses of both World Systems Analysis and World Culture Theory.

Study Abroad: Past and Present

The higher education institution has a long international history traceable to the academic mobility of medieval times. Immediately following World War II, the internationalization of higher education in the United States was dominated by political motives, visible through the European Marshall Plan. During the Cold War, American higher education engaged in oversees activity with the purported goal of promoting peace and understanding while others understood it as an assertion of power and imperialism (Mitchell & Nielsen, 2012). This eventually gave way to an economic rationale motivated by the notion of academic capitalism, which involved the belief that globalization required higher education to

change its goals to mirror the modern market (Mitchell & Nielsen, 2012).

Despite its roots, the international character of universities today has become distinguishably more complex. Study abroad is just one feature of this all-encompassing international identity, which has come, in addition to more traditional scholar exchange, to also include the structural agreements that facilitate the movement of students and researchers, as well as the convergence of course offerings and curricula (Frank, Robinson, & Oleson, 2011). One possible explanation is an increase in the entrepreneurialism demanded of universities as they compete to maintain their share of an expanding global market (Mitchell & Nielsen, 2012). Levy (2003) calls for a more cognizant acknowledgment of the fact that the field of study abroad is driven by a market very similar to tourism and that many aspects of study abroad involve the relationship between consumer and producer. Similarly, Anderson et al. (2006) cite student recruitment as one motivation for the increasing numbers of study abroad programs offered by universities and colleges. Thus, while study abroad may have its roots in historic scholar exchange, it is nothing short of naïve to overlook the economic rationale that has motivated many of its modern identifying features, as it has joined a long list of higher education activities that align with academic capitalism.

Higher Education in a Capitalist World-Economy

It is clear from the rapid increase in study abroad programs worldwide that the notion of academic capital is not unique to universities in the United States. Throughout the world, higher education institutions participate in programs of student and scholar exchange that are expanding rapidly in scope and number and becoming increasingly isomorphic at least in phrasing (i.e., the wording used by universities to frame their study abroad programs online) if not also in structure. Griffiths and Arnove (2015) raise the concern that any discussion of the isomorphism of education is incomplete without the acknowledgment of the capitalist world-economy. They explain that nation-states were created within a growing international system that defined and legitimated their posi-

tions in an expanding capitalist world-economy. According to their version of World Systems Analysis, the participation of nation-states in this world-economy provides an understanding of reality as they compete for shares of global surplus and to improve their positions within the global hierarchy (Griffiths & Arnove, 2015).

As the nation-state is not the sole provider of higher education, it is also necessary to understand higher education's position within this world-economy by analyzing how universities themselves, rather than just nation-states, can assume the role of key actors within this system of competition. Such a system is visible by analyzing the converging discourse on study abroad which is strikingly similar regardless of the culture, language, politics, economy, resources, or geography of the country in which its university is located. Some distinguishable patterns exist, but they do not serve to negate the overall convergence of study abroad phrasing, which by its transcendence of these factors points to their desire to earn, maintain, or improve their position within the capitalist world-economy. Their participation in this world-economy through study abroad is frequently attributed to globalization, necessitating an understanding of this phenomenon and the related concept of internationalization, which scholars argue is both a response to and a stimulus for further globalization (Mitchell & Nielsen, 2012; Matus & Talburt, 2015).

Globalization and Internationalization: A Cycle of Stimulus and Response

Mitchell and Nielsen (2012) importantly distinguish between these two interconnected phenomena of globalization and internationalization. First using a geographic metaphor, they clarify that the former is a common space that neutralizes frames of reference and has at its center the world's universities but that has no borders. Seen from an interactional standpoint, globalization is a process of increasing connectivity that fosters interdependence (Mitchell & Nielsen, 2012). Globalization as both a process and a common space has its roots, according to Mitchell and Neilsen (2012), in changes in communication and transportation that create access to new markets, goods, interactions, and relationships. Higher

education institutions have welcomed globalization and participated in the transformation of education into a product to be exchanged in this global market as they develop a consumerist approach. Thus, this market mentality has necessitated the transformation of education through internationalization, which Mitchell and Nielsen (2012) define as a series of actions chosen by individuals, groups, and institutions with the goal of crossing borders to gain social, cultural, political, or economic benefits. The emphasis is on these actors' agency in engaging in these deliberate choices. In summary, while globalization is seen as something that is happening, internationalization is seen as a response.

In the case of study abroad, higher education institutions are the ones making the decisions to cross borders, although it is important to note that study abroad programs are often framed as a *response* to the increasing internationalization of higher education. By responding with programming that enables the crossing of borders, however, it becomes clear that these institutions are actively contributing to internationalization and to the transformation of higher education into a good for exchange within the globalized market economy. Similarly, as is noted above (Mitchell & Nielsen, 2012; Matus & Talburt, 2015), universities both respond to and stimulate the phenomenon of globalization, enabled by their location as the hub or center of this imagined space, if viewed geographically. However, they remain for the most part unaware of how the choices associated with internationalization reinforce the globalization that has reshaped their environment of higher education (Mitchell & Nielsen, 2012).

While importantly clarifying how universities have helped to perpetuate globalization as a common space and an economic force, as well as internationalization's role as both a response and stimulus, Mitchell and Neilsen (2012) overlook how these phenomena have come to be such widespread "taken-for-granteds." Attributing it to expanding technology in communication and transportation does not entirely explain how these ideas themselves gained momentum in higher education nor how universities' approaches to internationalization became isomorphic in char-

acter. I use the convergence of study abroad phrasing (again, meaning the wording used by universities to frame their study abroad programs online) to illustrate one of countless examples of the isomorphism of modern higher education, which I believe warrants a deeper explanation to prevent the convergence of study abroad phrasing from becoming another "taken-for-granted" in the cycle of globalization and internationalization.

Network Analysis on the Convergence of Study Abroad Phrasing

I have chosen to illustrate the convergence of study abroad phrasing using a network analysis of common themes used by university study abroad websites. I sampled 30 study abroad websites from universities, each one from a different country, and representing six continents. I used the U.S. News and World Reports 2018 List of Best Global Universities as a sampling frame, but this was not intended to be a representative sample, and thus websites were purposively sampled according to the following criteria: their universities had an outbound international student program (e.g., study abroad or Erasmus+ available to students enrolled at that university) at the time of writing and a website responsible for this program, regardless of whether that page was dedicated specifically to outbound study or, in some cases, more generally belonged to office of international relations/affairs/education. For coding purposes, only websites that included a description of at least three sentences dedicated to the mission, available programming, or motivations for study abroad were included in the sample.

For each website in the sample, I coded the descriptions provided about outbound student mobility programs for themes regarding the motivations and outcomes of study abroad. The following themes emerged from my analysis: globalization, internationalization, interpersonal/intercultural communication, cultural immersion (including social or cultural integration), personal growth ("broadening horizons," "comfort zone"), international experience (including "travel"), language learning, academics (including credit and research), global citizenship/global competence, professional development (including "enhance employment op-

portunities"), and exchange of intellectual resources. The most frequently mentioned themes were academics, cultural immersion, and internationalization, with intercultural communication being mentioned the least frequently. However, interesting patterns emerge when the raw data was visualized using network maps through the software UCINET.

The network map provides a visualization of how frequently themes were mentioned together and thus which themes illustrate the strongest convergence. The nodes represent the themes and the thickness of the ties between two nodes represents how often those themes are referenced together. For example, from the thickness of the tie connecting them, it is visible that academics was more frequently referenced together with cultural immersion than it was with intercultural communication. The node of academics is most central to the network, frequently mentioned together with professional growth, international experience, cultural immersion, and internationalization, and only slightly less often with all other
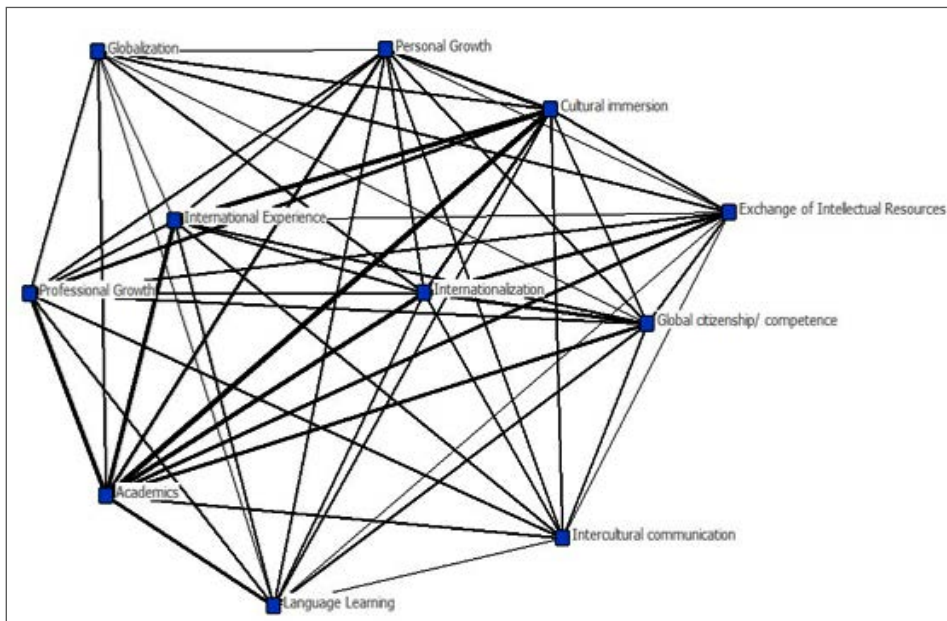

Figure 1: Network Map of Theme Referencing in Study Abroad Websites

themes. (It is important to note that centrality refers not to actual location in the map but rather to a theme's frequent referencing with other themes visible by tie thickness.) Next, internationalization plays a key connective role, having the strongest ties with the following nodes: academics, exchange of resources, global citizenship, and cultural immersion. Its ties with globalization, personal growth, professional growth, language learning, intercultural communication, and international experience are less thick but still strong. The theme of cultural immersion is also key, having strong ties with international experience, personal growth, professional growth, academics, and internationalization.

In addition to these themes that played a central role in being frequently mentioned with other themes, interesting patterns are visible in the networks that emerged among words frequently mentioned together. The most visibly strong network is that of *cultural immersion—academics—international experience*. Another similar network was *cultural immersion—internationalization—academics*. Both of these networks reflect the convergence of the phrasing of websites where study abroad was frequently depicted in light of internationalization or international experiences and, simultaneously, as providing both cultural immersion and academic benefits. Additionally, *internationalization—exchange of intellectual resources—academics* was another strong network, showing how websites who mention academics and internationalization together also frequently speak of the exchange of intellectual resources.

Most interesting is the theme of globalization whose ties with any other node individually or as part of a network are particularly weak. Despite being commonly referenced in study abroad literature as a catalyst for the internationalization of higher education (Griffiths & Arnove, 2015), it occupies a seemingly marginal position in this network map, and its strongest ties are with the themes of exchange of resources, cultural immersion, internationalization, professional growth, and academics, albeit overall rather weak. However, rather than suggest that globalization plays a non-central role, I argue that this shows that globalization has become both a taken-for-granted force and an imagined space within which

all of the networks shown operate. As Matus and Talburt (2015) explain, the idea of the imagined space of globalization allows both problems and solutions to be framed within it and, by so doing, legitimizes both the space itself and the role of the individuals and institutions that emerge to solve these problems.

The Construction of "Taken-For-Granteds" through a World Culture

Scholars offer various explanations for the creation of this imagined space of globalization within which forces such as internationalization both create and attempt to respond to new problems. As previously described, some (Griffiths & Arnove, 2015) see it through the lens of World Systems Analysis as a response to economic motives, a desire to maintain competitiveness within an increasingly global market and capitalist world-economy. However, as the global market is itself part of this space, the economic world systems explanation does not suffice independently, but when viewed together with the explanation provided by a world culture approach, it provides a clearer picture of the cultural, institutional, and economic forces that complement each other to perpetuate this respatialization. World Culture Theory views the international convergence in education as a product of the assimilation and recreation by educational systems of a universal model influenced by international and supranational organizations (Pizmony-Levy, 2016). Matus and Talburt (2015) explain that a network of intergovernmental and national documents is responsible for circulating a new conceptual model of the new imagined space of globalization. Then, the discourse of globalization within this network requires countries, individuals, and institutions to prepare for and respond to this phenomenon.

Intergovernmental and supranational organizations, including UNESCO, the OECD, and the European Union, played a key role in creating this model through "discursive interventions" (Matus & Talburt, 2015, p. 128). As both UNESCO and the OECD issued statements at the turn of the century on higher education and economic competition in a global world, they became key players in not only the creation but also the circulation

of such discourse. Interestingly, Matus and Talburt (2015) also found that UNESCO began promoting the same neoliberal economic ideals of the OECD, thereby narrowing and converging points of view regarding higher education and globalization and then perpetuating these views within the very global space it helped to create. Therefore, although the OECD promotes a globalized knowledge economy and human capital for development and growth while UNESCO focuses on cross-border exchange to promote economic partnerships and competition, both strengthen the legitimacy of internationalization within the space of globalization.

Once the space of globalization is created with universities at its center as agents to both create and respond to its problems, globalization is then recontextualized within national discourse to become the concern of a country, its institutions, and its students. The use of vague terms such as "innovation" and "global competitiveness" by the web's original actors allows for their recontextualization in whichever place they are enacted, inviting universal participation in the space of globalization to which they belong, contributing simultaneously to the changing nature of higher education to mirror market demands as previously mentioned. Their entrance into this space then further legitimizes the existence of this space, making it necessary for all universities—if they do not wish to lose their place in the world-economy—to operate within it. For example, in the United States, the Association of American Colleges and Universities responded to the OECD and UNESCO by enacting and circulating a set of guidelines for skills that twenty-first century university students should possess (Matus & Talburt, 2015), thereby locally contextualizing this world culture within national and local discourse, inviting universities to step into the space of globalization to offer solutions. The convergence of study abroad phrasing using vague terms such as "global competence" and "cultural immersion" to solve the problems of internationalization allow for study abroad to serve as one more path by which universities have entered this global space. It is not only study abroad programming but also the language used to describe it, influenced by a world culture created and circulated by supranational organizations and perpetuated

by the universities who take up this culture, that is destined to become increasingly isomorphic.

As described by Pizmony-Levy (2016) in the context of international large-scale assessments, the legitimacy of such a world culture is institutionalized not only by being embedded in a local context, but also through the portrayal of problems with the emergence of solutions and through the lack of questioning or critique of such a culture. Study abroad programs accept and partake in this world culture of the imagined space of globalization and the role of study abroad within it through the convergence of their phrasing (e.g., "cultural immersion" and the "academic benefits" of study abroad, among others). From this view, while this globalized space was created by supranational and international organizations, universities participate in it through study abroad by embedding study abroad in their own institutional contexts, by portraying these programs as a solution to problems, and by not questioning or critiquing the ideas of study abroad, internationalization, or globalization but rather accepting them as taken-for-granted.

As one example of these "taken-for-granteds," consider the way in which study abroad websites portray a set of skills to be gained, a list of motivations for studying abroad or partaking in exchange, while rarely referencing any literature on the subject. Certainly, the literature exists. Cushner and Mahon (2002) discuss the world-mindedness that students develop through leaving their comfort zone and being immersed in a new culture. Anderson et al. (2006) argue that students who spend an extended time abroad have greater cultural awareness. However, the field lacks consensus on these outcomes. For example, Salisbury, An, and Pascarella (2013) found that study abroad participation had little influence on students' appreciation of cultural difference, pointing to the fact that this commonly touted benefit is often exaggerated in higher education. Van de Berg et al.'s (2009) study found that exposure to a new culture did not lead to increased intercultural learning but for some even led to decreased cultural understanding. The existing academic research that does suggest a link between study abroad and intercultural competence is of-

ten wrought with methodological weakness such as an insufficient number of pre-test/post-test studies comparing pre-departure attitudes and behaviors to attitudes and behaviors when students return (Salisbury et al., 2013). Considering that cultural immersion and global competence are recurring themes in the phrasing of study abroad websites, this finding may be surprising, but Schartner (2016) offers the explanation that despite inconclusive evidence for such competence as a result of study abroad participation, it is increasingly referenced as an effect of and justification for the internationalization of higher education, which the universities relate to academic and employment prospects in light of globalization. It seems then that Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis of cultural immersion initiating a process of osmosis of these vaguely defined skills is used too liberally and problematically considering the absence of methodologically-sound support for such claims. Nonetheless, these claims are employed to promote and justify students' participation in the globalized space, which itself becomes a "taken-for-granted."

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Analysis

This paper is intended only to highlight the case of how study abroad programs are portrayed online by universities. Despite great variety in location, structure, funding, length, and a variety of other factors, the programs sound very similar in the way they are described by their websites. This isomorphism speaks to a trend that extends well beyond study abroad and into higher education in general, reflecting the perpetuation of a rapidly expanding world culture, which despite its seeming anonymity emerges from the influence of supranational and international organizations and then is given local meaning which legitimizes its existence. In presenting this analysis and the network map as a visual example, I aim to bring attention to how universities are partaking in this world culture and the imagined global space through study abroad programming. I recognize the limitations of such a preliminary overview and call for further studies to more deeply explore this topic.

One limitation occurred in the analysis, as in some instances, mul-

tiple pages on the same site were used to obtain the information that was then coded. For example, the home page for the office responsible for international education often contained introductory information and a description of the purpose or motivations for international study. Occasionally, this was not the case, and multiple pages such as one for general information on outbound mobility and then the next on "reasons for studying abroad" were both included to provide the necessary descriptions to allow coding. Furthermore, the function of outgoing student mobility was assigned to different offices depending on the university. European institutions tended to house this function under the international relations office, while universities in North America, Oceania, and South America typically had a website specifically for study abroad. Regardless of these inconsistencies, my analysis only addressed outbound student mobility, and despite the convergence of phrasing, there was a lack of uniformity in the organization of these websites, making it difficult to ensure that all information available was found and coded.

However, further analysis is necessary for a deeper understanding of how various factors may affect the phrasing used. For example, during my analysis I noted that European universities tend to focus very heavily on academic content and the process of initiating a semester or year abroad, usually detailing what is needed to participate in the Erasmus+ program. It would be interesting to conduct further analysis to determine how not only geographic region but also colonial history are related to phrasing and the portrayal of these programs. Additionally, given the small size of the sample of websites analyzed, more studies are needed to include a more representative sample of universities with study abroad programming to more thoroughly understand the convergence of their phrasing within the space of globalization, a capitalist world-economy, and an expanding world culture.

Conclusion

The aim of this study is not to refute any findings that suggest the innumerable benefits to study abroad but rather simply to highlight that

such conclusions have become taken-for-granted and serve to perpetuate the convergence of study abroad phrasing with little to no critique or questioning by the programs who employ them. Through a World Culture Theory approach, which draws on neo-institutionalist theory to explain how a self-perpetuating world culture is produced by and itself produces global convergence, nation-states enact rationalized myths of progress, taken-for-granted beliefs, and shared values (Takayama, 2015). It is important, however, to see that as the nation-state is no longer the sole provider of education, it is neither the only unit of structure in such a world polity of rationalized myths, and there is much more to explore regarding how sub-national actors, such as higher education institutions, exercise this convergence within the space of globalization and thus themselves become increasingly powerful at recreating and perpetuating this world culture. It is also limiting, as current academic discourse does, to portray World Culture Theory as incompatible with the World Systems Analysis view of economic motivation for convergence (Griffiths & Arnove, 2015). At least in the case of study abroad phrasing, visualized in this paper through the use of a network map, such convergence appears to reflect the motivation of participation in a capitalist world-economy and an imagined globalized space through the employment of certain rationalized myths and "taken-for-granteds" that are created and perpetuated by a world culture. So taken-for-granted are these beliefs, however, that the act of converging is rarely a conscious one. While it may appear to be an expression of local or unique interests and needs, it is instead the local legitimization (Pizmony-Levy, 2016) of globally institutionalized models and their supporting discourse (Frank, Robinson, & Olesen, 2011) at the site of the university. The convergence of study abroad phrasing is just one example of this isomorphism that occurs within a new, imagined space of globalization as the forces of internationalization, a world-economy, and a self-perpetuating world culture continue to grow.

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Italian Language Teaching Experiences in Anglophone Monolingual Classes of Elementary Level

David Marini

Abstract

This article focuses on monolingual classes of North American undergraduate students, with specific reference to courses for absolute beginners. The development of language skills requires time and cannot be separated from the actual use of the language, a use which can cause discomfort.

It is fundamental to understand the complexity of the psychological mechanisms that are triggered between subjects involved in a relationship based on word and language.

Word and language *force us to do activities that make us human*: the *forced* use of these tends to shake us from the ground up. Therefore, the psychological aspect is of significant importance. It is necessary to create a specific kind of class setting (which is an eminently psychological operation) and define its limits in order to be able to develop its full potential. The humanistic affective communicative approach proposed by us, putting the *person* at the center, is the main instrument to use within the classroom setting.

Keywords: Italian language, skills, communication, university teaching

In this brief contribution I'd like to focus on monolingual classes of North American undergraduate students, whose age ranges from nineteen and twenty-one. In particular, I shall refer to absolute beginners. Yet, many of the things that I'll say may very well apply to all of the more advanced levels. These are students coming from different North American universities and studying different majors. They live in Florence and attend the language course for about three and a half months. They take

Italian four times per week, Monday through Thursday, one hour each day, totaling 60 hours in the whole semester, and earn four academic credits for this work. (Four credits are a lot and, as we shall see later, this has a fairly strong impact on how to deal with the Italian language class.) They are usually at their first study abroad experience.

For these types of learners, we cannot refer to the Common European Framework, as they come from an educational system that is different from the one that generated the aforementioned framework. Furthermore, the average North American undergraduate student does not have a "metagrammatical vocabulary," that is, they are not able to define and distinguish, for example, the grammatical subject from the object, nor are they aware of the difference between direct objects and actions and indirect objects and actions; they do not know what it means to conjugate a verb; they are not aware, from a terminological point of view, of the meaning of pronoun or complement. Moreover, the North American learner comes from a school system that does not privilege oral exposure. All these peculiarities strongly influence the way North American students in Florence approach Italian language courses. The *Università di Siena per Stranieri* (Siena University for Foreigners) has recognized the specificity of these types of learners, creating the DITALS Interest Group for North American students. In doing so, it also confirmed the need for a separate training course aimed at teachers who want to specialize in teaching Italian to students from the USA.

For teacher training, special attention must be paid to the students' beliefs regarding teaching-learning methods. Students already have ideas on *how to teach*, that derive from habits and previous study experiences. They prefer a *deductive* and explicit approach, which they consider practical and fast. They find the *inductive* approach (proposed by the teacher) time-consuming and feel that it does not provide immediate reassurances. Generally, students tend to consider in a positive way the *quantity* of topics covered, while re-elaboration activities (an essentially *qualitative* work) of the proposed linguistic inputs are regarded as dispersive and *lengthy*, because they do not provide immediately *quantifiable* results. Un-

derstandably, students also have expectations about classes: they expect to find a course with thorough organizational and didactic coordinates, a series of contact hours presenting material structured with defined and recognizable categories such as, for example, grammar and vocabulary, in which everything is planned according to a strictly progressive logic (from page 1 to page 100, from the first to the tenth chapter), otherwise learners say that the instructor's teaching style is "sloppy" or the class is "all over the place".

Of course, the average student is not aware of the difference between learning a *foreign language* (that is, in this case, learning Italian in the U.S.) and learning a *second language* (the reality in which they find themselves immersed by living and studying for a semester in Italy). Likewise, most students do not know that all this entails a substantial difference for both learners and instructors.

Teachers at the beginning of a language course often encounter resistance. This is a significant factor, because students at our institute are *obliged* to study Italian. The inability to choose the class (and, consequently, the obligation to pay for this academic service at the beginning of the semester), interfere with the class pace. Motivation, which is fundamental for the teaching-learning process, is weakened by a situation that the learners see as constrictive. At first, students consider learning Italian as a price to pay to be able to spend a semester in Florence. They would gladly get rid of it, only accepting language as part of the package. The prevailing idea is that to learn Italian it is not necessary to study and that *participation* means being in the classroom, physically present, even if totally passive.

I would now like to focus on the specificity of a language class. Often, this specificity is the main cause of discomfort and irritation for students: the basic issue being that studying only before an exam will not prove to be a good strategy for them. The development of language skills cannot be separated from the actual use of the language, a use which, in itself, is a source of fear. On the other hand, students understand that without real, effective participation, the class does not exist. It is, then, the very nature of a language class that clashes against the typical attitude of

students who tend to approach learning in watertight compartments (i.e., distinct, separated units of learning): "Today I study this subject and I get rid of it. Tomorrow I will dedicate myself to that other subject, so I won't think about it right away." With *languages* this behavior doesn't work, because courses meet every day, and every week there is a goal to reach: a test, an essay, a conversation with Italian students and so on, not just midterms and finals. All these biases are an obstacle to correct learning, especially from a psychological point of view. Furthermore, the fact that even our approach – which in a broad sense can be defined as communicative, humanistic, affective, where the psychological and affective dimension of the human being is ever more relevant – goes against many of the (pre-established) expectations of the students who, as we mentioned earlier, value much more the *quantity* rather than the *quality* of the work done. It should also be remembered that the Italian language grade, as I said above, has a lot of influence on the student's GPA, because of the high number of credits of this course. Students know it, and they know that a failure in the language class would carry a lot of weight for them. In short, students psychologically find themselves caught in a crossfire, so to speak: they do not want to talk, because their direct exposure makes them feel uncomfortable, but if they do not speak, they know they will receive a low grade in participation. How can one get out of this predicament?

First, it is fundamental to encourage students to trust, to entrust, and to understand the cornerstones of the approach proposed by us, that is *globality* (it is not important to comprehend everything, it is enough to understand the general context, as there is always time to make adjustments) and *communication* (it is not necessary to produce perfect sentences. Communicating means *surviving*, satisfying needs: if you are thirsty, you only need one word, perhaps accompanied by a gesture). Thus, we begin to build language skills, first developing the passive ones of listening and reading, and then the active ones of talking and writing.

In addition to linguistic objectives in the strict sense, one of the long-term educational goals must always be kept in mind; I'm speaking of cultural education and, in turn, knowing that the culture has a strong

motivational drive for language acquisition. The first representative of this culture is, fortunately, the teacher. Students (who are not a blank slate when they arrive) are often curious and full of expectations about this other Italian. They already have a wealth of knowledge, stereotypes, and theories they want to test and verify. Curiosity is a fundamental tool. Teachers must use themselves, first of all, as objects of the desire for knowledge.

Putting aside initial reticence, students begin to consider Italian as *their class*, where they meet every day with the same people (unlike the other courses that do not include daily lessons). When things work well, the class-group is formed, and the Italian class becomes something like a shelter where one is pushed to get out of passivity and is *required* to intervene and interact. In that special context, the participation *requirement* becomes pleasant, too: students are not judged or called on only to be questioned. In the Italian class, it is possible to learn and use the same linguistic and cultural tools that students can use again in the "real world." In class there is an open dialogue among classmates and teacher, thus transforming them all into members of a new group. Students are eager to learn about their instructor, and they are willing to let the instructor know about themselves: the result is a powerful, motivating involvement. Psychic energy is linked, directed towards a purpose: *communicating*. Successful communication gratifies, reassures, pushes you to go on, to break the ice, to get out of the shell.

For all these reasons, the language course should not be regarded as a traditional space dedicated to learning theory, with a professor at the center who exhibits and *professes* their knowledge before an audience of learners who listen and write. Generations of language instructors have already shown that a class must be like a laboratory where you experience and try to learn (pragmatically, by using them) the tools to be reused outside. The psychologically skillful teacher must constantly emphasize that what happens in the classroom is *already* true and can also happen in the real context if you try to *communicate*.

As it appears obvious from what has been said so far, the psychological aspect has a preponderant weight. It is necessary from the beginning

(because the first contacts are fundamental for the structuring of any human relationship), *to create the class setting* and define its borders in order to be able to fully develop its potential. The creation of a setting is, in itself, an eminently psychological operation. Factors such as being forced to communicate in a language you don't know and forced to express yourself with the same tools of a child, push one to get involved. In fact, these same features may even stimulate resilience and resistance, if the *setting* has not been set properly, defined, mutually approved, and shared by all participants. This is the core of the problem. All this becomes even more burdensome if we consider that the learners we are dealing with come from the U.S. educational system, which, in principle, is not accustomed (as I mentioned above) to challenging students with oral tests and exams.

I would like to conclude with three very brief considerations, two of which (the first and the third) are quite personal. First of all, I would like to say that the need to manage discomfort, both of the students (when they do not respond and are neither involved nor motivated) and of the teacher (when learning appears to be particularly difficult for the students), has been the reason I undertook a process of analytical training. Years of educational and personal analysis, coupled with training in conscious (analytically oriented) listening, made me understand the complexity of the psychological mechanisms that are triggered between subjects involved in a relationship, especially when the relationship is based on word and language; the reason being, word and language *force activity and that very activity makes us human*. That is, *word and language are what make us eminently human*: it is inevitable that their *forced* use tends, potentially, to shake us from the foundations.

Secondly, it is crucial to reiterate there is no recipe, no given *method*, that is codified and always valid. Sooner or later, every codification, every stiffening, especially when speaking of a *subject* (i.e., language) whose mode of being is fluid and *in progress* par excellence, reveals itself as a "Procrustean bed." However, there is always the possibility of getting in tune with our students, trying to weaken the so-called affective filters, the emotional resistances that prevent a real linguistic acquisition. This is

done by creating the *setting*, as we said earlier, by shaping and reshaping, whenever it becomes necessary, the rules of this *setting*, with an artisanal *modus operandi*, thus being ready to use all that we need and to throw away (if need be) what at first seemed necessary, without fear of change. Students must also be encouraged to speak Italian from the beginning because its use in the real context (e.g., walking in the street, sitting inside a café, shopping at the supermarket, eating in a restaurant) has the effect of breaking the ice and showing, in a practical, clear way, that people do understand you. However, *pushing* to communicate can provoke anxiety.

This leads me to the other side of the issue, namely, *waiting* for the word to emerge spontaneously. But time is short, there are stages in every academic journey, evaluations (tests, exams, etc.) that the student must be able to sustain. So, does it become appropriate to push? One finds oneself in a *tragic* situation: *to wait* for the students to be psychologically ready or *to push* them to break the ice as soon as possible. What we should do, once again, is to work as artisans, without preconceived rigidity, with *caution*, because the way (the method) is not there, the way is done by going. To use a common simile, it's as if we were in the middle of the ocean on a leaking boat: to stay afloat we can and must use all that is available to us.

Thirdly, I realized *a posteriori*, after twenty years of teaching, the importance of two fundamental theoretical assumptions that have always guided me, both as a teacher and as an author of teaching materials: the first is the *spiral* (ascending) *movement of the way knowledge functions*, theorized by Hegel and made up of returns and recurrences, but always at a higher level, precisely a level where the syntheses are made. The practical translation of this gnoseological model is nothing other than the mode of operating of each teacher in a language class, in which, a linguistic *input* is given, so that to proceed from superficial and temporary learning to deep and real linguistic *acquisition* is always constituted by a series of returns to the same point. Yet, each return is characterized by a higher stage of awareness. Graphically put, this way of operating looks like a rising spiral. The other theoretical assumption I alluded to is the *hermeneutic comprehension-pre-comprehension cycle* theorized by Heidegger. According

to this theory, no subject involved in a linguistic relationship is a *tabula rasa* (an absence of preconceived ideas or goals). Suffice it here to recall famous works by *expectancy grammar* theorists and the whole notion of "grammar of anticipation," namely that special grammar guiding predictive processes, as Balboni argues.

Having said this, I'd like to add a short, conclusive, and reassuring note: discussing the idea of "misunderstanding," Cacciari holds that, in the end, *mis-understanding* (not understanding each other immediately) implies the creation of a *common* space, i.e., *communis*. It is from the Latin adjective communis that the word communication derives. As mentioned above, communication and globality (the true cornerstones of the affective and humanistic communicative approach proposed by us) are ultimately based on these two authoritative philosophical assumptions.

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administrators

A Fresh Perspective on Internships Abroad in Italy

Thomas Brownlees

1. New trends in international education

One of the most prominent trends in international education over the last decade pertains to the relentless transition from in-class lectures to new and more informal approaches to college education in both humanities and STEM disciplines (Stanford at al., 2018). Furthermore, some of the most innovative teaching methodologies have found very fertile grounds in the context of international education, where the chance to merge "traditional" in-class lectures with an immersion into a country's cultural heritage has sparked a wide range of new opportunities for students. Credit-bearing courses now include volunteering, practicums, service learning and experiential learning courses, just to name a few.

Because of this trend, universities worldwide have been able to not only revamp their courses, but also develop a more profound engagement with the communities where they operate. Volunteering is an inspiring example of how, for instance, the US culture of service could develop, through study abroad programs, an international reach for the benefit and growth of all parties involved. These typologies of courses promote a learning-by-doing approach, centered on the hard and soft skills that students can develop when immersed into a collaborative environment. As the formal US educational system can be perceived as more inclined towards competitive behaviors, these experiences can make a difference in the students' lives by promoting team values and communal goals.

Within the context of informal learning, internships have obtained particular prominence in universities' degree curricula, as they not only serve as a preliminary step before entering the workforce but also provide an irreplaceable career-orienting experience. Each university in this

respect may have a different definition of what can be defined as an internship, as it may be described both as simple exposure to a professional environment, or as actual labor, where a student's performance may be assessed on the same framework as regular employees. Thanks to the development of international relations, however, interning at home may not be enough for the most driven students. Globalization requires graduates to have a high cultural intelligence quotient (Earley et al., 2004) if they are to enter multinational companies. Study abroad organizations in this respect face a challenging task, that of delivering these opportunities by matching diverse and complex local business landscapes with students' expectations, which at times are hard to match. However, those study abroad organizations that have been able to meet this responsibility have seen internship requests increase steadily, while growing their local business network. There are, nevertheless, many elements to consider as the model usually adopted for internship provision is still less than perfect. In the following section, we will analyze the cost-benefit relationship which these experiences entail.

2. The opportunities and challenges associated with providing internships abroad

Aside from their academic relevance, internships abroad have gained momentum because of some of their distinctive features that set them apart from all other classes, which are inexorably grounded in the teacher-student hierarchy.

Let us list a few distinctions of internships:

- In the light of the rising costs of college tuition, internships are perceived as valuable investments, capable of providing career-enhancing opportunities for the students. Research shows how internships provide opportunities for developing various professional competencies, depending on the interests of the students (Dragoo et al., 2016).
- Internships provide authentic exposure to foreign culture, de-

veloping students' cultural intelligence (Eisenberg et al., 2013) and intercultural competencies (Stebleton et al., 2012).

- Internships represent an optimal blend of formal-informal education, teaching both techniques and values associated with a given profession.
- Research shows the character-building value of internships abroad (Arranz et al., 2017), which can enhance students' entrepreneurial traits.

At the same time, when looking at the quality of the experience provided to international students, it is possible to draw a discomforting conclusion: the factors which make an internship successful seem to rely more on chance than design. Some of the main issues associated with internship provision are as follows:

- The presence of a high language barrier affects both communication and student performance at the workplace (Ramlan et al., 2018), limiting the contribution that the resource can provide.
- Hosting organizations tend to assign students tasks requiring very limited intellectual engagement. This is mostly due to the short length of the experience (on average internships last less that 12 weeks) which does not allow for an in-depth involvement of the student in the organization's inner workings.
- On a more material level, students abroad rely on public transportation. This limits the choice of placements to those located within walking distance, or reachable through bus lines.
- Last but not least, placements are usually confirmed only once students are on site, as students often need to undergo an interview with the host organization before being officially accepted into the workplace.

These limitations prevent the education institutions from guaranteeing a standardized service quality to the students due to the many

variable factors which play into the student's experience.

Moreover, the current model leads to the misconception that the professional component outweighs the educational one.

This situation is therefore problematic. On the one hand, the current rise in internship requests would advise schools towards investing in the provision of internships; on the other hand, it is challenging for an organization to scale a service when it is not possible to guarantee a standardized quality experience (Carter et al., 2017).

3. Italian legal framework

Aside from the issues pertaining to finding the right placements and matching them with the right interns, attention must be given to the fairly strict legal framework that disciplines labor. In Italy, in particular, the *ratio legis*, which governs credit bearing internships, or *tirocini curriculari*, is based on finding a balance between providing the opportunity to advance students' skills by gaining exposure to a professional environment while at the same time discouraging the use of such activity as a form of unpaid labor. In this sense, interns need to be inserted into a program which is focused on the learning curve that students experience, as opposed to their performance or productive output.

This regulatory mindset is clearly exemplified by the list of requirements foreseen by the law, which includes:

- An alignment between the student's degree curriculum and the professional field where the student is placed.
- The academic institution and the hosting organization need to have an ongoing agreement (called *convenzione di tirocinio)*, which foresees the presence of both an academic tutor and a placement supervisor in charge of managing both sides of the relationship with an intern.
- The academic institution and the hosting organization need to agree on a *progetto formativo*, namely a document detailing the learning outcomes of the experience.

As said, the Italian government adopts a protective stance towards the student in order to make sure that an academic endeavor does not turn into unpaid labor. In this sense, local regulations pose additional limitations on eligible hosting organizations, requiring them to comply with a series of requirements, which make sure that hosting interns is not a free alternative to employee recruitment. Furthermore, national laws limit the number of interns that an organization can host, based on the number of employees working for the company.

This legal framework limits the scope of internships; nevertheless, it can be viewed positively since it provides us with a valuable insight into what this experience should mean to the students, and how we can devise new formats and educational models that enhance the learning value these experiences are meant to provide.

4. Case-scenario experience: 440 Industries

Once we realize that the focus of an internship should be on the learning and job-orientation component of the experience, we find new insight into how to design an experience more capable of harvesting the students' potential and fulfilling both their passions and sense of purpose. Moreover, factors which pertain to the current student generation need to be considered (Karakas, 2015) since, if on the one hand academic institutions may be resilient to change, on the other hand students need to interact with fast-paced modern-day environments if they are to engage with new opportunities.

440 Industries is a hybrid organization designed with a cultural mission in mind. In cities like Florence, which are globally-acclaimed cultural hubs, we often see limited communication between two distinct and self-reliant groups—the local and international communities. Study abroad programs in this respect act like embassies. By creating an area of overlap between the communities, these programs are creating facilities that, despite being physically in Florence, still reflect the norms of behavior followed by international organizations.

But what if we could move beyond that and create an organiza-

tion focused on providing internship experiences which address both the needs of students and host businesses? On the one hand, this organization could recruit international talent to create teams of students willing to immerse themselves into the areas of Italian business excellence, and thereby assist business owners, entrepreneurs and managers in solving real-life problems experienced on a daily basis.

On the other hand, this organization could reach out to many small and medium enterprises which require exposure to the international community in order to develop the mindset they need to tackle internationalization and business development issues, or to solve problems where engaging with a younger audience is essential. This is exactly what 440 Industries does. It creates a middle ground between academic institutions and businesses where both sides of the relationship can get value for the time, energy and resources that are invested in these experiences. By matching willing students with businesses looking for help, a very strong and tangible relationship is instantly created. This allows for a much wider array of opportunities, which expose students to the inner workings of their client companies. Moreover, each student group can work with a variety of businesses, expanding each student's experience of organizations of varying size, culture, and field of operation.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the expanding boundaries of study abroad are providing leaders and administrators alike with the opportunity to challenge many established and conventional educational models. Initiatives like 440 Industries are led by the commitment to the new international education focus on allowing students to connect with their study abroad location, drawing on students' passion and purpose, enthusiasm and responsibility. This is what is going to elevate the significance of the time they spend abroad, enriching it with authentic and meaningful experiences.

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Out of Your Comfort Zone:
Tools for Mental Health
Marisa Garreffa

Having tools to support good mental health can be the difference between a vitalizing study abroad experience and an overwhelming one. Young people today face challenges unseen in any previous generation: globalization, social media and online identity creation, saturation of pornography, fast-paced dating and sex culture, over-scheduling, and increased pressure to succeed in competitive economic and social realities. The mental health outcomes of these factors are real and urgent, and travel can act as an amplifier. Through education, we have an opportunity to provide solid mental health tools that can be applied immediately to enrich and empower the lives of young people, now and for the future.

Within a travel experience and away from the security of the familiar, culture shock will shine a light on exactly what coping strategies young people have developed, and how those strategies may be failing. If effective tools have not been taught, then young people will develop reactionary behaviors to solve problems in the short term that often create long term distress. The challenges of travel can destabilize mental health, which, in rare cases, can lead to a full crisis. Out of their comfort zone, how do students make decisions about what to do, where to go, who to trust, and how to evaluate their experiences?

We do not need to stoke fear or alarm. Empowering students means providing tools to develop self-agency, awareness, confidence, and healthy decision making. An effective approach should validate pain, assist recovery, encourage pleasure, and emphasize positive outcomes that can be achieved through conscious transformation. It should build courage to overcome obstacles without resorting to self-destructive, risk-taking, or denial-based behaviors.

Within the education system is the opportunity for mental health intervention. Mental Health Practitioner Elizabeth Connolly works with individuals in student populations of Florence, and argues that "education should not only provide an enriched, broad-based, academic program, but also provide a supportive learning environment that challenges young people to explore who they want to be as a person, societal challenges, relationships with others, personal values and beliefs, and peer influences."

Asking for help still carries a stigma, especially for young people who want to prove their independence and invincibility. Some who need therapeutic support will access it, but many will not, or will be unable to for complex social, financial, and cultural reasons. Multiple approaches are required to make mental health support accessible and available to all. What I offer here is a framework for mental health practice that can be used during the travel experience, and throughout life.

The key areas I identify here are drawn from my own experience. I survived a violent drug-rape in Florence, and the lengthy court process that continues today, six years later. I have learned what it takes to thrive overseas despite all obstacles. My life is now better than it was before the assault – nourishing and rewarding. This is not because crisis automatically functions as a growth experience, or because my life is free of struggle. It is the result of solid mental health practices that I learned during years of therapy.

The key areas I am identifying are centered on self-examination and have had a profound impact on my quality of life. Because often I found myself saying, "I wish I had known this before," I now want young people to have immediate access to these skills. It is not only crisis situations that are served by mental health support, but every area of life. I have outlined each topic as a series of questions to guide an exploration of identity, the self, and current strategies (or lack of) for managing emotional and psychological health.

It is not about eliminating tough days or tough feelings. We do not try to control the impossible. It's about having a system to get to the core of each situation and its effects, and a strategy for choosing our responses based on a clear grounding in identified values and needs, as well as in-

formed collaboration with our contexts.

Values and Goal-Setting

To develop a full self-concept, students must identify their strengths, needs, and values. This self-knowledge becomes the basis for healthy decision making. This process should be revisited throughout life to reflect upon changing ways of thinking, shifting priorities, our vulnerabilties, and the best strategies for working with these evolving definitions of self. Who I was is not who I am, and travel is a transformative experience for my sense of identity. The outer self is a flexible construction that can be adapted throughout our lives. The inner self is the stable core, often buried under false beliefs and patterns, that is the source of intuition and "gut feelings." I can learn how to separate them, and develop a practice for checking in with these "selves."

Underpinning goal-setting is the recognition of desires and the ability to evaluate chioces and make decisions about how to act upon them. If I understand what I want and, more importantly, know why I want those things, I can become more flexible and adaptable to how the experience may unfold. This is a key factor in resilience.

University hook-up and shot-drinking cultures are a significant influence on young people, who are heavily invested in gaining peer approval and belonging. This affects how they define themselves and set goals. It is important to identify problematic goals such as "getting an Italian partner," "having sex," "getting wasted drunk." Dating, sex, and alcohol use are not problems in and of themselves, so what makes certain goals problematic? It is a problem when the behavior is unconscious and/or the student is seeking to resolve a core emotional struggle, but that behavior will not result in long-term change or increase the individual capacity for self-care and emotional regulation. They are behaviors that introduce a new set of risks and difficulties that add to the emotional burden rather than relieve it.

Openness and Boundary Setting

What does it mean to be open to new experiences? To be open to

myself, to others, and to my environment? How does this relate to risk and fear? What is a healthy risk, and what is a dangerous one? Risks are not only related to physical safety, but also to emotional and psychological factors as well. Knowing I can evaluate and navigate risk builds confidence in trying new things. How can I use curiosity and courage to open myself up to unexpected adventures? Tools of contextual awareness, respectful interaction, and negotiation contribute to making new experiences meaningful. What are the social rules and particularities that we must be aware of in a foreign culture? Where and how do I learn them?

Boundaries increase freedom, providing a stable ground from which to launch adventurous experiences. How can I understand what boundaries I already have in place, those I'd like to have, and those I may need? A strong emotional response is often a clue to missing boundaries. What does it mean to listen to any discomfort I'm feeling, and other inner cues? What do I do when my boundaries clash with another person's, and how do I negotiate conflicting needs in a travel context? How do I set boundaries between me and my friends, new roommates, my host, the flirtatious waiter at the restaurant, interactions on the street? How can healthy boundaries and informed negotiation help me manage conflict, compromise, and respectful engagement with the culture and context around me?

Risks and Reducing Risk Factors

There are the specific risks that come with living and traveling abroad. Florence is like any other big city, but it can feel deceptively like a small town, disabling one's usual level of awareness. Crisis skills involve understanding the risks. This includes knowledge of common strategies used by criminals who specifically target foreigners, without engaging in excessive fear or catastrophizing. A risk is not only an external danger but includes exhaustion or emotional overwhelm. We want to work with, rather than against, these limitations.

Reducing risk factors is not about the total elimination of risk. It is having the tools ready to manage situations that may arise. These include awareness training, bystander support, and self-reflection. It also

includes moderating alcohol or drug use in unfamiliar environments, planning how to get home, and knowing key information about support and emergency services in Florence.

We need to trust our intuition and respond to its signals. The challenge is separating intuition from false fears. This can be tricky, and a lifelong process, but will serve us well. It's never impolite to leave or say no, and it's ok to assert our boundaries when we feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Each person needs to identify a diverse network of support. For example, after the rape, I was supported by a therapist, a lawyer, and a selection of peers and mentors to whom I could turn to when my own strength failed. Bystander training, such as learning to spot the red flags and simple but effective intervention techniques, is also vital to community support. However, there is an important difference between being an active bystander, and becoming a caretaker. This means knowing how we can help, balanced with knowing when and how to enforce our limits.

Avoid Blame and Crisis Management

Working to reduce risk factors does not equal accountability in the case of an assault or attack. The victim is never at fault, but do we really understand why? We must examine the concept of self-responsibility, recognizing that it is important to take full responsibility for our own actions, but this does not make us responsible for the actions of others. The person who chooses to abuse is accountable for the outcomes of their actions. For example: If I choose to binge-drink, I am responsible for my hangover, for challenges in regulating my emotions and maintaining my mental health, and for my own behavior and the impact it has on other people. I am not responsible for being targeted by a criminal.

We need to recognize red-flag behaviors and environments, and develop the courage to remove ourselves from those situations wherever possible. We need skills to navigate legal, medical, and recovery systems in the case of a crisis.

The more we understand about victim myths, rape myths, and any negative perception of foreigners in tourist destinations, the better we are

prepared to assert our own personhood and rights in the face of those pressures. We can learn about the challenges of navigating medical and legal systems in a foreign country, and the valid reasons victims have for believing that reporting a crime is futile. Nevertheless, reporting criminal activity is essential. Whether or not a person commits to making a complaint or, in my case, a full court process, having an official record will increase awareness of criminals by law enforcement, and it can influence the outcomes of future legal actions. The act of making a report is also an act of power, a step towards saying that what happened was not acceptable. This goes a long way to challenging victim blaming, which can be deeply internalized.

I can find out what it will mean if I do commit to a legal process, the legalities, costs, and timelines involved. If I can work through those blocks in advance, I am more likely to push through them if and when it's needed, either by me or someone I know.

Sexual Consent

What does healthy, active, and continuous consent look like? What is the difference between verbal and non-verbal communication, and how do they impact our ability to give and perceive consent? What does communication mean in the sexual context, and how can it both increase pleasure and ensure healthy consent at every stage of sexual interaction? Many of the tools we have already been learning, like boundaries and core values, apply also to consent. We need tools to have more open conversations, negotiate needs and desires with partners, and redirect sexual focus towards curiosity, pleasure, and discovery, rather than simply "getting laid."

Communication is complicated by cultural differences, and there are limits and challenges to reading verbal and nonverbal cues, especially when outside of our own language / culture / place. How might the sex and dating culture here be different from back home, and what might those differences mean for the way I interact? I can take the opportunity to reflect upon experiences I have already had, and those I may like to have, and consider them from the perspective of cultural differences. Particular attention should be paid to "red flags" and the importance of

not ignoring them with "cultural differences" as the excuse.

Caring for Self, Caring for Others

Self-care is essential, not as the popular perception of small self-indulgences, but as a constant, dedicated process of checking in with myself, doing emotional housekeeping, creating a balance between activity and rest, and feeling empowered to ask for help when needed. The areas outlined here serve as a firm foundation for this self-care practice. By practice, I mean that there is no "destination" to achieve, where I arrive one day, am mentally healthy, and therefore my work is done. Mental health is an ongoing process that evolves as my identity evolves throughout life, and is something that must be maintained in the same way I'd maintain a healthy diet or exercise routine.

It's important to identify wider networks of support and know when and how to hand over the situation to someone more qualified when I am out of my depth. I have learned that knowing my limits does not mean that I am weak, that I have failed, that I do not love another person, or that I am abandoning them. It means that I am being honest about my limits, taking care to not risk mental health further, and helping myself or others to find support if it's appropriate to do so.

Returning Home

There is a common phenomenon that occurs after a person returns from a transformational experience, like travel, and begins to care for their mental health in new ways. Their changed habits and attitudes can often cause some disruption in old relationships. This doesn't mean that the old relationships are over – not at all. It *does* mean, however, that a period of adjustment is normal; common within this period are feelings of loneliness, not feeling understood, feeling judged, and pressure to return to "normal." Stay conscious and compassionate with yourself and others, and resist the impulse to revert back to old habits out of fear. You made the changes for a reason. The benefits to your life will be motivation enough to stay the course.

Perspectives on Common Challenges at Home Institutions and Study Abroad Programs

Peter Naccarato

I first came to the Umbra Institute in the summer of 2012, with a group of eight students from Marymount Manhattan College. I had worked with the Umbra staff to recruit my students and I was excited to teach my faculty-led course, *Mangiamo: Food in Italian Literature and Film*. When the airplane lifted off from New York's JFK airport, I was ready to leave behind the daily grind of the spring semester and immerse myself in the beauty and pleasure of an Italian summer. I knew that I would have my teaching duties and would need to oversee the students who were accompanying me on this study abroad program, but I also imagined an academic experience free from the usual issues and challenges that we confront regularly at our home institutions.

While I can say that my first summer term at the Umbra Institute (along with three more in 2013, 2014 and 2015) exceeded my expectations, I realized that it took a lot of work to create such a carefree environment for me and for all of the faculty members who teach there each summer. As the teacher of a faculty-led summer course, I was afforded the luxury of distancing myself from many of the challenges faced by study abroad programs like the Umbra Institute. But having worked as an administrator at the Institute during the current academic year, I have come to recognize that study abroad programs deal with many of the same challenges faced by colleges and universities in the U.S., but some of those challenges are exacerbated within the study abroad setting. In this short essay, I discuss some of those common challenges and consider strategies for addressing them.

For all of us who work in higher education, curriculum design and development is an ongoing challenge. Common questions that we con-

front include: What is the right balance between ensuring that students study what the faculty deems essential while recognizing the pressure of the "market" to entice students with a curriculum that they will find appealing? Can we use our curriculum design to push students away from seeing requirements as boxes to be "checked off" and instead encourage them to be adventurous and explore areas of interest that may extend beyond their majors or professional ambitions? Should we focus on growing successful programs or investing time and resources in developing new areas of study? As we address these and similar questions, we do so in a context in which students are increasingly focused on completing degree requirements as quickly as possible and avoiding anything that leads them away from doing so.

While this reality can put pressure on faculty at any college or university when they design and redesign their curriculum, it poses unique challenges for study abroad programs as well. First, there is the hurdle of convincing students that studying abroad will not delay their progress towards graduation. In fact, in addition to concerns about the overall cost of international study, Shaftel et al. (2007) explain the possibility of a secondary cost: "Students and their parents or sponsors must pay twice for an international study opportunity, first for the opportunity itself and later for the student to make up course work that was not accepted by the home institution or that was missed during the period of foreign study" (p. 27). In this case, issues of transferability and course equivalencies weigh heavily on study abroad programs as they make decisions about curriculum design and development.

A second factor impacting how study abroad programs develop their curriculum is the shifting student demographic for international study. In her 2010 article, April Stroud cites national statistics showing that "the three fields of study most represented among study abroad participants include social sciences (21%), business management (19%), and humanities (13%)" (p. 493). However, shifting enrollments across U.S. colleges and universities are inevitably impacting the study abroad market. As Vande Berg (2007) explains, "The academic interests and needs of

students have considerably diversified, with majors in Business, Sciences, Engineering, and other 'nontraditional' fields going abroad in record numbers" (p. 393). Such changes will continue to influence curriculum offered by study abroad programs that want to stay competitive. Given that these majors tend to be more prescriptive and allow for less flexibility than majors in the humanities and social sciences, study abroad programs will likely face even more pressure to ensure that courses designed to attract science or engineering majors are easily transferable to students' home institutions and that they will fulfill specific major requirements.

Ironically, the familiar refrain that studying abroad allows students to step outside of their usual environment, to experience new people in new places, and to broaden their horizons—both personally and academically—is increasingly joined by guarantees that even while doing so, students will not miss a step towards degree completion because the curriculum they will find at their study abroad program is easily transferable to their home institutions and will allow them to continue fulfilling major, minor, or general education requirements. Of course, this promise puts increasing pressure on study abroad programs to think carefully about stepping too far afield from the types of programs and courses that are most common across U.S. colleges and universities. So the challenge for those of us working on curriculum development within the study abroad context is to be creative and innovative within the constraints of students' expectations that courses taken abroad will easily transfer to their home institutions, will fulfill specific requirements, and will not derail their progress towards graduation.

In addition to what courses are offered, we also face challenges with regard to pedagogy and the possible disconnect between the expectations of students and the traditional teaching methods utilized by many professors. Katrien Struyven, et al. (2010), citing Johnson and Seagull (1968), explain that traditionally, "teachers were too often educated by means of lectures" and furthermore that "teachers tend to teach in the form they were taught" (p. 43). Consequently, professors who adopt such a teacher-centered pedagogy understand their role as "help[ing] students

to acquire knowledge by transmission" (p. 44). As a result, they "do not assume that their students need to be active for the teaching/learning process to be successful" (p. 44). For some professors teaching in study abroad programs – particularly those who were educated within a traditional European framework – lecture-based teaching is the standard and the form of teaching and learning with which they are most experienced and most comfortable.

However, it is increasingly likely that this approach contradicts the classroom experiences of many students coming from U.S. colleges and universities. As Vande Berg (2007) notes, "faculty members are revolutionizing the classroom in the United States and setting high student expectations for what sort of activities, in and outside the classroom, best support their own learning" (p. 395). This change is characterized by Struyven, et al. as a shift towards "student-activating teaching," which "stimulates students to construct knowledge by means of real-life, realistic, practical and relevant assignments that literally require their 'active' involvement to incorporate the available information: that is to select, to interpret and to apply knowledge to practical cases and to solve complex vocational problems" (pp. 44-45). At many U.S. colleges and universities, such approaches have become the norm, with students actively engaged in learning through small-scale exercises (i.e., discussion-based classes, class presentations, small-group work and larger group projects, portfolio-based assessment, etc.) and large-scale practices (i.e., experiential learning, role-playing and other game-based pedagogies, community-based and service-learning projects, etc.). The underlying philosophy of such pedagogical methods is that "students are seen as active knowledge constructors and this activity of students is considered to be a necessary part of the learning process" (Struyven, et al., p. 44).

Given this context, it falls upon study abroad program administrators to foster an environment that encourages ongoing faculty development in order to produce a steady transition towards student-centered pedagogies. But there are significant challenges to doing so, including securing buy-in from professors who may remain committed to the teach-

ing strategies they encountered throughout their own education; setting aside time for faculty to participate in pedagogy workshops and then to incorporate what they learn into revamped courses and syllabi; building internal support systems and external partnerships for community-based learning; establishing realistic timelines for implementing new pedagogies and assessing their effectiveness; and securing the financial resources to support faculty and staff as they do this work. While such an undertaking is not easy, it is necessary if study abroad programs are going to deliver an educational experience that complements and reinforces the pedagogies U.S. students are experiencing at their home institutions and thus have come to expect when they study abroad.

I will conclude by discussing another area in which we are witnessing shifting student expectations at both home institutions and study abroad programs, specifically with regard to diversity and inclusivity. While U.S. colleges and universities have experienced demographic and social changes since at least the 1960s that have required them to focus on these issues, the last decade has witnessed a resurgence of social awareness and campus activism. As Chun and Evans (2018) report, "progressive student movements on many college campuses... [are having] significant positive impacts in motivating some top white university administrators to take significant diversity and inclusion actions that improve their campus racial climates and programs" (np). This is reinforced by Suarez, et al. (2018), who similarly note that "the incorporation of an equity perspective throughout a campus is paramount" (p. 64) and that colleges and universities throughout the U.S. are focused on adopting "policies and processes that infuse diversity and inclusion throughout the institution" (p. 67). Of course, this is a positive development that enhances the educational, social, and cultural experiences of all students, faculty, and staff, particularly those of color and from other traditionally underrepresented groups. At the same time, it poses a unique challenge for study abroad programs.

As Soria and Troisi (2014) explain, "Even as study abroad participation has grown and its benefits have been well documented, disparities

in study abroad participation remain a concern for higher education in-stitutions" (p. 265). They cite several studies that uncover factors for why white students are more likely to study abroad than students of color, in-cluding fears of encountering racism abroad and a lack of faculty of color leading study abroad programs. While U.S. colleges and universities need to address the specific concerns of students of color as they promote study abroad programs on their campuses, we also bear responsibility for antic-ipating these concerns and responding to them. Like our counterparts in the U.S., we must develop programs, policies, and practices that support a diverse learning culture.

Of course, how this is accomplished will vary but there are some common steps that we should all embrace. First, consider adopting a pol-icy or statement on diversity, equality, and inclusion. Such a statement can set the tone for the entire community and can serve as the founda-tion for additional initiatives that enact the values and priorities that it expresses. Second, make diversity training a priority for faculty and staff development. While such training opportunities can take many forms, they can be beneficial for all faculty and staff, especially those who are not from the United States. Workshops, tutorials, and informal discussion sessions can help all faculty and staff reflect on their own experiences and think about how their perspectives may be different from those of U.S. students. Third, as we welcome students to our programs, we should talk with them about our commitment to creating an equitable and inclu-sive environment within our classrooms and across our campuses. At the same time, we should prepare them for the realities they may face outside of our doors. While each destination country has its own history and cur-rent climate, we all share responsibility for preparing students – particu-larly students of color – for the realities they may face in their new homes.

Over the last several months, I have come to recognize some of the challenges that U.S. schools and study abroad programs have in common. In reflecting upon them here, I hope to have shown how those challenges are also opportunities to continue building our academic programs, to invigorate our classrooms with new and creative pedagogies, and to cre-

ate communities that embrace the diversity of our students. As we do so, we can become better programs, we can strengthen our connections with the colleges and universities with whom we work, and we can make our students' study abroad experiences even more remarkable.

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Spotlight on… Paola Pedrelli

Trudi Crouwers

Dr. Paola Pedrelli (PhD in Clinical Psychology) is director of Dual Diagnosis Studies at the Depression Clinical Research Program (Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston). She practices as a clinical psychologist at the same hospital and teaches Clinical Psychology at Harvard Medical School. Her research focuses on etiology (disease causation), assessment, and treatment of comorbid affective disorders and alcohol misuse.

We know that some students coming to Europe engage in heavy drinking while abroad, exposing themselves to all the risks involved. The European laws that allow them to drink before the age of 21 seem like an open invitation to some of them to drink too much. Some of those students were engaged in binge drinking already before they went abroad and some start drinking here. But we also know that among them are students with mental health challenges like depression. What do we know, and what should we know, about students who have mental health issues and are involved in heavy drinking as well? A better understanding of this comorbidity (the simultaneous presense of two chronic diseases), as well as the underlying mechanisms and motivational aspects of heavy drinking, can lead to a more effective treatment. For study abroad advisors, more knowledge could add to a better preparation and support for students going abroad in Europe.

Dr. Paola Pedrelli is doing important research on the co-occurrence of heavy drinking and mental health issues like depression. This is a topic of great interest to colleges in general and study abroad programs in particular, since students often find themselves in places where it is legal to consume alcohol, so we spoke to her about her research and the developments in the field

You studied in Bologna for your MA in Psychology. In 1997, you went to the USA for your PhD and you are still there, working as a researcher and clinical psychologist in Boston. Could you tell us more about

your career choices and how your interest in depression and comorbidities developed?

In 1995, I studied for one year at University of California, San Diego, where I met my future mentor, John McQuaid. Seeing the type of job he had (which included conducting research studies, writing grants, and making significant contributions to science through his papers) was very appealing to me. At the time, I knew that conducting research in psychology in Italy was not going to be possible. So, I chose to move to the United States to do a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and be trained in conducting rigorous research.

And you still feel that it was a good choice?

Very much so. I love living here and I love my job. So, I think it was a good choice.

Would you like to tell us how your interest in depression and co-morbidities developed?

Depression is one of the most common mental health conditions, a disease that can be associated with many significant problems. For that reason, I have been very interested in understanding this condition to develop effective treatments and relieve the suffering of many patients. I started to become interested in studying the etiology and treatment of depression (both when occurring alone and when co-occurring with other conditions) when I was at the the University of California in San Diego (UCSD). There I worked on developing a treatment based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) principles for depression co-occurring with schizophrenia. CBT is an evidence-based treatment that has been validated extensively. At the time, evidence-based psychosocial treatments were not provided to patients with schizophrenia. So, when it started to emerge that CBT adapted for this population was effective, I became very excited about it.
I remained in San Diego from 1997 to 2004, then I went to Seattle for

one year, and I have been here in Boston since 2005. After mt Ph.D., I was supposed to go back to Italy as I had promised my family, but I ended up in Boston. When I went to Italy to explore job options and found very limited opportunities, I opted to remain in the United States. The compromise with my family was that I would move closer to Italy by moving to the East Coast. It actually made a big difference – the flight to Italy from Boston took half the time than the one from San Diego.

My mentor, Maurizio Fava, the founding director of the Depression Clinical Research Program (DCRP) here in Boston, is Italian. So, I came here also hoping we might be able to develop some collaboration with Italy. However, I have not developed any formal collaboration with any Italian groups yet. When I joined the DCRP at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), I started to become involved in conducting studies with young adults in college. I shifted my interest towards young adults because I was able to see what a significant difference one could make by intervening early in people's lives. By intervening with people age 18 rather than 50, a lot of negative consequences associated with chronic symptoms can be prevented. By treating individuals with mental health problems early on, one can really change the trajectory of their conditions. When I started working with this age group in the public health field there was a lot of interest in heavy drinking because of its high prevalence among young adults in college and because of the severe consequences associated with this behavior. So I started to be more interested in the co-occurrence of heavy drinking and depression in this population. At the time, there were not a lot of researchers studying the influence of depression on alcohol misuse. I developed a treatment for college students with both depression and heavy drinking, and now I have spent six years studying it. I am currently writing a paper about my results that show that CBT is associated with reduction of depressive symptoms as well as heavy drinking.

Can you tell us more about your research?
In the past three or four years, there has been a very significant interest within psychiatry in how we can leverage technology to improve

treatment and assessment. In that context I started collaborating with a team from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to examine whether we can leverage data collected passively (that is, without input from individuals) through sensors to detect severity of depression. We track movements and socialization (e.g., number of message texts and how much time they spend on the phone) through sensors in mobile phones and physiological response through a wearable device. Recently, I finished a pilot study in this area that showed promising results and we just started a larger study to examine whether our findings will be replicated. I find working in Boston very exciting because you are surrounded by people who are doing really cutting-edge research. This makes it possible to establish very exciting collaborations and develop innovative ideas.

I am excited about research itself, the process of investigating questions and knowledge. I could probably be examining a number of different problems and phenomena. I love being a scientist because I find the process of understanding people and their behavior very intriguing. Ultimately, I want to use science to identify ways to help patients.

Do you also receive patients for treatment?

I am also a psychologist at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) and part of my job is seeing patients. In our clinic we primarily see patients with depression. I deliver CBT, which is an evidence-based treatment for depression. Often in the U.S., patients with depression first report their symptoms to their primary care doctor, who might prescribe medication. Some patients get better and those who do not improve or who are not interested in medication are referred to see a therapist. My group is specialized in treatment of resistant depression, so most of our patients have chronic depression and comorbid psychiatric illnesses, including anxiety. In the US, most people have health insurance, especially now that the ACA[1] is in place. A lot more people than ever before go to

1   The Affordable Care Act, enacted under President Obama's administration

the therapist because it is not so costly. While paying out-of-pocket for health care is expensive; co-payment for one therapy session is usually only about 15 to 30 dollars.

You are involved in research, treatment and raising awareness around this topic.

My main goal is to make a difference in people's lives, so I am always trying to find ways to have a positive impact and disseminate science-based knowledge. It is unfortunate that oftentimes research papers do not have an impact on policies. I think scientists have a responsibility to advocate for evidence-based programs and for policies that are based on science.

Could you tell us what you do in the area of raising awareness?

I have been invited by colleges, high schools and scientific organizations to present my research. By going to different institutions like hospitals, psychiatry departments, even universities and high schools, to talk about my research program, I have been able to raise awareness about the fact that depression is common among young adults and that, in this population, it can often co-occur with heavy drinking. This is news for a lot of people. People know about the existence of problematic drinking and about depression. Yet, the fact that these two conditions often co-occur among college students is a notion that is not known, which is problematic. If clinicians don't know that they coexist, they may not treat them and programs addressing both of them are not developed.

Could you tell us some more about the importance of gender differences you have found in your research?

Men and women differ in a range of ways. Women are less able to metabolize alcohol than men because of differences in their bodies. Wom-

en and men receive different alcohol-related societal messages. There is more stigma about getting drunk for women than men. Women cope with life and adversities differently than men. Women have higher vulnerability to developing depression than men. Conversely, men are at higher risk for substance use disorders. Given this body of knowledge, I have always been interested in examining differences in the two genders. I conducted several studies examining whether different mechanisms would explain heavy alcohol use in men and women in college and in a few studies I found some differences. For example, in one study I examined whether our ability to withstand stress, called "distress tolerance", is associated with drinking. I found that women who have a lower tolerance for their distress tend to drink heavily to cope with negative affect: "I am having a bad day and I really do not want to deal with it, so I am going to drink. This way I will feel better and won't have a bad night." However, I did not find this relationship among young men.

When you look at this population of young adults, what do you consider the most promising developments in research on depression and alcohol use?

What I see as very promising is the use of technology, which I feel really improves the methods of studying the etiology of heavy drinking and depression and the impact of our treatment. In psychology, we often study a phenomenon by asking questions to a respondent. However, this method is of course biased because, in most cases, recall is not objective or accurate. New developments in technology now allow researchers to assess specific behaviors passively, without relying on the person's report. Moreover, the high adoption of smart phones allows a more frequent assessment of behaviors while they are happening in the real world. There is a methodology called EMA (Ecological Momentary Assessment) whereby each day patients or participants are sent surveys on their cell phones to which they respond, so we know their daily mood and their daily alcohol consumption in a more accurate way. Through technology, we can have

much better information. We can now study with higher accuracy and reliability if a certain mood is associated with increased alcohol use. That is very exciting to me.

Technology can also allow us to predict with more precision when someone is about to drink. We can leverage this knowledge by sending text messages that are tailored to them and that may prevent them from consuming alcohol at high-risk levels. This approach is called "Just-In-Time Adaptive Intervention" (JTAI). It may be more effective than seeing a therapist once a week or every two weeks because it provides help when the individual needs it. I feel like text-based interventions and EMA are really revolutionizing the field of psychology.

Study abroad institutes have to deal with the fact that academic terms overseas seem to be a very inviting environment for high alcohol use. Is there any research done about these topics in the study abroad context?

Some scientists that have done research, including Dr. Eric Pedersen, from the University of Washington. Dr. Pedersen and his group have shown that there is a significant increase of alcohol consumption among students who go abroad. Unfortunately, that is worrisome because once they experiment with a high level of drinking they tend to maintain that level once they return to the United States. It is something that colleges really should start addressing because students who go abroad are at high risk of heavy drinking and heavy drinking puts them at risk for a number of additional dangerous behaviors. For example, it has been reported that sexual activity without protection (e.g. not using condoms) is more frequent among those students abroad who drink heavily. Numerous studies have looked at strategies to prevent heavy drinking. For example, normative feedback is a treatment we implement a lot in the context of binge drinking: clinicians first ask students what they think is the percentage of people around them who drink or drink heavily, and then they provide the feedback. Often students' estimates are significantly higher than the correct one. A lot of students think that all their peers engage in heavy

drinking, but actually it is not the case. Students who have really high norms, who think that everybody drinks, are the ones that actually are going to drink a lot. We have seen that addressing those inflated estimates helps reducing heavy drinking. Moreover, it has been reported that students who go abroad believing that everyone going abroad drinks a lot, end up drinking heavily. This is a problem that should be addressed in the program before the students go abroad, not when they are already there. Unfortunately, universities have low resources for these kinds of things and they prioritize the those who are still in the U.S. and not students who go abroad. Colleges should consider preparing the students for both the trip and the experience. It has also been shown that the students who are less knowledgeable about the culture tend to stay and hang out more with the other Americans – they are the ones who drink more. Being immersed with the locals seems to be associated with lower rates of heavy drinking.

Knowing that quite a few students tend to go abroad unprepared, what advice can you give to the study abroad institutes?

If think it would be very beneficial to create opportunities to integrate students with the locals. Oftentimes in treatment we focus on making long-term goals more salient to the patient. Rather than have them thinking, "This is my three months in Italy. I'm going to just party and that's it," I believe reminding them about their long-term goals and the opportunity to immerse and learn the local culture (not necessarily just be there to drink because they can) would be beneficial. It may also be helpful to remind them, in a non-judgmental or condescending way, that it is not correct that all college students abroad drink heavily. Some professors, or adults in general, tend to sound condescending to young adults and that is something that is really not going to help. It may also be helpful to provide and suggest alternative behaviors to drinking. Oftentimes when students are in a new country and don't really know what to do, they may turn to drinking. They may be excited about the possibility of going to a country where they are old enough to drink. However, if the

institutions are provided exciting alternatives – for example, free tickets to the theater or gym membership or invite students to play a soccer game together – students may be able to see that drinking is not the only thing they can do. In short, providing students with alternatives may reduce their likelihood to drink.

Could you see yourself working in Italy doing what you do?

No, I could not. In Italy, funding for research is very limited, especially for mental health. I wouldn't really be able to do research at this level.

Would you consider yourself one of the famous "*cervelli in fuga*" (brain drain)?

Yes, I definitely am a "*cervello in fuga*." There are a lot of Italian people in Boston as well. I know a lot of them in this area. For example, in my research group (the Depression Clinical Research Program) out of 15 doctors, 3 are Italian, as is our founding director.

So, you are in good company there?

I am in very good company!

Looking forward to your next paper. Thank you very much.

Employability of Study Abroad Students, a Literature Review

Jamie Weaver

Introduction

Study abroad experiences are becoming an increasingly important aspect of a student's undergraduate career. Once achieved, these experiences will not only be a benefit financially, but they will also challenge and enhance the students' experiences with future employers. Additionally, by studying abroad, students gain competency that allows them to be a global citizen in an ever-shrinking world (Friedman, 2007).

Currently, less than 2% of the national student population has studied abroad on either a short term (less than a semester) or long term (semester or longer) experience while at a university in the United States. (Picard, Bernardino, & Ehigiator, 2018). The locations of these study abroad programs vary greatly and can generally be divided into traditional or non-traditional. The categorization of locations into traditional or non-traditional is most commonly based on the number of American students who study there. Using this method traditional locations are identified as Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand. While non-traditional locations are those in Africa, Asia, Latin America or the Middle East (Wells, 2006).

No matter the length or the location of a study abroad experience, students return from them saying, "It has changed my life." The research on this phenomenon is extensive, since the 1920's and 30's researchers have tried to understand why students have such a powerful response to their experience and what aspect of the student changed as a result (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2009). This body of research, which is widely dispersed, is detailed in two separate publications by The Forum on Education Abroad. Within these publications the research on study abroad is organized by decade and common topic (Mukherjee, 2012).

One common topic that arises is based around the soft skills that

students gain through study abroad. These studies have a found a number of common skills that are increased as a result of a study abroad experience. These are most commonly categorized by a) foreign language skills, b) understanding and tolerance of other cultures, c) ability to adapt to changing situations and d) overall communication and interpersonal skills (Crossman & Clarke 2009; Di Pietro, 2014; Di Pietro 2015; Jones, 2016; Kostelijk & Regouin, 2016; Williams, 2005).

Many researchers have supported the development of these skills during study abroad; however, as the number of students participating in study abroad increased rapidly in the early 2000's, practitioners and administrators began to wonder if study abroad was having the intended influence on students. Are the learning outcomes and objectives being attained? Are those skills that students developed benefiting them as they finish their academic careers and look to join the workforce?

This literature review will seek to gather and organize studies that explore how soft skills from study abroad are transferred into the workforce. It will also examine if the employability has increased for those students who participated in a study abroad experience during the undergraduate academic careers.

The organization of this paper is as follows: The introduction serves to give a short historical perspective and base line knowledge on study abroad; the methodology section describes how the research process was conducted and its results; the literature review section provides an in-depth view of the articles found during the research process (these articles are organized by common topic and compared); and the concluding section discusses the results and implications for future research.

Methodology

The initial search for studies related to study abroad and employability occurred in February 2018. Using Google Scholar the terms "study abroad" and "employability" were searched. This first search yielded 6,120 results. These results were sorted by relevance, the first 60 article titles were skimmed and set aside for further review as needed. Further

searching was conducted using the advance search function of Google Scholar. "Study abroad and employability" was entered in to the "exact phrase" field in the advanced search. This yielded 11 results, all of the abstracts were scanned for relevance.

The Penn State University Libraries online search engine was also used. Initially a search was conducted with the terms "study abroad and employability". The search was selected to only include peer-reviewed publications and yielded 460 results, sorted by relevance. The titles of the first 30 articles were scanned and set aside for further review as needed. To narrow the search of these articles, the advanced search function was used. Within the fields of the advance search the terms "study abroad" AND "employability" were used, searching only peer-reviewed publications. This search yield 11 results. The abstracts of all 11 articles were scanned for relevance.

The articles that were selected for further review were skim-read and divided into folder labeled either "YES", "MAYBE", or "NO" depending on their relevance to the literature review. The articles within the "YES" category met the criteria of being specifically about the employability of students who studied abroad during their undergraduate academic careers.

The references of these articles were also reviewed to find articles that may have been missed during the online searches. During the review of articles in the "YES" category, it became evident that within Europe the term "student mobility" is used rather than "study abroad". Therefore, the advanced searches within Google Scholar and the Penn State University Libraries were repeated, using the term "student mobility." These searches yielded 136 and 10 results, respectively. The titles of these articles were then scanned for relevance, reviewed later and added to the categories previously listed. After all of the searches and review of articles was concluded, 20 articles were found to be relevant for review with regards to the employability of study abroad students. Within the next section these articles will described and categorized thematically.

Literature Review

Current research has served to link the skills gained from study abroad to the employability of the students who participated in these programs. For the purposes of this literature review the term study abroad will be used to refer to any time that a student spends on an undergraduate academic or internship program outside of their country of citizenship. The base of knowledge on employability of students as it relates to skills gained during study abroad is fairly new and still developing. Much of the research is based outside of the United States and is not specific to one type or location of study abroad program. Therefore, this review will use the same broad and all-encompassing terms to reflect the terminology used in the current literature.

According to OECD (2017), the number of students enrolled in tertiary education (i.e. postsecondary education) outside of their country of citizenship has more than quadrupled between 1975 and 2015, from 0.8 million to 4.6 million. The largest increase was seen between 2000 and 2015 when the numbers doubled from 2.0 million to 4.6 million (OECD, 2017). Government incentives and policy changes have had a direct influence on this growth. In the United States, the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program claimed that 1 million Americans had participated in study abroad program by 2017 (Brooks, Waters & Pimlott-Wilson, 2012). Similarly, the European ERASMUS Programme, funded by the European Union, has recorded over 3 million students who participated in study abroad programs from its inception in 1987 until 2012-13 (Brandenburg, Taboadela, & Vancea, 2016).

This large increase in students who study abroad can be attributed to globalization and the internationalization of curricula in higher education. According to *The World is Flat* by Thomas Friedman (2007) we are currently in Globalization 3.0, which is best described as the world shrinking from its small state, achieved during Globalization 2.0 (1800 to 2000), to "tiny" and "flat" (Friedman, 2007). In this new tiny and flat state, individuals have the power to collaborate and compete with each other on a global scale. For an individual to reach a successful level glob-

ally, it will take a specific set of skills that should be developed early and strengthened over time. Historically, study abroad experiences are a way to gain those skills.

Skill Development and Employability

When discussing employability skills, it is important to think of them both in a domestic and a global context. Globalization has required those entering the workforce to be able to function on a global scale. To encourage students to go on a study abroad experience, it is not uncommon for advisers, practitioners, and study abroad alumni to tell these prospective students that studying abroad will increase their chances of getting a job within the global market. Often the opportunity is advertised as a way to "set yourself apart" or "move your resume to the top of the pile." This communicates to the students that by studying abroad they will build a set of skills that will make them more employable. Yorke (2008) defines employable skills as a "set of achievements, skills, understanding and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations" (as cited in Jones, 2013). These skills can further be identified as transferable or soft skills such as intercultural communication, self-awareness, and flexibility (Jones, 2013).

Jones (2013) offers a broad description of what employability skills are, while Eaton and Kleshinski (2014), Kostelijk and Regouin (2016), and Williams (2005) examined how certain populations of the students grow in certain skills during a study abroad experience. These studies are summarized in Table 1.

Eaton and Kleshinski (2014) conducted an overall study on the top 50 undergraduate business programs in the United States. From this study they identified the three top competencies that led to employability for business students. These skills include the ability to operate globally, intercultural understanding, and fluency in a foreign language (Eaton & Klenshinski, 2014). Even though Eaton and Kleshinski (2014) were specifically studying American students, their findings can be applied throughout the world. For example, they found that the ability to speak a foreign

Table 1: Studies on employability skills developed.

Studies	Country or Region of study	Results
Eaton and Kleshinski (2014)	United States	Important competencies include: ability to operate globally; intercultural understanding; fluency in a foreign language.
Jones (2016)	United Kingdom	Transferable or soft skills are key to increasing employability.
Kostelijk and Regouin (2016)	The Netherlands	Study abroad influences: significant growth in the personal lives of students & moderate growth in both professional and English proficiency. No influence on multicultural personality was evident.
Williams (2005)	United States	Study abroad students have a larger growth in intercultural communication. They also start at a higher level than students who do not study abroad.

language increased the employability of business students. For an American student, a foreign language, such as Spanish, German or Chinese, was beneficial. But for a student in Europe the foreign language could be English. In addition to other soft skill areas, Kostelijk and Regouin (2016) focused on the English fluency of Dutch students who studied abroad and those who did not during the 2007 spring semester.

This qualitative study evaluated these soft skill areas, a) English language proficiency, b) personal growth, c) professional growth, and d) development of multicultural personality. Overall, it was found that students who participate in a study abroad program experience significant growth within their personal lives. Meanwhile, there was only moderate change in the categories of professional growth and English language proficiency. The development of a student's multicultural personality was not found to be affected by the study abroad experience.

While the study conducted by Kostelijk and Regouin (2016) focuses on Dutch students, Williams (2005) is specific to the intercultural

communication and global competence of American students studying at Texas Christian University. By using the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) and the Global Competency and Intercultural Sensitivity Index (ISI), Williams (2005) compares the growth of study abroad students to those who stayed on the home campus. Through this analysis William (2005) identified that students who study abroad not only have a larger growth in intercultural communication skills, but also start at a higher level of intercultural communication than those who do not study abroad.

Student Motivations

Kostelijk and Regouin (2016) examine the outcomes of intercultural communication, as previously described, but they also study the motivation of students when choosing to go abroad. A pre-test survey was distributed to 714 study abroad students prior to starting their experience. They found that 84.7% were motived to go abroad for personal growth, while 62.8 % were motivated by professional growth. Once the students returned from their study abroad experience, they received a second survey that asked how their professional and personal growth was affected: 56.3% of students who went on a study abroad experience felt that it prepared them for their professional careers. In addition, 79.6 % of students who did an internship abroad felt that it affected their professional careers. This compares to the 81.8% of students who had a domestic internship. On the personal level, 84% of students who went abroad or who stayed on the home campus, felt that they grew their personal networks. Even though the findings of Kostelijk and Regouin (2016) were based solely on the responses of Dutch students, they are similar to that of Di Pietro (2014). Through literature from studies around the world, Di Pietro (2014) found that often times students go abroad "not because they want to gain competence in academic and professional domains but because they are looking for adventure and excitement." He also highlights the fact that students who choose to study abroad in the first place may have higher or different skill levels than those who do not, especially as it relates to

Table 2. Studies on student motivations for going abroad

Studies	Country or Region of study	Results
Di Pietro (2014)	Italy	Students choose to go abroad for personal reasons, looking for adventure and excitement.
Kostelijk and Regouin (2016)	The Netherlands	84.7% of students were motivated for personal growth, 64.8% for professional growth. 56.3% felt they had grown professionally after the experience.
Nilsson and Ripmeester (2016)	Europe and Global	69% went abroad to improve their career prospects. Employability ranked first for motivation from 2010 – 2014.

intercultural skills (Di Pietro, 2014). This description is highly anecdotal but is similar to the findings of Williams (2005).

Similar to Kostelijk and Regouin (2016), Nilsson and Ripmeester (2016) also conducted a study on European study abroad students. However, it was more encompassing of the entire region, rather than focused on one country. Their sample consisted of 164,000 currently students studying abroad around the world, as well as 2,366 prospective study abroad students (Nilsson & Ripmeester, 2016). For 69% of the prospective study abroad students, improving their career prospects was the main reason for participating (Nilsson & Ripmeester, 2016). Current study abroad students from the study rated employability as the top factor in their satisfaction with the study abroad program. They rated these factors on value of importance; consistently, employability ranked first from 2010 until 2014 (Nilsson & Ripmeester, 2016).

From these studies focused on student motivations and employability, which are summarized in Table 2, we can see that students commonly select to go abroad for personal reasons. There is a smaller population who do it for professional growth. The difference could be aligned with cultural differences between to the populations, but it is most likely a result of personality and characteristics of the individual student. However,

no matter the motivation going on the study abroad, students experience professional growth.

Effects on Employability

Even though there has been research to establish both the skills gained by students on study abroad and their motivations for doing so, the gap between those skills, motivations and employability needs to be bridged. Much of the research on the employability of study abroad students are based out of Europe. This is due to the ERASMUS Programme that gathered large amounts of data from 1987 to 2013. Studies from the United States and other regions of the world tend to be smaller scale and more qualitative in nature. To further organize the studies on the effects of study abroad on employability, I have separated the studies by positive and negative sub-categories.

Positive Effects

To be considered to have a positive effect on a student's employability, a characteristic or factor must have made a positive impact on the student's job prospects. Throughout the studies examined, this positive impact manifests itself in a variety of ways. Brandenburg, Taboadela and Vancea (2016), Di Pietro (2014), Di Pietro (2015), Lianos, Asteriou and Agiomirgianakis (2004) and Rodrigues (2013) all measure the earning potential and employment rate of study abroad students as compared to non-study abroad students. Their studies focus on different countries and populations of students throughout Europe.

Both Brandenburg, Taboadela and Vancea (2016) and Rodrigues (2016) conducted data analysis across Europe. Di Pietro had two separate studies, one in 2014 on the students in the ERASMUS and the second, in 2015, on a large population of Italian students. Due to the size and length of the ERASMUS Programme, all of these studies were conducted on very large populations of students. In contrast to these large studies, Lianos, Asteriou and Agiomirgianakis (2004) focused on a comparatively smaller population, around 800 students in Greece.

Brandenburg, Taboadela and Vancea (2016) summarize the findings of the ERASMUS Impact Study which gathered data on students in 34 different countries. The three main points from the study that focuses on career development of students, are a) study abroad students are 50% less likely to be unemployed longer term b) ten years after graduation, study abroad students are more likely to hold managerial positions and c) the students are more inclined to take a job abroad (Brandenburg, Taboadela & Vancea, 2016).

Similarly, Di Pietro (2014) uses data from the ERASMUS Programme to form conclusions about the employability of study abroad students. Of the surveyed students, 87% stated that they felt the experience help them have a more successful interview, while 54% said it helped them secure their first job (Di Pietro, 2014). There was a small sample of US college students represented in the study, and they stated their study abroad experience helped them become fluent in a second language which helped them earn 2-3% more than those who did not know a second language (Di Pietro, 2014). In a study of 16 European countries, Rodrigues (2013) found that study abroad students earn 3-5% more in general, no matter their fluency in a second language. The percentage increases the longer a student is abroad – for example, students who spend 3-12 months abroad earn on average 5% more than non-study abroad students (Rodrigues, 2013).

The same author, Di Pietro, conducted an in-depth quantitative study specifically with Italian students in the ERASMUS Programme. For this population of students, it was found that 10 years after graduation, the employment probability increased by 22.9% for those students who studied abroad (Di Pietro, 2015). The positive effects of study abroad on the employability rate was also seen by Lianos, Asteriou and Agiomirgianakis (2004). They showed that 86% of study abroad students in Italy found employment within the first year of graduating (Lianos, Asteriou & Agiomirgianakis, 2004).

The positive effects of study abroad on employability expand past the rate described and the higher earning potential. Additional positive effects, which often times are more vague, were found by Brooks and Simpson (2014), Crossman and Clarke (2009), Farrugia and Sanger (2017),

Norris and Gillespie (2009), Orahood, Kruze and Pearson (2004), Petzold (2017) and Wiers-Jenssen (2008). Similar to the previous studies discussed, these also occur in a variety of regions.

Both Norris and Gillespie (2009) and Farrugia and Sanger (2017) conducted larger scaled studies on study abroad students with in the United States. Norris and Gillespie (2009) used data from a 50-year alumni survey administrated through the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES), a non –profit organization that coordinates study abroad programs for United States students (Study Abroad with IES Abroad, 2018). The survey was distributed to 14,800 study abroad alumni with IES between 1950 and 1999, with a response rate of 25% (Norris & Gillespie 2009). Seventy-seven percent of the respondents stated that the study abroad experience allowed them to acquire skills that made a significant impact on their career (Norris & Gillespie 2009).

The number of responses, 4500, for the study conducted by Farrugia and Sanger (2017), is similar to the response rate for Norris and Gillespie (2009). Farrugia and Sanger (2017), used data gathered through the Institute of International Education (IIE) Generation Study Abroad initiative. Seventy-eight percent of respondents in this survey have talked about their study abroad experience in a job interview, while 50% felt that their experience led to a job offer (Farrugia & Sanger 2017).

Smaller scaled studies were conducted on specific fields or regions by Brooks & Simpson (2014), Crossman and Clarke (2009), Orahood, Kruze and Pearson (2004), Petzold (2017) and Wiers-Jenssen (2008). The studies conducted by Brooks and Simpson (2014), and Orahood, Kruze and Pearson (2004) were based in the United States. Brooks and Simpson (2014) conducted a small-scale study on family and consumer science (FCS) majors at Midwestern universities. The study abroad experience of the FCS majors was directly linked to a positive impact on the student's personal and professional growth (Brooks & Simpson 2014). By using the skills gained during that experience the respondents felt it made a significant impact on their ability to gain employment (Brooks & Simpson, 2014).

Orahood, Kruze and Pearson (2004) also conducted a study in the Midwest, specifically focused on business students at Indiana University. There were 198 responses to a survey that was distributed to all junior and senior business majors at the university (Orahood, Kruze & Pearson 2004). Of that 198, 83 (42%) of them had studied abroad (Orahood, Kruze & Pearson 2004). Ninety-six percent of those students responded that the study abroad experience had an impact on their career path: some (30%) had job offers prior to their date of graduation (Orahood, Kruze & Pearson 2004).

When comparing studies conducted around the world, it is not uncommon to compare the United States to other first-world countries with English as the primary language. In fact, in terms of study abroad and employability, a study conducted by Crossman and Clarke (2009) in Australia is frequently cited on similar topics in the United States. Crossman and Clarke (2009) conducted stakeholder research at one Australian University that included students, academics and employers. This provided a strong connection between those who are affected by a study abroad experience. From the qualitative interviews Crossman and Clarke (2009) conducted, they were able to draw the conclusion that all three stakeholder groups saw the connection between a study abroad experience and the development of key skills within the students. Employers felt strongly that students with a study abroad experience were "ahead of the pack" when it came to interpersonal skills (Crossman & Clarke 2009).

While other studies like Brooks and Simpson (2014), Crossman and Clarke (2009), Orahood, Kruze and Pearson (2004) examine specific populations of students in the United States and Australian, two studies in the European region, Wiers-Jenssen (2008) and Petzold (2017), focus on similar, yet, more specific topics. Wiers – Jenssen (2008) conducted a study with Norwegian students with some small comparisons to ERASMUS students. They not only look at the fact that study abroad students have higher employment rates, but also examine where those positions were held. It was found that students who study abroad are more likely to work abroad or have more frequent international work assignments, no matter the field of study (Wiers-Jenssen 2008).

Petzold (2017) conducted a very unique study that is unlike any other that has been examined. To track the effect of study abroad on a student's employment prospects, they created a variety of resumes to submit to job postings. The resumes were strategically designed to either include or not include a study abroad experience. If included, the experience was described in the cover letter and detailed in the resume (Petzold, 2017). The resumes were submitted to 231 job postings, and the time it took to receive a reply and the type of reply were tracked (Petzold, 2017). The study finds that a study abroad experience significantly decreases response time from those employers with a foreign branch, it also increases the likelihood of an invitation for an interview (Petzold, 2017). However, for employers with no foreign branch, the study abroad information did not make a significant difference (Petzold, 2017). This study was unique in its design, and it offered great insight into the effects of study abroad experience on the job application process.

All of the studies examined are summarized in Table 3. From this summary it can be seen that study abroad has a significant positive effect on a student's employability. These positive effects include a) decrease the time of response to a job application, increase the likelihood of an invitation to interview, b) increases the chances of a successful job interview, c) increase in employment rate from 1-10 years after graduation, and d) increase the earning potential by 3-5%.

Table 3 summary of positive effects of study abroad on employability.

Studies	Country or region of study	Results
Brandenburg, Taboadela and Vancea (2016)	ERASMUS	Ten years after graduation, study abroad students are more likely to hold management positions and earn higher wages.
Brooks and Simpson (2014)	United States	Study abroad has a statistically significant impact on the participants' professional growth and ability to gain employment.
Crossman and Clarke (2009)	Australia	Students who study abroad are more employable according to potential employers.

Di Pietro (2014)	Italy and ERASMUS	Students feel it was a positive addition to their resume. Employers felt it makes a job interview more successful.
Di Pietro (2015)	Italy and ERASMUS	Study abroad students are 22.9% more likely to be employed 3 years after graduation.
Farrugia and Sanger (2017)	United States	78% of study abroad students discussed their experience in a job interview. Those more advanced in their career feel it led to a promotion.
Lianos, Asteriou and Agiomirgianakis (2004)	Greece	87% of study abroad students gain employment in 12 months after graduation. Study abroad students consistently earn higher wages.
Norris and Gillespie (2009)	United States	77% of participants feel that the study abroad experience had a significant impact on their career.
Orahood, Kruze and Pearson (2004)	United States	96% of study abroad students feel the experience had a significant impact on their career path; 33% of study abroad students had a job offer prior to graduation, compared to 25% of non-study abroad students.
Petzold (2017)	Germany	Applications with a study abroad experience received a quicker response time than those without it. It also increased the chances of a job interview.
Rodrigues (2013)	Western and Eastern European Countries	Having a study abroad experience increases the chances of having an international career. Students who studied abroad from 3-12 months earn 5% more per hour compared to non-study abroad students.
Wiers – Jenssen (2008)	Norway	Study abroad students are more likely to have international careers than non-study abroad students.

Negative Effects

The positive effects of study abroad on employability were previously described. These effects are significant; however, there have been a few negative effects that need to be examined. Some of the studies that described these negative effects are the same studies that found positive

effects, specifically, Di Pietro (2014), Rodrigues (2013), and Wiers-Jenssen (2008). Brooks, Waters and Pimlott-Wilson (2012) is the only study that found negative effects and no positive effects. All of the studies, were conducted in Europe (east and west).

Brooks, Waters and Pimlott-Wilson (2012) conducted a small qualitative study with 85 students who had studied abroad during their undergraduate career. To gather data, in depth, individual istudents were interviewed in depth. The results found that student motivations are for personal growth, which aligns with what was found previously in Kostelijk and Regouin (2016), Di Pietro (2014) and, Nilsson and Ripmeester (2016). They then drew the conclusion that these motivations provided no advantage to students when it came to gaining employment (Brooks, Waters & Pimlott-Wilson, 2012).

Both Di Pietro (2014) and Wiers-Jenssen (2008) found overall that students who study abroad take longer to find a job. Specifically, Wiers-Jenssen (2008), whose study was conducted in Norway, found that the longer a student studies abroad, the longer it takes them to find a job. These results were support by Rodrigues (2013) who found that study abroad students took an average of 0.4 months to find a job. When trying to find a job, they also use more job-search strategies and apply for more jobs than those who did not study abroad (Wiers-Jenssen, 2008).

The studies with findings on the negative effects of study abroad on employability are summarized in Table 4. Overall, even though the negative effects were found, it is not clear if they out weight the positive effects of study abroad.

View of Employers

A majority of studies on the employability of study abroad students depend on the students' impressions to collect data and form conclusions. A few studies previously discussed collect information from both the students and their potential employers. Di Pietro (2014) and Crossman and Clarke (2009) are two such studies. Both studies give the employers view on a job candidate who has studied abroad. Overall, Crossman and Clarke (2009)

Table 4. Summary of negative effects of study abroad on employability

Studies	Country or region of study	Results
Brooks, Waters and Pimlott-Wilson (2012)	United Kingdom	Study abroad does not lead to a labor market advantage in the United Kingdom.
Di Pietro (2014)	Greece	Not all study abroad students are able to communicate their experience into something an employer would value. Difficulty developing an employment network. Takes longer to find a job.
Rodrigues (2013)	Western and Eastern European Countries	On average, study abroad students take 0.4 months longer to find a job.
Wiers – Jenssen (2008)	Norway	Study abroad students have higher unemployment rates 3 to 5 years after graduation. They spend a longer amount of time on the job search.

found that study abroad students are more employable and more attractive to potential employers. Their experience abroad "stands out to employers" on their resumes and tells the employers that the candidate has been "exposed to global thinking" (Crossman & Clarke, 2009).

Similarly, Di Pietro (2014) stated that the experience is a positive addition to a resume and often leads to a more successful job interview. However, a successful interview can be determined by how the students discuss their past study abroad experience and relate it back to the job position (Di Pietro, 2014; Ripmeester, 2016). Oftentimes, when asked about a study abroad experience in a job interview, students use the term "fun" or "nice" with no ability to discuss it deeper (Ripmeester, 2016). They don't realize how the experience has affected them. They have had no training on how to reflect and articulate their experience so that it leads to an increased chance in getting a job offer (Harder et al, 2015).

One other factor that may impact the employability of study abroad students is based on the view of that experience from those in charge of hiring new employees. According to Trooboff and Berg (2008), human resource or hiring managers value a study abroad experience more than

senior management. The value of the study abroad experience seems to increase the longer the it lasted (Trooboff & Berg, 2008). Additionally, if the person conducting the job search or interview studied abroad during their academic career, they place a higher value on that experience when evaluating potential employees (Trooboff & Berg, 2008).

Information from these studies is summarized in Table 5. From this it can be concluded that, overall, employers value a study abroad experience. However, how much value depends on two factors: first, on the student's ability to discuss the experience in a meaningful way, and second, on the position and past experience of the employers.

Table 5. Employer's view on the value of study abroad.

Studies	Country or region of study	Results
Crossman and Clarke (2009)	Australia	Students who study abroad are more employable according to potential employers.
Di Pietro (2014)	Italy and ERASMUS	Students feel it was a positive addition to their resume. Employers feel it makes a job interview more successful.
Harder et al (2015)	United States	The value of the study abroad program is based on the students' ability to express themselves.
Ripmeester (2016)	UK and ERASMUS	Study abroad students are highly attractive to employers. However, students need to be educated on how to talk about their experience.
Trooboff and Berg (2008)	United States	All employers valued a study abroad experience in employees. However, to what degree depended on their position and previous study abroad experience.

Discussion

It is apparent from the research described in this literature review that students who go abroad do gain employability skills. However, to what extent is still being investigated. The literature in this area is relatively new but growing due to the need to justify the outcomes of study abroad experiences. Since this body of literature is so new to the field, when examining it, it seems slightly disorganized and contradictive. A majority of the

studies are currently coming from Europe, with a limited number from the United States and almost none from other parts of the world.

Despite slight disorganization among the findings of the studies available and the lack of literature from a large section of the world, a majority of the literature supports the theory that study abroad leads to higher employability of students. It is widely accepted that students gain intercultural communication and problem-solving skills, as well as global awareness through study abroad. These skills are valued by employers in many fields, as long as students can apply the skills gained to their work environment. Once study abroad students have gained employment, they earn 3-5% more than students who did not study abroad. They are also more inclined to gain managerial positions later in their careers. (Brandenburg, Taboadela, & Vancea, 2016).

Between the positive and negative impacts found regarding the employability of study abroad students there were some contradicting findings. For example, Di Pietro (2015) stated that study abroad students have higher employability rates three years after graduation than non-study abroad students. This is in contrast to Brooks, Waters and Pimlott-Wilson (2012) who stated that they actually have lower employability rate. Additionally, Lianos, Asteriou and Agiomirgianakis (2004) state that 87% of study abroad students gain employment within a year of graduation, while Wiers-Jennsen (2008) states that study abroad students take longer to gain employment than non-study abroad students.

I believe that this confusion and contrast between studies can be attributed to the large variety in populations that are being studied around the world. Study abroad as a field is global in context; therefore, different cultures value study abroad differently. As the body of literature grows on the subject of the employability of study abroad students, themes and commonalities will become more apparent.

Conclusion and Implications

As a result of globalization the need for individuals in the workplace who have the skills to be successful on a global scale continues to

grow. Developing employees before entering the workforce increases the likelihood that an individual will easily and quickly become successful. Employers have a need for employees who can navigate the global marketplace, and they invest substantial financial resources into developing those employees internally. If an employee enters the company with higher global skills, the company can use those resources for other purposes.

During post-secondary education is the ideal time to take advantage of the opportunities available at the educational institution that help build these skills. In an ideal situation, all students attending post-secondary institutions will have the opportunity to be culturally immersed through a study abroad program. Through this experience, they gain skills that will provide them with advantages as they enter the workforce.

To be competitive on a global scale it is imperative that a higher number of individuals in the United States have more international experiences. In some viewpoints, the U.S. may be lacking in this area due to its size and economic stability. The earlier one has this experience and gains valuable skills, the more of an expert they can become. As individuals enter the workforce, this study abroad experience will provide them with distinct advantages within the global marketplace while delivering a cost savings to their employer.

The need for global skills is not restricted to a particular industry. Skills gained through study abroad can lead to an over increase in productivity at every level. This result directly affects the trainings that are provided by workforce education professionals (individuals with a responsibility to provide global skills guidance and training to all individuals within a company). Trainings that are provided to employees with less development international experience must begin with an awareness of themselves and may have difficulty moving past this level. By entering the workforce with more well in-depth experience and more developed skills, trainings can extend into higher level practical applications. As a result, the company as a whole will have higher productivity and be more competitive in the global marketplace.

Limitations and Direction for Future Research

This literature review only examined research on study abroad as it relates to the employability skills gained by students. The research on the impact of study abroad is extensive and has many different applications. It could be possible to form a different conclusion if the review contained articles on the broad impacts and skills gained by study abroad. With that said, due to the global context of study abroad, the research comes from many different countries with cultural differences. These differences add to the complexity of analyzing the research, since different cultures value different things. For future research, studies should focus on the value of employability skills across different cultures, linking these to the study abroad experiences of students. This research can be focused on the potential employers of former study abroad students. They are the ones that drive the value of the skills gained from the experiences.

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alumni

Reflection of Studying Abroad in Florence, Italy: May 2018-June 2018

Veronica DeFelice

Writer's block has come over me as I ponder the pleasurable fascination I had when fleeing by air to Florence in early May last year. The prospect of involving myself in a culture that was different from my own in America made my mouth water. Beforehand, in my imagination, I had a beautiful, spirited desire to stroll—for the first time in my life—through the streets of Firenze, soaking up heartwarming sights, listening to my own thoughts, and savoring the aromas.

Although I had never been to Italy before, I knew *mi piace la frutta* ("I like fruit"), a phrase I learned how to say in my Italian course in Connecticut, USA (and I do salivate at the thought of fruit). I would soon be at Sant'Ambrogio Market, gathering delicious fruits and vegetables to cook my daily meals with.

Prior to my arrival in Florence, as my planning nature took hold of my mind in preparation for departure, I attempted to research and map the walk from Aeroporto di Firenze-Peretola to the International Studies Institute; I clutched the idea that I could conveniently walk to my destination from the airport and that it would be a joyous way to absorb my first steps on new soil! I imagined my enjoyment strolling along the Arno River. After I snapped back into logistics, I realized I was getting ahead of myself and needed to get settled first: *Aspetta!* (*"Wait!"*) Deep inside my mind, I knew my time would naturally unfold in Italy, and it would allow me to explore, learn, and appreciate my environment. My stay would be short, but I would experience it with great attention and heartfelt gratitude. I knew that this would be a six-week-voyage I would go through intensely, meaningfully, and with careful contemplation. The time, hard work, and money of my own I put into being able to come to Italy, excluding any financial help from my parents, created a yearning inside of me to

spend my time and money wisely and with active energy.

Upon arrival at my apartment on Via Luigi Carlo Farini, following being greeted by the lovely smile and liveliness of Serena Giorgi (*Community Engagement Coordinator* at ISI Florence), I peered at the synagogue across the street and imagined the stories surrounding the iron-oxidized dome and within its interior. As my mind and body were now present in Italy, the past and present function of all the buildings and landscapes grabbed my attention, like they had done when applying to the program back in America.

I decided to take a class called Villa and the Gardens and Architecture of Italy: History and Preservation with Professor Silvia Catitti, a licensed architect. In reflection now, the courses were delivered in the most delightful way with information I will hold onto for a lifetime. The ingredients of an Italian formal garden – geometry and symmetry, evergreens, water, and lack of floral abundance – has been painted in my mind as not only beautiful but also as a structurally untranslatable landscape. It has permanently been added to my brain's knowledge of many elements of harmony. The gardens in Italy became a memorable part of my peace about which I would journal my feelings and considerations. I received many doses of floral wonders in Florence, like in nearby Piazza D'Azeglio and a small garden across the Arno River called Giardino Martin Lutero that I documented.

As I set sail on my journey to Florence, I chose to take in all the sights through solitary adventures. The preservation of ancient structural inspirations by the Romans and the built-up city were colorful to my eyes. I pondered the attention to detail that must have gone into quarrying the material to build these homes and buildings and the significance the architecture holds today to the Florentines and to its visitors.

Above all, I became more in touch with myself during the silent moments I experienced in Florence. Simply closing my eyes while sitting on a cobblestone sidewalk near Ospedale degli Innocenti, in stillness with my thoughts, or going on walks and runs throughout the city became the most loved "monument" to me. I can recall looking towards the sunlight

and hearing the laughter of the locals.

I became engrossed in Italian culture. Thus, at a local bookstore, I chose to purchase two books written in Italian by Italian authors, one called *Non vi lascerò orfani* by Daria Bignardi and one called *La bottega del caff*é by Carlo Goldoni. I feel that the best way to connect is through understanding the conveyed feelings and language of my surroundings. I am in the process of translating these two books for my own learning.

Culturally, my moments in Florence were musical and vivid, like the bright red, fresh tomatoes that are dear to my stomach. The ISI Florence staff and the Florentine lifestyle I acquired have made a distinguished mark inside of me, and my heart and mind are forever changed in a way that allows positive growth for me as time prevails.

Thank you, ISI Florence.

Beyond My Expectations
Chelsea Fife

Boarding the plane to Florence, I was excited yet nervous thinking of what the next four months had in store. I had never traveled to Europe before, but I had expectations that my semester would consist of learning about Italian culture as well as meeting new students at the International Studies Institute program. What I did not imagine while walking through the airport with my three bags and my passport in-hand was that I was about to embark on an adventure that would impact my life for years to come.

While I was preparing for a semester abroad and choosing my classes, one course caught my eye. I have always had a passion for assisting others, and I wanted to continue working with people with disabilities while I was in Italy. ISI Florence offered a course called *Cultural Engagement Practicum: Critical Disabilities Studies*. I learned from the professors at ISI Florence that this course would involve traveling twenty minutes by train to a restaurant in Pontassieve, which is a town outside of Florence. It was my responsibility to work with the staff members with disabilities who were hired by the restaurant. The professors at ISI Florence also informed me that only one person at the restaurant could speak a minimal amount of English. I knew that this opportunity was going to be challenging, but I also knew that I would learn valuable lessons and information that could benefit me in graduate school and in my future career as an Occupational Therapist.

On the first day, when I arrived at the restaurant, the staff hugged me and greeted me at the door. I only knew how to introduce myself in Italian and ask the staff their names. It was difficult to understand everything that they were saying because my Italian vocabulary was limited. We used hand gestures and small phrases in Italian to communicate. After a couple of weeks, my professor had an idea that I should teach English to the staff members at the restaurant because the staff was interested in the language and frequently asked me how to pronounce words in English.

I knew that teaching the staff English would also help me improve my Italian. I decided to choose topics to teach the staff that were beneficial to their work setting. The topics ranged from fruits and vegetables to objects in the restaurant. The staff was always excited at the end of their shifts for the English lesson. During the workday they would ask me what the topic was for that day and then request topics for the following week. Every word that the staff learned in English, I was taught in Italian by the staff members as well. When I left the restaurant on my last day, I cried while saying goodbye to teveryone. As I walked back to the train station to board the train back to Florence for the last time, I thought about how much time I spent with the staff and how much we all learned from each other.

While reflecting on my time spent in Florence and traveling to nine other countries on the weekends, I realized that all of my expectations had been surpassed. The CEP 201 course alone exceeded my outlook for being abroad. I was able to learn so much from the staff members at the restaurant who had disabilities. Not only did I learn how to work with the staff, but I also adjusted to working in a new culture. I was able to use the Italian that I learned throughout the rest of my time abroad. When my friends and I went out for meals, I was able to ask questions and understand the waiters and waitresses in Italian. This course taught me not only about Italian culture, but it also taught me lifelong lessons to which I can always refer. This experience taught me that in my future as an Occupational Therapist I might not always be able to communicate with my patients, so I will need to use similar techniques such as gestures and short phrases that my patients can understand.

When I returned home from studying in Florence, my friends and family asked me about my favorite moment from abroad. As I began to recap the past semester, I could not pick one favorite part from my four months of adventures. I realized that everything I had experienced changed me into a better person. I discussed this idea of living in a new culture and finding my own way in many of my graduate school essays and interviews. Graduate school faculties found my time abroad unique because not only did I adjust to a new culture and classes in another

country, but I also spent time doing something I loved – helping people with disabilities. They also pointed out that when I talked about my time abroad they could see how meaningful it was to me.

I am now one semester into graduate school and I can relate almost everything that I am learning in school to my time abroad. It has been two years since I arrived in Florence, but I constantly think about my experiences and how I can still learn more from them. As the next cohort of students begin to leave for a semester in Florence, many of them ask me for advice about their next four months. I have trouble being able to sum up everything about my experiences in a text message or email. The most important piece of advice that I can give someone is to step outside of their boundaries and challenge themselves. If I had not stepped outside my comfort zone and participated in the CEP 201 course and work in Pontassieve, I would not be the person I am today. I advise people studying abroad in Florence to live in the moment and be grateful for every opportunity. Florence changed my perspective on life, and the experience was beyond my expectations.

Adjusting to A Foreign Culture:
A Personal Experience

Leah G. Flautt

I lug my bulging suitcase through the crowded, noisy Fiumicino Airport in Rome, Italy. I have a splitting headache and attribute it to lack of sleep on the overnight plane. It is 8:00 a.m. in the morning – 2:00 p.m. my time – but it feels like midnight. I realize I have not eaten anything in almost sixteen hours, but I am not the slightest bit hungry. I attribute this to nerves. I exit baggage claim following a large mass of people, all of them speaking the completely foreign Italian language. I have never been so relieved to see two men in white shirts holding a green sign that reads "UMBRA." I made it. Finally, I can relax. Despite my headache and my knotted stomach, I plaster a smile on my face and greet and chat with my future classmates as I wait to be taken to the bus that will drive us the three hours to Perugia. About an hour later, I am walking down the aisle of the bus, and I spot a row of open seats. "Score!" I thought. "Now I can spread out and take a short nap." I didn't want to take too long of a nap for fear of becoming jet lagged, but I could tell from my headache how much I needed to sleep at least a little bit. I drift off to sleep… I awake from a dreamless sleep after what feels like a second with my headache somehow worse than before. Though I have thought a lot about this day since it happened, I still cannot remember the sequence of events that follow. On my first day in a foreign country in the middle of my nap I had a seizure, which put me in the hospital for my first five days abroad. While I was there, I felt I was missing out on the Italian culture of Perugia. Little did I know, while the Umbra staff was preparing my classmates for the new Italian culture, I was actually confronted by it even more directly in the hospital.

Hofstede's Six Dimensions of Culture

In this essay, I will describe several experiences I have had in re-

gard to my unforeseen hospitalization while studying abroad in Perugia. I will use these experiences to compare some aspects of American culture to Italian culture according to Geert Hofstede's theories. At first, Hofstede stated at first that culture had *four* dimensions: power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, and uncertainty avoidance. Later additions to this theory are long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation, and indulgence vs. restraint (Hartmann, 2012). I will focus on some of the above-mentioned dimensions and then define culture shock and describe my experience of it upon arriving in Italy. I will conclude by describing the effect I predict reverse culture shock will have on me when I return to America and am thrown back into my family, friends, and a very different culture from the one to which I have been adjusting for the past four months.

Power Distance

Power distance refers to how close the people of a society feel to their governing power, or how easily they become a part of the governing power (Hofstede 2011). Italy has a lower power distance than America (Hofstede Insights), which I saw reflected on a smaller scale in the culture of the hospital. I had several nurses and doctors of different rank take care of me while I was there. When the doctor arrived in my room to phone my father and give him a full report on my status, all of the nurses and doctors under him who cared for me in any way were also present, even though most of them could not speak or understand English very well. At Ospedale di Perugia, it is clear that the head doctor is in charge, but more so than in American hospitals, the subordinate doctors are included in important deliberations and meetings. Thus, there is less of a power difference in Italian hospitals than in American hospitals.

Individualism versus Collectivism. Individualism refers to the societal value of an individual standing out, in contrast to collectivism, which places value on blending into the crowd and working together accomplish things (Hofstede, 2011). America and Italy are both individualistic cultures, but America scores much more highly on individualism than Italy does

(Hofstede Insights). On my second day in the hospital, my roommate was admitted: an average Italian woman who seemed to be no worse off than I was. However, for the entirety of visiting hours from 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., she had constant visitors. By the end of her third day, I could tell that it was the same five or six people over and over again, spending hours at a time with the woman. The first two days, I felt happy for her that she seemed to be so popular with her friends and family but sad for me, because the constant company reminded me that I came here alone and would have no one in Italy who loves me to visit me in the hospital. My family would definitely visit me in an American hospital but probably would not stay longer than a few hours, as they would have their everyday lives to keep up with as well. As I became familiar with all of her visitors, I realized how much time each visitor spent and how often each visitor came. *Don't these people have lives or jobs?* I thought. *How can they take this much time out of their schedules to sit around and do nothing?* I realize now that this is not because they have nothing better to do. They have jobs, but they are far less interested in standing out in their workplace as they are in pulling together as a group to do whatever they can to make a person feel better.

Masculinity versus Femininity. A masculine culture values strength and power, whereas a feminine culture values nurturing and caring for other people (Hofstede Insights). While both America and Italy have masculine cultures, the data show that Italy is more masculine than America (Hofstede, 2011), which surprises me because in the hospital, I found Italy to be much more feminine than America. My first day at lunchtime, they dropped off my meal: some sort of chicken and an apple, which tasted a lot better than it sounds. I realized that the nurse had forgotten my utensils with which to eat my chicken. I could not type into Google translate fast enough what the word "fork" was in Italian and did not want to be a bother to someone else, so I just ate it with my hands, partially feeling like a barbarian and partially grateful that lunch did not involve soup or rice. At dinnertime, my translator from Umbra was there, and this time I was quick to notice that they had forgotten my silverware again. A bit annoyed, I pointed this out to her and she asked the nurse for a fork and knife. The nurse looked a little bit

confused as he left to get my silverware. When I asked what the deal was about remembering the silverware, my translator explained to me that Italy, on the whole, is very aware of its resources. Having to wash lots of reusable utensils after each meal would waste water and using disposable utensils would waste plastic. Though the hospital has some to spare, it only gives utensils to patients who specifically ask for them because they figure that most patients will have a visitor every meal to bring them their own utensils. In America, most hospital patients do not have visitors for every meal, because people are not as nurturing and do not spend near as much time with their hospitalized friends as Italians do. Americans are more occupied with being the best at their jobs and standing out in whatever group they are involved. Although learned the Italian expression "*forchetta, per favore*" from the experience, I still thought it strange for the hospital to make such a big assumption about all of its patients.

Culture Shock

Culture shock is defined as the ways that people react to strange or unfamiliar places (Bochner, 2003). My experiences with culture shock come from between-society contact. I traveled as an individual to a different country and was surrounded by the foreign culture of Italy. The most current theory of responding to culture shock is the ABC theory, which includes affect, behavior, and cognition.

Affective Approach. The affective approach to culture shock is that when one comes into contact with a foreign culture and responds with a "negative affect, such as confusion, anxiety, disorientation, suspicion, even grief and bereavement due to a sense of loss of familiar physical objects and social relationships" (Bochner, 2003). I believe that I was more anxious and more easily agitated by things than I needed to be in the hospital because I knew my father could not be there with me quickly if something went terribly wrong. I could not make it home if I needed to. In the beginning, I had none of my familiar clothes or books or computer to make me feel comfortable and at home. My translator ended up having to bring me some of her own clothes. Some of the best ways to reduce the affective aspect of

culture shock are reducing anxiety and surrounding oneself with some familiar items. It predictably helped when I was able to wear my own clothes and call my father from my own cell phone.

Behavior Approach. The behavioral approach says that certain behaviors of an individual tend to go unnoticed until the individual is in a strange place where people behave differently (Bochner, 2003). For example, in America I have no problem talking to anyone I meet on the street or anywhere, but by the time my roommate arrived at the hospital, I had already had several strange and foreign encounters, so I was subconsciously self-conscious about talking to her because I did not know how she would respond or what the proper etiquette was in Italian hospitals. I was so self-conscious that we sat there for what seemed like hours in silence until she finally saidc "*Ciao*." Then I felt like an unfriendly idiot for not saying something sooner.

Cognitive Approach. The cognition aspect of culture shock has to do with different people's interpretations of events that have happened (Bochner, 2003). When I was surrounded by the different Italian hospital culture, I was frustrated and annoyed at things that would not bother most Italian people, like not receiving a fork or not knowing how long I would have to stay in the hospital. Once my translator described the logic behind things that happened, I was able to accept it, adapt and move on from the differences.

The Similarity-Attraction Hypothesis. On my third day in the hospital, my translator brought a redheaded American girl into my room whom I had never seen before but, nonetheless, I jumped out of my bed to give her a big hug in greeting. Emily Townley and I were at first attracted to be friends at the hospital because we were the only two *ragazze americane*, as the Italian doctors would always refer to us. Though we slept in different wings of the hospital, it was still a comfort knowing that there was someone in a very similar circumstance to me, an American girl who had just arrived in Italy to study abroad and was unexpectedly taken into the hospital. It provided me a sort of comfort knowing that there was someone who understood exactly what I was going through, from the language barrier

with the doctors, to the inability to express myself accurately, even to the constant lack of forks at every meal. From the first day she arrived at the hospital, we were constantly in each other's rooms and walking around and outside the hospital together. Obviously, neither of us had any visitors besides the translators, so we were each other's visitors. My increase in feelings of comfort around someone I just met supports the similarity-attraction hypothesis, which says that says people with similar backgrounds will be attracted to each other (Bochner, 2013). Even after we had both returned to Umbra, we remained friends because we shared the common experience of being in the hospital during the first week of our time in Italy.

Returning to America

Though my time spent at the hospital was a difficult time for me, I have come to adapt and love Italian culture. Though I am not fluent in Italian, when I return to taking French at my home university, I will say "*sì*" instead of "*oui*" often. My sisters will ask me to drive them to *Chick-fil-A* and *Subway*, and I will struggle to say yes, having been exposed to such fresh food here in Italy. When people in my dorm leave the heat or lights on or forget to take the trash out, I may become frustrated. I am taking some time to prepare for the reverse culture shock that is to come when I return to America. Hopefully, the transition will be smoother than it was when I arrived in Italy and, hopefully, I will keep some of the best aspects of Italian culture in my heart and will not lose them in the hustle and bustle of American culture.

Expectations vs. Realities:
An English Summer Camp
Laura Guay

Florence is a truly magnificent city bursting with historic charm. It is a place where you can enjoy beautiful walks, food, and museums. But if you really want to avoid being an average tourist, you must interact with the locals. I have been fortunate to have spent three summers in Florence, accompanying my dad on his teaching endeavors. I tried to break the traditional tourist lifestyle by going to the market every day and forming relationships with the vendors. In fact, my family and I became such a regular face over the course of those six weeks that the vendors remembered us from year to year! If you ever find yourself at the *La Botteghina dell'Augusta* stand at the Sant'Ambrogio market ordering some pasta, know that I probably had that same pasta at least a dozen times. Yes, it was a little excessive, but the vendors helped me work on my Italian, and we thanked them for feeding us by making them an American staple: chocolate chip cookies. Although my Sant'Ambrogio market experience will always hold a special place in my heart, after the second time in Florence, I promised myself that, if I happened to find myself in the city again, I would find some sort of volunteer experience or work experience where I could regularly interact with locals in situations outside of the market.

With the help of my dad's former student living in Florence, I found the opportunity to volunteer at a summer camp for Italian kids learning English several kilometers outside of the city center. I decided to apply for this position after considering other volunteer options, such as cleaning the streets of Florence, working at a daycare, and volunteering with the ambulance service. After realizing that I would probably not enjoy hearing the sound of the ambulance siren more than I already did on a daily basis, I Skyped the woman who founded the camp, known as "Inglese for You." I remember our conversation was so relaxed and her desire to learn

more about me and my personal aspirations was so genuine, that I began to anxiously await my arrival in Florence.

For the first three weeks in Italy, I was able to adjust to the lifestyle we had assumed the previous two summers, continuing to strengthen the relationships I made with market vendors and creating an internal expectations list for the camp, where I would be working for the final three weeks. As someone who had little background in the Italian language – I often tell people that "I can get by at the market" – I was nervous that it would be difficult for me to help plan activities at the camp. However, although all of the other counselors were fluent in Italian, I discovered that the founder of "Inglese for You" was a woman from New York who married an Italian, and my two other colleagues were Americans from Texas and Ohio who both taught English lessons to local Italians and worked at the International School of Florence.

The location of the camp was at a *Casa del Popolo*, essentially a community center, in Osteria Nuova. I knew there was a restaurant, but other than that, I did not know what to expect. The first day I saw the *Casa del Popolo* was the day before camp started, when the other counselors and I set up for the first theme: "Exploring the U.S." Outside, a lot of older locals as well as the restaurant owner and waiters (with whom we would become well-acquainted over the course of those few weeks) were sitting in chairs set up under an awning. Then, I saw an enclosed area down some steps where there was a trampoline, a playground, and a beautiful view of Florence. This area served as a perfect space for many of the camp events that would soon follow. Inside, there was a game room on the left, a restaurant on the right, and straight ahead, there was an auditorium with a stage. After we had finished preparing everything for the next day, the camp director drove us back into the city, and from that day on, I knew this was going to be the immersive experience I was looking for.

The next day, I remember waking up early in order to make sure the bus would not make me late for my first day of work. Only one bus left from the final stop where I had to switch to go to the camp. One of the other counselors told me that I am not Italian until I had run to catch

a bus. That day, I officially earned my "Italian" title. Learning the bus routes and seeing the same people every morning and evening on their way to and back from work made me feel like any other average person on their way to work.

I worked for three weeks at the camp, and each week, we had a different theme. The first week was "Exploring the U.S.," the second week was "Harry Potter," and the third week was "Coding Camp." The themes were great fun, especially when I ran the Junior Ranger activity during the U.S. week and the spells class during the Harry Potter week, but the parts that will stay with me forever are the memories from the relationships that were formed. As previously mentioned, I was not certain about how to start talking to the kids. Since the camp was targeted at kids ages six to twelve, so I assumed they would not know a lot of English. They knew how to respond to some of the questions I asked, but, after a while, their blank stares worried me. As with any new task, I had some awkward moments, but I eventually got into a groove of explaining in English, performing the task as an example for them, and then asking one of the other counselors how to say something in Italian as a last resort.

The amount that the kids taught me and the amount I learned from them (not only about language, but also about culture and forming relationships) was unexpected. It is amazing how fast relationships develop when you spend eight hours a day (more on Thursdays, when we would set up tents and stay overnight) with the kids and fellow counselors and interact with them in play, work, and meal environments. Moreover, I was shocked by how much the kids trusted me even though I was not speaking their language. There were definitely some young children who were not confident in their English abilities, and whom I considered shy, but they would still run up to me and give me these great big hugs, sometimes even competing for who could give me the longest hug. I realized that, although language is necessary to form a deep relationship, kids are smart and can determine someone's character and how comfortable they are just through instinct.

Still, I struggled sometimes, as I desperately wanted to communi-

cate a specific point with some of these kids. I learned to get past the language barrier to some extent by interpreting the children's hand gestures and tones of voice. I would then either respond in English or nod in agreement with them. In fact, I convinced one little boy that I could understand what he was telling me until the last hour of the last day of the second week of camp. Over time, I also grew more comfortable disciplining the children. When they did not respond to English (as they were required to do), all I had to do was yell, "*Basta*," or take away a toy, the universal sign of disapproval.

From the camp songs, the journal activities, the sports (including countless water balloon fights), the kids' energy gave me something to look forward to every day on the bus ride to Osteria Nuova. During those three weeks, I learned more Italian than I had in the other four plus months I had spent in Italy. I would return to the market or even the streets of Florence and be much more capable of understanding what people were saying. I think it was good for these kids to go to a camp and listen to native English speakers, but it was also good to motivate me to learn another language.

Sadly, the final lesson I learned was about the permanence of goodbyes. It was likely that I would never hear another hello from them. It was so hard to leave the *Casa del Popolo* the final day, because I knew that I was now beginning my own life and would not have the opportunity to accompany my dad on all of his study abroad courses. As a result, I will no longer be able to take advantage of those situations and turn them into something that can impact my life so profoundly. Still, as I settle back into my dorm at Penn State, wearing my tie-dye "*Inglese for You*" shirt and looking at the photo album the director of the camp gave me, I know I will always have those happy memories to relive as I await the next journey in my life.

A Tale of Two Cities:
From Florence to Erzurum

Korey Silverman-Roati

Two years, almost to the day, after my first day in Florence, I landed in the eastern Turkish city of Erzurum. Three other young Americans and I were there on a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship, expected to spend the next nine months teaching English speaking courses at Ataturk University. We landed at the Erzurum Airport with only a loose idea of how we would get to our new apartments. After waiting around at the airport for thirty long minutes a young man in a sharp suit, who spoke very little English, ushered us into his '80s Mercedes. He drove fast down a highway through a valley below treeless mountains, past shepherds and their sheep, up to a city at the base of the Palandoken Mountain.

As we were driving, my mind wandered to a taxi ride two years before. A future roommate and I piled into a small taxi outside the Peretola Airport, about to spend a semester studying at Palazzo Rucellai. I looked out the window the whole time, my forehead pressed against the glass. We drove by small cars and even smaller streets. Hundreds of mopeds swarmed around us like bees. The buildings fit together as if they had been cut out of a single block of stone. The streets became narrower and narrower as we got closer to our apartment. When we arrived, we unlocked a fifteen-foot heavy wooden door to enter our apartment building.

Recently I began wondering why the first rides into both cities have been etched so clearly in my mind. One of my favorite authors, neuroscientist David Eagleman, studied near-death experiences to try to discover whether time really slows down when people are in mortal danger. He placed people on a fifteen-story drop above a net and recorded their brain activity during free fall. He found that time didn't slow down for people. Instead their brains, experiencing mortal fear, recorded everything they were experiencing, giving the people the illusion that time was slowed

down in their memory of the event.[1] Perhaps, then, it was fear that led to such vivid first-ride experiences for me. In both cities, I had dropped out of the sky into a new city in a new country with months of living ahead of me, perhaps afraid of what I did not know.

My memories of the two experiences stand out not as linear progressions but as crisscrossing and sometimes overlapping thoughts. One vivid memory from Florence was the day of my art history test on Florentine architecture. My walk to school every day took me on a twenty-minute path through the old streets of Florence's city center. On that day, I began to count the number of buildings I walked by that would be on my test. First was the Ospedale degli Innocenti, a Brunelleschi-designed orphanage adorned with clay artworks by the della Robbia workshop. Next was the Duomo, its imposing visage towering over the city, its marble walls newly cleaned and restored. Across from the Duomo was the Battistero di San Giovanni, the bronze gates of which were the result of a design competition, which Brunelleschi lost. However, his anger at losing spurred him to become an architect and design the Duomo's dome across the street, which now looms over the Battistero. Finally, I caught a glimpse of Orsanmichele, a church adorned with fourteen statues in niches on its ground floor exterior (the real ones had since been moved inside, replaced by replicas).

My experiences with architectural monuments in eastern Turkey were less structured. On some weekends, my fellow American teachers and I would rent a car to explore the mountains around Erzurum. Sometimes we would come across a brown sign indicating that a historical building was nearby. We would follow the signs and drive up a winding path to an old Georgian cathedral in ruins. I would park the car and we would explore around, alone at the site, witnessing an empty circle to the sky where the dome once was, wooden planks holding up walls where

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1   I should caveat that this description of Eagleman's scientific study about memory was recounted from memory. For a more detailed/accurate description, see his study here: https://www.edge.org/conversation/brain-time.

marble columns once stood, and climbing up and sitting in empty windowsills to look out on trees growing through cracks in the stone.

Exploring foreign cities has a way of bringing literature to life. In one of my classes in Florence, we studied Bocaccio's book, *The Decameron*, in depth. The book begins with ten young people meeting at the Santa Maria Novella Church to tell the 100 tales that make up the book. During our study, it quickly became one of my favorite books, especially for the way Boccaccio seemed to burst through time with views that appear more acceptable in our day than in the fourteenth century. When I visited Santa Maria Novella, I sat at the top of the steps and tried to imagine the city as it looked during the characters' time – a task that is probably easier in Florence than anywhere else I've been.

Before I arrived in Turkey, I read *Snow* by Orhan Pamuk. The book is set in the eastern Turkish city of Kars (*kar* means snow in Turkish) and follows its main character through a magical realism telling of heartbreak and an attempted coup. My fellow teachers and I took a couple weekend trips to Kars, only a two-hour drive from Erzurum. While there, I drank the main character's preferred drink, *raki*, and wandered through the streets imagining I was he, ducking into alleyways to avoid detection by the military enforcing a curfew.

This is perhaps an obvious point, but certain nuances in culture are much better understood through direct experience. In my Italian class in Florence, we spent an entire entertaining day learning Italian hand gestures. One of the ones I distinctly remember was a way of expressing, with exasperation, "What are you saying?" in an exasperated way. To do so, you clasp your palms together as if in a prayer and shake them up and down. On my walk home from that class, I saw a group of five men around my age walking in the other direction. As they passed me, one made the shaking prayer expression while loudly asking, "*Cosa dici?*"

In one of my speaking classes in Turkey, I taught twenty or so doctors, some much older than me. Each week, we would read an article of my choosing to give them practice reading and comprehending and to learn any new words they didn't know. One week, I chose a story about

Turkey that had reached the American press. Turkish Airlines had recently made flight attendant dress more conservatively, sparking a cultural debate about shifting cultural values in the country. I was curious about the students' views about the article, especially being in a city widely viewed as conservative. One of the students explained to me his view that the "shift" in values was actually an expression of Turkish people's true values that had long been suppressed under secular rule. Another disagreed, arguing that the airline dress code change represented one action in a long list of moves away from the country's foundational principles.

When it was time to return home from both trips, the anticipation flipped. Now a fear crept in that when I returned home, I would find things had changed over the last months. And when I arrived, my mind began to record in overdrive once again, this time overlapping my previous memories of home with new ones seen through new eyes, informed by my experiences in Florence and Erzurum.

Diversity - The Beauty of Colors
Lolita Savage

Like the dollops of colors on an artist's palette, Lolita Savage's story paints the perfect picture of a true multi-cultural experience. When ISI Florence asked her to contribute to 'Beyond', she found it hard to pinpoint one specific experience to write about. You cannot obtain green without first mixing yellow and blue. And the same goes for Lolita. She is who she is today thanks to the combination of the many episodes and palette of experiences that express her essence. If these chapters of her life are the hues, her added diversity as Asian and female is the tone that gives even more depth to her "self-portrait."
Lolita lives her life like a painting that never dries, transforming it into an incredible journey across time and culture. (NP)

> *"The human race is one beautiful rainbow of brilliant colors which come from a single pot of gold".*

"Embracing the Different"- Around the Globe

It has been over 45 years since I arrived in Italy. From the terrace of my Florentine apartment, I look down at the magnificent Piazza della Signoria, crowded with hordes of tourists from all over the world. They have come to enjoy the rich treasures of this ancient city, its monuments, sculptures, and classical objects of immense artistic value which were left behind by the Medici family. Just across from my home is the *Salone dei Cinquecento* inside the imposing Palazzo Vecchio where, on June 10, 2017, I received the Premio Europeo "Lorenzo il Magnifico". This is a prestigious award granted by the Accademia Internazionale Medicea (The International Medici Academy) to those who excel in promoting the humanities, art, culture, science, and politics, keeping alive the legacy of the greatest

Lolita Savage in her studio. (*Photo: © Philippine Tatler*)

patron of Renaissance art, Lorenzo dei Medici. The awardees represented different geographical origins brought together by each one's achievements and contributions to the progress of our modern civilization. It is very clear that the Medicis knew and embraced diversity because it was key to attaining the glory of the Renaissance, just as the Romans did to build a strong, solid world empire that lasted for centuries. Part of the Roman Empire's greatness, I am convinced, was granting Roman citizenship to the people it conquered without obliging them to renounce their respective cultures.

People have been diverse from the very beginning. Although human beings were believed to have originated from one species, archeological remains of separate species that followed had different physical

features such as the size and shapes of jaws, teeth, and brains as they evolved and adapted to their local conditions. Some hunted, some fished, and some farmed depending on the geographical demands of their existence. Whether in the tropics or in the icy poles, their location affected the pigmentation and colors of their skins. My Filipino people are generally brown because we are blessed with a powerful sun, which probably is also why we tend to smile readily with a sunny attitude.

I feel very fortunate to have become an international artist. My passion for art, education, languages, history, and foreign cultures took me to many countries which helped me understand and appreciate the meaning and importance of diversity. Since I left my native country, the Philippines, I have lived in Italy, Sweden, France, the USA, the UK, and revisited numerous times most countries in Europe, Scandinavia, some parts of South America, Africa, and Asia. In 1980, while working at the United Nations in New York City, I met my African-American husband, Frank Savage, who was chairman of Alliance Capital Management International, a position that put us always on a plane traveling around the globe. As a couple, from 1987 thru 2001, we regularly attended the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland; and those meetings gave me the chance to interact with prominent world leaders in business and politics.

To be in the same room with Nelson Mandela, Shimon Peres, Yasser Arafat, and a host of other presidents, prime ministers, and kings was an exciting and humbling experience for me. In 1999, I was elated to be selected among the international artists featured by the Forum to exhibit artworks.

My art and my marriage both intensified my interaction with diverse cultures, as did my three children. Realizing from my own experience the need for cultural exposure, I convinced my husband to send our children to boarding schools. My sons went to Gordonstoun School, up in the freezing Scottish highlands. My daughter presently is married to a half-English man who was born in Singapore and who was raised in southern France. To add to the diversity in our family, I have nephews and nieces who are Italian, Hungarian, and Mexican.

To me, the world has opened up like a garden with fragrant flowers

in multiple colors. I wouldn't have seen its total beauty had I not left my home of origin.

Developing Moral Values - The Philippines

I was born in Manila in the Philippines, where diversity is, has been, and will always be a part of our eastern culture. My country of more than 7,000 islands is home to many indigenous peoples, each with distinct physical features, regional traditions, and religious beliefs. Along with eight major languages, over seventy dialects are spoken – a factor which may have facilitated my learning of other foreign languages. Since the 10th century, the indigenous people traded actively with the Chinese, followed by the Muslim Arabs in the 12th century. In 1521, Magellan "discovered" these peaceful islands under the Spanish crown and subsequently named them after King Philip II. The Philippines became a colony for 400 years, becoming a melting-pot of Asian, Pacific, and European populations. Spanish, English, Dutch, Portuguese colonizers and traders were in and out of its ports. Many foreigners, overwhelmed by Filipino warmth and hospitality, settled and intermarried with the submissive, industrious, local population.

Colonization has had both its negative and positive influences on the Filipinos. One big negative is that of racism. Somehow, our native minds were slowly poisoned into thinking that what was white, fair and tall was beautiful, and what was brown, dark, and short was ugly. Being taller than the average Filipino, I always felt guilty and was sorry for my countrymen who were of darker skin than I. The colonizing Spaniards made sure that their superior status was unreachable for the natives and were comfortable in treating them like slaves through a feudal system. But through the years, Filipinos have recovered from the afflicting disease of colonial mentality, yet many may still carry the suffocating air of elitism and discrimination. On the positive side, colonization brought us knowledge of the western world. The Spaniards introduced Christianity, built churches, schools, and universities. Our exposure to foreigners was an education in itself: it made us adaptable, resilient, and capable of as-

similating easily into other cultures.

In 1973, I completed my Bachelor of Fine Arts from the oldest Catholic School in Asia, the Royal and Pontifical University of Santo Tomas, founded in 1611, making it older than Harvard University. After graduation, I was offered a convenient position and became the youngest instructor of the College of Architecture and Fine Arts. Slowly, my hard work was starting to pay off. Finding the means to support myself through college was not easy. It meant waking up as early as 4:00 a.m., doing my school assignments, walking to work, working until after midday, then attending classes in late afternoon and evening. Getting involved in extra-curricular activities was important too, so I was involved in the student council and was president of my predominantly male class for three years. There is never a problem of being a male or female if one leads and does a perfect job. Teaching was an exhilarating experience but I could only enjoy it for three months before I was sent to Europe. The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs granted me a scholarship to pursue my painting studies at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Florence. It was my first time ever leaving my country; my life adventure as a young woman artist in the big wide world was about to begin.

I was ready – my education in the Philippines prepared me to step onto the international stage equipped with practical knowledge and moral values inculcated in me during my eight years in Catholic high school and university. My Catholic convictions instilled in me an incredible amount of confidence to fearlessly confront anything mean and negative which may challenge my journey to finding success. But as everything else in life, these reassurances had their other sides. Yes, Divine Providence would allow me to survive, but it was up to me to cultivate the resources available around me by working very hard. And to be in the likeness of God, I felt I had to behave strictly in exemplary ways and excel in the use of the artistic talents that God gave me. It was imperative to stand-out as the image of perfection that I was molded after; as in Michelangelo's words: "The artist is a tool in God's hands, an instrument of a higher will." Hence, I have conditioned my mind to think that whatever I do, it would follow the order of what is morally acceptable to God, my-

self, and the people around me. As life unfolded, however, I learned that imperfections are very much a part of human existence. Still, I do think that the process of seeking the ideal is the right direction to follow and puts me as close as possible to ultimate perfection. I apply this thinking in daily life, in my interaction with other people, and in executing my creative activities.

"Learning to Adapt" - Italy

Italy seemed so far away, it took over 24 hours before we landed in Rome. The plane made innumerable stops unloading and picking up passengers in different countries. I remember the flow of diverse people in their traditional garb, speaking different languages, searching for words and gesticulations to be understood by the crew and co-passengers. English then was just on the way to becoming the international standard of communication. We were all aboard the "Plane of Babel." So, as human beings, we sat peacefully, respectfully, and harmoniously next to each other, adjusting to the limited dialogue, space and time that we would be sharing during our voyage.

Before going to the *Accademia di Belle Arti* in Florence, I was sent to Perugia to learn Italian. The *Università per Stranieri* is a school that specializes in teaching high quality Italian language and Italian culture courses to foreign students. My classroom was filled with nationalities from all parts of the world: Americans, Australians, Germans, Israelis, Palestinians, Lebanese, Scandinavians, and Chinese (only male Chinese, still wearing their Maoist gray uniforms.) We became like children of mixed parents from distant corners of the globe sent to Italy to learn how to talk, how to adapt to Italian culture, and how to socialize and build friendships with our new found "brothers and sisters". I learned so much from this international atmosphere, from listening, observing, from doing things together like going to the *mensa* (cafeteria) for a hearty plate of pasta, strolling along the Corso Vannucci, or visiting the ancient ruins of Umbria. Respect, kindness, and genuine curiosity were the weapons used in conquering new friends in the international arena. There is something sat-

isfying from discovering why human beings find themselves in a certain time and place, why suddenly they sit next to someone they had never ever met before. Curiosity to knowledge, then knowledge to understanding, then understanding to accepting. Gradually, we students became interrelated through exposure to international education.

In Perugia, I was hosted by a Sardinian family. Mamma Lillina became my first Italian "*mamma*" – an incredible woman who gave her love so generously to a foreign young Asian woman, a woman who put her trust to a total stranger… me. She knew I was learning Italian so she decided she was going to help. She labeled practically all the objects inside her home in Italian, and at dinner, she served the very best wine that made me quickly adept at speaking any language! Before Italy, I had only drunk water. Lillina has passed away, but to this day, her family remains connected to me like I were a permanent part of them. This has become the case with most of the friends I made in the countries where I lived since I left the Philippines. In learning and knowing how to adapt, I was adopted like a daughter, regardless of my race and origin.

Presently, Florence may look the same with its enduring charm, but when I arrived there in 1973, it was even more romantic and enchanting. People were very elegantly dressed, and they were generally more polite. The gentlemen would courteously take their hats off in front of women, and everyone gave a curious but kind, welcoming look when they saw foreigners like me. They wanted to know where I came from, what I was doing in Florence, and if I liked their city. They seemed to really care and wanted to make sure that I was happy. Every day on my way to school, I would stop by a cafe/bar for a cappuccino and pastry, which I got for free because the generous owners knew that I was a young student with limited funds. There was a totally different atmosphere and attitude towards foreigners at that time in Europe.

Again, like at the *Università per Stranieri di Perugia*, my painting class at *Accademia di Belle Arti* was very international, but this time the foreigners were mixed with Italian students. My best girlfriends were Fay Bevan from England who was born and grew up in Cyprus, and Nurit Rachlin

Arrival in Perugia, Sept, 1973 welcomed by the Bulletti family. The lady to the left with eyeglasses was Lolita's first *Mamma Italiana* Lillina.

from Israel. In 1975, together with a Norwegian woman painter, Fay and I did our first art exhibit at Palazzo Strozzi in 1975 through an international organization called "Incontro per Stranieri". Nurit, on the other hand, used to take me to the synagogue, allowing my first exposure to Jewish culture and religion. Our head professor at the Accademia was the famous painter Silvio Loffredo, a liberal teacher who allowed active interaction between his diverse students coming from overland and overseas. We all got along peacefully and happily, inside and outside the classrooms.

In Florence, I found my second "*Mamma Italiana*", a woman named Aura Federici, who rented me a space in her luxurious home filled with art. She is now 87 years old and continues to treat me like her own daughter.

My two years at the Accademia were like heaven! I was doing what I love most, painting, in a very historically and culturally rich setting, under the supervision of a dedicated art professor, and in the company of international artist friends. By that time, I was already fluent in Tagalog, Spanish, English, and Italian.

Acceptance – Sweden

When asked why I chose to go to Sweden after Florence, I can think of two main reasons: The Scandinavians' reputation for respecting women as equal to men, and their reverence for nature and the environment. The openness and spontaneity of the Scandinavians I met in Florence so deeply impressed me that I thought I wanted to learn more about these peace-loving people. So, I jumped into my next life adventure in the land of the Vikings.

In Sweden in 1975, there were hardly any Asians in sight, so my presence could hardly be missed wherever I went. It felt like I had just landed from another planet, but I took in the shy stares as a friendly sign of welcome. I had to learn Swedish quickly to know what and how they are thinking since they were not very like the outgoing and communicative Italians.

I enrolled in a language school and, once again, was thrown into the international arena of immigrants, but this time, the learners were

not students but mostly workers and refugees seeking political asylum from Hungary, Yugoslavia, Iran, and several Arab countries. Everyone had their story to tell, and it did not require fluent Swedish to feel and understand the misfortunes that some of these people had gone through and which pushed them out of their native lands. Indeed, I admired the compassion of the Swedish government in allowing these people to start anew within its structured, comfortable, and humane social system.

Sweden's natural beauty was so overwhelming that it became a major inspiration of my art. Every day, I would walk into the woods near the tranquil lakes, pluck wild berries, listen to the footsteps of deer, and smell the fresh air of Nordic winds. My passion for painting nature became so intense that I knew this was going to be my choice country for a while.

For me, acceptance into a new society demands not only learning the language but also immersing oneself into understanding Sweden's culture by participating in its customs and traditions. I studied its history and society, ate potatoes instead of rice, danced around the Maypole, held the candled crown on my head as their Christmas patroness St. Lucia, and bravely confronted the harsh winter snowstorms like a true Viking. To supplement the little income from my art, I worked as a substitute teacher, a most daring move for an Asian woman who had barely begun to speak Swedish. Indeed, survival can make one commit the most courageous acts. Both for me, as a teacher, and for my blond-haired blue-eyed students, it was a unique and unforgettable experience. Art had become an effective medium for understanding diversity.

When I was young, my father warned me that I would be forever poor if I chose to pursue art. Having seen real poverty and its miserable effects on people, I decided never to become poor even if I pursued art. As a financial back-up, I trained in office management in Stockholm while also attending a language course in German at the Goethe Institute. By now, I had added more languages to my list including Norwegian, which is almost identical to Swedish.

Being in a land that highly respects the status of women, my possibilities in Scandinavia were endless.

One Human Race – USA

In 1979, I flew to New York City to work for the United Nations Office of Public Information to use my international background and knowledge. My co-workers were from every corner of the globe; most of them, like me, were multi-lingual. Every morning, we were briefed on the current situation of the world and which news items we could share with the hundreds of international visitors that visit the United Nations every day. We were trained to answer economic and social questions, political and security questions, human rights, and questions on the structures and functions of the many UN agencies. So, there I was, amidst the multi-colored diplomats and political leaders working together in a common pursuit of human equality, justice, and dignity for all men and women of nations, large and small, to maintain international peace and security. Outside the protected UN compound, I now began to learn about America. I lived on the East Side of Manhattan, a few blocks away from work. I sensed it was not a usual place for me. I was warned that I should be cautious and not respond when approached by strangers in the streets. In Sweden, I was used to saying "*hej*," (hello) to the other human being walking opposite me; no malicious intentions or provocation on either part, only a sign of respect and politeness.

Before I came to the USA, my knowledge of American racial issues was very limited. In Sweden, my eyes were opened in a social studies class when we discussed the plight of people of color in the book *Svart i Vitt Land, Rasfragan i USA,* translated to: *Black in a White Country: The race problem in the USA*, by Sture Lindmark (Stockholm, 1971).

I realized that I was living in a white land and had no idea what was truly happening with blacks in America. In the Philippines, my home country, blacks were portrayed as singers, dancers, boxers, and criminals. I was very ignorant of black Americans until I met my husband-to-be Frank, a very successful, sophisticated, learned, international businessman.

Assumptions, generalizations, discrimination, stereotyping, racial bias, were new words to me. I learned their painful significance only after years of living in this land. America is a dream for immigrants, the

land of hope and opportunities, but I realized the price of living in it may sometimes cost human dignity. I remember telling my husband, "If I were black, I would have left this country a long time ago." I could not imagine myself having the same resilience in the face of offensive racial discrimination. Still, my husband values democracy more than anything else and believes that the goodness of his country will prevail, even if it seems to waver at times.

I married my husband and had two beautiful children, a boy, then a girl. Sometimes, I did feel a bit offended when I was mistaken for their nanny, because their color was unmistakably darker than mine. Later we moved to the suburbs to give our growing children more running space. My third child was born in Stamford, Connecticut, where families of international executives working in New York City would often live. Once again, I was surrounded by multicultural people. Our children played regularly with children who were Japanese, Peruvian, Italian, Danish, Norwegian and of other foreign origins. Stamford is a vibrant city. I decided to get involved in this community and its non-profit organizations on arts, culture and, yes, diversity.

Diversity was not a word often heard back then. It became a commonly used topic for me when I decided to move permanently from Sweden in the early '80s. I thrive in diversity. I have learned from my international education that diversity is an absolute necessity for a healthy, vibrant, and productive community. I love and respect all my friends whose race, color, and creed are different from mine. I am an artist – an artist who needs all colors to be able to create a stimulating picture. I need blue and green to create a field of peace, red and yellow to make a fire of hope, pink and purple to inspire harmony. Inspired by the global atmosphere in Stamford, I organized the first International Cultural Festival at a local school to celebrate the diversity in our community and build interest, respect, and tolerance for all races. It was a successful and satisfying project that proved the good-will of all parents and students to learn and be educated on this most relevant subject.

International education is the best way to increase our knowledge

and appreciation of the world, of all the differences, and for all the similarities of the peoples that live in it. It is only we leave our country that we allow ourselves to have a personal insight into other people… every person has a soul that can only be felt by direct contact, by interaction mind to mind, by seeing eye to eye, by the pulse that comes from their heart. With international exposure, you will likely face adventures that could bring out your hidden capabilities to cope in order to survive.

People may also discover hidden positive qualities in themselves like kindness, generosity, compassion, and humility to reciprocate those who are gentle with them. They may also become more selective as they develop a discernment for the good qualities they find in a culture and combine these with the qualities they carry within themselves from the time they leave their original home, thus making them a better person. Thinking and behaving in an international way represent the nourishment of the spirit that gives one the courage to take steps forward across new bridges and discover the beauty of the unknown. Civilization was born out of a cognitive interaction between the new and the unknown. There would not have been progress without the small steps that courageous people have taken, leaving behind their comfort zones to go on long voyages crossing dangerous oceans in search of new worlds.

For one who has seen a great part of the world, I feel there is much more left for me to discover in this big world of diversity. My international education continues until that time when humankind recognizes that there is only one race: the human race.

How to Unlearn Everything
Jack Sherman

Stefano Corazzini was standing in the parking lot outside the *Duomo di Siena*, halfway into an impassioned speech about the origin of the city's cathedral, when it hit me: this was the first parking lot I'd seen since I came to Italy. I'd spent time in all the postcard regions – Florence, Rome, Milan, Venice, Cinque Terre, Lucca – and nowhere else had I seen a place to *store one's car.* Make no mistake, I was astonished. There was street parking, sure, and illegal spaces were fair game (cue the Audi I saw conveniently straddled across the median of a busy intersection during midday traffic in Florence), but an honest-to-goodness parking lot? Not a chance. So when Stefano finished explaining how the Black Plague killed nearly a third of the cathedral's workforce and halted construction for years on end, I had only one question for him.

"Where do you park your car every day?"

Several students laughed. Stefano turned to me. He was wearing a dark navy sweater with white horizontal pinstripes and a checkered button down underneath, with slacks resting on slightly worn athletic shoes. His outfit looked stifling under the sweltering sun, but he hadn't broken a sweat. Instead he smiled, grinned at me with the eyes of a scholar – skin pulled tight at the edges, lids perched above the pupils in a narrow slant – and raised a finger.

"You don't need to park if you never drive, *amico.*"

Stefano does, indeed, drive. But not much. In his own words, he moves his car from its space on the street "just enough to avoid a ticket when the parking *polizia* come by each month." Anyone who's traveled through Italy will recognize the subtle art of *furbizia* at work here, that distinct cultural cleverness in the face of bureaucratic institutions which Italians regularly employ to outsmart the system. But there's something else going on here, too, something larger than Stefano or me, and it con-

cerns far more than intercultural discussions about cunning parking pro-
cedures. In fact, it might just be the key to revolutionizing how we ap-
proach international education.

    What does it mean to study abroad? Is it a cultural experience? An
experiment in independence? A rite of passage for emerging scholars? A
definitive answer will probably always elude us. But I've had some time
to think about it and, year after year, I've habitually come to the same
conclusion: in many ways, studying abroad is an arduous process of un-
learning everything you've ever known. This sounds easier on paper than
it is in practice. To purposely unlearn what you know is to make a fool
of yourself in front of others with great frequency and conviction. You
must attempt to learn a foreign language by using it poorly. You must take
wrong turns and get lost within cities you hardly know. Above all, you
must ask questions about local parking customs at inopportune moments
and receive surprising answers. You must do all of these things, and you
mustn't be afraid to do them.

    This is exactly what happened between Stefano and me: in a small
but powerful way, our nonchalant cultural exchange at an ill-timed mo-
ment forced me to reconsider what public and private transportation
looks like in different parts of the world. As an American, it was wholly
unfathomable to me that anyone would drive so sparingly. My monthly
car payments and insurance fees are reason enough to put thousands of
miles on my dust-black Toyota Yaris each year. And yet, Stefano's sto-
ry made sense. He lives in Florence, an immensely walkable town, and
inner-city parking laws restrict drivers from using many of the town's
narrow, winding roads. After all, why drive when biking or walking to
work is much faster? And so, while my curiosity spurred a seemingly
frivolous discussion, it provided me with the opportunity of unlearning
an ingrained cultural bias.

    This wasn't the first eye-opening conversation I'd experienced in
Italy. By now I was having around-the-clock revelations, some small, oth-
ers colossal, to the point where I'd deconstructed almost all of the pre-

conceived notions I'd formed back home. I was having embarrassingly enlightening moments on a daily basis, and I was thankful for them. Most of all, I was excited to unlearn even more.

Of course, as ambassadors of our own competence, the notion of unlearning goes against everything we've been taught. But if you can suffer this painful process, you will be gifted with the rare opportunity to relearn everything, too. You will relearn the definition of beauty as you stand atop the mountain trails of Cinque Terre, sipping freshly squeezed orange juice from a hillside vendor and gazing down at the seaside salt-blasted pastel homes that grip the edges of the Mediterranean. You will relearn how to drink wine by tasting it fresh from the cask in cellars that have been practicing the art of vinification since the Medicis ruled Florence. You will relearn how to converse using smiles and nods alone, and in doing so, you will come to cherish your native language and how it effortlessly tumbles forth from your mouth. But to do this – to do any of it – you must first unlearn it all, piece by piece, inch by inch.

Speaking of which, if you're going to unlearn everything, you'll want to start with inches… they'll do you no good in a world governed by the metric system.

If you're flirting with the idea of unlearning everything and don't know where to start, it helps to have a guide. Two guides are better than one, and three are even better than that – rewiring your brain takes an army of great minds to successfully accomplish. In my case, I enlisted the help of three guides who worked day and night to ensure that by the time I set foot on American soil once more, I didn't know a single thing.

My first guide was my landlord, Christina, who governed our flat during my stay in Florence. She retains a special place in my heart for helping me un-learn my American predisposition to excessive consumption. On my first night in Florence, much to Christina's consternation, my roommate and I short-circuited our flat's power upon arrival. We'd plugged in *everything* – laptops, phone chargers, TVs, blow dryers, personal fans, the washing machine, you name it – and within minutes, the

circuit breakers flipped, plunging us into a premature midnight. Christina wouldn't let us hear the end of it.

"Americans! How do you blow the power within ten minutes of receiving your keys?" From that moment on, we avoided her gaze like the Black Plague itself. We always looked twice before leaving our apartment, making sure she wasn't hiding in the dilapidated stairwell, ready to pounce on us from the shadows. This was, of course, an overreaction. Christina was simply trying to explain one of the many nuances of European living: electricity can be a bit fickle in cities built before the birth of Christ. In the end it was a valuable lesson, the first of many embarrassments that would prepare me to unlearn everything else — and, in an unlikely twist of fate, it was this incident that led to the connections which would help me become an occasional contributor to the Italian Studies Institute blog and now *BEYOND*. In many ways, I have Christina to thank for the very existence of this piece.

My next guide was Stefano Baldassarri. It didn't strike me at the time, but looking back, there are few people *less* suited to help you unlearn everything than the ISI Florence Program Director. An avid academic with a rich background in foreign language studies, medieval history, Italian literature, and more, Stefano is a font of knowledge, and he shares his wisdom willingly. Despite his impressive intellectual clout (or perhaps because of it), he helped me unravel much of what I'd come to believe, starting with parking principles. Over the course of my stay, I would seek his advice on a myriad of cultural subjects. Our conversations ranged from the metaphysical to the mundane: how do Italians create modern art in the shadow of cultural giants like Michelangelo and Botticelli? Has anyone fallen into the Arno recently? What does the slowly diminishing role of Catholicism mean for the future of Italian politics and cultural life? Why are there condom machines on every street corner in Florence?

Stefano answered my questions with humor and grace, and in doing so, helped me discover something incredibly valuable: there is no shame in discussing both the simple and the complex at once. This is, of course, a well-known fact among many Italians. Old friends and acquain-

tances alike spend their afternoons discussing everything from politics to pets at cafes and *gelaterie* in the span of one breath, switching effortlessly from subject to subject as if they're asking for a glass of water. It is not uncommon for a waiter and their patron to lament about the backhanded politicking that goes on among the Italian football elite before transitioning to a nuanced discussion about the state of the economy.

To an American steeped in the tradition of small-talk, it sounds a little bit like magic. In some ways, it *is* – this kind of conversational vulnerability will likely remain an enigma to myself and countless others who live stateside, and we will continue to be fascinated by it wherever we go. But were it not for Stefano, I wouldn't have learned that this parallel world of intercultural dialogue could exist at all. He was the first person to draw back the curtain, the first to reveal this proverbial *Land of Oz*, the first to dazzle me with a concept that will continue to intrigue me throughout my adult life.

My third guide was the brilliant and enigmatic Verdiana, our chaperone through the streets of Venice. Shaped by a city with a rich and complex history, her knowledge of Venetian culture was razor sharp, and her influence was instrumental in helping me unlearn both the esoteric and the practical. For instance, while I will never forget what she taught me about the composers and writers who once frequented the streets of Venice or the impact of tourism and pollution on the city's crumbling wooden foundations, I am still reminded of a very elementary lesson I learned about American punctuality while frequenting a Venetian cafe.

"*Perfetto, signore,*" the *barista* said, writing my order down in her sleek checkbook. An espresso and a croissant. I reached for my wallet to pay. The woman smiled and shook her head. "You haven't had your meal yet." Verdiana, who was standing beside me, laughed quietly.

"Coffee first," she chided me. "Pay after." *Pay after?* Imagine ordering a tall blond coffee at Starbucks and promising the *barista* you'll cough up the money after you've drunk it. I'd *pay* to see that conversational transaction play out in real-time. Nevertheless, that was the policy here: drink first, pay after. The cafe had cultivated a culture of mutual trust

between its employees and patrons; as such, there was no need to rush toward payment. Within these walls, prompt payment was considered uncouth and shady behavior. Lesson unlearned.

Parking, power and payment culture. They're not exactly the stuff of legends, nor are they the topics that keep most people up at night. But each subject, and the guides who helped me navigate them, were instrumental in allowing me to discover something about myself I'd never even known I *knew*. And for that, each of these interactions hold a special place in my heart, along with the countless thousands of other cultural, political, historical and practical themes I'd been forced to confront, examine, and reconsider while studying abroad.

Before you embark on an international education excursion of your own, I must admit: I've misled you. When I mentioned that I had three guides during my time abroad, that was a bold-faced lie. The truth is that I had many, many more guides than that. There was Emma, the bright-eyed ISI associate who showed me how to get lost in Venice; there were the bartenders at *I Visacci,* who coached me on the art of persuading your friends to pick up *il conto,* the check; there was the priest at Sunday mass who taught me to leave my cultural and religious biases at the door; there was the aging Florentine waitress who'd shown me humility by publicly berating me with a stream of expletives after I'd unwittingly insulted her restaurant's menu; there were the Armenian food stand salesmen who were gracious enough to sell me discounted kebabs when my credit card was rejected; and of course, there was the Australian backpacker, who showed me the plausibility of trekking the world on little more than a few thousand dollars and a week's worth of laundry. I was guided by each and every one of these individuals, and countless others. To say otherwise would be unfair, and likely impossible – for how does one invoke all knowledge without an armada of aides in their arsenal?

Yes, I was taught many things, some large and others small, but it was only through the help of the many people I met that I was able to do so. And perhaps *that* is the true meaning of studying abroad: more than a

process of unlearning, it is a process of forming connections with people who will irrevocably change the way you think, act, learn, communicate and create, guiding you toward a better understanding of the world and your place among its residents.

So, whether you're a college student seeking new opportunities, an ex-scholar looking at a master's program abroad, or a recent high school graduate who's lived their entire academic life in a five-mile radius (as I once had), I have some choice words for you: How would you like to unlearn everything?

reviews

Transforming Study Abroad.
A Handbook

Neriko Musha Doerr
New York and Oxford, Berghahn, 2019
Reviewed by Federico Damonte

Scholarly literature on study abroad is by now so vast that even a list of the handbooks and monographs trying to survey the whole field would be remarkably long.[1] Beyond these general works, a large literature of more specialised studies now covers most aspects of the study abroad enterprise and experience within different academic disciplines (history, sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc.) and from different points of view (the economics of education, the psychology of personal development, intercultural communication and so on).

Yet, despite the proliferation of both general and specialized studies, the impression remains that as an academic discipline study abroad research still lacks a shared theoretical foundation that makes it possible to analyze the experience of all those involved – not just students, but also teachers and administrators – in precise terms that have some general validity. This basic feature of any general discourse about study abroad seems rather out of reach at the moment, and this in turn has serious consequences for the coherence of the whole literature on the topic.[2] For instance, Lewin (2009b, xviii) notes that many faculties and study abroad departments extensively use the notion of "global citizenship" to explain

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1   See Byram & Feng 2006; Lewin 2009a; Twombly, Salisbury, Shannon & Klute 2012; Sanz, & Morales-Front 2018, among many others.

2   A related and even more serious problem is the basic empirical correctness of the literature, as shown in the common confusion about what study abroad *should* be and what it actually is. See for instance the often made point that study abroad should take place with the consent and active engagement of the local communities, a condition that is seldom observed in reality.

the ultimate goal of studying abroad for a short period. The notion is discussed in much literature on the field (see the extensive references in Lewin 2009a) and is by no means an empty marketing slogan: as Schattle's (2009) article in the same book shows, the roots of "global citizenship" lie in the cosmopolitan tradition, going back to the ideal of "world citizenship" of ancient and modern philosophers, from Socrates to Kant. This provides the phrase with a long intellectual history as well as a specific modern implementation (Nussbaum 1996). Yet as Lewin points out, the notion is not universally accepted:

> "*Global citizenship* is a controversial term, with many people insisting that it cannot exist because it is intimately connected to the nation-state, and others contending that the deployment of global citizenship undermines newer states' long and hard-fought road to achieving citizenship for its own citizens. For these critics, global citizenship is an act of colonialism. Still others assert that while people who engage beyond their borders are doing something, to call that something global citizenship is erroneous." (Lewin 2009b, xviii).

Lewin correctly claims that in the face of these disagreements, we must endeavor to define our terms, even if we are afraid of what we might find (Lewin 2009b, ibidem)

In this regard, Neriko Musha Doerr's handbook is definitely most timely, as it represents a much needed deconstruction of several major assumptions in the field, accompanied by constructive proposals, at the end of each chapter about how to move beyond those assumptions. A cultural anthropologist who quotes Benedict Anderson among the scholars who "changed her life", Doerr has already published several articles on study abroad based on in-depth interviews with students. She clearly has the ability to see the ideology behind education policies, as well as the power politics behind the ideology. When applied to the field of international education, this approach results in placing the study abroad experience within a complex network of power relations. More generally, it leads to

a fundamental criticism of what the author calls "homogeneity frame-works," according to which both the host and home culture are seen as monolithic and homogenous. Instead, she claims that study abroad programs are bound to face the diversity of the cultures of both the host community and the students, and that this fact should be emphasized and used in the study abroad context.

Understandably, a review article cannot do justice to all the observations and insights provided by the author. I thus prefer to focus on Doerr's discussion of the general features of study abroad, leaving aside her detailed discussion of students living with host families (Chapter 5), and volunteer/service work abroad (Chapter 6). I hope readers will agree with me on the rationale for this choice and soon move from my short review to reading Doerr's book itself.

In Chapter 1, Doerr starts her analysis with a critical discussion of the notion of "global citizenship." In doing so, she connects with previous research on the topic quoted above, such as Lewin (2009a). Doerr squarely situates this notion within the larger issues of globalization and different types of international mobility. This approach has the immediate and substantial advantage of providing researchers of study abroad with a term of comparison outside of education – something that many other kinds of analysis lack. Doerr reminds us that we live in a world where "the mobility of the rich is encouraged as cosmopolitan, whereas that of the poor is often seen as illicit, if not forbidden as it is for 'illegal' immigrants" (37). In this context, study abroad could be argued to occupy an intermediate position, leading to a precise hierarchy of international mobility, in which the value attached to the higher type necessarily implies a devaluation of the type below. This neatly corresponds to the ambiguous status of study abroad in public opinion, where it is at the same time praised as an indispensable element of higher education, which is necessary to acquire otherwise unattainable skills, and disparaged as a gross commercialization of education, in which students spend time abroad without ever opening a book or mixing with locals, or "commercial travel masquerading as academic experience", in Lewin's (2009b) summary description. The author

draws several other interesting consequences from this analysis, some of them new in the field of study abroad research (to the best of my knowledge). For instance, Doerr observes that the low value attached to the mobility of economic migrants naturally implies – within the home country – the devaluation of the experience of minority students with an immigrant background, who could be argued to have as much "global competence" as students who have studied abroad. Instead of recognizing such experiences as valuable, research and policies concerning study abroad ignore it and consider it a deficiency *not* to involve minority students (including those with an immigrant background) in study abroad!

Doerr then discusses the ideology behind the notion of globalization, and her short summaries of previous critiques could not sound more relevant to our field. In this view, globalization is but the current incarnation of the nineteenth century idea of social evolutionism, in which the advanced West spreads progress and commodities to the non-West, which in turn is seen as the passive receiver of Western ideas and goods. In this ideological narrative mobility is associated with the West and "progress," while the Non-West is seen as static and backward, its role being that of elevating itself by accepting Western people, goods, and commodities. Clearly, such an approach complements Ogden's (2007-8) description of study abroad as a colonial experience, and could be said to provide it with a theoretical foundation. Once again, Doerr draws several interesting consequences from her analysis: for instance, she points out that the notion of "global education" can have very different meanings in the U.S. context, but usually does *not* include experiences in which mobility is associated with non-West or "static" cultures, such as immigrants' adapting to a new culture in the host country, heritage students learning (and going abroad to learn) their non-European heritage language, or more generally the learning associated with crossing cultural, racial or economic borders within one's country (34).

In Chapter 2, Doerr discusses the notion of "culture" in the context of study abroad. As a cultural anthropologist, her discussion is thorough and enlightening, so much so that these pages could be used as an excel-

lent introduction to the topic. The author clearly and critically introduces the notions of "culture", "multiculturalism", and "cultural difference." In particular, she follows Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) in postulating five different types of multiculturalism, which are said to have both general validity and be relevant to international education. Among them, I found the notion of "pluralist multiculturalism" very interesting and relevant. This is the kind of multiculturalism that views all cultures as intrinsically valuable and promotes tolerance of different cultures. In general terms, this is a form of cultural relativism, that is, the idea that beliefs and cultural norms must be understood within their own context rather than according to your own standards (59). In practical terms, this means a withholding of judgment based on one's own viewpoint, which is clearly an important and useful skill to acquire. As Doerr notes, though, the problem with this approach is what exactly "culture" is. In our commercial world, the celebration of "different cultures" often implies objectifying them into a "safe diversity" of cuisine, art, and fashion (59). In this way, cultural difference is something that anybody can try without feeling threatened, or learning about its wider cultural context (not to mention its unequal economic and political conditions).[3] This leads to the paradoxical result of making cultural differences very uniform: all cultures are "different" in the same safe, reassuring, predictable, way. Doerr's then links this type of multiculturalism with study abroad, claiming that it is often promoted as an "adventure," an "exploration" of a static, commoditized, foreign culture (61). Toward the end of this chapter, the author puts forward several proposals on how to think of "culture" in the study abroad encounter: it is important, she says, to alert students to the fact that "culture" cannot refer to a single, clearly defined unit; that society is too complex to be described by a hypothetical homogenous culture; and, finally, that "culture" is just one possible way of dividing people up (66-67).

Chapter 3 is dedicated to language and the notions of "linguistic

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3   To this list I would add another point: without becoming aware of one's own standards and viewpoints.

competence" and "native speaker." Doerr discusses these notions as they lead, in her opinion, to a devaluation of the study abroad student's attempt to learn the host country's language. She argues that these notions should be substituted with that of "expertise" and the focus on language learning should be on a "lingua franca" (presumably English) rather than the local standard. The chapter is unfortunately marred by the author's lack of a clear understanding of the linguistic issues discussed, so that her critique of these two notions will fail to convince most linguist readers. In brief, the notion of "linguistic competence" does not refer to an empty theoretical construct, but to a huge and complex set of theories (phonology, syntax, semantics, and others) and their corresponding data, which all together try to describe the language spoken by native speakers. These theories, in turn, point to a much more complex language than second language speakers of the same, and that complexity corresponds to a much wider communicative expressiveness.[4] The second language students' own perception of their limited grasp of the language is not an instance of devaluation, but a correct perception of their own linguistic ability: for instance, many study abroad students do not acquire the ability to ask several types of everyday questions (Damonte 2018). Doerr seems also unaware that this type of reduced learners' language often has strong and historical negative connotations, which is thoroughly surprising in a scholar evidently so alert to the cultural manifestations of unequal power relations. The colonial and imperialist origins of pidgins and various kinds of "lingua franca" have been studied in detail and are still alive in people's memories. Does Doerr really think that native speakers are going to appreciate being addressed in a simplified and heavily distorted version of their own language, where all the basic rules of politeness are necessarily absent? Or, even worse, in the patronizing "baby talk" English of former settlers and today's aggressive tourists? This confusion is all the more unfortunate as the chapter offers some useful

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4   Contrary to Doerr's implicit claim, linguists and language teachers do not believe that this complexity and expressiveness is restricted to the "standard language", which is a different socio-linguistic notion.

observations. Among them, in my opinion, is Doerr's proposal to stress the diversity of the host language, which naturally corresponds to the cultural diversity in the host and home countries discussed in the previous chapter.

The next chapter is probably the most significant of the whole book, as it carefully deconstructs a long established notion in the study abroad field: immersion. Doerr is very careful to point out the merits in the idea, which makes her discussion even more useful. The chapter begins with a precise and clear description of immersion as a learning method: on the one hand, it discourages spending time with fellow students, or spending too much time in contact with friends and family back home; on the other, it encourages making local friends, engaging in the local community, and spending time with a host family. Defined in this way, immersion consists of everyday activities (buying groceries) and intentional activities (volunteering to teach English in a local school). Doerr starts her critique as follows: "By suggesting that doing *anything* in the host society – including talking to *any* stranger […] – constitutes meaningful experience, the notion of immersion constructs people in the host society as homogenous" (97). She pointedly adds that "such experience […] merely provides a sense of how one stranger on the street thinks when someone from another society is [interacting] with them"[5]. She calls all the activities that students are encouraged *not* to do (move in groups, going to bars and restaurants aimed at tourists and so on) "outsider space" and logically observes that recognizing the existence of such a space necessarily implies that "immersion" cannot happen anywhere, any time. More generally: "Even though one's own presence as a visitor from elsewhere changes the configuration of the supposedly homogenous destination, one still seeks to see the destination as homogenous" (98). For many study abroad programs' teachers and administrators working in tourist cities like Florence, this general statement is easily observed in the vast industry that pretends to offer "authentic" experiences, from "typical" restaurants to "real" farmhouses (many of which are meant for foreign students). The au-

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5   Doerr extends her critique to the practice of having local families host study abroad students, which is the topic of chapter 5.

thor then expands her analysis to the whole relationship between home and host society implied by the immersion paradigm. She notes that by advising students to stay away from the Internet, this paradigm implicitly assumes that the home society is globalized and, therefore, advanced and developed, as discussed above. On the other hand, the paradigm posits that the host society is as local, parochial and, therefore backwards, by assuming it is not discoverable through the Internet. This obviously corresponds to a precise hierarchy, namely, the one discussed in the first chapter on globalization.

Many teachers in study abroad programs will also strongly sympathize with Doerr's claim that immersion devalues classroom learning and teaching. The author provides plenty of evidence in this regard from promotional material, where classroom learning is implicitly posited as inferior to "natural" learning through immersion. This is not only unfair to teachers, but also wrong, since, as Doerr notes, students are going to use in "natural" contexts *outside* the classroom the communicative and interpretative patterns they have learned *inside* the classroom. Every teacher knows that learning is neither inevitable nor automatic. So, learning through immersion depends on explicit teaching. Doerr's corrective proposal in this regard will also find the support of many teachers and educators: focus immersion learning on everyday activities. The overall goal would then be to make students connect their own "immersive" experience with some structure of the host society. In practical terms, this means focusing students' attention on the way people in the host society carry out their daily tasks; as we all know, this is an area of local culture that often remains completely unknown to study abroad students.

The seventh and final chapter contains a remarkably lucid and grounded discussion of that most elusive feature of study abroad: self-transformation.[6] Doerr carefully describes how theories of self transformation

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6   Chapter 6 contains a discussion of the way in which study abroad reinforces the idea of border between countries and culture by the very fact of promoting border crossing as a formative experience, which in turn leads to what the author calls "border pedagogy." Doerr's analysis, while insightful, is more relevant for international volunteer work than study abroad, so I will not discuss it in this review.

are based mainly on students' own narratives. In turn, students' narratives (in the form of interviews or essays) are used by administrators to evaluate and improve study abroad programs. She then turns her focus to the transformative narrative structure associated with study abroad, and points out how it is centered on a "catalyst," which then leads the protagonist to find the "truth" about oneself. The crucial point is that this "discovery" is a part of the study abroad narrative even before students have started telling their own stories. Consequently, it is the students' storytelling that conforms to the narrative, and not the other way around. More generally, Doerr notes that students' narratives are not produced *only* by the students' own storytelling, but that other "coaxers" shape them by asking specific questions and guiding the response. Doerr lists at least three coaxers: the educational institutions in the home country, service rating systems of study abroad programs, and commercial study abroad providers (171). The author offers real life examples from the websites and promotional materials of all these institutions to show how they adhere to an essentially pre-established narrative. As a corrective, Doerr proposes to keep paying attention to students' narratives but sensibly suggests to shift the focus from the transformation itself to the expectations surrounding both the narrative and the whole study abroad experience.

My inevitably short review has provided a detailed idea of the type of critiques and proposals that Doerr puts forward in her book. Yet, as I said from the start, the topics and the ideas I mention in this review are just a fraction of the wealth of material that the author brings to the discussion. Even the summary of existing literature on studying abroad that this book provides would make it extremely useful. More importantly, Doerr's intellectual contribution to our understanding of the study abroad experience makes her work invaluable. In sum, Doerr's research broadens and deepens our knowledge of the field while remaining lucid and practical. Some readers (especially those with a more practical, hands-on approach to our work) may be put off by the author's unrelenting theoretical questioning of both methods and results. In the same way, some teachers will probably find little practical value in the long list

of questions for students that Doerr suggests as a way to overcome the limits of international education as it is today. Indeed, some of these lists seem to require students to become fully fledged cultural anthropologists in order to profit significantly from their study abroad experience. These lists, though, belong to a general reform proposal that it is hard to reject. Basically, this is what Doerr is calling for: Let us make our students as aware as possible of the implications of what they are doing. More generally, Doerr never lets her own analysis lose sight of the realities we all work in and have to accept. Likewise, the issues of globalization, international mobility, national stereotypes (among others), that she brings into the discussion are also very real, and have real consequences for our day to day work with study abroad students. It is the great merit of this book to spell out very clearly what these consequences are.

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