STUDY ABROAD'S CONTRIBUTION TO CRITICAL THINKING AND WORLD CITIZENSHIP

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This paper articulates and defends two theses due to Richard Paul and Linda Elder. First, creative thought and critical thought cannot be separated. Second, the intellectual traits constitutive of critical thinking are interdependent. The twin theses combined with certain impact studies show that study abroad enhances both creativity and criticality. The primary value of such gains resides in their potential to realize not only the Socratic ideal of rationality but also the Diogenean ideal of cosmopolitanism. The former consists in the cultivation of fair-minded, creative, and critical individuals and societies, whereas the latter consists in the cultivation of citizens of the world and the single community to which they belong. Since study abroad can lead to intellectual growth in participants, this paper recommends certain policies and practices to help ensure the desired gain.

The Benefits of Study Abroad

Study abroad is typically described as life-changing. A defining moment, or so participants say, study abroad helps shape a participant's life for years after the experience. In 2002, the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES) conducted the largest survey of study abroad alumni ever. The IES Abroad 50-Year Alumni Survey confirms the long-term impact of study abroad on a participant's personal, academic, and professional life (Mary M. Dwyer, 'The Impact of Study Abroad Program Duration', *Frontiers*, vol. 10 (Fall 2004), pp. 151–163; Mary M. Dwyer and Courtney K. Peters, 'The Benefits of Study Abroad', *Transitions Abroad*, vol. 27, no. 5 (2004), pp. 56–57). The

doi:10.1017/S1477175612000097 © The Royal Institute of Philosophy, 2012

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1477175612000097 Published online by Cambridge University Press

data, which the Institute gathered from 3,723 respondents who took part in IES study abroad programs between 1950 and 1999, show that study abroad positively influences the maturity, education, and career path of participants.

When asked about personal development, 96 percent said study abroad increased their self-confidence, 97 percent said it enhanced their maturity, 89 percent said it empowered them to tolerate ambiguity, and 84 percent said it caused them to modify their sociopolitical positions.

When questioned about intercultural development, 98 percent said study abroad expanded their understanding of their own cultural values and biases, 82 percent said it helped them develop a more refined way of looking at the world, 90 percent said it inspired them to cultivate a more diverse circle of friends, and 64 percent said it encouraged them to explore other cultures.

When queried about academic commitment, 80 percent said study abroad raised their interest in academic study, 86 percent said it strengthened their commitment to foreign language study, 87 percent said it helped shape their subsequent educational experiences, and 64 percent said it influenced their decision to attend graduate school.

When asked about career development, 62 percent said study abroad triggered an interest in a career direction pursued thereafter, 76 percent said it enabled them to acquire skill sets that influenced their career path, 65 percent said it enhanced their ability to speak a foreign language used in the workplace, and 48 percent said it prompted them to engage in international work or volunteerism.

Beyond the Cultural and Linguistic Benefits

How reliable are the self-report data? Given the temptation to overreport good behavior and underreport bad behavior, could the high percentage of survey respondents who claimed to have been positively transformed by their study abroad experience be an artifact of social desirability

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bias? While such a possibility cannot be ruled out, its actuality is yet to be established. Besides, a number of studies exist that employ objective measurement tools such as the pre-test and post-test of specific skills and confirm the advantages of study abroad beyond the cultural and linguistic benefits.

Consider the improvement of creative thinking and communication skills. Tracy Rundstrom Williams shows that students who study abroad generally demonstrate a greater increase in intercultural communication skills after their time abroad than students who stay on campus ('Exploring the Impact of Study Abroad on Students' Intercultural Communication Skills', *Journal of Studies in International Education*, vol. 9, no. 4 (2005), pp. 356–371).

Stronger results have been obtained. Irvine Clarke III et al. show that students who participate in study abroad not only improve their intercultural communication skills to a greater degree than those who do not but also achieve a 'significantly higher level of intercultural communication' after the experience than their stay-at-home counterparts ('Student Intercultural Proficiency from Study Abroad Programs', *Journal of Marketing Education*, vol. 31, no. 2 (2009), p. 176).

Finally, living abroad has been found to boost creativity. In a series of five studies, William W. Maddux and Adam D. Galinsky discover a robust correlation between living overseas and enhanced creativity, identifying adaptation as the critical mechanism that underlies this linkage. They hypothesize thus:

> Adaptation may be the key psychological element that explains why living abroad is associated with creativity. Because culture is such a pervasive force, impacting and shaping every aspect of one's life, adapting oneself to a new culture – learning how to behave and think in [a] different way – may make individuals chronically aware of multiple perspectives and approaches when dealing with mundane and

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> novel situations and, thus, may be associated with increased creativity. ('The Relationship Between Living Abroad and Creativity', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 96, no. 5 (2009), p. 1054)

While traveling overseas might not enhance creativity, living in a foreign land and adapting to a new culture would. Insofar as study abroad augments the chance of cultural adaptation, participants are poised to gain from enhanced creativity.

The Inseparability of Creativity and Criticality

Study abroad promotes the development of not only creative thinking but also critical thinking for two reasons. First, according to the commonly accepted model of critical thinking developed by Richard Paul and Linda Elder, creative thinking and critical thinking are 'so interwoven that neither can be separated from the other without an essential loss to both' (*The Nature and Functions of Critical and Creative Thinking* (Dillon Beach, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2008), p. 3). Second, in line with the Paul-Elder Model, certain traits of mind, the growth of several of which study abroad has been shown to advance, constitute critical thinking, and the traits are interdependent such that the acquisition, possession, retention, employment, development, and enrichment of one requires the same of the others, and our critical thinking will be compromised if we are severely lacking in any of these traits (*Critical Thinking*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2005), pp. 21–22). Because of the inseparability of creative thought and critical thought, as well as the interdependence of the intellectual traits constitutive of critical thinking, to the extent that study abroad promotes the development of creative thinking and constitutive traits such as intellectual humility and intellectual empathy, study abroad promotes the development of critical thinking.

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Consider the inseparability of creativity and criticality. Thinking, whether creative or critical, is a cognitive achievement, something which the mind must work to attain. Creative thinking involves a process of making or constructing whereas critical thinking involves a process of judging or assessing. When engaged in sound thinking, especially in a self-reflective manner, one cannot help performing the creative and critical functions simultaneously. A mature mind cannot form high-quality thoughts without ascertaining their worth, and such ascertaining includes a critical component. Nor can it *provide well-reasoned critiques absent creative effort*, because it has to envision alternative possibilities and craft the analyses and interpretations involved. To produce is to appraise; to evaluate is to generate. Creativity thus requires criticality, and vice versa. Overlapping and interacting with each other, they are integrated and inseparable aspects of excellence of thought. Insofar as the creative implies the critical, an improvement in creative thinking implies an improvement in critical thinking.

Some may oppose the Inseparability Thesis because it fails to delineate important distinctions and ultimately conflates two different ways of thinking. Opponents may invoke the following passage to justify their stance:

> Whereas creative thinking is divergent, critical thinking is convergent; whereas creative thinking tries to create something new, critical thinking seeks to assess worth or validity in something that exists; whereas creative thinking is carried on by violating accepted principles, critical thinking is carried on by applying accepted principles. Although creative and critical thinking may very well be different sides of the same coin, they are not identical. (Barry K. Beyer, *Practical Strategies for the Teaching of Thinking* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1987), p. 35)

There are three reasons for rejecting this critique. Firstly, to maintain the Inseparability Thesis is not to identify creativity

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with criticality. Inseparability is not identity. That Helen of Troy is inseparable from her lover Paris does not mean that they are identical. Secondly, the objection assumes that the creative/critical distinction maps neatly onto the divergent/convergent distinction, but this assumption is tendentious. Logicians, mathematicians, and scientists can engage in convergent thinking by attempting to solve problems that admit one and only one solution, and do so in a creative manner. Isaac Newton invented calculus to advance his inquiries into motion and gravitation and to solve the problems thereof. Similarly, writers, composers, and artists can engage in divergent thinking by attempting to forge new ideas and new inventions, and do so in a critical manner. Leonardo da Vinci's greatness as a painter and a sculptor was due in part to his profound analysis and interpretation of the human anatomy. Newton's critical thinking is divergent whereas da Vinci's creative thinking is convergent. This conclusion is consonant with both the hypothesis that divergent thinking and convergent thinking are two major components of the creative process and the finding that creative people deploy both forms of thinking well. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, author of the finding, puts it thus: 'Divergent thinking is not much use without the ability to tell a good idea from a bad one – and this selectivity involves convergent thinking' (*Creativity* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996), pp. 60–61). Lastly, even if an artist somehow succeeds in her deliberate attempt to defy logic to create an immortal work of art, her consciousness of what she is trying to defy, together with her means-ends reasoning, indicates that whatever else it may be, her endeavor is still an exercise in critical thinking.

The Interdependence of Intellectual Traits

Paul and Elder conceive of critical thinking as 'the art of analyzing and evaluating thinking with a view to improving it' (*Critical Thinking: Concepts and Tools* (Tomales, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2009), p. 2). Requiring

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'rigorous standards of excellence and mindful command of their use,' critical thinking is 'self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking' (p. 2). Their conception of critical thinking as an art notwithstanding, Paul and Elder insist that it is more than just mastering a certain set of skills. Since it defines one's character, critical thinking involves the possession of a certain set of traits, the habit of exercising these traits, and the commitment to accept and employ the results thereof to guide one's behavior. According to the Paul-Elder Model, the traits characteristically present in critical thinkers include intellectual humility, intellectual courage, intellectual empathy, intellectual perseverance, intellectual integrity, intellectual autonomy, confidence in reason, and fair-mindedness.

To establish the Interdependence Thesis, consider intellectual humility. Intellectual humility consists in the Socratic knowledge of one's own ignorance. To realize what we know and what we do not know, we need both intellectual integrity and intellectual courage. Intellectual integrity enables us to be true to our own thinking and to recognize the limits of our knowledge as well as the limitations of our point of view, whereas intellectual courage enables us to squarely face our own biases, prejudices, and whatever else is responsible for our own cognitive shortcomings. Intellectual integrity and intellectual courage, in turn, require intellectual autonomy and intellectual empathy, respectively.

The reason intellectual integrity requires intellectual autonomy is this. Intellectual integrity consists in being true to one's own thinking, being consistent in (the application of) the standards one uses to assess one's own thinking, holding oneself to the same robust standards of evidence one expects others to meet, and acknowledging inconsistencies in one's own thought-feeling-action matrix. These are nothing but different forms of thinking for oneself in accordance with standards of rationality, and such thinking for oneself constitutes intellectual autonomy.

Since it is challenging to think for oneself in accordance with standards of rationality, especially when one must face

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and address ideas toward which one has strong negative emotions and to which one has yet to give a serious hearing, intellectual autonomy and thus intellectual integrity require intellectual courage. Both also require intellectual perseverance because, given the demands of thinking for oneself and taking responsibility for one's own thinking, one constantly needs to stick to the true and the relevant and use one's knowledge and insight to the optimum level despite obstacles and difficulties, especially when the struggle with uncertainty and confusion may persist for an extended period.

As asserted above, intellectual courage requires intellectual empathy. To discover our own biases and prejudices, we often must entertain views that differ from our own and reason from premises with which we disagree. Like intellectual autonomy and intellectual integrity, intellectual empathy requires intellectual perseverance, in addition to the generosity and flexibility of mind that enables us to switch from one perspective to another. It takes time and effort to penetrate a paradigm toward which we harbor hostility. The same holds true for rectifying if not eradicating our egocentric and sociocentric penchant for identifying truth with our own immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs.

Likewise, intellectual empathy requires confidence in reason and fair-mindedness, in addition to creativity and imagination. Our attempt to put ourselves in the place of others to understand their ideas will be unwarranted unless we have sufficient trust in reason to believe we will not be contaminated by whatever is false or misleading in the alternative perspective under consideration. Faith in reason and the conviction that we will not be harmed by considering novel or foreign viewpoints are not sufficient, however, to motivate most of us to consider them seriously. Our motivation must also derive from an intellectual sense of justice.

All viewpoints are equal in the sense that they face the same tribunal of reason and are subject to the same standards of rationality. A fair-minded thinker does not discriminate against any viewpoint because of her own feelings or

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vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of members of any group to which she belongs. Applying the same intellectual standards through and through, she treats all viewpoints alike, without reference to her own advantage or the advantage of any of her groups. Consequently, if we are to commit ourselves to the fair play of reason, we shall have to be just to the views we oppose and consider them in their strongest form so as not to dismiss or disparage them out of ignorance or bias. To discharge this duty, we need intellectual humility, which is what we posited at the beginning.

The Cultivation of Critical Thinking

Study abroad spurs the growth of several intellectual traits. Recall the IES Survey. Firstly, 98 percent said study abroad expanded their understanding of their own cultural biases and 82 percent said it helped them develop a more sophisticated way of looking at the world. Secondly, 84 percent said it caused them to modify their sociopolitical positions and 64 percent said it encouraged them to explore other cultures. Thirdly, 89 percent said it empowered them to tolerate ambiguity and 90 percent said it inspired them to cultivate a more diverse circle of friends. Fourthly, 86 percent said it strengthened their commitment to foreign language study and 64 percent said it influenced their decision to attend graduate school. This body of evidence shows that study abroad furthers the development of intellectual humility, intellectual courage, intellectual empathy, and intellectual perseverance, respectively.

Compare Tracy Rundstrom Williams, 'A Multidimensional, Qualitative Approach to Study Abroad Assessment', *Frontiers*, vol. 18 (Fall 2009), pp. 289–306. Williams's study, which relies on more than just self-report measures, indicates that study abroad students generally demonstrate an increase in each of the following: understanding of international and cultural issues; flexibility and adaptability in

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new environments; tolerance toward and comfortability with people of culturally diverse backgrounds; open-mindedness and curiosity; and 'critical skills' such as resourcefulness, creative thinking, problem solving, decision making, socialization, negotiation, leadership, and teamwork in culturally diverse settings.

Given the interdependence of intellectual traits, if study abroad furthers the development of intellectual humility, intellectual courage, intellectual empathy, and intellectual perseverance, it also furthers the development of intellectual integrity, intellectual autonomy, confidence in reason, and fair-mindedness. All intellectual traits constitutive of critical thinking are thus enhanced, and so is critical thinking itself.

The Socratic Ideal of Rationality

Socrates was a critical thinker *par excellence* – the Platonic Form of Critical Thinking, as it were. As evidenced by Plato's Dialogues, he manifested all intellectual traits constitutive of critical thinking. Socrates, or rather Plato's Socrates, demonstrated intellectual humility by professing ignorance of the truth of the matter under discussion, whether it be piety (*Euthyphro*), justice (*Republic*), friendship (*Lysis*), or knowledge (*Theaetetus*). He demonstrated intellectual courage by challenging the prevailing ideas and practices of his day, whether they be about temperance (*Charmides*), love (*Symposium*), beauty (*Hippias Major*), or courage (*Laches*). He demonstrated intellectual empathy by accurately stating, developing, and refining the positions with which he disagreed, all the while making respectful references to other cultures such as Egypt (*Phaedrus*) and Persia (*Laws*). He demonstrated intellectual perseverance by struggling with substantive and difficult issues such as the above and adhering to rational principles despite irrational resistance from others.

A nonconformist with a penchant for questioning the *status quo*, Socrates displayed intellectual autonomy by

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thinking through issues on his own rather than uncritically accepting what he was told by his peers or established theological heavyweights such as Homer and Hesiod. A single-standard advocate striving to lead an examined life, he displayed intellectual integrity by holding himself to the same set of principles by which he expected others to abide. A man of reason eager to give up his own view when another is shown to be more reasonable and hostile to the idea of privileging any party's interests including his own, he displayed fair-mindedness by considering all relevant alternatives and thinking within such standpoints to appreciate them and be swayed by them when evidence warranted it. An arch-enemy of sophistry and disputation, he displayed confidence in reason by observing the principles of sound reasoning when persuading others of his position and deeming it less important to win an argument than to see the issue from a logical point of view and in all its complexity.

Socrates was both a proponent and an exemplar of a quite demanding paradigm of critical thinking. In augmenting critical thinking, therefore, study abroad makes a contribution to the realization of the Socratic ideal of rationality. Such a contribution consists in helping cultivate fair-minded, creative, and critical individuals and societies. We have seen in Socrates what a critical individual is like. Here is William Graham Sumner's characterization of a critical society:

> The critical habit of thought, if usual in a society, will pervade all its mores, because it is a way of taking up the problems of life. Men educated in it cannot be stampeded by stump orators and are never deceived by dithyrambic oratory. They are slow to believe. They can hold things as possible or probable in all degrees, without certainty and without pain. They can wait for evidence and weigh evidence, uninfluenced by the emphasis or confidence with which assertions are made on one side or the

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> other. They can resist appeals to their dearest prejudices and all kinds of cajolery. Education in the critical faculty is the only education of which it can be truly said that it makes good citizens. (*Folkways* (Boston: Ginn, 1906), p. 633)

Since critical thinking is 'a prime condition of human welfare' and 'our only guarantee against delusion, deception, superstition, and misapprehension,' Sumner concludes that 'education is good just so far as it produces [a] well-developed critical faculty' (p. 633).

The Diogenean Ideal of Cosmopolitanism

In addition to critical individuals and societies, study abroad helps cultivate citizens of the world and the single community to which they belong. Study abroad thus makes a contribution to the realization of the Diogenean ideal of cosmopolitanism, so named in honor of Diogenes the Cynic, the first thinker to have called himself a 'citizen of the world [*kosmopolitês*].' Just as certain traits and habits characterize the critical way of life, so certain virtues and commitments exemplify the cosmopolitan mode of being. Just as study abroad develops the critical traits and habits, so it fosters the cosmopolitan virtues and commitments.

In *Cosmopolitanism* (New York: Norton, 2006), Kwame Anthony Appiah defends what he calls 'partial' or 'rooted' cosmopolitanism. Partial cosmopolitans 'take sides neither with the nationalist who abandons all foreigners nor with the hardcore cosmopolitan who regards her friends and fellow citizens with icy impartiality' (pp. xvi–xvii), while rooted cosmopolitans affirm that 'loyalties and local allegiances ... determine who we are' and that 'a creed that disdains partialities of kinfolk and community ... has no future' (p. xviii). In accordance with Appiah's formulation of cosmopolitanism as 'universality plus difference' (p. 151), cosmopolitan virtues include concern for others on account of shared humanity and respect for legitimate differences in

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thought and action (p. xv), whereas cosmopolitan commitments include commitments to universal truth, tolerance, pluralism, and fallibilism (p. 144). Pluralism holds that 'there are many values worth living by and that you cannot live by all of them'; for pluralists, it is neither surprising nor undesirable that different people and different societies subscribe to different values (p. 144). Fallibilism, which Appiah also dubs 'epistemic humility,' holds that 'our knowledge is imperfect, provisional, subject to revision in the face of new evidence'; knowing they do not have all the answers, fallibilists are humble enough to think they may learn from others (p. 144). Since Appiah-style commitments to universal truth, tolerance, pluralism, and fallibilism share a strong family resemblance to confidence in reason, intellectual empathy, intellectual integrity, and intellectual humility *à la* Paul-Elder, respectively, insofar as study abroad enables participants to develop these traits of mind, it strengthens their cosmopolitan commitments and helps realize not only the Socratic ideal but also the Diogenean ideal.

A Few Modest Proposals

I would like to conclude with three schematic proposals for ensuring intellectual growth in study abroad students. First, study abroad, while not inexpensive, fosters the development of 'informed, critical, and creative thinkers who communicate effectively,' to borrow a signature phrase from my university's Quality Enhancement Plan. Since such development is crucial at all levels of education, subject to the relevant budgetary constraints, study abroad ought to be part of any significant institutional effort to promote critical and creative thinking.

Second, considering adaptation is the critical mechanism that underlies the robust correlation between living overseas and enhanced creativity, study abroad programs ought to be structured in such a way as to increase participants' chances of adapting to the host country's culture. If

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participants form a hermetic community in which they live and interact primarily with others from their own culture, they may fail to take full advantage of the opportunity to improve their creative and thus critical thinking. Conversely, host institutions ought to make every effort to help visiting international students, scholars, and their families adapt to the local culture so that all stand to gain from enhanced creativity and criticality.

Third, in a recent study, Joshua S. McKeown observes, 'No president, provost, dean, or study abroad director would discourage the expansion of studying abroad on her or his campus, with most actively encouraging it, yet the kinds of inquiry and assessment that typically accompany first-year programs, academic curricula, living-learning communities, and other campus programs have largely been absent from study abroad' (*The Impact of Study Abroad on College Student Intellectual Development* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009), p. 1). To rectify this situation, there ought to be a concerted institutional effort to initiate and pursue similar kinds of inquiry and assessment for study abroad.

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