
(RE)TURNING TO *STUDY* ABROAD: REIMAGINING GLOBAL EDUCATION IN THE AFTERMATH OF PANDEMIC

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the international mobility of nearly 350,000 U.S. college students annually on study abroad programs,¹ contemporary philosophers of education have rarely considered this growing sector of education in their work. While its purported aims are noble, the field of study abroad – or education abroad as it is increasingly known – is not immune from, and indeed embraces, discourses and practices that are, to use Gert Biesta’s term, *learnified*.² Biesta defines learnification as “the translation of everything there is to say about education in terms of learning and learners,” which he posits as problematic in its emphasis on individualistic and process aspects of education, over or at the expense of relationships and content.³ Practitioners and scholars within study abroad have long yearned to push back on narrowly prescriptive outcomes, marketization and commodification, and necessary yet restrictive risk management protocols—all of which can compromise and limit students’ educational endeavors abroad. Learnification can equip these educators with a theoretical, educational foundation for their resistance. While the Covid-19 pandemic brought the field of study abroad to a virtual stop, these dire circumstances provide a unique opportunity for leaders in the field – and for philosophers and theorists of education – to rediscover and renew study abroad. The editor of the leading journal in study abroad has noted that the “the field of education abroad will have no choice but to reinvent itself” as it gets through and emerges from the pandemic.⁴ As they are called upon to reimagine and restructure academic experiences abroad for intra- and post-pandemic contexts, practitioners and scholars should consider a re-turn to the field’s core, to which it has been shaken. *Study* itself has been a subject of increased interest within

¹ Institute of International Education, “Open Doors,” December 1, 2020, <https://opendoorsdata.org/>.

² Gert J.J. Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2013); Gert J.J. Biesta, “Good Education in an Age of Measurement: On the Need to Reconnect with the Question of Purpose in Education,” *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability* 21, no. 1 (2009), 33-46; Gert J.J. Biesta, *The Rediscovery of Teaching* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

³ Biesta, “Good Education,” 38-39.

⁴ Amelia J. Dietrich, “Charting a Path Forward for Education Abroad Research,” *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 32, no. 2 (2020): 8.

philosophy of education in recent years, standing in opposition to or in tension with learning.

In the first section of this paper, I introduce Biesta's and others' critiques of the learning regime and then align key aspects of contemporary study abroad with them. Engaging with representative program information published online, I draw attention to the ways in which discourses of learning permeate study abroad. I engage different critiques of the problem of learning, including Biesta's ideas on individualistic or individualizing framings, and the emphasis on the qualification domain in education, along with Tyson Lewis's critique of operativity in education. I use these concepts to frame the initial problematization of specific examples from university and program websites. Second, I build a case for study as a promising and attainable form of educational engagement abroad. I suggest that aspects of study have been present, and can continue to be present, even within the seemingly restrictive contexts of accountability – for outcomes, for revenue, and for student safety and security. Zhao, Ford, and Lewis underscore that study, as an *alternative* to the learning logic, does not stand in *opposition to* learning.⁵ Zhao's and Ford's earlier writings on the yin-yang movement of study and learning are particularly insightful in demonstrating this.⁶ Finally, I turn to Lewis's engagement with Walter Benjamin's work to explore two specific forms of study – collecting and wandering – within the study abroad context. I discuss how practitioners in study abroad can be attentive to opportunities for these forms of study without having to root out all leaning. The current circumstances of the pandemic and the impending reimagining of study abroad present an opportune moment for the consideration of these as alternative framings.

THE LEARNIFIED STATE OF STUDY ABROAD

Philosophers of education have written extensively over the past fifteen years about what can be called learnification or the learning regime. Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein situate us as inhabitants in a “learning society” in which all “technologies and procedures are introduced to address us as lifelong learners and to create an infrastructure to operate” in it.⁷ Learning is not simply a vocabulary of education. Rather, as an economized and politicized term, it frames our entire society. Within this context, educators are driven “to select important issues, to reflect upon them and to rationalize what they and others are

⁵ Weili Zhao, Derek R. Ford, and Tyson E. Lewis, “A Global Dialogue on Learning and Studying,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 39, no. 3 (2020): 239–244.

⁶ Weili Zhao, “Daoist *Onto-Un-Learning* as a Radical Form of Study: Re-imagining Study and Learning from an Eastern Perspective,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 38, no. 3 (2019); Weili Zhao and Derek R. Ford, “Re-imagining Affect with Study: Implications from a Daoist Wind-story and Yin–Yang movement,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 37, no. 2 (2018).

⁷ Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein, “The Learning Society and Governmentality: An Introduction,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 38, no. 4 (2006): 417.

doing or what they or others have to do.”⁸ As a seemingly educational logic, learning is therefore easily taken up by educators, in what is ultimately then a service—an economic and political one—to the external learning society.

Learning as a problematic discourse, vocabulary, or logic is taken up by Biesta in his discussions of learnification. Biesta explores what is problematic with a totalizing language of learning in contemporary education. He does not contend that learning has nothing to do with education, or that it is not one important part of education. Rather, he asserts that the language of learning is insufficient.⁹ Biesta has identified three functions or domains of education—qualification, socialization, and subjectification. Learning, he indicates, only emphasizes qualification, which is “providing [students] with the knowledge, skills and understanding and often also with the dispositions and forms of judgement that allow them to ‘do something.’”¹⁰ While an important part of education, a sole focus on this function prompts us to overlook the educational importance of socialization—“ways in which, through education, we become members of and part of particular social, cultural and political ‘orders,’”¹¹ and subjectification, which “might perhaps best be understood as the opposite of the socialization function. It is precisely not about the insertion of ‘newcomers’ into existing orders, but about ways of being that hint at independence from such orders; ways of being in which the individual is not simply a ‘specimen’ of a more encompassing order.”¹² In exploring the examples from study abroad below, it becomes clear that the qualification function is quite present, and that it may hinder students opportunities to encounter new ways of being in different orders.

Lewis offers similar critiques of learning, focusing on its attachment to potentiality, or “what must be actualized over and over again through the learning of skills.”¹³ This, Lewis observes, transitions learning into an economic logic in which learners are constantly investing in learning to become or have something more. Similar to Biesta, Lewis does not dispute that learning has some place within education. “Learning is not the be-all-and-end-all of education ... [It] is but one kind of educational logic.”¹⁴ A learning framing imposes what Lewis describes as operativity on education. All attention is focused on actualization of potentialities, toward survival in a global economy.

The above authors provide some key insights into the problem of learning. Such discourses and practices of learning are fully entrenched in study abroad for U.S. college and university students. Until recently, The Forum on

⁸ Simons and Masschelein, “Learning Society,” 417.

⁹ Biesta, *Rediscovery*.

¹⁰ Biesta, “Good Education,” 39.

¹¹ Biesta, “Good Education,” 40.

¹² Biesta, 40.

¹³ Tyson E. Lewis, *On Study: Giorgio Agamben and Educational Potentiality* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2013), 5.

¹⁴ Tyson E. Lewis, *Inoperative Learning: A Radical Rewriting of Educational Potentialities* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2018), 1.

Education Abroad recognized a variety of activities—from traditional, academic semesters abroad to directed travel—as education abroad, “as long as these programs are driven to a significant degree by learning goals.”¹⁵ The offices that administer these programs on some U.S. campuses even include the words *learning abroad* in their formal names. As is the case in discussing any aspect of U.S. higher education, I am mindful of the challenges of painting broad strokes about study abroad, which comprises myriad program types, structures, and practices across thousands of U.S. institutions. However, the specific examples I cite here are representative of trends that manifest across many, if not most, of these varied colleges and universities and their students’ experiences abroad. I identify three instances that point to framings of study abroad as individualized, operative, and career-oriented, applying specific ideas from contemporary philosophers of education.

INDIVIDUALISTIC AND INDIVIDUALIZING FRAMING OF STUDY ABROAD

Biesta points to its individualistic or individualizing framing as one of the problems with the discourses of learning.¹⁶ He contends that the learner-centered focus on the individual diverts our attention away from the importance of relationships within education. Biesta situates the possibility of a grown-up way of being in the world at the core of the educational task, underscoring relationships as essential to education.¹⁷ Such a grown-up way of being is the purpose of the subjectification function of education.

Planning information at one top-tier liberal arts college states that, “students are expected to select curriculum abroad that will complement studies undertaken on campus, in relation to work in the major field planned for the senior year. Occasionally, a student will spend a semester overseas on a program unrelated to her major, but which gives her the opportunity to explore another dimension of her interests.”¹⁸ The focus here is the student: *her* major, *her* plan of study, *her* interests. This is common across many institutions. Researchers in study abroad note that administrators “build... programs based primarily on U.S. student demand and then secondarily concern [themselves] with issues of intercultural integration.”¹⁹ I would be remiss if I were not to acknowledge the

¹⁵ The Forum on Education Abroad, *Resources*, “Glossary,” February 22, 2020, <https://forumea.org/resources/glossary/>. The Forum is a leading professional association as well as the federally-recognized standards development organization for education abroad in the United States. The Forum has recently removed this specific qualifier from this glossary entry, although “learning” remains within this and other definitions.

¹⁶ Biesta, *Beautiful Risk*, 62-68.

¹⁷ Biesta, *Rediscovery*, 7-21.

¹⁸ Wellesley College, “Selecting a Program,” *Getting Started*, December 1, 2020, https://www.wellesley.edu/ois/getting_started.

¹⁹ Anthony Ogden, “The View from the Veranda: Understanding Today’s Colonial Student,” *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 15 (2007): 40.

role that a necessary business model for financial survival plays in this. However, the consequences remain educational. From the moment that students begin to engage with the planning process for education abroad, their individual needs and desires remain fully intact and are reinforced by the messaging from responsible offices on campuses and then by program structures abroad.

OPERATIVITY IN STUDY ABROAD

Lewis offers his critique of learning in response to marketized conceptions of education that are framed in operativity. Everything, including failure, is regarded solely in terms of the pursuit of actualizable goals.²⁰ This narrows the scope of what is valued educationally even further, reducing the already individualized focus to demonstrable outcomes. Researchers, including me, have focused heavily on outcomes in the study abroad literature in recent years.²¹ These predetermined learning outcomes fully frame education abroad as operative, as productive. The Forum on Education Abroad defines a student learning outcome as “a statement which describes significant and measurable change occurring in students as a direct result of their interaction with an organization and its programs and services.”²²

One prominent national university, which administers programs abroad for its own students as well as students from other institutions, presents clearly articulated learning outcomes for each of its programs. Typically three to five per program, they range from the generic: “develop a set of skills (adaptability, self-reliance, ability to problem-solve) to learn and succeed as a student in an academic culture different from one’s own,” to the quite specific: “develop an in-depth understanding of the major communicable diseases in Ghana and a broader contextual understanding of how socioeconomic, cultural, and political

Ogden’s article has driven much discussion about the decolonization of study abroad among practitioners. There are clear intersections between the learning regime and neo-colonialism. Lewis, in *On Study*, asserts that learning has in fact colonized schools and universities, 3. A full consideration of the colonial aspects of study abroad, however, extend beyond the immediate scope of this paper. For some of the scholarly work on colonialism and decolonization in study abroad, see Ogden’s article, as well as a dedicated issue of *Frontiers* coloniality-decoloniality: Eric Hartman, et al., *Coloniality-Decoloniality and Critical Global Citizenship: Identity, Belonging, and Education Abroad*, *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 23, no. 1 (2020); and Erin K. Sharpe, “Colonialist Tendencies in Education Abroad,” *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* 27, no. 2 (2015): 227–34.

²⁰ Lewis, *Inoperative*, 4-5.

²¹ Mark R. Kurt, Neal Olitsky, and Paul Geis, “Assessing Global Awareness over Short-Term Study Abroad Sequence: A Factor Analysis,” *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 23, no. 1 (2013): 22-41.

²² The Forum on Education Abroad, *Resources*, “Glossary,” December 1, 2020, <https://forumea.org/resources/glossary/>.

factors impact infectious disease patterns across the population.”²³ The outcomes are ostensibly positive, but they are consistent with what Lewis identifies as a problematic ontology of the student who *will* or *must* fulfill potentialities.²⁴ Student learning outcomes such as these reduce education to a teleologic framing that is consistent with the student as someone who must move from here to there, who will transform from this to that. Consequently, “when potentialities fail to actualize themselves in terms of measurable outcomes, then education fails.”²⁵ If at the end of their sojourn abroad *students will be able to do something*, the entirety of the program risks being transformed into a series of limited and focused investments and interventions to realize these, and only these actualizable goals. Encounters with the world that cannot be directly linked to these specific outcomes are then framed as not educational. For example, the student who participates in the above program in Ghana, but who does not master the expected content in infectious disease, fails as a learner. Lewis emphasizes an Agambenian potentiality, which includes an equal *impotentiality*. Highly specialized and prescribed learning outcomes do not allow the educational freedom for the student abroad to *not* “develop a set of skills” or to *not* “develop an in-depth understanding.”

CAREER-ORIENTATION IN STUDY ABROAD

The individualistic or individualizing framing is first narrowed to specific actionable and measurable learning outcomes. These outcomes are then further collapsed into a focus on one specific domain of post-college career. Such increasing emphases on career-oriented outcomes further narrows the scope of what is valued within a learnified framing of education. A growing prioritization of career preparation across U.S. higher education makes it increasingly difficult to frame education abroad in any terms other than investment in a career path.²⁶ One major third-party provider of programs abroad for U.S. students presents the benefits primarily within a very operational career framing, noting that it increases hireability and starting salaries. “By living and learning abroad, [our] students develop highly sought-after professional skills...that not only make them more hireable, but also launch their career.”²⁷ These types of career skill framings overemphasize what Biesta calls the qualification domain of education,

²³ Boston University, “Global Programs/Study Abroad,” *Program Learning Outcomes Assessment*, December 1, 2020, <https://www.bu.edu/provost/planning-assessment/program-learning-outcomes-assessment/learning-outcomes-by-program-2/global-programs-study-abroad/>.

²⁴ Lewis, *On Study*.

²⁵ Lewis, *On Study*, 38.

²⁶ Elizabeth Brewer and Anthony C. Ogden, *Education Abroad and the Undergraduate Experience: Critical Perspectives and Approaches to Integration with Student Learning and Development* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2019).

²⁷ IES Abroad, *Benefits of Study Abroad*, December 1, 2020, <https://www.iesabroad.org/study-abroad/benefits>.

impeding a “meaningful balance” with the other domains of socialization and subjectification.²⁸

Even the noble ideal of forming global citizens—a frequent aim of study abroad programs—is often confined to specific knowledge, skills, and competencies of the qualification domain. Intercultural communication skills, adaptability, and language proficiency, to name a few, are acquired by the future global citizen qua future worker in the global economy. This remains fully embedded in the qualification domain. Subjectification, according to Biesta, “expresses a particular interest...in the assumption that those at whom our educational efforts are directed are not to be seen as objects but as subjects in their own right; subjects of action and responsibility.”²⁹ Many study abroad practitioners’ deeper understandings of global citizenship would resonate with Biesta’s ethical framing of subjectivity. Yet, their intense focus on forming, making, developing, or preparing global workers precludes or leaves very little room for subjectification to – as Biesta describes – *emerge*.

My engagement with the three examples above is not intended to serve as critiques of the individual institutions. Rather, it provides salient, representative examples of how study abroad is indeed learnified. Several aspects of the problematic discourses of learning are clearly highlighted in the cases above. However, an evaluation of information on the study abroad websites at most U.S. colleges and universities—from community college to the Ivies—would yield similar information to illustrate these and other aspects of learnification. Many professionals within study abroad would not be shocked by the basic findings in the preceding sections. These educators know that there is too much catering to individual students’ interests; that specific learning outcomes do not necessarily capture each student’s experience abroad; and that the emphasis on job and career benefits seem to be overshadowing other aspects. However, they and others may dismiss such contentions as mere pet peeves; as nostalgic longings for the way it was when they were abroad; as refusals to embrace new trends among college students; or as pure stubbornness. Addressing these concerns using a framework of learnification challenges such dismissals and validates them as legitimate educational critiques. Engagement with the ideas of Biesta, Lewis and other contemporary philosophers of education can equip study abroad professionals – as well as scholars who engage with this sector – with a new educational vocabulary to problematize and to renew their field.

ROOM FOR STUDY WITHIN LEARNIFIED CONTEXTS

Biesta’s theory of learnification, Lewis’s problematization of an economic logic, or other arguments against learning from within the philosophy of education literature might provide practitioners and scholars of study abroad with a sound, theoretical grounding—one that is educational—to critique the

²⁸ Biesta, *Rediscovery*, 28-29.

²⁹ Biesta, *Beautiful Risk*, 18.

field. However, they do not provide them with a way out. That is to say, it does not offer them educational guidance for the renewal or reimagination of study abroad. On the contrary, realizing that learning is the dominant discourse of not just study abroad, but of all of higher education and education more broadly, can be paralyzing for these educators. If this logic undergirds the entire system, how can they even begin to think of anything else to reorient the field? It is necessary, therefore, to equip them equally with an alternative framing from philosophy of education – *study*.

Largely in response to the critical attention to the hegemony of learning, philosophers of education in recent years have (re)turned to various conceptions of study as such an alternative educational logic.³⁰ There are numerous and varied theories of study engaged in the recent literature. I will discuss two forms of study below, in the specific contexts of study abroad. First, however, I need to address the relationship between study and learning within the recent literature. As I noted above, the dominance of learning can seem to foreclose any other possibilities, leaving educators, including those in study abroad, feeling that they are without options. Such a sense of being stuck risks being reinforced through a misreading of learning and study as an oppositional binary.

The insufficiency of the language of learning is affirmed by others, as is its close relationship with study. Zhao, Ford, and Lewis underscore that study, as an *alternative* to the learning logic, does not stand in *opposition* to learning. Rather, they suggest that it is *different*.³¹ Further removed from an oppositional binary, studying and learning are described as being in dynamic relation with each other.³² Others engage study to reconceptualize learning itself.³³ Lewis explores the Benjaminian idea of study as a particular form of learning. The critical distinction is that study is nondurational, and the focus is on moments of study.³⁴ In the final section of this paper, I propose Lewis's engagement with two studious forms in particular from Benjamin—collecting and wandering—for consideration in the contexts of study abroad.

Some of the most helpful ideas bringing the discourses of study and learning together, or into relation to each other, emerge in turns to non-Western sources. This could be of particular interest to study abroad scholars and practitioners, who value the exchange of ideas across geographical and cultural

³⁰ Tyson E. Lewis, *Walter Benjamin's Antifascist Education: From Riddles to Radio* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2020); Claudia W. Ruitenberg, ed., *Reconceptualizing Study in Educational Discourse and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Zhao, Ford, and Lewis, "Global Dialogue."

³¹ Zhao, Ford, and Lewis, "Global Dialogue," 241.

³² Jairo Jiménez, "Gatherings of Studying: Looking at Contemporary Study Practices in the University," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 39, no. 3 (2020): 269-284.

³³ Hans Schildermans, Joke Vandenabeele, Joris Vlieghe, and Piotr Zamojski, "Studying in the Superdiverse City: System D and the Challenge of Solidarity in Brussels," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 39, no. 3 (2020): 257-268.

³⁴ Lewis, *Walter Benjamin's Antifascist Education*, 113-115.

borders. Zhao and Ford turn to Daoist thinking, contending that study and learning are always happening together. They “re-conceptualize learning and study, figuring them not merely as alternative or oppositional orderings, but as Daoist Yin-Yang movement wherewith learning and studying, analogous to the Yin-Yang elements, always happen together, mutually informing, confronting, and transforming each other.”³⁵ They advocate an understanding of both study and learning as educational processes, in constant tension or struggle with each other, but with neither valorized over the other. Zhao describes such a Yin-Yang conception as learning and studying “entangled within a perpetual movement.”³⁶ Zhao observes that contemporary neoliberal contexts allow for learning to dominate and marginalize studying. Importantly, this is not just about studying stagnating, as Zhao says, but also about “people no longer easily *seeing* the happening of study.”³⁷ To put this into the context of study abroad, the challenge posed by the prescribed learning outcomes in specific disciplines and cross-cultural communication skills is not just that they limit students’ opportunities to engage in study. Even when students find or stumble into the time and space of study, it is not recognized as educational, if at all. Finely tuned, narrowly focused outcome assessment instruments do not allow for these moments of study to be recorded, documented, and reported. These are crucial points for any educator exploring the implications of learning and study within study abroad. Aspects of study have been present, and can continue to be present, even within the seemingly restrictive contexts of accountability—for learning outcomes, for revenue, and for student safety and security abroad. Therefore, those leaders and scholars interested in study abroad need not dismantle the learning regime in order to see (again) the study that happens abroad. Stated differently, the task is to structure programs for learning *and* for study. I turn now to briefly consider two forms of study that are present within the unique circumstances of study abroad.

COLLECTING AND WANDERING AS STUDIOUS STUDY ABROAD

It is undeniable that the current context of a global pandemic has devastated the field of study abroad. It has certainly foreclosed a significant amount of *learning* and *studying* abroad. This will continue as the field slowly re-emerges in the coming academic terms and over the next couple of years. Yet, there is a unique opportunity to re-imagine programs, especially with the smaller groups of students in the first terms ahead. It is likely that, for the foreseeable future, many activities such as international study tours during the term abroad, internships and service placements within local corporations and organizations, and many organized group activities will be limited. Rather than focus on these as lost learning activities, study abroad administrators might want to seize on

³⁵ Zhao and Ford, “Re-imagining,” 110.

³⁶ Zhao, “Daoist *Onto-Un-Learning*,” 269.

³⁷ Zhao, 269.

them as new opportunities for study within the cities where the students are based. I turn briefly to Lewis and his engagement with Walter Benjamin to briefly consider wandering and collecting as two forms of study in the city.

WANDERING, OR THE ART OF STRAYING

Through activities such as scavenger hunts during on-site orientations, the city is too often presented to students abroad as a maze. Students navigate the maze of the city streets with the express intent of arriving at a specified destination, having made the “right” turns, avoided the dead ends, and minimized exposure to anything that is not on the most direct path to the exit of the maze. Approaching the city as a maze aligns with an operative, learning framing of the educational experience abroad, and it diminishes the city to a heuristic device for the student to make sense of things fully exterior to the city. The maze conception of study abroad remains fully embedded in a linear, temporal framing. It is not what is within the space of the maze, that is the city, that is important. Rather, it is the successful, or timely exit from the maze that is the ultimate goal, and the marker of success.

In contrast with the learning qualities of the maze, in which there are clearly demarcated beginning and end points, and only one, pre-determined way to successfully exit, Lewis draws our attention to the labyrinthine qualities of study, noting that “a labyrinth lacks clear stopping and starting points. One cannot enter or exit it, only turn corners, walk hallways, or examine endless side-chambers.”³⁸ Benjamin observes that “the labyrinth is the habitat of the dawdler. The path followed by someone reluctant to reach his goal easily becomes labyrinthine,”³⁹ and he describes the streets and waterways of the Berlin of his youth as labyrinths.⁴⁰ His writings on encountering the city are therefore an apt source to draw upon in considering a studious approach to the city. Lewis points specifically to the educational potentialities of distraction that emerge through the Benjaminian art of straying.⁴¹ Benjamin likens artful urban straying to a walk in the forest, during which the wanderer is alert to all the sights and sounds around them. As such, “to lose oneself in a city...calls for quite a different schooling.”⁴² While Benjamin credits Paris with teaching him this art as an adult, his schooling had begun as a child in the streets of Berlin. However, as Lauren Elkin notes in her recollection of her own initiation into wandering Paris as a student, walking for no reason does not comport with the suburban lifestyle of

³⁸ Lewis, *Inoperative*, 45.

³⁹ Walter Benjamin, “Central Park,” in *Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938-1940*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2003), 171.

⁴⁰ Walter Benjamin, “A Berlin Chronicle,” in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979).

⁴¹ Lewis, *Walter Benjamin's Antifascist Education*.

⁴² Benjamin, “Berlin Chronicle,” 298.

the typical American study abroad student.⁴³ Therefore, it is incumbent upon study abroad educators on-site to structure programs in ways that allow for this artful straying and to provide some schooling to the non-pedestrian student.

One way to present this conceptually to students is to introduce them to the writings of Baudelaire, Benjamin, and others who engage in studious ways with the city, as Lewis suggests.⁴⁴ Attention should be given to the inclusion of other authors who represent a diversity of gender, racial, and class perspectives. One more concrete way to invite students to encounter the space of the city is to disrupt the time of learning. Scheduling classes for students with long enough breaks in between can provide students with the time to leave their classroom buildings and encounter the urban surroundings. Early in a program, this may require some nudging and some modeling or guidance. This can be as simple as one of the on-site personnel inviting students to go for a walk after class—without a map, without their smart phone GPS, without a guidebook, and without a destination. Not a tour, it is okay if some students hang back a bit, seeming slow, maladroit or even stupid, as a young Benjamin did trailing his mother in Berlin.⁴⁵ There is everything to see and nothing to miss in such an activity. Importantly, to engage students in this type of non-durational moment of study, and to resist its slipping into a project of learning, the urban wandering should not be the subject of an in-class essay in the afternoon language class, or a prompt for a journal entry in a writing class, or springboard for discussion in the architecture class.

There are aspects of the *flâneur*—the nineteenth century urban stroller made known through Charles Baudelaire—that may seem to be exemplars of study and as some of the easiest concepts to translate to the study abroad context. A twenty-first century, high-tech *flânerie* within study abroad has already been explored.⁴⁶ A parallel can be clearly imagined between the leisurely yet attentive strolls of the *flâneur* and my proposed artful straying of the study abroad student. However, there are problematic aspects to *flânerie*, both in regards to its connection to questions of privilege, as well as to its fit as a form of study. Lewis comments that “studying is not simply a privilege of a few who have the luxury to wax philosophical.”⁴⁷ However, the person of the *flâneur* is critiqued as privileged. In discussing *flânerie* as study, David Romero problematizes the nonrepresentative identity of the *flâneur*—his gender, sexuality, class, ability,

⁴³ Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2017).

⁴⁴ Lewis, *Walter Benjamin’s Antifacist Education*, 150-151.

⁴⁵ Lewis, “Berlin Chronicle,” 294.

⁴⁶ Karen Rodríguez and Bradley Rink, “Performing Cities: Engaging the High-Tech Flâneur,” *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 20, no. 1 (2011): 103-119.

⁴⁷ Lewis, *Inoperative*, 97.

race, and ethnicity.⁴⁸ Given the reality, and perhaps even greater perception of study abroad as elitist, this is a problematic dimension that I cannot overlook. The strolling observations of the flâneur need to be considered more carefully to better understand them as, or not as, intentional, purposeful, planned, and structured. The more that the student's straying is *not* these things, the more it aligns with the concept of study. The more it *is* these things, the more it aligns with learning. Lewis points to the key role of attention in distinguishing between the flâneur and the wanderer. The flâneur is captivated, or too attentive to specific details of the city. Whereas the wanderer who is artfully straying is distracted by the city; their attention is dispersed.⁴⁹ As Benjamin asserts, "the revealing representations of the big city have come ... those who have traversed the city absently, as it were, lost in thought or worry."⁵⁰ Educators on-site need to provide the time for students to enter into these spaces of distraction in the city.

COLLECTING

Many educators lament the been-there-done-that, bucket and checklist approach of students abroad. Although highly individualistic, the seeming detachment of most of the accumulated "list" experiences from any learning outcomes or career skills place them in tension with learning. Lewis, however, posits collecting as a method of study, drawing from aspects of Benjamin's work.⁵¹ Perhaps, through Lewis and Benjamin, it is possible to salvage students' meanderings, hodge-podge jumping about, and checked-off lists as educational engagement—perhaps *in tension with* but not *opposed to* their learning abroad. Benjamin's book collector loves the object they possess—but not for any functionality; is interested in lonely or abandoned books—not the high-priced, "luxury editions;" and feels a sense of responsibility toward the objects in the collection—whose value is in its potential transmissibility.⁵² The on-site professionals and academics who direct programs abroad are curators of collections—often of the old, abandoned aspects of the cities which they inhabit. Too often, they are called upon to convey the specific knowledge they possess, in service to narrow learning outcomes. Attention can be shifted from this predetermined knowledge to what Lewis describes as the objects' knowability.

⁴⁸ David Romero, "Studying as Privilege: Latin American Travelers, the German Painter, and the *Flâneur*," in *Reconceptualizing Study in Educational Discourse and Practice*, ed. Claudia W. Ruitenberg (New York: Routledge, 2017), 151-172.

⁴⁹ Lewis, *Walter Benjamin's Antifacist Education*.

⁵⁰ Walter Benjamin, "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," in *Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938-1940*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2003), 41.

⁵¹ Lewis, *On Study*; Lewis, *Walter Benjamin's Antifacist Education*.

⁵² Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting," in *Illuminations*, Hannah Arendt (Frankfurt: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1968), 59-67.

This requires an openness that disrupts much of the learning logic and resonates with the dispersed attention of straying.

We are familiar with the “luxury editions” that the collecting tourist wants in their bucket—Notre Dame and the Louvre; Santa Croce and the Uffizi; St. Paul’s and the Tate. The educational value of such sites is often tied to very specific learning outcomes. However, the on-site educators in each of these and other locations also have their own collection of special sites, off the tourist route, and unlisted in the textbooks and guidebooks—the church or mosque they pass on the way to the train station; the local art gallery in their neighborhood, or the wall of graffiti that lines the tracks as their train cuts through the city; the weekend flea market that fills the sidewalks along an avenue outside the city center. Like the book collector, these individuals often have a love for these things, as well as a sense of responsibility for them. They can invite students to peruse these special collections of theirs, to explore their library, so to speak. Importantly, they need to do so in the hopes of transmitting the thing’s knowability, but not specific knowledge. Unlike the prescribed learning attached to visiting the “luxury editions,” the encounters with these “lonely and abandoned” sites should be open, allowing for the potential that the students may, or may not, choose to add it to their collections.

Wandering and collecting are just two brief examples of ways in which the conceptual, theoretical work of philosophy of education can begin to be applied within the contexts of study abroad. Study abroad administrators should consider how programming can be freed from some of its learning to allow for studious wandering and collecting. Consistent with what I noted above, these opportunities, times, and spaces for study do not require an undoing of the learning in programs abroad.

CONCLUSION

My purpose here has been to bring a new sector of education into the important discussions in philosophy of education. Through a condensed overview of the concept of learnification and its application to specific examples from within study abroad, I have highlighted the ways in which this scholarship is relevant to this field of education we have largely overlooked. While the framing of learning yields problems, the possibilities for study to exist alongside or in tension with it provide opportunities to re-imagine devastated field with time and space for other educational functions. The crisis moment of the pandemic is a good point of entry for further engagement from philosophy of education.
