

WORLD CLASS(ED) TALK: THE REFLECTIVE
DISCOURSE OF PELL GRANT STUDENTS ABOUT
THEIR STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE

BY

THOMAS J. HOSPOD

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OF

THOMAS J. HOSPOD

APPROVED:

Dissertation Committee

Major Professor Carolyn Panofsky

Katherine Branch

David Brell

Minsuk Shim

RIC: Donald Halquist
Dean, Feinstein School of Education – RIC

URI: Nasser H. Zawia
Dean, The Graduate School - URI

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

AND

RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

As American higher education proceeds with the internationalization process of the undergraduate curriculum, college and university campuses continue to advocate for higher levels of study abroad participation among the student population. Originating from a tradition that perceived involvement as a luxury for a select few, these experiences are now commonly viewed as a means for the general student body to develop the knowledge and the 21st century skills required to fully engage the global context in which we live. Despite the continued expansion in the number of students participating, the general profile of participants has remained stubbornly similar, with individuals of “lower” socioeconomic standing and social class origins consistently identified as being underrepresented in these programs.

This investigation aims to better understand this low-income segment of the student population by researching the experience of Pell Grant recipients who *did* study abroad to determine what factors supported their decision to proceed with participation. The study also seeks to better understand these students’ experience while abroad and upon reentry into their domestic social networks. Employing Seidman’s (2006) structure for in-depth, phenomenological interviewing as a guide, a three-interview series was used to explore the experience of 17 students at a public flagship university in the northeast region of the U.S. Theoretical concepts of social and cultural capital developed by Pierre Bourdieu are utilized to frame the study and to analyze the constructed discourse, as well as to foreground issues of social class and status.

The analysis revealed two groups of low-income participants roughly distinguished by parents' educational levels and associated social and cultural capital of their families. By examining the discourse of these study abroad alumni, the objective is to produce knowledge that can be used to gain a more robust understanding of these participants to better inform international educators how to encourage and support participation, to expand these opportunities to this population, and to gain deeper insight into how to effectively support them throughout the study abroad process. Recommendations for international educators and further research are suggested.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Study abroad participation is now commonly viewed as an essential component of the American undergraduate educational experience in order to help students develop the knowledge and the 21st century skills required to prepare for challenges they will face as citizens and to fully engage the global context in which we live. It also is one of the most commonly discussed and measured components of the internationalization of campuses nationwide (Hudzik, 2011; Larsen & Dutschke, 2010; Stearns, 2009). The *2014 Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* indicated that study abroad participation for the U.S. postsecondary student population had doubled in the past fifteen years and more than tripled over the past two decades (Farrugia & Bhandari, 2014). This increase is a significant achievement as the absolute number continues to grow, reaching 289,408 participants for the 2012-2013 academic year. However, from the standpoint that there were approximately 20 million students enrolled in U.S. postsecondary education (U.S. Department of Education, 2013a) during the same time period, less than 2% of U.S. college students study abroad annually with fewer than 10% of undergraduates studying abroad before degree completion (Farrugia & Bhandari, 2014). These percentages have essentially remained constant; most students graduate from college without ever having studied abroad (Bhandari & Chow, 2009) and there has been a slowing of growth in the past five years (Farrugia & Bhandari, 2014). In an era when our political leadership and higher education associations have advocated for a comprehensive U.S. international education strategy which would

establish and expand study abroad (for example see: American Council on Education, 2002; Clinton, 2000; NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2007), the reality is that participation simply has not become a standard aspect of the college experience for the vast majority of students, nor have previous participation goals called for by educational leaders been met. This continues to be the case even though global competencies acquired through educational experiences such as study abroad are no longer “a luxury for a select few, but rather, are essential skills for all individuals” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, p.5). Recent commentary in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* posed a question that is asked by many in the field on international education and beyond about this dilemma: “If study abroad is critical to the future success of our students and our society, why hasn’t it become more common among undergraduates” (Salisbury, 2012)? In this study, I pursue this question from a different perspective and explore the lived experience of Pell Grant recipients, a population of students largely absent from these opportunities, that *did* study abroad in order to provide insight into factors that supported their participation. In addition, I go further to examine how they retrospectively viewed and made meaning of their study abroad experiences. The intent is to highlight the experience of working class students, a subgroup of Pell Grant recipients, in order to explore the impact of social class status in this context.

The Study Abroad Student Profile

Aside from limited participation overall, notable disparities related to who accesses these opportunities persist. Traditionally study abroad has been represented by a student profile that has remained virtually constant: students tend to be white and

female (approximately 82% and 65% respectively) humanities and social sciences majors (Bhandari & Chow, 2009). Following historic trends, contemporary education abroad still generally resides within the participatory domain of wealthy, financially comfortable, and educated families (Bowman, 1987; Hoffa, 2007; Stallman, Woodruff, Kasravi, & Comp, 2010). Simply stated, the experience has remained largely embedded in its historical roots as an activity accessed by a select or privileged group of students. Overall, there remains a need to expand the access to study abroad to students of diverse backgrounds, underrepresented majors, and low incomes (Obst, Bhandari, & Witherell, 2007). Arguably this is a growing challenge for students and families of “lower” socioeconomic (SES) standing and social class origin as trends in disinvestment of state funding for public colleges and universities since the 1980s and declining value and support of federal student grant aid have contributed to creation of a higher education system that Calahan and Perna (2015) conclude is “stained in inequality” (p.4) as gaps in higher education outcomes, such as degree attainment, across family income groups have grown larger than any time in the past 45 years. In this climate, financing a college education, let alone study abroad, may be perceived as not being accessible for large segments of the student population and the lack of financial resource is often cited as a rational explanation for non-participation.

Beyond Economic Capital

The discourse of class today still shapes the rhetoric used to describe contemporary study abroad programming (Reilly & Senders, 2009). There has been a discursive transformation that saw the idea of study abroad change from the 19th century version of a “Grand Tour,” to the pedagogical value of “cultural immersion” and

“foreign language skills” in the 20th century, to the current narrative of study abroad broadly viewed as an investment or commodity that is purchased to set students apart from the rest in order to succeed in school, business, and beyond (p. 242-243). The current discourse is a popular conception that frames study abroad as an endeavor for the economically “advantaged.” In examinations of underrepresentation in study abroad in regards to lower SES or social class standing, there is a tendency to look only at the limited financial needs of students, which oversimplifies the problem (Martinez, Ranjeet, & Marx, 2009). This viewpoint does not consider other markers of class such as the social and cultural resources derived from the environment from which students come or how their upbringing and view of the world impacts their level of engagement with these programs. In short, how aspects of social class status beyond economic resource(s) impact participation and experiences has been neglected in research about underrepresentation in regards to study abroad. This is not to deny the importance of one’s economic resources, but economics alone simply provides an incomplete picture. This study primarily utilizes the theoretical framework of renown French Sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, who conceptualized social and cultural resources as capital, “assets” that are hypothesized as being as significant as economic capital in the social sphere.

Pell Grant Status as an Indicator of Social Class

The federal Pell Grant program is covered by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA). The intention of this federally funded program was to assist undergraduates of low-income families to finance their college education, with an underlying objective of supporting social mobility. Given the federally established eligibility guidelines required to secure a Pell Grant, this population provides a pool of

students who would tend to be from what would be described as lower SES or economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The profile of the Pell Grant recipient, as outlined in Chapter 2, is in many ways that of individuals who are of a class status defined as working class and that is how many of the study participants identified themselves.

The Researcher's Stance on Class and Underrepresented Populations in Study Abroad

“Our different class standings cause us to act differently, live differently, and have different experiences and life chances, despite our underlying resemblance in a common humanity” (Zweig, 2000, p. 36).

Many of the studies on the American class system and working class individuals and families, focus their research on individuals of similar identities such as race and gender or race, age and marital status (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Barratt, 2011; Lareau, 1989; Rubin, 1976; Sennett & Cobb, 1972; Stuber, 2011) in order to foreground class and “to prevent the confounding factor of race” (Lareau, 1989, p.12) or “complexity of ethnicity and gender” (Barratt, 2011, p. 15). As a researcher, I have taken a stance and decided to foreground issues of class in this study and not focus on students of a particular gender or ethnicity. As class intersects with all other identities, a conscious decision was made to identify Pell Grant recipients that seemed to be representative of a working class identity and then proceed with permitting the participants to define themselves. The overall intention is to focus on educational access, equality and democratization in the area of study abroad by learning about the experience from the student. Class in this sense does not seek to replace race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, or any other category of identity (Alberti, 2001, p. 568). It looks to

find what does and does not support success for all students by starting from a base of commonality

Definitions and Concepts

Just as it is important to state why Pell Grant status is used to select participants for the study and to explain the decision to not use any additional dimension such as race or gender, it is also essential to provide a general overview of key terms and concepts that are utilized throughout and the intended meaning for each in this study. Most are more fully explored in the Review of the Literature.

Economic, Social and Cultural Capital

Bourdieu viewed culture and social networks as resources, like economic capital, that is scarce, subject to monopolization, and transmitted from one generation to the next (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Social and cultural capital are “benefits” or advantages one can achieve that provides a higher status in society (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital is gained through the social networks to which one belongs and relationships established with others that provide influence, support, and potential access to opportunities that membership to specific social groups may provide. Cultural capital, on the other hand, are the forms of knowledge, language, abilities, education, and advantages that a person has, which give a more “privileged” position (Bourdieu, 1986). In the educational context for example, parents who have attended college themselves can provide and transmit specific attitude and knowledge about how to navigate the campus setting or to take full advantage of services offered in order to succeed. Students without the same cultural capital, such as first generation college students, may not even be aware of the help that is available or feel the service offices

are expected to provide assistance, and perhaps continue to struggle or dropout, as they do not take advantage of the institutional support that is available.

Habitus

The notion of habitus is comparable to an individual's worldview that guides their actions in life. "This concept, which is akin to the idea of class subculture, refers to a set of relatively permanent and largely unconscious ideas about one's chances of success and how society works that are common to members of a social class status or status group" (Swartz, 1997, p. 197). These dispositions lead individuals to "act in a way as to reproduce the prevailing structure of life chances and status distinctions" (p.197). The notion of habitus permits Bourdieu to stress that life choices, such as educational choices, are more dispositional in nature rather than conscious, rational decisions. The accumulated economic, social and cultural capital one possesses impact one's habitus in regards to where they see themselves and others in the societal social structure.

Study Abroad

An education enrollment option designed to result in academic credit that occurs outside the student participant's country of residence that results in progress toward an academic degree at their home institution (Forum on Education Abroad, 2011). The education abroad experience can include an array of programs in regards to duration and purpose – semester, summer, short-term programs, as well as, classroom study, field study, service-learning, and internships for academic credit. This definition, widely used among international educators in the United States, excludes the pursuit of a "full academic degree at foreign institution" (p.12).

Working Class

The literature underscores the fact that there is no precise definition for “working class,” as class entails a multitude of complex relationships of social, cultural, economic factors, and more (Barratt, 2011; Markus & Fiske, 2012). Conley (2008) refers to four important pillars of wealth, income, occupation, and education that most researchers traditionally tend to utilize to define or approximate one’s class designation. The aim of this investigation is to explore how class works in relation to the study abroad context despite the lack of consensus in regards to terminology. Therefore, for purpose of this study students that would come from an upbringing or environment that is viewed in the popular culture as having limited economic, cultural, and social capital will be described with this term. As indicated above, Pell Grant status, examined in greater detail in Chapter 2, was utilized to help operationalize this classification. I was influenced by the philosophical stand taken by Dews and Law (1995) who conducted research on “working-class academics.” Rather than provide *the* definition, they decided it was more important for the contributors to define themselves than to impose any definition that would only hinder the process of individuals making sense of their lived experience (p.8).

Personal Connection to the Study

My interest in this topic begins with my own involvement as a semester-long study abroad participant in Guayaquil, Ecuador my first year as an undergraduate student. After many years of reflection, I am still profoundly appreciative of how fortunate I was to have been involved in an experience that provided an incredibly transformational learning experience. Without a doubt, I am confident that I am a better

citizen, scholar, and individual due to this experience, and that I was set on a trajectory that to this day still offers personal and professional rewards. In retrospect, however, it is evident that my participation, as many of the participants in the study, was much more the product of happenstance than any well-articulated plan. For that, I am equally (if not more) grateful that a series of fortuitous events provided me what has been a prominently defining period of my life. On the other hand, it has always been somewhat unsettling that such an opportunity was the result of more than a little good fortune.

I am not quite sure why I studied abroad, let alone went to college. Both seemed like good ideas, but not something I set out to do. My parents did not attend college, but at least the idea that “you should go to college” was enough to provide the awareness, so I could figure out the rest moving forward. I was fortunate to be open to the possibility of considering study abroad as our home address provided access to a high quality regional high school that provided interactions, and eventual friendships, with a few visiting international students. In addition, I benefitted from access to a high quality public post-secondary educational system that at the time was reasonably affordable, so I was not deterred by the idea of taking on the crippling student loan debt that is common today and could make enough money to work my way through. Finally, I started my academic career at a community college that had a faculty member dedicated to study abroad and whose support made participation seem possible, and eventually a reality. Even in today’s “global era,” it is important to note how uncommon it is for community colleges to offer these programs. To my benefit, critical support and uncommon opportunity converged.

Having studied abroad at a time when the enterprise was just starting to become a ubiquitous aspect of the undergraduate experience, I recall having numerous questions upon my return. How come more students did not participate in what to me had been a powerful and engaging learning experience? With so much potential for “real” learning and global understanding, why were these programs not more abundant and accessible to more students? Why didn’t my peers seem interested in pursuing a similar opportunity that I had? In retrospect, the idealism of youth guided my thought process, but even at a time prior to the dramatic increase in the interconnectedness and interdependence we now encounter in our daily lives due to irreversible surge of globalization, it just seemed to make sense to me that comparable experiences should be a part of everyone’s education. Besides, I naively rationalized at the time, if I could do it, so could anyone.

Presently, as a professional in the field of international education for nearly 20 years, and having worked with hundreds of students, it is evident, statistically speaking, that the odds of someone like myself studying abroad at the time were overwhelmingly not in my favor. I certainly did not face the difficult life challenges such as the death of a parent, prejudice, living on borderline poverty, or homelessness that some of the participants in this study encountered, but I did fit the profile of someone who typically still does not study abroad – first generation college student, commuter student, community college student, working fulltime while enrolled fulltime to put myself through school, social connections and networks that were based in my community and not on campus. Even as I moved on to a reputable four-year public research university and carried on in the same way, it is fair to say that I went to class instead of going to

college. There is a big difference between those two, and there are many commonalities in my experience with those who are the focus of this investigation. Many students with characteristics and an educational experience similar to my own are simply not connected to the institution and its networks in the same way as students who come from a college-going culture and they exist on the periphery. Involvement experiential education or extracurricular opportunities, are not on your radar. Options, such as study abroad, do not seem like an option.

From my professional experience, the vast majority of students that pursue these opportunities tend to follow the national and historic trend of being students from “more privileged” backgrounds. Yet, throughout the years, I have encountered individuals, as limited as their numbers may be, who are not “privileged” and despite great odds are intent on participating and successfully pursue and complete study abroad programs. After the experience, they seemed more deeply transformed than most. Many are from what the field of international educational traditionally refers to as underrepresented groups in regards to participation from a perspective of race, ethnicity, ableism, sexual orientation, major, and social class. Yet despite the great diversity of personalities and identities, to me there always seem to be common themes of experience for all of these students that seemed to align along social class standing, or status, and held more dominant sway over one’s involvement than all other personal and societal influences. This “factor” may appear obvious, however, the importance of one’s social class in relation to participation is largely ignored in discussions of underrepresentation in study abroad, or at least not appreciably researched.

In discussions of low-income students, the low level of participation is generally attributed to lack of financial resource and other issues of class are rarely analyzed, which to me seemed ironic when the history of study abroad, as postsecondary education, is so deeply associated with being an activity for the wealthy and “upper class.” Intuitively, the subject of class seemed to offer the opportunity of understanding some of the complexities as to why many members of underrepresented groups do or do not participate. But even further, I wanted to look at the complete experience to understand what can be learned in order to assist others and guide practice and policy. In short, my interest is not to lament over those who do not engage but learn from those who beat the odds and did participate. I also felt their stories were incredibly inspiring and needed to be heard.

In writing about her experience as someone from a working-class background who became a college professor, LaPaglia (1995) describes being in a “straddling position” between her working class origins and the elitist nature of academe. She sees this position as a possible advantage, as it can afford what she describes as a kind of “double vision” by being both an insider and an outsider if one is “careful to look in both directions” (p. 185). I too find myself as an insider/outsider. I would like to “look carefully in both directions” by expanding our understanding of an underrepresented population of students, that really represent an underrepresented majority. My nontraditional path to becoming a professional in international higher education also provides a unique viewpoint. Given my background, the fact that I studied abroad was far from the norm, however, the other aspects of my university career – first generation, enrollment at a public institution of higher education, commuter, working while

studying to finance my college education – would be more in line with the postsecondary experience of the majority of undergraduate students in the U.S., especially those traditionally underrepresented in study abroad. The portrayals of higher education in the popular culture, on the other hand, do not present my experience as typical. Going away to a four-year residential college and being a full-time student involved in campus life is depicted as the archetypical and validated experience. The aim is both to inform the field and also to validate the experience of working class students so professionals and leaders in higher education have better insight into how to be more purposeful in addressing underrepresentation in study abroad. To democratize the undergraduate study abroad experience and open the doors to participation in education abroad, an essential and often overlooked starting point is to provide voice to the students.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

Undergraduate students from lower socioeconomic and working-class backgrounds, albeit at a less significant number, do successfully participate in study abroad programs. Rather than focus on why these students do not generally study abroad, this research examines low-income students who did study abroad. This investigation used the qualitative research interview and critical discourse analysis to make sense of the experience of study abroad alumni who were Pell Grant recipients to address the following questions: What factors supported participation in their study abroad program(s)? How do these students retrospectively view and make meaning of their study abroad experiences?

Significance of the Study

Study abroad is touted as an integral component of an undergraduate education in order to succeed in today's increasingly interconnected and interdependent planet. The recognized importance of study abroad experiences has led to an ever-mounting call for increased participation by governmental and educational institutions. Yet, following historic trends, only a small minority of American college students take part in these programs. Traditionally, participants in study abroad programs have been privileged students from exclusive, private institutions. Most U.S. students do not attend elite, selective-admissions four-year colleges, yet those institutions are taken as the model for higher education (Alberti, 2001) and the population that studied abroad in the past is not representative of today's college population. The reality for the majority of Pell Grant students, let alone most American undergraduates, may be that they do not have the economic, social and cultural resources to pursue and engage such opportunities. This research is intended to help understand how and why a group of students from this large underrepresented population of students made the choices they did related to study abroad before and during college. It examines their choices, from the decision process to involvement and engagement, to post-study abroad impact.

Critical perspectives are largely absent from the mainstream literature that looks at study abroad in a higher education context (Twombly, Salisbury, Tumanut, & Klute, 2012) and the success of programs is largely based on the number of participants rather than quality of their experience and what they learned. Rather than looking at the number of participants or summarizing their time in the study abroad endeavor as a discrete number (Stuber, 2011), I examine what happens to these students while they

are in college, to better understand the connection between education and social inequality. More importantly, I examine this from the students' perspective – a discourse often absent in the research literature. The objective is to produce knowledge that can be used to better inform international educators about how to expand opportunities to this population and gain deeper insight into how to effectively support them throughout the study abroad process. The underlying assumption is that by gaining a more robust understanding of these learners institutions can develop processes and policies to encourage a more representative group of participants in these educational activities and thereby contribute to the diversification and democratization of this aspect of the nation's higher educational system.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

There is now broad consensus that study abroad is an invaluable part of the academic experience and provides global competence among U.S. citizens, helping the United States maintain economic competitiveness and increasing public engagement with issues of international concern (Freidheim, 2012, p. 6). Given America's role as a global leader, expanding the overall number of participants and increasing the level of diversity for the populations of students that are currently underrepresented in study abroad, to make it more representative of the nation's demographic, is viewed as a national priority (Lincoln Commission, 2005; Manley, 2014). The 1980s marked the beginning of a period of expanded growth in study abroad and the attraction of an unexpected level of interest and attention (Goodwin & Nacht, 1988) that has continued to the present. Within the last decade, national campaigns have called for meeting the goal of sending one million students abroad annually (Lincoln Commission, 2005) to doubling the current number of students who participate annually by 2020 (Institute of International Education, 2015a). Therefore, it is essential that colleges and universities eliminate the concept of study abroad as a luxury for a privileged minority or "add-on" to a college education and advocate for policy and practice that ensures equitable access. If this equity is to be achieved, we must understand what influences underrepresented students to study abroad and the nature of their study abroad experiences in order to support their personal and academic success throughout the process.

There has been limited research examining the social and extracurricular lives of college students, and how social class background, in particular, may be a factor (Stuber, 2011, p. 3). Overall, low SES students have been historically underrepresented in higher education and face persistent challenges related to equitable access to, and outcomes of, higher education (Walpole, 2003). However, despite concerns and calls for research on social class differences, scholars often control for social class differences rather than focusing on how those differences may shape the experiences and outcomes of students (p. 46). Similarly, the literature in study abroad has been limited. During the early stages of study abroad's contemporary expansion, the existing research was referred to as "spotty, lacking in comprehensiveness, and all too often anecdotal rather than systematic and scientific" (Briggs & Burns, 1985, p. 57). Although the volume of investigative study has increased in recent years in areas examining topics such as learning outcomes from study abroad involvement (Comp, Gladding, Rhodes, Stephenson, & Vande Berg, 2007), significant gaps in the literature remain. The dearth of scholarly attention cited range from minimal research on specific populations like low-income and first generation students and their study abroad related experiences (Martinez et al., 2008) to an overall deficiency of investigation utilizing a critical perspective (Twombly et al., 2012). A significant contributing factor for this inattention, is the general absence of scholars and researchers that claim the field of international education as their primary discipline, as would be the case with other established academic fields of study (CIEE, 2006). Additionally, many of the professionals involved in study abroad programming are neither academic nor researcher, but academic administrators. These individuals may

generate questions and hypothesis related to the endeavor, yet lack the formal training, knowledge or resources required to pursue methodologically solid research.

Promoting an opportunity structure for social mobility through a college education is a fundamental aspect of our social policy (Walpole 2003), and this is increasingly being tied to gaining global and cultural competencies via educative experiences such as study abroad participation. Lower SES or working class students have historically been an underrepresented group in higher education, and particularly in study abroad programming. Given the paucity of research focused on social status and this specific context, this study aims to explore the impact of social class on participation and experience of this population in relation to study abroad. To that end, this chapter provides a review of the literature on the working class in the United States, American higher education, study abroad programming with its historical roots to privilege, and the research addressing underrepresentation in relation to social class. Before the extant research is explored, the theoretical lens of Pierre Bourdieu is examined in order to provide a framework to help better understand the lived experiences of the Pell Grant students and their study abroad sojourns.

Framing the Study Abroad Experience with the Theoretical Lens of Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "capital" provides a theoretical lens for exploring social class and how individuals perceive and negotiate their lives in society. Bourdieu viewed culture and social networks as resources or assets: they share many of the same properties of economic capital in the sense that they are scarce, can generate social profit, are subject to monopolization, and can be transmitted from one generation to the next (Bourdieu, 1986; Lareau & Weininger, 2003). In addition, he developed the idea

of habitus: the preconceived and internalized system of dispositions, including physical and emotional dimensions, as well as, values, attitudes, judgements and beliefs shaped by the individual's immediate environment (Bourdieu, 1989). This set of deeply internalized master dispositions generates action (Swartz, 1997, p. 101) and can be viewed as a person's "web of perceptions about opportunities and the possible and appropriate responses in any situation" (Walpole, 2003, p. 49). One's habitus is also greatly influenced by the capital resources one possesses (Bourdieu, 1989). This concept developed by Bourdieu helps illuminate the role culture and sociocultural processes play in social reproduction, or maintenance of the status quo in regards to social mobility in society (Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Swartz, 1997), and enables researchers to place these influences at the center of analyses of various aspects of social stratification (Lareau & Weininger, 2003, p.567). Pursuant to this theme, Swartz (1997) notes that Bourdieu viewed the educational system as the principle institution in contemporary societies for controlling the allocation of status and privilege by offering the primary institutional setting for the production, transmission, and accumulation of the various forms of cultural capital. Bourdieu further maintained that in modern society educational institutions actually contribute to the preservation of an inegalitarian social system by allowing inherited cultural differences to shape academic achievement and occupational attainment in such a way to maintain the social structure (Swartz, 1997). These concepts developed by Bourdieu, and elaborated further directly below, provide an organizational scheme to gain insight as to how working class students experience and interact with study abroad.

Cultural Capital

Economic barriers alone are not sufficient to explain disparities in the educational attainment of children from different social classes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Bourdieu argues that, above and beyond economic factors, “cultural habits” and “dispositions” acquired primarily from the family, but also peer groups, are fundamentally important to school success (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). He contends that cultural capital exists in embodied, objectified, and institutionalized forms (Bourdieu, 1986) and includes cultural and linguistic knowledge, aesthetic preferences, values, norms, specialized information, and educational credentials. Key elements of class cultures become forms of cultural capital because they provide parents, and thereby their children, a pool of cultural knowledge and resources that are based in their social status in society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Lareau, 1989). The levels and types of cultural capital contribute to the structure and orientation of one’s habitus. A substantial amount of research explored further below indicates that educators and educational institutions value high-status cultural capital typically possessed by higher SES status individuals and as a result inequality is perpetuated in educational settings. The scholarly work suggests that middle and upper class students tend to possess the capital required to navigate educational systems according to the norms, rules and expectations of the institution and have different skill levels for managing institutional encounters that lower SES students typically do not possess (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). This places the latter group at risk of not reaping the social benefits of the educational system as they make choices or utilize strategies that lead to less success in adjustment to school, performance, and academic achievement based upon class

distinction (Swartz, 1997). An important concept related to cultural capital further developed by Lareau (1989) is that the possession of high status cultural resources does not automatically yield social benefit or profit unless they are effectively “activated” by the individual. One with a high level of cultural capital may, purposely or unwittingly, make the choice not to take the opportunity to “invest” these resources (and thereby leave them “unactivated”). This theoretical approach retains the notion of individual variability and demonstrates the room in Bourdieu’s theoretical model for human agency (Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

Social Capital

Bourdieu defined social capital as the “aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word” (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 248-249). The accumulation of social capital possessed by an individual depends on the size of the network of connections and support systems one can effectively mobilize and on the quantity of the cultural and economic resources possessed in one’s own right by each of those to whom they are connected (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249). Social capital can provide access to and knowledge about available educational choices and opportunities or information and exposure to desired experiences, activities or positions. Expanding upon Bourdieu’s concepts, Putnam (2001) suggests the potential differential value of social capital based on the distinction of being exclusive or “bonding” vs. inclusive or “bridging” in nature. The former “tend to reinforce exclusive identities and

homogenous groups” while the latter “are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion” (p. 22).

A significant point is that the various forms of capital are considered convertible (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 253). For example, economic resources can be used to gain experiences that lead to the acquisition of more cultural capital, that can be “invested” to develop social ties and networks, and these connections may lead to opportunities that contribute to the accumulation of more economic and social capital. This convertibility of the different types of capital is the basis of the strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital and the position occupied by individuals in the social space (p. 253). A primary aspect of the high levels of capital and reproduction is the idea that they are used as a “basis for exclusion” from opportunities such as desirable employment opportunities, resources, and high status groups and positions (Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

Habitus

As indicated above, one’s habitus is significant in orienting and guiding one’s actions in life and contains:

...systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53).

Bourdieu indicates that the habitus provides a “sense of one’s” place in society, but equally important one’s “sense of the place of others” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 19). This “sense” is shaped by the “beliefs, attitudes, aspirations, perceptions and values an

individual acquires through home and school environments and social class that serve to frame and constrain their choices” (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). The habitus is a “structuring structure” (Swartz, 1997, p. 102) because the manner in which individuals construct information and knowledge is through “dispositions” they have acquired through their upbringing (Bourdieu, 1984) and is impacted by the type and levels of capital one has accumulated. Based on Bourdieu’s concepts, we are “disposed” toward enduring and durable class-based values, beliefs, and behavior even at an unconscious level that is seemingly instinctive or second-nature because the social and cultural influences experienced during the socialization process frames how we think about and engage the world. Although individuals can acquire the social and cultural “competencies” which characterize the upper-middle and middle class, they can never achieve the natural familiarity of those born to these classes (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Swartz (1997) notes that it is the product of an individual’s class location and not the cause. However, a person would be predisposed to act and live in a manner that is consistent with their habitus, and therefore, anyone is a party to reproducing the social order and his or her location within it.

Utilizing Bourdieu’s Concepts to Explore the Study Abroad Experience

As explained later in this chapter, historically, studying abroad has been accessed by students that have high levels of economic, social and cultural capital and a habitus that would perceive this experience as the norm, or at least a possibility. Given the level of economic wealth, a logical assumption is that financial resource was the primary determinant of participation vs. non-participation. However, Bourdieu’s expanded concept of capital provides the possibility to explore these patterns and the

experience of undergraduate students and study abroad more deeply and comprehensively. This is particularly important when looking at Pell Grant participants that most likely would not have the economic capital or a “disposition” to become involved in these programs. Bourdieu defined the working class by its relative lack of all forms of capital compared to the middle and upper classes (Swartz, 1997). This is helpful in providing an understanding that these students come to college with different levels of economic, social, and cultural capital that could see them experiencing the institution very differently than their peers. Students from higher SES backgrounds enter the university with key social resources and cultural codes and cues to take fuller advantage of the experience while those from low resource circumstances are left to acquire the knowledge and skills to negotiate the educational environment once they set foot on campus (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). In an era when securing a college degree is becoming more and more important to personal and economic success, and studying abroad, an experience customarily accessed by “elite” students, is becoming viewed as a key component of this education, understanding how this aspect of higher education is experienced by traditionally underrepresented groups is essential. Understanding how working class students utilize strategies to accumulate, invest, and convert the various types of capital in the study abroad process is facilitated by Bourdieu’s theoretical framework.

Study Abroad and Internationalization – A Growing Priority on American Campuses

Although study abroad programming has a long history in American higher education, at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st it has been one of

the most commonly discussed and measured components of the internationalization of campuses nationwide (Larsen & Dutschke, 2010). Available data sources related to the numbers of Americans studying abroad prior to the mid-1980s are generally understood as not providing reliable figures due to the use of varying methodological approaches to data collection (Briggs & Burns, 1985; Larsen & Dutschke, 2010). However, since the 1990s, statistics on study abroad have been more trustworthy and indicate increasing undergraduate enrollments in study abroad programs. Keller & Frain (2010) noted that it is difficult not to infer that the “rising salience of globalization” (p. 39) played a role in the clear pattern of this rapid growth discernible in the IIE *Open Doors* numbers from this time period moving forward. Where study abroad used to be viewed primarily as a luxury, there is now more consensus that it is an integral part of the academic experience and provides global competence among U.S. citizens, helping the United States maintain economic competitiveness and increasing public engagement with issues of international concern (Freidheim, 2012).

Since the outset of the new millennium, there has been an expanding call to increase the number of undergraduates who have completed study abroad experience by the time they graduate. In 2000, President Clinton signed the first-ever Executive Memorandum on international education. Among the goals for preparing our citizens for a global environment was a commitment to promoting study abroad (Clinton, 2000). Although falling short of a comprehensive U.S. international education strategy advocated by higher education associations such as NAFSA: Association of International Educators (2007) and the American Council on Education (2002), which established study abroad as an integral component of undergraduate education, the

discourse of study abroad as a critical element for preparing undergraduates for the challenges they will face in the global environment has continued to mount.

On college campuses, study abroad is seen as an important aspect of comprehensive internationalization strategies. The importance is revealed not just in numbers sent but also the number and diversity of students, locations, subject matter studied, and duration of study (Hudzik, 2011). The democratization of access to participation and the resulting benefits are fundamental aspects of this shift, as are calls for all students to have the opportunity to engage in learning through study abroad by increasing options and identifying and eliminating barriers to participation, as well as incorporating these experiences into the mainstream curricula. Despite the growing attention, by 2005-6 only 1.4% of all American students were doing any academic study abroad, suggesting that over a normal college career only 1/20 of a graduating class would have participated in an opportunity that so many educators regard as the core experience in creating global competence (Stearns, 2009, p. 75).

The acknowledgement by educators, political leaders, and business people alike that there is a need to send more U.S. students abroad has led to initiatives such as the prestigious Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Fellowship Program (2005) recommending a goal of one million students participating annually within a decade. That figure represents about 50 percent of the number of undergraduate degrees (associate's and bachelor's) awarded annually by accredited American colleges and universities at the time – a significant increase. **The Commission advocated that:**

Promoting and democratizing undergraduate study abroad is the next step in the evolution of American higher education. Making study abroad the norm and not the exception can position this and future generations of Americans for success in the world in much the same way that establishment of the land-grant

university system and enactment of the GI Bill helped create the “American century” (Lincoln Commission, 2005, p. vii).

However, the passage of the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act, which would have provided the resource and support to turn this vision into reality, never materialized, as the proposed legislation was not passed by the Senate.

Despite failure of the Simon Bill to pass into law, the initiative to increase and diversify study abroad participation has not waned. This can be seen in the Institute of International Education’s (IIE) launch of the Generation Study Abroad initiative in 2014 that seeks to have 600,000 U.S. students studying abroad in credit and non-credit programs, essentially doubling participation in five years (Institute for International Education, 2015a). Generation Study Abroad will reach out to educators at all levels and public and private sector stakeholders to get more Americans to undertake an international experience. The overall message exemplified by the actions of campus internationalization efforts and proposals of American leaders in society at large is that study abroad is associated with being an invaluable aspect of one’s education to prepare for current and future world environment in which we live. Just as important as the cause of making these academic experiences a core component of the college experience, so too is the goal of democratizing access.

The Pell Grant and Access to American Higher Education

This study uses Pell Grant students to acquire a population of students that come from working class backgrounds. To understand the choice of Pell Grant students it is essential to understand the history and intent of the Federal Pell Grant program. The historical context and profile of the traditional population of recipients provides insight

into this demographic. It serves as and a frame of reference for the life stories revealed in Chapter Four.

Historical Roots of the Pell Grant Program

The Federal Pell Grant program was established in 1972 and is covered by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) which was an important component of President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" agenda and "War on Poverty" aimed at improving the nation's economic and social conditions. A key component of this legislation was to assist undergraduates of low-income families to finance their college education and to commit the federal government to the goal of making a college education accessible to all with the goal of narrowing the enrollment gap between the most economically disadvantaged students and those from other income groups. The program was initiated by then Rhode Island Senator Claiborne Pell who argued that broader opportunity for higher education provided social and economic benefits to the nation (Wolanin, 1998). Originally called the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant, and later renamed to honor the Senator, the funding provided scholarships of up to \$1,400 annually or half the cost of college, whichever was lower, to students from families with incomes below \$15,000 per year; covering a substantial proportion of undergraduate college expenses at the time (Levine & Nidiffer, 1996, p. 33).

In higher education Pell eligibility is conceptually understood to be a characteristic of students with limited economic resources or from economically "disadvantaged" backgrounds, low-income families, or those who are independent students with low incomes enrolled at universities or other postsecondary institutions. From the outset, the grants have been, and are, generally considered the foundation of a

student's financial aid package to which other forms of financial aid are added. The average Pell Grant per recipient was \$2,435 (in 2013 dollars) in 1993-94, \$3,141 in 2003-04, and \$3,678 in 2013-14 (College Board, 2014). The average grant actually peaked at \$4,107 (in 2013 dollars) in 2010-11 before falling in subsequent years. Only undergraduate students who have an expected family contribution (EFC) of zero and enroll full time/full year receive the maximum Pell Grant. The EFC is a financial aid formula used to estimate a parent's and/or student's ability to contribute to post-secondary education expenses. In 2012-13, 27% of recipients received the maximum \$5,550 in Pell funding, up from 22% in 2002-03 (College Board, 2014). In total, Pell Grants for undergraduate students increased from \$16.5 billion (in 2013 dollars) in 2007-08 to \$38.2 billion in 2010-11. These grants totaled \$32.7 billion in 2011-12, and rose to \$33.7 billion in 2013-14 (College Board, 2014).

It is estimated that in 2010 there were approximately 21 million postsecondary students in the U.S. About 18 million were in undergraduate programs and 3 million were in graduate, or post-baccalaureate, programs (U.S. Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2013b). During the time period between 2000-2010, the estimated number of recipients of federal grants increased from 4 million students to 11 million students, with 97% or more of these awards in the form of Pell Grants. Although overall funding has increased, the trend has been a more dramatic increase in number of recipients competing for a pool of funds increased in real dollars, but not in the proportion to the eligible population.

Prior to the reauthorization of the HEA in 1992, institutions were free to determine if any federal financial aid would be used to help students fund their study

abroad program. The common practice at many institutions was of not permitting, or limiting, the amount of aid to be utilized for this purpose (Cressey & Stubbs, 2010). During the reauthorization process, new language was included that guarded against institutions restricting, or withholding, federal aid including the Pell for use on their approved academic programs abroad, as was possible in the past. Throughout the 1980s, and as the 1992 reauthorization approached, the Pell Grant continued to “stand tall as a symbol of the federal government’s commitment to equal educational opportunity for higher education through student aid,” affirming the opening of more opportunity by supporting the use of grants and other federal assistance to fund study abroad (Wolanin, 1998, p.24). However, its actual effectiveness as the engine for achieving that goal was being challenged due to inadequate levels of funding. Additionally, the overall increase in educational costs have compounded the problems as higher education expenses have outpaced the purchasing power of the Pell Grant.

Profile of Pell Grant Recipients

According to the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (2009), eligibility for federal need-based financial aid, including the Pell, is primarily determined by a student’s family income. The student’s dependency status determines whose income is taken into consideration during the need analysis process. For example, if a student is dependent upon her or his parents for financial support, it is the parents’ income that is considered. If a student is financially independent, only the student’s income is considered. Since 2003-04, approximately 60% of Pell Grant recipients have been independent students, whose eligibility is determined by their own financial circumstances, rather than those of their parents (College Board, 2014, p.29). Most undergraduates in the traditional college age cohort (18 – early 20s) are

considered to be dependent, but there are exceptions such as those who are married, are veterans or on active duty, have been wards of the state, or are homeless.

In addition to income, other factors determine Pell eligibility and a student's EFC. These include family size and number of family members attending college. In the 2012-13 award year, 61.2 % of the more than 3.78 million Pell Grants awarded to dependent students were to students from families with annual incomes below \$30,000; 76.8 percent of grants were to those with family incomes below \$40,000; and 88.6 percent to those from families below \$50,000 (Calahan & Perna, 2015, p.14). During the same time period, 60 percent of Pell Grant recipients were independent students: 36% had dependents of their own and 22% were independent students without dependents (College Board, 2014). Among independent recipients with dependents, 84% had family incomes of \$40,000 or less (Calahan & Perna, 2015). At the time, the maximum possible Pell award was \$5,550.

Additional demographic data for Pell Grant recipients reveals that approximately 36.3% are white, 27.6% were Black/African American, 24.7% were Hispanic/Latino, 5.7% were Asian, with the remaining individuals identifying as "other" or more than one race, or from a recognized indigenous population (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). The gender breakdown was 37.8% male and 62.2% female. The data also reveal that parents' highest education typically does not include postsecondary education: 53.7% had achieved a high school diploma or less, 15.9% had some college (defined as less than 2 years), 3.8% completed some amount of vocational training, 7.1% an associate's degree, 12.5% had obtained a Bachelor's degree, and 7.1% a graduate degree.

It is possible that some middle-income students may receive Pell Grants, which can be due to circumstances such as having siblings who are also in college. Wolanin (1998) also suggested that when the reauthorization of the HEA in 1992 eliminated the consideration of the asset value of the family's home in determining the expected family contribution, the Pell Grant program shifted somewhat more toward students from middle-income families, who are more likely to have significant home assets. However, the majority of Pell Grant recipients come from low-income backgrounds (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). The federally established eligibility guidelines required to secure a Pell Grant, along with the data compiled on the recipients, supports the claim that this population provides a potential pool of students who would fit the criteria of being economically "disadvantaged" students from working class backgrounds, the focus of this study.

Impact of the Pell Program

Although the Pell Grant provides the possibility of increasing access to higher education for more students, when the program reached its 25th year of existence the enrollment gap between the most economically challenged students and those from other income groups did not appear to have narrowed despite the high hopes and expectations from its initial supporters. In fact, the gap may have widened during this time (Turner, 1998). Because the real value of the grants have been reduced by inflation and limited by an expanded population of eligible students, critics have questioned whether the Pell Grant is critical in purchasing educational opportunity and plays a pivotal role in whether a student goes to college or not, as it did when initially launched (Kramer, 1998). For example, the average tuition and fees at colleges and

universities in the U.S. more than doubled in constant dollars since 1970, rising from \$9,625 in 1970 to \$20,234 in 2012-13 (Calahan & Perna, 2015, p. 18). Compared to the average cost of attendance, the maximum grant reached its peak in 1975 when the maximum Pell grant covered two-thirds (67 percent) of average costs. The maximum Pell Grant covered only 27 percent of costs in 2012, the lowest percentage since 1970.

In addition to the shrinking purchasing power of the Pell, since the early 1980s the percent of higher education expenses covered by state and local governments has declined significantly. The result has been a shift of the responsibility for paying for college to students and parents (Calahan & Perna, 2015). For example, on average state and local sources accounted for 57 percent of higher education revenues in 1977, but just 39 percent in 2012 (p. 25). On the other hand, students and parents contributed about 33 percent of the revenue in 1977, but 49 percent in 2012. Thus, the financial challenges to secure postsecondary education for those without the means, is significant and the majority of recipients, at a minimum are facing significant economic hurdles.

Increasing the size of the Pell Grant maximum is viewed as an important initiative that could be taken to improve the present system as the population of eligible recipients could focus on preparing themselves as college students and focus on what it takes to complete their academic program rather than energy and resource being diverted towards the financial burden of staying enrolled (Kramer, 1998). However, it is understood that the Pell Grant alone is not sufficient to ensure enrollment, retention, and persistence to degree completion for low-income students, as other factors such as academic preparation and achievement, support and encouragements, and information are also essential (Perna, 2013). Variation in preparation, motivation, culture, and the

availability of educational enrichment opportunities can account for some of the diversity in enrollment rates. (Kramer, 1998). To encourage significant improvement in educational outcomes for low-income students, all facets of the problem need to be addressed and the Pell Grants only tackle the financial barrier. Improving the persistence rate of students also requires providing these students adequate academic preparation before enrollment and meaningful support once they are on campus (Lee, 1998).

Generous support of higher education and federal programs such as the GI Bill, Pell Grants, and work-study allowed for the education of low-income students to be heavily subsidized. As these sources of revenue have diminished, along with declining public commitment to equal access, institutions are sometimes forced to choose between admitting qualified students who cannot pay and less qualified students who can (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013). This aspect of the general American higher education experience – access for those who can afford it – seems to have transferred to the study abroad experience as well. As with the initial intent with the Pell and postsecondary education in general, Salisbury, Paulsen & Pascarella’s (2011) study supports the assertion that increases in financial capital through federal or institutional grants can improve the likelihood of study abroad intent among some groups such as Asian-American and Hispanic minority students that represent a high proportion of the Pell receiving population (p.145).

Study Abroad and a History of Privilege

Historical research reveals that American study abroad is rooted in the tradition of the European Grand Tour that took hold in the U.S. in the 19th century when wealthy

families would send their offspring to Europe for primarily cultural exposure and personal development (Bowman, 1987; Hoffa, 2007; Stallman et al., 2010). Most of those on “tour” were females and many of the early study abroad programs that emerged from this practice were developed at elite private schools, primarily for young white women, who studied the liberal arts and humanities. Although there has been significant growth in these programs, with participation rates nearly doubling from the 1980s to the mid-2000s (Obst, Bhandari & Witherell, 2007), social, ethnic, and gender disparities are nearly comparable today with 40 years ago when the rate of expansion for these opportunities increased significantly (Hoffa & DePaul, 2010). The pronounced lack of diversity in the study abroad demographic has generated a consensus in international education that the endeavor has an image problem as the perception still prevails that study abroad is seen as an activity for wealthy students at selective institutions (Fischer, 2008). Although this perception is being challenged, it is important to explore the evolution of study abroad as a privileged enterprise.

In his comprehensive history of U.S. study abroad programming, Hoffa (2007) provides the antecedents of contemporary study abroad, with a common thread throughout that the experience has largely been within the exclusive realm of possibilities for a privileged minority. From the country’s birth in the eighteenth century, affluent American students could be found studying throughout Western Europe to “see beyond the limits of American colonial culture” (Hoffa, 2007, p. 25) and gain access to quality educational institutions that were simply not available domestically. During the nineteenth century travel to Europe for the well-to-do was not only for formal education, but was characterized by an American version of the

European Grand Tour, a period of travel and living in foreign locales without enrolling in formal study (p. 31). These journeys were not typified by wandering sages of past centuries, but by intellectual elites, who by default came from more advantaged upbringings, and by young people in quest of social and cultural capital required to generally foster the development of the sophistication required and expected for the societal roles of gentlemen and ladies of the elite, affluent classes of American society.

The 18th and 19th century journeys represent precedents related to the twentieth-century progression and development of U.S. study abroad (Bowman 1987; Hoffa, 2007). From early in the century to well after World War II, economic and intellectual elites dominated American study abroad populations (Bolen, 2001). The launching of present-day study abroad programming – education abroad for academic credit that enables a student to progress towards the home degree – was established in the 1920s with junior-year abroad and faculty-led programs, mostly from Eastern private colleges and universities (Bowman, 1987; Briggs & Burns, 1985; Hoffa 2007). The several junior-year programs launched by women’s colleges during this phase provide an image which stuck over the decades, namely that it is primarily a private college phenomenon, is predominantly for women in the humanities fields, and tends to be expensive (Briggs & Burns, 1985).

In his study of one of the pioneering Junior Year in France programs at mid-century, Pace (1959) noted that the post-World War II group of 1955 he studied could not be considered representative of a cross-section of college students because it was “a highly selected group academically, economically, socially, and culturally” (p.21). Most of those students had come from families in which the economic status was

typically in the \$10,000 to \$15,000 annual income category, and from the families in which one or both parents have traveled outside the United States (74 per cent have) (p.15). At the time, the average (median) income of families in was estimated to be \$4,400 by the U.S. Department of Commerce (1957). Pace provides further insight by quoting one of the many he interviewed for his study who stated that the Americans had difficulty understanding the problems of post-war Europe because “(t)hey are still so young and so privileged that it is difficult for them to realize life differently” (Pace,1959). This exemplifies the deep historical roots of exclusivity associated with study abroad well into the 20th century.

During the latter half of the 20th century, and greatly influenced by painful lessons of WWII, federal “internationalist” legislation such as the Fulbright program benefitted the field of international education in general, as the number and variety of programs expanded (Hoffa, 2007, p. 135). In a historical context, this period accompanies the general expansion of access to higher education and the country’s expanded role internationally as a “super power.” No single vision of overseas education emerged (p. 189), but the concept of study abroad became more commonly known as a component of the higher education experience.

The 1980s to present

Toward the latter decades of the past century, and the initial decade of the new, study abroad programs proliferated on campuses nationwide, moving from the periphery to the center of consciousness for higher education and a marked awareness on part of most students (Hoffa, 2007; Stearns 2009), with an increased level of attention and interest that was detected in the late 1980s (Goodwin & Nacht, 1988). In

1989-90 approximately 70,000 students studied abroad while the number nearly quadrupled and reached approximately 270,000 in the 2009-10 academic year (Bhandari & Chow, 2011). By 2013-14, the most recent data available for this report showed that 304,467 students had studied abroad (Institute of International Education, 2015b). However, despite this increase, at least until the mid-1980s most study abroad participants came from wealthy, educated families (Stallman et al., 2010), with scholars still noting at the time a level of skepticism and a notable deterrent to gaining institutional support being related to the perception that it was still simply the grand tour for the well-to-do (Goodwin & Nacht, 1988, p. 5) and that that many undergraduates study abroad primarily for what may be seen as “hedonistic or even frivolous reasons” (Briggs & Burns, 1985, p. 53). Beyond the sheer expansion of participants, one of the principal trends of this period was the objective of democratizing study abroad by improving access: that it should not simply aim at elite private school undergraduates but include a demographic that reflects the make-up and diversity of the American postsecondary education population (Bhandari & Chow, 2009; Hoffa, 2007; Hoffa & DePaul, 2010; Stearns, 2009).

The traditional socioeconomic profile of study abroad students has moderated to a certain extent. However, due to the lack of data collected and compiled, it is difficult to pinpoint the distribution of study abroad participants by socioeconomic status at present. Nevertheless, it is widely accepted that middle and upper class students participate and socioeconomic diversity in study abroad is limited (Picard, Bernardino & Ehigiator, 2008). Important measures to minimize financial obstacles have assisted in this respect. For example, as noted above, the reauthorization of the Higher

Education Act in 1992 made explicit the “portability” of financial aid to cover the expenses of approved study abroad programs. Until that point, it was a challenge for students on many campuses to access and utilize their financial aid funds for this purposes (Bolen, 2001; Stallman et al., 2010). Since the 1990s, federal aid, government policy, and study abroad advocates have joined to create a mass market for American study abroad programs, assisting in the expansion and diversification of study abroad (Bolen, 2001). These initiatives, which have primarily focused on eliminating financial barriers, have helped provide access to students from lower socioeconomic standing, but a more representative study abroad student body is almost as elusive today as when growth began to increase in the 80s (Hoffa, 2007; Hoffa & DePaul, 2010; Stearns, 2009).

Research on Study Abroad and the Influence of Social Class

As indicated above, the history of the American study abroad experience is one with its roots marked by privilege and the participation of elite students endowed, following Bourdieu’s framework, with high levels of economic, social, and cultural capital with a habitus that would presume such an activity as characteristic of the college experience. Although there are multiple groups identified as being significantly underrepresented in study abroad for decades, beyond descriptive statistics and anecdotal evidence on who goes abroad, most of the research has focused on participation rates based on gender, major, and ethnic or racial background (e.g., Obst, Bhandari & Witherell, 2007; Twombly et al., 2012; Van der Meid, 2003). Investigations examining social class as a primary element have been limited in number (Simon & Ainsworth, 2012), with a small amount of research that focuses on the direct

impact of social class and, once again restricted to whether or not one participates in a study abroad program. This is surprising considering the extensive level of support to expand the numbers of participants and the fact that previous investigations, although limited in number, suggests the importance of class status as a reason for unequal participation (Martinez et al., 2008; Norfles, 2003). Further, the research that has been conducted is primarily concentrated on intent to participate with investigation of the complete study abroad experience for working class students virtually non-existent.

Economic capital and lack of financial resources have been cited as barriers to participation for underrepresented groups (Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Fellowship Program, 2005; Dessoff, 2006). It stands to reason that not having the means to participate easily at one's disposal poses a challenge. Exploring the capacity of U.S. institutions to send more students abroad, the IIE in collaboration with the Forum on Education Abroad administered an online "snapshot survey": they found that 89% of respondents from 290 academic institutions and international education organizations indicated the barrier to sending more students revolved largely around costs and funding, with 83% identifying the increase in the number of scholarship opportunities for students as the mechanism that would enable them to send more students abroad (Gutierrez, Auerbach, & Bhandari, 2009). However, this prominent focus on financial means distracts from considering other barriers to equal access for underrepresented groups, with institution-specific studies that suggesting that the reasons students do not study abroad are not solely due to finances; so the factor of economics cannot wholly explain underrepresentation (Hembroff & Rusz, 1993; Martinez et al., 2008; Spiering & Erickson, 2006). Additionally, it is difficult to separate different forms of capital when

discussing their influence on study abroad participation (Twombly et al., 2012). Concerns about fitting with their major, graduating on time, compatibility with their values and norms are examples of additional reasons for non-participation (Spiering & Erickson, 2006). However, as Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella (2009) note, even when exploring the limited aspect of intent to study abroad, there is little indication of the degree to which these pretexts were evidence of an active barrier to participation or a retroactive justification for the decision not to participate. This is an important point since, hypothetically, at least some form of financial aid, especially federal assistance, should be available to most students so they can finance a study abroad experience.

Scholarship examining levels of capital and study abroad has recently begun to emerge. Noting that they were unable to identify previous research that explicitly examines various forms of capital in the context of intent to study abroad, Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, and Pascarella (2009) explored the impact of financial, social, and cultural capital on students' intent to study abroad by analyzing data from the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education. They found socioeconomic status to be positively related to the intent to study abroad. Their data suggests that lower income students are less likely than higher income students to intend to study abroad. Further this decision was found to be correlated with levels of precollege social and cultural capital setting foot on campus and the amount of capital acquired during the initial year of college. Examples of precollege capital included availability of information or networks that increase one's ability to gain access to study abroad, parental educational attainment, previous travel abroad, perceived importance of study abroad and

postsecondary education in general, as well as the home and school context. Simon and Ainsworth (2012) had similar findings in a mixed methods study on race and socioeconomic status, also concluding that students' habitus, social and cultural capital shape the study abroad selection process. Whites and high socioeconomic status students were also more likely to have family and friends who valued study abroad than were lower socioeconomic status and Black students. However, when controls for socio-economic status were included, study abroad participation did not differ between White, Black or Hispanic students. Compared to the lower SES students, the higher SES were "advantaged" in the sense that they were simply better able to acquire and use cultural capital when accessing information from institutional agents, were located in the social and peer networks that made study abroad "normal" and, essentially were from families that were "engaged in concerted cultivation (p.17)," (a term explained below). These social and cultural factors, in addition to financial constraints, contributed significantly to the race and class disparities in study abroad participation.

Although not taken from a working class perspective, additional contemporary qualitative scholarship related to privilege and study abroad sheds light on the complex interplay of social class and accumulated capital for students from high SES backgrounds. Zemach-Bersin's (2009) interview study at an elite, private university in the U.S. found that many of the students in her study just assumed that participation was an entitlement and something they always knew they would do as a rite of passage that is a standard part of the college experience. Although not focused on a working class perspective, the investigation provides insight into how class relates to perceptions of study abroad. This is similar to the findings of Green, Gannaway, Sheppard & Jamarani

(2014), who examined the social and cultural capital Australian students were likely to “have packed in their bags” (p.3) as they prepared to study overseas. Similar to Zemach-Bersin’s findings, the students actually preparing for a sojourn abroad had dispositions for study abroad in the sense that they “had a confidence that was rooted in multiple dimensions of privilege”; these students could not only afford to study abroad, they could also imagine themselves doing so due to prior international experience, parental involvement, a strong network of highly mobile friends and extended family and financial security (p. 7). These conclusions are comparable to those of Waters & Brook’s (2010) study of “accidental achievers” in the United Kingdom. Their study of students who decide to pursue a degree abroad demonstrated that the entirety of environmental and social influences and the multiple dimensions of privilege provided the ‘accidental’ accumulation of valuable cultural capital that came together to provide their participants with a habitus inclined towards an international education (that was already economically viable). For most there was an absence of any explicit strategy why they had originally thought of studying overseas other than the pursuit of excitement, glamor, and adventure (p. 221). In addition to supporting the idea of capital resource and a habitus of comparable privilege, the three studies lend support to the ideas of social class factors as an important aspect of the predominate class of students who are predisposed to study abroad, and in most cases, with confidence and ease (Green et al, 2014). Additionally, although levels of capital may effect students differently along gender lines (Salisbury, Paulsen, Pascarella, 2010) and between white and minority students (Salisbury et al, 2011), the similar findings transnationally demonstrate the significance of class – at least in regards to intent and participation.

Considering the layers of privilege associated with study abroad participation, simply providing financial resources is unlikely to make it more accessible to the majority of lower SES students currently underrepresented in study abroad (Green et al, 2014; Martinez et al., 2008; Salisbury et al, 2009). The findings of the limited number of studies suggest that institutions should consider how they might facilitate the accumulation of capital for students traditionally not involved in study abroad to help develop a habitus and disposition to participate. Green et al. (2014) propose the possibility of students gaining “mobility capital” through such initiatives as scholarship programs, social support structures, or curricula with compulsory study abroad requirements. Without providing meaningful mobility resources to access these programs, working class students may continue to find themselves in a double-bind: the need to acquire global skills and experiences via study abroad, but insufficient capital to access these opportunities.

Notwithstanding the fact that increasing numbers of individuals, globally, have access to higher education, and that opportunities for study abroad continue to grow, the data suggest that educational opportunities continue to be differentiated by social class background. “To the degree that the Grand Tour continues today, it might be seen in the demographics of contemporary international education, which generally still favors students from wealthy and educated families and affluent nations” (Hoffa, 2007, p. 18). Further, the studies support claims that real choice in education is often a myth and the discourse about the democratization of study abroad is more rhetoric than reality (Waters & Brooks, 2010; Green et al., 2014). A common theme in critical scholarship is that many students understand and liken study abroad to a commodity (Bolen, 2003;

Zemach-Bersin, 2009) that they can buy in order to gain social and cultural capital that will set them apart and be “ahead” of those who do not participate, as they supplement their education and build their resumes; in this way, study abroad contributes to social reproduction rather than mobility (Reilly & Senders, 2009, p. 242). Woolf (2010) argues that this distinct gap between those who can travel or study abroad and the idea and rhetoric of the global citizen may also signal the development of a new global elite that is comprised of a privileged and empowered class that has access to travel and technology that others do not, with the resulting emergence of two tracks of citizenship:

...national and global, with the latter being more prestigious. Along with greater separation between rich and poor, educated and not, there would also be those relegated to living out their entire lives in one land. (p.51)

Class, Classism, and the Working Class in America

America’s Struggle with Class

As elaborated above, study abroad has historically been associated with wealthy students from selective private institutions. Yet, despite this association with privilege and those with the financial means to engage in such experiences, in depth examination of socioeconomic status or the influence of social class in relation to study abroad is not prominent when focusing on topics such as underrepresentation in participation. A basis for this could be related to the lack of consensus on a clear definition of class in research and American society at large. Lareau notes that “reasonable people disagree about the best way to define the concept of social class, and many, leery of conceptual ambiguity and confusion, avoid the term altogether” and as a result, a “considerable murkiness swirls around the empirical study of social class” (2008, p. 4). Other explanations include America’s lack of comfort with the idea of a class system or

acceptance of the idea that classes do not exist (Zweig, 2000). In his exploration of the “status system” in America, Fussell (1983) suggests that at a minimum most citizens are uncomfortable about the idea that classes exist in our country. Yet contributions of past research support the notion that social class is one of the most powerful ways in which societies rank their citizens, shape their identities, and affect the interactions of these identities in our society (Markus & Fiske, 2012).

The ideology of classlessness in American society contributes to the reluctance of Americans to describe themselves as working class or upper-class or to allow that one’s class has more than a modest impact on one’s life chances (Lareau, 1989). This aversion is fueled by our historically motivated beliefs and ideals that all Americans are middle class (Markus & Fiske, 2012) and the discourses of meritocracy and individualism. Jensen aptly summarizes the nation’s inability to come to terms, and sense of denial, on the topic of class in that it remains “enormously mystified, deeply complex, and largely hidden from view” (Jensen, 2012, p. 26). Yet, what each of us knows and has been taught is that our sense of “normal” has been derived from the class in which one is situated (p.26). It is possible that the “class denial” and belief in the meritocratic nature of the American educational system may be at the core of why the impact of class is under-explored in studies related to study abroad and higher education in general.

“Working Class” and Commonalities to the Pell Grant Recipient Profile

Defining social class is a significant challenge, with different indices of status that often correlate poorly and do not provide the same pattern of results, partly because social class designation is highly context-dependent (Markus & Fiske, 2012). As noted

above, Bourdieu's theory would define one's social location relationally in terms of social and cultural capital. Most descriptions approximate this approach by referring to four important "pillars," namely wealth, income, occupation, and education that researchers traditionally have tended to utilize to define or approximate one's class designation (Conley, 2008). However, the conventional perspective is that the core of class is economic (Jensen, 2013; Zweig, 2000). In rudimentary terms, classes are groups of individuals connected or made different from one another based in the workplace, specifically on the power and authority people have in their roles at work (Anyon, 1980), but extending into the political and cultural aspects of society as well (Zweig, 2000). The roles individuals carry with them confer different degrees of income and status, but their most fundamental feature is the different degrees of power each has in society (p.11).

The popular vernacular includes the term "working class." The working class consists of people who share a common situation in the social structure having little power and living in a place of relative vulnerability in the economy, in politics, and in the culture (Zweig, 2000) and in many ways, in society in general. The recent increase in inequality is not just a case of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer; our society's growing gap between the "haves" and "have nots" is a reflection of the increased power of the wealthy and the reduced power of the majority who form the working class. The basic change in circumstances, with a small minority population controlling a majority of wealth has formed the backdrop for much of the political debate in recent decades (Zweig, 2000) and has expanded on the global scale. Traditional working class jobs have disappeared in the U.S. as labor-intensive

manufacturing has gone overseas, with new service-sector jobs taking on traditional working class characteristics (Barratt, 2011). However, social class is a lived, developing process (Anyon, 1980) and although those in the working class may perform slightly different work, as a group members retain their relative position in the social structure when inequality increases and social mobility recedes.

The “four pillars” approach, working class students would generally be viewed as those whose parents have not received college educations (e.g. Lubrano, 2004; Peckham, 1995) and hold occupational positions that require lower levels of skill, usually within the manual labor or service sectors of the economy, having lower levels of pay, limited autonomy at work (e.g. Barratt, 2011; Jensen, 2012; Stuber, 2011) and having limited or non-existent personal/family wealth (e.g. Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Barratt, 2011; Stuber, 2011). This profile of working class students also closely matches the profile of many Pell Grant recipients. Because of the low-income requirement for Pell Grant recipients, it is likely that many come from working class backgrounds. In any case, Pell Grant status is the best available way of identifying a working class sample in college. This research on the working class provides insight to better understand the discourse and nuances of the talk of the participants of this study.

Foregrounding Class

Although a clear definition of the classes, such as the working class, would be not easily agreed upon, it is a tacit assumption that one’s class intersects with many of the other markers of one’s identity such as gender, age, or ethnicity. Class categories, like many others, are complicated and can be assigned according to innumerable variables and relationships between those variables (Peckham, 1995). Considering this

level of complexity, some studies exploring higher education and the working class have attempted to foreground class by controlling for other factors and exploring the experience of students of similar gender and ethnicity or race who share a similar socioeconomic status (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Barratt, 2011; Stuber, 2011). Others have avoided categorization within class designations altogether, as no perfect division exist. In their influential study on “working class academics” Dews and Law (1995) by-pass this dilemma by allowing the participants and contributors to their study to define themselves, rather than imposing any definition that would only hinder the process of individuals making sense of their lived experience (Law, 1995) as academics from the working class. This attempts not to dismiss other important dimensions with which individuals identify, but rather to validate the collective experience with many others and to recognize their class - a type of diversity few schools seem to covet (Jensen, 2012, p.80).

Classism

Class is about power some people have over the lives of others and the powerlessness most others experience as a result (Zweig, 2000). This includes the cultural power to shape which ideas and values tend to dominate our thinking (p. 11). This translates into classism which ascribes worth and value or ability based on social class and results in differential treatment based on the myths and beliefs that working class cultures and poor people are inherently inferior (Jensen, 2012). Even the words we use, without much thought, to describe moving through the class structure, reinforce this judgement. For instance, when we speak of that movement between classes, “we don't speak simply about going up or down; instead we climb into a higher class or fall

into a lower one” (Rubin, 1976, p. 90). Such language creates prejudice against the language, cultures, and communities of the working class. It is also systemic domination of subordinated class groups that benefits the dominant class groups and operates as a means of keeping working people at or near the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder (p.38). The other side of classism is that dominant group members, such as the wealthy and middle class, internalize this perceived superiority and their class privilege becomes accepted and justified as the societal norm.

Many Pell eligible students come from backgrounds that make the transition to college and participation in academic programs such as study abroad a challenge, not just because of the potential financial disparity they may encounter between themselves and the more privileged students, but also because they enter an environment and experience that is not typically part of their world or habitus. Therefore, not only are there economic and academic challenges to confront, but there are also the rules and norms of this new environment and the potential bias of classism. For some, the feeling is akin to be caught between two worlds, an experience to be discussed after a general overview of the research on the working class in America.

Examination of Class in U.S. Society

There are several significant studies that illuminate the concept of a working class in American society. Rubin’s (1976) research into the lives of working class families and Sennett and Cobb’s (1972) influential work on the dynamics of class, identity, and self-worth of this segment of society show that U.S. social structure hinders opportunity for this population. Both studies are seminal works as there was limited research focused on the working class until that time and their work is

considered groundbreaking. Although concentrated on a particular time in history, these works provide themes that extend to the present time when exploring class and social mobility.

In *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, Sennett and Cobb (1972) studied the effect of class in our society on “blue-collar” or working class individuals through observation and 150 in-depth interviews. The research primarily examined the experience of white males and how they experienced their position in an American social order that largely measures individual worth in terms of professional attainment and accumulated wealth. They argue that this aspect of class in our society sets up a contest for dignity (p. 147). The participants overwhelmingly reveal a tendency towards an overall lack of self-respect and wrestle with self-defeat and contend that the psychological motivation instilled by a class society is to heal these feelings of self-doubt. To survive in this world of perceived failure and self-blame, individuals attempt to restore their dignity and gain respect in their lives by framing their work and position in life as a sacrifice they are making for their families and those they love. The hope is that their children climb the socioeconomic ladder to a location above their family’s station in life.

Sennett and Cobb concluded that the act of sacrificing so that one’s children will not have a life like their parents leads to the hidden injuries of resentment, shame, and anger for many of those interviewed. Families face difficult balancing acts as they wish to devote time with their children, but spend more time away from them working longer hours in order to provide the better future they hope to provide for their offspring. Parents of children who do “succeed” and rise in class rank can become a “burden and embarrassment” to those who have become “successful” and enjoy a higher quality of

life (p. 133). This aspect of a class society, they conclude, contributes to the continuation of the class order as “rising above” means someone must remain “below.” A humane society would strive for the dignity of all rather than only valuing those with wealth, special ability, title, and so forth, values that establish a hierarchal order of individual worth.

Rubin’s (1976) classic work provides rich detail and insight on the vicissitudes of life for America’s working class. Her study sample included fifty families that were employed in blue-collar occupations, were all intact families, neither husband nor wife had more than a high school education, and there was at least one child under twelve years of age still in the home. For purposes of comparison, she also interviewed a group of twenty-five professional middle class families, whose characteristics match those of the working class group in all areas except education and occupation.

Rubin’s ultimate conclusion is that “(i)n the working class, the process of building a family, of making a living for it, of nurturing and maintaining the individuals in it costs ‘worlds of pain’ (p.215).” Although American families are “a product of its time and place in the hierarchy of social institutions” (p.210) they share some common experiences, some elements of the common culture by virtue of being part of the same society; “different in that class differences give a special test to the shared experience and a unique and distinctly different set of experiences” and challenges. For the working class people studied, Rubin’s findings portray a sense of resignation to the idea that social mobility is not a realistic possibility. It represents more of an illusion. In order to plan for the future, people must believe it possible to control their fate—but here there was a difference that sharply distinguished between the working and more

privileged classes. She suggests that the belief can only be held if it is nourished in experience (p. 38). This seldom happened in the working class homes observed.

Lareau's (2003) work complements that of Rubin's and also supports the importance of an individual's location in the social structure and impact in shaping their daily life and life expectations. Her study of young children from various socioeconomic backgrounds shows that, from a very young age, working class children are generally raised very differently than their peers from middle and upper-class backgrounds, revealing how variation in parenting styles are related to class distinctions. She utilizes the term "concerted cultivation" for the childrearing methods of middle class parents and "accomplishment of natural growth" for the approach utilized by working class and poor parents. The former population consists of parents that tend to be professionals with high levels of educational attainment, being very involved in their children's school and afterschool activities and providing a very structured environment and learning enrichment opportunities. Because the "cultivated" children are more engaged with their parents in regards to critical thinking and the use of advanced grammar, are more involved in organized activities and are provided with such supports as supplemental learning or direct parental advocacy when needed. The concerted effort helps them to perform better and get better grades on tests and ultimately outdo their peers in school. The cultivation, Lareau suggests, also helps these children later in life as the parenting style grooms them for white collar jobs and the types of interactions that a white collar worker encounters.

The children raised by "natural growth" tend to have a more unstructured upbringing, with parents who tend to have less education and time to provide the

support and values that will provide the advantages in school. These parents have less time, not always by choice, to spend with their children, and fewer resources to provide organized activities. This results in more unsupervised time with peers and less preparation to successfully engage future education and work opportunities that could lead to upward social mobility. The commonalities within the “cultivated” and “natural growth” childrearing practices and outcomes, respectively, were found regardless of race.

Similar to both Sennett & Cobb and Rubin, Lareau revealed how patterns in experience and access to higher levels of economic, social, and cultural capital distinguish classes and significantly impact one’s life chances. A noteworthy focus in this study revealed that advantages of class and resources led to advantage in the educational environment, a focus to which we now turn. Many of the core sentiments expressed or detailed by these studies are important to consider as some of the same threads of experience are evident in the lives and life transitions for the Pell Grant population.

Impact of Social Class in Education

Lareau’s earlier research reveals that social class has a strong and direct significance in shaping students’ lives in schools and has a potent influence on parental involvement patterns (Lareau, 1989). Although she focuses on elementary level education, her study parallels the extensive work of Bourdieu, who maintained that the cultural experiences, greatly impacted by class, in the home differentially facilitate children’s adjustment to school and academic achievement (Lareau, 1989). Essentially, the dispositions acquired in the socialization process, heavily influenced by the home

environment, impacted how the parents engaged the school environment and the quality of relationship established with the educational professionals.

The relationship between the school and the working class family was found to be characterized by a low level of engagement with the educational systems, as parents believed and trusted that it was essentially the teacher's responsibility to provide the education their children require. As a result, they sought little information, rarely intervened in the child's academic program or advocated effectively on their behalf, and provided limited educational enhancement activities such as reading at home. The result was that their children received a basic level of education. This contrasted significantly with the relationship between the school and the upper middle-class families that was characterized by active engagement in their children's education and the expectation to share the responsibility of this task with educator. These parents were actively involved and strived to supplement the child's curriculum outside the classroom.

The “home advantage” Lareau reveals is social class. The “education, occupational status, income, and the characteristics of work—provides parents with unequal *resources* and dispositions, differences that critically affect parental involvement in the educational experience of their children” (Lareau, 1989). Social status also provided a resource to upper-middle-class parents who approached teachers as social equals or from a higher social status, and therefore, were able to advocate for their children and help navigate the educational systems in order to maximize the educational system to its highest potential, for current and future benefit (p.175).

The study suggests that key elements of class cultures become forms of cultural capital because they give parents a pool of resources linked to social class (Lareau, 1989). This keeps the playing field unequal in the educational setting from the initial stages of the American educational system and helps maintain our schools as “gatekeeping institutions” (p.11). Thus, professional middle-class parents, assuming that their children compete for careers like theirs, utilize the educational system to ensure their children are receiving an education that helps develop innovation, initiative, flexibility, creativity, and a well-developed set of interpersonal skills while working class parents, also assuming that their children will work at jobs roughly similar to their own, frequently do not ensure the same quality of education, or simply lack the resources to ensure a similar opportunity (Rubin, 1976, p. 128).

Anyon (1980) described a “hidden curriculum” in her study of school systems that is itself “stratified” by classes that she identified as working class, middle class, affluent professional, and executive elite. She revealed that the school experience in the schools studied differed qualitatively by social class. She noted that “(i)n the contribution to the reproduction of unequal social relations lies a theoretical meaning, and social consequence of classroom practice (p.90).” Her work contends that the consequence is that the differences in curricula provided to students of different class backgrounds help to reproduce social stratification in society. This occurs by the dissimilar curriculum, pedagogical practices and assessment practices that vary and provide students from the social class groups with education and skills that have distinct aspects that prepare the students for discrete societal roles and relationships.

Working class students in her investigation received education that was equivalent to following steps of a procedure and prepared them for future roles that consist of taking orders and following directions. In contrast, the others largely learned some choice and decision making (middle class students), creativity and independent work (affluent professional school students), and an emphasis on developing analytical intellectual ability (executive elite students). The focus of these varied forms of education for these groups prepares each, in their respective order, for future responsibilities and relationships that are either bureaucratic, or representative of decision-making and managerial roles, or positions of leadership and power. Therefore, just as the home advantage tends to play a significant part in students' maximizing their ability, Anyon's work suggests the school systems also dispense knowledge and learning that provides a class-based trajectory. All of these studies strongly suggest that social class is important and, in this case, contributes to the advancement of social or institutional forms of inequality that may deeply impact one's place in society. These findings and concepts are transferable to studying working class college students and how they experience study abroad. These findings also relate to whether students may or may not have pre-college capital.

Working Class Academics in Higher Education

Documenting the experience of university faculty from working class origins, Ryan & Sackrey (1996) conclude that the academic work process and environment is antagonistic to the working class life. Academic institutions tend to remain elitist in nature and the academics within reside in a world culture different from that of the working class which fosters these antagonisms. The academics who thought that higher

education looked like “paradise” to them as undergraduates only discover how the university promoted and preserved the class system that had taken a toll on their families and close associates from a similar working class background as they grew up (Ryan & Sackrey, 1996). Where these faculty came from mattered in how they interacted with the academy, their colleagues, its students, and the tempo of the institution (Law, 1995). It also influenced their level of comfort navigating and feeling comfortable in this environment.

Pursuing a similar study, Dews & Law (1995) document the events and experiences of working class academics and find that common themes consistently emerge in the life stories of what otherwise appear to be very different people in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, geographic origin, etc. Despite a wide diversity of individuals in their study, they find commonalities in estrangement from family, and similar frustrations and ambitions, suggesting that class presents different dilemmas in academia than those posed, for example, by either race or gender. The “working class academics” do not cease being men and women, for instance, when they become doctors of philosophy (Law, 1995). However, most do cease being working class when they become professors. Becoming a professor resulted in experiencing an imposter phenomenon caused by the intersection of internalized class conflict and the feelings of being a fraud in their professional role (Ryan & Sackrey, 1996, p122). Peckham (1995) likens this transition to that of being a border crosser who has memories of the old country, which shaped his worldview and the mask he wears to elude the border guards to slip into a new country of privilege.

The research on these “working class academics” assists in understanding the level of stratification and privilege in higher education in general. Even those who are part of the professoriate struggled with their roots as they attempted to become part of the academy. This sense of “not fitting” in is also explored in this exploration of study-abroad participants from the perspectives(s) of undergraduate students in higher education. This study will also provide a lens to view low-income students’ level of comfort in navigating university spaces or a host country culture and “micro-culture” of other American students on the same study abroad program who may come from privileged backgrounds and happen to form the majority of their compatriots abroad.

Straddling Multiple Worlds

The literature on working class academics provides important insight into the faculty whose mobility path into higher education has led them to cross into different social class levels that have left them with a sense of having a “double life:” they have moved into a different class as they became faculty in higher education. Others have referred to this transition as being in a state of “limbo” (Lubrano, 2004), as “status incongruity” from being “caught between two worlds” (Sennett & Cobb, 1972, p. 20), as “straddling classes” or being a “class crossover” (Jensen, 2012). These works speak of challenges and classism faced by individuals as they proceeded along their mobility path from working class to middle and upper class status. For working class students, attending college creates a sense of culture shock on campus when they feel they do not fit in an environment where the professors identify primarily with the middle and upper class and their values (Tokarczyk, 1995). Where the latter group has learned the class codes of thinking, speaking, and writing in ways reinforced by their upbringing that are

expected and rewarded by the institution, working class students have to make significant breaks with their families' and communities' (Peckham 1995) and social background influences that likely shaped their individual attitudes and behavior.

Jensen refers to this transition as an invisible passage from one world to another where the assumption, everywhere in the middle class, is that working class life is simply inferior in all ways (Jensen, 2012). Potentially this passage carries effects such as stress, dissonance, anomie or sense of placelessness for these students as they face a collection of contradictory emotions, beliefs, and loyalties as they navigate a new environment and cross over to a higher class. At the same time they are changing, they no longer feel completely at home with their class-based home environment, longstanding social networks, or background.

Social Class and Undergraduate Education

The common perception of American higher education is that it is a model meritocratic system that is an engine of social mobility. Jensen's (2012) analysis of class in higher education led her to the conclusion that working class lives and cultures clash more in higher education than in almost any other context since traditional postsecondary education was largely designed by and for the upper classes. The less cultural capital students have accumulated from previous schooling and the closer they are to a working class or lower middle class background, the more they face a "tangle of extracurricular psychological, sociological, and cultural confusion" (p.150). Given the differences in cultural and social capital between the middle and upper classes and the working class cultures, the latter may face and experience what is comparable to culture shock as they enter college, with its predominately middle/upper-middle class culture

(Zweig, 2004). This uneven distribution of capital across class lines contributes to many working class students having fewer capital resources as they enter college and attempt to transition to higher education, which in turn would contribute to being differently involved in the campus social and extracurricular domains, affecting their experience, impacting the ability to accumulate additional social and cultural capital that is important in college and afterward (Stuber, 2011; Walpole, 2003). These observations are significant to this study as they help inform the experiences of the Pell Grant students who did study abroad. These patterns are also evident in the studies related to class and the undergraduate experience.

Jenny Stuber's (2012) research on the comparative college experience between students of differing class origins at one of the best private liberal arts institutions and a large state university in the Midwest demonstrates how "the experiential core of college life—the social and extracurricular worlds of higher education – operates as a setting in which social class inequalities manifest and get reproduced" (p. 4). In her study, more affluent students typically arrived on both campuses with a more sophisticated understanding college and how to navigate the institution. They also approached college as an opportunity, and a central part of the experience was to expand social networks, so they were "primed to meet people" from the start. The privileged students participated more in activities like Greek life, study abroad, and student government. Their participation enabled them acquire the social and cultural capital that set the stage for gaining access to valuable social and occupational opportunities beyond college. Aside from financial constraints, students from less-privileged backgrounds, on the other hand, were less equipped with resources to take advantage of the institutional

opportunities to expand their capital. An important aspect of her finding was that the working class students were “pulled in” or “pushed out” of the extracurricular activities by the campus environment and institutional programming such as special freshman orientations for first generation students, mentoring programs, and college support programs for students traditionally underrepresented in higher education. Across the two institutions, unlike the upper and middle class students, the working class students did not have the individual habitus and social and cultural capital resources to get involved. Ironically, the very programming intended to reduce inequalities had the result of reinforcing them. Interestingly, the working class students at the elite private school occasionally noted feelings of exclusion and being looked down upon because of their class standing, but simultaneously were more integrated into the campus social and extracurricular activities compared to peers at the public institution (p.113).

Similar to Stuber’s work, Armstrong & Hamilton (2013) investigated the “experiential core of college life (p.4),” the time between college entry and exit, of 53 young women over the course of five years at a large public research university in the Midwest. From the time the students arrived at what was known as a “party dorm,” the researchers found that students from similar class backgrounds shared financial, cultural, and social resources, as well as lived experiences, that shaped their orientations to college and the agendas they could reasonably pursue (p.10). Further, their study revealed that instead of creating an environment that led to integration and the diminishing of social stratification, both the university infrastructure and student peer cultures played a role in sorting students along class lines that were similar to those that existed as students began their postsecondary careers - the flagship university was seen

to be reinforcing differences of social class. This was contrary to what the researchers anticipated, as a key part of the mission of public universities is the explicit intent of sponsoring mobility among disadvantaged groups. Armstrong & Hamilton contend that the current context of higher education has produced a tilt toward recruiting affluent students (p. xiii). As sources of revenue in the form of public financing have diminished institutions have intensified efforts to attract those with the financial resources to fully fund their education in order to achieve solvency, even if the recruits are not the most academically promising. A consequence of this trend has been the elimination of opportunity for capable students who may have been pursued in the past despite their economic means to pay. They argue that this has also resulted in the university's organizational arrangements disadvantaging all but the most affluent because it structures the interests of this more privileged constituency into its organizational edifice and creates "pathways" that are simultaneously social and academic and coordinate all aspects for the university experience. Because students from less privileged backgrounds did not have sufficient levels of financial, social, or cultural capital to navigate the university environment, the system does not serve them well and they are set on pathways that tend to place them on a trajectory of lower quality education and limited career options.

Their study also puts into question the concept that public institutions are meritocratic in nature for all students who work hard and have promising academic abilities will excel and enhance their chances of climbing the social ladder. Using an example of what they refer to as "creaming" (p. 149), which is the identifying of an academically promising student from the lower classes into a track of mobility, they

reveal that such social movement was largely dependent on being placed in a program for disadvantaged students or acquiring an early connection with an invested faculty member. The student who fit this profile in their research served as an example of students who are vaunted as success stories that demonstrate that anyone can succeed in college if personally motivated. These stories reinforce perceptions of mobility through meritocracy and contribute to the myth of rising to a “higher” class through ability. In reality what is at work is an “inherited meritocracy” (p. 13) where merit is also heavily class-based in the sense that students who came from families with higher economic means and levels of social and cultural capital have had the support to develop the skills and habits a meritocracy system actually rewards. This same dynamic also provided students from the upper classes with a higher margin of error that the lower middle-class and working class students did not have in regards to financial support, college loan debt, social networks that provide access to potential career connections and the like. In Armstrong & Hamilton’s example, the student who was “creamed” had the benefit of a parent who had college experience and had acquired levels of social and cultural capital that enabled the successful navigation of the university programs to gain access to opportunities that were primarily designed for students from backgrounds of enduring disadvantage.

The idea that social status origins of a college student continue to affect his or her college experiences and outcomes afterwards are supported by Walpole’s (2003) longitudinal study that examined the data from the Cooperative Institution Research Program (CIRP) taken from 12,386 subjects from 209 institutions across the U.S. The survey was conducted as they entered college and at four and nine year intervals. The

survey provided information on student's activities, aspirations and attainment from the start of college until early adulthood. The data gathered suggest that the social status origins of a college student continue to affect their college experiences and outcomes. During college, low SES students worked more, studied less, participated in fewer extracurricular activities, and reported lower GPAs than their high SES peers. Nine years after entering college, the low SES students had lower incomes, educational attainment, and graduate school attendance. From a Bourdieuan perspective, the findings lend support to the notion that students from low SES backgrounds possess different social and cultural capital than do all students or high SES students, and that attending college does not necessarily indicate that a student has risen economically or socially to a level similar to that of his or her peers, and that students from higher SES backgrounds continue to have advantages beyond the campus experience (Walpole, 2003). These were traditional aged low SES students who attended four-institutions and are a relatively privileged group of low SES students (p.67). Therefore, she concludes "low SES college students and their experiences and struggles deserve continued attention, investigation and understanding" (p.67).

In her instrumental case study exploring the impact of social class on adjustment to college life, Bergerson (2007) notes that it is tempting to look at the differences among college students from a deficit point of view and question how we can make up the difference in the capital our students possess. This is especially relevant because society-wide institutions, like public education, presume we all think and learn like middle class people do (Jensen, 2012). Using the story of Anna, Bergeron demonstrates how students who do not possess the type of capital most valued by higher education

institutions – middle and upper class students – can struggle to succeed as their values are not validated by the institution. In this case study, the student left the institution because the way she valued work, connections to her family and community, and focus on academics clashed with the institution's and its emphasis on campus involvement – which favored traditionally aged, full-time students, deeply involved in the college experience, that was not possible for Anna given her life's circumstances. Demographic shifts in the U.S. anticipate an ever increasingly diverse population of students like Anna that are working class, students of color, and first generation. In order to support their educational pursuits, the researcher proposes that institutions critically examine how students come to college with different habits and levels of capital that disadvantage some students, such working class individuals, while increasing the capital of others and contributing to social reproduction. Further, institutions must consider how to be inclusive of students like Anna and adapt policies and practices to meet the needs of these individuals because traditional forms of college involvement may require that these students leave behind networks and aspects of their identities that are important to them. Such a change requires turning perceived deficits into assets that institutions should embrace so they can support the success of non-traditional students.

Summary

With the ever-increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of our planet, the national call for increased study abroad participation, to prepare undergraduate students to be personally and professionally prepared for the global environment in which we live, is unlikely to wane. However, despite the high regard Americans have for study abroad and the increasing involvement of more students, the proportion of

individuals participating has remained relatively low and the population has stayed relatively homogenous. Historically, the literature indicates that study abroad as it is known today has largely been a luxury for affluent U.S. college students whose financial resources and family backgrounds predispose them to seek out such experiences and allow them to access and take advantage of such opportunities (Martinez, Ranjeet, Marx, 2008). While data demonstrates that there are multiple segments of the undergraduate population that has remained generally underrepresented, very limited research has been conducted that attempts to foreground issues of class, a factor that transcends and intersects multiple identities of individuals, in the study abroad context even though a broader body of work examining working class lives in American society at large and the education environment have provided insight to understanding the experience of these individuals. Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical concepts of social and cultural capital and habitus provide a framework to better understand how students, such as Pell Grant eligible individuals, from lower SES or working class backgrounds experience study abroad. In recent years, Bourdieu's ideas have started to be utilized to help unearth intent and participation rates bases on capital accumulation and habitus. The scholarship and theoretical ideas help to frame the experience of the participants in this study – from their pre to post-study abroad sojourn.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The fundamental objective of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the study abroad experience of American undergraduate students who are Pell Grant recipients. By examining the discourse of those who *did* study abroad, the objective is to produce knowledge that can be used to better inform international educators about how to expand these opportunities to this population. It seeks to gain deeper insight into how to effectively support these individuals throughout the study abroad process and when they return from their sojourn abroad. Much of the research on this population and their overseas academic experience is very limited, with common understanding regarding their interaction with the study abroad experience widely based on anecdotal commentary and supposition that does not necessarily include the voice of the students themselves.

Due to the paucity of research, an investigative method that is exploratory in nature is appropriate as this is a relatively new field of study that can be better informed by inquiry techniques that allow as much detail about the participants' experience to emerge during the information gathering process. Therefore, I pursued a qualitative approach with a semi-structured interview technique developed by Seidman (2006). This methodology provided the flexibility to follow a data collection strategy that was open and inductive in nature, permitting the maximum opportunity for discovery and deep insight into the lives of the participants not easily obtained with many other forms of data collection.

At the core of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience (Seidman, 2006, p.9). The face-to-face dialogue between researcher and participant(s) provides the opportunity to deeply explore how Pell Grant students make meaning of their participation in education programs in their own words – from the decision-making process to participate until their return and readjustment to life stateside. In this study, this meant employing multiple interviewing techniques or strategies, such as allowing the interviewees to guide the discussion or describe personal experiences of choice in order to obtain the thick detail and description required to gain insight into the worlds of the students sharing their life stories in relation to the study abroad experience. With this approach, the researcher is able to react to what is said during the interview process, probing new areas of discussion that may be revealed during the meetings and permitted to pursue secondary lines of questioning, as appropriate. In short, the generative questioning approach, which does not utilize predetermined assumptions about the research subject, provided rich sources of data for analysis and hypothesis development that can contribute to the nascent and expanding body of knowledge that will enable international educators to better understand this population.

Researcher as Instrument

Two core elements of the naturalistic inquiry paradigm are that “no manipulation on the part of the inquirer is implied” and the “inquirer imposes no a priori units on the outcome” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 9). These fundamental tenets of human research support the concept that the researcher is the tool and data gathering instrument that can pursue the study of a phenomenon naturally in the real world to gain

a better understanding of those whose lives we examine rather than focus the inquiry on hypothesis verification. In other words, the “formulation of the interviewer role” changes the function of the researcher from “being a data-collecting instrument for researchers to being a data collecting instrument for those whose lives are being researched” (Oakley, 1981, p.49). This phenomenological approach affirms the necessity of relationship building, proceeding with extensive dialogue and open-ended questions, and developing rapport with the interviewees in order to gain insight into their lives.

Due to the nature of speech events like the interview, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) utilize the term “inter-view” in order to emphasize the idea that knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee(s). The interview event itself generates co-constructed experience and data worthy of study (Mishler, 1986). This implies that the researcher is more than the data collecting instrument. His or her contribution also involves active engagement and making meaning and sense of the lived experience of the population whose worlds we are trying to comprehend. Comprehensively, interview research offers the possibility to obtain rich information because the participants are brought together in a knowledge producing exchange. Accordingly, the inter-view allows the researcher great potential to give “voice” to the participants in the study as they are permitted to detail as much of their experience as they desire during the knowledge construction process. That is the intent with the population being studied here, which has been traditionally underrepresented in study abroad.

Setting

The location of the study is a four-year, public flagship university in the northeastern region of the U.S. The institution is a public research university and is a Land, Sea, and Urban Grant institution. At the time of the data collection the institution enrolled approximately 13,500 undergraduate and 3,000 graduate students. Approximately 60% of the undergraduates enrolled were residents of the state, with the vast majority from the 18-24 year-old demographic. The university operates on a semester system and offers a comprehensive array of education abroad programs: winter session, summer, semester and academic year study abroad options; international internships; and international service-learning opportunities. At the time the data for this project were collected, the average number of Pell Grant recipients each academic year was approximately 2,700 students, or roughly 20% of the undergraduate population.

Description of the Study Population

In higher education, Pell eligibility is conceptually understood to be a characteristic of students with limited economic resources or from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, educational opportunity outreach programs in the post-secondary education environment designed to motivate and support students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds such as Upward Bound (e.g., a TRIO program) would be comprised of a significant number of Pell Grant recipients. In the study abroad context, the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, a U.S. government funded program, shares the same objectives with its stated mission of diversifying the study abroad participant population at the undergraduate level. The

Gilman uses Pell Grant status as one of its fundamental scholarship eligibility requirements in order to increase study abroad participation of students from lower-income backgrounds.

A primary intention was to foreground social class dynamics by selecting students based on socioeconomic status as indicated by their Pell Grant eligibility. Within these criteria, there was the assumption that the parameters established would provide variation in terms of participant diversity (major, ethnicity, cultural heritage, race, gender, religious affiliation, program duration and destination, transfer or non-transfer students, first generation college status, residency, etc.). Social class, however, is a distinguishing marker that transcends and cuts across the other socially constructed identities mentioned. This would help explore common themes of class and how it impacts the study abroad experience. Therefore, for the purpose of this study it is paramount that the participants are Pell Grant recipients as it is a means of identifying working class students and those of “less privileged” socioeconomic standing.

Participants

Every individual has her or his own life story and experiences events, other people, and the environment from his or her own unique perspective. Accepting this premise, the intent was to select students from one four-year public university who were in their last year of undergraduate study and close to earning a bachelor’s degree, or recently graduated (within one-year of degree conferral date). It was expected that all of these students would have had different personal experiences, but would have had access to similar institutional resources and information about study abroad available to them from this specific “window in time” (i.e., comparable 4-5 year period). During the

interviews, the intention was to also learn why and how each participant accessed these resources. As will be elaborated in the chapters that follow, many of the students came from backgrounds that in most cases would derail the path to higher education, never mind a study abroad experience, or what Sherise, one of the participants in this study, referred to as “automatically the prime college experience.”

Sampling Design & Procedures

The Interview

Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) note that the interview attempts to understand the world from the participants’ points of view in order to unfold the meaning of their experiences (p.1). Therefore, the aim was to interview participants three times utilizing Seidman’s (2006) structure for in-depth, phenomenological interviewing as a guide. The phenomenological interview process utilizes a three-interview series to reconstruct one’s experience with the topic of study by exchanges on (1) a focused life history, (2) details of the experience being investigated, and (3) the participant’s reflection on the meaning of the experience(s). For this project the interviews centered on topics related to the participant’s personal history, reconstructed details of the study abroad program or programs (as it was revealed that some participated multiple times), and how each participant made meaning of the experience.

The strategy was to use what Spradley (1979) referred to as “grand tour questions.” Grand tour questions are open ended and elicit long narratives in order to gain deep insight into the world of the participants. To facilitate dialogue and the interview process I developed sample questions and themes in the event participants were uncertain what aspects of their personal histories to share, or if hesitant to discuss

freely because a level of comfort or trust with me had not been established. Sample questions for each interview follow:

1. Sample of focused life history questions.

- I am interested to understand the reasons people decide to participate in study abroad programs. Please tell me about your thoughts that led you to participate. Can you tell me a little about yourself such as where you are from, your major, etc.?
- How would you describe yourself and your personality to others?
- What were your objectives for attending college?
- What groups or organization are you involved with while at the university?
- Please discuss when you actually learned about study abroad as a “concept” or began to learn what it was all about. How did this come about?

2. Sample of questions about the details of the study abroad experience.

- If you had to provide the most significant factors that led to your decision to study abroad, what were they?
- What reactions did you get from your family, friends, and most immediate acquaintances about your plans when you told them you were studying abroad?
- Prior to studying abroad yourself, who did you think typically studied abroad?
- Before participating, what were your personal goals and objectives related to studying abroad? Why did you want to do this?
- Could you please discuss how well you feel that you adjusted to your new environment while studying overseas?
- What were your personal highlights and low points of the study abroad experience? Why?

3. Sample of questions related to the participant’s reflection on the meaning of the study abroad experience(s).

- Please talk about whether or not you think studying abroad is for all students, or others like yourself, and why you hold this opinion. How did you feel about this prior to your experience?
- Studying abroad can provide one with the opportunity to look at one’s country, culture, society, and life from a different perspective because you are looking at these experiences from “the outside”. If you share this view, how did you use your experience to view America, your life, or your place in American society from this outsider’s lens? What did you see or notice that you normally might miss from “the inside”? Did this, or has this, caused you to re-examine anything about our society and/or your place in it?
- How has the experience changed you?

- What about study abroad experience would like to share, or want people to know, that you were not asked?

A comprehensive list of prepared questions for each interview in the three-part series is located in Appendix A. Fortunately, from my perspective as the researcher and co-constructor of the interview, rapport developed quickly and the talk remained true to the emergent design in the sense that the participants generally selected events and details to discuss. After introductory formalities during the initial meeting very little encouragement was required to obtain lengthy personal narratives, which produced insight into their lived experience.

Purposeful or purposely selected sampling (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002) was utilized as the intent of the study was to better understand the experience of Pell Grant recipient status students who had studied abroad. It was established that all participants met this criteria. This was also a convenience sample due to the fact that, as explained above, I have access to a sizable target population through my professional position. The objective was to ensure enough participants in the study. What constitutes an appropriate sample size varies in qualitative research, but what constitutes adequacy will be the context and exercising careful judgment not to overgeneralize from the sample, while maximizing the depth of information purposeful sampling can provide (Patton, 2002, p. 246). Seidman's criteria (2006) for enough is sufficient numbers to reflect the range of participants that make up the population so others that make up the population studied might have a chance to connect with the experiences of those in it (p.55). The second criteria was to reach data saturation, or a point in the study at which I began to hear the same information conveyed. Given these guiding qualitative principles, with the need to consider practical concerns of time and resources required,

the initial goal was to obtain a total of 20 volunteers to start the investigative project in order to ensure at least 15 initial participants in case of potential attrition as the research progressed.

Recruitment

Initially the proposal was to identify and recruit the candidates in three ways, each designed to recruit without direct contact by the researcher. They were:

1. The Director of the Study Abroad Office (SAO) at the study university would send a letter of invitation on behalf of the primary investigator via e-mail to potential volunteers. The recipients were to be individuals that are part of the target population as the SAO had contact information of individuals that might fit the desired criteria from an institutional data source utilized to promote a federally funded scholarship program that seeks to diversify study abroad participation.
2. Professionals at the institution's SAO would be asked to recommend students who meet the criteria and characteristics that are the focus of the study. They would then be asked to e-mail a letter of invitation on behalf of the primary investigator inviting them to participate in the study.
3. Since I am an employee in the SAO and had professional interaction with individuals that could serve as potential participants, I could identify students that might fit the profile of the population to be studied. SAO professional staff would e-mail a letter of invitation to these individuals on my behalf.

4. As this is an emergent design project, chain-sampling or “snowballing” techniques would be utilized if participants suggested other individuals that could be considered for inclusion in study (Patton, 2002; Seidman 2006).

For this investigation, only the first and second recruitment tactics were utilized because these recruitment efforts produced a satisfactory number of participants to complete the study. The pool of participants was drawn from student contact information that was in the institution’s SAO database for participants that had studied abroad on a semester, academic year, winter term, summer or spring break program between the fall of 2011 and summer of 2013 (Fall 2011, Spring 2012, Winter Session term 2012, Spring Break 2012, Summer 2012, Fall 2012, Spring 2013, Winter Session 2013, Spring Break 2013, Summer 2013). Total population of students participating in one of these programs during the established time period was approximately 950.

Because it was the goal to recruit study abroad alumni who were Pell Grant recipients in their final year of college or were recent baccalaureate graduates, the pool of potential contacts was cross-referenced with an institutional recruitment contact list that had been utilized to promote the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program on campus. This list increased the probability of contacting Pell Grant recipients as that is a primary eligibility requirement for the federally funded study abroad scholarship program. The list of contacts remaining was reduced further utilizing a query to identify students who, during the time of the study, would be recent graduates (within one-year of degree conferral date) or approaching their graduation date within the upcoming academic year. This was feasible as all individuals had self-

disclosed their anticipated date of graduation during the study abroad application process and was information that was available from the SAO.

The aim of obtaining a group of recent graduates or students nearing degree conferral was twofold. First, to accentuate the point that I was not in a position of power over the participants. In the interview there is always “power asymmetry” because the research interview is not an open conversation between equal partners (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The researcher has “scientific competence,” initiates and defines the interview situation, determines the topic, questions, terminates the conversation, and has a monopoly on interpretation and reports what the interviewee reported (pp.33-34). In an attempt to minimize the unequal power relationship between us I decided it would be more advantageous to have individuals that were leaving, or had left, the university. If they were no longer “ beholden” to the institution in any way, it was hoped they would feel more comfortable sharing more detail about their lives and could provide frank and honest opinions, including any related to the SAO and institution. The origin of this concern was connected to the fact that I was employed in the office that facilitated or coordinated their study abroad experience. Therefore, it was to ensure that they knew that although I was a representative of the university in my professional role, I would have no position of authority such as granting grades or credit over these potential participants, so they could proceed without apprehension that there might be some personal cost for their disclosure.

The second motive was the intent of increasing the odds of there being a longer time period for personal reflection on their experience(s) as it pertained to their overall college experience if their baccalaureate academic career had ended or was near closure.

Since the participants passed through the institution at approximately the same time, it was also hoped that there would be some opportunity to compare how individuals of a particular graduating class experienced a particular window of time at the same university. For example, while pursuing their degrees what institutional support services designed to help students study abroad were effective for some, not others, and why?

It should be noted that during the planning phases I inadvertently did not account for the fact that some of the participants would be 5th year students or “super seniors,” or enrolled in undergrad programs that were 5 or 6 years in length, such as Accounting and the Pharmacy program. This meant that some of the participants could potentially be two years from graduation. Regardless, it was deemed appropriate to incorporate these individuals as it was concluded that they brought valuable perspectives to the study and, due to the structure of their curriculum, it would have been highly unlikely that they would access the SAO again.

Using the parameters outlined above, the database population was reduced to 189 individuals. On October 24, 2013 the director of the SAO sent a letter of invitation to this potential pool of applicants. (See Appendix B for copy a of the recruitment letter). In the subsequent days a coordinator of faculty-led study abroad programs forwarded the original invitation with a message directed at alumni of short-term programs encouraging these individuals to review the correspondence if they had missed or had disregarded it. It was thought that since many of the students may have interacted with this professional, a level of trust would have been established and recruits would feel more comfortable becoming involved.

The two messages resulted in 19 initial responses of interest to participate in the study. As these initial recruitment efforts eventually proved to provide a sufficient pool of participants, no additional attempts at recruitment were initiated. Two of the individuals who responded had participated in a pilot research project conducted a year prior that was used to develop the questions, research design, and feasibility of the project being described. Like the other volunteers, they were identified when the SAO database was queried for potential candidates. At the time of the trial investigation both were in their last year of study at the university, but were recent alumni when interviewed for this inquiry. Both also agreed to allow their data from the pilot study to be used for this project per my discretion.

Data collection process

Following the distribution of the recruitment e-mail, those who volunteered to participate were contacted with a follow-up e-mail or telephone call in order to answer any questions related to the study, obtain availability, and begin to set up initial face-to-face interviews. Careful attention was given to the electronic and oral correspondence at this phase in order to address any concerns, but also begin to develop trust and rapport with each individual. In total, 17 of the 19 initial contacts eventually agreed to participate in the study. Given the size of the group and amount of time that was anticipated to interview each study abroad alumnus, review audio recordings, conduct preliminary analysis of data, and prepare for member checking and follow-up questions between individual sessions, the total population was roughly divided into three groups of five or six. The intent was to stagger the interview process over the course of several months in order to effectively manage the volume of data that would be collected.

Therefore, as data collection for the first group was ending, the initial interviews for the second were being confirmed, as the interviews for the second came to a close, the beginning of the process with the last group was initiated.

The data collection stage occurred over the course of approximately 16 weeks with a range of one to five interviews per week during this time period. The average number of interviews was three per week, which was a number that was most effective for preliminary analysis, reflection on the discourse, and preparation of questions and member checking that was necessary groundwork for subsequent dialogue. Time was dedicated to analytical memo writing between interviews in order to assist in finding relationships and interpreting the large volume of data that accumulated.

Following Seidman's (2006) recommendation, the goal was to space all three interviews with each individual three days to a week apart (p. 21). This allows time for participants to contemplate what was discussed in the preceding interview but not too much time as to lose the connection between the two. The majority of meetings with interviewees were conducted in publicly available conference rooms on campus, primarily in the student union, or in coffee shops conveniently located for the participants. A primary objective was to secure meeting space that enabled participants to feel comfortable and situated in a "non-threatening" and casual environment. Since some of the individuals were now employed with professional and personal commitments that made it challenging to meet, three follow-up interviews were conducted by telephone. One participant's conversations were completed using Skype video chat as she had relocated to another region of the U.S. after graduation.

Initial Interview – Student Background and Life History

During initial interviews the customary research protocol was followed with participants being informed of the nature of the study once again and provided with a consent document that they were asked to sign. At that time they were also encouraged to ask questions about their rights, the project, and any other concerns they may have. I also came prepared with a contact list of institutional support services and resources for students related to health and wellness, such as the Counseling Center and Health Services Department. The intent was to be able to refer participants to the appropriate professional should the interview process unexpectedly reveal traumatic memories or personal experiences that would warrant a referral. However, no need to distribute this document arose during any of the interviews.

Once written consent was obtained, the focus of the interview followed Seidman's (2006) structure, which in this study was exploring the complex issue of studying abroad by examining the lived experience of the participants and the meaning the experience had for them. I pursued the task of putting the participant's study abroad related experience in context by asking them to tell as much as possible about themselves and reconstruct as much of their life history up to the point when they embarked on the overseas educational experience. Not only was the goal to focus on their past to learn about its relation to the study abroad participation, but to also to place the study abroad experience in the context of their lives.

As I wanted to pursue the study by exploring social class dynamics as an overriding focus, I purposely did not incorporate a survey or ask questions specifically related to one's age, gender, major, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, etc.

Although it is understood that there is a great deal of complexity on how these various identities interact, and an anticipated level of intersectionality, it was left to the participants to describe how they wished to identify themselves. The intent was to remove any preconceived notion(s) I may have of who these students were, and to see if any striking similarities in experience related to class emerged, regardless of other identities and socially imposed parameters. In short, other than confirming Pell Grant eligibility, I wanted let the students talk about what identities and life experiences were important to them.

Interview Two - Details of the Study Abroad Experience

The second interview is typically used to concentrate on the details of the participants' present life experience in the topic area of study (Seidman, 2006, pg. 18). For this investigation the second interview was slightly amended. Instead, the study abroad alumni were asked to reconstruct their study abroad experience and provide as much rich detail as possible about their time abroad, their interactions, and the social setting(s) in which they were immersed. Details and not opinions were the primary focus (p.18) of this interview. However, since rapport had been established with most individuals during the first interview, the second interview for almost all participants was the longest and when the most details were shared. For most, there was an eagerness to share their study abroad experience, as it had been an important life event for them. Since what they were reconstructing was primarily the recent past and its impact on the present, a significant amount of opinion and reflection entered the details recounted.

Interview Three - Reflection on the Meaning of the Study Abroad

Experience

The emphasis on the third interview was to ask the participants to reflect on their education abroad experience and the meaning it held for them. The previous dialogue of the past and one's personal history along with study abroad experience was intended to establish the conditions for reflecting upon what they were doing now in their lives and the meaning they impart to the events that they recount in the interview (Seidman, p. 19).

Interview Process Summary

A total of 17 participants were eventually interviewed for this project. After approximately 12 to 15 participants had completed the interview sequence, the goals of sufficiency and data saturation were being met. To determine this, I would repeatedly ask the following guiding questions established by Charmaz (2006) when determining if the researcher has met the standard for gathering rich and sufficient data:

- Have I collected enough background data about persons, processes, and settings to have ready recall and to understand and portray the full range of contexts to the study?
- Have I gained detailed descriptions of a range of participants' views and actions?
- Do the data reveal what lies beneath the surface?
- Are the data sufficient to reveal changes over time?
- Have I gained multiple views of the participants' range of actions?
- Have I gathered data that enabled me to develop analytical categories?
- What kinds of comparisons can I make between data? How do these comparisons generate and inform my ideas? (pp. 18-19)

Although comfortable with the quality of data after 15 participants had been interviewed, I followed Seidman's advice and erred on the side of having more data rather than less (2006, p. 55) and there was an element of giving respect to those

remaining volunteers who wanted to have their voices heard as they felt it was important to contribute to the study. The 17 individuals were involved in 39 interviews, which resulted in approximately 43 hours (2,549 minutes) of recorded dialogue. The shortest interview was a final follow-up interview that lasted approximately 30 minutes; the longest interview was 1 hour 37 minutes. Average duration of all interviews was 1 hour 5 minutes.

I tried to adhere to the interview structure established by Seidman but did meet challenges doing this in regards to number of interviews, spacing between each meeting, and assisting the interviewees to maintain focus on the purpose of each theme prescribed for each particular interview. The first two items were a challenge as the timing of the research project coincided with a final exam period and winter break, and many participants had personal, academic, and work commitments that made scheduling meetings quite challenging. Additionally, when conversing during the second interview some participants were persistent about combining the second and third interview during the second interview session. They indicated that they would “stay as long as I needed them” but preferred to finish during that meeting. Rather than lose out on the data they would be willing to share at that time, I complied and collected as much of their experience and reflective discourse as emerged at that session.

Regardless of the minor adaptations that were unanticipated, the accommodations seemed methodologically appropriate (Patton, 2002, p. 72) and successful as the data gathered for these “exceptions” was essentially as rich and plentiful as that provided by participants who progressed with the three stage interview process. Seidman himself acknowledges that researchers have reasons for pursuing

alternatives to his specific approach as long as a structure is maintained that all the participants reconstruct and reflect upon their experience within the context of their lives (p. 21). I pursued a pragmatic approach recognized by Patton (2002) and feel this objective was achieved to the highest degree possible as the modification of having students discuss their study abroad experience, which was in the recent past rather than the present, had already permitted a substantial amount of personal reflection for most individuals.

Delays in interview spacing proved to be beneficial as it permitted time for listening to the previous interview(s) a minimum of two to three times prior to subsequent discussion(s). In this way, I became deeply immersed in the data. Additionally, this allowed for preliminary analysis of the preceding discourse and preparation for member checking and follow-up questions in subsequent interviews. I had purposefully incorporated Mayo's Method of interviewing into the process, which calls for stopping and summarizing the talk of the interview to ensure that the interviewer has properly interpreted what has been said to the fullest extent possible (in Kvale and Brinkman, 2009, p. 45). The gap(s) between interviews also enabled a more thorough member checking process to occur during ensuing meetings as I had more time to reflect upon the data from the preceding speech event.

Each participant was given a \$20 gift card of choice (e.g., Amazon, gas station, Starbucks, iTunes, Dunkin Donuts) at the end of their final interview. This was used as an incentive during the recruitment phase. It was made clear throughout the interview process that the incentive would be provided when the participant ended their involvement in the interview process - whenever they decided that may be. This was to

ensure that no individual continued to participate simply for the incentive or felt obligated to continue if provided upfront. When presented with the card most participants indicated that it was not necessary and they would have participated anyway and/or had forgotten about the incentive. These comments seemed quite genuine and not feigned by any.

Instruments and Tools for Collecting and Storing Data

A Sony IC Digital Recorder (model ICD-PX720) was used to collect the interview data. After recording, digital files were transferred to a Dell laptop computer equipped with *Dragon NaturallySpeaking 12 Premium* speech recognition software. This permitted me to listen to the audio files and “voice write” data notes in Microsoft Word 2013. This enabled the individual speech events to be converted and used for preliminary analysis, analytical memos, and member checking and question development between interviews. Finally, an Iomega HDD external hard drive was used to save and store all electronic files. An external device is utilized as it can be disconnected and stored in a locked file cabinet in my office space.

Transcription of Data

Transcribing and Transcription Accuracy

Upon completion of the interview process, all interviews were transcribed in one of two manners. First, in order to facilitate the aim of becoming immersed in the data, I personally transcribed the data into Word 2013 or “voice wrote” the transcripts using the voice recognition software. This involved listening to the recorded audio files and repeating the speech events into a microphone so dialogue could be converted to text. Although highly effective in regards to accuracy and immersing oneself in the data, it

proved to be a very time consuming process. Therefore, nearly 75% of the files were transcribed and transformed from audio to text utilizing a professional transcription service provider. All transcriptions were produced in Word tables so each individual speech act was input into a unique row. As elaborated in the paragraph below, this format was utilized to facilitate the coding and data analysis process.

To ensure accuracy of the transcript documents that were outsourced, I carefully reviewed all text while listening to the audio files to ensure they were transcribed verbatim, making necessary corrections while proceeding with a line by line audit. As part of this process, one minute intervals were noted throughout the transcripts and each row of transcript was assigned a number in order assist with the organization and categorization of text when conducting the coding and data analysis process. Additionally, notations to identify speakers and turns were included and columns for notes, analytical memos, ideas for codes, and emerging patterns were incorporated. The transcription and formatting processing took approximately eight weeks with the 39 interviews producing 1,396 pages of transcripts. The shortest transcript was 16 pages in length, the longest 64 pages. Average transcript length was approximately 40 pages per interview.

Generative Data Analysis

The reason the interviewer spends so much time talking with the participants is to find out what *their* experience is and the meaning *they* make of it and then to make connections among the experiences of people who share the same structure (Seidman, 200, p. 128). It is also necessary to get a sense of the whole – context, utterances, redundancy in speech, etc. and provide a faithful representation of the data (Cameron,

2001) for systematic analysis. To do this I made a conscious decision to adjust transcripts to more accurately represent the speech events and manually code all transcripts to ensure substantial time to immerse myself in the data and permit time for careful analytical reflection as I methodically proceeded in the following manner:

1. Pre-Coding, Preliminary Analysis, and Analytical Memos

As no one can claim final authority on the “best” way to code qualitative data (Saldaña, 2009, p. 2), I decided to proceed as suggested by Boyatzis (1998) who notes that the researcher should be open to all information and attune all of ones senses to be ready to receive all pertinent information. Proceeding accordingly, “pre-coded” preliminary transcripts and interview notes by underlining or highlighting rich or notable quotes or passages that seemed to be what Boyatzis refers to as “codable moments,” or moments of significance and worthy of attention. Expressed another way, they seemed to be important components of the lives and experiences as described by the participants. This was supplemented with analytical notes and memos that in a practical sense assisted with the management of dealing with such a large volume of data but also were crucial in analyzing data and codes early in the research process (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). This technique also permitted the flexibility to explore my ideas and thoughts related to the categories and themes that began to emerge as I progressed with data collection and eventually intensive analysis. This became one of the most useful “sense-making tools” utilized (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 73). For example, while pre-coding and memoing after the initial interview with Asia, her repeated comment that studying abroad is “not real unless you can see yourself doing it” was highlighted and explored further in the follow-up interviews and meetings with the

other participants. Without the careful reflective analysis assisted with coding and memoing, I might have come to the conclusion that having a friend encourage her to study abroad was in its own right a critical motivating factor. However, the analytical tools utilized enabled a deeper exploration, and refinement revealed that it was not just encouragement of a trusted friend, but seeing herself or someone like her, in a close friend that had already studied abroad was the more significant element actualizing her own interest in participating. What could have been an oversight would become a central theme in this study.

2. Open Coding and Recoding

As indicated above, I have an extensive personal history working with the population being researched. While this is a strength in the sense that I personally can provide insights and experience to the area of study that many conducting the study could not, I felt it was necessary to reflect on my own bias and any preconceived notions related to the data to ensure I approached the transcripts in a holistic and open way. To facilitate the process, I found it helpful to listen to the interview two additional times and follow the transcripts line by line while also comparing the speech with my analytical memos. Through this process, the data generated in excess of 100 initial codes and significant phrases that utilized the actual words of the participants. I also developed coding memos in order to continuously compare codes with the data throughout the analytical process, in order to ensure the coding process was remaining faithful to the data from the beginning of the analysis to the end of the investigation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). To further organize the data and emerging categories, significant passages and quotes that were linked to codes produced by the text were also

color coded into three basic categories: text related to personal histories, during the study abroad experience, and post program experience and reflection. From this process, the data began to “reduce” and condense into general categories that seemed to describe and summarize the study abroad experience for this population.

3. Recoding, Axial Coding and Participant Profiles

After completing a comprehensive open coding process, axial coding was conducted. Axial coding “relates categories to subcategories, specifies the properties and dimensions of a category, and reassembles the data you have fractured during initial coding to give coherence to the emerging analysis” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 61). This helped to identify relationships among the open codes and classify them into categories that were taken from comments and patterns that began to emerge from the data. As much as the combinations of codes began to synthesize into groups that began to “look alike” and “feel alike” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.347), it was necessary to take a step back and “recode” with the “more attuned” perspective (Saldaña, 2009, p. 10) acquired from working extensively with the data. The consequence was that some of the data needed to be synthesized further, re-classified, or simply set aside.

4. Selective Coding, Categories and Themes

Following the initial coding phases outlined above, I pulled various codes into groups and categories. This categorization and analytic reflection process resulted in three primary themes or thematic categories that rose out of, and were the outcomes of, the data (Saldaña, 2009, p. 13). These themes are the core variables and I utilized the actual words of the participants as the descriptors of the phenomena that represented the core of their experience(s). Once this was completed, I reread all transcripts and coding

tables that had been created during the analytical process and selectively coded the data to the central themes generated. To give voice to the population studied, I used actual words of the participants that captured the essence of the core experiences. The central themes revealed are described in the chapters that follow.

5. Major Themes and the Emergence of Two Pell Student Profiles

After all interviews were completed the compendium of data was carefully analyzed to search for patterns and themes utilizing the coding and analytical approaches detailed above. At this phase of the process, the discourse of the participants was the sole focus of the analysis with minimal attention given to the personal characteristics or self-disclosed identities of who was providing the talk. After the major themes emerged from aggregated data, it became evident that the themes were being presented and described as having been experienced in two distinct ways. This revelation prompted me to compare the codes and themes to the descriptive personal information provided by each participant. I developed tables that outlined the biographical characteristics of each student (e.g., residency status; whether they were first generation college students) and began to see that two distinct Pell Grant student profiles emerged. As will be explained in Chapter Four, one group of students is called Working Class (WC) and the other Capital Accoutered (CA). Further, when I eventually merged the themes revealed by the data to the two groups, I found that differences within the themes were attached to the specific WC or CA student profiles in a distinctive manner, unique from one another. Given that the recursive analytical process resulted in the identification of two distinct groups within the larger set of participants based on some family characteristics and the major themes were

experienced differently by two different types of Pell Grant students, the findings of this study are presented from the perspective of each sub-population.

Trustworthiness

A fundamental objective when proceeding with qualitative design is establishing trustworthiness. In simple terms, this equates to persuading the audience (and self) “that the findings of the inquiry are worth paying attention to, and worth taking into account” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). Creswell recommends that the researcher incorporate at least one or more “validity strategies” in order to assess whether the findings of the study are accurate and convince readers of that accuracy (p. 191, 2009). To ensure a high level of credibility, I have incorporated his strategies throughout the process and have elaborated on them throughout. Specifically, the following steps suggested by Creswell were applied in this study.

Prolonged Engagement in the Field and Clarification of Researcher Bias

Although these strategies are typically separated into two, I feel that it is necessary to combine them due to my professional career in international education. Normally, prolonged time in the field provides the researcher with a deep understanding of the phenomenon and population under investigation. In addition to spending months interviewing the participants of this study, I have spent over 15 years working closely with study abroad programming and have interacted and advised hundreds of students, many with similar characteristics to those identified for this study. Additionally, a significant amount of personal and professional time over the course of the past several years has been dedicated to activities intended to make study abroad more accessible to students underrepresented in study abroad participation. For example, coordinating

programming and information sessions dedicated to promoting the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, which provides awards for U.S. undergraduate students who are receiving Federal Pell Grant funding at a two-year or four-year college or university to participate in study abroad programs worldwide, has brought me into contact with many Pell Grant recipients interested in studying abroad, and when they returned again. In addition, I have served on Gilman national scholarship selection panels on three occasions. Serving as a panelist involves reviewing approximately 70 scholarship applications which include personal statements from each applicant. Due to purposes of confidentiality and lack of permission for usage these essays were not included in this study, but they have provided great insight to other Pell recipients from around the country each time I participated, and helped to inform this study.

Although experience and prolonged involvement provide me, as researcher, with an understanding of the population that someone outside the administration of international education mobility programs conducting the same study would not have, this perceived strength could also be a weakness in the sense that one can be too close to the data and miss important data due to preconceived notions and expectations of what one will find. Therefore, a significant amount of self-reflection and production of analytical memos were generated to make certain any preconceptions were kept in check. My interpretations inevitably are shaped by my background, so at various points I have made comments on how my history may impact the findings of the study.

Debriefing sessions

In addition to numerous consultation sessions with my dissertation advisor, multiple peer debriefing sessions were held with colleagues working in higher education and professionals in the field of international education. These were conducted to secure data interpretations beyond my own and address questions regarding the data, my analysis and codes. This critical review by individuals looking at the study “from the outside” kept my preconceptions in check and ensured that my understanding of the information collected was capturing the essence of lived experience of my participants.

Member Checking

In order to determine the accuracy of my findings, I proceeded to member check my profiles, interpretations, and findings with participants in the study. A strength of interview is that it provides the immediate opportunity to utilize Mayo’s Method, which is the approach and benefit of stopping and summarizing the talk of the interview to ensure that the interviewer has properly interpreted what has been said to the fullest extent possible (in Kvale and Brinkman, 2009, p. 45). Additionally, the three-interview sequence afforded the chance to review and reflect upon the discourse of previous interviews and confirming initial interpretations of the data in subsequent interviews.

Limitations

As there is limited research in international education related to study abroad and the population studied, interview research provided me with the opportunity to get closer to understanding the experience of these students than I would have been able to do with other methods such as a survey or questionnaire. However, all methods have

their strengths and weaknesses and this study is no exception. Therefore, the following limitations of this investigation are acknowledged:

Generalizability

This study was conducted at one university in the northeast region of the United States and utilized a small (n=17) population of convenience. As a result, this study may not be directly generalizable to other institutions and contexts. However, the tacit understanding of qualitative interview research is that the knowledge constructed in the “inter-view” or exchange of views during the interaction of interviewer and interviewee (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009) and the information produced may not be applicable to other environments. Regardless of this reality, I was able to explore the experience of an underrepresented population in study abroad in great depth and detail. Issues such as class, privilege, and accessibility are not limited to any one context and, therefore, the phenomena described in this research may provide valuable insight and understanding that is transferable to other settings, a fundamental aim of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Convenience Sampling

Although closely related to the concern of generalizability, the fact that I proceeded with a sample of convenience may lead to the criticism that the participants are not representative of Pell Grant students because they come from a single institution and self-selected into participating in this study. By the nature of this design, more motivated students may be represented. As an example, Addison noted in her second interview:

It was really creative of you to combine Pell Grants and study abroad to find this type of group of students. Yeah. Because it implies more than just a will to study abroad. It implies a lot of work and ambition.

This “ambitious” group may not be representative of the vast majority of Pell Grant students that do not participate. However, the intention of this study is to explore the experience of those students that *did* study abroad and gather a deep, rich understanding of their experience, even if it is not applicable to all underrepresented students.

Admittedly, after the first few interviews I was questioning the wisdom of this approach as initially the participants interviewed had several similarities such as high GPAs, but as I progressed the opposite concern emerged: I wondered if anyone would believe I had been able to recruit such a dynamic and diverse group with such minimal effort.

Additionally, the convenience sample provided access to a sizable participant population that was similar and would be extremely difficult to access in another context, especially for the three interview series that is the core element of the inductive interview methodology pursued. The rich data and insight that emerged to describe the experience of this population far outweighed the limitation of utilizing a sample of convenience, due to the fact that this was an exploratory study and provides an important foundation for future research. It is important to note that this is a sample that is drawn from a population that comprises a large proportion of U.S. college enrollment – large public institutions. In 2013, 13% of these campuses nationwide enrolled 10,000 or more students, accounting for 59% of total college enrollment (US. Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2013a).

Role and Ability of the Interviewer

I attempted to be faithful to the interview research methodology and was careful to heed the advice of qualitative scholars with many years' experience and expertise by attempting to avoid leading questions, utilizing open ended questions, reflecting on the unequal power dynamic that exists in the interviewer relationship, and other aspects crucial to the paradigm. Regardless, the simple fact remains that if another researcher, friend, or peer were to interview the students to inquire about their study abroad experience, they could construct different knowledge as one cannot expect answers on one occasion to replicate those on another as they will emerge from different contexts (Platt, 2012, p. 22). Because I was willing to share my own personal stories and having accumulated many years of professional experience that other researchers may not have, I believe I bring a unique insight that facilitated a level of comfort, and provided credibility, that was effective when working with this sample population and gaining their confidence to talk freely. For example, several of the students made comments that I was "the perfect person to do this" (Mallory), what I was doing was "really positive" (Mario), or the student seemed pleased to be heard. Jade stated that "... it's nice to know that people actually do care of how the experience was for you" because typically people would only address her experience at the superficial level rather truly delving into her life and what she had gone through and how studying abroad had impacted her personal history. This level of trust was important to being privileged to listen and obtain the best understanding of their experience that I, as researcher, could make possible.

Despite the fact that every aspect of the research interview is not replicable, careful attention was given to establishing an audit trail of how I proceeded and systematically progressed in a manner to build trustworthiness of the data and demonstrate to the extent possible to describe the experience of these participants from which others may benefit and learn. I feel that key to all of this was trying to effectively establish rapport with participants so they would feel comfortable sharing their experience, which is an area that I feel others pursuing similar study should direct substantial energy.

Confidentiality and Protecting the Identity of Participants

All participants for this study were volunteers who were willing to share their stories. As indicated above, all signed consent documents. Many commented that I could ask or share “anything” discussed. Regardless of the level of openness to be identified, direct or implied, all proper names for both people, institutions, and local geographical locations have been given a pseudonym to respect the confidentiality and protect the identity of all interviewees and those who may have been discussed in any manner within the narratives provided. Proper name pseudonyms were selected by using an on-line name generating software application.

CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Introduction

The primary objective of this study is to better understand the study abroad experience of working class students. Therefore, this chapter provides summaries of what the 17 participants described as important life events. Following Seidman's (2006) interview methodology, the first interview is a focused life history of the research participants and provided the opportunity for them to reconstruct what they felt set them on a trajectory to consider and eventually study abroad. This approach is to offer insight into who these individuals are and develop a general profile to help better understand their lived experiences. A number of the participants faced extremely challenging life events that altered their personal situations dramatically, such as the death of a parent during their adolescence, and it would seem likely that these individuals would be contained within the same "class profile." However, although many shared similar experiences, examination of all the data resulted in placing these participants in two distinct groups centered on social class differences. Similarly, the recursive theme development process avoided the trap of confusing the dramatic life experiences with the pervasive (Seidman, 2006) and further supported the finding of two general profiles.

As indicated in Chapter 1, securing access to Working Class (WC) status students was achieved by using Pell Grant recipient status as a means to operationalize this definition. As explained in Chapter 3, during the coding and data analysis stage of this investigation, it became apparent that two broad categories of students began to

emerge from this large population based on the histories and self-expressed identities that were shared. This is not to suggest that all students in each of the smaller groups were the same in all ways, or that there were not personal characteristics or lived experiences that were similar between the two smaller groups, but in general there were marked differences. These variations seemed to provide each group with rather a distinct worldview and perspectives on how their respective members approached study abroad, their experiences with it, and their ways of feeling about their involvement and how it has, and will, impact their lives moving forward. Therefore, the findings are organized and presented in a way that reveals the differences of two Pell Grant subgroups. The first group (9 of the 17) met the criteria of working class by possessing low levels of economic, social, and cultural capital. The second group of students were also Pell recipients, but it became apparent that their profile did not fit that of the first, or WC, group. Although this will be elaborated further below and in Chapter 5 (also on Findings), most of these individuals had met with a reversal of fortune or significant life event that, in many instances, resulted in rather sudden and sustained financial hardship. However, compared to the working class students, students in this group had high levels of social and cultural capital that resulted in different patterns of experience. As explained below, these students are referred to as Capital Accoutered (CA) because they possessed significantly different habiti and important capital that the WC group did not. Not only do these differences lend support of Bourdieu's theoretical framework, but they provide important comparative experiences to the working class students who had a tendency to find their way with "accidental capital" (Jensen, 2012). The profiles of the second group are also presented below. Tables 4.1- 4.4 provide an overview of

demographic and life experience data provided by all individuals interviewed. This information helps frame the profiles and the analysis to follow.

Table 4.1

Personal Characteristics of WC and CA Students

Student	Gender	1st Gen College	1st Gen U.S.	Residency	College Outreach/ Support Program Participant?	Age Range	Gilman Scholarship Recipient?
Working Class							
Sherise	F	1st Gen College	No	In-state	Yes	18-22	No
Mallory	F	1st Gen College	No	Out of state	No (529 Plan)	18-22	No
Alyssa	F	1st Gen College	No	In-state*	No	28-32	Yes
Asia	F	1st Gen College	No	In-state	Yes	18-22	No
Mario	M	1st Gen College	No	In-state	No (waiver)	18-22	No
Rob	M	1st Gen College	No	In-state	Yes	18-22	Yes
Jade	F	1st Gen College	Yes	In-state	Yes	18-22	No
Josh	M	1st Gen College	No	In-state	No	18-22	Yes
Mariana	F	1st Gen College	Yes	In-state	Yes	18-22	No
Capital Accoutered							
Emma	F	No	No	Out of state	No	18-22	No
Nikki	F	No	No	In-state*	Yes	18-22	No
Ethan	M	No	No	In-state	No	18-22	Yes
Miriam	F	No	Yes	In-state*	No	18-22	Yes
Addison	F	No	No	In-state*	No	18-22	No
Eva	F	No	Yes	Out of state	No	18-22	No
Julia	F	No	No	Out of state	No	18-22	No
Larissa	F	No	Yes	Out of state	No	18-22	Yes

*Originally from another state or country.

Table 4.2

Family Context of WC and CA Students

<u>Student</u>	<u>Parent's Marital Status</u>	<u>Father's Career</u>	<u>Mother's Career</u>	<u>Older Sibling Who Studied Abroad?</u>	<u>No. of Siblings</u>
Working Class					
Sherise	Separated	Administration	Administration	n/a	0
Mallory	Married	Mechanic	Hairdresser	Yes (1)	1
Alyssa	Divorced	Machinist	Retail	No	1
Asia	Married	Unemployed	CNA	No	5
Mario	Married	Administration	N/A	No	11
Rob	Divorced	Carpenter	Nursing Home Aide	No	5
Jade	Separated	n/a	n/a	No	2
Josh	Married	Facilities Manager	CNA	No	2
Mariana	Separated	Student	Manufacturing	No	1
Capital Accoutered					
Emma	Married	Teacher	Teacher	Yes (1)	2
Nikki	Divorced	n/a	Nurse	n/a	4
Ethan	Solo Parent	n/a	Social Worker	n/a	0
Miriam	Divorced	Nurse	Dietary Aide	No	1
Addison	Divorced	Retired	n/a	n/a	4
Eva	Divorced	Info Technology	Small Business Owner	Yes (1)	1
Julia	Widow	Deceased	Business woman	n/a	1
Larissa	Widowed	Small Business Owner	Deceased	Yes (2)	2

Table 4.3

Academic and Initial Career Characteristics of WC and CA Students

Student	Major(s)	Minor(s)	Student Status at Time of Interview	Career Status at Time of Interview
Working Class				
Sherise	Sociology		Graduated	Non-Profit Sector Admin
Mallory	Political Science, Public Relations	Marine Affairs	Senior	Student
Alyssa	Anthropology	Int'l Development	Graduated	Graduate Student
Asia	Film	Anthropology, Leadership Studies, Non Violence & Peace Studies	Graduated	Community Service Program Participant
Mario	Kinesiology, Physical Education		Graduated	Seeking Employment
Rob	English, Philosophy		Graduated	ESL Teacher Abroad
Jade	Accounting		Senior	Student
Josh	Marine Biology, Microbiology		Senior	Student
Mariana	Accounting		Senior	Student
Capital Accoutered				
Emma	Film, Writing & Rhetoric		Graduated	Daycare Instructor
Nikki	Human Development & Family Studies		Junior	Student
Ethan	Philosophy	Sociology, Anthropology, Japanese	Graduated	Part-time Teacher
Miriam	Pharmacy, Spanish		Senior	Student
Addison	Biology, Biomedical Engineering	Sociology, Chemistry	Senior	Student
Eva	Fashion		Senior	Student
Julia	Nursing		Graduated	Nurse
Larissa	Education, Fashion, French		Senior	Student

Table 4.4

Study Abroad Destination and Program Duration of WC and CA Students

Student	Study Abroad Destination(s)	Program Duration(s)	Program Type
Working Class			
Sherise	South Korea	Semester	Program Provider
Mallory	Japan	Short-term Summer	Faculty-led
Alyssa	Belize Quebec, Canada India Mexico	Short-term Summer Short-term Summer Semester Short-term Winter	Faculty-led Program Provider Program Provider Faculty-led
Asia	Belize Nepal Belize Mexico	Short-term Summer Spring Break (embedded) Short-term Winter Short-term Winter	Faculty-led Faculty-led Faculty-led Faculty-led
Mario	Tanzania	Short-term Summer	Faculty-led
Rob	England	Semester	Bi-lateral Exchange
Jade	Ghana	Short-term Winter	Faculty-led
Josh	Bermuda	Semester	Program Provider
Mariana	Spain	Semester	Program Provider
Capital Accoutered			
Emma	Belize Cape Verde	Short-term Summer Short-term Summer	Faculty-led Faculty-led
Nikki	Cape Verde	Short-term Summer	Faculty-led
Ethan	Japan	Semester	Bi-lateral Exchange
Miriam	Spain	Short-term Summer	Faculty-led
Addison	China Dominican Rep.	Short-term Summer Short-term Winter	Faculty-led Faculty-led
Eva	Italy	Semester	Program Provider
Julia	Dominican Rep. Dominican Rep.	Short-term Winter Short-term Winter	Faculty-led Faculty-led
Larissa	France	Semester	Program Provider

PELL GROUP 1 -WORKING CLASS STUDY ABROAD ALUMNI
(LOW CAPITAL)

Nine of the Pell research participants fit the profile of working class students and a habitus that would not be construed as predisposing them to consider study abroad as a normal part of the college experience. These biographical summaries attempt to capture what the students decided to share about their lives, identities, and exposure to the idea of study abroad. As all participants self-selected into the study, it became evident that the WC population interviewed was represented by highly motivated and intelligent individuals who were very apt at articulating stories and had a desire to share them for the benefit of others with similar backgrounds. Despite the challenges many faced, it was not surprising to discover such a high achieving group. This can be linked to the idea put forth by Bourdieu in regards to social class background and school performance. His research suggested that a strong correlation between social class background and academic performance at the lower levels of schooling may diminish at higher levels in the educational system because the lower-class students that tend to persist represent a highly select subgroup (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) – even though they “bear the mark of their initial cultural disadvantage” because of their background (Swartz, 1997, p. 201).

Mariana

Mariana was an in-state Accounting major who spent a semester abroad in Spain during her junior year and was preparing to graduate during the time of her interview with a position at a major multinational professional services firm already in place following her graduation. Academically focused and highly involved in campus

activities and organizations, she wanted to be sure she took of advantage of the opportunities the university provided, noting that she was “very, very excited to – just like crack the bones and suck it for all it was worth” and excitedly announcing “I wanted to be sure I did *everything*.” Relating her personal history, she described herself as “100% lucky” and considering the personal challenges she faced, commented that “You wouldn’t think a story like this would ever make it abroad.”

Identifying herself as Hispanic, Colombian, Colombian-American, Mariana was, like her only sibling, a high achieving first generation college student and U.S. citizen. Neither of her parents completed postsecondary education and were living in the U.S. as undocumented immigrants prior to the birth of their children, after overstaying their visas in an attempt to pursue the greater opportunity they perceived America could provide. Eventually her mother gained citizenship, but the plight of her father led to a “tough family situation.” She shared that from the time she was in preschool until well into high school her father was incarcerated. Upon his release, he was deported back to his country of origin. She added that only a very few close friends are aware of this aspect of her life and that she shortens the story by saying he was deported when she was three: “(It’s not to say I’m ashamed of it, it’s just something I don’t share because I think people are judgmental.” She explains that her parents were vulnerable as undocumented immigrants who could not speak the language, defend themselves, or afford an attorney to fight her father’s charges because they worked minimum wage jobs. Furthermore, she expounded, until this day she would probably say her father is innocent of the charges that sent him to prison. Regardless of his culpability, the details recounted seem to indicate that he was on the harsh, losing end of the “tough on crime”

policies of the time. Having a fuller understanding of the situation that comes with age and education, Mariana believes that: “If we had \$15,000 for a lawyer, my dad probably would have been in jail for one year.” Instead, the years that followed were significantly different:

We lived in [this state] because that’s where the rent was the cheapest and he was in federal prison in [the neighboring state] so my childhood was two times a month we would go on Saturdays like, um, yeah, so we had family in Queens so we would leave school on Fridays and my mom would get out of work like five and then we would go get the oil changed and then she would drive always to Queens and then wake up at 3 o’clock in the morning on a Saturday morning to drive to a federal prison and to stay there the whole day. It was really cool cause...I guess it wasn’t that cool. They actually... when I was little they told me he was in college. I was like why isn’t he coming home with us? It wasn’t until I was like, I found out when I was like 7 or 8. (My brother) like, knew because he like, read “federal prison” once (on the sign) and (he) put two and two together. I was never like, that fast, so, so yeah my mom decided to stay with him and he would call every single night at 8 o’clock at night. Like, if I wanted to go over a friend’s house at night I would have to wait for dad to call. I’d have to wait for dad to call and then ask him like, “Can I sleep over,” Can I...My mom always made sure he was part of our lives like, she always made sure that he, um, had a say like, so I grew up respecting my father as if he like, had raised me because you know he did raise me and he was present. I mean it was a phone call every night.

Mariana explained that her mother has “street smarts” and described her as the “strongest and greatest person” she knows who “completely dedicated her life to her two children.” Essentially proceeding as a single parent, she worked low wage manufacturing jobs to support the family, refusing food stamps and public housing assistance, which she “did not want any part of” because of “dignity and pride.” Living in the inner city, the three of them shared a small two-bedroom apartment that she and her mother dreamed of leaving. She described it as not as nice as her university dorm and that many of the students, primarily “out of stater’s” who live in off-campus

apartments during the academic year, pay more for their temporary college accommodation than they do for the apartment they have called home:

...they pay \$600, \$700 dollars a month and I don't even pay that at home, and they live in these beautiful houses. And, I like, so [it's] almost surreal to me to be surrounded by these types of people. I didn't think I understood that we were lower middle class because I consider ourselves like lower middle class or higher lower class, if that makes sense. And that never really hit me until I came to college and got to see like, the comparison.

In regards to previous education Mariana explained that unfortunately she did not receive the “utmost high school education” as the institution she attended has a reputation of being an underperforming school with a high dropout rate. At State University (SU) she felt that she had a huge disadvantage because she did not obtain the education that the person right next to her in her classes did. She added that she did not want that for her future children and she wanted “to be in a good school district to make sure that they're getting top notch.” Speaking only Spanish at home, and not learning English until Kindergarten, a combination of school enrichment programs targeting “disadvantaged” students with academic promise, and high parental expectations guided her to a path of academic success. Her father always demanded good grades and her mother always reiterated that she and her sibling were “destined for greatness.” Commenting on her mother's mantra, she explains that she heard it so much that she began to believe it. Asked whether her mother's parenting approach made a difference she stated:

Oh yeah, 100%. I think cause I have friends who also like, their parents are almost the same situation as me, Spanish families. Same culture like, I want to say generally. Latino culture is very similar um, and their parents adored their children but worked all the time, didn't have many convers[at]ions. Their idea of raising a family was to make sure they're providing for them, that the kids have food on the table, and you know, that, so that meant working 24/7. My mom also worked very hard but it was, she was very um, conscious of the fact that she

needed to talk to us and that she wasn't our friend; she was our mother. And there were strict rules for things we had, the values that were instilled. She was just very good in knowing how to raise us where she knew yeah she had to provide and put food on the table but she needed to talk to us and the way to raise us was to talk to us and to be strict; be a mother. Where I don't think all my friends got that um, I think, yeah absolutely 100%. The way my mother raised us was what has helped to shape me to be as successful as I've been, you know, so far.

Her older brother, who she referred to as being "very smart," also served as a role model for success. Whereas he was identified for his abilities and was enrolled in honors and advanced placement classes, Mariana would need to ask to be enrolled in the same, so she could be like him. Due to his ability he eventually was admitted to a local Ivy League school. She admitted that she "didn't really understand what 'ivy' meant" because she did not understand that one institution was more prestigious than another.

When applying to college she limited her choices to colleges that were geographically close, so she could be close to her mother. She received an offer of admission to her first choice, a private college renowned for its business programs, but declined due to the lack of financial resources. At the same time she was admitted to the College Success Program (CSP) at SU which, provides individuals from "disadvantaged backgrounds" with student services and scholarship funding aimed at supporting degree completion. Given her personal situation, this opportunity was the most practical and too good to pass up.

Academically successful at SU, Mariana also become very involved in multiple clubs and organizations and took on many leadership positions: she worked as a Resident Assistant, and she interned each summer for the company that has offered her employment upon graduation. In addition to her family, she also credits her advisor

and mentor, Professor Surrey who took notice of her motivation and potential and served as her mentor to keep her “on track” by continuously providing guidance and also setting high expectations throughout her four years.

Growing up Mariana had been involved with some domestic travel and made occasional trips to Colombia to spend portions of summer with family, as her mother did not want her children to lose their Spanish or cultural heritage – an identity Mariana rejected with shame as a teen, but now embraces with pride. These visits were viewed as important time with family and not vacations, in the traditional sense, for leisure. Adding that she thought people automatically associate travel with money, for them it signaled setting priorities when resources were limited – time with loved ones versus a larger apartment or more costly automobile. She learned of study abroad in high school from friends who participated in programs for secondary education students and from a family friend who had studied abroad. However, she knew at that time (high school) that her family simply did not have the means to send her to China or London. Elaborating further, she acknowledged that: “[Study abroad] had been on my radar since I was in high school and me and my mom talked about it, and I was like, I have to, I have to do it.”

Alyssa

Alyssa was an in-state student who transplanted from the southern region of the country, where she lived her entire life, until approximately five years prior when she was in her late twenties. An Anthropology major and International Development minor, during her junior year she studied abroad on two short-term programs (Belize; Quebec, Canada) and followed with a semester-long program in India during her senior year. At

the time of the interview she was finishing the first year of her graduate program at SU and had just completed an intersession program in Mexico. A first generation student who had always been a commuter, she had started her postsecondary education in the community college system in her state of origin. Having settled in her “new” state, she attended SU because it always “bugged” her that she did not earn her degree.

Alyssa’s mother had always worked in retail and her father was a machinist. She explained that she grew up in a mobile home, and despite the fact that the family was not in poverty, her parents never had money. Other than occasional visits to family out of state, she did not travel much but did interact and develop friendships with individuals from around the globe while being employed as a tech support representative for a company with customers worldwide. When her parents divorced, she moved with her mother into a “nice house” with her stepfather who she described as middle class and an individual who “just made us more worldly” as he had grown up in a major U.S. city, was a first generation citizen, and had traveled.

Alyssa explained that she went to high school in a good school district adding, “those people [in the district] had money” and that it was not uncommon for peer students to receive brand new Camaros and Mustangs as their first car when they turned 16. Noting that she was not as good a student as she could have been because she spent more time with friends and working (“Four months after I turned 16 I got a car and I went to work”), she was in Honors and Advanced Placement classes until she decided to graduate a year early since she had fulfilled her academic requirements and “did not fit” in the high school environment:

Like I had friends that were in Honors classes with me, but predominantly it was the people that, you know, like, you just knew they were better off. And I think

that maybe—and I have prejudice against it – but it’s like, “If I want to go somewhere, I have to go to work.” Whereas, like, some of them didn’t. Like they were handed things. And it makes it easier to do a lot of things when you, you don’t have these other things going on. Or you have your parents way more involved in the, “You’re going to do this.” Like, “You’re going to play football” or, “You’re going to do well,” or “You’re going to be in Honors.” And it’s like, my parents were there, but they let us kind of do what we wanted to do. Like, they were, they didn’t push us to be in in Honors classes like, we were in Honors classes because we chose to be. Like, even though I went to a, I went to a good school, and I was in, I was in advanced classes, nobody really talked to me about like, “You go to college after high school.” I don’t know how I made it through high school without like really having a counselor. Like, I went, I remember sitting in my counselor’s office and being like, “I want to graduate early.” And they’re like “OK, this is what you do.”

Finishing high school a year early, Alyssa took a semester off before starting at a local community college:

It was one of those things like, the rich kids like, they fill out the college applications and they go to the big universities and like, I’m going to go to community college because that’s what I’ll be able to afford. And like, that’s just the thing that made sense to me. It, it was my worldview.

Although Alyssa completed a few semesters at community college and a semester at one of the state universities, her progress toward a degree ended as work commitments increasingly took precedence. Eventually, after working several years, she decided to move to a new region of the country because she just wanted to go somewhere new:

I was really tired of [that state] like, I always just kind of never felt like I fit there. It’s like, I was always there, but I never really felt like it was, it kept pace with the way I wanted to live my life...When I was younger and...had girlfriends...and in [that part of the country] having a girlfriend is – yeah – like, you get stared down in, just in public, it’s like, “Oh” whereas, like, even just in [the northeast] like, that’s, it’s just part of like, “Oh, whatever.”

Knowing she could work for the same company and that the new metropolitan area had an extreme sports team – her hobby – similar to the one in her home state, she knew she

would have an income and potential social network to make new friends, so she made the move.

Returning to college as a “more mature student,” Alyssa devoted a lot of time and energy to her studies and the learning experience versus just trying to get a degree and moving on. She was now more concerned with figuring out what she wanted to do with her life and gave precedence to being happy with what she was doing. Comparing herself to the much younger students in her classes she added that she noticed a big difference in academic commitment because she was here because “I want to be in college” and “not because somebody told you to be here.” Always having an interest in other cultures and reading about them, her level of maturity and sense of purpose at this stage of her life changed study abroad from something she had never considered to a possibility. The new social networks exposed her to friends who had traveled, including another “older” student who served as a critical role model. She explained these influences and how they would precipitate participation in her first program:

...the biggest one would probably be Lisa like, as far as getting me here because she was an older student already here and she had already started dealing with [the study abroad] office. And jumping through like, “How do I get the department to give me money to do this?” And “What if I want to do that?” Like, figure, she had already started figuring it out and she was, she was a year ahead of me in the like, in the game...[She] was really the first person that I had talked to about like, “Oh, I could actually like go study and do this.”...I never would’ve learned about it. I never would’ve...known that [the Belize program] even existed.

Participation in the initial short-term program led to involvement in additional study abroad opportunities, time out to attend a study abroad fair that resulted in adding a minor in International Development, and engaging in international-related activities

that she previously had not considered or had overlooked. Alyssa explained that in the past, “As a commuter student I walk[ed] by that stuff.”

Sherise

Sherise was an in-state Sociology major who studied abroad in South Korea. As a “super senior,” she decided to incorporate a semester overseas into her fifth year of study at State University. At the time of the interview, she had completed her degree and was contemplating graduate work. She self-identified as an African American student and was a first generation student; her parents, now separated, had attempted college when they were younger but never finished. At the time of the interview her father, who had been in the military when he was younger and who she described as “very smart,” was pursuing a degree. Both parents had primarily held administrative positions in the private sector.

Sherise described having nurturing relationships with both of her parents, but described an especially close relationship with her mother while growing up:

I’m her only child, so it’s just like we were – like when it comes to certain issues or goals like, we’re together on it. Even if we butt heads, we’re still together like... Once we figure out what we’re actually doing, we’ll – we’ll do it.

This relationship and status as an only child resulted in a high level of attention in the form of parental support and encouragement in being actively involved in activities in and out of the academic environment:

Like, yeah. I was an only child, so somehow they gave – yeah, somehow to get me out of the house and like, play with kids, I did karate. I did softball. I did um, I stuck with dance, but like, I did – I did other stuff. It was intense. My dad used to say that all the time. He’s like, “I don't know how you function.”

Maintaining an active schedule continued throughout high school where Sherise incorporated dance into her schedule after a day of academics, student organizations,

and school athletics, such as track or tennis that kept her busy late into most evenings. Although her school was considered an “underperforming” high school by the state’s educational authorities, she simply stated that she “didn’t go to a rich school” and that it was a “normal public school” that was “just trying to get, to get kids into college.” She was one of those who maximized the opportunities offered and opted to pursue college. Her parents influenced this decision:

I think it was like, parents always want their kids to go to college, so it wasn’t like, “You have to go to college” or like, there wasn’t an ultimatum to it. It was, it was my choice, but they always pushed me towards college. It was pushed – it was, it was like, “Are you going?” “What are you doing if you’re not?” They asked me the question, “What are you doing?” “If you don’t go to college, what are you doing?” I had, I had no answer and I was like, “You know what?” “College is probably the best thing for me.”

Sherise was not sure if she wanted to attend SU but completed the admissions application because it was free for her. She really wanted to “go far away” and “get out of here.” However, the reality that she did not have much money was a major obstacle that grounded her decisions. Her guidance counselor started advising her to consider SU because they had the College Success Program, into which she was ultimately admitted. Asked if the CSP offer led her to choose SU she responded:

Um, honestly yes, because the in-state tuition was cheaper and my mom was kind of like, pep talking me about like, you know loans like, “You’re paying for this, I can only help you so much.” “You’re going to have to pay it back.” I got accepted to other schools but, ultimately, the College Success Program was helping me way more than any other school was...I got accepted to two other colleges, at the time, but like compared to –comparing tuition, I was like, SU is like cheaper. And it’s in-state [tuition], on top of my College Success Program financial assistance. And I was like, I really don’t want to be in that much debt.

Sherise's entry into college also coincided with a disconcerting turn of events when her mother lost her job and house. Financial necessity resulted in her mother's decision to move to Florida to live with her own mother:

Like, [the company] downsized. And then my mom got laid off. So then, just to like, be able to survive and like, gather herself, she, she looked, she went back with living with my [Grandma]. So that happened. Well, yeah, because my mom, my mom was helping me. Freshman year, my mom was helping me pay for school. So I didn't have as much loans, and as soon as that happened, I was like, not – like, I wasn't getting as much financial help and not that I knew that was going to happen. So, it was like more on my shoulders. Um, my mom and my grandma are living together now [down south], so it's just like, and I was like kind of on my own up here. My dad's up here, but it was just like, I lived at school, so I felt more Sherise [is here] and the family was here.

Despite the disruptions, Sherise proceeded to be actively involved in college by joining multiple student organizations and utilizing her talent in dance to join SU's cheerleading squad. Selecting a major, however, posed a challenge since she did not know what degree she wanted to pursue. When she eventually decided, she was "just kind of scrambling" to finish her degree requirements and ultimately learned that she would not be able to graduate in four years. She explains: "I did find out I had to do an extra year, so in my fifth year, is when I studied abroad."

Sherise points to her curiosity about Korea leading to her interest in study abroad. She already had an appreciation for the culture and watched Korean TV shows on her own before she even wanted to go study abroad. She attributes her interest to popular culture influences and an initial attraction to Japanese anime that had waned and resurfaced as an interest in Korean pop music (K-pop) and Korean television dramas (Kdrama) that she "discovered" while Googling. Her affinity for Kdrama's evolved into an "addiction" that she attributed to being primarily responsible for her fascination with Korea and principal influence for selecting the country as her study

abroad destination. However, she did not seriously pursue going abroad until late in her college career:

[F]reshman year, people would talk about [study abroad]. I saw like booths about it, or I knew somebody, um, who went, or they were here one semester and gone another...and then there was a point when it was just like, "There's no way you're going to [graduate] in four years." "You're going to have stay a semester or even a year." And I was like, "You know what?" "I always wanted to study abroad, let me start looking into this now." So, uh, I don't know. It just looked like the best opportunity. Like, my chance. Like, I can actually go abroad at this point and, um, have money – like money [from financial aid] to help me with it instead of me coming up with it all on my own...so like researching, I actually had a friend who went with me [to the study abroad office] because he wanted to go to Italy. So, we were kind of doing research together, but he found out he couldn't do it credit-wise [because he transferred from a community college already]. So, in the end, I ended up going by myself.

Prior to studying abroad, her experience traveling out of her home state had primarily been limited to visiting family that lived along the eastern coast of the U.S. With her mother's departure she felt a sense of empowerment in the fact that she was already on her own and starting her independent life, so felt she could also be self-sufficient in Korea. This sense of independence, combined with the fact that she would require a fifth year to graduate, and learning that she would have access to CSP financial aid to fund her program were significant motivators:

[G]oing to the study abroad office, I found out that the funding that I get normally can still apply to me, for my studying abroad. And I was like, I think – it either ended up being the same or right under what I usually pay, and I was like "That's amazing!" I can be in a whole different environment next semester and barely like, I hurt my pockets more than I would have if I was here, pretty much.

Her parents were hesitant to support the idea, but initial resistance turned to support:

My mom was like, my mom was freaking out! Once again, only child, so she was freaking like, "What do you mean you're going to Korea?" "That's like halfway around the world." "For how long?"...And my mom was just like, she

was happy and she was scared at the same time, but she was right there helping me fill out paperwork, saying “Did you, do we have to go get your passport picture yet?” “Your visa came in the mail.” “I looked up plane tickets, they went up today, we’ll try again tomorrow.” Yeah. My dad, he was excited. My dad is, I don’t know, a protective dad...It was funny because we were having a conversation recently and he was like, “I freaked out when you told me you were actually going to Korea like, and it was official.” He was like, “A little part of me was just like ‘oh’ like it’s for real!” ...I mean, I don’t really know how to define the support, but like my family was just so excited. Like, my grandma called me and was like, “You’re going to – you’re going, I’m so proud of you baby” kind of thing. And I was just like, it kind of warmed my heart because I was like, I made my grandma proud kind of thing. Yeah.

Rob

Rob was an in-state resident who was an English and Philosophy double major. Although initially pursuing a year abroad, he spent a semester in England during his junior year. At the time of the interviews he had graduated and was preparing to teach English overseas for a year before pursuing graduate work. In regards to siblings, he explained that of his “[Biological] father’s children, I am the fifth, the youngest of five, and of my mother’s, I’m the third youngest out of four.” His father and step-father were both carpenters and his mother, an aide in a retirement home, had recently entered the workforce. He identified as lower class and as a first generation college student, the only child out of his siblings to attend college, let alone finish. An academically talented student, by default Rob’s circumstances have required a great deal of self-sufficiency since he entered the foster care system about the same time as he started high school. An independent individual, he navigated the subsequent years, and college life, with his intellect and figuring things out as he went along. For example, when describing how he learned to apply to college, finance his education, and navigate the FAFSA process without the family support most students would rely upon he noted:

Google. Like, that's literally like, well, I didn't know everything I was supposed to do. Like they [Children and Family Services] didn't [help]. I did have life skills [class], and that only lightly touched on everything. So I just kind of Googled everything.

When he started at State University Rob realized that he “was inhibited a lot” by his hometown and state:

[W]here I lived it was largely middle class to lower class white kids and almost – that was all. I had very little interactions with even other religions. I had never met a Jewish person until I was in college. There wasn't – LGBT wasn't that big in high school. I really wanted to expand my horizons, you know, and the best thing to do would be to get out of America.

Growing up, he had only experienced a very limited amount of domestic travel and had remained close to home until his study abroad experience: “I can't remember like, the last time I went on a vacation – even just like an amusement park was several years ago.” As his self-described class status was “lower class” he elaborated further on what this meant and how the lack of resources also restricted his extracurricular involvement as a youth:

Um, I felt like it meant that I had less inherent advantages like, I didn't, I – I wouldn't have been able to afford like, many extracurricular activities anyways, because my high school didn't like, supply things for it. Like, you still had to like, dish out a decent amount of money towards anything you want to participate in. And I know that kept me out of a lot of things like in my youth. Because like, we had started Boys Scouts and stuff like that, but then it became an issue where my father well, my stepfather, had to work all the time. So, like, I couldn't even get involved in stuff like that. It just hampered a lot of things between, just time, and not having like, the money to afford things. And like, I probably, I know a lot of people who, took, SAT training courses in high school. And obviously I couldn't afford anything like that. So, I went without that. You know? And like, just, I don't know. Just like, a lot of basic stuff that probably would have been helpful.

Due to precarious circumstances at home he was in a group home for several months as he entered the foster care system for the duration of his high school years.

While in high school Rob was in the Honors program and took Advanced Placement classes. Despite this achievement, he downplayed this point by suggesting that this academic track did not necessarily equate to a quality program. He explained that he “did not want to be too harsh,” but mostly his high school was “pretty mediocre” and the program “was a lot more hopeful” than anything else. His sentiments are derived from his perception that, except for the “better off kids” who went on to private schools out of state, a lot of the kids who were in the honors program at most went to the local community college, with most that he knew dropping out. Although he stated that high school was “not hard” and that one could finish “if they did the bare minimum,” he admitted to being “kind of a bum” in regards to applying himself in order to secure a better future through higher education due to his sentiments at the time: “Well, I’m not going to be able to afford anything anyways.”

Although he wished he could have left the state, Rob decided to attend SU as it appeared to be the only option. Since he was part of the foster care system, the Children and Family Services (CFS) offered some funding for college:

I didn’t study for the SATs at all. But fortunately I just happened to get like, a really good score. And when I found out I got higher than all my friends who were doing it for, like, the second and third time I was like, “Oh, well. I guess, I guess I’m okay then.” ... I didn't have any interaction with anyone regarding college....The only thing I went to my advisor for was to get the waiver for the State University application. And that was the only thing. There was a common app, but I only applied to SU. So, I just gave what was requested by SU... I didn't tell my step-father for a month after I got accepted to SU. Like, it was very low-key. I didn't even tell him I applied to SU. Like, they [guardians] were not on my case about anything....It was funny because I was always called like their [CFS's] model person because I was one of the first people to like, go to the, like, to go to college from that group of kids at the time. I was never on like good terms [with them] because they always like, to try and take credit for my established – like, for like, what I did. Like, they were like, “Oh, look! We got him into college.” And I was like, “You didn't help at all!”

Rob recounted that when he started SU he met a much greater variety of people than he had encountered in the past and it made him want to meet more types of people. He admits that he “kind of felt like ignorant at first,” and that compared to many other students, he felt at a disadvantage since he had “very little under [the] belt in terms of experiences.” He added “I just wanted to fill in the gaps I didn’t really know were there until I was at college.”

Rob had an interest in travel and, in particular, an interest in England from the books he had read, and the fact this country was the setting for two of his favorite book series. He did not know much about study abroad until high school: “It was something that I ended up hearing about, but I didn’t understand that much.” That changed when one of his friend’s older siblings had gone to study in China, and Rob started to question where he wanted to go. He decided on England even though he was not sure if it was a realistic goal, given his circumstances, but became determined to do it “at all costs:”

So it was like, I kind of just had known about it long in advance. It kind of came along and like, “Okay. Now I go and do this,” like anything else I would have done. It’s one of those things I’ve always like, “Oh, it’s going to happen.” And, like, by the time it finally did happen I was completely unprepared for it... I had gotten a job at Star-Mart, which sucked so much, but I was like, “I’m going to keep going because I need money for England.” And I got the Gilman scholarship. I didn’t think I was going to get it. And it was awesome and then I never went back to Star-Mart. I quit later that day because I hated Star-Mart so much. It was so demeaning to me, but I was like, “I’m going to go there at any cost, even if I hate this job more than anything.”

Asia

Asia was an in-state student and double major in Anthropology and Film, with minors in Leadership and Peace Studies. She was interviewed several months after her

graduation and had just started a year of community service in the large metropolitan area where she grew up. Given the fact that she could only recall traveling out of state twice to neighboring states in order visit family, it was quite an accomplishment that she completed four short-term study abroad programs: in Belize (2), Nepal, and Mexico during her undergraduate career. Her participation supports her assertion that she was determined to take advantage of what the university had to offer because this was the one time she felt she would “have all these opportunities.” She summarized her perspective by stating: “I realized a long time ago that I was going to have to be kind of in charge of myself. Like I wasn’t going to wait around for an anything to fall into my lap.”

Asia identifies herself as African American and comes from a large family – she was the fifth child of eight. Her father did not complete high school and was described as unemployed at the time of the interview; her mother earned a GED and was a Certified Nurse Assistant. She and her sister were the first in her family to attend and then to earn college degrees. She explained that she attended an “average” high school where she said less than half of the students who start actually graduate and that it was the norm for “a lot of kids to fall through the cracks.” She also expressed displeasure with the fact that the institution also lacked a lot of extracurricular opportunities. In middle school she had become involved with College Promise, a college-readiness and scholarship program for students in low-income urban school districts that she referred to as “College 101.” This experience made college seem like “the next thing” and goal to achieve after high school:

To me, high school, it was kind of a, kind of a joke. Like we, we knew that we were like, an under-performing school. The teachers knew. Everybody in the

school knew. And like the kids in – wanted to get, uh, like just graduate high school. We knew what we had to do. It was kind of just like, “This isn’t easy, but I know I’m going to do it, because I know I need to get the grades, because I want to go to college.” Like that was kind of just – we came to class. We helped each other and anyone who was not about, like doing work, we just kind of – they stayed in the back of the class, and everyone else kind of worked in the front of class. And the teachers were totally okay with that...State University was the time where I was like, I got, I know a lot of people. “This is fun.” Like, “I like school.” And high school was just like, “How do I get out of here so I can go to college?”

Asia thinks her parents were just happy that she and her siblings “made it out of high school” because they never completed it themselves. She feels they did not understand her educational experiences and did not know how to advise her:

Since I was in high school, I was kind of in charge of like my education. Like, my parents don’t really know what I’m doing, I’ve got to explain... No one like told me to stay after school and study. I went out of my way to go to the library and like, do what I had to do. I never got pressure from my parents to get the grades or – not that they didn’t care, but they never asked about it... Nobody was like, I didn’t get pressure at home to get [A grades]. But I also wasn’t like rewarded if I got an A and like, I did it for myself mainly. Uh, same thing when I was in college like, I would go home and my parents like, never asked me about my grades or anything. They were like, “As long as you’re happy and you’re safe.” “You have something to eat?” And I was like, “Yeah.” And they were like, “Alright, so you’re good?” ... But anything that I report back, so it’s just like well, “That’s great!” like, “Keep it up!”

Admittedly lacking direction Asia applied to colleges in a neighboring state with a primary focus on trying to “get out.” In the end, she stayed in-state and attended State University because she was admitted into the College Success Program. The CSP academic and financial support made the decision easy. Unsure what major to pursue, she initially considered International Business because business was something that she knew, but soon realized during freshman orientation that the major was not for her because she said it “seemed to be very impersonal.” She also recognized that

potentially the major would lead to a career where she “wasn’t going to be dealing with people hands on”:

So, I found anthropology and I found out what it was and what I wanted....Um, so basically, I came to [SU] freshman orientation, and they told us to choose a major because we’re going to fill schedules, and I had no idea what I wanted to do. . . . I told this to my advisor, and, uh, she was like, “That’s totally fine.” “You can take an anthropology class.” “Like, that sounds like what you’re, what you kind of described to me.” And I was like, “I have no idea what that is.” Um, but I signed up for the class, Anthropology 101, and I walked into the class.... [The professor] knew everything about the subject and he just made us love it, so I was like this is where I fit in.

Just as she did not know that her interest in cultures, people, and travel related to Anthropology before her advisor helped her discover that it was Anthropology, the same curiosity led her to consider study abroad:

I always knew, um, since probably I was like 11 that I wanted to travel. Like, I didn’t think I would. Like, study abroad wasn’t like, a word that I knew, but I knew I wanted to travel, um, and then as I got older, I started watching PBS and National Geographic and all of this, and I think “I want to do that.” “I don’t know what it’s called, but that’s really cool.”

When she came to State University, these interests and the desire “to do everything” led to being “super involved” with clubs and student organizations. She also became one of two first-year students to be hired as an orientation leader for the subsequent freshman class. This is where she learned of more possibilities for students. One of the possibilities was studying abroad.

Josh

Josh was an in-state student who was a double-major in Marine Biology and Cell & Molecular Biology who studied abroad at a research station in Bermuda for a semester during his junior year. At the time of the interview, he was finishing his degrees and was in the process of applying to graduate school. The oldest of three sons,

he was a first generation college student. Josh's father had been employed as repairman for a large retail store for many years, but was now a facilities manager at an assisted-living facility. His mother had recently returned to the workforce as a Certified Nurse Assistant. She started college but she stopped attending when she became pregnant with Josh. He readily admits that she provided a lot of support and played a significant role in encouraging him to participate in academically and socially enriching activities as he grew up and progressed through college:

I feel like I value the knowledge more than the grades. I should study a lot more than I'd like. I can get by without like trying. Like, I don't – no, I've never stressed out because of school. Um, but that's, you know, it also is reflected in my grades. Um, but I would rather be getting a "B" in chemistry without trying than getting an "A" and crying every night about it like some of my friends do. Yeah, I mean, both my, my, dad's like, whatever, and so like my mother was like, I mean she gets on my butt about everything and like, classic me is finishing something at the last second. Um, but um, but it's good to have her, you know, prodding me along the whole time.

Josh emphasizes that his parents "had him young" and purposely moved, to what he referred to as, "one of the more expensive towns" in the state before he was two:

I'm from [Harriston] High School, so I had that like, kind of lucky, because [Harriston's] like a, it's like, got a really good school system. But it's expensive to live there, so we have a small house.... The reason that they moved to [Harriston] because [my parents] were like, it has a really good school system and it would be really good for the kids.

Josh explained that of all the brothers, he is "probably going to go the farthest" in the family as both of his younger brothers have special needs that would preclude them from attending a university or pursuing graduate school. Additionally, the medical support required for his siblings has created financial challenges for the family.

Discussing his pending graduation he described the situation:

[I am] graduating with like \$30,000 in debt and it's all mine. Like, my parents, there was no like, college, like, fund. Like, they like, they tried, but it was just not like an option. Um, because like, for a really long time like, with a family of five in the town I live in and like, my dad – my mother just started working in the past like year – and my dad made like about like \$50,000. So like, you know, we weren't like dirt poor, but we definitely were not loaded. Um, and especially with like the stuff that you know my, the health insurance, basically with both my younger brothers. Because my youngest brother takes a butt-load of meds, because he's, he's bipolar, autistic, like, OCD, ADHD. He's got a huge slew of stuff... my youngest brother is mentally ill to the point where like, he will be fine as long as he lives in like a group home or something.

During high school Josh was actively involved in extracurricular activities and participated in band, sports teams such as cross country and baseball, and student clubs. Outside of school he achieved the rank of Eagle Scout in Boy Scouts. He indicates that he earned about a 3.0 in high school and completed several Advanced Placement classes. The AP biology class is where he learned that he really thrived in marine biology, microbiology, and related sciences. This interest and learning of the study abroad program in Bermuda at SU worked in his favor:

Josh: And then I was like, I want to go to SU because I can study marine biology there; it's got a really good program.

Interviewer: [T]he Bermuda program in particular, you had heard about it and that sort of “sealed the deal” for coming to SU, or?

Josh: I mean... It was a huge. I don't, the thing is, I don't know where else I could have gone... so like my mother knew like people who had had like sons and daughters go [to Bermuda] and like, stuff. Um, and you know, it's like a big thing for Marine Bio to do that. So, I had heard about that and [SU] was also really the only place I could afford. Um, I had to be in-state, more or less. So, um, I was like, it was, it was good that it worked out like that.

When completing the “common app” for college Josh indicated that he simply “made it out to SU” as he did not explore other options. Having benefitted from the

“good school system,” once it was time for college, he found he was not on equal footing as many of his friends who were leaving the state to attend college:

Yeah, I – a lot of my friends went to Ivy Leagues, because whatever. And I was like, going to SU and everyone was like, “Oh.” Like, at [Harriston], it’s like, “Oh, SU, you’re going there?” Or like, you know? They’re, I mean, I don’t know. I was like, it’s fine. But you know like, all, literally all, my friends like, went there, like, Georgetown, um, my friends went to Yale. It was like, I was like, “OK,” but whatever.

At SU, as in high school, Josh did well academically and became involved, albeit at a more limited level, in student clubs and intramural sports. He also became a Resident Assistant in the dormitories “out of necessity” to help finance his education. Working towards participating in the Bermuda program by earning solid grades became his goal for his first and second years at SU.

Josh did not travel extensively growing up, but had some experience outside of his home state. Some travel included visits to relatives and parental acquaintances in neighboring states. He indicates that his family did not have a lot of extra money to travel. However, his whole family was able to visit Disney World when he was a child because a non-profit organization, Making Dreams Happen Foundation, offered them a free trip due to the health situation related to his youngest brother. Attending an outstanding high school also provided an opportunity for international travel that would not be available in most school districts:

Like, I went to Ireland my freshman year with the band and that was cool and my mother was like, “I’m so glad that you got to go to Europe so young, blah, blah, blah.” “I want you to see all the great places.” And I was like, “Thanks, mom.” And so like, I don’t know. I mean like, I feel like everybody want[s] like, probably is interested in traveling because like, well, who doesn’t want to see the world?It was pretty funny because like, there were like some parents that were like. OK, like, I understand safety for your kid and stuff, but like you have to cut the umbilical cord. And holy crap, some of these parents were like

ridiculous. They were like, they were like asking all these like, super overprotective questions. I was just like, I wanted to, I wanted to slap a lot of them. It's not like [my parents] are like cold and callous and don't care; it's just they like, understand I'm responsible and independent. And they're like, "You can drink, don't be an idiot." "Don't get hit by a car." Because you know, opposite sides of the road.

Learning about the study abroad program, Josh's mother provided support and encouragement despite the fact it was going to be a "huge financial dig:"

My mom was like, "Yo, this is cool!" Like, you know, "You should try to do that." Like, and it was always like, you know, like, Bermuda! Bermuda! It was like, the pipe dream like they – um, and it like, you know, started to become a reality, um, like sophomore year because like, there were the meetings that I had to attend and stuff and learn about it, the info sessions. Um, and one of my friends, um, so I-I was on, again Frisbee team and we, you know, so I met him my freshman year. Um, and he was a year above me. It was just encouraging to hear that it had been such, a lot like, so much fun. And I had seen like, pictures and stuff and I was like, "I'm going to do this." "This is exciting." But like, if they hadn't been there, I would have still gone. It was just like, encouraging to see that somebody else had a positive experience.

With the support of family and endorsement of friends, Josh was interested in studying abroad. The fact that the curriculum was designed for his major was essential as well. If there had been any "issue" with the credit or a delay in graduation, he notes that he would have aborted all plans as he could not simply take a "nice trip off" for the semester and "just be doing it for funsies." Such a proposition would not be an option.

Jade

Jade was an Accounting major who participated in a short-term winter-session in Ghana during her junior year. A first-generation American and college student, she explained that her parents emigrated from Haiti and so the influence of the Haitian culture, as exemplified by her proficiency in Creole, is significant. She is "only with her mom now" and her maternal grandmother, who came to live in the U.S. within the last

year. She also has a brother and sister close in age but for the most part indicates that her family in this country is “really small” with her mother remaining in regular contact with her close family members back in Haiti. An in-state student, Jade grew up in the capitol city until middle school and then moved to a town in the greater metropolitan area. She self-identifies as African American, Haitian American, and American. Jade was on track to graduate from SU. She is not only the first to “actually successfully stay in college” but would be the first in her family to successfully secure a college degree.

While in high school Jade was an honors student and involved in multiple extracurricular activities that included student organizations and athletics. It was at this stage of her education that she took a class in accounting, which sent her on a trajectory to pursue her major in college:

I took my first accounting class while I was in high school and I absolutely fell in love with it. I’m a numbers person, so I love math, I love all of that, and it’s combined with business, so I just – it’s the best. It’s overall just a good choice for me in what my interests are...In the Haitian culture, it’s just like, go to school to be a nurse. Especially as a woman. So, go to school to be a nurse. But I was like, “Mom, no.” “The medical field is not for me.” “I’m all about business, so I’m doing business.”

Her mother would support her decision to pursue Accounting and Jade attributes her initial hesitancy to the fact of her “not knowing too much about accounting and how it would be beneficial.” Coincidentally, it was also her teachers in high school who exposed Jade to the concept of study abroad:

Well, I’ve had professors that studied abroad, and they would always talk about it. “Do it.” “It’s a great opportunity.”...I had, um, my accounting professor in high school. She studied abroad in Spain when she was in college. So she would just talk about how, like, once we – Well, it was my senior, my senior year. So,

you know how they talk about where to go to college, do this, do that...try to get as involved as possible.

Despite the encouragement of her teachers, she didn't think she was going to study abroad "at all" and "didn't think it was even an option." Attending college appeared financially unattainable since she comes "from a background that does not have a lot of money," which always created a "struggle." However, it was a goal that she was determined to pursue. Her mother had instilled the idea of going to college in all three of her children so, she knew "automatically that there was no way I was not coming to college." Her financial burden was also significantly reduced when she was admitted into the CSP at SU. With the support of the CSP, she enrolled at SU and, as in high school, became very involved in multiple student cultural and leadership organizations and intermural sports. She also successfully balanced her campus involvement with academics and on-campus employment opportunities.

Aside from a trip to visit family in Haiti when she was a child, she did not travel significantly outside of her home state. Although she had heard of studying abroad and imagined herself going to Europe, she did not pursue the idea until a peer presented the idea of participating on the program to Ghana at a student organization meeting:

So we had – well, they had one of – a [student] representative come to one of our board meetings, and they just talked about the program, and a couple of us were like, "Yeah. It sounds really cool." "Let's do this." And, I mean, after then, they – I think they came back one more time and talked about it, and I was sold from there. Yeah. Um, yeah. I think it was more in like, the recruitment, who did it. Like, they actually went out there. They actually went to every organization so that got the students to say, "Oh, yeah. I really should go." "This should be a great experience." That's very important. I think that's key in getting students to study abroad. Like, a student has to be saying it to someone else...I – and I feel like if it's coming from a faculty member, it's – you kind of feel like it's their job to just say that to you....And, I mean, it wasn't a full

semester, so I was a little more like, “OK, let me just try it out.” Because a full semester, I feel like that’s too much at one time.

Jade knew that the credit would not apply directly toward her Accounting major but knew she could use the credit for free electives:

... I knew I wasn’t taking classes for my major, so I was just like, “This is my chance to study abroad.” “I know I’m going to have a good time.” And I actually enjoy learning languages. So, once I knew that I could learn the language of Twi I was just like, “OK!” That’s also another plus. I think a lot of people just go just for the experience and learning experience. My basis is more on curiosity. Because all I know is, really, America. It’s just like, “What else is out there?”

Once she made up her mind to participate she was determined that “nothing was going to stop me at that point” and committed herself to the goal. This included canceling her campus housing and commuting from home for a semester to save for the program. She explained that commuting was tough since she had classes every day, continued to work on campus, and remained involved in student activities. She added that she rated her options and felt that it was worth it. Her family supported her but had concerns:

Um, they were all for it, but they knew I was on the fence about like, how I was going to pay for it. So they were saying they – if it’s going to be like, a huge sacrifice or like, a burden on you, don’t, don’t necessarily do it. Because, in the long run, it wouldn’t really be that beneficial besides the experience...I think off-the-bat, they were just shocked that like, somebody was actually doing that... Because I don’t think they even know many people that studied abroad. So, I think it was just like, “Oh, my gosh!” “Jade’s actually doing it!” So, I think it was a shock and a little excitement in there. So, um, I first wanted to study abroad when I was in high school. Like, at first I was just like, “Oh my God, I can do that.” “It’s so cool.” Um, but I never thought I would actually do it. It was just like a really cool thought. And then I came here, and I still – I actually still, today, can’t believe that I studied abroad. I can’t believe I actually did it. So, I don’t know, it was – I don’t know, I’m still kind of shocked that I did it.

Mallory

Mallory was an out-of-state student pursuing a double major in Public Relations and Political Science, with a minor in Marine Affairs. She participated in a short-term summer option in Japan during her junior year and was completing her last semester at SU at the time of the interview. She was very close with her older brother, who was one year ahead in college; both were first generation college students. She was from a section of the Bronx that she referred to as “not very good” and “the hood.” She described her parents as being “very blue collar” as her father was a mechanic and mother a hairdresser.

While at SU she explained that most students did not believe her when she told them where she was from:

...that’s funny too, because when I come here and people, people, um, like reverse racism? Or like, reverse stereotype me, because – I’m from the Bronx. And they’re, like, “Are you *really* from the Bronx?” I’m like, “No, I am from *the* Bronx.” “Like, the like, hood.” And I get so many people like, and it drives me crazy, because it’s like, “You don’t know where I come from and, you know, I don’t like – being that like, angry person”...Because people will be like, “Oh you’re not from *the* Bronx.” “No, I am from the Bronx, like-like straight up.” “I told you that last time.”

Mallory self-identifies as white, Jewish, and a minority in the context of the borough where she grew up. Living in the same apartment where her mother was born and raised, she explained that personal safety was a concern in her neighborhood: “Um, like, we had three cars broken into, three cars stolen, um, gunshots at night – like, I remember my mom like, not letting us out past a certain hour.” She credited her maternal grandparents, specifically her grandfather, for providing critical guidance to both grandchildren throughout their life. Placing a high value on education, they also

provided educational opportunity that would otherwise not have been available to Mallory and her brother because of much needed financial support.

Gesturing with her hands to create an imaginary scale that begins with poverty on one side and ends with middle class status on the other, Mallory indicates that her family belongs in the middle between the two. She adds that her family “had food stamps for a while and like, other stuff.” Despite their status and lack of financial resource, her grandfather facilitated enrollment in a series of Jewish Day Schools where they would receive a quality education that, without his guidance, would not have been accessible:

...the reason why we went to Jewish school, me and my brother, was because the Bronx – the area we lived in was not very good...the school district in my area was, um, really, really bad. It was like, 30 percent graduation rate, they had security, and – you know like, teenage pregnancy like, everything you can think of. Um, drugs, whatever.

Mallory and her brother had to change schools multiple times as they closed or merged with others. Despite the challenges of finding an institution that would honor scholarship and financial aid arrangements of the previous school or long commutes on public transportation, their family strived to provide both children with the opportunity to obtain a quality education. The last move occurred while she was in high school:

So we had to transfer to Long Island and commute that whole way, from the Bronx to Long Island, which is like an hour and a half each way every day to go to school because of money reasons. Why – we still lived in a bad area in the Bronx and we couldn't go to the public school and again, my grandpa being so – dedicated to education, that he was – especially with the financial aid aspect of like, we can go to this school that's far away [because it offered the best aid package], so we might as well just commute that way. Um, which is also crazy.

In high school, in addition to the academic work that included AP classes, Mallory was really involved in high school extracurricular activities. Although

acknowledging she was a “good” student, she was on the “lower end of the spectrum” compared to many of other students in her school that consisted of many “trust fund babies.” Assessing where she ranked academically in her graduating class, she explains:

I would probably be on the middle to lower end of that spectrum. Because half my class made Ivy League schools and [I am] an intelligent person, but in comparison with all these overachievers, um, coming from big money to afford, uh. Like some of my friends like, own real estate companies, own lumber companies. Like, big, big money like, um, you know, or like, the entertainment business like, know famous people so –have huge mansions in Long Island with summer homes in the Hamptons. And like, uh, really hard to like, be in that setting and then I’m, “Okay, I’m going back to the Bronx.” ...I never had an SAT tutor, and some people sat every night with theirs and paid a lot of money for that. To go to a better school.

Despite the challenges, the investment provided access to a quality education and experiences, such as a senior year trip to Israel. The travel experience is common for the students at her former school since the education was also intended to strengthen Judaic beliefs and practice. Her grandparents assisted by bridging the financial gap with monetary support to make access to these opportunities possible. Similar funding materialized for college expenses as they had preplanned and started a college savings plan years earlier for both grandchildren:

I came to State University – totally undecided, not knowing what I wanted to do. Obviously we are so grateful and lucky because a lot of people are not in this day and age. But, the 529 [college fund], that savings must have been like 20 years – so luckily [if not] for them like, I would, I would not be where I am if it hadn’t been for their good fortune and their generosity... I remember like, paying those [college application fees] out of pocket was like, I’m like, lunch money like, being, yeah, being strained for that. Those were really expensive and the same thing when I took like APs my senior year. Those tests were really expensive too.

Financing her college education was a challenge, but also a motivator to maximize the opportunities:

When I first came to SU, um, it was – my, my dad was just on unemployment...Like, we got financial aid like, it helped us so much. [My parents] don't make that much. So if they make, let's say, at most \$50,000 in a good year, and that's between the two of them, really. My mom doesn't make that much money from hair dressing so, um, yeah so, it's not a lot of money, at all. That's like, like, that can be me and my brother's tuition alone, for one semester.

Even when I'm in class like, I always like, understand like, the value of like, "Oh, I'm in class." Like, d-did you ever like, see that statistic of how much each class actually is? So, like, if I'm in class just now, it's like, "Oh, I paid \$100 for this." Or, I don't know. It's like, it's like the number of hours per credit or whatever. It's like, so I'm like, I'm paying my money to be here, so I'm gonna go to class!

Although she was a "good" student in high school, Mallory explained that the extra resources available at SU, such as the Academic Support Center, contributed to helping her make the Dean's List almost every semester. She also became very involved on campus by interning, becoming a Teaching Assistant, working for various departments, and holding leadership positions such as becoming a student mentor and board member on various undergraduate organizations. Along with institutional resources, her grandfather still exerted influence on important decisions:

...I was like, and my brother being a double major, I – him being older, I was always driven to do more with my time and – I guess get my money's worth out of college. We're best friends. But he, um, when he was going to school, he really wanted to go to like, a private artsy school because he was always into like, acting, singing, dancing, all of that. And then my grandpa was like, "Well that's not really a career path." Um, and he said the same thing for me about adding political science.

Mallory primarily attributes her interest in study abroad to the two influences of being in a "Jewish environment" and being independent. The first because the school and community encouraged travel to Israel and the second a result of growing up in (and navigating) a diverse, major metropolitan area from the time she was in elementary

school. She even contemplated a gap year program before college that many of her high school peers were pursuing. However, she gave up the idea due to financial limitations and the concern of her family that such programs were equivalent to a “booze cruise” and their fear that she would not be “driven to go back to college.” Always regretting that she did not have that opportunity, she did not need to be convinced to pursue the program to Japan when it presented itself. Her brother, who had studied abroad in China and had a positive experience, advised her to proceed. Not only did she value his opinion, but was also able to gain advice on what he had learned by his “trial by error” experience. Her grandfather supported his participation because he believed that “economically, China will be ‘something big’ someday.” Providing a cost analysis of the study abroad program costs vs. taking summer courses on campus, the educational benefits, and demonstrating that the credit would fulfill degree requirements, her grandfather decided to support Mallory’s goal as well. Once again her grandparents came through and provided financial assistance that made participation possible: “Okay, we’ll treat you.”

Mario

Mario was an in-state student who grew up in a town about 15 minutes from SU and said that the university “has always been really close.” At the time of the interview he was a recent graduate and still living at his parent’s home. During the summer of his junior year he participated in a short-term service learning program in Tanzania. He is the ninth child in a family of twelve children. One of his older brothers started college approximately 20 years earlier, but it did not work out as planned because “he had trouble his first year, just partying, and got too crazy and he just, he couldn’t handle it

so he dropped out.” Therefore, Mario was not only a first generation college student, but had become the first in his family to graduate. He earned degrees in Kinesiology and Physical Education. An individual actively involved in athletic activities, he used the sports analogy of “team play” to describe and equate how he personally approached life:

I was always – basketball definitely was number one – I was into that. I played all four years and it was a huge experi[ence]. I loved – it, it was the best experience I got. I learned a lot and then, uh, yeah, I mean, I was actually a good student. I mean, I wasn’t really a, I tried to keep level-headed. I didn’t really, I mean, I don’t want to brag or anything, but like your coach will tell you that I’m a team player, I like to be a team player, oriented I mean, I would like to be a little more selfish. I probably should have, but it’s like, I don’t know, it-it is what it is, I feel good.

Growing up Mario had an interest in travel that he primarily attributed to exposure from multimedia sources, but he did not have many opportunities to explore extensively out of his home state. When explaining the level of his pre-study abroad travel experiences he said:

A little bit, I mean not really, just uh, I had some family in different states. We really kept in close, I mean, it wasn’t like anything crazy, like out of the country. I was one of twelve, so...so it didn’t allow me to travel too much, but uh, yeah, so it was, so I mean. A little bit, it’s always been a thing I wanted to do, so...

He first encountered the concept of study abroad in high school when his alma mater occasionally hosted one or two exchange students. A few of his peers on the basketball team also participated in long-term exchanges as well. As a result, it became something that “he had heard about” and was something he “wanted to do,” as he approached college. A self-described B/B+ student in high school he related how his path to State University was delayed:

...so you know, I didn't really apply to too many other schools. I played basketball when I was in high school, so I had a few offers there, but it's yeah, like the money's – a couple private schools, so it was like, yeah, \$30,000 or something, it's not really, it wasn't that important, that worth it for me, so... Ah, yeah, I mean, actually, I applied here, I actually didn't get in my first time...which was surprising...

As a result, Mario started his college career by spending two years at a local community college “just trying to get a feel” for what he may be interested in studying before he transferred to SU where his father works in one of the business offices:

I transferred here, and main reason I'm here, my father works here. I got some tuition waivers, which was huge. So, it was like, it was almost like “Why not?” So [money] it's, it's a big thing. So, I as I was talking like, money was an issue.

Considering he had to complete what he felt were some of the challenging science courses that were part of his curriculum, he was satisfied to have finished SU with nearly a 3.5 GPA. He commuted to school, but held various jobs on campus in the recreational services equipment rooms explaining that “it was just like work and school kind of thing” and the being at home was “a blessing” as it kept him grounded and focused and not distracted by “constant parties” and “every night with roommates.” Socially he was involved with intramural sports but did not feel completely part of the university experience:

I was like, yeah, a little bit on the outside, I would say...because you're at the home life still, it's like you're not in a dorm, it's like, I mean I would – that's one aspect that I kind of wish I did for like a semester. It's like living in a dorm. It's just a chance to meet a bunch of different people from either different states, or provinces or wherever for a semester, but like yeah, it's something – it's something I wish I did a little bit more. If I did that, because then it would have opened me up to some more [experiences], but I had, I loved to play intramurals and stuff, so I met a bunch of kids and still talk to them or play basketball with them today, so it's like. Still, I guess that aspect kind of made up for it a little bit...

Mario did not recall ever hearing anything about study abroad opportunities while studying at the community college. When he enrolled at SU he recalled he occasionally looked at the study abroad website but was not sure why he never took the step to make progress towards participating. When one of his professors mentioned that she was leading a faculty-led service-learning program to Tanzania, his interest was piqued:

Since this was her first summer doing it, I knew her kind of – and I kind of was – I always try to think of like, how did I really like get into, like going into this... and then like uh, one of my buddies that was in my class I met here, we just became friends at school, he said he was, like [going], we talked about it a little bit and we're like, us-oh are you thinking about it, and we kind of both were like on the fence and then we just sort of like, yeah, eventually it was like, yeah I want to go if you go, and like he's like, yeah I'm doing it, and so we were like, all right, sweet, let's do it. It was nice to know someone else to do it with, it was just like kind of just be comfortable... a little more comfortable so it was really sweet that we both decided on doing it and that after that I was, like, whatever.

Aside from deciding who else was participating in the program, thoughts turned to finances:

I mean initially, it was just like seeing [how to pay for it] like, the money was to just try to figure, and then seeing what that is – was, and then, kind of seeing who else is going, because it was new – it was a new program. So [I thought], maybe I can pull this one off myself, so...to some degree, I mean, I still, you still have great help from many people that helped us with some fund raising and everything, so... it's a summer trip and it's something I really want to do, I can shell out the money for it and just suck it up... it was something I think I needed to do or wanted to do, so I – my parents were good with it and they helped out a bit, so it was just like I want to do it and I think overall it was a good experience and was something that I-I-scraped for the opportunity, so I didn't want to pass it up... Once I committed to it and I told [the professor] I'd do it, I didn't just want to like you know [back out]. It was really good, I mean, we saw everyone that was doing it and it just seemed like yeah, I don't know, "Let's get it done!"

PELL GROUP 2 – CAPITAL ACCOUTERED STUDY ABROAD ALUMNI
(HIGH CAPITAL)

Eight of the Pell research participants fit a profile that, solely in terms of economic capital, would place them in a lower income or lower SES group. These individuals were victims of family tragedies or calamitous life events that resulted in reversals of fortune that created circumstances of financial hardship or prolonged adversity. However, despite the lack of financial resources, the individuals in this group generally were in possession of social and cultural capital not possessed by the working class students. Most, if not for a significant occurrence such as the loss of a parent or demise of a marriage, would likely find themselves, at a minimum, situated in the middle-class. In possession of important levels of social and cultural capital these participants had a habitus that normalized the college experience and would generally predispose them to consider study abroad as a customary part of the university experience. They will be referred to as “Capital Accoutered” (CA) because, although economically they may have been on the same footing as the Working Class students at this stage of their life, most had been “equipped” with social and cultural capital that prepared them to navigate the study abroad process and postsecondary environment. In essence, most were successful in “activating” their available social and cultural capital (Lareau, 1989) for personal benefit. Even those who had “immature” levels of capital, in the sense that their life-changing event occurred at a young age, their early “capital prosperity” had remarkable staying power. They were outfitted with an accoutrement of “capital tools” that they did not fully understand how to use, but even this was

advantageous in comparison to the WC students who did not have possession of the “tools” or even know that they existed.

Julia

Julia was a Nursing major from a bordering state who had graduated at the time of the interview and was working in one of the preeminent children’s hospitals in the country. During the latter half of her undergraduate career, she participated in a short-term winter-session program in Dominican Republic that was developed for nursing majors and had a service-learning focus for two consecutive years. She explained that she came from a “nice town” with a “good public school system” that was generally a “good area to grow up in.” In her immediate family she had a younger brother, still in college, and her mom, who worked in business. Both of her parents and her grandparents went to college and she said she comes “from a line” where “everybody goes.”

She indicated that she was “probably middle class.” Elaborating further, her personal story was marked by a tragic loss that significantly impacted her family and standard of living:

We – I wouldn’t say that we were, that I’m extremely well off, but you know, we’re not, uh, I don’t know how to say this in a, um, proper manner. You know, we did – again, like, we went on family trips and we were able to do fun things like that...And then the other thing was when we traveled, um, my dad passed when I was 13. So we traveled more when he was alive, and then after that it became a little more difficult for us to do that kind of stuff just money-wise and, um, my mom had to go back to work and that kind of thing.

Having gone through family tragedy, Julia had always known that she wanted to be a pediatric nurse to help prevent anyone from ever feeling what she had felt as a youth:

I think that I grew up really fast, so I feel like I just have kind of, I don't know, like a mature soul, I want to say. Like I just knew like, college to me, it wasn't, I mean, you know, it's fun and I had a great time. And, you know, you do the whole party scene. But it really was about the education for me. Like, I really wanted to be a nurse, and I want to be a good nurse.

When she began the college search in high school she picked states she would want to go to and “absolutely loved” State University after a campus tour. In addition to having a nursing program, an important factor was that it was “close enough to go home but far enough away that I still got that college feel.” She described herself as “a pretty good student,” and she indicated that she studied “really hard” and was the type of student who would stay in on weekends to study because she knew that she had to put in a little extra effort to succeed in such a challenging academic program.

Acknowledging the benefits of learning a second language, she started to minor in Spanish as well, but stopped in order to focus on her major.

Having vacationed a fair amount domestically and internationally with her family when she was younger, and the fact that her parents had traveled extensively, Julia was thinking about study abroad in high school and as a freshman. For the most part she was always considering Europe as a study destination. She knew a SU alumni from her hometown who had studied abroad, so she was aware that opportunities existed prior to arriving on campus. However, she was concerned that it may not be possible due to her rigorous and very structured major. Despite the anticipated challenge, she contacted her major advisor:

I e-mailed my advisor the end of my sophomore year, and I don't know the exact – what made me exactly think, “Okay, let me look into something for nursing,” but I think I just –I've always been extremely adventurous and wanted to try something new, and my Mom's always encouraged [me], you know. Whatever I want to do, she supports. And so I just – I think I e-mailed more than one, um, person, like different study abroad programs. I was looking stuff

up online and kind of realized that doing a trip like this was something I really wanted to do.

Financing the programs was a significant concern as both Julia and her brother were in college, creating a significant financial burden for their mother. The first time she studied abroad the cost was minimal due to philanthropic donations that helped subsidize the program. The second year the financial support provided by a donor was not there, but her mother assisted:

It, it was doable and my Mom was able to support me to do it. But, again, she's a single mom and has two kids in school. So it wasn't just like, "Yeah, sure go and whatever, bill me later." It was – something we had to look at and kind of see. But my Mom loved that I did this trip and she knew how passionate I was about the trip. So it wasn't like I was just going, not saying that other study abroad [programs] you're just going and partying. But it wasn't like I was just going for a month – for a few months and just kind of – and I needed the money so I could travel and all this stuff. It was, she was giving money for something that I was passionate about. It was, um, a great cause when you look back on it. Well, the work we do is unbelievable and the impact you make is, um, it's just incredible. So, the type of study abroad that I ended up doing was so beyond, different than what I ever had imagined...we would see about 100 patients at each clinic, and they would come in, you know, and that they're having different things wrong. And, um, we would give what we could and do the best we could to treat with what little resources we had available.

Emma

Emma was an out-of-state student who double-majored in Film and Writing & Rhetoric at State University. She grew up on "the shore" that she also describes as "a very nice area," that had a "really great school," with programs that "sparked her interest in traveling." The youngest of three, both of her older brothers had also left their home state to attend college and earn their degrees. Both parents had completed graduate-level work, earning master's degrees in Education. During her four years at SU, Emma participated in two short-term study abroad programs during her junior year,

a winter intersession program to Belize and a summer option in Cape Verde. Having had positive experiences while participating in both programs, she completed a month long internship program in South Africa shortly after graduating from SU.

Discussing her background, Emma explained that her parents wanted their children to experience as much as they could and that they were always trying to make sure they were happy. Although she only recounted one trip out of the country with her family, a cruise to Key West and Mexico as a teen, her high school offered opportunities beyond the borders of the U.S.:

I went to Montreal with like our band and stuff like that and Quebec and.... We had, um, a chance to go abroad to Spain for a week. Um, my – I think I was a junior in high school, so I did that and that kind of sparked my interest in traveling.... Um, and my, the brother going to UNN, he's studied abroad in Spain for a year, too, through his college – and when [my high school class] were in Sevilla he was like pretty close to where we were staying, so we got to meet-up there, which was really cool.

Speaking highly of her high school, where she was a very involved honors student, she agreed that these experiences, including the fact that her brother had studied abroad, made her open to the idea of considering going abroad while in college.

When deciding on what college to attend, like her older brothers, she conducted a search to find an institution that would be a good fit academically, but also with her personality and lifestyle. She explained:

Yep. I mean, basically, uh, the whole like applying to college thing I was like, I want to still be in the northeast. Um, I – it was between here, UNN and State University. And, um, I just visited all of them. I liked this campus the best, pretty much. It was on the water and it was only two hours from home.

Enrolling in the Honors Program at SU, she indicated that her freshman year was a challenge and that she had even considered transferring, but she changed course in her sophomore year when she started making friends and getting involved in student

activities, the Honors program, and campus employment opportunities. Living on-campus, she also held two student employment positions providing academic support peer in the Academic Support Center at SU during her four years, which also helped cover educational expenses that were also financed by institutional scholarships and various forms of financial aid. Although acknowledging that she was graduating with \$70,000 in loans that she would “have to pay-off the rest of her life,” she was not fully aware of the specifics as her “mom does the FAFSA forms and all those things.” Preferring not to elaborate, she indicated that in high school there were some “difficult times” that resulted in financial hardship and her family selling their home.

Prior to participating in her first study abroad program, the winter intersession program to Belize, she had explored studying abroad earlier in her college career:

I was like, heard of other people, I guess, studying abroad...Um, I guess when my brother was studying abroad I kind of, you know, thought about wanting to travel again and so, um, if, but yeah. I was kind of like annoyed how I didn't know, like no one told me like, you know you can do documentary film in another country...I had been looking into studying abroad, um, and I just randomly chose Australia...like, it was too much money or like it seemed like it was going to be too difficult to pay for like, the whole tuition. And I felt like my parents were kind of like, I couldn't give them enough information.

Later, as a junior, one of her Film professors mentioned the program in Belize:

She was great. And, um, she just happened to mention one day, “Oh, is anyone studying abroad for the documentary, uh, film class in Belize?” And I like, instantly was like, “What?” I've never even heard, you know, that we had a film, like, Study Abroad class.

Although financing the program was a concern, Emma was able to use some of her unused aid from the previous semester and secured a small scholarship from the program itself:

So it's not like my parents had to like dish out a couple thousand dollars, like, that they had, because we didn't have that at the time. Um, and so, yeah,

definitely price was like a factor...I think I either had like refund money on my SU refund card to pay for that and, um, I did apply for the, um, the scholarship, uh, or the grant for that – like on the website that I filled out and it was really, like, really easy to get. I feel like I didn't even have to like write a huge essay, I just like, but again, I applied for a scholarship and I got, um, I think it was like the same one through the study abroad program. Um, and so, yeah, that really helped, um, pay for that. But pretty much, it was all – all my college was loan money anyways.

In retrospect, Emma was pleased that a semester study abroad program had not worked out as she was able to experience all SU had to offer because she was able to complete the experience during winter break. Having a positive experience, she began to research additional opportunities upon her return:

And, um, so I went on that and it was the, like, best time of my life and, and it was really awesome. And, um, I wish it was longer than that. So when I got back I was like, "I need to do that again!" And I just went right back on the website....I found – we – went to an island in Belize and I was like, well, I really want to do like another tropical thing. So, I found Cape Verde on the website and it was for the summer....Um, and so, yeah, definitely price was like a factor. But again, I applied for a scholarship and I got [it], um, I think it was like the same one through the study abroad program.

Although film-making was not a focus of the second study abroad program, Emma was able to negotiate an independent research project while participating in the program so she could produce a documentary film that would fulfill requirements for her senior capstone honors project. Eventually, she was able to use both experiences to gain admission to a summer internship program in South Africa after her graduation: "Belize and Cape Verde gave me a little bit of an upper hand to be accepted into the program."

Nikki

Nikki was an in-state student who grew up in a neighboring state until high school. She was a Human Development & Family Studies major who participated in a short-term summer program in Cape Verde during her junior year. At the time of the

interview, she was finalizing plans for a full semester program in Spain during the fall semester of what would be her fifth year. She was oldest of five children, separated by ten years from the second oldest. Nikki's mother was a single parent as her parents were divorced, with her father living out of state. Her mother was a nurse who, like her five siblings, completed college; her mother's siblings include another nurse, a teacher, an engineer, and a doctor among their number.

In high school Nikki was very involved in athletics and student organizations such as drama and a business leadership program, but did not have a job because her mother wanted her to focus on academics. She was in the honors program and in advanced classes until transferring to a new high school when the family moved for her mother's work. Due to the timing of the move mid-year, she was placed in "regular classes" that were not as challenging and resulted in her not putting forth much effort because the classes were simply too easy. She added that the advocacy to change this "kind of got brushed under the rug" as her siblings, being much younger, required more attention at the time.

Nikki decided to attend SU because it was closer to home and she had applied to colleges late, which limited her choices. Given her mother's stretched financial resources, a significant factor was that SU offered the best scholarship package since she knew the burden of most educational expenses would be hers. Trying to find the most resources that would help her in the long-term, she applied to the College Success Program:

And like I originally applied to SU and, uh, a couple of my friends that went to the same high school it was like "Oh, well this program helps you out and, you know, you can go there a summer before and like feel it out." And I was like

“Oh, well if you guys are doing it” like, “I’m going to do it too.” So, and then I just got into it.

She also gained valuable counseling from relatives on financing college:

So, like, like, my FASFA, um, my older cousin, she’s four years older than me, and when I was a freshman she had to help me out with my FASFA and, um, with financial aid and stuff like that. And I just like, really paid attention because it’s something that I just need to know like how you’re doing it. I know my mom really wouldn’t be able to take out loans for me because she still has loans under her name from when she went to school.... So it’s all money that’s eventually going to come out of my pocket, so I just tried to find the most resources as I could that will help me out in the long run.

While at SU, work obligations limited her extracurricular involvement to intramural sports, as she focused on moving towards financial independence to assist her family. To do this, she always held one or two jobs and took six classes every semester. Initially, she was a Business major for two years but switched majors because she wanted “to do something that was more interacting with people” versus “just being in office.”

Although she had not traveled out of the country, she had traveled domestically to several states. Having been exposed to the concept of study abroad in middle school by her babysitter, a role model and college student who spent a semester abroad in Latin America, she knew it was “one of things that was on my list” to do before graduating from college:

I just remember her like, before she was leaving like, coming to my house and like, telling us all about it and I was like, that’s so cool, you can just go to school in like, a different place. So, I really believe that’s what made me want to study abroad because it like, when I think of the first time I ever heard study abroad that’s automatically what comes to mind, just that memory....I decided I wanted to study abroad before I even entered college. I mean I wouldn’t say like the University like attracted me to it; neither did they like – I had kind of already made up my mind before I even came here. I don’t know if I’m a good person

to ask if the University helped attract [me to it] because I already knew I wanted to go.

Nikki self-identified as Cape Verdean, and the cultural influences of Cape Verde were still strong in her family even though she was the third generation living in the U.S. Initially, she was only planning a semester abroad, but she became interested in the summer program when it was brought to her attention:

So, like I know I definitely would've went abroad. I'm not sure it would've been Cape Verde if like, I wasn't so pushed in that direction. Like with the College Success Program and me being Cape Verdean – I am Cape Verdean cultural-wise, um, and so I just thought it would be cool just because I, why not go back to a place where my family's originally from?...and it did help that a lot of my friends were going to that same program... right now I am trying to study abroad for the fall...now I know I can be away from home...

Although participating in the program created an additional expense, Nikki did not apply for extra scholarships. Regardless, she strategized by moving off campus the semester prior and used the cost savings from her CSP room and board scholarships funds to finance her program:

I remember my friends actually applied for scholarships but I had so much going on I couldn't even like apply for scholarships and they had gotten money. And like paying it back, I was like "Oh, I wish I had applied for those scholarships." . . . I had the CSP money, so I was always kind of like really all set and it was kind of like, I didn't want to take more than I already like, I already have a decent amount of money coming towards me. So, it's like ah, I don't want to be too greedy taking more scholarships, you know?I used, uh, FASFA, um, and like my parents, they like kind of raised money within the family for me. Um, I was working so I used some of that money and, um, and the CSP [money].

Once finances were in order, Nikki's family provided support and helped with preparing for her program. This was approached with great enthusiasm:

Well, they was excited, um, it, my family, they, we like kind of live all far apart. Like there's only a few of us in [this state]. There's some in Virginia. There's some in Florida, so. And like word spread so fast that like, that's where I was going. And it was just like, it was more of like, everyone was happy for me

because I was going to be the first one going back, um, in three generations....
[My grandmother] she was really excited.

Eva

Eva was an out-of-state student majoring in Fashion with a minor in Business. She spent a semester of her junior year studying abroad in Florence, Italy. She had an older sister who attended and earned her degree at the flagship university in their home state. Her mother was born in Poland and came to the U.S. as a teenager, so although experiencing many years of assimilation and socialization in the American culture, retained many cultural customs and practices of her home country that had an influence on Eva and her older sister. Her mother completed studies at a cosmetology school and attended some college courses that assisted her with managing her hairdressing business where she has remained self-employed for over three decades, and her father earned a degree at a prestigious Ivy League institution. Her parents had divorced when she was much younger and both children remained with their mother. Her father lived in a neighboring state with her step-mother.

Eva explained that despite the fact that the first language she learned was Polish, she did not retain this ability as she grew older. However, she used this aspect of her childhood as an example of how her mother's background exposed her to a culture originating from outside of the U.S. and a familiarity with the idea of travel and living in other countries as significant in cultivating her interest in studying abroad. Additionally, when she was young, her father completed a significant level of business-related domestic travel that, combined with her mother's influence, put at "the back of my mind" that traveling was "something that I could do in the future." She saw this as

feasible because her family enjoyed a few vacations outside of the country when she was a teen.

Eva had been directly exposed to the idea of study abroad in high school by her guidance counselor and by her older sister:

The school, um, in one of our meetings like, with our guidance counselors, they provided us with like, just some like, small information about it. Just like, kind of hinting at it. Just saying like, “This is a really good opportunity for you to go to a different country and learn different skills” like, things like that, “and be culturally immersed” like, in whatever. So, um, that’s kind of where it stemmed from. But I mostly got the idea from my sister....Um, my sister studied abroad in Poland. Our family is from Poland. My mom came straight from Poland. So my sister’s, like, idea was to go meet our family that we’ve never met. So she went there.... [While I was in] high school, we visited her for two weeks while she was there. So, I got to see Europe a little bit, I mean, a European city for the first time you know, the architecture. Everything like that was really intriguing to me....I loved my experience with my sister going abroad and she loved it and she had nothing but good things to say about it. So, I figured, I’ll make time for that in my schedule at some point. So when I came into [college], I already knew that I wanted to go abroad somewhere.

Eventually attending SU, Eva indicated that she was an “A-B student,” but in high school was closer to a “B-C student.” Despite wanting to go to college and study abroad at some point, Eva lacked a sense of direction and “was in six different directions” as her secondary school years wound down:

And I didn’t really know where I wanted to go, in terms of college. Like, I got into all the schools that I applied to that year. Um, but they were all like mediocre schools. Like one was, Coastal College, which is an okay school like, don’t get me wrong. They’ve probably got pretty good programs, but I had no idea what I wanted to do there. And it’s known as a party school. And I was like, “Why am I going to go to a party school to party more and not know what I want to do.” And, you know what I mean? And I had no intention of going. But my mom was like “Well, you got into all the schools that you applied to” and I’m like, “Mom, those are like some of the worst schools in the country.” That’s why I got in because my GPA; my GPA at that point was like a 2.8, which like isn’t that good, I mean. It’s not bad but it’s not good. And so, it’s like I can’t, I, I couldn’t get into like Harvard or like CU or, you know, something like that...

Knowing that she was not ready for college and simply needing a break, Eva decided to create her own “gap year” between high school and college. Despite the fact that she did not know what direction to pursue in regards to college, she knew herself well enough that forcing a decision would not be productive:

I took a year off between high school and college and I worked at my – I lived with my dad in...and I worked at [Ski Mountain Resort].... My dad came up with this idea that I should move in with him and work at [Ski Mountain Resort]. And I was basically a ski and snowboard bum, you know, just kind of hanging out and making money. And I didn't really know what I wanted to do, in terms of a major, so I kind of focused on one at, like, during that year. I kind of like, narrowed down my options and picked, like, five, and then I picked three, and then I was, like, “Okay. What universities have these three specific majors for me, and do they all have good programs?” And then I applied to like, ten schools. And then I got into eight, and I chose SU.... [My dad] was actually supportive of it because my stepmom actually did the same. She took a year off and she actually skied for the U.S. Ski Team and traveled Europe for a year....But she also like pushed it. She was like, “You know what?” “If you're not going, if you're not going to go to school, at least work and make money and go have a new experience.”...[M]y mom hated it. She lied...and she lied to half of her clients saying that I was going to community college because she was like, appalled that I wasn't going to college. Because she never lived on campus, she never like had the real college experience and [my dad] did. Like, his frat was the frat in Animal House. So, um, that was his college experience and he “gets it.” So I moved in with my dad, and it was the best decision I've ever made, honestly, because it gave me time to like, focus and figure out what I wanted to do and work and, I don't know. It was great.

After taking a year off after high school, Eva began SU with more focus. She knew she wanted to study abroad so she explored her options during her sophomore year of school and then made a plan to go her junior year, spring semester. She was concerned about financing her program but then concluded that if her sister made it work that she could probably do the same. In addition to her financial aid, she saved \$5,000 working and received assistance from her mother:

She doesn't have a lot of money from the business though. All of her money is in the business. Any extra money that she has is tips and it goes into her bank

account and that's what she used to help me over abroad.... Everyone was really excited and really supportive. Um, my mom, especially, she's like, "Go see Europe," like, "Go enjoy yourself." And the same with my dad.

As it turns out, studying abroad actually "worked in her favor" in the sense that she was able to use her financial aid from SU and the basic program costs ended up being less than a semester back on campus. She added that she did not bother to apply for any study abroad scholarships:

...my dad has always said like, scholarships are great if you can get them, but like, if – if you get grants, those are better. Like, they're usually more money, they probably help you out more, and you don't have to like, waste your time doing like, a three-hour-long paper, whatever, to apply for a scholarship. And so when I was applying to schools, like colleges, he was like, "Don't worry about scholarships yet." "If you find one that is easily accessible, fine, go for it." but like, "Don't worry about it so much,"...so, I guess that's why I didn't really do it....So I – it's not as stressful for me as it would be for someone who doesn't have that safety net with the parents, you know. I mean, there's a lot of people's parents that can't even think about even sending them to school, let alone going to study abroad.

With the complete support of her family, she prepared for her semester abroad. She emphasized the fact that because her sister had gone before her, she was more at ease as her departure date approached. She elaborated further:

But it definitely helped. It definitely made me more comfortable going abroad. I would have been a little bit more nervous, I think, going abroad had my sister not gone. Because she told me a little bit of like, the Discount Air like, freak things that can happen. And like, she warned me of like, some other things, you know? It's just like, the – she gave me a list of like, ten things to worry about like, when you go abroad. It was like, a cute little like, package that she gave me before I went. And it was like, "Don't bring luggage on Discount Air." Like that and like, some other stuff. So it was really funny, but I loved it....I think about [my semester abroad] every day. I think about going back every day.

Miriam

Miriam was an in-state student in the “zero to six” Doctor of Pharmacy program, which means she entered college as a traditional freshman and would earn a doctorate in six years. She was a Spanish major as well for her “own knowledge” and her awareness that proficiency in Spanish would be helpful in her future career. This interest was key in deciding to participate in a short-term summer program in Spain. She was also a speaker of Arabic as she lived in Egypt until the third grade when her family moved to the U.S. and became naturalized citizens. Miriam explained that “everyone in my family has been to college,” both parents completed their degrees in their home country and her only sibling, an older brother, was currently studying Neuroscience at City University a well-respected private university. Prior to their move to the U.S., her father had been a surgeon working in another Middle Eastern nation where the financial compensation was more favorable. The objective of pursuing foreign employment contracts was to finance a better private education for his children back home as the public system was generally viewed as inferior. This strategy came at great sacrifice as he only saw his family about one month a year, so when he won the lottery for a green card they made the move to America. Despite leaving their home country, at least the family could be together and the children could receive educational opportunities that had not been so readily available.

During the interviews, Miriam self-identified as a minority, Mediterranean, and Egyptian. She described her family as upper middle class or mid-middle class while in Egypt, but the move to the U.S. was associated with a number of disappointments and a descent in socioeconomic standing. Her father’s medical credentials were not fully

recognized in the U.S., so after weighing the pros and cons of repeating years of education again, he decided to accept employment as a nurse. Additionally, her parent's marriage ended in divorce, so the "whole motive of moving here was ruined." Miriam and her brother lived with their mother and did not have contact with her father for several years. Her mother, who had studied languages, worked as a dietary aide barely making ends meet:

[M]y mom was like, was struggling a lot, so I think growing up we were not even middle class. We were probably like, upper low class. Like, as in you're just above, barely above, the poverty threshold like. You know? When you're just right there. You're on the border. So yeah, with two kids and a single mom. So, it was pretty tough. But then, as I grew up and I started to work myself, and started to help out, things started to get better. Like, you know, I could do things for myself. I could afford my own gas. So it started to look different. And now I would say it's much better because I have, I have like, um, a job at ABC Pharmacy, and I think it's, it's helping a lot.

After the divorce, Miriam's family did not have contact with her father for several years. Without his financial support, her mother forged ahead as best she could. Despite the hardship, she refused public assistance. Eventually, her father provided financial assistance in order to assist with the medical expenses for her brother's health condition:

I mean, even like, for instance, when my mom and dad didn't live together and like, my mom couldn't afford to really buy good insurance, we still had something, but my mom was like, "There is no way we're going to get" like, "We're going to get like, a free health plan because I work and we're healthy right now, so why should we need to do this?" To her, it was a dignity thing like. At one point, there was, um, her friend was telling her, you know, "You should go get food stamps" – because my mom worked as a dietary and she only made like, \$9.00 an hour. And she's like, "No, that's my dignity." And she would not do it. And so, that's the family I come from. It's just like, you know, you work You don't take from other people what doesn't really belong to you.... My mom started talking to my dad again because of my brother. [My] brother is sick, and sure, my dad is an RN, he makes good money. But none of it goes to anything because my brother's sick. You know, it's like. Uh, yeah,

like hospital bills and all that. And insurance. Just paying for insurance, getting new insurance to be able to cover more. That's a lot of costs.... Because she couldn't afford to get him any kind of medical care. Yeah, [my dad], he added us to the insurance and so, yeah.

In high school Miriam performed well academically, was in the honors program, and completed some Advanced Placement coursework for college credit. With the separation of her parents, she relied on her educators for guidance as she did not have any contact with her father and her mother “knows so much less than my dad does” about school. Explaining that she was “on my own” when making decisions, she acknowledges a math teacher who saw her talent and motivated her to do well in school:

And so, I did really, I did really well in my high school, but I ended up doing pharmacy because I didn't want to be a math major. No one really told me to like, pharmacy's good or anything, I just kind of came with, up with that on my own. Honestly like, just doing some research of what majors there are, and like, I'm like, you know, pharmacy. I always wanted to be a dentist....And it was, it was like, where am I going to go? And I was in high school and I was trying to decide. I'm like, well – and then they say “math and science, math and science.” And I'm like, well, my dad was a surgeon but I don't want to do that, so I was somewhere in the middle.... My mom and dad weren't, they were divorced and they were like, in the midst of like, you know, arguments and stuff, and I wasn't even allowed to talk to my dad. So, I didn't talk to my dad and so, he didn't convince me with anything. Like, I remember after I'd gotten accepted he's like, “So, what did you go to school for?” That's when we started to talk again and I'm like, “Oh, I went to school for pharmacy” and he was like, really happy.

Although she had been admitted to other reputable institutions, including one with a dental program, she decided to stay in state and attend SU. She explains that it was “really rough” making her final decision because of financial concerns. To minimize expenses, she decided to commute rather than stay on campus as it was “too

expensive.” Gaps between classes were regularly spent studying in the Honors Lounge or Library.

While growing up in Egypt, Miriam had traveled to neighboring countries to visit her father when he was abroad working. Once her family moved to the U.S., finances limited travel to trips back “home” to visit family, especially when there was an illness in the family. Given the rigid Pharm D. curriculum, there seemed to be little room in her schedule for study abroad. Having taken Spanish in middle and high school and thoroughly enjoying it, she decided to pursue a minor:

I really enjoyed it, and I found that not only was it fun to learn, but it was, it was fairly simple. And at the same time it was, it was different from what I do. So like my classes are mostly like disease states, treating people, dosing’s and things like that, and this was, like, way different. And it was like, I was like, “Oh, I love this,” you know? I get to feel like I’m a normal college student instead of like, you know, an intense, hard core college student. So, I liked it and I did it because I had motivation. I mean, I really wanted to do it. I mean a Pharmacy degree on its own is sufficient, but I mean, I didn’t push myself to do it; I simply just enjoyed doing it...and just having some kind of a second language to help with Pharmacy because, um, the, we keep learning about the, you know, the new changing dynamic demographics, um, Hispanics becoming, instead of a minority, a majority.

While working on the minor, she realized that she was not too far off from a Spanish major, so decided to pursue that instead. However, she was concerned that she would not be able to finish the degree since her primary degree required an extensive time commitment. Then, she realized that she could fulfill her Spanish requirements over the summer. She discussed it with an Honors advisor who “pushed her” to consider it. Learning that she could stay on track with both majors by completing a significant portion of the language degree in the summer was an ideal solution. She was initially admitted to a program in the Caribbean the summer prior to the one in Spain,

but turned it down for a summer internship in Pharmacy. Concluding that study abroad was important, she knew she could put it off for the following summer and gain the benefits of both opportunities.

Financing the study abroad program did not discourage Miriam as she perceived long-term benefits of participating and knew from visiting the Student Financial Aid Office that loan options were available:

...I wasn't even looking at the money cost. I was like, "You know what?" "I'll pay it off, I'll work." "I'll work and pay it off." But honestly, this is a once in a lifetime experience... I know myself, you know? If you're someone who is not very motivated, you might drop next semester, or take it off, or might do part time and you don't really know what your major is. Then you might not feel – because you might not be able to pay it back. But I know that, you know, "I'm motivated and I'm going to do this," and either way, "I just got this job, and I'm going to work, and I'm going to do this." And I had that motivation, so financial issue? Yes, it was an issue because I wouldn't have been able to pay for it, but I learned that there were loans. I had just gotten my job, um, an internship. And I know that I'm going to graduate and be able to pay off the loan, if worse comes to worst, so I'm definitely going to go.

Taking on debt to participate was virtually eliminated when Miriam earned a Gilman Scholarship and a national, merit-based scholarship for study abroad.

However, her parents were reluctant to let her participate:

...my parents are almost too protective, and that's one of the-one of the other things that keep people from going abroad is that, the parents. They're like, "Oh, no," like, "Why go abroad?" "The classes are here." That's what my parents were first telling me, but I had to do it. And I did it. And then it just happened like, you know? I applied for the scholarship. I got the money, and I can go. And then, "If you just don't let me go, then you know, you're just a hindrance to my education." They can't say no...I'm going to, I'm going to enjoy it. I'm, it's going to be an experience to look back on. It's going to help me in my career. I got the Gilman Scholarship, which was awesome. Um, I really didn't, I'm like, "This is one, it's a federal scholarship, and it's a national scholarship." "What's, what are my chances?" "Think of how many people apply." I just thought it was something like the scholarships you apply – You know the scholarships, when you first enter college, and you just go on Google

and you type in a scholarship name and you apply to all these things and you never get any of them? I thought it was one of those.... [My parents] like, they were happy that I would go in the end, after I got the scholarship. "Sure, you can go." Because they knew that, you know, I like, I don't even know what, my dad in the end still. Even with the scholarship, he still did not want me to go. He was still like, you know, he, when. I remember when he was driving me to the airport, he's like, "Well, good luck, and stay really safe, and call me every single day." And I was like, he was not happy at all. He was worried. But then when I came back and told him all about the family, he was like, "Oh thank God, I'm so happy you had a good experience," and "Wow!"

For those who choose not to study abroad, she said she felt that they were not motivated, or were scared.

Larissa

Larissa was an out-of-state student in her last semester of college during the interview and anticipated graduating with degrees in French, Secondary Education, and Fashion. She spent a semester her junior year in France in order to improve her proficiency in that language. She was already conversant in Creole as her parents were immigrants from Haiti who had arrived in the U.S. only a few years prior to the birth of Larissa and her three other siblings. Since the language and culture of her parent's homeland remained significant in the household, she primarily self-identified as Haitian American, but also African American, and Christian. She explained that "I like to help people" and that she was "big on church," and her family was deeply committed to their Evangelistic faith. Her father, as a young man, committed to ensuring he and his family would serve God in their daily lives after a profound spiritual experience when he was healed from an illness after deep prayer and a promise to dedicate himself to God should he be restored to good health.

In addition to their faith, a strong work ethic and commitment to education have remained central to her home environment even as the family faced several challenging life events when she was growing up. Her father had attended college in Haiti and was trained as an accountant, but he was forced to pursue a different path in his new country:

Um, we started off in the ghetto, I guess you could say, in Fairfield County. And, yes, there is a ghetto in Fairfield County...Um, I grew up – I – first of all, I want to say I'm not rich. Um, I have, my parents are immigrants from Haiti. Um, my dad came here, um, looking for an accounting job, um, because that's what he, uh, mastered in in Haiti. Um, (he) couldn't find, well, couldn't get one because he didn't have his green card. So, instead of being an accountant, he passed by a dry cleaning business and they took him right in. And it was easy money. And from then on, he stuck with the dry cleaning business. [He became] the owner about 12 years ago.

She was not sure, but believed that her mother had not attended college. With weaker language skills, her mother worked as a cleaning lady. Larissa was ten years old when tragedy struck and her mother passed away from cancer:

Yeah, it was, it was hard times for a while. My dad raised us four kids for a couple years....So, I wanted to point out that we didn't, it wasn't a privileged type of childhood. Uh, my father worked for every penny he had. Um, but he made it. He raised – honestly, I thought I was rich because the way he raised us. We had everything we wanted.

Her father's hard work enabled the family to move to a new home, but the recession derailed his efforts:

So we moved from like, the ghetto in apartments to this big house. I finally had my own room. We had a backyard, a front yard. There was like a big tree in the front with a tire swing. So, we were just like "This is amazing!" Like, "This is life!" Like we all like, we moved up. And like, my dad was taking care of us. Um, but he still worked in Fairfield Country so we didn't see him as much....It was like, it was an amazing life. Uh, but then, my dad got remarried. Um, I don't know what happened. I still don't know what happened because my dad doesn't really like to talk about it, but we lost the house. And then we moved

back to Fairfield County. Um, bought another house. Not as big, but it was still a house.

Larissa is firm when detailing the fact that education was “not a joke” for her father and that there was an expectation to do well in school. Even when he was not available due to commitments at work, he expected the older siblings to assist the younger with their homework. His efforts paid off as her older sister and brother, who attended a selective private liberal arts college on athletic scholarships, would earn their degrees, with the youngest two on their way to doing the same. When she was in high school, her father’s standards made her “different” than many of her peers:

I was happy being different; because at my school, African-American students didn’t really take honors or AP classes. And, um, to be considered a black girl, that meant that you were unintelligent. So, um, in high school, I was called a white girl because I took AP and high, and honors classes, and I was also a cheerleader. Um, in high school, I sort of, “You’re not going to stop me from doing what I want to do.” And I guess you can kind of say I-I’m kind of hardheaded in that way because there are some things that I shouldn’t have done that I did. Um, but I was a cheerleader. I did band, um, well, color guard anyway; I didn’t play an instrument. I did the step team. I was part of a dance team. Um, I was part of the choir....I helped with tutoring every now and then. Um, during the summertime I would volunteer at camps, until I could finally become a camp counselor....I guess this is like bad to say, but I didn’t want to be a black girl. Because to be a black girl meant that you, you weren’t pushing yourself to do better. You weren’t getting straight As. You, um, you weren’t doing anything after school but like hanging out with friends...My thing is in high school, we actually had a group of Haitians – well, like, in high school, you always had the, like the immigrants, the students who, um, weren’t born in America....I don’t know, I guess they got caught up in the whole being bad boys and, you know, trying to look sexy and show off their bodies. And I have a father who just refused to let me wear any type of anything to school. And, um, every now and then they would look at me, or they would tell me like “You’re, you’re something different.” Like, “You’re a cheerleader and you’re getting straight As.” Or like, they wished they could be like me. And I told them like, “There is no reason why you can’t get straight As or why you can’t be, um, a cheerleader as well. It’s-it’s not that hard.” “You’ve just got to apply yourself.” And they’re just like “No, I could never do it.”

Given her success in high school and expectations at home, Larissa moved forward with college plans, selecting SU because of its Fashion program, a discipline for which she always had a passion. Many adults in her Haitian church community pushed her towards practical careers such as becoming a doctor, lawyer, or nurse, but her father supported her pursuing her dreams, as she described in a discussion they had as she was making a decision on where to study:

I remember having this conversation with my dad in the car. And I was like, “Daddy, I don’t know what to study when I go to college.” And he was just like. “You study whatever you want.” And I was just like, “What?” “Shouldn’t I study something that makes money?” And he was like, “Well, you have to be happy, too.” And he was like “I don’t want to tell you to study anything, and you don’t like it and you’re stuck with it.”...my dad was just like “No, do what makes you happy.” So, that’s what I stuck with.

On campus she was involved in several student organizations and was a Resident Assistant as well. Although she was pursuing a triple major, of the three, her passion was her Fashion major. Despite the challenge of taking three majors, she felt the majors did not have the level of respect that STEM field majors receive, so she usually informed new acquaintances of studies in the order of perceived importance:

And um, even with my triple major like, everyone's just like “Oh, but you have three majors and that's amazing!” And I look at my majors like, well it's not mathematics, it's not engineering, it's not anything in the medical field. I say “French, Education, Fashion.” Fashion usually goes last, which is bad because I love it.

Prior to college, travel for Larissa had been limited to domestic locations within the U.S., primarily to visit her godmother or for family vacations. She was exposed to the idea of travel to France in her high school from her French language class, but she never gave study abroad much thought despite considering it “part of college,” until her

older sister studied abroad on a short-term program that was embedded in her semester biology class:

And like we would talk about going to France and like, um, all the, um, um, sightseeing and, um, the great places that you could go to. But I never really, it never really dawned on me that I could go. And then when my sister went to London, I was just like, I never really, I still never really thought about it, you know? I was just like “Oh, you went to London.”...So then, I was like, “Okay, I’m going to France!” So, that’s the reason why I went to France. Um, well, not mostly the reason I went to France, but, um, because I saw what my sister did. Because she kind of led the way for the family. We saw that, okay, if she’s able to do it and not require as much money from my father then, you know, we can do it.

Her older brother would soon follow their older sister’s experience by going abroad for a semester, using his athletic scholarship to help finance the experience. As a result, Larissa decided to pursue the same option and started a conversation with her father:

[I asked] “Daddy, can I study abroad?” And he was like, “Yeah, go ahead.” And I was just like, “Are you sure?” And he was like, “Yeah, if you can find a way to pay for it, go ahead.” So, I found a way to pay for it. And he goes like, “Yeah if you can do it, do it.” And that’s it. I was just like “Alright.”

Receiving a Gilman Scholarship for study abroad assisted Larissa significantly, even though in the long run it was less costly to study abroad than stay at SU paying non-resident tuition:

It was amazing because for the longest time, when I applied, um, we were all just like, “Well, how are you going to fund yourself in France?”.... If I didn’t get the scholarship, I actually don’t – I honestly don’t know what would have happened. I’m pretty sure he would have found a way to help me. I think my dad would have found a way. I think my dad probably would have given me his credit card and would have been like, you know, “Be very conscious of what you purchase.”

In the end, the finances came together and Larissa had a productive experience.

Speaking of her successful experience, Larissa lamented the fact that the semester passed so quickly. She noted “I didn’t want to come back. I – it was amazing!

Addison

Addison was an in-state student majoring in Biomedical Engineering and Biology with minors in Chemistry and Sociology. She aspired to attend medical school. Describing herself as a “troublesome” child who was also “super smart” growing up, she related a tumultuous upbringing that resulted in being independent from the time she was 16 in order to escape an abusive household. Living in an undesirable family environment significantly contributed to pursuit of a study abroad experience when she was in high school as it served as means to leave home; at that time she went on a year-long exchange to Europe. Her exchange year experience set the stage for additional personal travel and participation in two short-term study abroad programs while at State University. She was the oldest of five, with an adopted brother who would eventually go “back with the State” when her parents divorced. Her mother and father, who she refers to as “smart people too,” had both completed college degrees, in music theory and computer science, respectively.

More so than many of the interviewees, Addison conveyed a deeper self-awareness and contemplative deportment. She self-identified as White, Female, Jewish and as a member of the LGBT community. She indicated that while she was growing up, they were essentially poor and lived in a household that would become chaotic during summers when their uncle, who had “mental problems,” would move in with his four children. Nonetheless, she relates that she had a lot of “cultural stuff”:

...the money was inconstant, so the money would come in and go out so fast. And it never really touched us kids. My parents didn't have good spending habits, and my father retired really early, for whatever reason. He's still retired.... And so, I don't know, we were raised like, my parents' families. So, my extended families had nothing to do with us. My mom, because her family was Catholic and she converted to Judaism, so they wanted nothing to do with

us or my father because they were all terrible people. So we estranged ourselves from them. So, there was no help coming in. So, any sort of, I don't know where I'm trying to go with this. They still raised us like we were middle class or something. Like, they'd tried to make us – my mom was very strict about grammar. We weren't allowed to speak with accents. Like, she wanted us to sound educated. She studied music when she was in college. So, she – really held value in culture.

It was while studying at a charter school that “one of the most amazing teachers I ever had,” piqued her interest in international travel:

Like, I was a troublesome child. But she just let me do whatever the hell I wanted. And I loved learning so, she'd let me, she'd let me go ahead or study something else. And, and she would tell us stories about teaching on these islands with – where like, they don't have paper and she had to teach in the sand and did math with rocks. And I was like, “I want to do that!” You know? And I was like in sixth grade. I was 12. Um, yeah, so that's, that's probably where it got planted. Although I wasn't so – it wasn't so specific...

Addison indicated that the internet was important for her because it was how she learned about programs abroad that would enable her leave home for a year. The dilemma was that she had no funds and needed to be 16. Her parents would not pay for it but said if she could get the money, they would sign the documents. After working and saving to cover the costs she added: “So two years later, I was like, sign here.”

She spent her junior year of high school studying in Belgium where got the “travel bug” and said she “wasn't afraid of just going someplace anymore.” Returning from her year abroad, however, she explained that her home situation was so bad that she ran away. Therefore, her time overseas also marked the time when she effectively became independent. Sleeping on couches “a lot,” she “kind of dropped out of high school.” But she was aware of “not wanting to be homeless forever,” so she applied to and managed to get admitted to State University.

SU literally became her home. Referring to scholarship and general financial support that might have been accessible to her, she admits that she “missed a lot of great opportunities because I had no clue.” Even pursuing state and federal financial aid was a challenge because she had been on her own but had never been legally emancipated since she “did not know what that was” and therefore, managed to creatively to get by. For example, volunteering for overnight shift as an EMT provided a place to sleep or, after her freshman year, working for the LGBT Center in exchange for room and board provided a residence. At the time of the interview, nearing the end of her college career, she had an apartment and added:

I have a partner and I work 25 hours. I'm on SNAP, so I get food benefits. Supplemental Nutrition Program through the state. And they give me utility help so, I pay like 30 bucks. Not that I even turn on the heat, but it's still 30 bucks a month. And yeah, it's going so well right now. I feel like a real person.

Having already studied abroad in high school, Addison saved for a three month trip to Central America after she graduated from high school, volunteered in Africa during a summer while at SU, and participated in two short-term study programs while in college – an intersession J-term service learning program in the Caribbean and a summer program in China. Citing her limited resources, she advised that “If you’re going to have an opportunity, you have to have money to take it, or you have to be creative enough to get the money.” Indeed, she was creative enough to find the financial resource for both her academic programs and non-academic opportunities via scholarships, working, financial aid, or fundraising. She explained that she had been deeply moved and inspired by her desire to help others after her service learning experience with the Nursing program that was providing health care to an impoverished area of the Dominican Republic. In addition, her volunteer efforts in northern Africa

were highly impactful. These experiences satisfied her goal is to help others, which she viewed as self-serving because helping made her feel good and was a priority:

Um, I think I took growing up with no money and applied it a different way. Like, I don't mind. I'll spend every penny I've got to go someplace and have no money while I'm there, have no money when I come back. I'm okay with that. Like, I'll fix it. I'll have enough for rent – when it comes around.

Ethan

Ethan was an in-state student who majored in Philosophy with a minor in Japanese and spent a semester during his junior year studying abroad in Japan. Had he not studied abroad, he would have also graduated with a degree in Anthropology and from the Honors program. Noting that he spent most of his life being “ambivalent about everything,” he seemed comfortable with his choice since he was not going to pursue grad school. Very articulate and a student who excelled academically, it was evident that he was a very intelligent individual who had reflected deeply about his study abroad experience and his life events in general. He was an only child of a single-parent for as long as he could remember, as his parents separated when his father disappeared while he was still a toddler. His mother also completed her college degree at SU and had a career in social work.

Ethan indicated that, while growing up, for a time he lived with his mother's fiancé and his four children who had “*real* behavioral issues,” so he spent a lot of time alone in his room where he discovered “a lot of sort of subcultures on the internet that emanated from Japan such as anime, manga, and gaming.” He explained that this early interest resulted in a curiosity about the Japanese culture that continued into college. Therefore, it seemed logical that Japanese would be the foreign language he studied in

college and, it “made sense” that he would eventually go to Japan for his study abroad experience.

Ethan attended a private, all-male preparatory high school where he excelled and had access to quality academic and extracurricular opportunities not typically found in most institutions, especially the public institution offerings within the region. He was under the impression that during his years at that institution his mother did not pay a large percentage of his tuition and that she was struggling to pay for a long period of time:

...because I would find letters from the school about it and I would find like drafts of her replies because there is a policy at [Speakman] that if you have not paid tuition you cannot take the final exams. But I was in the top 10 of the class and so she was not going to have that. So, there was this big behind the scenes thing that I never really saw.

In the end, he graduated from that institution and “walked into SU as a sophomore” because he had earned 35 college-level credits from Advanced Placement classes that were applied toward his university degree.

Although his interest in Japan and the Japanese language would eventually influence his study abroad destination, Ethan almost studied in England. When applying to colleges, his first choice was Ames University, which he describes as a study abroad oriented university. He learned of this institution because “they had a booth at the college fair at my high school.” The primary draw was the fact that if he had accepted the offer of admission, he would have spent his first semester in London. However, since the institution was not forthcoming with an attractive scholarship package, he opted for SU, especially since he was undecided on a major:

My initial idea was to come here for a couple years and try to figure out what I actually wanted to do and not waste a ton of money while figuring that out. I

didn't want to be spending \$40,000 at a college where I would be undeclared. So, this was kind of my version of [going to community college]. Then, I've just never gotten out of here. One of those things.

Settling on SU, he became involved in a lot his first week as a freshman and explained that it's how he met everyone he knew. Noting that his strength was to network, he became involved in multiple student organizations even after he decided to commute from home after his first year. Commenting on his experience versus that of a "typical" commuter student:

I had a weird experience of that effect because I was here and then I started commuting. But I was here for a while and I was here for, you know, 12, 13 hours a day. So, I was never part of the "go to class and then go home culture" that a lot of commuters are at SU. I noticed that and it boggles my mind because I was always so involved with student organizations, because I always had a place to go if I ever needed one.

Academically Ethan decided on Philosophy as a major as that was the discipline that he "thrived in most." He attributed this to the quality of the faculty. Offering the opinion that he generally did not think the academic programs at SU "were that good," he used his networking skills to seek out the professors that he liked, were intellectually challenging, and served as resources for other opportunities:

I have the skill, you know. "Who do I need to ask to figure this out?" And so, I also learned that the best approach for getting classes that you liked was signing up for zero classes. Show up for 24 credits on the first week and just pick the ones you like and ask for permission number so, you actually have to talk to the professors. And so, I was on good terms with most of the people that I was associated with. And so, became very close to Professor [Finley]. She directed me to [Karen Herring], who directs a lot of this sort of thing (scholarships) and [Karen] was able to point me to these four (national scholarship programs)...

Though he had little travel experience before he went to Japan, he knew before going to college that he wanted to study abroad:

I definitely came into the college with the idea I wanted to study abroad and that's why I was going to go to [Ames University]. In general I definitely wanted to study abroad. Initially I was going to England because I hadn't taken any language classes and they were not as important to me back then. And like I said, when it came time, Japan just made the most sense to me.

He finally decided to pursue studying abroad because he “wanted to do something with my life” after a series of disappointing personal experiences. Viewing the study abroad as a “sort of self-discovery,” he explored his options and utilized campus resources to discover and pursue scholarship opportunities. Although until that point he had paid for his SU tuition with “a lot of loans and scholarships,” financing his education became a more acute concern as his mother had an 18-month period of unemployment. In fact, that period of unemployment was the reason Ethan became eligible for the Pell Grant. He did not want to take on loan debt to study abroad, so scholarships were key to his participation:

It's also worth noting that I got two outside scholarships to go to Japan. What wasn't covered by the Gilman (scholarship) was covered by the Lemming (scholarship), but not knowing that, I definitely would have not made the decision to go if I had not gotten both of them...[I] applied to the Freeman and Boren (scholarships) too.

Explaining that he did not know how much he would have known about the study abroad and scholarship opportunities without the direction of specific faculty and staff, his networking ability proved to be advantageous. He applied for scholarships with confidence, even being told by one advisor that a specific national scholarship program gave out awards “like candy” when referring to the high volume of recipients and level of funding. For Ethan, the idea to study abroad had “been there,” he just needed to use his “go get it attitude” to put the funding together and make a semester abroad happen.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter began by presenting a comparison of the two groups and the words of the participants were presented to give specificity to the distinctions made between the two groups. These data support the claim that there are two kinds of low-income students who participate in study abroad and the two groups are roughly distinguished by the educational levels and associated social and cultural capital of their parents. The profiles primarily demonstrate the unique life histories of each individual. However, there were common threads or elements of experience for individuals from each group, even if not fully elaborated in each biographic overview above. These are presented in Table 4.5 below. This is not to suggest that all students share every single characteristic of these two profiles, but the commonalities within each emerged repeatedly during the multiple interviews conducted.

Table 4.5 – Overview of Common Profile Characteristics of WC and CA Groups

	<u>Working Class Students</u>	<u>Capital Accoutered Students</u>
Family College Culture	First generation college students. First of their siblings to succeed at completing college.	At least one parent with a college degree. Enrollment the norm for their immediate and extended families.
Economic Stability	Self-identified as working class, low income, or lower SES status. Financial limitation or instability prevails.	Backgrounds of financial stability or comfort until significant life event adversely impacted family wealth and economic welfare.
Residency	In-state resident students.	Out-of-state residents. If in-state resident students, transplants from other states or countries
Parent’s Occupation	Working class or service jobs.	Primarily professional.
Previous Travel	Minimal, domestic. International travel restricted to first generation students visiting family in parent’s country of origin.	Domestic and international. Leisure travel common prior to setback.
Selection of State University	SU was the default option.	College search/visits before selecting SU.
Academic Background	Majority from “underperforming” high schools.	From “good” public system or private high schools.
Navigating College Experience	Support from outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds.	Assistance and information from immediate or extended family.
Financing Education	Critical financial support enabling university attendance provided by outreach and student services programs.	Family assistance with accessing and acquiring financial aid. Institutional scholarship support.
Academic Discipline(s)	Diversity of majors – equal distribution. Not fully aware of options before college, selected major after entering SU	Diversity of majors – equal distribution. Aware of academic focus/discipline or interests when entering college.
Pre-College Study Abroad Awareness and Plan	Aware prior to attending SU. Did not think study abroad was a realistic possibility.	Aware prior to attending SU. Part of college plan.
Extracurricular Involvement	Moderate to high. Holding a student job to assist with college and living expenses (personal and family) essential.	Moderate to high. Holding a student job to assist with college expenses or discretionary spending common.
Study Abroad Participation Objectives	Less clear objectives, more focus on travel and “getting away.”	Articulated academic, skill development, or career-oriented.
Pre-Study Abroad Perceptions	Major accomplishment if achieved. Prime college experience.	Typical aspect of college experience.
Pre-Study Abroad Preparations - Family Involvement	Primarily proceeded independently and “figured it out.”	Active involvement. Knowledge acquired from study abroad experience of older sibling or other contacts.

Working Class Profile – History of Minimal Capital

As they progressed towards college, the WC students had personal histories that have been referred to as the “double whammy of disadvantage” (Lederman, 2009): they were from low-income families and were first generation college students. They had all received the message that they should go to college, and always knew that they were going, but details of how they would get there were generally ambiguous. Constrained by financial resources and unable to count on extensive social networks or the cultural capital of parents, they had to rely on formal and informal support from their institutions. Like the working-class students in Stuber’s (2011) study of a public university, in this case SU was the default choice. Most individuals recounted being told by high school counselors that SU was their option; they simply met with these individuals to obtain the college application fee waiver, or only selected SU on the Common Application. For WC students whose families were involved in their lives, their parents were supportive of their children’s goals, but lacked the experience and knowledge to help them navigate the educational context. Parallel to the “natural growth” children in Lareau’s (2003) extensive research, the parents put their faith in their student to find his or her way and the educational institutions to provide the appropriate support. In general, most WC students approached college unprepared to navigate the environment or access the institutional resources that would provide support. Rob’s comment that he wanted to “fill in the gaps” he “didn’t know were there” until he was at SU captures the sentiment and experiences of most of these individuals.

For most WC students, the transition to college was eased by the College Success Program or college readiness programs that provided student support throughout the college experience. These programs provided support and guidance helpful in succeeding academically or accumulating social capital that opened the doors to more opportunities at SU, including study abroad. Others would come to perceive these programs as having the potential of holding them back in the sense that they were treated as a CSP student at SU rather than a SU student who had CSP support; potentially, their participation kept them from fully integrating into campus and pursuing all the institution had to offer. Some would draw upon their level of motivation and personal achievement for taking them as far as possible, but putting faith in self-reliance was also limiting as opportunities were missed or delayed when they did not take advantage of support and access to social networks that were readily available to high capital students. Regardless, at a minimum, participation in these program provided critical financial support to make the pursuit of a degree feasible and at least put the WC students on campus, which otherwise, most alluded to, probably would not have occurred.

Specifically related to studying abroad, all of these students were aware of study abroad programming prior to attending SU and expressed an interest in, or desire to, participate when they were still in high school. Generally, the follow-up comment to their response, or attitude expressed, was similar to Josh's who stated with a matter of fact tone, "well, who doesn't want to see the world?" For these WC students, the goal of studying abroad was also viewed as a means to get away from environments that had not provided as much opportunity for them in the past, and there was a sense of

disappointment. They were not getting the same college experience as portrayed in the popular culture where students go away to college - they were at SU because it was the only option. However, despite the early interest, essentially most had given up the idea of studying abroad before they stepped foot on campus. Perceiving that they were already priced out of the opportunity, pre-study abroad participation was described as a dream or considered an activity for the well off. Having minimal experience with domestic travel, let alone international, study abroad was simply not part of their habitus. Living in a geographically small state, some of the WC students recounted having visited outside the state only once or twice in their lives prior to studying abroad.

Attending SU provided the WC students the chance to compare themselves with other students, especially those from out of state who were generally seen as being economically privileged because they were paying high non-resident tuition. Having been raised in “disadvantaged” situations with much lower levels of social and cultural capital than their peers at SU, many did not feel completely comfortable in the higher education environment. Yet, they were growing in ways that were making them feel different when at home or with family and hometown friends who did not go to college. Many conveyed a feeling of uncertainty similar to the sense of being caught between two worlds that other researchers have documented (Jensen, 2012; Lubrano, 2004; Ryan & Sackrey, 1996; Sennett and Cobb, 1992). Some also expressed a feeling of “survivor guilt” as described by Piorkowski (1983): as the only members of their immediate family and friends who are striving to climb the socioeconomic ladder, they questioned why they had succeeded where the others had not and possessed a sense of somehow

being disloyal to their relationships and roots as they moved forward and others were left behind.

Capital Accoutered – Abrupt Change, Accumulated Knowledge

The economic status of the CA students was relatively similar to the WC students, but primarily in the present-day. Most of the families of this group had experienced divorce or parental death, which resulted in a financial setback or constraint that had not been part of the majority of their upbringing. Most of their parents (or parent they lived with) were college educated and held professional positions that, combined with another income, would most likely have placed them in the middle class. However, the significant life event left most of these individuals in single parent homes with limited or greatly reduced resources in terms of time and money that could be directed toward an environment of “concerted cultivation” (Lareau,2003) that had been common before the limiting event. Despite the challenging life event, the CA individuals had experienced, or were provided with a lifestyle that familiarized them with a predominantly middle-class world and they exhibited a habitus that made attending college and participation in activities such as study abroad familiar. Limited economic resources were a concern but level of confidence in overcoming the financial obstacles, and higher level of social and cultural capital, provided a world view markedly different from the WC group.

Most of the CA students had knowledge that came from being raised in the culture of the middle class. As none were first generation college students, they had parents with backgrounds that provided an understanding of how the educational system works – and this was an awareness not present in the WC families. Their parents were

able to use their experience and knowledge of education and careers to provide their children with advice. If the parent was “stretched too thin,” extended family or social networks, served as resources. When preparing for college, substantial college searches were conducted by this group to find an institution that was “the best match” for personal or future career goals. Except for one member of this group, none had been life-long residents of the state. For most, SU was not in their home state. If it was, a very careful analysis was conducted before deciding to accept admission. Unlike the WC group, none felt limited to this option, though it may have been the most practical financial decision. If they decided to stay, they were very purposeful in their approach related to academic and extracurricular involvement in order to maximize their experience.

Compared to the WC group that relied heavily on the staff at CSP, or figured out things as they went, the CA students verbalized a level of confidence in seeking out opportunities, such as enrolling in the honors program or cultivating relationships with faculty and staff who would serve as important sources of assistance and information. Many also noted that they were recipients of institutional scholarships that reduced their costs to attend SU. Overall, they were advantaged simply by having family who knew that such programs or assistance existed and how to gain access. Even for the CA students who had lost access to some family relationships, possession of accumulated cultural resources yielded a social profit as they were able to effectively “activate” them (Lareau, 1989) independently.

Similar to the WC group, the CA students were aware of study abroad prior to their attending college. A significant difference was that they overwhelmingly viewed the

opportunity as part and parcel to the college experience. Most had experienced previous international travel or had participated in high school excursions abroad. For those who were not the oldest child in their family, several had siblings who had already studied abroad. The endeavor was familiar and was not perceived as an “once-in-a-lifetime experience,” but as an activity that was viewed as an investment in personal or career skills development. Although financing the experience was a concern, the more significant challenge was working out logistical details related to curriculum requirements or evaluating the pros vs. cons of participation in the larger context of future career or graduate study plans. For the CA group, study abroad was an option for a more clearly understood progression through life after SU.

As detailed above, two general profiles emerged from the Pell Grant (or low-income) student groups. Outlining the significant differences provides the background for findings and conclusions presented in the following chapters. Although both groups faced the challenge of limited financial resource, the Capital Accoutered group was equipped with higher levels of social and cultural capital than the Working Class students when they entered college, when they began to explore study abroad options, and when they returned from a study abroad experience. These differences provide important insights into a more nuanced understanding of how low-income students successfully activated or accumulated levels of capital in order to study abroad. With these data, the hope is to inform educators about how to better assist students from this traditionally underrepresented population as they considered and participated in these programs.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

Introduction

The preceding chapter provided the two profiles of Working Class and Capital Accoutered students to provide the life stories of these individuals and common experience influenced by level of social and cultural capital and habitus of each participant. As indicated in Chapter Three, the coding and data analysis process revealed the two distinct Pell Grant student profiles. Prior to the emergence of the two subgroups, during the initial coding phase I pulled various codes into groups and categories. This categorization and analytic reflection process resulted in three primary themes or thematic categories that rose out of, and were the outcomes of, the data (Saldaña, 2009). Once this was completed, I reread all transcripts and coding tables that had been created during the analytical process and selectively coded the data to the central themes generated. To give voice to the population studied, I used the actual words the participants utilized when describing their experiences. These were:

- a. Theme 1 –“Believing You Can Do It Is the First Step” – Actualizing the Study Abroad Experience.
- b. Theme 2 - “This is What I Know” – Economic, Social, and Cultural Capital in the Study Abroad Context
- c. Theme 3 – “Making Me Consider Options I Wouldn’t Have Considered Before” – Reflection and Transformation from Studying Abroad

As with the previous chapter, themes and findings are primarily presented in a manner that reveals the differences between the two profiles to give specificity to the distinctions made between the two groups of low income students that studied abroad. This chapter is organized by the three themes listed directly above and comparisons

between the two groups when relevant. Research literature is used as a lens for highlighting meanings of what the students are saying. Connections are made to the literature for the purpose of analysis and understanding the talk of the students interviewed.

Theme I – “Believing You Can Do It Is the First Step” – Actualizing the Study Abroad Experience

For almost every student interviewed there was an awareness of college-level study abroad that originated no later than the final years of their high school education. While financial resources constrained the sense of feasibility to participate in these programs as they entered State University, their habitus seemed to guide their beliefs as to whether or not these opportunities were for “someone like them.” The WC students had overwhelmingly been exposed to the concept by chance through peers or a mentor who took interest in them while the CA group had a more developed frame of reference about studying abroad through siblings, networks of contacts linked to social class position (of the past), or accumulated familial cultural capital. Alyssa’s explanation of her biggest obstacle to pursuing study abroad elicited a response that was expanded to include her college pathway, and exemplified the experience of many WC students:

I think money was my biggest obstacle. Like, it was always just in my head of “I can’t afford that” and, without even knowing the price. I just always assumed it was out of my, it was like, that thing that kids whose parents are paying for, like giving them a full ride or like it’s that thing the rich kids go do. Like, I don’t mean that in like, a bad way, but it was and that might come from part of my upbringing as well because...we weren’t in poverty but we weren’t, we, I grew up in a, like mobile home park and then we moved to this like nice house and, but it’s like my parents never had money... the school district I lived in, those people had money... those were the people that like I went to school with and it was just like that’s what they do, which is one of the reasons I graduated (from high school) early was because I was just like “I don’t fit in here.” So yeah. But it was, that was the thing. It was one of those things like the, the rich kids, like they fill out the college applications and they go to the big universities and like

I'm going to go to community college because that's what I'll be able to afford. Like that's just the things that made sense to me. It was my worldview. Like I, I didn't know.

Salisbury et al's (2009) study suggested that in general, the intent to study abroad is positively related to social and cultural capital accumulation prior to attending college. The data from this study seemed to support these findings, with a small caveat. While the CA group relied on bonding or inclusive capital (Putnam, 2001), the WC students were primarily limited to an interest in study abroad until "bridging" capital in the form of trusted peers or advisors motivated them to explore and pursue what previously seemed to be a "pipe dream" and made them determined to find the means to participate. Interest became intent, surprising themselves and those closest to them. As demonstrated by the reaction of Jade's family when she told them of her decision to study abroad:

I think off-the-bat, they were just shocked that, like, somebody was actually doing that. Because I don't think they even know many people that studied abroad. So I think it was just, like, "Oh my gosh!" "Jade's actually doing it!" So, I think it was a shock and a little excitement in there.

Believing You Can Do It Is the First Step

For many populations that historically have not studied abroad, such as first generation college students, the perception that study abroad is superfluous or simply not for them has been frequently noted (Dessoff, 2006). On the other hand, students of upper-class backgrounds who have studied abroad view the experience as a rite of passage that will provide personal growth and development (Zemach-Bersin, 2009). The students in this study did not suggest that their experiences were an extravagance, but had perceived the enterprise as the purview of "rich students." Although they had

precollege interest, at least the WC students had experienced what has been referred to as “not-for-people-like-me” syndrome, where they did not think that study abroad was for them and had filtered out or ignored information about study abroad (Jackson, 2005) as they began their studies at SU. In short, most had already self-selected out of the possibility. Jade’s mindset was typical of many of the interviewees:

I first wanted to study abroad when I was in high school. Like, at first, I was just like, “Oh my God, I can do that.” “It’s so cool.” Um, but I never thought I would *actually* do it. It was just like a really cool thought. Then I came here, and I still – I actually still, today, can’t believe that I studied abroad. I can’t believe I actually did it.

For the WC students, most considered themselves fortunate to have even made it to college and credited some form of college outreach and support program for students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds for making it possible. Although interested in studying abroad, the constraints of their habitus (Satterlee, 2009) initially saw them forgo investigating the possibility. The CA group, although facing diminished economic resources, had amassed sufficient social and cultural capital, that provided a level of comfort with the idea of participating on a program at some point during their college career. Even though financing was a concern, it was generally viewed as a surmountable obstacle that could be offset with alternative forms of funding such as scholarships or financial aid. In essence a cost-benefit analysis was conducted and if the experience was deemed important to their future plans and aspirations, securing the economic resource was pursued even if it meant accepting the burden of future loan debt.

Students from both groups in this study noted that for students with limited economic resource, believing that they could study abroad was essential. Addison summed up this sentiment in the following way:

Believing you can do it is the first step. Or even just the belief. It doesn't have to be real. It can be completely fictional. Mine might be completely fictional. I have no idea. But the belief that you can do it is the first step, otherwise, you're not going to even try. Or you might try half-heartedly. Or you might try – but also try Plan B just in case, which isn't giving it your all.

Although both the WC and CA students were interested in study abroad prior to college, how they “took the first step” followed two distinct paths elaborated in the sections that follow.

WC Perspective – Believing Is the First Step

As indicated, the participants were interested in study abroad well before they put foot on campus but had self-selected out of pursuing the opportunity as they did not see themselves as someone who could study abroad. Although cost, personal responsibilities or curriculum constraints are often cited as explanations for non-participation of students traditionally underrepresented in study abroad, the students in this study did not cite these as the foremost factors for not acting on their curiosity about the whole enterprise. This does not dismiss the real life obstacles these individuals faced, but until they believed that studying abroad was actually for someone like them, they did not act. For them, participation was reserved for people who were “well off”, “privileged”, “better off kids,” or “out of stater's.” It was not until a trusted individual normalized the experience in their consciousness as something they saw themselves doing. In several instances, the WC alumni that had dismissed the

possibility went on to participate in multiple programs and would become staunch advocates for others of similar backgrounds and means to follow their path.

For many of the WC students few had direct experience with these programs or role models that had previously participated. They had made decisions not to participate based upon their perceived notion of who typically went abroad. At SU, many WC students indicated that prior to participation their image of the typical participant was someone from out of state (“out of stater’s”) and in a fraternity or sorority (“Greeks”). Given the high cost of non-resident tuition and perception that the “Greeks” were from specific geographic regions in the northeast that are associated with wealth, the terms seemed to serve as the vernacular for someone who was privileged, from the upper social classes, and carried a negative connotation of a party lifestyle. This was the case for Asia until a trustworthy peer altered her outlook. Her discourse captures the elements described by multiple interviewees:

Uh, after my first year, one of my, um, yeah, one of my good friends, uh my good friends, uh, she’s into anthropology as well, and she said “I went on a study abroad program.” “I really loved it.” Um, “You should try it.” You know, it’s to Belize. So I was like “All right.” It’s something I like, I don’t know anyone who is doing this, but I’m going to go. And I went online and I probably filled the application three times before I actually like finished it.

She continued:

I always knew, um, since probably I was like 11 that I wanted to travel. Like, I didn’t think it would, like study abroad wasn’t like a word that I knew, but I knew I wanted to travel, um. And then as I got older, I started, watched PBS and National Geographic and all of this, and I think I want to do that. I don’t know what it’s called, but that’s really cool. Um, and then when I came to college, my, um. So, I found anthropology and I found out what it was and what I wanted. And my friend Peg, like she just made it seem so real, because she like actually did this. And I was like, well, if you can do it, I know I can do it. Like, this-this is fun! Like it seemed more tangible now that I knew somebody. It wasn’t just like this, thing that you hear about and you read about. It was like

actually somebody I know and talk to and have class with did this and she says it's good, so.

Clarifying this discourse in her second interview she elaborated further:

Well, my friend really recommended it, and so, I was like, "Dude, if she can do it, I can totally do this." ...she, Peg made it real. Like I'd never knew anyone, like I always thought the people who studied abroad were like, I don't know, rich seniors who just did it for fun. Like, I don't know, I thought. It just wasn't like anybody I ever knew who ever talked about it. And then, most people in my major, when I started to take more classes in my major, they were like, "Yeah, like people in our major, this is what we do." Like, "Everyone who's an anthropologist studies abroad." And I was like, "Really?" "All right." Well, this is going to be me.

Discussing the importance of her perceptions being altered, she described how she came to use what influenced her to participate to inspire others:

I think that's when so many of my friends, or just, or like my students, like all of my students would just be like, "I really want to do this." And I'd be like, "You guys, I did it." Like, it seems when you know someone then everything just makes so much more sense. Like you, you can't be it if you can't see it. Or you can't, you know what I mean? Like you, it's not real unless you can see yourself doing it. I think when other students tell you that, like a professor can tell you like you would be great for this. But if someone else like, "Oh, I did that trip last year." Like, "I know you." "You'd, you'd love it!" Then you're just like, in your head you're like, "Yes!"

Even for the only WC student, Alyssa, who had never had an awareness of study abroad, being able to relate to someone else who had participated in the programs, made the difference. Explaining that "it wasn't until I got to SU that I really heard like, I've heard of study abroad, like had any idea how it even remotely happened." It was a new boyfriend and relatable friend that opened her eyes to the opportunity and motivated her to move forward:

She (friend) did a lot of study abroad's too. And then as, and also was an older student. She's the one that told me about the Belize faculty-led study abroad... The bug to travel came from talking to Chris, um, because he had just traveled everywhere. And then Lisa was really the first person that I had talked to about like, "Oh, I could actually like go study and do this."

Generally, seeing someone they knew or could relate to that made studying abroad seem possible if you were not “well off” was noted as significant for all of the WC students. What complemented the shift in perspective for most was also the suggestion, approaching an “invitation,” from the same individuals to make them believe they should and could study abroad, with the belief providing the impetus to surmount additional perceived barriers such as cost. Ironically, upon their return a number of WC group individuals would find themselves in the position of being associated with those they stereotyped prior to going abroad themselves, providing new insights into the influence of cultural capital and social class. Mariana’s reflective talk serves as an example:

I think everyone in their mind, when they think study abroad, they automatically say it’s a constant, it’s an expensive, it’s an expensive thing, so. That just, um, or me being able to study abroad and being able to tell the stories of the places I’ve gone. I think automatically gets associated with “Oh she has money!” So [now], it gives me an edge in that way that people don’t look at me as “Oh, Latina, she doesn’t have money.”

CA Perspective – Just Taking the Step

Similar to the WC students, the Capital Accoutered group alluded to factors, such as cost, that presented challenges to participation for them. They also overwhelmingly indicated that taking part in study abroad was considerably overrepresented by students from circumstances of financial comfort. Despite the similarity of opinion, they were generally more direct in their responses. For example, Addison’s concise response “I think the perception of study abroad is that it is for the upper class” was typical for this group. “Greeks” or “out of stater’s” did not serve as a proxy for privilege, they primarily identified class status as a fundamental characteristic

of the participants. Lacking financial resources, these individuals had higher levels social and cultural capital that was very distinct from the WC group. Although their financial situation had been compromised in some manner, they shared characteristics that were similar to many socioeconomically advantaged students who are more likely to come from families with a tradition of study abroad participation. These personal home-life circumstances promoted a “valuable resource” in the form of awareness and knowledge of study abroad opportunities (Simon & Ainsworth, 2012). For the CA students study abroad was part of their habitus. If they felt taking the step to go abroad was personally beneficial, they were adept at activating their capital resources to overcome potential barriers.

At a minimum, the CA students were fully aware of study abroad as a possible option for them prior to attending SU. Julia indicated she knew “a girl from my home town who also went to SU.” She added that “the (acquaintance) was a few years older, she studied abroad in Italy, so I always knew that there was study abroad.” Most however, had already envisioned participating. Eva reiterated this throughout her interviews with comments such as “I figured, ‘I’ll make time for that in my schedule at some point’ so, when I came into school, I already knew that I wanted to go abroad” and “Before coming to college I knew that’s something that I wanted to do, before I completed college was study abroad.” When questioned about the effectiveness of the institution to encourage or inadvertently dissuade participation, Nikki replied without hesitation:

I decided I wanted to study abroad before I even entered college. I mean, I wouldn't say like the University like attracted me to it, neither did they like [discourage]. Yes, I had kind of already made up my mind before I even came

here. I'm, don't know if I'm a good person to ask if the University helped attract [me to the program] because I already knew I wanted to go.

Ethan's interest was such that his first choice institution when applying to colleges was Ames University, an institution he referred to as "a study abroad oriented university," because he would have spent his first semester in London. He decided not to attend that institution due to the high cost, delaying his study abroad participation. However, his decisive steps to pursue study abroad matched the precollege intentions of the other CA students.

Unlike their WC peers, the CA group students perceived studying abroad more than an option for others, they knew it was a possibility. Additionally, they tended to understand the experience as step towards achieving future goals rather than an end in itself. As an example, Addison discerned the opportunity to use her study abroad participation to bolster her medical school application. As her personal background had resulted in being independent as a teen, she perceived an advantage of using the experiences to counter the lack of economic and social capital. She reasoned "anyone who goes outside of the linear path [by participating in a program like study abroad] even a little bit, we're almost treated as special." "Because what gets you into medical school is your grades and who you know and your money. And I've got none of those [last two], really none." Despite her minimal social and economic capital resources, she had the awareness of how to navigate the process and familiarity with the reality that accumulation of additional social and cultural capital was essential to move forward.

Networks of Support - Bridging and Bonding Capital

As elaborated in the previous section, whether or not the CA or WC students knew about study abroad prior to college did not necessarily mean they would pursue the opportunity when they arrived on campus. The data suggested that whether or not they would follow through was significantly influenced by the accumulated cultural and social capital they each possessed. For the CA students, familial experience and support established options as a normative component of college. The WC students, however, relied heavily on peer networks and trusted institutional representatives before they came to the realization that they too could actually study abroad. The concepts of bridging and bonding capital (Putnam, 2001) are helpful concepts to further unpack the importance of social networks in relation to making the desire to proceed a reality.

WC – Bridging Capital from a Trusted Peer or Mentor

The majority of WC students came to college interested in study abroad but indicated that they would not have pursued the opportunity if not for the influence of a trusted peer or mentor. These influential individuals contributed to the belief that participation was equally possible for them as any other student. As all WC interviewees were first-generation college students most recounted a pattern of having to “figure out” the SU environment as they proceeded. Study abroad was generally not considered within the realm of possibilities. What proved significant to making the decision to apply and move forward was the bridging social capital provided by trusted friends or peers encountered on campus, especially high social capital peers. For those providing the “bridge,” study abroad was normative or part of their own experience. The bridging capital provided an important conduit to information and knowledge

related to study abroad opportunities and made the activity seem inclusive rather than reserved for a select group of privileged students. In essence these peers served as “cultural mentors” helping the WC student acquire a “limited set” of cultural resources that are more common for students of middle class backgrounds (Lareau & Calarco, 2012, p 65). The sharing of experience and knowledge assisted understanding how to navigate and engage the various institutional agents that were part of study abroad process. For example, both Asia and Alyssa were very specific identifying their peer cultural mentors as being primarily responsible for their decision to proceed and provide important details on how to proceed. Describing the influence Alyssa noted:

(T)he biggest one would probably be Lisa, like as far as getting me here. Because she was an older student already here and she had already started dealing with (the study abroad) office. And jumping through, like “how do I get the department to give me money to do this?” And “what if I want to do that?” Like figure, she had already started figuring it out and she was, she was a year ahead of me in the like, in “the game.”

The “game” Alyssa refers to is the institutional bureaucracy that required the social and cultural capital provided by her friend to help her navigate her way. This same friend also assisted with identifying sources of funding. Her interest in off-campus study also emerged from the social support she began receiving from her boyfriend and the fact that having an international study experience was normative to him.

The influence of cultural mentors proved significant for others even if they were not close friends of the WC students. Jade explained that a recent study abroad program alumnus came to the meetings of a student organization to share his experience and recruit:

So we had, well, they had one of, a representative come to one of our board meetings, and they just talked about the program, and a couple of us were like, “Yeah, it sounds really cool!” “Let’s do this!” And, I mean, after then, they – I

think they came back one more time and talked about it, and I was sold from there. Yeah. Um, yeah. I think it was more in, like, the recruitment who did it. Like, they actually went out there. They actually went to every organization. They talked about it in a really great way. So that got the students to say, “Oh, yeah. I really should go.” “This should be a great experience.”

When asked to comment further on the importance of the representative being a fellow student she continued:

That’s very important. I think that’s key in getting students to study abroad. Like, a student has to be saying it to someone else. Yeah. I, and I feel like if it’s coming from a faculty member, it’s, you kind of feel like it’s their job to just say that to you. But if you see a student, you know that they’re taking their time out to tell you about a great experience that they had. It’s probably more of a trust thing.

Asia expressed the same sentiments:

I don’t know. I think more important like a, a peer, so that I have a role model. I think, like, a role model to somebody who’s usually a lot older than. This was a peer it’s like, “Hey, we’re on the same level. If you can do it, I can do it. There’s nothing really separating us.”

Reflecting upon her return and desire to encourage others from a similar background to study abroad, Mariana also emphasized the importance of peer influence. Indicating that she had directly influenced two younger students in her CSP support group to study abroad because she “hit them” with her stories and shared how she had a positive experience. As a CSP student the others, who were the same, could relate to her so she was perceived to have level of credibility. Noting that since they are “all CSP” that there is a bond of trust that makes the others believe “I can do it” since she had done so already.

Although the majority of WC students credited their cultural mentors for moving forward, not all had the benefit of an experienced peer. However, “collaborating” or providing mutual support with an acquaintance proved beneficial for

others, coupled with a mentor or some other trusted institutional representative. For instance, as a commuter and transfer student from the local community college, Mario expressed feelings of being on the periphery of campus life as he did not have the same access to the social networks as one living on campus:

Yeah, I would say – I would say connected, but I was like, yeah, a little bit on the outside, I would say...because you're at the home life still, it's like you're not in a dorm, it's like, I mean, I would – that's one aspect that I kind of wish I did for like a semester. It's like living in a dorm. It's just a chance to meet a bunch of different people from either different states, or – province or wherever – for a semester, but like yeah, it's something – it's something I wish I did a little bit more. If I did that, because then it would have opened me up to some more [opportunities]...

Having developed a friendship with another student in his class, both decided to pursue a short-term program being led by their professor:

(W)e just became friends at school, he said he was, like-we talked about it a little bit, and we're like "Oh are you thinking about it?" And we kind of both were, like on the fence and then we just sort of like, "Yeah!" Eventually it was like, "Yeah I want to go if you go!" And like he's like, "Yeah I'm doing it!" And so we were like, "All right, sweet, let's do it!" It was nice to know someone else to do it with, it was just like kind of, just comfortable...a little more comfortable so it was really sweet that we both decided on doing it and that after that I was, like, whatever. [Laughs]

The "partnership" was sufficient to convince him to move forward. Moving forward together was reinforced as the faculty member established their trust and provided reassurance and support for them to stay the course. Mario added that since he was able to hear "straight from her, face to face" with questions or concerns that could have led to cancelling his plans had.

Similar to Mario, Sherise had also explored studying abroad with an "inexperienced" peer. Always interested in study abroad, she attended SU's study abroad fairs and information sessions, but did not seriously consider taking the next step

until making a joint study abroad appointment with her friend. Even as he eventually dropped out of the process due to his own personal situation, she had proceeded far enough along in the process where her family had time to accept her plans and come to provide the support that enabled her to follow through.

For these WC students the referent peers were more influential than most other individuals, at least in the decision making stage, including SU faculty and staff. This does not, however, suggest that institutional representatives did not maintain an important role in the process. College success of many working class students can often be partially traced to a mentor who went out of his or her way to encourage and provide for students (Tokarczyk, 2004). This was the case with Mariana who benefitted from what Armstrong & Hamilton have referred to as “creaming” (2013). Since she was a CSP student who began her academic career with a solid GPA, her academic promise brought gained the attention of a faculty member who took an interest in her and served as her mentor. Although Prof. Surrey provided counsel, he was referred to as a friend. He guided and provided essential support for this, and other initiatives and, although not a peer, served as a cultural mentor filling in where parental social and cultural capital were not abundant. This relationship was so critical to her plans to study abroad and college success in general:

(In Prof. Surrey) I know I have someone I can talk to and someone that, like my mother, because my mother doesn't get it. I mean my mother didn't, she didn't go to higher education. She doesn't understand it 100%. She gets it, you know, like a mother gets it, but she but she doesn't “get it get it.” Professor Surrey does get it because, Professor Surrey you know, so it's nice to have him...

Overall, primarily peer relationships advanced study abroad application and participation for this group, but other individuals served as cultural mentors if quality

and trusted relationships were established. In addition, despite the fact that a large volume of information and processes (e.g. applications) were on-line throughout the process, many WC students expressed an ongoing preference to work with institutional staff in person when seeking program details or support. Jade's comments summed up the inclination expressed by the WC group to work directly with the international professions in person versus using on-line resources by stating "(s)ome things are necessary, that personal relationship, that is so important." "Yeah. I think I need it." At least for her first experience abroad (she was planning another at the time of the interview), she also expressed the need to know who was leading her program adding "Well I'm the type of person – I don't think I could trust just, like, anyone to just take me out of the country, let alone, the state." "So I think I would actually have to know who I'm going with." This prerequisite of familiarity and trust extended to the program selection for several of these individuals, with several only opting for programs fully coordinated and delivered by SU staff over other possibilities offered by other institutions or program providers. Asia's talk comprehensively captured the comments by the majority of the group explaining the level of institutional support that made them feel comfortable to move forward. Detailing her initial study abroad experience that would eventually become the first four different programs, and why she veered away from non-SU run programs:

Um, mainly because it was through the school. Like I – I feel like whenever I did research or like, "I want to travel, I want to do this." It seemed way too much to grasp, and I was like, I had no idea where to even start with the e-mails or calls, so, because it was SU, I was a lot felt more comfortable, and I was like, "Okay, I know that if there's an office on campus where I can go to if I have any questions, like it seemed more accessible."

During her second interview she elaborated further:

(It was mostly important to me because I knew that if I was nervous or had any, like, doubts, there was an office. But it was mostly just that I knew there was Study Abroad office on campus, and when I first started, the Study Abroad office was actually in the College Support Building where the CSP was right over there. And I felt way more comfortable. I was like it's right over there, and like if I'm too scared I can run back to my advisor whose office is around the corner, and she can kind of like – like ease me in to dropping off the application. Uh, so it was way more comfortable, just because I knew that there was a place on campus where I could go to, because, again, if there wasn't a place on campus, I kind of would have just kept the application in my room...

In her final interview she pinpointed her point:

It's the, it's the human interaction that helps the most, I think. So when I would drop off the application, I'd ask questions that I was like, like, burning questions I always had to have. And then, um, (the study abroad staff) would just, like, be really reassuring like, "This is fun." like easy. "Here's some things from before." Just like refer – and just, "Maybe you should think about this." I think that you miss out on that if you just fill in an application online and, like, it just doesn't seem, I think it seems more real when you actually have to drop something off, talk to somebody. There's more accountability.

Although many of the WC students were part of the College Support Program, or similar college success program, the support of peers to reassure, guide through the process, or simply answer questions, was frequently described as holding significant value and influence as someone they could "relate to." However, this did not exclude other individuals as serving as guides or cultural mentors: what was suggested repeatedly was the element of trust. Indeed, institutional representatives did serve this role for several of the WC students and provided the information and support that were not available from their traditional social networks or home environment that shifted their attitudes about whether or not they would pursue a study abroad experience.

CA – Bonding Capital from a Sibling or Social Networks

Nearly the entire CA group entered college anticipating that a study abroad opportunity awaited them. For many of them, their families actively reinforced and supported their goal to participate. In addition, the character of their social capital was bonding in nature (Putnam, 2001) as they were from knowledgeable families with siblings who had studied abroad or were connected to networks of relatives, friends, and formal acquaintances that provided additional information or made the experience familiar. Despite financial challenges, they possessed the cultural capital that helped them to successfully pursue and participate in a program. When facing barriers to participation that might derail their goal, their efforts were bolstered by the assistance or guidance of their family or aforementioned web of social networks.

For many of the CA students it was their parents who provided guidance and helped them navigate the university system. Although financing study abroad was a concern, it was not uncommon for parents be fully involved in finding and securing resources to provide access and opportunity for their children. For example, Emma's parents lacked the means to finance the education of all three children, but knew how to negotiate the financial aid process – “my mom does like the FAFSA forms and all those things.” The sizable amount of loan debt she would be responsible for weighed on her mind, but for the present, she could focus her attention on maximizing her college experience adding that “They want us – they wanted us to, you know, experience as much as we can. They were always like, you know, trying to make sure we were happy and things.” As a consequence, Emma had been provided with opportunity to participate in international travel programs in high school and her older brother had

been afforded the opportunity to study abroad in college, inspiring her to want to do the same.

As Emma experienced, family encouragement normalized study abroad and swayed Eva's decision. She had been advised of the benefits in high school, but it was her parents and, in particular, her sister's study abroad experience that was most influential:

The (high) school, um, in one of our meetings, like with our guidance counselors, they provided us with, like, just some, like, small information about (study abroad). Just, like, kind of hinting at it. Just saying, like, "This is a really good opportunity for you to," like, "go to a different country and learn different skills", like things like that, and be, like, culturally immersed, like in whatever." So, um, that's kind of where it stemmed from. But I mostly, like, got the idea from my sister.

After expressing interest she goes on:

Everyone was really excited and really supportive. Um, my mom, especially, she's was like, "Go see Europe!" like, "Go enjoy yourself!" And same with my dad.

Larissa also reiterated the importance of her siblings. As a first generation American, there was not a tradition of study abroad in her family; however, her father possessed cultural resources that were significant in actually realizing social advantage and gaining educational advantages (Lareau, 1989). Indicating "it never really dawned on me that I could go," and that she had always thought "(study abroad) was meant for white people, you would call, with money," her father guided his children to accumulate educational opportunity and higher levels of social and cultural capital despite their economic struggles. As a result, by the time she reached SU, study abroad had become common in her family:

Um, then my sister went off to college. And, um, she studied abroad. She went to London. So after my sister went to London, my brother, last semester or the

semester before I did – went to Barcelona. We're a year apart. So then I was like "Okay, I'm going to France!" So that's the reason why I went to France. Um, well, not mostly the reason I went to France, but, um, because I saw that my sister did. Because she kind of led the way for the family. We saw that, okay, if she's able to do it and not require as much money from my father, then, you know, we can do it.

Clarifying further, her discourse reveals how the high levels of social and cultural capital provided opportunities in multiple aspects of her family's educational experience and provide the "know how" on how to take advantage of programs to minimize financial barriers to study abroad:

Um, and then it wasn't until my brother went, honestly, because my sister I know that her program was paid for by her university, because she was studying Bio and um, through the Bio and her GPA, then everything was just paid for. And so my dad just gave her spending money, um and she was responsible, not like me, so she wouldn't spend a lot, um, but then my brother went and he has a full scholarship through the university because he plays [a sport]. So he had and he worked um, at a really, really nice internship because he is an Economics major so he landed like a really nice paid internship for the summer before he left. So, he saved up a lot of money to go and I believe the school gave him some funding as well. Um, but I know for him I knew studying abroad was a fun time. Because it was like he went to Spain and I'm like you're not studying Spanish at all, you're just going because you want to go. And he's just like, "It's part of college." And then my sister went because it was made accessible to her and then she also received credit for it, so I know it was about school and because she wanted to go. Um, so then by the time I started studying, I went for me.

Although confident that her father would have come up with funding to make her semester abroad possible, Larissa utilized experience and knowledge provided by her family and secured a Gilman scholarship, significantly narrowing the gap between the cost of her program and her financial resource.

Although some of the CA students were only children or the oldest child in the family, removing the potential of having an older sibling as an influence to study abroad, they had access to other important social networks or recognized that their

experience could encourage their younger family members to participate. For example, Ethan's mother had identified the advantage of sending him to an exclusive private high school where he benefitted from the influence of social networks that established studying abroad the norm – to the point that his college preference had been the “study abroad oriented” institution. Nikki provided an awareness of bonding capital and how it could be utilized to encourage friends and younger siblings. When asked how she would inspire others to proceed as she said:

I would want to say it's more time educating people because, um, just like I think through word of mouth, uh, (information about) study abroad gets around better. Word of mouth is also better and like, I now tell all my friends, like “You have to study abroad.” I push all my friends, simply, like “No, you have to study abroad!”

Elaborating on the same topic later in her interview, she discussed the importance of precollege capital and provided further insight into the origin of her plans and how they were established by the cultural socialization she had received at home:

...I realize that as well, that's why I said I have younger siblings. I just remember that's how I got introduced to (study abroad). It was kind of cool, them knowing that I was going abroad. I don't know. Maybe, like I had hoped to introduce (study abroad) to them as well just like it was introduced to me. Along with like any of my friends, I tell them “You have to study abroad, this is so cool!” I feel like, that word of mouth is definitely being a big - I wouldn't say it attracts a lot of people, word of mouth, just because you get to see someone's life personal experience. It's just more personal.

In addition to the importance of securing the financial resource, proceeding with a study abroad experience also requires the belief that leaving campus for a period of time to study abroad will be both enjoyable and beneficial (Stuber, 2011). For several of the CA students who had become estranged from their families or found themselves in a situation where their traditional family support system had been compromised in some manner, requiring self-reliance, the perceived benefits of study abroad seemed to

see them through to participation. The vestiges of earlier socialization had provided the confidence and “capital tools” that impacted the way they approached campus resources. Miriam for instance was determined to study abroad because she perceived it would help her become a better healthcare professional by learning another language and being able to understand diverse cultural perspectives. Despite the fact that the acrimonious separation of her parents left her to take charge of her education independently, she was prepared to proceed. Regardless, her family upbringing had provided foundational knowledge that guided her to access the SU Honors programs and develop relationships with faculty and access other academic resources that she navigated confidently. It was an advisor in the Honors program that presented the opportunity to study on a faculty-led program. Without this encouragement she indicates that she “probably would not have studied abroad” as her pending degree already showed promise of exceptional professional opportunities. However, once inspired to proceed she deftly navigated the institutional process. Her early upbringing had taught her how to take advantage of identifying opportunities. For example, she actively consulted with faculty on how to maximize her study abroad experience so she could secure the necessary credit(s) to alter the pursuit of a minor in a second language to a earning another degree in Spanish. Aware of her limited economic means, she engaged the financial aid staff to understand how to secure, and receive, sufficient funding for her program. Her habitus provided her a high level of confidence to proceed:

(Taking loans) I know I’m going to finish school, like – I know myself, you know? You have – If you’re – If you’re someone who is not very motivated, you might drop next semester, or take it off, or might do part time, and you don’t really know what your major is, then you might not feel – because you

might not be able to pay it back. But I know that, you know, I'm motivated, and I'm going to do this, and either way, I just got this job, and I'm going to work, and I'm going to do this. And I had that motivation, so financial issue? Yes, it was an issue because I wouldn't have been able to pay for it, but I learned that there were loans. I had just gotten my job, um, an internship. And I know that I'm going to graduate and be able to pay off the loan, if worse comes to worst, so I'm definitely going to go.

With the same poise, she explained how she pursued two substantial scholarships that would eliminate the majority of her study abroad expenses. While many low income students would not move forward when faced with a commonly identified barrier, Miriam viewed it as a surmountable impediment adding that “without the scholarship I was motivated enough to do it, I would have still done it with a loan.”

For the CA group as a whole, like the WC students, personal relations were viewed as significant to pursuing study abroad. Unlike the WC students who overwhelmingly benefitted from chance encounters and suggestions of trusted peers, the CA students had bonding capital via family support or networks they navigated with confidence and identified and utilized institutional representatives they knew would provide guidance. Whether it was Miriam accessing financial resources or Julia, as discussed in her profile, taking charge of her study abroad objectives by reaching out to faculty members, the CA group proceeded with a level of know-how and confidence when accessing institutional resources. Even Addison, a CA student who had essentially severed her ties with her parents in her teen years, was in many way better “equipped” to proceed and seek out study abroad opportunities upon arriving on campus than the WC group. However reflecting upon her history, she recognized that losing access to her family's social capital resulted in missing opportunities such as SU's merit scholarship options that could have provided much needed financial support and

academic opportunities. Having lost her networks, she expressed a keen understanding of their importance. She also reiterated the inclination of students from lower income backgrounds without reserves of familial capital of relying on informal networks of trusted peers to motivate them to study abroad rather than turning to SU faculty or staff. She added “because they're just going to look at you (as an institutional representative) and be like, “Yeah, uh-huh. He's selling it.” For the CA group knowledgeable family and their networks impacted their approach. As Eva had expressed about the influence of her older sister’s participation on her own:

(I)t definitely helped. It definitely made me more comfortable going abroad. I would have been a little bit more nervous, I think, going abroad had my sister not gone. Because she told me a little bit of like, the Discount Air like, freak things that can happen. And like, she warned me of like, some other things, you know? It’s just like, the – she gave me a list of like, ten things to worry about like, when you go abroad. It was like, a cute little like, package that she gave me before I went. And it was like, “Don’t bring luggage on Discount Air.” Like that and like, some other stuff. So it was really funny, but I loved it...

Financial Realities and Scholarships

Although a significant proportion of what is detailed above focuses on the significance of social and cultural capital for the Pell student population, a common thread throughout all of the interviews was a ubiquitous preoccupation with finances. The reality is that financing any aspect of higher education is a real obstacle if you do not possess economic resource to proceed. How the WC and CA students approached this impediment was also meaningfully intertwined with their worldview and accumulated capital. For the WC students, the lack of financial means had imparted a cautious approach as they understood they operated with a much smaller margin of error or without a safety net if things turned badly. Using his own experience to explain why lower income students do not pursue study abroad Rob explained that the whole

prospect was “daunting” because he did not have anyone else to provide him with financial support. He added that he wouldn’t have asked his family for money if he “had issues over there” and “that was a little – it was a little scary” to know they he did not have “a family to turn back on” should he require financial assistance while abroad. Despite this general apprehension related to cost, the approach of most of the WC students was a not to pursue financial support such as scholarships because they had no experience applying or thought they were for “more successful people” – even for a study abroad scholarship, such as the Gilman Scholarship awards, specifically targeting students like those interviewed. While the CA students expressed a similar consternation about resources, they generally approached the problem with a higher level of confidence and cognizance of the possibilities available that saw them approach study abroad as a possibility they could take advantage of.

WC- Financial Strategies and Scholarships, Bridging Capital Revisited

Many of the WC students interviewed were caught in a double-bind in the sense that they had received the message that studying abroad was an important aspect of a college education, yet they had come to believe that it was for more privileged students. This challenge also extended to securing financial resources, specifically scholarships, designed for students without the financial means to study abroad. As indicated above, many had dismissed such opportunities as being students that were from more comfortable backgrounds that were not part of very different from their own personal histories. Furthermore, just as they required support from sources they trusted in order to pursue participation, a comparable level of encouragement and assistance was

required to secure the funding to finance their plans once they were set on making a study abroad experience a reality.

Although federal law makes clear the “portability” of financial aid to cover the expenses of approved study abroad programs, many of the WC students struggled with understanding the process and, unlike many of the CA students who had parents assisting with the process, were discouraged with the financial aid process that was designed to equalize access for them. Mallory’s approach to using financial aid was not uncommon for these students:

Um, so, for – well, it’s also trial by error, because my brother’s older, so it’s like, “Oh, well he knew he had to do it, so then he told me to do it.” So (we) always filled out our own, um, paperwork through FAFSA [sic], and, um, so our parents not being – not having gone to college – like, are not savvy with a lot of those things.

Not knowing “what questions to ask” in relation to financial aid and study abroad caused Asia a great deal of angst, nearly derailing her plans. When asked how she proceed she explained:

It’s not simple at all! I – I remember, like, painstakingly, like, being in my room, asking my roommate, like, “Come with me to Allen Hall,” “I have to go to Financial Aid,” and being like, “Oh, my God, that’s going to take like an hour.” And just being like, stressed on my bed, but not knowing what to do. Like I – I think I went to Financial Aid, like, ten times, like, per trip just to, like, I’d ask one question. They’d send me away. And then I’d be like, “Oh, wait.” And then I’d have to go back. And it was just a lot of back and forth with Financial Aid. Like taking off of this loan, adding a loan, signing this. And, uh, it was not easy at all, actually. So I feel like that process alone can deter a lot of students, because it almost deterred me a lot to like, “All right, I don’t know how to do this.” “I’m just going to forget about it.” Um.

Asked if she had received any instruction on how to use financial aid in general, she responded “no” and continued:

And actually because of that I feel like I missed out on a lot of ways that I could have made it less expensive for myself just by, um, not doing the research and

just not knowing what questions to ask...And I was just so overwhelmed to be like, "Take out a loan?" "Okay." When I feel there were so many other options I could have done before I went down that route. I just didn't know.

One of the options that many of the WC students did not fully research, or dismissed, were the growing number of study abroad scholarship opportunities, such as the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program, aimed at making the experience accessible to students similar to those in this investigation. Many shared comparable sentiments that being a recipient of such an award was, like their earlier perception of study abroad, for a select group of students. In most cases they did not differentiate between merit-based and need-based awards. Sherise even equated her chances of securing a scholarship as being remote as winning the lottery. In more ways than one, this was sadly ironic, as several of the WC students were only able to attend SU as participants in the CSP, or comparable initiative, programs that had admitted them because of their academic accomplishments and being perceived as having promising future potential. What emerged was discourse indicating that these individuals required a high level of support navigating financial options and when actually pursuing, and in many instances receiving, scholarships, were the result of chance encounters of advice and encouragement rather than intentional strategy.

Josh's perceptions of scholarship recipients being an exclusive group demonstrate this theme. When discussing who he had thought studied abroad prior to his own participation, he conceptually placed scholarship recipients in a category similar to the "well off" whom he thought studied abroad. This was demonstrated when he discussed who studied abroad:

Successful people. And people that like either had a good amount of money or got like good scholarships. Because like, I know like not everybody studies abroad

And like I was like, I feel like if you do, like – now, looking back, I don't think like all these same things necessarily. Um, but like, I – it was always like, I took those people and kind of like elevated them, like put them up on a pedestal. Because I was like, "That would be so cool!" Like, you get to go somewhere, learn, and get all that worldly experience and stuff. So like, I thought it was like pretty awesome.

He went on to express the concerns about financing his program abroad:

One thing that I, like, I seriously think, like-like, financial stuff is the biggest, like, problem. Like, that did set me back a lot and it was a pain in the butt to do it all. And like, paperwork out the wazoo. Um, and just, like, you know, um, like, I get it's all, like you know, necessary and jazz, but I'd say, like, that is the biggest, like, thing. Because, like, if I could, like, you know, find a program and, like, pay, like, you know some money but not, like, chop off my arm, I'd do it again. Like, it was great. It's – it's a good experience.

Despite this acknowledgement of need, he did not realize that scholarships were an option until he found himself at a mandatory information session related to his potential study abroad when he learned that Gilman scholarships were available and was encouraged to apply. Of all the WC students, who, like Josh, would actually apply for this scholarship, all would receive one, except for one student who was selected as an alternate and wait-listed. Fortunately for Josh, he had a parent, in this case his mother, who was actively involved in trying to support his efforts and worked with him to follow through with the application. The common inclination for these students was to forgo applying or approach application with a level of distrust.

Just as many of the WC students did not think study abroad was for them, even though they had a precollege interest, the same individuals did not pursue scholarship funding, even though they had academically solid records. The commentary of others

was very similar. When asked if she applied for scholarships to finance her program

Jade replied:

I have not. Again, I just didn't think I would get it, so I was just, like, "Yeah." ...I don't know, but I just think that's just a – it's a normal mindset for a student to have who's applying for a scholarship. No. I – I just really think there's, like, better people out there than me. So I'm just, like, "Okay. There's no point."

Asia's comments were similar:

I would but, like, I'm, I, I'd, I would, sometimes I'd get, like, the application and would never, like, finish them and I'd be, like, oh well, like, I'm just going to go for it. And so, I can't say that I, I did. I think I, because I would, the, I always, always think, like, they would never, like, give it to me, like, that's what I would think. And I'd be, like, oh, there's, like, hundreds of people applying, like, I don't think it's really make a difference.

Balancing her school and work schedule, she decided not to spend her limited time on an application that, in her mind, would not produce results:

I should and then as soon as the semester, like, starts and work starts it's, like do my work or do this kind of thing that's not, it's, like, extra, like, it's always on the side and you keep putting it off and before you know it's a week left and you're, like, either I can scam and bullshit this or I can, it's almost, like, self-sabotage sort of like. You're, like, oh, you can bullshit this but then if I do, they're just not going to choose it.

Alyssa's perspective was the same. However, similar to Josh, one of the motivating factors that encouraged her to at least apply for the Gilman Scholarship, was the size of the award:

(I) also haven't taken the time to put time into them, because I assumed that I wouldn't get them. And it's like, "Why am I going to take the time that I have so little of to, like, write these essays that, that probably aren't going to end anywhere but in a trashcan?" And so I just, I know that I should because, because everybody says, "That's what you should be doing." But I don't know. I – I have a very funny outlook in that I would rather just take out a loan. And yeah, I have to pay it back later, but it doesn't take, it doesn't take the time. And the time is what I have so little of. Gilman because it was actually a big enough award to be worth it for me, because that made a big difference. Am I going to, am I fighting with 800 other people for this \$200?" Like that's, that's not worth

it. Like it just, but it was probably partially because I just always assumed that, like, I wasn't going to get them.

For other WC students, the decision not to pursue scholarships was tied to one's personal values and habitus. For example, Mariana viewed pursuing support as a sign of disrespect to her mother, a person for whom she held the highest regard:

So, but, it's because in my way of viewing it I feel disrespectful asking for money because it, to me like, I'm not appreciating everything mom's done for me... I feel like, asking for money is like saying you know, she is not, she didn't provide, you know, and she didn't do enough.

Her trusted mentor advised her otherwise, convincing her to apply by telling her "I know your stories and there's one thing not wanting to share these stories, but when there's money on the line, you share them!" However, her level of discomfort with the idea was still evident when she finally made the decision to apply for scholarships making peace with the idea by adding commentary to her essays to ensure she did not disrespect her mother. She continued:

And I know that's not the way, but that's kind of like, it's very difficult to, like you know, I start, I start off my application saying "My mother is an incredible woman and I don't want to make it seem otherwise." "She has done everything." "She has stretched her dollar," like, "She has handled everything like magnificently." So, but it was important for me to say that for me, she's still the best thing that ever happened.

For others, even though they were capable students and had overcome multiple life obstacles to get where they were, their humility got in the way. Not having a sense of entitlement or uncomfortable with "self-promotion," they struggled when having to complete scholarship essays. Asia's initial hesitation captures some of these elements:

It's a scary thing like writing your proposal because you, you always wonder like "Oh, is this person going to" like, "Does this even seem possible?" Like it makes sense to me, but like I don't think anyone's going to, I know proposals are like really hard. I'm writing one now for like an Honor's project. And it's like I'd rather just not go through with it than to finish this proposal. Like I, it's

scary I think too, writing about yourself and then writing about – why they should think you’re a good candidate. And then I don’t know what they want to hear and I’m just like ah, this is why I want to go. Like there’s no good reason besides I want to go. Like I hope to do good things when I come back, but like I really just want to go, like.

In addition, Asia also discussed elements of distrust towards scholarship committees and institutional representatives presented as there to help them, but with whom they had no relationship yet, had to share details of their lives traditionally reserved for close friends or family. Rob, who had acquired a level of savvy from having to be self-reliant at a young age, captured this sentiment as he discussed how he eventually applied for a Gilman Scholarship, but proceeded with a level of caution that preceded his college career when trying to navigate social services programs in order to get to SU:

Like I manipulated that system admittedly, but – but I don't know, like I wasn't on good terms with – even though – it was funny because I was always called like their model person because I was one of the first people to like go to the – like to go to college from that group of kids at the time. I was never on like good terms because they always like to try and take credit for my established – like for like what I did. Like, they were like, “Oh, look!” “We got him into college!” And I was like, “You didn't help at all!” So, like I was always a little wary of them.

For several of these students, being involved in the CSP, or similar program, was a great asset as the financial support reduced the need for employment, and thereby permitted time to earn high grades and get involved on campus – where they would become engaged and encouraged to pursue study abroad and related scholarships. Others, however, did not have this support and expressed a level of frustration that scholarships would not go to the “most deserving” or those who did not fit the “traditional college student profile.” Required to work to finance their education, for example, did not permit the study time required to earn the higher grades they were capable of, and

therefore become contenders for merit scholarships. Josh seemed slightly irritated in his response when asked who should receive study abroad scholarships:

I mean, it's good to give them to people that are financially needy... they can't just like read everybody's application and all that stuff, but I hate – it's because I get screwed by it, because people look at my GPA and they're like, "Oh, you're an idiot!" Um, so like, I hate things that are defined by GPAs. Although, I mean, it obviously is a good indicator to a degree. Um, but I mean, so I think, I think people who, like, you know, need it and demonstrate like, like if somebody, you know, has a bunch of money and they want to, you know, go somewhere, and somebody does not have a lot of money and they want to go, but it's like for legitimate reasons, whereas like the other person is like just maybe like some floozy, like I want to go to Bermuda so, "I can drink and like hang out in the sun."

Alyssa, as a non-traditional student by her age, believed that many scholarships were not getting to those with the greatest need. Initially returning to college as a part-time student she explained:

Like when I first came back I was part time. And so, I wouldn't have qualified for most of them because you have to be full-time.

In her second interview she elaborated further:

The ones that are, like, straight up only for full-time students I think are really unfair, because generally if you're part-time, there is a really good reason other than, "I just only want to take two classes this semester." Like you either go to school full-time. And if you're, like, in school to be in school or you go part-time because you have this other major, major thing in your life that doesn't let you go full-time. At least in my experience.

When writing on how to create more study abroad opportunities for first generation students, Martinez, Ranjeet & Marx (2009) note that funding study abroad was a concern for many low-income students and that it is essential to acknowledge the realities of financing adding that the "need to explicitly express the benefits, create a culture that values study abroad and show it is a worthwhile investment." (p. 535) For the WC students in this study, although funding their education was an ongoing concern, the values of study abroad seemed to carry the day as the financial options

aimed at assisting students from similar backgrounds were often not pursued (i.e., study abroad scholarships) or found to be complicated (i.e., FAFSA) and were not always maximized effectively or efficiently. Although they were aware of the potential for aid, the progression tended to be more ad hoc with an array of strategies utilized to finance the endeavor. These ranged from picking up an additional job or cashing in a 401K to moving back home and commuting to save on housing or simply relying on the faith, as Mario did, that everything would somehow come together when he explained that “it’s just more of do you want to do it and if you do then it’s going to work out.” It begs the question if scholarships and awards, as well as aid programs, are effectively making study abroad accessible for low-income students.

As with making the decision to pursue study abroad, high levels of support on how to finance it and encouragement to apply for scholarships to fund the endeavor are necessary. Many of the students did not fully understand the particulars of using financial aid as they were navigating the process by themselves. What was mentioned on several occasions was the missed opportunities for securing scholarship awards.

Although all of the WC students had earned GPAs well above a 3.0, many passed up opportunities to apply for both need-based and merit-based awards. Two common factors that encouraged application, aside from learning about the scholarships, were the size of the award (i.e., Gilman Scholarship program with the potential of receiving \$5,000) and encouragement from a trusted peer or institutional representative to apply. In the latter case, the perception that scholarship were for “better” students would be eradicated, just as the belief that study abroad was for “well

off kids,” by reassurance and seeing themselves in another. Asia’s comments were representative of this theme that was expressed many times:

And you know what also helped? As soon as like, I think my sophomore or junior year I actually knew the people who were getting these things (scholarships) and it made it, yeah, and it made it seem more real. Like I personally knew them, I hung with them. Like, went camping and then I’m like, “Wait, you got that scholarship!?” like, “Oh, my God!” And when you know people that get it they aren’t just like this face you see on like a banner and like “Oh, that student, she probably like doesn’t like eat or like socialize or anything.” And you’re just like “Wait!” “That’s like, Annie!” and like everybody, like it’s, it seems more tangible when you know somebody I think.

CA Financial Strategies and Scholarships - Confidence and Capital

For the CA group, funding their program was a significant concern but generally the discourse related to finding the means did not dominate the discussion as much as it had with the WC group. Although facing funding did cause some consternation, the financial hurdle was generally perceived as surmountable and was overcome with social and cultural capital resources typically accumulated within family relations and social networks. Although a term utilized for children of upper class families, the CA group had an “inheritance of possibility” (Conley, 2008, p.369). In this context, they knew study abroad was an option for them. Although economic resources were not readily available, the experience and networks that were accessible vaulted them forward with a level of confidence that they could make arrangements to proceed.

The CA students came from families where there was a college going culture. At least one parent had a college degree and several had older siblings that were pursuing or had also completed a college degree. As indicated previously, many like Emma had parents navigating the financial aid process for them and assisting with financial arrangements to make the process feasible. In most instances, difficult choices were

primarily limited to assuming loan debt to participate, not forgoing current opportunity such as moving back home or taking on more additional employment that would limit campus involvement or academic achievement. If a job were pursued, the purpose in most cases was to provide “spending money” or additional travel while abroad rather than determining if the program was even feasible. Eva, for example, was like many CA students who were not fully supporting their regular college expenses, unlike most of the WC students, so could work and save all of earnings for her trip:

Um, I mean, money was an issue, like it was definitely, like, hard for me to save up. I mean, I saved up like \$5,000 before I went. So that was hard, because I really wanted to buy like shoes and stuff like that and whatever, but – and I wanted to buy clothes before I got there, but then I was like, “Wait, no.” “I should just buy clothes when I get there, because it will be better.”

Coming from families that also had relatives such as aunts, uncles, and cousins that also had college experience, many CA students already had an extended network of information and support in place. Nikki explained that she planned to use FAFSA to help fund her program (an option explained by her cousin when starting college), but also had financial assistance from the very same network. She expounded “I used, uh, FAFSA, um, and like my parents, they like kind of raised money within the family for me.”

For some CA students, there was a similar perception of who received scholarships for study abroad that match those of the WC students. Nikki stated “I think, it's like people think, it's either rich kids or really smart kids who just get scholarships, the smarter kids.” Emma offered a perspective of understanding that some students would not even try pursuing scholarships noting “I can see how students would be like, ‘Oh, but if someone’s smarter than me up there, there’s someone who’s going to

have a better application than me' like, 'Why bother?'" For this group, however, almost all actively pursued and secured study abroad scholarships. Of the eight interviewed, six were recipients of awards for their programs. The two who did not, had not applied. This is in comparison to the WC group: only three of the nine interviewed were recipients of a scholarship on their initial study abroad program. One of the multiple participants did start to apply and receive scholarships after "learning the ropes" during her first experience.

As mentioned above, many of the CA students actively applied for scholarships. Whereas the WC students had expressed a reluctance to pursue funding or ask for financial support, many of the CA students successfully advocated for themselves. For example, Julia was a recipient of funding for her first study abroad experience. Desiring to participate in the same program again the subsequent year, she successfully petitioned the program faculty to intervene on her behalf and secure funding for her again, even though pools of funding were traditionally reserved for those who had never studied abroad. Higher levels of social and cultural capital also placed several of the CA students in positions where they would have access to more information or where the likelihood of faculty intervention would be higher. For instance, although multiple students in both categories had been placed in honors or advanced placement classes in high school, only the CA group had members who enrolled in the SU Honors program. Several of these individuals detailed how they were specifically told to apply for study abroad scholarships and provided with follow-up guidance and support. Ethan was the extreme case, applying to multiple local and national scholarships, explaining "(the Honors Advisor) was able to point me to these four scholarships." Adding the process

was a bit stressful, he joked “I was skipping parties I was being the worst college student ever so that I could actually do my work [to complete the applications].”

Regardless, he proceeded with confidence that some form of funding would be forthcoming, even receiving the advice from an advisor that some need-based awards were “given out like candy.”

The two students who did not pursue scholarships primarily cited a lack of time. Nikki was consistently taking additional courses each semester and working more hours than most of the students in the CA group. The fact that she was working so much was unique compared to the other CA students as she was already receiving financial support from the CSP to attend SU. This was primarily due to the fact that she preferred to live off campus and permit her mother to focus financial resources on her younger siblings. In the midst of applying for a semester abroad program during the interview, she described why she did not apply for scholarships when she studied abroad the first time:

So, um, and actually like for, as far as scholarships, I didn't even apply to any scholarships because like I was so like I had to worry about finals. So, that was kind of a thing that I regret that I'm trying to avoid this time when I go – abroad.... So, it was like, and I mean I guess for like a normal, not a normal student but someone who didn't have as many classes and not working as many hours as me it would've been maybe a little bit easier.

When asked if she had ever applied for any college-related scholarships she continued:

No, not even to come to SU just because I had the CSP money. So, I was always kind of like really all set and it was kind of like I didn't want to take more than I already like, I already have a decent amount of money coming towards me. So, it's like, ah, I don't want to be too greedy taking more scholarships, you know? So, I like stayed away from there, um. And like I said, I didn't have time.

For Eva, applying was not even considered as her father had advised her not to worry.

She explained:

Like I was literally just trying to scramble to get everything together, and I just didn't think about (scholarships), I guess. And my dad has always said like, scholarships are great if you can get them, but like if – if you get grants, those are better. Like they're usually more money, they probably help you out more, and you don't have to, like, waste your time doing, like, a three-hour-long paper, whatever. "Don't worry about scholarships yet. If you find one that is easily accessible, fine, go for it, but, like, don't worry about it so much, because in the grand scheme of things, it's like \$50 to a \$5,000 grant." So, I guess that's why I didn't really do it. I just didn't think about it, honestly. I don't really know that I saw any, like, in my vision either, you know what I mean? I didn't research them. I didn't.

Although she did not apply herself, she was aware of the possibilities as during the interview she explained that she had recently provided another student advice on looking for scholarships to fund her program:

...one girl that I was talking to a couple weeks ago, she was asking me about studying abroad and the reason why she isn't going is because of money. And I was like, "Well, why don't you go see if there's grants or scholarships or something like that out there?" And she's like, "Which ones?" And I'm like, "I don't know, but I'm sure you could research it." And she's like, "Well, I'm not that great of a student." I'm like, "But you could pretend to be," like – I don't know. You could write a good paper and show someone that you know what you're doing.

Some of CA students did have similar worries as the WC students such as ultimately not believing they would receive the scholarships they applied for. In the end, however, the CA students generally proceeded with confidence and the tools to negotiate the institutional spaces to their advantage, even if it was as fundamental as accessing institutional resources for basic advantages such as asking to have scholarship essays proofread by unknown faculty and staff in order to improve one's odds of success. In addition, among the CA students there tended to be a sense that scholarships should go to the most deserving students. Whereas the WC students tended to express those with

the most financial need as the most deserving, the CA students tended to favor merit. However, both groups seemed to perceive that there were always ways to “work the system” to one’s favor if you knew how. As Miriam, a CA student, explained with a tone of resentment:

I know people who-who get-get help from SU that I don’t think deserve it, you know what I mean? I really am like, you know, I thought this – I thought his dad was, like, you know, really rich, and, you know – anyways, whatever. But you know what I mean? So, there – there’s – there are ways of fooling the system. It’s – it’s like, people do it all the time.

Theme 2 - “This is What I Know” - Economic, Social, and Cultural Capital in the Study Abroad Context

Referring to his hometown and upbringing to situate how he managed and internally processed the entire study abroad experience, Josh commented: “This is what I know.” Like all of the students, from the time they learned of study abroad and throughout the study abroad process, both groups of students mediated the process based on their habitus. Just as there were divergent tendencies between the two groups in regards to the decision to follow through and participate, the interviews revealed interesting differences in the goals and objectives of the experience of studying abroad based on their individual point of reference. While CA students identified specific academic and professional advancement, as a whole the WC students were less likely to elucidate succinct pragmatic aims and generally offered intrinsic incentives. For the former group, the enterprise was described as a standard aspect of the college experience on a path to “bigger and better things.” For the latter, like Sherise who described study abroad as the “prime college experience,” or Rob who thought that it was “the only way (to) get a complete college experience,” participation was framed as

a once-in-a-lifetime event that was a special opportunity to be maximized for all its worth. The CA students spoke of underlying motivation that was absent from the discourse of the WC students who did not cite long-term investment or job skill development of participating but would point to gains in personal growth. Both, however, would attempt to position themselves, in slightly different ways, as not being part of the traditional privileged study abroad student population whom they perceived as simply pursuing the activity for principally touristic purposes and the negative connotation that was attached to that identity.

Cultural Capital Disguised as Motivation

Although nearly all of the students interviewed indicated a precollege curiosity in studying abroad, the WC students did not act on their interest until encouraged to do so by a trusted individual. Because they generally had not envisioned themselves engaged in this activity, the suggestion and possibility was like a sudden revelation that caused them to proceed without fully considering the academic and future career benefits of involvement. On the other hand, the CA students, almost to a person, described themselves as having motivation that resulted in their participation or said that those who did not participate were lacking in motivation – frequently expressed in a disparaging manner. They all tended to have a sense of a career path they wished to pursue and the skills and experiences study abroad could provide were described as significant to supporting those goals. In essence, there as a strong element of instrumentality. While a dictionary may define motivation as a force or influence that causes someone to do something, and was used as such by this group, it was repeatedly invoked in a manner that seemed to equate the word as being equivalent to saying “I

have cultural capital.” These individuals had the awareness that the opportunities were important for skill development to build credentials and resumes or to develop additional social networks that would be useful in the future. In short, they had the motivation (capital) that framed the experience in a more consumeristic or utilitarian manner. The WC students overall would get their “motivation” from the experience itself as they embarked and participated in an activity that they would learn offered access, useful knowledge, skills, and relationships that went beyond simply participating in an exciting opportunity to experience more than SU and expand their limited knowledge of other peoples and locales.

CA and WC Student Motivation

Of all the CA students who participated in the interviews, Miriam was the one individual from the group that had not entered SU with an established plan to study abroad. Pursuing a Pharm D. degree that offered very limited flexibility to fit an experience abroad into her plans and a family situation that created financial hardship, she understood the investment in going would have long-term career gains. She would explain in a subsequent interview that it was her motivation that would impel her to participate. Her talk and reflection on why her peers from high school did not go to college, compared to both her and her brother, provide insight into how many other CA students would use the word motivation in a manner that actually refers to cultural capital. For example, in one passage she ponders if lack of economic resource alone account for not pursuing a degree:

But I mean, he’s motivated. We’re – we’re very motivated. I mean, that’s – that’s what really– I feel like that’s what gets-gets. That’s the most important thing. It doesn’t take as much, um, like, um, brain power. It just takes motivation to get through school. You don’t have to be a genius. I know so

many people who have, like, a really good IQ, and they're just not motivated and they don't go to college, and they're just at home or working at McDonald's. And they're very smart. They're very bright. They were top of their class in high school. But they just don't have the motivation. I really – no, I really don't know why. I don't know why they're not motivated. I don't. I don't. I guess it could be, like – it could have to do something with the way they were brought up? Um, their family doesn't-their family never, like, you know, they never enforced or they never stressed the importance, of, like, higher education. Or it could be that, you know– It could be psychological, and, like, maybe they're just depressed, or they're – that's–that could cause their lack of motivation.

Her earlier peer group can be compared to the WC group and their engagement with study abroad. Had they not had financial support to actually attend college and the encouragement of a trusted individual, their curiosity related to education overseas may have remained an idea never to be acted upon. The CA students, however, had the cultural capital –which they referred to as motivation – to understand the benefits and advantages of internationalizing their degree. Although initially looking for programs as a sophomore based on location versus objectives Emma would complete two programs focused on film to build her portfolio related to creating documentaries; Miriam, and Julia would participate in programs based on the goals to build language skills to enhance their career prospects in their desired profession. Even when the participants did not cite obtaining specific skill sets, there were future life objectives in mind. For example, Ethan aimed to see if he would be able to live in Japan long-term in order to attend graduate school. Essentially, the intent of students in this group was presented with a higher level of instrumentality, a higher level of focus on career and economic benefit, or a means to an end above personal and intellectual growth. Julia, whose goal it was to be a “good nurse” noted that she “just kind of knew where I stood on a lot of different things where maybe other people, it was more of like a finding

themselves type of thing.” Not that there were no altruistic motives in her participation, but the primary focus leaned toward more instrumental goals.

In many ways the CA group’s intentions suggest a degree of commodification of study abroad that is discussed further below. The WC students in this study on the other hand, generally pursued participation as an opportunity for opportunity’s sake. Not intending to partake in the endeavor until the urging of a trusted individual, the WC students overall did not articulate specific academic or career goals as part of their decision-making process. Josh was the exception, having acquired “motivation” from his high-capital friends (most of whom went on to exclusive private institutions) in one of the top high schools in the state, and a mother who was determined to have him make the most of his education. He knew the program he would be an “investment” since it provided research in his academic field:

I just, I just knew it was a good thing that I should do and that it would pay off if I did it. And that’s why like even though it was an investment like, I mean, that’s exactly what it is. It was an investment. Like I’d pay a lot of money, but it’s going to pay off. Whereas like I don’t see why you would do it if it was just for like funnies. Like, yeah, it would be great, like I would take vacation all the time if I could.

Having very little experience out of their communities, study abroad was partially to “leave,” “get away,” or “escape,” if only temporarily, knowing there was more to the world, but they had never had a chance to explore it. Most were not quite sure what it was that was out there or how it would benefit them, aside from the personal growth.

Comments like Rob and Asia’s were common. Rob noted:

I wanted to travel. I mean, I live in (this state). (This state is) far too tiny, and I was disappointed already. I wanted to leave the state originally for college just so I wouldn’t be stuck here. But that didn’t pan out because of funding. So I figured the next – and then when I found out how relatively affordable it could be to study abroad... Because – well, I just don’t like (this state) very much. I’ve been born and raised here. I had never left the country before I studied

abroad. And even, like, I didn't have many trips even around the country, so I just – just not enough to keep my interest for 21 straight years without doing anything.

Asia explained:

I knew there was like – so much bigger than (this state), so much bigger than (my city). Like I just wanted to explore, because my whole – I think up until I came to college, I had never even been out of like (the neighboring state). Like my sister went to school in (the bordering state), so I visited there, and then...my family is from New York, so I went there once, and I was like, "I can't spend my whole life in (my home state)." "I can't spend my whole college days not leaving like (the northeast)." So, and I wanted to go far. I wanted to travel. Like the more I was learning in school, the more I was like, "I can't" – like I need to apply this real world, like, knowledge.

Once the WC students believed participation was possible, they described personal growth as the objectives and goals they had hoped to achieve from what was labeled a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Overall, they seemed to have not received a lecture on the professional or career skills one could achieve. As indicated above, articulating the expected outcome(s) was challenging. Mariana's commentary exemplifies the personal benefits envisioned:

I needed to go abroad because it was the only time I was going to be 100% selfish and kind of just discover myself and figure it all out and see if the self-esteem and character I had worked so hard to build could translate to other places.

Rob would come right out and say it was not about developing skills, adding spirited sarcasm he explained:

It wasn't at all for résumé building. It was for self-growth and partly just spite. I really run on spite. It's really bad, I'm going to be such an old man by the time I'm 30. But a lot of people – it's like I haven't done that. No one in my family's done that. I'm going to go do that. And then, it's also like, well, what's stopping me from doing that?

After participating in a program, the WC group would still have difficulty putting the benefits they gained into words, but at that point would begin to apply some of the same

language used by the CA group prior to participation. Explaining that she now had “motivation to do better” because of everything she had seen, Mariana began to see how what had been an experience for personal growth could have additional benefits:

I did find this summer during my internship (study abroad) was a talking point for me. So it was a big talking point for me and that people were impressed by that. So, it was a talking point for your peers or like, to your bosses. People in my internship had just come back, came back from abroad, so it was a good because we all got to share our experience. From my bosses too. And it was even better cause a few of them had studied abroad, you know, back when they were in college. Even if I don't, even if I took out 500 loans, a million loans to study abroad um I think it gives me an advantage in that sense.

Explaining that the company was looking to send some interns abroad to represent them at a corporate philanthropic event overseas she continued:

And I think on my application I had put that I had just come back from study abroad and that I was of Colombian heritage. (They probably thought) “She's been to all different places and she's been able to have these positive experiences and been able to connect.” I think that automatically gives me a leg up.

This “leg up” was a primary reason she would be selected for the assignment. Others, like Sherise would also begin to use their experience(s) for more pragmatic means as well. Having selected study abroad primarily due to her curiosity, she would also begin to understand that using her study abroad was helpful during job interviews. She explained one particular instance:

Honestly, yeah because I told her I studied abroad and she was like, “*Really!?*” So, every time I do tell somebody that, they're always interested... and especially when I say I went to Korea and they're like, “That's really different.” Like, on my resume, I put like I volunteered in Seoul with the orphanage. And people look at that...

Sherise and Mariana would, like most of the WC students, pursue study abroad for its own sake and did not describe the more instrumental benefits that their CA peers

would discuss as the motivation for participation. Comparable to the decision to attend college, where they “figured it out” as they proceeded, they detailed a similar experience when encountering these programs. They vaguely knew it was beneficial, but were not completely sure why. In many ways, they described approaching the experience with a more open mind and desire to maximize all of the opportunities that were presented to them as they participated in the experiences. The lack of “motivation,” also known as cultural capital in this context, did not serve to limit their thinking in regards to expectations. As a result, upon their return they seemed to have their eyes opened to a whole new way of thinking about their academics, future career plans, and their place in the world that was not described by the CA group. Many also acquired an “addiction” to study abroad again, excitement for their studies upon return to SU, and trajectory towards new experiences and professions that will be revisited in theme three below.

Intrigue and Rejection of the Touristic Juxtaposition

Since the study abroad enterprise takes place overseas, there should be little surprise that what is attractive to participants is the “abroad” aspect and the attraction of travel. For all of the students in the study, especially the WC students who in many instances had rarely been fifty miles from home, the attraction of exploring the world was broadly discussed. Whether it was Sherise’s interest in Korea because of K-pop and KDrama, Rob’s fascination with England because it was the setting of his favorite book series, or Ethan’s interest in Japan because of his anime hobby, elements of popular culture and destination-branding influenced their selection of the host country of study. In addition, touristic undercurrents were evident and were a significant

component of the discourse. While enticed by the grand images of travel and seeing the world, simultaneously they attempted to dissociate themselves from what they felt was the prevalent image of study abroad, which was rich “sorority girls and fraternity guys” who simply traveled and partied their way through the experience. The Pell students expressed transformation from gaining knowledge through what they would frame as more authentic engagement with the host cultures while the traditional participants were largely perceived as leisure-seeking partiers looking for a good time. In essence, they would attempt to create an identity diametrically opposed to the popular image and seemingly became more conscious of the larger world and what role they wanted to create for themselves in it.

WC Perspective

For the WC students, choosing to study abroad was a major decision, as they had never envisioned moving forward with the idea and financially it was “the one big purchase they ever did.” Because each came from a family with little or no disposable income, careful financial budgeting was frequently discussed and the perception had been that study abroad was for rich kids who simply partied. At SU, this idea typically referred to students involved in Greek life because they were perceived as being wealthy and privileged. Asia, like others, added in her last interview that “usually my friends, we (joke), if you’re from [out of state], you’re going to be in a fraternity or sorority when you come to SU. That’s like the joke. Um, it’s mostly out-of-states [that go abroad].” The typical study abroad student was equated to the Greeks on campus and WC seemed to hold a level of disdain for them. Abroad, the “sorority and fraternity” students were positioned as tourists with negative connotations – socializing

only with Americans while abroad, partying excessively, traveling extensively away from the study abroad program site, not being academically-oriented. This view oversimplified the experience of these students, but essentially the prevailing stereotype portrayed the majority of participants as “better off” individuals on vacation. There was a desire not to share that identity by pointing out the frivolous behavior of these participants. In some ways, the sentiment was a claim to show that they were not like the others and also it served to validate their experience as something distinct and “authentic.”

One of the WC students indicated that she had encountered the party-abroad perception from her family prior to attending SU. For example, Mallory described how she faced resistance to a gap year program from her family because they did not feel it was a serious endeavor:

I was going to just do, like, a – a year abroad or something, like a gap year, because all my friends from camp were going on a gap year program in Israel. I always regretted not having that opportunity to do that, because my parents and my grandfather were, like, “Well you’re just going to, you know, booze cruise,” like, “You’re just going to, like, go, like, and – spend that year abroad and not do anything”...

In some instances, the reality matched the perception if the students did pursue the easier path. For example, Mariana, capturing the similar talk of the others, would initially describe how she planned on taking it easy on her semester abroad, actually catching herself in the act of using touristic terminology when describing her experience:

And, I think that if I didn’t go abroad I would have not had the excitement I have for this year. I was doing so much, classes were becoming so stressful, and I think junior year is usually the most stressful uhm, it’s like you get the bulk of like your hard courses and I was just involved with so many things. And I hadn’t had a summer because I’ve been interning for three years. I just felt like I

needed, I needed a vacation. It was like, in a sense a vacation (laughing). Cause I went abroad with the intention of taking four classes. Four classes that weren't supposed to be difficult.

However, the “vacation” path was too unsettling for her sense of self and she quickly made adjustments to maximize her learning, cultural immersion, and earn some extra funds to pay for her semester:

And I did that for the first week and I could not handle it. Cause I went abroad with the intention of taking four classes. I immediately got enrolled into the master's level classes, I dropped out of two of the easiest classes and got into two of the hardest classes. And I got a job, technically I got three jobs. I was tutoring in Spanish, I was tutoring in English, and then I worked for a travel agency (to earn a free cultural excursion).

She would continue by elaborating who she encountered studying abroad and why they were there:

In my opinion, ah, sorority girls. I think the perception here, I think it's mostly sorority girls, I think, and fraternity guys, a small [amount], like fraternity guys and just overall. I think at least when I studied abroad and all the people I studied with, they were all from [neighboring states]. I didn't study abroad with anyone that was from (this state). My understanding is, if you said perception I would say the people who studied abroad are sorority girls who really want to party in Barcelona with all their friends.

Later she would return to the touristic party subject:

I mean for the most part I think people study abroad because it's party abroad and they'll come back and probably talk about how enlightening their experience was, but in reality it was party abroad. And to a certain extent it was party abroad for me too.... Well, because I am telling you, I do think that people go study abroad and think party abroad. And I think that's almost a sad, sad correlation. I partied when I had to party but I had, I wanted to make sure I got something else out of it. This was an expensive trip. This, it was gonna be an expensive trip and if I am going to sit here and, cause I knew that if I came back, and I was going to come back and, if I had a positive experience all I was going to talk about was the culture. Because that is what you always hear. You're like “And you'll get enriched with the new culture”. But I wanted to make sure I was going to get in like, I was learning about a new culture. If I was going to come back and talk about all that, because I think even the people who party all semester long socialize with one person from Spain, but just stick with the

Americans say “Oh it was the best experience ever, I got so enriched in the culture,” but they don’t actually. Um, but I wanted to be sure if I was going to say that, then I was going to live it. I was going to be able to make comparisons between my culture and their culture.

She continued during the second interview:

I quickly realized that a lot of people go with the mentality to travel to other places I can’t say for sure, but also think there are a lot of people who went with no budget and like, I had a budget. My mother was very much like “Do” like, “Have your fun,” “Feel,” “Spend all the money you want,” and we took out a loan. And that was fine, but I still felt, I think you don’t ever, if you have always lived your life kind of very money conscious. Because you’re on vaca – you’re studying abroad. I don’t think that ever goes away to tell you the truth. So, I was money-conscious the whole time. My experience with the people who studied abroad was they had money. Not like tons of money, I’m not saying they were the richest. They were from, most of them were from New York, New Jersey and other places too, but uhm going to out of state schools like. If you’re going to an out of state school and you’re not going (to SU) for a specific recognized program I’m going to automatically assume that you have some kind of money because you are paying tuition that is incredibly high for an education that you can find back home.

To drive the point home, she would provide an example:

An experience I had was that my classmates um although they um it’s a “C” average I think you need for your transfer, to transfer your credit (back to your home institution). A lot of them weren’t in the position that they weren’t even going to get that “C” average and they were OK with that. And they almost lost an entire semester and they were OK [with that]. Studying abroad I had a few classmates. Probably one of the more privileged ones that were OK with knowing they were going to fail a few classes and they were only taking four classes or three classes, something like the bare minimum. So to me it was a little, I went, I took five classes. I was planning on taking four because I didn’t want to take it easy. I ended up taking five and I mean they were not that difficult. And to have a lot of my classmates to be in the position to like barely be passing, it’s like what’s going on here? Because they were like you know every weekend off to – lots of travel. More of a trip than an experience.

Like many WC students, Mariana knew there would be a level of fun attached to the experience, but was surprised by the high level of immaturity that was not part of her

world. She, like some of the others, would admit to taking part in some level of partying, but excessiveness was limited to times that were spent with her fellow citizens –“I didn’t get drunk until I was with the Americans.” She was also one of the few WC students who would suggest that they partied or traveled extensively from their program site. Her discourse overall, however, contained many of the points of the talk of the others. Most would associate the partying scene with traditional destinations such as Western Europe, but would detail similar experiences and sentiments regardless of their destination. Alyssa for example, would express this sentiment but then lamented the fact that the party-focused participants were found beyond the borders of Europe and were where she studied even though she had selected a non-traditional location in India for her semester abroad program. The WC students also would describe these students who were spending more time vacationing than studying with a level of contempt and do their best to distance themselves from that identity. Some would take a moral high ground condemning this behavior and cast being privileged as a blight on the image of study abroad and provide a discourse of privilege-as-a-liability (Stuber, 2011). For example, Josh would question the motives of his more privileged high school friends who went on to a premiere Ivy League institution when discussing study abroad and some of their international volunteer work:

I have a lot of friends at [Ivy College]. A lot of them, they are – because they all are fine and like, you know, they-they’ve got, you know, a good amount of money. And like, I know a bunch of my friends that have just gone off and done like, like they just do, like some like mission work that’s like whatever, where, off somewhere. They do it for a little bit and it’s just like, they just do it because they’re like, “I can.” And like, “Oh, it’s good” like, “I guess.” But like, you know, there’s not a lot of like passion or whatever behind it. I just feel like they’re doing it because like they can and it’s good to go like, somewhere.

While downplaying the seriousness and intent of the more privileged students, the WC group expressed that they had maximized the academic and cultural aspects of their experience. The common source of regret voiced by many is when they felt they did not or could not contribute more to their host country in a constructive manner. Potentially not understanding the focus of her program, Mallory explained her disappointment while on her program in Japan two years after the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami that devastated the region where she studied:

I thought the trip was going to be more volunteerism as well, like some sort of aspect with that, because – which, I found kind of, um, uh, torn between, because I was like, “Well, all this is happening here, like, we have to do something.” And I felt like that, like, um, men – what’s that called? Morally strained. Like, it’s like, I felt like –I felt like we were going there, and not like mocking, but you know. We were going to take pictures and learning about like, the- the- literally the science aspect. Like, the coastal, and the history. We talked to local fisherman, and the whole trip was set up incredibly, but if they had a volunteer aspect with that sort of program, it would have been like, I would have had like, a 100 times better view on it. And go to those sites, but I wish, again, there was, like, that volunteer aspect. Like, I felt guilty. I wish like, even if I wasn’t building something, I wish it was like, I don’t know working in a soup kitchen or any type of community service, even for a day, would have been really, like a really nice, I think. And I know it was more like an academic trip to literally learn about mitigation. Because every time we went to a work site, it was like, it was kind of like, um, kind of like I felt faded because we were going to all these different places but they all kind of looked the same. They were all destroyed, they all still needed help. And we were just like touring around taking pictures and it seems kind of douche-like.

Several of the WC interviewees, especially those studying in “developing” countries, expressed a sense of solidarity with those they encountered living in situations of material poverty and lack of opportunity. Jade’s comment was similar to many: “I understand where they’re coming from” when referring to some poverty-stricken children she encountered in Ghana. Having originated from modest backgrounds, the WC students had a high level of sensitivity to those at “lower” end of

the socioeconomic spectrum and seemingly increased their desire to distance themselves further from the more touristic behaviors they associated with the experiences of those they perceived to be the typical study abroad participant.

Although initially intrigued by the idea of studying abroad because of touristic influences, and overall fewer specific objectives, the WC group proceeded with a sense of “participating for the sake of participating” or simply learning what would come their way. What did seem to increase as they proceeded was their desire to demonstrate that their experience was serious and educational, while at the same time disparaging the image of privileged students partying abroad. Specifically, they were constructing a study-abroad-student identity based on their values such as respecting the host community and maximizing the time abroad in productive pursuits with the local culture. In many ways, as discussed further below, this stance helped to reveal that the WC (and CA) students were navigating two cultures while abroad – the host culture and an American culture of privilege located abroad.

CA Perspective

Similar to the WC students, the CA group was also critical of the touristic portrayal of the study abroad experience and even used some of the same language (e.g., “partying sorority girls”) to describe those represented the unfavorable stereotype of participants. Despite the many parallels, the CA group tended to attribute the behavior of “party abroaders” more to immaturity than social class and privilege. Some did express outright disdain for those who did not take the endeavor seriously. For example, Larissa said she was appalled by the students in the “party group” who were annoyed with the citizens of France who did not speak English. But overall CA students

expressed a greater level of tolerance versus outright disdain for those who were looking just for fun in their program. As most had traveled previously, they did not consider this a once in a lifetime opportunity, but an aspect of a longer journey in life and they had a general sense that this was about skill and experience development for the resume.

Expressing specific objectives for their abroad program, members of the CA group generally saw the experience as leaning more towards personal gain versus a mutual exchange with the host culture. Several of these students used touristic discourse to describe their own intention for participating even though they were critical of others. For example, Emma would describe aspects of the decision-making process when selecting her second study abroad experience in the following manner:

Well, I really wanted to do like another tropical thing. So, I found Cape Verde. So, it was nice to get away from the cold and go somewhere tropical. Um, and even when I went to Cape Verde in July, it was still really about the culture being so different and new to me. I really liked, um, just the whole location and everything. It had a big, um, impact on me. Um, it was still definitely an educational experience, but it also felt like a vacation. Um, and it, while you're still getting credit for it.

Nikki would participate in her first program abroad primarily for heritage exploration but would prepare for her second program in Spain based primarily on destination because she "always wanted to go somewhere in Europe" because it "was always somewhere I wanted to visit." She would indicate that study abroad was not for everyone if they were more interested in a vacation, but would not find it objectionable for a peer she became friends with in the program when she learned that she was more interested in "a trip:"

I don't feel like study abroad is for everyone because for some people study abroad with the mindset that this is vacation. It's vacation but it's also 50/50 with

work too. So I feel like some people just don't have that mindset and maybe they should take a vacation versus go and study abroad.

Regarding her friend's motives she explained:

But she actually, she didn't even know where Cape Verde was located and, um, it was just interesting to see like somebody who was just going on a trip just because she wanted to go on a trip. And the course requirements like fulfilled whatever she needed fulfilled because she was a senior. And it was just interesting, like you don't know where Cape Verde is? And she's like "No, I'm just going." And I was like "Oh, this is like cool."

The other CA students would all relate similar experiences or perceptions, regardless of location, program type, etc. of others in the program lacking academic focus and primarily interested in a vacation that happened to fall under the mantle of study abroad.

The comments related to this sentiment were abundant:

"A lot of people that were just really interested in traveling There was a lot of like pressure, I guess you would say, to party. Like they just kind of went to party. Um, but like some of the University of Mid-Atlantic girls like they just stuck together and then lived in their apartment and went to class and that was it." – Eva

"Um, a lot of other people were, like, "I didn't know we needed a book." So, but, I mean, I guess it makes sense because we're taking a language course, like, but, I don't know." – Eva

"I think that's what most college students think of it as, is like, you know, I'm just doing this because I want to go to Spain and I want, I want to go shopping in Spain... most people here, and most people that there were there were younger than me. They just, they just want to go and have fun instead of taking the classes here. It's most students." – Miriam

"[The others on the program] would go out and drink and party and experience the culture. And I, I would – honestly would stay home every night and study. And they thought that was weird. That's the American experience of the culture. And they just brought (partying) over to China and did it the Chinese way." – Addison

"When people study abroad, they take easier classes, I want to say, without really saying that but that kind of thing. It's more of like "go explore the world." I feel that's how –

that's the impression I got when I went to visit and that's the stories I've heard. People just – you know, they go to class but it's not like you're actually back at SU taking these crazy hard classes that you need to be in the library every night.” – Julia

“... it's more of a party thing and it's obviously I feel that because of privilege—because I saw it as a blessing to be able to go to France because I didn't even think I was going to get the Gilman. If you already have the funding, then you just see it as a vacation. You don't really see it as um, time to understand a new culture. But I mean that's also, I think upbringing has a lot to do with that, because some of the girls that I studied with they were just like, they had the same mentality as me and then there were other girls that had the opposite mentality, which is like about partying.” – Larissa

It is not that the CA students did not express concern about the party perception and the touristic discourse they encountered, but it was typically expressed in a more matter of fact manner. The talk suggesting that study abroad was more “party abroad” for many students, with an emphasis on vacation and fun, was not a revelation to this group. Most in this group had their goals and seemed resigned to the fact that the less serious lacked maturity and were studying abroad to “find themselves”. It was an objective that they may not agree with, but seemed to understand. Their personal circumstances had left them in a situation where they could not afford such an indulgence and so they proceeded to focus on the experiences and skills they sought to obtain to position themselves for future academic and professional opportunity.

Navigating Two Cultures and Program Design

When enrolling at SU, the WC students were entering an environment that was completely new to them and they encountered students for whom the values, beliefs, and behaviors of the college environment seemed natural. As discussed above, this was the case with study abroad. Ethan even commented that “some people just put it into the schedule when you're 18 that in the fall of their junior year or the spring of their

junior year there going abroad, you know, to Italy.” Given their background, the CA students as a whole seemed to fit the role of the latter group with their higher levels of social and cultural capital. However, both the WC and CA students would face challenges that were similar in many ways with the cultures of the other students where they studied abroad. The uncomfortable interactions discussed were not related to adjusting to the host country culture, as one would expect, but the study abroad culture constituted by their compatriots that was imbued with touristic influences and privilege.

Navigating Two Cultures Abroad

The WC group generally described themselves as well-meaning individuals who wanted to rise above the superficial, consumer-based exchanges that they associated with the privileged students who they felt were spending time seeking vacation-like leisure rather than study. Having gone against the odds to get to the point where they were in their college careers, many participants expressed resentment over the fact that other students were not taking the opportunity seriously and these participants were not at ease with being viewed as similar to those whose behavior they did not agree with. For example, Mariana would express her irritation with students from families with financial means referring to themselves as “broke college students:”

We’re broke college students so we’re kind of in the same field but in reality it’s like, yeah, you’re a broke college student but mommy and daddy are still paying for your car, they are still putting money in your account so you can pay for your food. But yes, I’m a broke college student but I’m working. I’m working and paying my own bills and I’m doing this and my mom helps me as much as she can but I have to help her too. So um I think studying abroad is immediately attached with ‘she has money’ and I don’t have to sit there and think people are going to think that I don’t have money.

As a study abroad participant, and upon her return, she felt that she was being identified as a student “with money” simply because she had studied abroad. This was

a label that she was not comfortable with, and as discussed further below, would make her feel as though she was comparable to an imposter as the other students and her host family would assume she came from financial comfort.

Rob who was simultaneously enticed by the ideas of traveling and of studying in another country found it challenging to engage with the American study abroad students at the university where he was studying because they came from higher SES backgrounds. He transitioned successfully to the host institution and country but found it challenging to find common ground with the other study abroad students from the U.S.:

I didn't like a lot of the Americans there. I mean, some of it was just – there were a lot of really Southern kids. A few were very much more entitled than other people. You could tell their father was footing all the bill and they were just being very frivolous. But most of them – they were, like, not tight but they were budgeting like I would expect.

Not interested in the “clubbing scene” or the politics of the other study abroad students that clashed with his preference for a more socialist approach with “the government taking care of the people more,” Rob would avoid this group and focus more on studying. He continued:

But our interests just weren't the same, remotely. They were all ultra-conservative to the point where I was really surprised that they were in England, of all places. A lot of the ones that I met, yeah. Whenever – because, I mean, we talked a lot about the Republican presidential nominees that are – some of the opinions I just thought were a little ridiculous. I didn't realize people actually supported Newt Gingrich. Like, I was just baffled. I don't know why. I – but, yeah.

Rob would go on to have a rewarding experience and provided details of focusing energy on engaging the locals and daily life of the host community. His involvement was made easier as there was no language barrier and he had access to a full university of students. Others such as Sherise would face more of a challenge as she participated

in a program that was designed specifically for American students based in a Korean institution and expressed a dichotomy of American participants:

I mean uh, I think they were two separate groups. Well, more than two separate groups. Like they were the ones that had a lot of – had more money. And it could've been like their family had money, or they just had more loans, or a scholarship. But they did travel more. And like, obviously, I wanted to go with them, but I was like, “I need to eat for the week, so I'm not going.”

Like Rob, Sherise would focus her efforts on meeting local students and would even identify one of the activities what could be equated to spirit week at her host institutions as “the best night of her life.”

The CA students would also express similar experiences when encountering the study abroad student culture on their program. Larissa's experiences covered an array of areas where she did not “fit in:”

Some students, I mean, there's some students who – I would say those who are more privileged and could care less. Because I – I remember there were like a group of girls who, um, were mad that some French people didn't know English. And I had to stop and look at them and like “You came to France and you expect French people to know English?” It's like “Why – why did you come to France?” Like, I don't know. But, I mean, those girls, they honestly, they partied. They only – they came to France to travel. And it means like they're in Spain one week and then, um, inland the next week. And the week after they're like, in China.

Noting that she “got along with everyone” despite her preferences not to partake in the touristic elements of the program, her host mother would initially be concerned that she was not behaving like the others she had hosted in the past. Larissa added:

I got along with everyone, but when it came to going out at night, um, I preferred to stay in my room. My host mom actually, she contacted my – my director and she kind of was worried, because she told, she told her, she was like “She doesn't go out.” ... So I guess she always had like Americans who would just, who were just never home. And so when, the fact that I was home, she just was like kind of worried. I don't know, that's fine.

Explaining that she would prefer not to go out to clubs and bars and that if she did, it would have to be with trusted friends who would behave responsibly, she was more interested in learning about the French culture:

And so, I think the others, the rest of the group, I didn't do anything with them because I was just, like I would sit up with the mother and just talk all night. When I didn't go, I actually spent time with my host mom. She taught me how to knit.

Given her background and status as a first generation American, Larissa would express more life challenges and opinions that place her as one of the CA student who was closest to being categorized as a WC student, aside from the fact that her father had a degree from his country of birth. These struggles made her particularly upset at the insensitivity of the other students in her program when she was required to undergo emergency surgery during the first week of the semester and her family, unable to finance a flight to be at her side, offered support from stateside:

And so, um, I had to have surgery right away. And, um, I'm in the hospital, I'm calling my dad and I'm like "Daddy, I'm going to have surgery. I got appendicitis and the doctors want to talk to you." And so they're like talking to my dad in French, and my dad's like so calm, like this, man. I don't know how – I'm like on the phone and I'm like crying and I'm like I don't understand why this man is not crying and bugging out, too. But he was like so calm. He was like "You know Jesus loves you." He's like "Pray." "He's going to get you through this." "It's going to be okay." And he's like "I'm going to call you when you wake up." Yeah, everything went well. I mean, while I was in the hospital was hard because I didn't have anyone there, so I was by myself.

Her family would stay in constant contact via telephone as she recovered in the subsequent days, but the others in her program could not relate to the lack of physical presence by her family:

Because all those other students are coming from America, that came from America, um, they were like "Yo, my parents would have been here the next day!" And I'm like my parents don't really have the funds to just come and stop everything they're doing and get on a flight to come. My sister told me that my

dad borrowed the money from someone (for the surgery). The student insurance, the way it works is you – you pay upfront and you're reimbursed.

Asked how the comments affected her she continued:

(It did bother me. Honestly, my father, granted my father is re-married and I have a step-mother. He is still the only parent and so to ask him to leave America, just to tend for me for, like, a few days, when I am going to be fine. Like, I already went through the surgery. It's not like I was dying. Granted I could have, but I didn't. Um, I felt like that was asking for too much. Why me, I don't think they saw it as, I don't know what they were thinking when they said that. I just think some of the parents that um, well, I don't know. I guess the parents that um, or the students that I met, they had parents who were born in America, for like generations. And so they have the funding to, like, that, to just go and buy a plane ticket and see their child in the hospital and I guess that's really what it is. I wouldn't say that we have an emergency funding. It's more so like my dad's business and then whatever savings that he has from the business or for like the house...

The nature of study abroad programming and the propensity for other students in the program to be from more privileged backgrounds, the WC and CA students were face-to-face with class differences that they generally kept at a distance while back home. Once in a new country, both groups seemed to understand that they would need to modify their behavior to appropriately navigate the host culture and rarely brought up cross-cultural complications in their discussion. When challenges with the host culture were discussed, they tended to revolve around host family placements that involved the students residing with wealthier families. Although part of her high school exchange rather than college abroad experience, Addison could not find a level of comfort required to stay with her “rich family” and after a short time period requested being switched into a family that was “the same economic level” where “it was more comfortable.” Mariana would also elaborate on the details of affluence involving her host family more than other cultural differences as she transitioned to life in a home that

was truly a new world to her in many ways. When discussing her family's "little apartment" at home, she began discussing her study abroad host family:

Um I think the whole socioeconomic thing was very interesting because I was abroad and I was "Oh my God, I'm with this rich, wealthy family" and I've never had this, but um but because I was American it was, I knew they assumed I had money. Especially because when I talk about my experiences and I'm like "Oh, I've been to Colombia." Those aren't cheap trips and people, I think people immediately assume travel [equates with] money. I mean they don't know that we had to take out a loan to get that... So, um yeah, so I didn't feel weird; it was a constant like self-reflecting kind, um, this place "Wow!" "I'm in this place" and like "Wow!" "I'm with this rich family that takes me everywhere and they think I'm rich, and I'm not."

Every day routines provided an education in class difference. For example, although dining customs are very different in Spain, when combined with the etiquette of a wealthy family, Mariana would be introduced to everything from using the "proper" utensil to pairing wines as a matter of course. Her language skills and affable personality seemed to win the patience (and affection) of the host:

They would be so upset with me the first time because I would devour my plate and because that's what I do. Um they were like "How could you taste that?" They were so upset... but if you didn't eat it the way they wanted you to eat it, they weren't happy, but it was a nice way. It was very, very nice. We sat down, there was, there was everything. You had your knives like, there was like the three plates. You served one at a time. It was very, it had to be proper. At home it's like "All right, everyone to the couch." It's like watch TV while we eat dinner. That's not the way the way it is. We were at the table for three hours. They were not like happy with us.

Mariana, like many of the other students interviewed, would discuss this distinct grouping of study abroad participants along socioeconomic lines. Comparable to the stance of positioning themselves in contrast to the touristic and "better off" students, they would make the most of their circumstances and involve themselves in activities that were within their means, in many instances maximizing immersive opportunities

that provoked a significant level of reflective thinking as less time was spent “collecting stamps in the passport,” by default, with such travel not being in their budget, as was the case for many of their American peers. This was not necessarily viewed negatively, and depending on the program design, provided opportunities for students from very diverse backgrounds the chance to not only learn about the host culture together, but also the social structures at home. Mariana would note the opportunity for this, too, because the participants “didn’t have a history together” and the only thing they “owed to each other” was to have “a good time and great experience abroad”.

Program Design

Regardless of the program type (e.g. faculty-led, direct enrollment in an overseas university, etc.) or duration (e.g. short-term, semester-long, full academic year), the programs that were described as having the higher level of mediated learning opportunities and purposeful reflection produced discourse that indicated a more elevated degree of personal and educative learning outcomes – both in quantity and quality. The learning gains in study abroad are not only about the host culture, but also about one’s country of origin. Since many of the WC students had only conceived the opportunity as nothing more than a dream for much of the time prior to the decision to move forward, most had not fully articulated their objectives and did not take advantage of the institutional advisors and information available that would help increase the odds of selecting a program which would enable optimal learning from the experiences. Several, such as Asia, would have the support of their family, but did not have involvement from family in regards to selecting and preparing for their program. Her

mother would express concerns for her well-being, but beyond concern for her daughter's personal safety, she was not significantly involved in the process:

I'm kind of, like, been on my, not on my own, but, like, academic wise, since, like, high school. Like, my parents don't really know what I'm doing, I got to explain, oh, 'hey, mom I'm studying abroad,' she's like, 'oh,' that 'be safe' kind of thing, I think they're happy that we were, just made it out of high school-wise, but anything that I report back, so it's, just like, well, 'that's great,' like, 'keep it up' kind of. They don't understand, yeah. And my mom, one thing is well, like, "All right" "Well, have fun and be safe." Like, "Make sure you're always, carry around, like, sharp items with you in case." I'm like, "Mom!"

Asia participated in four faculty-led, short-term programs that provided a significant level of well-designed opportunities learning for all of the participants. These programs were not only related to the host countries and curriculum of the program, but also provided the opportunity to share and learn with a diverse group of peers that she had not, and typically would not intermingle with at home. Asia would comment that the programs brought her into contact with students from all different majors and backgrounds that she would never have come to know on campus. The higher level of faculty/instructor involvement, academic guidance, group work, and required reflection required by the faculty leaders served as a "leveler" in the sense that the coordinators on her programs also did not permit factions to emerge, as was the case with several of the long-term programs where students had more time, or were permitted more free time, with less structured 24/7 learning and reflection. In most instances of faculty-led programs, students expressed less dismay with the behavior of their peers nor did they focus as much on touristic talk.

Several students, even the CA participants, selected programs based on finances. In other words, they selected options that were not suited for the optimal academic and personal growth, but cost. Ethan, for example, opted for the least costly program that

offered the least amount of structure as it involved direct enrollment into a Japanese university with courses designed specifically for international students. In this decision, he was going against the advice of his academic advisor and perceiving the more structured programs as being “on rails.” This term was an analogy borrowed from players of video games where the user “sees” through the character’s eyes, but does not control the path it takes, as though the player is limited to being “on rails” like a train on its tracks, so that interaction with the environment is limited. He viewed this structured learning as a negative prior to the semester abroad but in retrospect, reflecting on his semester, he felt he would have gotten more out of his experience if he had someone to provide more guided-learning and reflective-processing – “something that needs to be advised on an individual level.” Instead, his emphasis on the “price of freedom” led him to choose a program that proved not to be intellectually stimulating (almost disappointing) and populated with cliques consisting primarily of travelers and partiers, with Ethan not feeling a part of either. In addition, he found the cultural barriers of the host culture to be more challenging than anticipated. His not fitting into either the local or the study abroad group culture was portrayed as an isolating experience.

**Theme III – “Making Me Consider Options I Wouldn’t Have Considered Before”
– Reflection and Transformation from Study Abroad**

At the time of the interviews, all of the participants, at a minimum, had had at least six months to reflect on their study abroad experience(s). In some cases, the individuals were one or two years beyond their participation, or initial participation if they studied abroad more than once. As a result, not only was it possible to ask how the interviewees made sense of their involvement immediately after their return, but also, in some cases, as they left the university and pursued careers or additional

educational opportunities. Overall the alumni described their experience(s) as positive and, therefore, most were eager to share their story. Most held the view that their interview would in some way encourage and help other students “like them” to participate and have a comparable opportunity as they had. The CA cohort had set specific goals and objectives that most seemed satisfied to have achieved the goals they had set for themselves prior to departure – most of which were described as acquiring specific experiences or skill sets they could apply to their degree or resume. The discourse of WC students, however, suggested a level of transformation that was difficult for them to put into words. Studying overseas and being completely removed from their home environment offered a new perspective on their place in the world and new possibilities that they did not know existed or seemed unattainable in the past. Several, were propelled toward a completely new trajectory in life. Rob would explain it in a manner that seemed representative of the talk provided by many of the WC students:

Well, for me (study abroad) personally opened up a lot of options because like, we had mentioned before when we were discussing whether or not I would have been willing to go abroad for anything else if I hadn't studied abroad. Like, it would have been something that I considered. So, now this is, I mean now this is all I've been looking into or for future prospects for like, jobs has been things that are abroad. So, like, this completely changed any path that I thought I was going down before because now I can only see being abroad in the future. So besides that radical change, um, it definitely opened my eyes to certain activities like, I never traveled that much before...I really want to get out of this comfort zone. Because I don't like this comfort zone that much. It's not that comfortable. So I don't know. It's definitely just making me consider options I wouldn't have considered before.

“Opened Doors:” New Career and Academic Trajectories

After their study abroad experience, over half of the interviewees would participate in another program within a year of their return from their initial experience

or participate in some form of internship or volunteer abroad program. Two of the WC students had participated in four programs by the time the interviews were conducted and one was preparing to start employment overseas. These “repeaters” would attribute their continued involvement to their initial opportunity, with some of the WC students referring their desire to learn and engage the world beyond their previously limited borders as an “addiction.” Alyssa, a non-traditional student in regards to age, and one of the students who would study abroad multiple times, related how studying abroad would connect her to more opportunities she did not know existed and a new academic and career path. As an individual who was always told “you go to college after high school,” but was left to “go figure it out,” she would not even return to college until her late twenties, with no plans to study abroad until her peer encouraged her to participate. She would explain her journey:

Coming back as an older student it’s also one of those oh, well that’s something you do when you’re younger. So, so as a younger student it was something that you do when you have money and then as an older student it’s something that like wasn’t on my radar. (Study abroad), that’s something that, like, you go to college, you study abroad. That’s something you do in this period of your life. And if you don’t do it in that period, then you just can’t do it.” Like I think that it’s really hard. It is a really, really hard decision to say, “You know what? I have this life established. But I’m going to get up and I’m going to go over here and do this.” It’s really hard to do that.

Her initial program would expose her to new options and individuals that would help her discover an academic track that matched her interests:

I find it really ironic that I’m on the path that I’m on. I remember being 16, 17, 18 and while I thought about being an interior designer, I also was always like you know, it’d be really cool to like go somewhere and help build water systems or like. Or know how you get into it the international development stuff, but didn’t know anything about it. Or know how you get into it. Or if there are careers in it and stuff like that. So, it was always really interesting to me and I always like have had that like, I want to, because I’ve always wanted to like

learn about other people's cultures but also make the world a better place. And as a kid or as a young adult or whatever you are then, like I had like that I can change the world. And I don't have that so much anymore as like, you can change somebody's life.

Participating in her first program, she would learn that she could become more involved in international education and connect multiple experiences together to develop a career plan:

My study abroad has been so linked to that because like I may not have been a, I probably wouldn't have gone to the Study Abroad Fair if I wasn't, hadn't gone on the Belize trip. (Upon my return), I was actually promoting the Belize program...I met Professor Allen, who was handing out flyers for the International Development minor, and was like this is what I always wanted to learn about. So, I went and talked to him, and with him like you had to do an international internship.

The experiences and networks established from her first program would lead to additional overseas programs and moving from not knowing how to navigate college or that career opportunities in her areas of interest actually existed, to finishing her study abroad programs and her undergraduate degree with a clearer focus, completing a Master's degree at the time of the interview, and applying to Ph. D. programs focused on global issues related to sustainable agriculture and food systems. She notes that "The funny thing is like, I want to have a career but I don't think about the money like, I think about doing something that I'm going to love doing."

Rob who is quoted at the beginning of this section, and had not been sure he would go to college, described his semester abroad as empowering. Elaborating, he would state that "It definitely just gave me an opportunity to do a lot of things I would have never imagined I could do" and that "it almost seems like a dream, surreal" that he had studied abroad. He would elaborate how his time abroad impacted his future:

Well, in a sense it's kind of got to be like a foundation for everything else because, like I mentioned. This is kind of, like, I'm building my study habits upon what I, how I studied there. And I still continue that. And so that's definitely both for, like, personal growth and for if I do go to grad school, that's largely what influences it is how I learn to vigorously study like, that and just that kind of effort that, like, it's required of me. So academically-wise, personally-wise. I needed that experience. And also, I needed to break away from my friends for, like, to find out who I am because I very much, I'm not, I'm not going to call myself very open, like super open-minded. But I'm not, like, very close-minded either. And, like, I like to pick up traits and, like, hobbies of other people to at least try them out. So, but at the same time, like, that really gives me the reason to, like, take the initiative. Because then I'll see something and be like, "Oh, I'll try and do that." But, like, it's because it's someone that I know. But, like, there, when I was, basically just thrust out there by myself, I decided what I wanted to do on my own. And it was definitely a good opportunity for self-growth because I had to take the initiative rather than waiting for something to pass by me and then decide to pick it up.

Rob would discuss how in high school a peer would always discuss that she wanted to "somehow get into the international sphere" and how "it was something that I ended up hearing about but I didn't understand that much." After his experience abroad, he would leave to work and live in Asia a few months after his initial interview and graduation, with long-term plans to complete graduate work abroad.

For some of the students, studying abroad was one of the first times in their college career that they could focus on fully being a student. Most, especially the WC students, were typically working to pay for their education or support themselves, commuting, or fulfilling family obligations that competed with academic work. Josh, for example, was one of the few WC students who, like the CA students, viewed study abroad as an "investment" prior to his participation. Although admitting that he did not overreact if he did not earn all "A" grades, he was also fulfilling other responsibilities, such as being a Resident Assistant, in order to minimize his educational expenses. As a result, he did not have access to limited, and coveted, positions on campus related to his

major that open the doors to additional academic and professional opportunities in his chosen field. By studying abroad, he gained the access to the career building experiences needed, and the time to focus on his research interests:

(If you want to work in a lab here (at SU), you have to be getting ridiculously good grades or have some sort of prior experience. And so like, I had tried and I – it was never successful. And I was like, they can't say "no" because it's part of the program. And so, and that's-that's how I ended up doing it. But um, it was really cool because I had been like, I had been wondering the whole time, like, is (research) what like I want to do? Is – am I going to be good at it? And I ended up being good at it, and it made me really happy because then I was like, "I like this!" Like, "I want to do like research science." "This is cool." "I want to be like," you know, "Working in the lab and going out in the field and doing cool stuff." And so like, I knew by doing the Bermuda program that I would get that experience.

In the second interview, Josh would elaborate after being asked if he felt studying abroad gave him an advantage over his peers on campus:

Well, the simple fact that I did go abroad – I don't necessarily feel like I have an advantage, but what I picked up from it I do. So if I'd gone there, I wouldn't be, like, "Oh, well, I had," I wouldn't be all snooty and be, like, "Oh, well, I had a study abroad experience so I'm more cultured than you." No. It was like what I actually learned there was what I feel puts me at an advantage over a lot of students who have not had such an opportunity.

He also added that gaining research experience in another country would also make him a better researcher after SU, as he also gained skills working in a diverse environment, completing grant proposals, and writing an article that was soon to be published in a scholarly journal. His work on the station earned him an invitation to return the following summer to complete a research internship:

But I just think [my experience] was great, because "Why not?" There are a bunch of research stations all over the world. So, why not have people from elsewhere come because it's cool, because the thing is, is they have different ways of thinking. I, again, as I mentioned before, I viewed it as an investment. Yes, it's expensive and it's a bummer that it tacks on a bunch more money I have to pay off later, but without it, I would not have gained the experiences that

I have now and they have very immediately benefited me. Like, they have made it so I can work in labs on campus and get experience. I'm doing work that is eventually going to be published probably within a year, maybe, now.

The experience also created the opportunity for Josh to secure a mentor who would provide funding for his summer internship back at the research station, and was providing assistance to facilitate an additional opportunity to return when his interview was being conducted. He also decided to apply to graduate school and felt his chances of admission were more likely due to his study abroad experience:

I know that [study abroad] helped, because like I've been going back, and it's really like pushed me into doing research. Like, I've done a lot of things now. There's been like, as an undergrad. And I'm working in two labs now and doing some cool stuff, and I'm kind of like heading some of the [research] I'm doing. So it's like totally paid off, and I would say it was worth it.

As indicated in the sections above, except for Josh, at the outset the idea of study abroad being an “investment” for future academic or career goals was not expressed by the WC students. After their return several students found that what was pursued for more intrinsic purposes had cultural and social capital value that could be used to open more doors and access additional opportunities. For example, Sherise learned that her study abroad could be a good “resume builder”, and Mariana came to realize that her experience was a “good talking point” that “gave her a leg up” with her internship supervisors and colleagues. This was distinctly different from the CA group students who had more extrinsic purposes for participation, but who expressed less dramatic transformation from the endeavor.

The CA students also spoke positively of their experience(s), but overall as a group they did not speak with the same level of passion and enthusiasm as the WC students. Most, having traveled overseas in the past on vacations and pursuing more

“instrumentalist” objectives, expressed a level of disillusionment with the totality of the experience. Not that the personal benefits were insignificant, but they were not depicted as being as transformative as changing academic majors or career plans, as conveyed by the WC group. Where the discourse related to change and personal benefit would be used for several minutes by WC students, the CA students were more direct and provided less talk about their change. For example, when discussing the gains of her study experience, Addison simply stated “The only thing that that gave me really that staying here wouldn’t have was I wasn’t afraid of just going someplace anymore.” Ethan explained that he came to the conclusion that he could not live long-term in his host country, a possibility he had been considering prior to his experience, but summarized by noting “I was just wondering maybe I would’ve gotten a lot more out of it if I had someone say “look here”. Ah, so maybe that’s even something that needs to be advised on an individual level.” Neither of these students found their gain to be insignificant, but at the same time, none was indicative of the profound, lengthy, and life-altering descriptors used by the WC students.

Some of the CA students were more direct and mentioned specific career and academic skills they had hoped to gain out of their study abroad experience, as compared to more intrinsic benefits and objectives. They spoke of the acquisition of what were perceived as “hard skills” to build a resume, which resulted in descriptions of being better professionals after graduation. This was noted as one of the primary purposes for studying abroad. They also spoke of gaining “soft skills” such as more nuanced cultural understanding and empathetic understanding of others in “less fortunate” circumstances. They were more likely to describe these competencies as

unexpected benefits of participating that they had not considered prior to departure. For example, describing her pre-program objectives Miriam explained how acquiring Spanish proficiency would make her a competitive candidate for future employment opportunities. Post participation she would focus on how acquisition of a second language contributed to being a more humanistic healthcare provider. She explained that polishing her skills abroad has improved the service she can provide in the work environment when Spanish-only speakers require assistance:

(At the pharmacy) my pharmacist will be like, “Hold on, um, I have someone who can speak Spanish. Hold on just one second.” And they’ll go grab me. And I’m like, “yay, I can actually help people!” It’s awesome. So, like, I feel like I could help people.

Her experience and ability to better assist what she perceived as an underserved population would seem to contribute to a level of contempt, similar to that expressed by many of the WC students, for those who were participating simply “to have fun.” She would explain:

All right, so I think— I don’t think study abroad—is for everyone, because, I mean, it’s not vacation abroad – it’s *study* abroad. So, I mean, everyone would love to go abroad, right? I mean, 99.9% of the student body would love to go abroad. Maybe they’d like to go abroad and say they’re studying abroad, but they’re really not studying. They’re just going abroad. And I’ve seen that. I mean, there were people that were undecided majors, or, you know, were not doing anything with Spanish that were in Spain, and they were just there just to have fun.

Referring to the study abroad experience of these students, she would continue to add that if they were not “going to do anything with it or help someone with it, like, help the general population, you know, they should not do it.” She would soften her stance slightly as she proceeded by acknowledging after a moment of reflection that it is hard to judge someone’s true intent. However, she was firm with her position that

scholarships for study abroad should be geared towards students such as “healthcare-related majors” who would use their acquired knowledge to “help the general population.” Her perspective seemed to be moving towards valuing the more intrinsic aspects of participation and further from the touristic images and behaviors she had witnessed.

Similarly, Julia was aware that learning a second language and studying abroad would set her apart in her job search prior to participating. She explained that her service learning program would indeed become an advantage in securing a position with a nationally renowned healthcare facility upon graduation:

Well, I definitely think it helped get me my job, so that was great. Um. Well, my, almost my entire interview was about the Dominican. It just, yeah. They were *so* intrigued by it and just wanted to know, um, just like how I was able to adapt and they just were very impressed by it. And we, that was basically my entire interview. We discussed this trip. So I for sure feel that this was a big factor in me getting this job.

She had described how she approached her initial participation as a chance to build clinical skills and knowledge for her future professional goals. The service aspect of her program was presented with more of a “quasi-missionary zeal” with comments that “rarely went beyond the first person” or “serious exploration beyond the self (Woolf, 2006, p.136).” Once she became involved in the first program, and repeated a second time the following year, her frame of reference seemed to have shifted beyond her own personal “benefit” towards viewing more “underprivileged” populations from a more empathetic perspective. This can be gleaned from her talk as when she states:

But also just, I think just having more of a sensitivity to people that I work with, um, especially patients and their families. Just kind of knowing that you don’t really know what goes on when they leave the hospital and, you know, that it’s just, it’s, um, you know, you’re always going to get those parents. You’re like, “Oh, they just for a lot, or it was a hard day.” But, you know, they’re in a

hospital caring for their child. And I feel like I've been able to kind of take that step back and be like, "Okay. Maybe they're not the most easy-going family. But you have to look at the bigger picture." And I feel like Dominican kind of helped me with that, to just see the bigger picture.

She would continue to explain that she now could see her relative privilege in the "bigger picture:"

You know, I came from a nice town, good, um, public school system. Um, you know, I just kind of had a, a good area to grow up in. And I think some people, they could achieve just as much, if not more as me if they were put in my exact same situation. But some people may not be as fortunate. So I think that hinders a lot of people's success. So, it's not always work hard and you'll succeed. And, you know, you can do whatever you want in life because it's so different for everyone. For me it could be to succeed, and I'm only supporting myself. And I could have more success because of that. Where someone else could go to the same level as me, but have to support an entire family. And so on and so forth. And that could hinder success.

Overall, new trajectories in academics or careers were not discussed by the CA group, as they already had a sense of what educational or professional path they wished to pursue or had a broader sense of what was possible prior to departure. Pursuing the opportunities for specific skills seemed to inhibit a sense of studying abroad simply for the sake of the experience that was typical of the WC students;' to a point that in comparison it seemed to limit the level of talk related to learning and transformation in the current context that was attributed to participation. For example, Ethan and Addison, were rather matter-of-fact when expressing how little the experience(s) had changed or impacted their lives up to the time of their interviews. However, for others, such as Miriam and Julia, what changed was their way of thinking about how the "hard skills" they hoped to achieve were fortified by the "soft skills" that led to self-descriptions that suggested humanistic growth that they described as personally rewarding.

Exacerbated Sense of Limbo

Culture shock and reverse culture shock are normal aspects of the study abroad experience. When individuals transition into a new culture in the host country, they experience culture shock as levels of dissonance or disorientation in terms of new ways, attitudes, values, belief systems, and ways of living that may challenge one's own and one's adaptation to the new environment. Returning to one's home culture can create reverse culture shock as a similar level of internal struggle and confusion in the readjustment to the rhythm of life back home after experiencing new people, places, and things that potentially provide a new worldview that may not merge with the way of thinking that one left and managed effectively prior to departure. Interestingly, very few of the students would even bring up or allude to the fact that they experienced any form of culture shock related to the host culture. (In some cases, the short duration of the program(s) may have precluded this). However, what was more prevalent, especially with the students who spent at least a semester abroad was the talk by the WC students confronting cultural differences around social class dynamics abroad and at home.

As elaborated in some of the Chapter Four profiles, as first generation students on SU's campus many experienced a level of culture shock entering an environment that was new to them and their families and was populated with students who were viewed as "well off." Abroad, as detailed above, all the students rejected the touristic/party culture they encountered, but it was primarily the WC students who described a challenge in adjusting to the culture and lifestyle of their more "privileged" compatriots. However, the WC student's talk also suggested a level of personal change

as they accessed more experiences and education than those in their home and social environment. As they were “climbing the social ladder,” they found they were straddling or crossing classes (Jensen, 2012; Lubrano, 2004) however, the study abroad experience seemed to exacerbate these feelings for some as they truly had experiences that went above and beyond what most of those in their social network experienced, but at the same time they did not feel totally comfortable with their peers in the study abroad program. Later, when they returned home “changed” from the study abroad program, they experienced a sense of distancing from their traditional social networks. In this way, they felt at home in neither group, in between or in “limbo,” as Lubrano writes.

For some of the WC students, many who had experienced a very modest life, it was awkward not only to be out of place with the other students on their program, but also with the host culture who automatically thought they were wealthy simply because they were Americans studying abroad. Mariana’s homestay arrangement exemplified the discomfort of being incorrectly classified as a “well off” student when that was far from the case. Upon her return she was informed that her host sister was going to visit the U.S. and intended to stay with Mariana and at another former study abroad participant’s home. This caused her family distress and a sense of shame:

[My host family] were very well off and wealthy and that, but um I think that automatically you get, no, no automatically um, people think that you’re studying abroad so you have money. So, I think my host family think I was, thought I was, I had money. (I) never and, I never told them otherwise, um, I did actually, it’s funny because my host sister was going to come visit (in the U.S.) and she was going to stay with Layla. I immediately told my mom. Mom freaked out she was like, “What are we going to do?!” like, “She’s going to see our little apartment!” And even like to this day my, my boyfriend was going to come visit my mom was like “I don’t want him to come visit” “they’re going to see our little apartment” she’s so ashamed of where we live. No, it’s like it’s sad,

it's so sad, because, you know, she's worked so hard. This is the place where she raised us, where I think she did a phenomenal job, and here she is completely embarrassed by it.

Already struggling with her desire to separate herself from her hometown and mindset of many of the students in the College Success Program, while trying not to “ever forget her roots,” the interactions introduced by studying abroad seemed to amplify the feeling of uncertainty about where one's loyalties lay in the social order. After explaining the episode above, Mariana would say “Oh God, it's a constant, like “Who am I?” “It's an identity crisis!”

For some of the WC students there was a sense that they had to temper how much they would talk about their experience with close friends from similar backgrounds. This was especially the case for Mario, who was careful to make sure he did not appear to be bragging about his experience, and Jade who initially planned to participate with a group of her peers at the same time. Some of her friends were not able to proceed and had become envious:

Because as soon as we came back, we just talked about how great of an experience it was, and, a lot of people, um, there were actually a lot more people who signed up with us, but just didn't end up going. I'm not sure what their reasons were. But they kind of were jealous that they did not end up going with us.

The temporary feelings of resentment would wane for some, but for others, like Rob, the experience served to distance him further from his friends, especially those who did not continue their education as he had. Carefully attempting to separate “traditional” culture shock from his experience he elaborated when asked about fitting in with his old social networks upon his return:

Well, there was a little bit of an issue at first when I came back. Sometimes, like, a lot of my friends, like, a lot of my friends – especially the ones that I’ve known since I was really little that I probably wouldn’t become friends with, like, later on in life. Like they’ll say like, really, really, really ignorant things. And, like, it kind of became hard to stomach. If like, often like, I chastise. I’m like, people don’t necessarily like that when they’re being belittled, especially by someone their own age. But it’s like, I don’t know. If I hear, like, a racist or misogynist or, like, homophobic remark that’s like completely unwarranted or, like, just not that there, there’s usually an opportunity to have them be warranted. But I don’t know. Like I definitely, I know some people find that off-putting. And one person even, like, called me out. They were like, “Just because you went to England, don’t act so high and mighty.” I was like, “But you just said...” Uh, so I started to get on some people’s nerves coming back because, I don’t know. I was in such an excessively liberal place. Then I came back to people who were not as, like, I was already, like, quite liberal before I left. And when I came back it was, like, kind of in full swing.

He continued:

I mean it’s not as pleasant hanging out with them now. And I definitely, after I came back, my hanging out with them became much more sporadic. But I mean I also, I’ll still stay and talk, talk with them, like even now. Well, the vast majority of them.

When asked if his feelings were related to reverse culture shock, he would attempt to differentiate carefully:

For me it was, like, less reverse culture shock, but like reverse culture boredom. I came back and was, like, I am not especially easy to entertain before coming back I was like, I’ll tolerate a lot of things but, like, I’m not like usually very giddy or excited about stuff. But, like, then coming back I was like, “Wow, Stranton’s really boring.” Like, all the time. Like, I could no, like, I don’t really love being there right now. So, like, I wouldn’t say there was much of a shock factor because the people I left hadn’t really changed that much. So, I knew what to expect. Like I’m sure my interactions like, before were a little more strange to some people. But even that eventually smoothed itself out once like, I kind of reached a medium between Rob that had left and Rob that had come back. And, like, so I’m definitely, I’ve probably cooled down a little bit since my first return. But I haven’t necessarily reverted back to pre-England Rob.

Although Rob may have been experiencing reverse culture shock from his semester abroad, what seemed evident was the separation from his long-term friends seemed to

accelerate. Being called out by his friend as acting “high and mighty” could almost be equated to not being one of the group any longer, but as one of the “better off” students that were studying abroad with him at the same time, and where he also did not quite “fit” either. Interestingly, none of the CA students chose to discuss this sense of moving away from established social relations and networks.

Transformation and Agents of Change

As indicated in the sections above, studying abroad opened new doors for many of the participants, especially those in the WC group, as the individuals launched new academic and career paths inspired by their experiences and the social networks that had been developed. In addition, many of the alumni would discuss a level of personal transformation that impacted how they now approached life in general. Previously seeing mostly limitations versus possibilities, many were committed to becoming change agents by helping others from similar circumstances to access international education opportunities. They expressed the goal of making a difference in the lives of others, especially those who were “in the same shoes” as they had been. What was distinctive about the objectives of the WC group was not only a desire to help, but it was presented as though there was an unwritten obligation, or responsibility, to proceed accordingly and “pay it forward.” Mariana, for example, would refer to this as “a duty.”

For the group, the levels of personal change varied considerably and, just as they had time to focus on solely being a student, they were also allowed time to reflect.

Josh’s comment about having a “Mufasa moment” captures this sentiment:

Like, there were times where it was like – I’m not going to say, “Oh, I was totally fine.” Like I didn’t miss being home or anything about home and stuff.

And it was just like a really good time where, um, for me personally. Like, I – it was really good for me because I ended up – it was, like, I’ve learned a lot about myself while I was there. And I know it sounds like super dorky and corny, but it was just nice because I had a lot of time to myself and I just thought about what I wanted to do, what’s important to me and all that jazz, and had a Mufasa moment, you know, honestly, it was – it was good.

Mufasa is a character in the animated movie “The Lion King.” As king, he was revered and greatly respected because of his qualities. He had a high level of intelligence and integrity, was honest, wise, and had a profound understanding of his duties and responsibilities to others. For Josh, this “moment” was what career he wished to pursue and the personal identity he wished to claim as his own. Other students, such as Rob would express changes in his habits such as being more open-minded or patient. For others, it was being energized about their return to campus and academics as they were now able to apply what they had learned in the international environment to the U.S. classroom. Mariana would voice this enthusiasm:

Um, so, I think, yeah definitely I think, like I said, study abroad changed everything for me. Just the way I viewed myself, the way I viewed the world, the way I viewed other people. It changed it all, all for the better. I truly believe that it has been all for the better, I have the most phenomenal experience here this semester, it was the best semester ever in college and it was because how I felt about everything because of study abroad.

An increased level of personal empowerment and determination to make the most of their lives was voiced most strongly by those who had barely ventured outside of their local communities and states prior to their program abroad. Asia’s talk serves as an illustration:

It made me a lot more confident. After the first time I studied abroad, like I was like, “Oh, if I was ever afraid of anything, I’m just like, Asia, you like traveled to like the time out of your country, you went to like Belize. You didn’t even know where that was on the map.” And like if I, like I do, I hated public speaking. I would hate putting myself out there. I was like really shy, never

talked to anyone. I was like really quiet. And now I'm just like pssh, I can do that. Like everything seems possible now! I'm like not afraid of anything really anymore.

Many of the WC students in particular would suggest that their new perspective on the world made them want to do something useful such as giving back to their community in the U.S. Others said they simply were more service-minded, regardless of the country they visited. However, such commentary was more prevalent when students had studied in "developed" countries that have a wider social safety net or in "developing" nations where they observed the existence of strong communal bonds and networks. For example, Asia would comment on accessibility to equal educational opportunity at home:

Like being, being abroad you realize, "Well, we have a lot of work back home." I definitely became an angry American. And I was like, "What?" "We need to do better, I'm done." No, I was definitely that person. Like, "Why don't we do this?"

Rob had similar comments on services such as universal healthcare, affordable public transportation, and green environmental policy:

It just made so much more sense to me. And seeing that it could be done just kind of made me think why are we not doing this?

Having a comparative example, the first time for many, was inspiring and several would take action to make a difference when they returned home and voiced a level of civic mindedness. Initial engagement upon their return primarily revolved around promoting participation of other students from less privileged backgrounds through interpersonal support and serving as role models. Some also began incorporating what they had learned into their fledgling careers.

Encouraging Others and Serving as Role Models

Many of the students discussed the importance of the study abroad experience in regards to obtaining a more global perspective and gaining significant personal growth so they set a goal to encourage others “in their shoes” to do the same. This was cited as an important reason for agreeing to participate in the interviews as many noted that they thought the information gathered would assist others to somehow achieve this goal. Having expressed the idea time and again during the interviews how important peer networks were in regards to their participation, many discussed how they served as role models and were developing social and cultural capital for their own family members. For many CA students like Nikki and Emma this continued the custom of information sharing that already existed; for the WC students such as Mario and Sherise they attempted to initiate the same practice with those in their own network. Sherise, as several others would explain, discussed how she was using her experience to encourage her family, especially younger siblings and relatives, to expand their horizons:

I mean, someone who’s done [study abroad] is always going to relate more ... My younger cousins, because I am like the oldest kind of, in this generation, of my family, um, they’re like – they want to go study abroad now. Because they heard that, they’re like, “Oh, your cousin’s in Korea?!” and they’re like, “That’s so cool, I want to go to Europe!”

For several of the students, the realization of their role-model status was enthusiastically embraced. Their achievement also seemed to serve as validation that they could accomplish just about anything as they had come so far in their lives, even when opportunity had been hard to come by. Mariana captured these sentiments when elaborating on her obligation to encourage others. Responding to the lighthearted comment that she would be responsible for dramatically increasing study abroad

participation because she was already advising students in several student organizations and support groups, she commented:

[Laughing] [N]o not responsible, but you share your experiences and people get excited about it. You know, when you talk about how wonderful something is people get excited about it and people want to have similar experiences. And, I, because they can relate to me because I have the answers for the questions that they have. Yeah definitely, I think it's that interpersonal interaction that's going to make you get it. Especially if I'm catching them young. 'Cause my friends don't want to hear about it, they didn't get the opportunity. Everyone's jealous of the opportunity, and not that I talk about my experience to brag about it, it's because to me it, it's just a reminder of how far I've come.

Expanding later about being a mentor like her mentor, Dr. Surrey, she added that she “want[s] to be that person for other people.” She would continue:

I don't want to forget my roots. I love, I went to [Clark High School], I would love to go in there and talk to high school seniors. It feels like it should be natural. That's like, I don't know, I feel it's my duty to pay it forward and that could also be because I ... because although I didn't grow up ... I mean, I say I was a disadvantaged youth, I don't feel that way in comparison, I just feel 100% lucky.

Some of the alumni had left SU, and started their post-graduation careers where they had already begun to use their experience to present studying abroad as possible educational opportunity to students who, like they once had, did not believe it was for them. Asia's discourse during her second interview exemplifies the transition from a positive influence to peers to an advocate for urban youth. She began by comparing CSP students like herself to those who were not like her and how she attempted to shatter myths as a college student:

So many students who are in CSP, like they either think they're not good enough, or people have told them [that], and it's good to hear from a, someone in a position of like, “I'm no authority.” I'd be like, “No, you're really good at this, just keep sticking with it.”

Continuing to discuss students in “other lifestyles” she elaborated:

If you ask like most of the people who I knew on campus who were like that, they were like, “Yeah, I went when I was in high school.” It was just the norm if you’re like-like someone who was in that like felt that’s just normally what they did. And I was not in that lifestyle, so that’s normally what I didn’t do, and like that’s what I thought beforehand, but now it’s like, I tell everyone to go abroad. So, that’s how it is perceived, like an exclusive thing, but I-I think it’s changing. I think, because, like more people are going abroad. Like they, like it’s mostly word of mouth. Like when you hear it from a student, it seems so much real then, like when somebody comes with like a presentation, or like, like when you – When someone else is like on Facebook, and they’re looking at pictures of like you having fun abroad, then they’re like, “Wow, like, that’s like attainable. That’s something I can do. I think it seems way more real just coming from someone who-who-who does it. That’s why I really, I tell it to everyone. I’m like, “Dude, if I can do it – I – I got in from [Main High School]!” “I didn’t go to like, [Harriston].” Then, and so, “You can totally do this and it’s worth it.”

Having worked as a teacher for several months after graduating she shared an experience that demonstrated her transition to using her study abroad experience in the role as a young professional and role model:

So we’re working with students who have been told like, they’re dumb, they don’t get this. So I’m in a classroom, and we’re doing basic like math, or something. And a student’s like, “I never get math.” Like, “I hate reading.” And I’m just. It’s kind of weird for me to kind of break that. I’d be like, “No, you’re not dumb at math, you just need to know the skills.” And just kind of building, it’s more so, it’s like building self, self-esteem, self-efficacy like, class. It’s more than like a CSP class, so that’s what I, that’s what I really like about it. Yesterday, for example, we were doing like, a geography lesson, and they’re like, “Yeah, I’ve always wanted to go to like Dominican Republic,” and I’m just like, “You should totally do it!” Like I – I traveled. And they’re like, “You, Miss!?” like, “No way!” I’m like, “Yeah, like, I went to the same high school you went to, and I did it.” “It’s totally possible.” Like, “You don’t have to be a millionaire to study abroad!” It makes some like, it’s really exciting to them!

With the exception of Larissa, the CA students did not mention being role models for other students in the same way as the WC students had. For those who mentioned becoming agents of change, the focus was honorable, but more on causes

they believed in rather than a dogmatic obligation. This is not to diminish the care and passion expressed for using what they had learned from the experience(s), but the approach was more individualistic than communal in nature, in the sense that they were reaching out to those whom they viewed as requiring help, whereas the WC students approached their support as what one contributes to a community and, as Jade had mentioned, they believed they had a sense of understanding where those they were offering assistance to “were coming from.” As an example, CA student, Julia, would describe how she was “pretty crushed” when it appeared she could not participate in the same service-learning study abroad program, noting that it was “extremely important” for her to go back to the program to assist the rural poor and noting this was something she was passionate about – the reason for her participation (versus duty). Addison would acknowledge that her desire to study (and volunteer) abroad would help to increase her odds for admission to graduate school. This was not the sole reason, as she genuinely expressed concern to assist others and was deeply involved in social justice issues, but admitted the personal benefits of being a change agent:

I want to – help people. I want to feel good about what I've done with my life. It's a little bit – uh, I mean, it's very giving, but it's also selfish. Like, I want to feel good – about what I've done. And I can't not do it because then I'll not feel good.

Although there seemed to be differences in worldviews in how the study abroad experiences were used in regards to defining their roles in society, the overall commentary was that in some manner, participation had contributed to making them better citizens and for most stimulated interest or involvement in civic engagement. For several of the students, they also suggested a more critical perspective on their world. Addison, for example, while putting forth “selfish” reasons for contributing beneficially

to society, would relate how troubled she was with the disconnect between the wealthy and poor that made her question the insensitivity in the design of one of the service-learning programs she completed:

[T]he trip was really strangely organized. It was split between the Dominican, a humanitarian relief trip, and then the second week we went to the capital. And we went with the Political Science student group. A professor took us around and we saw all the state buildings and met the country's top leaders and we learned about their history and we slept in a five-star hotel. And the contrast was sickening. And we had breakfast at a buffet where they threw away all the food after just helping people dying of malnutrition. And I can't imagine anyone walking away from that. I mean, it just, it makes you feel sick. And that's what you look at is when we were in that hotel, you're kind of looking at it like, this is disgusting, this excess, all these people, all this money. And it's so easy to compare that to your life in the United States and just make that, because it's very similar. And so I can't imagine anyone coming back from that trip and being like, this is great, I'm going to leave all my lights on all day type of deal. I'm going to do nothing with my – you know, it just, it-it hurt.

These narratives suggest a high level learning and increased sensitivity to important social issues that are acute challenges in modern society, for many of the interviewees. As exemplified above, at least during the time period between re-entry and the interviews, many of the interviewees were inspired to make a difference back home in some manner. Whether the impact is lasting is another question for further study.

Guidance and Processing after Reentry

All of the participants indicated that the experience had been important in some form or another. Whether it was the acquisition of skills and training that helped strengthen a resume to enhance employment offers, or providing confidence to travel abroad multiple times, or feel empowered to pursue graduate opportunities, both domestically and abroad, never considered in the past. Studying abroad also was described as advantageous and beneficial even if "how" could not be explained. There

were differences between the student groups initially maximizing the suggested benefits, as many in the WC group had gotten swept up into a good idea in which they never thought would be possible, while the CA students were more focused on the goals to obtain from a customary college experience. Regardless, of whether dividends were primarily self-serving or contributing selflessly to others, the social and cultural capital assets tended to enhance the CA students' prospects as they were more conscious to incorporate their experience into resumes and job interviews, for example. On the other hand, the WC students would gain this know-how in the same way they learned of study abroad – more often than not, by coincidence. Several would initially come to learn how to “use” their time abroad more effectively for gains at home. Examples are Mariana's realization that being a study abroad alum provided cultural capital with her peers in the professional world or Alyssa's chance encounter with Professor Allen, a direct result of having studied abroad, which resulted in a new academic and career path.

Several of the WC students, unlike the others, intimated that more counsel and guided reflection after their return would be helpful in processing their experience. Mario, for example, talked about finding himself contemplating his experience frequently, but could have benefitted from more structured counsel. These sentiments were such that he, similar to others, ended the interviews suggesting that the discussions had been helpful in that regard:

I mean, I say it's – no, I say it's a great – it's nice to just talk about it and get the different questions to it, like stuff I didn't really think about, and just applying that to it and kind of getting some more from it and like, I don't know. I suppose just talk about it and be able to just tell everything you've done kind of or be more open with it and just like have a conversation, and talk about it so I feel, yeah, definitely a positive thing.

Jade's comments were similar to Mario's in the regards to the interview providing a chance to better unpack the experiences. Comparable to many of the WC students, she would also suggest a sense of pride in being interviewed and offered a voice:

I don't know. I never – I never actually thought that I would study abroad. It's just that thing like you said, not many people actually go – but it's something that a lot of students have talked about, like saying – they want to go. I never thought I'd actually be able to go as well. So, I don't know, it was – I don't know, I'm still kind of shocked that I did it. Um, I-I actually like [these interviews] because, like, oftentimes, people would – when they know that you studied abroad, they'll ask questions, like, "Oh my gosh, how was it?" But they – I don't think they necessarily actually care. It's just something that you – It's something you should do. Like, if someone studying abroad and you know that, it's-it's – you kind of just have to ask them, "Oh, how was the experience?" Um, but it's nice to know that people actually do care of how the experience was for you. Whether it was negative or positive. And like, how they can possibly make it better in the future.

Asia would comment that the students in one of her programs would make a more lasting impression as the faculty member continued to meet with the participants after they returned from their program to process what they had learned abroad rather than permitting an abrupt ending to the educative possibilities when the group returned to the United States. The students would continue to share information as a group, providing a kind of mutual support and learning that several of the students sought and typically found wanting from their programs. She would explain that sharing on social media and gatherings filled the void.

On Facebook today, I – I reposted a photo of – of Oaxaca, and I was like, "Oh, I miss Oaxaca." And like all of the kids who – most of the people who were on the trip kind of liked the photo, and it was just like that little bit of follow-up like, this happened. This totally happened and didn't, just like wasn't a weekend like, we just imagined. (It also served as) validation? I don't know. [Laughs]

She continued later during the same interview that information sharing about sustainability issues was shared weeks after their return:

So, we'd meet up, and that would always come up, it was like, "I found this really good article showing how this relates to like (our state), or someone would post, "Like, yeah, like I'm actually doing this study, ah like a gap year program. It has something to do with sustainability, and it reminded me of Oaxaca. And then someone else would say like, "Oh, I'm really interested in like doing that after I graduate. It's like related material, I guess, to everything we learned during that trip.

These meetings would provide an avenue for extending and maximizing the learning potential and facilitated ongoing opportunities for the students to apply the knowledge gathered to their everyday lives and offered additional chances to open the students' eyes to new networks, jobs, careers, and experiences that started with study abroad experiences that altered their world view and fostered new paths in the lives of many of the study participants.

Findings Summary

For both the WC and CA students interviewed, the discourse suggested that their habitus shaped their ambitions and expectations related to study abroad participation. Nearly every student expressed an interest in study abroad prior to college, but expectations with regard to actually participating seem heavily determined by the educational experience and cultural life or their family background and other reference groups that were part of their world. For the CA students, the activity was considered part and parcel of the college experience as it was made familiar by such factors as college-educated parents, past travel, or sibling participation. Even though economic capital was a pervasive concern, the knowledge and information resources about how to surmount the challenges saw them through. Even CA students who were forced to take charge of their life due major to alternations in their personal situation, their upbringing and "reserves of capital" seemed to provide keen awareness and confidence about how

to access and take advantage of opportunities to enhance their particular educational situation. Lacking both economic resources and social and cultural capital, the WC students were primarily “figuring things out” as they proceeded. Nearly all had already “opted out” of studying abroad, which reflects what Bourdieu had insightfully demonstrated in his work on education, that academic selection is shaped by class-based self-selection (Swartz, 1997, p. 197). Since the WC did not have the same networks and knowledge, most were “beneficiaries” of chance encounters with “cultural mentors” rather than in control of intentional planning. However, once individuals in either group came to envision themselves participating, they were determined that nothing would stop them regardless of the cost – financial or otherwise.

Although the interviewees described a broad awareness of study abroad programs due to the popular media, high school and collegiate promotional activities, and electronic media, for most, it was interpersonal interactions that made the difference in regards to viewing the opportunities as worthwhile endeavors to pursue and a real possibility for them. For the CA students, these relations were part of their world of family members and associated social networks that provided information and know-how to take advantage of study abroad programs (and other academic and extracurricular opportunities) in the university environment. For the WC students, such opportunities had simply not been part of their world. Low SES students may learn an element of a high SES habitus through contact with student groups or faculty (Walpole 2003) as seemed to be evident here. Many of the WC students were encouraged, advised, and essentially “invited” to participate in their study abroad program(s) by trusted peers or, in some cases, mentors at SU. These individuals, primarily peers,

served as cultural mentors, normalizing the experience and providing access to important information, advice, and know-how through informal networks that are more important and influential for students coming from working-class cultures where peer, not power-negotiated, relationships are the norm (Jensen, 2012).

The section related to the second theme began with Josh's statement of "This is what I know." The levels of accumulated social and cultural capital of each group of participants would determine why they would study abroad and what they expected to gain from the experience. Regardless of their intentions, all participants talked at length of the touristic elements that, in their view, created the popular perception of studying abroad. Certainly, this theme dominated many conversations. During her first interview, Mallory explained:

I also think part of studying abroad is for Americans, why it's appealing is because you can drink at a certain age in most countries. Um, and then, getting, like, especially—my friends who went to Spain always, like, are, like, "Oh, the club scene," and, "It's crazy, it's wild."

However, during the second meeting after discussing that her friend's semester on exchange was described as a vacation get-away, she offered a perspective that would ground the abundance of touristic discourse by adding:

Also what's a good story, if they're going to tell me that they studied the whole time, also? I'm sure there was studying involved, but when they come back they're not going to be like, "Oh, I studied so much in my room."

This balanced approach at an explanation deserves consideration and, frankly, it is important to note that the interview questions focused on the study abroad experience and the level of partying may simply be a reflection of behavior on the U.S. campus exported to the overseas experience. Regardless, the WC students in particular were keen on reclaiming the image from a touristic emphasis. While the CA students were

focused on securing more “hard skills” for the resume, the CA students expressed a view that study abroad and similar off-campus study opportunities, such as internships, provide students with “soft skills” and opportunities to acquire social capital and cultural capital and gain informal cultural know-how (Stuber, 2012) . The WC students, however, had a challenging time articulating the reasons for participation and presented more altruistic language related to understanding other cultures and a curiosity to learn beyond the limited borders their socioeconomic status had set for them. They were, as a group, intent on maximizing the educational aspects of the program. This perspective set several of them apart from the study abroad student culture and related activities that exist in many of the programs. However, as elaborated further, the WC students would begin to better understand that the experience could be used to build important social and cultural capital that would be useful as they returned and moved forward in their academic and professional careers. They may have been “out of place” in the study abroad population, but gained important informal cultural know-how and a greater familiarity with the cultural knowledge that is used in processes of inclusion and exclusion among the privileged classes (Stuber, 2012). Almost by default, the lack of economic resource and a holistic approach seemed to permit the WC group in particular to “get more” out of experience as they took advantage of what the academic program and local culture offered instead of participating in what was constructed as a vacation for many other students. The totality of the experience versus limited goals of the CA students translated into WC students seeming to have maximized the academic and cultural experience to the best of their ability and coming back transformed and empowered to alter their life paths, and in many cases, the paths of others from similar

backgrounds – at least during the current phase of their lives. This transformation did not come without a cost, especially for the WC students, as they continued to process their experiences and were forced to negotiate between the relatively small world that was comprised of people, habits, beliefs, and a world perspective that they valued, but had in some ways, become as foreign as the countries they visited. As Asia declared, almost everything did seem possible now for many of the students as they accumulated levels of social and cultural capital that permitted them to see the world abroad, and at home, in a new perspective.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Summary of Study

Passage into the 21st century presents a challenge for educators at all levels of the educational system to provide students with the knowledge and a skillset to effectively engage the dramatic transnational interconnectedness and interdependence of our times. For American higher education, study abroad participation has increasingly become a highly promoted means to help undergraduate students achieve this goal. However, despite the fact that numbers of participants have steadily increased over the past three decades, the relative number of participants has remained small in relation to the large undergraduate student population from coast to coast, with the diversity of the profile of who studies abroad only making modest strides. With study abroad activity rooted in a history of participation by students of wealthier, upper class college-educated parents, transforming the endeavor into normative experience accessible to students from backgrounds of lower socioeconomic means and working class backgrounds remains generally elusive. Lower income students from families eligible for federal financial aid such as the Pell Grant are less likely to plan to study abroad than higher income students (Salisbury et al., 2009, p.133). Students enrolled at a community college, regional institution, or research institution, such as SU, are also less likely to study abroad than their peers attending liberal arts colleges (Salisbury et al., 2011, p.145). The students in this study would fit both scenarios as coming from a population that traditionally would not pursue these opportunities as part of their undergraduate experience. Of course, financial resources are consequential as they

permit one to purchase experiences such as travel or study abroad, and it is commonly perceived that their absence serves as a barrier to participation (Dessoff, 2006; Lincoln Commission, 2005; NAFSA 2003) for many students. Salisbury et al. (2009) also suggest that lack of funding also shapes student expectations about pursuing a program.

This study focused on the Pell Grant students that did study abroad to ascertain how individuals from a situation of limited economic means, specifically working class students, managed to study abroad and how they retrospectively constructed the experience. The literature on this population has a common theme that emerges time and again as expressed by Rubin (1976) in her seminal work:

For in order to plan for the future, people must believe it possible to control their fate – a belief that can only be held if it is nourished in experience. That seldom happens in working-class life. (p.38)

The reflective life history component of the interview discourse reflects the sentiment of the WC students as their lack of financial resource was an important element in the decision to attend SU, their local and most affordable option, in the first place. Funding also played a significant role in self-selecting out of study abroad prior to enrolling at the university even for those with significant pre-college interest in participation. However, what is evident with the WC and CA students, who also faced significant economic barriers, is the level of acquired social and cultural capital had equal importance in “controlling their fates” and their ultimate decision to study abroad. This study reaffirms that all three forms of capital are necessary; each is nothing without the other (Kovacovic, 1995, p.244). Social networks, knowledge of how to navigate institutional agents, believing that study abroad is a worthy and important activity, that scholarships are achievable, assuming participation is for all students: all

of these are elements of a complex interplay of forms of capital that need to be considered when attempting to make these opportunities accessible to underrepresented groups similar to those investigated in this study.

By providing voice to the Pell Grant students, and utilizing Bourdieu's theoretical framework and concepts, the discourse and themes generated suggest that the habitus or "structuring structure" (Swartz, 1997, p. 102) nourished in life experience(s) that Rubin refers to are potent influences that impact how the students construct and make meaning of study abroad, and how they come to define their role in a broadened view of society on a global level. It also helps to elevate the discussion of social class, a factor often not widely discussed when examining these opportunities. By taking an approach that puts aside a deficit model of examining the population explored, this investigation and data gathered support the claim that there are generally two kinds of low-income students who participate in study abroad and the two groups are roughly distinguished by the educational levels and associated social and cultural capital of their parents. Although both groups faced the challenge of limited financial resources, the Capital Accoutered group (e.g., possessing high levels of social and cultural capital, a greater sense of entitlement, possessing a more middle class "frame of mind"), was equipped with higher levels of social and cultural capital than the Working Class students (e.g., primarily first generation college students, in-state residents, attending SU primarily through some form of CSP option) as they entered college and began to explore study abroad until they returned from their experience(s). These differences provide important insights into a more nuanced understanding of how low income students successfully activated or accumulated levels of capital in order to study

abroad, how they engaged the experience(s), and how they incorporated the interactions and knowledge and skills into their lives.

The shifting demographics in the U.S. suggests that more students similar to the WC students in this study will become more and more numerous on campuses nationwide (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013). The data gathered in this study, and the Bourdieuan framework utilized, help to illuminate the challenges and opportunities for change. Traditionally, the students representing this population have not studied abroad in large numbers, yet the call to increase the undergraduate population to do so continues to mount. To meet this goal of making the programs truly accessible, formulating programming in a way that helps this population gain the global knowledge and skills required, and guidance on how to “use” them, it is suggested that a more holistic level of support throughout the process that supplements traditional levels of assistance and guidance (i.e., scholarships) will be critical. Such a multifaceted approach is necessary to address the differences in “our psyches, in our expectations, our sense of entitlement, and the ways we move through the world” (Charlip, 1995, p. 39). The exploration of this topic, by utilizing the constructed discourse of the Pell Grant students that did study abroad, contributes to a better understanding of these topics. Moving forward, this chapter begins with a discussion of the findings, continues with implications and recommendations for practice, and ends with suggestions for further study.

Discussion of Findings

In this section I discuss the primary findings of the research as they generally pertain to the three main themes discussed in the previous chapter. The first section examines one of the central questions of the study and examines the factors that supported participation in their study abroad program(s). The subsequent sections consider how these students retrospectively view and make meaning of their study abroad experience(s), with a higher level of focus on the Pell Grant recipients that fit the parameters of working class students, as defined at the outset of this research.

Getting to Believing that Studying Abroad is Possible

For the students in this study, enrollment and successful progression at SU, and studying abroad, was influenced by many factors: family and cultural attitudes, academic background and achievement, participation in an honors program or college bridge programs, awareness of opportunities, encouragement by a peer or influential adult who took interest in their potential and future, as well as affordability. Financial constraints, a primary emphasis for expanding participation, was important, but was only one of many layers of influence. Although both subgroups of the Pell Grant recipients, the WC and CA students, lacked financial resources, and in many cases were “economically disadvantaged,” the importance of social and cultural capital were the significant differences as to whether or not study abroad participation would be pursued while in college. The CA students had social networks and specialized information and cultural knowledge that contributed to confidence to find the means to overcome the lack of funds to participate. Nearly all of the WC students on the other hand, lacking similar accumulated “resources,” all but abandoned the possibility and had constructed

the enterprise as a dream rather than a normative aspect of the college experience. This finding, even among individuals from low income backgrounds, suggests that the level of social and cultural capital was equally as important as finances to making it seem possible to participate. In most instances, the WC student would accumulate “accidental capital” (Jensen, 2012), which proved to be vitally important to their participation, and suggests why many of these individuals would use talk comparable to Mariana’s and describe themselves as being “100% lucky.” It also connotes why the diversity of the study abroad participant is difficult to change and why only certain social classes may be securing global knowledge and skills, thus contributing to social stratification between those who are able to access opportunities and those who do not, because they have come to believe that the programs designed to facilitate these objectives are “not-for-people-like-me” (Jackson, 2005).

A significant finding was that all of the students but one in the study had precollege exposure and interest in studying abroad even if they had self-selected out before setting foot on campus, as the WC students had. Similar to the research of Salisbury et al. (2009), the findings here indicate socio-economic status clearly impacting the probability of intent in relation to study abroad. Their study suggests that low levels of pre-college social and cultural capital were significant and could very likely prevent lower income students from valuing the potential educational benefits enough to pursue a program or investigate whether or not opportunity exists to overcome the financial barrier(s). They also indicate that even if students from low or average SES backgrounds are provided full financial assistance to study abroad their habitus would still likely prevent participation. In short, the probability to participate

increased alongside the higher the levels of social and cultural capital of individuals. This was evident in the discourse of the CA students who were self-assured they would proceed. Fortunately, the WC individuals' exposure and interest was still extant, so when encouraged and supported to move forward, they were open to the possibility. In addition, although they lamented the costs, once they believed they could go and convinced themselves it was possible, they were intent on participating and found ways to finance the endeavor. This was typically in concert with the support or encouragement of a trusted peer or institutional representative. Of particular interest was the fact the more "disadvantaged" of the two groups, many of the WC students, believing in the benefits of study abroad after their initial experience, participated in one or more additional programs. This seems to complement the findings that "the impact of social and cultural capital accumulation is influential for all students – no matter their socio-economic status" (p. 137).

Although all of the students indicated a pre-college interest in studying abroad, as noted directly above, most of the WC students did not enter college with the intention of participating in what was described primarily as a "cool idea." Although many of the students such as Jade indicated that recruitment "would probably have to start in high school" and that it was important to "catch the students early," only two of the interviewees even suggested that an educator prior to college had discussed, encouraged, or influenced their study abroad participation. This is a disconcerting finding considering pre-college social and cultural capital is important to supporting study abroad in college and it seems unlikely that many low income and working class students would accumulate these assets at home. Given the fact that many of these

students described their schools as “underperforming” and “just trying to get kids into college,” suggesting that study abroad should be considered part of one’s future may simply not have been part of the culture and discourse, unlike in the schools attended by their CA peers.

Even among the Pell status students, it was the CA students who had access to social networks, parents who had been to college, or siblings/relatives who had studied abroad and made the experience normative. The WC students did not have the same access to the knowledge and networks or role models prior to college that could shatter the perception that study abroad was for the “better off kids.” In most instances it was pure chance that this group encountered individuals who introduced them to the idea or influential individuals such as cultural mentors (Lareau & Calarco, 2012) in college that inspired them to proceed. In the absence of any international education policy in the U.S. (ACE, 2008; NAFSA, 2007), or K-16 collaboration that would serve as a “leveler” and introduce all students to the concept and discourse of internationalizing their education through opportunities such as study abroad, participation still leans in favor of the “privileged” students. These would be described as those who have participated in the past due to their access to social, cultural, and economic capital to which the working class and lower socioeconomic students have limited access. The bonding capital that more “privileged” students possessed sustained the perception of exclusivity while the others, such as the WC students, benefited from the fortuitous encounters with individuals that would provide crucial bridging capital.

While many of the CA students possessed and activated their capital (Lareau, 1989) to move forward with their plans, the bridging capital was important for the WC

students for the “seeing someone like me” inspiration to proceed. The majority offered similar sentiments expressed by Larissa that if students “don’t see other people like them doing something, then they see it’s not accessible to them.” Witnessing someone like themselves participate was significant for most in regards to moving forward and actualizing their plans, but the educative intent of participating was often not part of the vision. The general lack of encouragement by teachers and professors also seemed to diminish the educative value participation could offer. Just as many indicated that the influence of precollege educators on their decision to study abroad was nonexistent, it was also not common for the participants to relate that a faculty member at SU specifically encouraged them to participate in a program or stressed the importance of participation as part of a contemporary university education. The exceptions were primarily faculty who were specifically recruiting for a program they were coordinating. Generally speaking, peers were most influential, with some suggesting that their faculty were actually in opposition to participation as exemplified by Larissa’s discourse:

Because like a lot—you'll find a lot of um, a lot of professors who don't support or don't see studying abroad as something that can um, impact you for the future—preparing for the future. They'll see it, as again, like a waste of time or just something you'll do after you graduate. It's just like, no, it's something that should be done before you graduate because you want to experience another culture, another country, before you enter into the real world and figure out where your place is in the world. You know, I don't know—at least, that's how I see it...

Various factors seemed to contribute to, and sustain, the perception of study abroad as a touristic endeavor. Students were relying on peers for information, and these individuals were inclined to focus on the travel aspects of the endeavor versus the educational benefits. In addition, they had previously concluded that only “Greeks” participated, and the enterprise was presented as a “add-on” and not being central to the

core of the curriculum as advocated by proponents of the comprehensive internationalization of higher education (ACE, 2008; Hudzik, 2011; NAFSA, 2007; Stearns, 2009). This is not to say that there were not seriously academically oriented participants, but ample accounts of fun and touristic tendencies and activities enjoyed by others “better off” tended to dominate the discourse. Many of the WC students did not seem to have full grasp of the potential benefits of studying abroad until they were in the midst of the experience or had reflected upon their participation leading several wanting to participate again later on. The messaging and image of study abroad, intentional or not, that was being communicated to these students was not one seen as necessary for gaining critical knowledge and skill development, but that of an option for those who could afford a touristic break from their academics or to “see the world” since the message was primarily being delivered by peers or popular stereotypes focusing on these aspects of the experience.

Just as the influence of social networks inspired the participants to pursue a study abroad program, there were significant differences in know-how and readily available support that was significant for successfully following through with the decision. For the CA students, their “motivation” to stay focused and confident to follow through with their plans was supplemented by a higher level of family support, intervention, and guidance throughout the process. Whether it was critical emotional encouragement, navigating the financial aid process to fund their program, or formulating specific objectives for the experience, they had higher levels of cultural capital that helped them negotiate the institutional spaces with a higher confidence required to proceed. Even when there was a significant adversity in their lives, such as

the dissolution of the family due to death or divorce, the CA students had “reserves” of knowledge and more confidently advocated for themselves to secure institutional advice, support, and resources so their plans were not derailed. The WC students, on the other hand, were all first generation students and relied much more heavily on the support of trusted peers for advice and guidance when forming their decisions to move forward. When describing their path through high school and college nearly all indicated that they had “figured it out” on their own due to the fact that they did not have college-experienced individuals who could provide firsthand knowledge or guidance. This was the case even if their parents and family were described as being just as loving and supportive as the CA parents were depicted by their children. Several others were connected to families not heavily involved in their lives or who had faith that their offspring could navigate their education independently. The distinction was similar to Lareau’s (2003) distinction between “concerted cultivation” and “natural growth” childrearing environments.

Almost all WC students were part of a college support and/or bridge program that made the big leap to SU even possible. The two who were not in a CSP had come from high school systems where they were immersed in populations for whom programs such as study abroad were the norm and had a higher level determination when proceeding. Overall, however, the entire group relied more heavily on institutional representatives and student service offices to provide information and direction. It was detailed by several, however, that although dependence on university agents was deemed necessary, a lack of comfort with this reliance was evident until trust had been developed with the professional staff in the various campus departments.

This was exemplified by Asia's account of visiting the study abroad office three times before deciding to submit her application or waiting in her dormitory room dreading the trip to the financial aid office for assistance. The CSP programs made a difference in assisting with the successful transition to SU, and some level of multifaceted support to this group in relation to studying abroad was equally important.

As other scholars have noted, the "possession of particular cultural skills and strategies give some individuals an advantage in complying with the standards of a given setting," indicating that institutional processes are not class neutral (Lareau & Calarco, 2012, p. 79). This seemed to be evident with these students: the CA students organized their programs confidently while the WC students, who required more direct support from the university, proceeded with a more haphazard approach, not fully understanding how to maximize SU's support staff to their advantage. These tendencies would also reemerge when pursuing scholarships for study abroad.

Compared to the CA students, the WC group would approach these opportunities with a near fatalistic outlook and initially forgo pursuing these awards. Most did not think their odds were good or they did not have skills or understanding how to connect with the scholarship providers in their essays. In the extreme case of Mariana, simply applying was perceived as being equivalent to disrespecting her mother, the person for who she expressed the deepest of admiration and love, because she felt that accepting assistance was equivalent not appreciating all she had done for her. Just as it took someone they trusted to convince them to apply, or come to understand how the process worked after participating in their initial programs, most WC students seemed to have an implicit awareness that this interpersonal

encouragement was a required component of the decision process. As a result, all were intent on expressing that they had an obligation to “pay it forward” and help students “like them” pursue these opportunities. This revelation, as Jensen (2012) found, seemed to reinforce the premise that intentional person-to-person interaction and trusted relationships are critical for many of the students from working class backgrounds.

The CA students, when they did apply for scholarships, applied with a level of savvy, if not outright confidence in several instances. Certainly, as a group they were more successful in their efforts than the WC students. Not that they were less deserving, but the students of highest need, in the sense they came from backgrounds of enduring disadvantage, did not have the same “tools” to play, what WC student Alyssa referred to as “the game,” when seeking funding. In many ways, there are parallels to Lareau’s (1989) findings that reveal that middle and upper class grade school children are given “preference” by teachers because the cultural capital that is acquired at home, and in school systems they attend, provides acquaintance to a given set of cultural practices that are more familiar and valued by educators, who are generally from similar backgrounds, and interpret the students as having natural talent and performing at a high level from individual effort, not social class advantage. The students may also perceive themselves in the same light. To extend this idea to the WC and CA students when applying for scholarships, individuals in the former group often expressed levels of frustration at the prospect of having to promote themselves to scholarship committees and presenting themselves to representatives they had trouble relating to. Conversely, the latter group discussed strategies of how they felt they convinced decision makers to select them for funding. The difference between Asia explaining that she faced the task

with trepidation and simply wanted the committee to know she “just wants to go” and Eva advising a young peer that she should write a scholarship essay and “pretend to be” a good student and “write a good paper” to demonstrate “that you know what you’re doing” shows the indispensable cultural capital, not in personal potential and ability, that provides a level of advantage to effectively advocate for oneself. It suggests that the contrast might impact the perspective of the committee, depending on its composition, when deciding which potential recipients have the “motivation” they are looking for in a recipient.

Whether it be moving forward with a study abroad plan, or applying for a scholarship to finance such an opportunity, the discourse suggests that a more holistic approach is necessary to support students from historically low income backgrounds to consider such programs as part of their education, and follow through with participation. For segments of this population, such as those represented by the CA students, simply providing funding may be sufficient. However, there are sectors of this group, such as the WC students, who need more purposeful assistance to develop the social and cultural capital to proceed. Many of these individuals are coming from backgrounds that make the university campus and its values, norms, and processes seem as unfamiliar as the foreign countries where international educators wish to see them study.

Bourdieu noted that “(t)o change the world, one has to change the ways of world-making, that is, the vision of the world and the practical operations by which groups are produced or reproduced” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23). Although these students moved on to campus with the odds against them in regards to participation, their stories

provide insight into how more students from similar backgrounds could be supported to do the same. Supplementing economic resources with opportunities to acquire higher social and cultural capital are essential. I now turn to the findings of the students' experience that go beyond simply gaining access and how they began to change their ways of "world-making."

The Worldview and the Study Abroad Experience

Just as the backgrounds, capital resources, and worldviews influenced whether or not the students would act upon their precollege interest in study abroad, these individualized circumstances significantly shaped the purpose of participation and how the two groups generally constructed their experience(s). As presented above, the motivation of most CA students was primarily to acquire specific skills and knowledge related to future academic and career aspirations. On the other hand, the WC students struggled to articulate specific benefits and provided more idealistic responses associated with participating for the sake of participating and learning about the world beyond their home state boundaries, where most had very limited (or no) experience. Whereas the whole concept was more clearly defined for the CA students who generally considered it a standard "part of college" that would help them achieve their long-term goals, for their WC peers the initial program was described as a "once in a lifetime" experience. Yet, while their objectives seemed modestly developed, they expressed more emphatically a desire to maximize their time abroad and shared thoughts that suggested that their participation was much more about personal development. The expectation was an "authentic" experience, which was the term used for an immersive experience to learn about the host country rather than an opportunity to enhance one's

resume or a “vacation abroad” that they identified with students originating from financially comfortable families. The difference framed two broad types of study abroad experiences rooted in rather distinct worldviews.

Given the wide variety of academic majors, it was noteworthy that until reflecting on their program(s) after participation, very few of the interviewees constructed the study abroad experience as being a core element of their academic major or critical to their future profession. As indicated, initially the WC students primarily equated the value of participation with gaining life experience while the CA group suggested skills and objectives that would supplement their curriculum or employment goals. In essence, for the latter it was principally a means to an end, which was to stand out “above” their peers in regards to graduate school or career ambitions. The discourse, in essence, presented study abroad in a manner that critical scholarship regards as constructing the activity as primarily a commodity (Bolen, 2003; Zemach-Bersin, 2009), an activity that is purchased like a good, or investment, that sets them apart from the rest and presents the world as an economic opportunity and resource (Reilly & Senders, 2009). The discourse of the CA students was not in any way malicious, but was presented in a way that was more self-serving than, for example, as benefitting the collective good. In short, study abroad was represented in a consumerist way (Bolen, 2003). The WC students, reflecting upon their participation, would begin to allude to the experience as providing skills and experiences that could provide academic and career advantages but, just as they disassociated themselves from the touristic images of study abroad, generally did not have the same perspective or distanced themselves from the “instrumental” intentions of the endeavor. Several of

the WC students would actually seem to relish the belief that they had become more service- or civic-minded from the experience and/or positioned themselves as having a more “genuine experience” in the sense that they were more interested in getting to know the host culture on a “more human level” rather than the superficial level as a tourist or, as Nick described his privileged peers, as someone who is simply volunteering or studying abroad simply because “they can.”

Although the WC students were mostly among those that disapproved of the consumerist aspect of study abroad, several of the CA students shared similar commentary. These thoughts were presented on a macro level and as a critical perspective of the U.S. For example, when asked if she noticed anything about America “looking in from the outside” while abroad that she had not discerned previously, Nikki commented that class stratification was starker in America than in her host country and that one’s worth there was not determined by one’s class. She cited the economic focus of our society:

I feel America is so business. Everything in America is like a business. I feel like there is not one thing that you can name in America that isn't business.

She, like several others, were seemingly expressing a longing for a quality of life that was perceived in the host culture and that they lacked in their own lives. This quality was presented as a greater sense of community, less social stratification, and “a feeling of home.” For example, some made comments that they “had problems with the culture here” or that perhaps the “best thing to do would be to get out of America” because their class status was perceived as presenting limitations. These same individuals were not “rejecting” America, as they would also praise many of the country’s freedoms and ideals, but they utilized such talk to express frustration with the levels inequality

between the “haves” and “have-nots” that they witnessed and personally experienced at home but did not perceive as existing in their respective host countries. This talk was also accompanied with a sense of disbelief that some of the social and communal “safety nets” encountered in countries with higher levels of social welfare programs abroad were not in place in the U.S. For these students, the experience was an awakening to a world of possibilities rather than securing “resource and opportunity” that they had been aware of previously, and initially discussed as a reason to go abroad.

For the WC students, many of their programs increased their direct contact with other Americans who were from backgrounds of privilege. What emerged was a significant amount of talk comparable to the findings of Stuber (2011) who encountered working class students on the U.S. campuses she researched who equated the culture of the privileged classes with negative characteristics. This discourse began with describing privilege on SU’s campus and proceeded to be more critical when focused on the study abroad context. The negative touristic and consumerist images of study abroad, fair or not, were exclusively linked to these individuals. This critique also resulted in claiming a higher moral ground and disavowing the lifestyle of these students (p.151), but also in the portrayal of study abroad as frivolous activity as the students attempted to reconcile the negative images with the positive representation of their own experience(s). Significantly, for a select group of both the CA and WC students, experiencing a level of social privilege in an “isolated encounter,” or from afar (looking back home from “the outside”), provided the opportunity to contrast and compare the differences of social status in another culture, which proved meaningful in regards to understanding institutional societal structures that create “social gaps”

between the student profile of the traditional study abroad participant and themselves and in society at large. Most notable, in several instances, was being marked with the identity of privilege by the host culture because of their nationality, causing reflection on the relative nature of privilege and the systemic, rather than individual, origins of social inequality. In addition, by involvement in an advantaged experience, these students also began to encounter and express an understanding of how the social networks and other forms of cultural capital possessed by their more “advantaged” peers is linked to “getting ahead” and climbing the social ladder. This situated many of the students in a position of finding their “place in the world” with new transferable global skills and experience that they were attempting to intellectually process. Simultaneously, this also seemed to create a level of cognitive dissonance as it placed them in a position of being similar to their privileged peers abroad (and when they returned), as they also attempted to retain the values and ways of their upbringing. They had changed in ways they have difficulty describing and did not transition back to their old social networks as easily as the CA students, finding they were not quite “fitting in” in either location.

Navigating Multiple Cultures

Inherent in the study abroad experience is direct contact with cultures different from one’s own requiring some level of cultural adjustment and adaptation for all individuals involved. As participants are visiting a new locale, it is safe to assume that the new environment presents a primary or dominant culture that requires a higher level of accommodation by the outsider in order to successfully manage the new surroundings. For the Pell Grant students, there was little exception, but the WC

students described crossing multiple cultures during the time period explored in the interviews - as first generation students attending college, entering the host culture abroad, navigating the American culture abroad, and readjustment when returning home where they did not quite “fit in” with either old friends or the “high capital” settings they continued to enter. Although encountering new cultures requires a level of change on the part of all individuals, class factors added another layer of acculturation for these students.

Starting College

Many of the CA students had parents, siblings, relatives, and social networks that provided direction as they entered and proceeded through SU. This was very different from the WC students who most likely would not have attended college if it had not been for the CSP or similar form of support. Asia’s account of not knowing that her interest and area of passion was actually an academic discipline that she learned was Anthropology and Rob’s comment that he had so many gaps in his knowledge base of the world that he did not know even existed until he attended SU, serve as examples of the “less developed” knowledge base possessed by these students. For this group, the transition to college was a challenge as the environment was as foreign as entering another culture. Much of their talk characterized the same struggles that working-class faculty (Dews & Law, 1995; Ryan & Sackrey, 1996) and students (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Stuber, 2011) have experienced in the higher education context, as the institutions are largely designed, and share, middle and upper class cultural values and are heavily populated with faculty and staff that primarily identify with students from these backgrounds (Tokarczyk, 2004). The CA students, although low-income, shared

many of the middle class traits that provided a clearer trajectory to studying abroad through SU and took advantage of support from advisors (e.g., Honors Programs) and faculty with whom they had established close relations and expected guidance – supplementing familial resources. On the other hand, the WC students found their way primarily through ad hoc support, or accidental capital (Jensen, 2012), and proceeded with a level of circumspection as they “figured it out” and, for example, relied on peers for advice related to study abroad instead of faculty and staff who were also viewed by some as “trying to sell it.” The inability to effectively integrate with and engage the university environment is typically seen as a problem or deficiency with the student (Bergerson, 2007; Stuber, 2011; Walpole, 2003). However, the institution did not quite lend itself to painless navigation for most of these individuals, who were learning the system as they progressed. Many did not completely take advantage of the support available as they either did not know it existed, were too “distracted” with multiple commitments and responsibilities (i.e., work) to take advantage, or were hesitant to accept help as it was contrary to their habitus to accept assistance. In many ways, the WC students had to figure out the college world that was new and unfamiliar to them in order to proceed with a study abroad experience, and the culture of the institution did not always lend itself to easy integration and engagement.

The Third Culture

While studying abroad, aside from the few students that stayed in homestays, very few of either the WC or CA students talked about any significant challenges adjusting to the host culture. As mentioned above, several participated in short-term programs, so the time to interact with the host culture was limited by the duration of the

experience. For those who participated in a program at least a semester in length, they discussed more difficulty or higher levels of discomfort with interactions they had with their compatriots abroad. The formation of third cultures on programs, or hybridised spaces comprised of other participants in their program (Citron, 2002; Green et al., 2014), were more of a challenge. Many of the students defined these cultures as “better off” students who stayed together and were focused on shopping, partying, and traveling. Many of these students were described using negative stereotypes and were associated with the touristic demeanor of which the low income students disapproved. It was not suggested that they did not get along with the more privileged students, but it was evident that the adjustment to what was equated to concentrated populations of privilege that existed on the U.S. campus created some level of discomfort or irritation for several. This aspect of the study abroad experience was not what many of the Pell students had envisioned and it seemed to increase their desire to immerse as much as possible with the host culture. Several seemed to maximize the opportunity, not simply due to the fact that they were on a “once in a lifetime experience,” but due to the fact that they were not accustomed to truly being full-time students and having extra time on their hands. Without the resources that many of the third culture students enjoyed, and with “extra time,” they spoke of higher levels of engagement and immersion with the local culture, and used non-touristic talk when relating personal experiences. In some regards, not fitting in with the larger group seemed to foster a more immersive experience for several and satisfaction in being able to commit to a higher level of focus on academics.

What caused a level of unease for several of the students, especially the WC group, was being marked with the identity of being wealthy by virtue of studying abroad. For those studying in a “developed” nation, there was a general sense of resentment being associated with behavior they did not approve of; for those in a “developing” country, there were expressions of appreciation for all they had as an American, while also expressing a higher level of empathy for those who lived in, or close to, poverty. At the same time, they were accumulating social and cultural capital that they would not have gained had they not participated. Regardless, the experience of study abroad seemed to exacerbate their sense of “status incongruity” (Sennett & Cobb, 1972, p. 20) or feelings of being in “limbo” (Lubrano, 2004) when they returned home and reentered their long-established social networks.

Return

The CA students would discuss some symptoms of “traditional” reverse culture shock, but the level discussed was limited. They also had a greater number of parents, siblings, or friends who could relate to their experiences and who provided a higher level of support and understanding upon returning home. The WC students’ commentary tended to focus on comments related to crossing classes (Jensen, 2012) that had been amplified by the study abroad experience. As they had already expressed a sense that they were straddling classes (Jensen, 2012) or had a sense of “limbo” from being on a path of social mobility that many of their friends and family did not quite grasp, the study abroad experience seemed to exacerbate these feelings. Their participation was far beyond what many of their families and traditional networks could relate to. Rob’s recollection of being referred to as “high and mighty” or Mario’s

comment about how he had to be mindful of not “bragging” too much in front of his peers are examples of the differences. Yet, at the same time that they realized that they were not fitting in their “old world,” there was an unease adjusting to the “new world.” There was a growing awareness of the different class codes and importance of various forms of social and cultural capital in new environments they entered, such as Mariana’s realization that her study abroad program made her “one of the gang” with her supervisors and peers while interning at a multinational professional service firm upon her return home. She was still aware, however, that just like with the “crisis” that presented itself when the daughter of her wealthy host family wanted to visit her in the U.S., she was straddling two worlds. However, unlike the previous literature on “straddlers,” these individuals were not only processing potential social mobility in a domestic setting, they had truly seen others’ cultures and ways of living – in some cases where they were the “privileged” group. As a result, there were descriptions of dissonance related to their metamorphosis that were not so much being imposters in both worlds, but more as a change agent able to negotiate the different cultures as they were determining who they wanted to be in a global milieu and no longer limited to the confines of the local context, which had been limiting during the initial phases of their lives. A sense of pride in their roots and what they had accomplished to date, with their international study serving as a highlight, was evident; as was the ambition to encourage others to do the same.

Moving Forward and Paying it Forward

For all the students interviewed, the overall experience was positive, with several, primarily the WC students, expressing that the experience had been

transformative. Despite this assertion, most had a difficult time putting into words why this was the case. While the CA students had largely set a range of goals they expected to meet and use to further their future academic and professional goals, the WC students were more focused on broad aspirations of “seeing the world.” Given the perceived economic cost of the endeavor, and anticipated benefits to be acquired, it is understandable why the “high capital” students sought out study abroad while the “lower capital” students needed to be sought after. However, for several of the WC students participation opened their eyes, literally and figuratively, to a world of possibility and launched new academic and career trajectories that they were still pursuing at the time of the interviews. Comparable to the accidental capital coming together to engender participation in a program, their understanding of how to utilize the skills and knowledge for their new ambitions was being formulated in an ad hoc fashion. Unlike the progression towards studying abroad, they discussed a higher awareness of lacking the social and cultural capital required to achieve their new goals, but revealed an enhanced cognizance of how to secure it and move forward. Additionally, their life histories, and having accomplished what was once a dream, provided them with a sense of confidence that they knew what it would take to fulfill their duty of helping other students follow a similar path.

Guided Learning and Support

The expressed level of transformation and knowledge gained by the students seemed connected to the level of guided learning and amount of personal and academic support provided by the program. As indicated, most of the students seemed to initially view programs with the most structure or “on rails,” to use the term put forth by Ethan,

with a level of skepticism as they were concerned they would not be able to immerse themselves into the host culture. However, those who had the higher level of involvement by the faculty, especially faculty-led programs, would provide some of the most complimentary commentary on their levels of learning from the experience. There was also a level of disappointment, especially with some of the WC students, that their program ended once they set foot back into the U.S. as the need to process what they learned, or what “to do with it,” was desired. Lareau (1989) identifies a point of confusion between possession of cultural resources and actually realizing a social advantage from them, and she notes that even members of the same social class may possess similar cultural resources, but may not use or know how to use them to gain “educational or occupational advantages.” In short, the WC students were not fully adroit at transforming the cultural resources into activated social and cultural capital. In contrast, the CA students entered the activity with specific objectives and would later utilize their experience(s) (e.g., in interviews to secure employment), as soon as they returned. Their WC peers returned energized, with several so affected by the experience that they would participate in additional programs and consider internationally focused academic, volunteer and career options; but they desired guidance in how to activate their newly acquired capital. Their peers and cultural mentors had convinced them to become involved in the experience(s), but they yearned for professional expertise to help them find deeper meaning and provide guided reflection to maximize their learning and convert their experience into concrete benefits that extended beyond the idealistic goals they started with.

An aspect of change to impact the WC students was a sense of empowerment that more students “like them” should participate in the same opportunities and they were eager to encourage others to do the same. As indicated in the previous chapter, most felt an obligation or duty to do so. Additionally, there was a sense described that they needed to be role models and agents of change. This was especially the case for the students who came from the most challenging personal circumstances since they understood that their participation, given the odds they faced, was unique. For example Asia explained that students like her were those who “aren’t usually the ones who study abroad” and she expressed a desire to make the invisible visible. She added that her CSP counselor would tell her that “Oh, you’re the only one” and that the counselor would brag that one of her advisees had actually studied abroad since it was so uncommon. These experiences further motivated her to encourage others, as she felt that she “wouldn’t be the person I am today” if it were not for her participation. Most significant was the fact they had all expressed an understanding that they would be effective role models as the value of “human contact” or “human interaction” with groups of students from similar backgrounds was valued and necessary. Additionally, in the early stages of recounting their life histories they expressed that they had achieved their dream through hard work or luck, with little acknowledgement of support they had from opportunities such as the College Support Program, institutional staff, scholarships, or similar support structures. If they alluded to such assistance, it was typically with a reserved demeanor; there was a level of discomfort with accepting assistance. Upon reflection, this perception seemed to gradually change and they generally saw these support services and programs in a positive light. They had begun

to comprehend, as their CA peers already had, the importance of accessing these networks of support. As a consequence, they were interested or actively involved in paying it forward by serving as novice cultural mentors by encouraging participation and compensating for the shortage of social and cultural capital that they had lacked themselves.

Implications for Practice

The implications of this study are for educators, administrators, and policymakers attempting to expand opportunities to the low-income college population and gain deeper insight into how to effectively support them as they consider, progress through, and return from, a study abroad experience. Throughout this investigation the findings have been framed using Bourdieu's concept of capital. Similar to a three-legged stool that requires the effort of each "leg of capital" to successfully support its "occupant," the research advances the point of view that a multifaceted approach is required at the institutional and national level for this underrepresented group of students. The initiatives and responses recommended below are based on the data and findings from this study that was generated from the experienced voices of Pell Grant study abroad alumni.

1. Develop a National Education Policy that Establishes a Comprehensive Strategy for the Internationalization of American Education

Although there is rhetoric that students need an education to prepare them for the global environment of our times, on a national level the United States lacks a formal international education policy or plan to internationalize our educational system. On a macro level educators and policymakers should support policy and call for resources to

develop global and intercultural competencies in the classroom, of which study abroad is included as a component of the strategy. On the local level, advocacy to internationalize our local campuses and educational institutions is equally important. As exemplified in this study, many of the working classes students did not have access to the same social and cultural resources through their families or home life that established study abroad as part of their habitus. Placing the promotion of these objectives in the classroom serves as a “leveler” (not to mention the enhancement of a more globally informed citizenry) and provides access to important information related to study abroad. Although not the focus of this research, internationalizing coursework and creating co-curricular activities at home to develop global, intercultural, and international skills could go a long way to changing the question from “Are you going to study abroad?” to “When are you going to start planning for your study abroad experience?” This is, admittedly, an ambitious goal, but the involvement of primary and secondary teachers in this objective would, based on the findings of this study, go a long way to presenting more students with the concept well before college.

2. Support Participation by Starting Promotion and Recruitment Early

From the interviews there were several direct recommendations that came from almost every interviewee. The first of these repeated pieces of advice was the need to “start early” and begin to foster interest in study abroad at a very young age. Prior to college the CA and WC students had an interest in studying abroad. The former typically learned through family or social networks, the latter primarily through chance encounters. Just as bridge programs normalized going to college for these students, formalizing the introduction of these opportunities was necessary before they arrived on

campus. Rather than framing the lack of participation of underrepresented groups as a challenge only for higher education, the objective to increase access should be reconstituted as a dilemma for all aspects of the American educational system. To send a more representative population, normalizing the activity should be seen as a valuable component of a contemporary education. Outreach and collaboration to specific college bridge programs, to target low-income populations, would be a worthwhile investment, as would higher education and primary and secondary education linkages to promote these opportunities early and begin to create a culture of inclusion in regards to study abroad participation for all students.

3. Minimize the Touristic Discourse, Imagery, and Messaging Related to Study Abroad

Much of the commentary from the students revealed a close association of study abroad with touristic images, to the point that several of them had dismissed their interest in the opportunity as something for privileged or wealthy students who are taking a break from serious academic work. Whether or not this perception is tied to the origins of study abroad or popular culture portrayals, their sensitivity to the consumerist messaging and commodification of the enterprise as a high-end, pre-packaged good, that scholars have noted with a critical eye (Bolen, 2001; Zemach-Bersin, 2008, 2009), adversely impacted the pursuit of participation for many of the students. Although international travel can offer a sense of adventure and fun, educators need to preserve and better promote the educative discourse, messaging, and imagery surrounding study abroad. With the enthusiasm to endorse these opportunities to more students, advocates and educators alike may be less discerning with the

representations communicated to the public that may actually help shape the perception of partying and the purpose as tourism. Few in this study spoke of being on the receiving end of study abroad being presented for personal development, academic enhancement, or the career-enhancing returns of participation, but many spoke extensively of being saturated with the “grand images” and recreational portrayals of going abroad. Ironically, several used touristic talk to describe their experience(s) when attempting to distance themselves from the stereotypical party images they objected to. Suggestions to minimize the unbalanced characterizations include being mindful of the discourse utilized by educators such as asking students “What are your objectives of studying abroad?” rather than starting conversations with “Where do you want to study abroad?” clearly articulating the potential life-long benefits of participation; or being mindful of whose picture(s), and what is being done in them, populate the promotional materials and social media venues for programs. Especially for the WC students, who expressed a need to “see yourself in others” in order to participate, most of the messaging they had observed discouraged rather than encouraged participation as it did not relate to their situation, or failed to demonstrate the activity as a worthy investment of personal resources (time, money, etc.). Additionally, these students described a habitus from which they approached higher education primarily as an educational endeavor, even if they struggled to articulate these goals, and as a result were wary of the representations that unwittingly or not promoted “travel abroad” with little mention of “study.”

4. Create Peer Support Programs to Generate Social Capital

A second recommendation that was voiced repeatedly by the interviewees was the importance of utilizing student peers to conduct outreach to the working class students on campus. The CA students had familial knowledge and established social networks to encourage and support participation, but others relied heavily on peers as trusted resources. Even though they related that they had gone to study abroad fairs or reviewed program websites and promotional materials, many were almost “going through the motions” until a peer’s suggestion or endorsement that made participation seem attainable and provided the impetus to move forward. Essentially, the face-to-face engagement created a level of trust and assurance to proceed as the advice was coming from someone “at the same level.” This also created a sense of accountability that provided comfort since the counsel was coming from a first-hand source. The effectiveness of this approach was apparent even if the interaction was with a high capital student as long as these “cultural mentors” tied the promotion to academic, personal, and professional development. Educators should promote such peer-to-peer initiatives, but also provide training to ensure the message, as proposed directly above, the one desired and the dialogue is sensitive to the personal situation of the target audience. Based on the discourse of interviewees, study abroad begets more study abroad if done effectively, as peers are highly influential in the decision to move forward, or not.

5. Establish Programming and Mentoring Programs to Develop Cultural Capital

Another recommendation is supplementing peer-to-peer outreach to promote participation with mentoring and additional programming on topics related to study abroad (e.g., utilizing financial aid, how study abroad can help acquire skills transferable to future careers) targeted at working class students. As many are first generation college students, many of the processes, academic expectations, terminology, or awareness of support services available are new or unknown. These students are largely reliant on the institution for guidance and have parents that “defer to the notion of professional expertise” (Lareau, 1989, p.59), trusting their student will figure out how to proceed. Leaving the acquisition of required knowledge to the student puts these individuals at a disadvantage. For example, several of the students noted discomfort and inexperience promoting and advocating for themselves in study abroad scholarship application essays while their CA counterparts carried on with relative ease. “Cultural mentoring can allow individuals to transform or supplement certain aspects of their class-based cultural repertoires and these changes can have meaningful consequences for individuals’ interactions with institutions” (Lareau & Calarco, 2012, p. 79). This was exemplified when Mariana’s mentor aggressively counseled her to apply for scholarships and the need to share her story produced positive results. Mentoring is crucial to working class students, but needs to include programming that increases knowledge of class and is sensitive to the needs and fears of the students (Tokarczyk, 2004, p. 165). These relationships with mentors were described as providing a safe place to address questions and concerns or acquire

support, but it was also apparent that time to build a relationship of trust with the mentor is critical.

6. Re-Structure Scholarship Programs to More Effectively Reach WC Students

All of the students were Pell Grant recipients, so financing their education and study abroad programs were a significant concern. Educators and policymakers “need to explicitly express the benefits, create a culture that values study abroad and show it is a worthwhile investment ” (Martinez et al., 2009, p. 535). Once the students were set on going abroad they were determined to find ways of funding, but many of these narratives were replete with anecdotes of precarious financial situations that almost derailed participation. A common comment from the WC students was that in retrospect they saw that they “could have done better” in securing funding, but simply “didn’t know” or “know what questions to ask.” This would change for those who “repeated” as they learned “the game.” Their experience of trial and error was mentioned as one of the driving forces to share what they learned with “students like me” or siblings who might go abroad in the future, because they wanted others to benefit from their “mistakes” and knowledge acquired through personal experience. As discussed above, the high capital, or CA, students were the ones most successful at acquiring funding, scholarships or otherwise, while the highest need students, the WC group, barely pursued similar opportunities.

What is evident is that efforts to increase funding are required, but so are alternate ways to allocate and administer scholarship funding and other forms of financial support. This is not to say that current aid programs are failing, but perhaps

they are not effectively impacting those who could most benefit from them because many do not have social and cultural capital to secure those funds. Taking advantage of the importance of peers and bridging capital should be considered as both elements address the financial and personal support and cultural values and needs of these students. For example, provide grants that fund groups of students or scholarships for friends with similar financial need and academic majors applying to the same program (which was common for several of the interviewees), to take advantage of social capital and comfort that comes with mutual support that is not available when proceeding independently. Other suggestions include logistical changes to the way scholarships are administered. Many students commented on the low award amount (less than \$1,000.00) of many scholarship programs that discouraged applying: as the tendency was to think that being a recipient was not likely, time was not invested in applying, but in trying to work more hours or consider how to utilize loans. However, programs with large awards, such as the Gilman Scholarship (potential funding up to \$5000.00) were pursued with more regularity. This would suggest funding agencies lower the number of scholarships they offer, but increase the level of the award for each in order to attract more applicants.

The timeline of many scholarship programs and or release of funds was also a concern as many award notifications were too close to departure dates or were only available to students if they had applied to a program and committed funds (i.e., deposits). In particular, need-based award programs should consider reserving some funds for “early notification” awards that low income students are informed will be available for their program six months to a year in advance so recipients can plan

participation with confidence, having a clearer picture of their financial situation and able to attend to the multiple roles and responsibilities beyond being a student that were part of the everyday reality for many of these individuals. This process could mirror the college bridge program scholarship fund model that was successful in getting them to college as they knew exactly what level of financial support would be available to them each semester if they maintained successful academic progress. In addition, not only funding for students should be considered, but resources to provide professional development opportunities related to study abroad to primary and secondary teachers or advisors who advise Pell students in college bridge programs. As discussed in the previous chapter, only two of individuals in this study were intentionally advised or encouraged by pre-college educators to incorporate study abroad into their future educational plans. All were primarily dependent on the knowledge of their families and social networks to begin to consider or understand the benefits of participation. At the same time, nearly all interviewees stressed the importance of recruiting participants well before college. Yet, educators in the foundational levels of the educational system do not seem to be sending a message to pursue these opportunities. With these findings in mind, and the historical data that demonstrates that even to this day very few college students participate in these programs, there seems to be a lack of “expertise” that needs to be addressed in the present day. Therefore, providing educators with the professional training, which could include training and skill development programs abroad, are an investment to explore and implement. Successful professional training program design could help develop educational professionals who will be interacting with future college students and potentially serve as trusted advisors and mentors who can encourage

participation for many years to come. Such initiatives would normalize studying abroad by bringing knowledge to the classrooms prior to college and campus support offices that aim to develop social and cultural capital, which is as important as financial support, and equally required by these students.

7. Establish Policy and Practice for Lifelong Learners Pursuing Study Abroad

This study intended to explore Pell Grant students in an attempt to foreground social class and the experience of low income participants. The wide array of student diversity within these basic parameters was anticipated, however, unexpectedly another population not typically investigated was represented by Alyssa. She represented a distinct population in the sense that she was a student several years beyond the 18-22 age cohort traditionally targeted for study abroad programming. Her lifestyle, personal responsibilities and obligations, and learning needs were significantly different as she was an individual entering higher education after several years in the workforce. As the pace of the global economy, technology, the need for additional education and training expands, and more adult learners beyond the traditional age cohort (re)enter the postsecondary education, research to better understand the differing needs of older adult learners interested in, or actually studying abroad, requires closer examination. The individual involved in this research brought a higher level of maturity, knowledge, and life experience to the study abroad context that was unique among the participants and suggests that different approaches to facilitating, supporting, and maximizing the educative objectives of the endeavor are needed.

8. Provide Purposeful Support and Learning Throughout the Experience

The intent of this study is to better understand the experience of Pell Grant students so educators can increase access to, and provide better support throughout, the study abroad program. The primary emphasis for educators and policymakers has been to address the first aspect, which is to significantly expand participation. However, balance is essential and energy “must shift from a focus on perpetually increased participation to purposefully designed educational impact” (Twombly et al., 2012, p. x). This fundamental prerequisite also needs to ensure that the needs of a wider diversity of participants, such as lower socioeconomic students are taken into consideration to facilitate the most educative experience possible. With studying abroad primarily populated by students of more privileged backgrounds, many of the working class students found themselves equally, if not more, challenged by the social class differences of their compatriots than with the host cultures they visited. Program faculty and staff should be aware of and better understand the perspectives of these students who are potentially adjusting to two cultures in their new environment and provide appropriate support related to differences in their experiences based on their social class background from pre-departure preparation to their return.

Educators developing and delivering study abroad programs for American students need “to ensure that there is at least some element of the program that addresses the fact that the students are from the United States, and that in fact creates some separate learning objectives” (Woolf, 2007, p. 499). The study abroad environment provides an uncommon opportunity for students from diverse social backgrounds to learn together, and from each other, about the culture and social

structures of our own society from the “outside looking in,” as well as comparative analysis with the host culture. Interviewees, particularly in programs with a higher level of mediation (i.e., short-term faculty-led programs) noted more collaboration rather than dissociation with peers from diverse social class backgrounds that they most likely would not have associated with otherwise. Purposefully creating learning objectives for educational programs that incorporate into the study abroad curriculum issues of class, classism and systemic forces that hamper social mobility can provide a unique environment to contribute to social justice along class lines and promote a better understanding and keener discernment of systemic social stratification in the U.S. in the local and global context.

9. Offer Post-Study Abroad Advising and Programming

Reentry is an important component of American students’ study abroad experience. The returnees, especially the WC students, expressed that they had gained a significant level of personal growth and empowerment from the experience. They also discussed how it had reshaped the way they saw the world and their current place in it, and what they might want to do in the future. In fact, many of them were pursuing academic and career trajectories with an international focus that they had not considered prior to their experience(s). Despite these significant gains, their progress towards pursuing these interests was more gradual, in some instances even stalled completely, in comparison to their CA peers. They simply did not have the same level of exposure to the potential careers or professional fields in which they could utilize the knowledge acquired from their experience(s). In order to help support these individuals in maximizing what they learned, post-program support and workshops on employment

and academic opportunities that exist and how to pursue them would be useful. Such instruction could be supplemented with information to help understand the transferability of the skills and competencies they acquired to strengthen career development and marketability.

Readjustment can create disillusion and disorientation for all students as they are not the same person they were when they left and are now faced with fitting their changed being into their old environments. The challenge of readjustment is common for most study abroad participants, but the WC students described their sense of becoming a class-crossover or straddler was exacerbated by their international sojourns. Institutions should provide support for these students, specifically by providing programming that will connect them with peers or mentors from similar backgrounds, to help them process their thoughts and receive guidance from an individual who can relate to their feelings. These mentors could also assist building formal and informal social networks and help to validate working class status and values.

10. Support Additional Research That Includes Student Voice

In the field of study abroad there remain notable gaps and much needed research related to traditionally underrepresented populations and their participation trends, but also the outcomes associated with such students' involvement (Ogden, 2015). The population examined here is one of the nontraditional groups not robustly represented in study abroad programming. The limited amount of research raises the question whether institutions are truly serving the needs of these students or the needs of the institution(s). What was apparent from the discourse of the students in this study was that an intensive level of involvement from many individuals was required to encourage

participation, with continual interpersonal interaction and support being indispensable throughout the process. Beyond participation, there are many other components of the experience that need to be researched further in order to expand the knowledge-base associated with the student culture examined. The inclusion of student voices, utilizing qualitative methodology, is essential to inform educators about how to effectively assist this population and to move beyond speculation and assumptions when developing policy and procedure that aims to serve these individuals. Providing as much voice and visibility for these students throughout the study abroad process should also be pursued in order to validate their stories and help to normalize the experience for other students from similar backgrounds.

Implications for Further Study

This investigation offers recommendations for practice that can be incorporated into the American campus and educational system as whole. Among the suggestions is the need to address the paucity of research related to working class students and populations underrepresented in study abroad programs. Historically, these students have not been involved in these opportunities, and so have been essentially excluded from investigative study. With the exception of motivations related to participation, there is a wide spectrum of student experience that should be studied. These areas include, but are not limited to, further examining how and why these students make the choices related to participation, their level of involvement and engagement while abroad, and post-program and post-college impact. Additional research should focus on institutional structures, policies, and practices, critically examining how they support or discourage the involvement of lower socioeconomic students in study abroad and

extracurricular opportunities in general. Based on data gathered during this study, specific areas to start follow below.

1. Replicate the Study in Other Institutional Contexts

The study here provides insight to a group of Pell Grant students at one specific type of institution, a public flagship university. The population investigated in this study provides important insight to students from working class and low income backgrounds. However, nationally a much larger proportion of similar students is represented at other institution types. For example, community college populations are comprised of non-traditional students who historically have been denied privileged educational opportunities (Frost & Raby, 2009, p.174) and are largely underrepresented in study abroad. These students comprise approximately half of all undergraduates in the U.S. but account for less than 3 percent of U.S. total study abroad population (Raby, 2008). Understanding the nuances of students from diverse educational settings could contribute significantly to the body of knowledge and could assist supporting working class students systemically.

2. Examine the Experience of Effective Peers and Cultural Mentors

For the working class students in this study, it was evident that a significant amount of value was placed in the interpersonal involvement and advice of individuals with whom they felt they could trust and were able to relate to their personal circumstances. Asia captured this sentiment, expressed by many of the research participants, when she indicated that the recommendations of peers were especially influential because these students were “at their level.” Since interaction with a peer or cultural mentor was a significant factor, at least in regards to participation, it is

important to explore the experience of these enormously influential individuals. Data to better understand their perspective on what they feel are the required skills and practices that lead to becoming effective leaders and cultural mentors would be useful. In particular, insight into what interventions that are particularly effective in helping to develop and activate social and cultural capital of Pell Grant recipients would be valuable. Educators and program administrators interested in creating programmatic initiatives, developing networks of support, or strategies to encourage greater participation of Pell Grant recipients, and other underrepresented populations in study abroad, could use the information to establish more effective policy and practice for this purpose.

3. Research Working Class Students and Their “Mobility Capital”

Researching the forms of capital that “have enabled students to begin their [study abroad] sojourn confidently” (Green et al, 2014, p. 11), Green et al noted that the social and cultural capital to successfully arrive at the departure gate with ease are typically not associated with low socioeconomic students, but their more privileged peers. However, they conclude their research by suggesting that the skills and knowledge accumulated by less privileged students during pre-departure preparations, and similar life experiences, could actually be advantageous while abroad as they may have developed important coping strategies not attained by their more privileged peers. They refer to these skills and acquired knowledge as mobility capital. When it came to navigating the university, study abroad process, or the study abroad experience, many of the working class students in this study demonstrated a great deal of resourcefulness to proceed and adapt to the multiple environments they faced, despite their limited level

of experience and resources to assist them in the new and unfamiliar settings. Although much of this creativity was developed by necessity, lacking the social and cultural capital of the middle and upper social class students, an appreciable amount of imagination, adaptability, and inventiveness were required to proceed. The life experiences and skills of the WC students, even compared to the CA students in this study, seemed to provide many of them with a higher level of flexibility, tolerance, adjustment skills, and cultural sensitivity that seemed serve them well. The data gathered from this study concurs with the recommendation of Green et al that the mobility capital obtained by these students should be the subject of further research. In addition, it would be useful to examine mobility capital in relation to gains in cultural and global competencies along social class lines during the study abroad experience.

4. Investigate the Perspectives of Educators and Institutions

Throughout its history, studying abroad has been closely linked with privilege and student from higher socioeconomic status backgrounds. Borrowing from the research on working class academics (Dews & Law, 1995; Ryan & Sackrey, 1996) and the level of elitism and social reproduction cited as inherent in academia, exploring the experience and values held by professionals and educators in the field of international education that guide their policy and practice could also be useful. Do these professional groups largely consist of individuals that hold values and assumptions that are unintentionally counterproductive to developing practice and policy that expands access and builds supportive learning environments? It would be useful to explore the experience and perspectives of these individuals to ask if they, and therefore institutions, send messages or establish conventions and process that push working class

students away from study abroad opportunities rather than welcome them in. Such research would complement the call for the increased inclusion of student voice and compel educators and institutions to take a closer look at themselves to understand ways they diminish, or potentially contribute to, the reproduction of inequitable social and power structures, despite calling for their elimination.

Summary and Concluding Thoughts

There have been notable junctures in the history of the United States when the prevailing belief in our country was that our society as a whole would benefit if higher education were equally accessible to individuals from all levels of our society. Meaningful strides have been made in this regard as a college education has become more widely accessible and some form of postsecondary attainment is becoming more commonly viewed as a necessity. In today's global environment, a growing chorus of voices increasingly calls for undergraduates to graduate with cross-cultural and global competencies, with study abroad participation considered an important tool for achieving this objective. However, the aim of increasing participation in these programs, coordinated efforts for diversifying the population that participates in these opportunities have just begun to gain momentum in recent years. The data show that only modest headway has been achieved. To progress toward the goal of diversification, multifaceted initiatives are needed that address the cultivation of social and cultural capital, as well as remedying financial impediments.

The life stories of the Pell Grant students explored in this study, framed by a Bourdieuan theoretical framework, accentuate the importance of providing resources and support that are comprehensive in nature, in order to expand access and maximize

learning gains during the study abroad experience and beyond. The level of knowledge and social networks the Culturally Accoutered students employed may inadvertently convey a sense of privilege, especially when compared to the Working Class students. However, it is important to emphasize the limited financial means for the population as a whole, as it underscores the importance of social and cultural resources for students at all locations along the socioeconomic spectrum. The strained, in some instances precarious, economic situation of all of the individuals involved nearly derailed college for many of the participants, let alone study abroad. The information gathered revealed that the students involved in this study also represent an abundant pool of talent and potential yet, most barely progressed through college and study abroad participation with accumulated levels of capital or by pure chance. For whatever reason, many of the students' levels of economic, social, and cultural capital were constrained by factors such as their family of origin or a result of dramatically shifting economic circumstances of the global environment. In short, most of students found themselves in a tenuous personal and financial situation as they attempted to secure an education they are informed is essential to thrive in today's world. The "collective we" need to take more responsibility for these students – we cannot just say "go abroad" and not provide the support mechanisms to make it happen.

The discourse of these students also suggests that to achieve the goal of a more representative group of undergraduate students who participate in these experiences, early intervention and long-term, sustained, commitment and investment are required. Moreover, elements of this commitment must be complemented with well-informed interpersonal interaction with peers, mentors, and educators. We cannot assume a "one

size fits all” approach to programming efforts, and institutions must consider how to adapt policies and practices to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse populations of students (Bergerson, 2007, p. 116). At the same time, with many institutions of higher education continuing to face budget shortfalls, bringing social class to the foreground in the discussion and action in relation to diversity efforts connected to international education are an essential investment of resources as this factor transcends all identities and has the potential to widely impact a larger group of diverse students.

“Finding that higher education serves to equalize at one point in time does not mean that it does so at another” (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013, p. 229). The historical growth of study abroad is rooted in privilege. Developing global and cultural competencies and skills through these programs should not be a luxury for the few. With the trend of obtaining a college education moving away from being a public good towards a private benefit, the risk of not truly democratizing these opportunities, or backsliding on momentum gained, is not beyond the realm of possibilities. Just as Bourdieu’s concept of forms of capital allows one to understand non-financial resources as assets, his work also puts forth the proposition that educational credentials have become a new significant source of stratification in modern society as they serve as important resources for status distinctions (Swartz, 1997, p. 181). Providing visibility and voice to the Pell Grant students helps us to better understanding how they began to change their ways of “world-making” and gain access to the “global educational credentials” accessible through programs such as study abroad. It is equally important that educators and educational institutions also change their ways of world-making to

support these students who have great promise, and provide them with the same opportunity to change the world and future paths.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Sample Interview Questions

Questions Guiding Interview 1: Tell me about how you got to this point. How is it that? (Focus on students' background, academic and personal life prior to departure, and decision-making process).

1. I am interested to understand the reasons people decide to participate in study abroad programs. Please tell me about your thoughts that led you to participate. Can you tell me a little about yourself such as where you are from, your major, etc.? (If necessary to initiate dialogue, suggest descriptors such as major, age, residency, first generation, heritage, etc.).
2. How would you describe yourself and your personality to others?
3. (If student identifies a class position). How would you define that?
4. In your opinion, would your closest friends and family describe you in the same way?
5. If you were to describe the “type” of student you are, what would you say? For example, Honors student, “B” average, creative, etc.
6. Tell me about the high school you attended? How would you describe the school and your experience there? (Inquire if they were on any specific academic “track” such as AP, Honors, and College Crusade). If any, who were the teachers or advisors there that you feel significantly influenced your decision to attend college?
7. At that point in your life, what were your objectives for attending college?
8. Please discuss whether or not your closest friends and family members supported your plans to attend college? In your opinion, do you think these individuals value education and pursuing a college degree?
9. How did you come to select <current institution> as your college? Did you study anywhere else such as a community college before coming to this institution? Where and why?
10. How would you describe your transition to college? Please talk a little about your adjustment and challenges you experienced?
11. What groups or organization are you involved with at the university? For example, are you involved with Honors, Trio, student clubs, volunteer groups, social organizations, etc.? If you are involved, how would you say this has impacted your time at the university? If not, can you explain why you decided not to become too involved?
12. Please discuss when you actually learned about study abroad as a “concept” or began to learn what it was all about. How did this come about?
13. Please tell me about time period when and why you made the decision to study abroad? Was it a specific moment or something that you considered over a long period of time? How did you come to this decision?
14. How do would you explain your personal decision-making process and what the significant factors, or experiences, were that influenced your decision to participate on the/a study abroad program(s)?

15. How did you come to decide where you would study and why you selected this/these specific program(s)?
16. Please discuss whether or not studying abroad was something you always wanted to do. Previous to studying abroad, can you describe if, or where, you had traveled in the U.S. or overseas? What was the purpose of this travel? If you had not traveled much previously, why would you say that is the case? If you had, why would you say that is the case?
17. If you had to provide the most significant factors that led to your decision to study abroad, what were they?
18. Can you tell me about the course of events, or timeline, between the time when you decided to study abroad until your actual departure? Was the experience stressful, easy, a challenge? How would you best describe your “state of being” this time?
19. Please discuss any obstacles (financial, academic, personal, etc.) that almost made you reconsider your plans or prevented you from pursuing your decision? If there were any, what were they and how did you overcome those challenges?
20. Can you talk a little more about where you come from and whether or not studying abroad participation is common for someone from the same community and/or similar background? Who in your family or peer group, specifically close friends, from your home town has studied abroad? Are you the first one in your family to go to college too?
21. What reactions did you get from your family, friends, and most immediate acquaintances about your plans when you told them you were studying abroad? How do you feel they viewed the activity? How do you think they viewed your decision? (Frivolous and a waste of time, valuable and an important component of your education, as an adventure)?
22. In your opinion, who typically studies abroad?
23. Prior to studying abroad, how would you have described what studying abroad was about and its purpose?
24. Was there anyone, group, or anything along the way that influenced or supported you in a positive way in regards to your decision-making process related to study abroad? Who and how? Was there anyone or anything discouraging your participation? Who and how?
25. How did you fund your program(s) abroad? What were your strategies to finance your experience, did you take a job specifically to finance the experience? Did you apply for any scholarships in order to finance your experience? In no, were you aware of any that existed? If yes, how did you learn about them? If you applied for scholarships, were you the recipient of any?
26. Before participating, what were your personal goals and objectives related to studying abroad? Why did you want to do this?
27. Which of your peers and friends participated on a study abroad program? Please talk about who they were and provide some insight why you think they participated on these programs? How did they impact your decisions, if at all?

Questions Guiding Interview II – The Experience (Focus on program planning, preparing, the time overseas)

28. How well do you feel that you adjusted to your new environment while studying overseas?
29. If there were other U.S. students on the same study abroad program as you, can you describe a little bit about them and what your impressions were of these individuals? Please talk about how you got along with them. Who did you tend to spend most of your social time with, why is that the case?
30. As far as the other Americans on the program....In your opinion, which ones were better prepared for the experience(s) compared to you? Less prepared? Why do you think this is the case?
31. While studying abroad, what type of activities did you get involved with that you typically, or most likely, would not do here at home? Why do you think that is?
32. Overall, how did your experience go? What would you say were the positive aspects and the negative aspects of your experience?
33. Talk about your overall experience - from arrival to departure – and what the highlights and low points were for you.
34. How did your expectations prior to departure match the reality “on the ground”?

In addition to the questions in this section, follow-up on information gathered from first interview will be discussed and/or confirmed.

Questions Guiding Interview III – How do you make meaning? How do you interpret? How have you been impacted? (Reflection, retrospective look at the experience, meaning making, expectations for the future).

35. Please describe any unforeseen or unexpected benefits that you feel you gained from your experience.
36. In retrospect, what do you know now (from your experience) that you wished you had known before going abroad? Looking back on the experience, please explain whether or not you feel that you were well prepared for your overseas program(s)? Why do you have this opinion?
37. In retrospect, can you explain whether or not you feel that met your goals and objectives you had set for studying abroad? How did these change over time and during the course of the experience(s)?
38. How would you describe your concept of what the study abroad experience was, or would be, prior to departure compared to your perception now? How do you think your ideas and opinions before your journey match with what you the general student population believes? Do you think your current ideas and opinions match what the general student population believes about study abroad? How and in what way? Based on your experience, describe ideas or commonly held myths about study abroad that, from your perspective, are simply not true.

39. Please talk about whether or not you think studying abroad is for all students, or others like yourself, and why you hold this opinion? How did you feel about this prior to your experience?
40. If you had to identify one positive moment from your study abroad sojourn that exemplified what was good about your experience, what would that be and why?
41. If you had to identify one negative moment from your study abroad sojourn that exemplified what was not good about your experience, what would that be and why?
42. (If the study abroad was first time participant was overseas). If it were not for the university study abroad programs, at what point in your life do you think you would have eventually travelled overseas and for what reason?
43. Studying abroad can provide one with the opportunity to look at one's country, culture, society, and life from a different perspective because you are looking at these experiences from "the outside". If you share this view, how did you use your experience to view America, your life, or your place in American society from this outsider's lens? What did you see or notice that you normally might miss from "the inside"? Did this, or has this, caused you to re-examine anything about our society and/or your place in it?
44. Tell me about aspects of the host country, society, and/or culture that you feel is done better than here in the U.S.? What aspect or practice do you think the U.S. should adapt. Why do you think you feel this way? Also, describe aspects or practices that you feel are better here. Why do you think you feel this way?
45. Upon your return, what reactions did you get from your family, friends, and most immediate acquaintances? Why do you think these were the reactions you received?
46. How has the experience changed you? Can you discuss whether or not this change has strained relationships with people such as friends or family that are important to you, and how? Conversely, explain how this change has improved relations with these individuals or how it may have created new and rewarding relationships?
47. How have you incorporated what you learned from your experience into your life? How do you see yourself using what you learned overseas in your life moving forward – in your personal life, academics, professional career?
48. What do you feel are the most significant things you learned from your experience?
49. What about study abroad experience would like to share, or want people to know, that you were not asked?
50. If you were asked to share your experience with thousands of people, for example you were in a television interview, what is it that you would say or want them to know?

In addition to the questions in this section, follow-up on information gathered from first and second interviews will be discussed and/or confirmed.

APPENDIX B: Recruitment letter

Subject: XXX - Study Abroad Research Project

Dear XXX Study Abroad Alumni,

I am contacting you on behalf of fellow XXX colleague and Ph. D. candidate, Tom Hospod, who is conducting research regarding the study abroad experience of students like you who also are, or were, Pell Grant recipients. As a current or former student that has spent several semesters on campus, and studied abroad, your experience may provide insight and information that could inform this project and help educators better understand how to make these programs accessible to more students like yourself.

The project consists of being interviewed by Mr. Hospod XXX on the XXX campus. Participants will be asked questions related to factors that influenced their decision to study abroad, the experience itself, and the personal impact of participation. It is anticipated that two or three sessions, approximately 30-60 minutes each, will be required to learn your story and allow for follow-up questions. As a token of appreciation, at the end of their last interview participants will be given a \$20 gift card for use at a local eatery near the university.

Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. With your permission interviews will be recorded, but all conversations will be kept confidential. No personally identifiable information will be linked with your responses in any reports that use your data.

Should you be willing to participate, please contact Mr. Hospod directly at **tomh@uri.edu** or **401-874-xxxx** within 10 days of receiving this invitation so he can schedule the initial interview appointment. If you have any questions or concerns you would like to discuss before agreeing to take part in the project, please do not hesitate to contact Tom at your convenience.

Your time and consideration for participating in this study are greatly appreciated. It is through the help of students like you that we gain the information required to help and guide the direction of policy that will make study abroad a real possibility for all students that wish to make an international experience part of their undergraduate experience.

Cordially,

Director, XXX
on behalf of Tom Hospod
Ph.D. Candidate, URI/RIC Joint Ph.D. in Education

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