# CULTURE ISN'T CUTTING IT:

# CREATING STUDY ABROAD MARKETING THAT APPEALS TO MEN

by

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**CULTURE ISN'T CUTTING IT:**

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Despite the fact that the number of study abroad students continues to increase each year and that the types of study abroad programs continues to diversify, women still outnumber men in study abroad participation at a rate of almost three-to-one. This qualitative study seeks to understand low male participation in study abroad as a result of negative perceptions caused by the ways in which study abroad is marketed to students. I selected male study abroad alumni to participate in personal interviews through which I sought to understand the criteria, motivations, and outcomes that men had for their overseas programs. A variety of study abroad marketing materials were also collected, with a specific focus on social media. Using human, cultural, and social capital as a framework for analysis, I conducted a comparative analysis to determine whether marketing materials reflect the most compelling benefits that would motivate men to enroll. Additionally, I used normative and dialogic frameworks to understand the ways in which men's views of their gender inform their study abroad experience. This study shows that study abroad marketing is not reflective of the practical and pragmatic motivations that men have for studying abroad. Overall, study abroad professional in charge of marketing should focus less on "fun" and

"cultural" experiences and instead emphasize the practical and pragmatic benefits of study abroad in order to attract more men.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF TABLES

# LIST OF FIGURES

**PREFACE**

Study abroad is an experience that has proven to be formative in my life, both personally and professionally. It is because of my passion for and belief in the transformative nature of the experience that, through this study, I seek to make changes to marketing that will attract as many male students as possible. I have the utmost respect for my colleagues, both at the University of Pittsburgh and nationwide, for the work that they do in creating academically sound, high-quality programming. The inclusion of any organization, university, or program in this study is not meant to say anything negative of the quality of their programming or their marketing. Instead, their inclusion in this study is a testament to the important contributions that they make to the professional field as far-reaching and well-respected institutions.

First, I would like to thank the 19 men who took the time to participate in my study. Their willingness to share and connect with me about their study experiences was obviously crucial to the study. More importantly, as a professional in the field, seeing their enthusiasm and learning about what they gained from their experiences was incredibly rewarding.

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the unending support of my advisor, Dr. Maureen Porter. Both academically and personally, Dr. Porter has been a sounding board and source of motivation to continue with the study despite the many times I tried to stop. She will always be known, in my mind at least, as the "Advisor who makes me do the things I don't want to do even though we both know that I should do them."

Dr. Porter encouraged to present my initial findings at the 2015 Pennsylvania Council for International Education conference. I am incredibly grateful to the conference attendees for their questions, insights, and conclusions during the formative stages of synthesizing my data. Many points of discussion from the conference have found their way into my presentation.

I also extend my deepest gratitude to my committee members for their thoughtful input and meetings that challenged my academic and theoretical growth throughout the process. Dr. Maureen McClure's expertise on human, cultural, and social capital was crucial in synthesizing my own understanding of the framework. Without Dr. Todd Reeser's guidance, I would not have been able to build the gender framework that became so integral in my study.

My colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh have been instrumental in finishing this project. I am forever grateful to Jeff Whitehead for his flexibility and support of me in completing my degree, in Vanessa Sterling for serving as a sounding board for ideas and after-hours chats, and the rest of TeamSAO for their interest and support of my research.

Throughout all of this, I have had my friends to keep me sane and grounded. Ryan, you served as my academic role model, always encouraging me to not quit and challenging my assumptions. Lauren, you have been the best study buddy, and more importantly, the best study-break buddy throughout this whole process. Rachael, thank you for taking the time to read my work and, more importantly, share your own experiences in writing and defending your thesis. And finally, I have to thank Becca, Andy, Hillary, Jeff, Alyssa, and everyone who was there for me in one way or another throughout this process.

Finally, I would not have been able to do this without the support of my family, especially my parents Bob and Darla, who have always believed in my ability to do whatever I set my mind to, especially studying abroad. In my own study abroad planning, I almost packed

out countless times and both of my parents were there to remind me how important it was to me. I cannot begin to imagine where I would be had they let me back out and will be forever grateful to them for not letting me do so.

# 1.0    INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the United States has seen a surge in the number of students participating on study abroad programs.  During the 2000-2001 academic year, a total of 154,168 students from U.S. institutions of higher education studied abroad.  In a little over a decade, the number of students studying abroad has almost doubled to a total of 289,408 students abroad for the 2012-2013 academic year (Institute for International Education, 2013).

Despite this growth, the percentage of female students is still well above the percentage of male students studying abroad, disproportionate to total enrollments.   Since the 2000-2001 academic year, men have comprised only 35% of the total number of students studying abroad (Institute for International Education, 2013), despite the fact that men accounted for 44% of total undergraduate enrollment at all four-year institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Thus, it is clear that the profile of the typical study abroad student has not changed.  She is in her junior year of college, white, and is most likely studying in the social sciences (Institute for International Education, 2013).  Ultimately, the percentage of male students studying abroad is not reflective of the percentage of men enrolled in four-year institutions of higher education.

The title of this study, "Culture Isn't Cutting It," is based on my belief that current study abroad marketing materials place the greatest emphasis on extracurricular activities, like travel, rather than academic and professional activities that are also key components of study abroad programs.  Through this study, I seek to understand the problem of low male participation in

study abroad as a consequence of the ways in which study abroad is marketed to students. Interviews with 19 men who had successfully completed study abroad programs serve as a the basis for a comparative analysis of the male study abroad students' experience against general study abroad marketing as well as program-specific marketing. By coding students' motivations and outcomes in terms of human, social, and cultural capital, I was able complete a comparative analysis that showed that the marketing materials do not accurately reflect the experiences of men who have participated in overseas programs.

## 1.1    IMPORTANCE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the last decade, a growing emphasis has been placed on the importance of intercultural exchanges through study abroad programs both nationally, through White House initiatives, and locally at the college and university level. In 2009, President Obama announced the "100,000 Strong China Initiative," charging U.S. colleges and universities with increasing participation in study abroad programs in China alone to 100,000 students per year. Two years later, in 2011, President Obama announced a "100,000 Strong in the Americas" with the same goal: increasing the number of students participating in study abroad programs in Central and Latin American to 100,000 students per year. More importantly than increasing the number of total participants studying abroad in these locations each year, the President's initiative also set a goal of *diversifying* the population of students who take advantage of these programs (U.S. Department of State). The field of international education has expanded upon President Obama's goals with "Generation Study Abroad," an initiative led by the Institute for International Education (IIE). The Institute has set a goal of sending 600,000 students abroad by 2020 and seeks to do so by

providing resources to colleges and universities, including scholarship funding (Institute for International Education, 2016).

As colleges and universities seek to diversify the cohort of students participating in international opportunities, it is important that we do not dismiss men as an underserved population. While some may argue that lower male participation in study abroad is not problematic, researchers have shown that participation in study abroad programs, including programs as short as week, can have positive impacts on a student's personal and professional development.  Furthermore, employers continue to place a growing importance on skills such as intercultural communication, foreign language skills, problem solving, and more that have been proven in multiple studies to be developed by study abroad programs.  It is the responsibility of study abroad professionals to ensure that the experience is marketed in a way that appeals to both genders so that all students have an equitable opportunity to take advantage of the professional, personal, and academic benefits of study abroad. While cultural exchanges are necessary components of study abroad experiences, for male students, highlighting culture along is not cutting it as sufficiently motivating marketing materials or program components.

## 1.2    RESEARCH QUESTION

Previous research suggests that men seek additions to their college education that offer concrete outcomes that can be directly linked to their academic and career progress and that study abroad is one of those experiences.  This study seeks to answer the following question: which important facets of men's study abroad experiences, including their motivations and perceived outcomes,

could be improved in marketing materials? I believe that a more nuanced answer to this question will provide insight into how marketing materials can be adapted to better appeal to men.

## 1.3      THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As students and their families make increasingly larger contributions to the cost of higher education, a shift in students' mindset has occurred that situates them as "consumers" of an education.  An increasingly consumer model of education has led to higher expectations of the services provided to students as well as higher expectations of post-graduation outcomes, including job placement (Tomlinson, 2015).  Through my personal experience working with study abroad students, I see that this consumer model of education has spread to international experiences as well.  As consumers, students and their parents see educational opportunities as investments and desire clear understanding of the returns that those investments may offer.  For this reason, I situate my study within a capital accumulation framework, specifically human, social, and cultural capital.

This framework allows me to understand student motivations for participating in study abroad.  However, as I focus specifically on men for this study, it is important that I provide a framework through which I can examine the impact that gender and gendered expectations has on study abroad participation.  I use normative and dialogic understandings of masculinity as a lens through which I can view men's study abroad experiences.  Together, these theoretical lenses allow me to explore the motivations and outcomes of men who have successfully completed study abroad programs.

### 1.3.1  Capital Theory Framework

In the sections that follow, I offer concise definitions of human, cultural, and social capital theories and explore their relation to study abroad experiences. Although I treat each separately throughout my study, it is important to understand that clear delineations are difficult to make. For example, nearly half of the men in this study desired to develop foreign language skills overseas. Foreign language skills can be viewed a marketable skills that is valuable to an employer (human capital) because it allows one to more easily navigate a foreign culture (cultural capital) and create new or deepen existing social networks (social capital). Ultimately, I base the classification of the various motivations and outcomes within this framework on the ways in which the informants in the study frame their own experiences.

### 1.3.1.1 Human Capital Theory

Since its first introduction in the 1960s, human capital theory has served as a means by which the value of education and other skills can be understood in terms of enhanced productivity and income for individuals. The Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), provides a modern and concise definition of human capital: "the knowledge, skills, competencies, and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social, and economic well-being" (OECD, 2001, p. 18). This broad understanding of human capital that extends beyond formal education allows my analysis to include other attributes, such as soft skills, that are developed during a study abroad experience. As I will show throughout my analysis of student interviews, a primary motivator of student participation in study abroad programs is the development of these types of human capital, driven by their belief that it will provide future benefits in terms of further education and/or employment.

5

Spring (2015) synthesized various reports to find the types of human capital that employers find valuable. His research shows that employers place greater emphasis on soft skills, including: team cooperation, decision-making and problem solving, communication in and outside of the organization, critical thinking, and creativity (p. 56-57). Within the context of his student, Spring finds that these soft skills are often more valued than discreet technical or job-related capacities. This understanding of human capital is in line with the OECD's (2001), which includes skills such as communication (including foreign language skills), intra-personal skills, and inter-personal skills (p. 19). These skills go above and beyond what is learned in a classroom. It should be noted that, as I will explore below, many of these skills might also fall under the category of cultural capital.

Human capital theory provides a logical framework in which to analyze student participation because students view study abroad as means through which they can develop skills that will differentiate them from their peers. Loomis and Rodriguez (2009) provide a critique of human capital theory in education, writing,

> [T]he institution is constructing an arena of competition based on a narrower range of skills and knowledge (less information0 that requires most of these students to compete, not on the basis of their strengths, but on weakness[…]What we are saying is that the institution is splitting attainment (a lower cost pathway of production) from commensurate knowledge and skills (a higher cost pathway). (p. 517)

In this sense, it is becomes clearer why human capital theory is critical in understanding participation in study abroad. Students enrolled in institutions of higher education find themselves in a situation in which increased competition for educational credentials and opportunities requires them to find ways in which they can differentiate themselves from their similarly credentialed peers. Students looking to fulfill academic requirements abroad, gain

overseas work experience, develop soft skills, and differentiate themselves from their peers may view study abroad as a means to this end.

However, my interviews with students show that the development of human capital, as defined above, is not their sole rationale for studying abroad. Many students also view the development of cultural capital and social capital as valuable returns on their study abroad investment. Understanding cultural and social capital, explored below, provides a more holistic understanding of motivations for participation in study abroad programs.

### 1.3.1.2 Cultural Capital Theory

Based on the literature that I synthesize in this section, I define cultural capital as the competencies that allow an individual to successfully navigate a foreign culture; have successful intercultural interactions within their home culture; and appreciate the value of cultural products from across the globe. The ability for a student to study, live, and potentially work abroad provides an opportunity to develop cultural capital in ways that he would not be able to do should he decide to remain on-campus for his academic career.

This broader understanding of cultural capital builds upon the work of Bourdieu (1986) and his three states of cultural capital. He writes, "[T]he objectified state of cultural capital in material objects and media, such as writing, paintings, monuments, instruments, etc., can be transmitted in its materiality" (p. 19). I believe that study abroad provides the opportunity to develop this primary state of cultural capital through the activities that one may associate with international travel, including visiting museums, sites of historical importance, and sampling local cuisine among others. Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, and Hubbard (2006) show that even short term study abroad programs that focus cultural exploration rather than intense cultural immersion can have positive impacts on a student's intercultural sensitivity.

The availability of these material objects to students who study abroad allows them to "embody" the capital, as Bourdieu puts it, writing,

> The accumulation of cultural capital in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of what is called culture, presupposed a process of embodiment, incorporation, which, insofar as it implies a labor of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor. (p. 18)

In discussing the "inculcation and assimilation" of another cultural, I believe that Bourdieu is describing the process that international educators more commonly refer to as "cultural immersion." That is to say that the embodiment of culture is the process by which a student can not only see and appreciate the signs and objects of another culture but can come to understand the importance of those signs and objects as material manifestations of the history, values, and norms of the host culture. The embodiment of culture goes beyond "visiting" and comes as a result of living within another culture. Gomstyn (2003) shows that study abroad provides the opportunity for a student to develop this deeper understanding of culture, especially when it is one of his goals for participating in the experience.

Finally, participation in a study abroad provides a third state of cultural capital for students – the institutionalized form. Bourdieu (1986) writes,

> With the academic qualification, a certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture, social alchemy produces a form of cultural capital which has a relative autonomy vis-à-vis its bearer and even via-a-vis the cultural capital he effective possess at any given moment in time. (p. 20)

Regardless of the amount of embodied cultural capital that a student acquires while abroad, his participation in a study abroad program has earned him a certain amount of cultural capital. As Trooboff, Vange Berg, and Rayman (2008) explore, hiring managers report *believing* that studying abroad cultivates certain qualities that they value in employees. Although one could

speculate that interviews and work performance may ultimately prove otherwise, in some cases it does not matter the amount of cultural capital that one developed during his experience – the presence of the experience on a transcript may be enough.

A broad understanding of cultural capital includes competencies that allow an individual to successfully navigate the interactions of multiple cultures, whether abroad or at home. Study abroad can play an important role in developing competencies as intercultural communication, facility in a foreign language, and the ability to understand issues within a global context. Beyond providing support to the development of human capital, Schultheis (2014) notes, "the quality of one's social capital depends largely on one's place in the social sphere and the possession of economic and cultural capital" (p. 156). Thus, cultural capital is also important in the development of social capital, which is explored below.

### 1.3.1.3 Social Capital Theory

The creation of social capital, defined by OECD (2001) as "networks together with shared norms, values, and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups" (p. 41) is another piece of the capital puzzle that allows an understanding of men's motivations to study abroad. Bourdieu (1986) originally defined social capital as

> [T]he 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 – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the back of the collectively-owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (p. 21)

Coleman (1988) offers a broader view of social capital, defining it as "…a variety of entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate actions of actors…" (p. 98). Social capital has been expanded to not only recognize the

networks that individuals can use to become more productive but also recognizes that social factors such as norms and values play a crucial piece in the creation of this capital.

Schultheis (2014) emphasizes the importance of creating these networks, writing "such connections are worth their weight in gold…We then say that we have to build, cultivate, or sustain our connections, not let them fade, and if they have faded, we must 'revive' them again…" (p. 152). The maintenance of social networks and social capital is important because, as the OECD (2001) notes, social capital can play crucial roles in finding employment and improving overall health and well-being. Just as that the creation of human capital is necessary for productivity, the creation of social capital is necessary for finding spaces in which one can be productive.

My interviews with students will show that study abroad provides a way to create networks larger than those that would be created if the students were to stay on campus. Socially, participating in study abroad programs provides the opportunity to meet individuals from one's home institution, including individuals with whom students would not have interacted otherwise; in some cases, the opportunity to meet students from other institutions across the United States on open-enrollment programs; and finally, the opportunity to meet locals who may serve as a cultural guide. Professionally, internship and research experiences that are integrated into study abroad programs allow students to create a professional network that expands beyond the borders of the United States.

Although, in terms of this study, clear lines do not exist between human, cultural, and social capital, the definitions and understanding that I have provided allow for clearer classifications of the motivations and outcomes of students participating in study abroad

programs. Throughout the rest of this study, I provide rationale for the classifications that I have chosen. Additionally, Appendix A provides concise definitions of these codes and classifications.

### 1.3.2 Masculinity

Although human, social, and cultural capital provide the framework to understand men's motivations for study abroad, they do not provide the theoretical framework necessary to examine the ways in which gender and gendered norms and expectations may affect men's participation in overseas experiences. Gore's (2005) work explores the negative perceptions that many men have of study abroad experiences as a consequence of their view of the experience as a feminine pursuit. She contends that the history of study abroad as it is known today can be traced back to late-19$^{th}$ and early-20$^{th}$ century overseas trips led by faculty from small, liberal arts colleges. These experiences were often viewed as a "refining gloss for a marriageable young woman" (Fisher, 2012, p. 2), a belief that contributes to the misconception of study abroad as a feminine pursuit today. Gore further expands upon this notion by connecting men's negative views of study abroad as an experience with stereotypes of women's seriousness of purpose with regards to their academics,. The logic follows that if study abroad is something that women do, and women are not dedicated to their academics, then study abroad must not be an academic experience.

Because of social norms that define what it is to be masculine, men are expected to pursue opportunities that allow them to be better positioned to make money and provide for their families. Thus, as a "non-academic" and 'feminized" pursuit, study abroad falls outside of this realm. In order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which gender affects

men's motivations and outcomes around study abroad, I have constructed my framework around normative and dialogic masculinities.

### 1.3.2.1 Normative Masculinity

I have chosen normative masculinity as a key component of my masculinity framework because it provides a lens through which I can understand the effects that societal norms and expectations of men have on their motivations for participating in study abroad programs and the outcomes that they define from their programs. Connell (2005) writes,

> The terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' point beyond categorical sex difference to the ways men differ among themselves, and women differ among themselves, in matter of gender. Normative definitions recognize these differences and offer a standard: masculinity is what men ought to be…Strict sex role theory treats masculinity precisely as a social norm for the behavior of men. Normative definitions allow that different men approach the standards to different degrees. (p. 69-70)

Thus, normative masculinity can be defined as that which provides the example of how a man should act, behave, and strive to be within a given societal context. As I demonstrate through the interviews with the 19 informants in my study, normative masculinity plays an important role in the decision making process for these students. The normative view of masculinity within the context of this study can be viewed as that which drives men to pursue opportunities that will lead to future success, which includes financial success through work prospects and academic success through acceptance to prestigious graduate and medical schools.

Within Connell's definition of normative masculinity it is possible for men to strive for and achieve these standards of masculinity to varying degrees. Reeser (2010) writes,

> […B]ecause there are certain advantages and privileges accorded to it, masculinity functions as an effective carrot to normalize those within discourse. If you allow power to make you into what it wants, you will receive the benefits of masculinity in exchange. (p. 31)

Normative masculinity is important because it provides the ability for men to rationalize their participation in what would otherwise be considered a feminine pursuit – it is specifically for this reason that I chose to incorporate normative masculinity into my framework.

On one hand, despite research that shows the numerous professional and academic benefits of study abroad, the social norm continues to stand that men have more to gain by remaining in the United States and pursuing domestic opportunities rather than experiences overseas. In deciding whether or not to participate in study abroad programs, men may be considering whether or not buying into the social norm of "staying home" outweighs the benefits of a program in a foreign country.

However, as my interviews will show, men frame their study abroad experiences in ways that fit within their own normative views of masculinity. That is to say that they view study abroad as an opportunity that differentiates them from their peers and allows them to develop skills and competencies that will provide future benefits that help them achieve the societal standards for their gender. A feminine pursuit becomes a masculine pursuit because it allows them to achieve normative standards of masculinity.

Normative masculinity is important because it allows for an understanding of how men relate to societal norms, that is to say an internal understanding of their own masculinity. What it does not provide, however, is the understanding of how men who participate in study abroad programs view themselves in relation to others, including their male peers who have studied abroad, those who have not, and their female peers. Next, I offer an exploration of dialogic masculinity, a theory that seeks to understand men's masculinity in relation to others.

**1.3.2.2 Dialogic Masculinity**

In the way that normative masculinity allows one to understand the ways in which men relate to societal norms, dialogic masculinity allows one to understand the ways in which men relate to other men and women with regards to the construction of their own masculine identity. Reeser (2010) writes,

> ...[T]his approach assumes that masculinity as sign and subjectivity cannot be separated from all other signs and subjectives against which it is defined. Though masculinity might seem to function alone and on its own terms, it inevitably functions in implicit or explicit relation to a series of others. (p. 41)

Within the context of this study, the informants understood their masculinity in relation to two "others." First, the men viewed themselves in relation to women, including those who did and did not study abroad. Reeser writes,

> A man does not simply say something about women, but in responding to a woman, he defines his masculinity relationally….The dialogue implies not a single definition of the other as not me, but a continual process of not me's. There is no simple opposition between male and female, for instance, but a series of oppositions that never end and that are each slightly different from each other. Thus, the opposition of masculine and feminine might be frequent, but the separation of the genders is a constant process, and has to be repeatedly established rather than taken as a given. (p. 42)

This is important because it provides another means by which the men can justify their participation in what is considered to be a "feminine" pursuit. Dialogic masculinity provides a way for men to create distinctions between themselves and their female peers with regards to their motivations for participation. The men in this study actively engaged in creating oppositions between themselves and women.

Dialogic masculinity is important to my study because it also provides a framework for understanding men's relation to the second "other:" men who did *not* study abroad. Beyond defining their masculinity in reference to women, the men in this study further demonstrated their masculinity through the ways in which they viewed themselves compared to men who did

14

not study abroad. For the men in the study, the differences that they saw between themselves and women, such as "women tend to be more outgoing than men," also served to define themselves against other men – "Because I studied abroad, I am more outgoing than other men." The understanding of these interactions between external parties in constructing masculinity is crucial outcome of incorporating dialogic masculinity into my study.

The primary disadvantage that I see in the use of dialogic masculinity is that it does not account for men's understanding of masculinity in relation to societal norms. However, it is for that reason that I have combined normative masculinity and dialogic masculinity to create my framework. Normative masculinity is the lens through which men's views of study abroad and their own masculinity can be compared to masculine societal norms and values. On the other hand, dialogic masculinity provides the lens through which men negotiate the same relationship between their experience and masculinity in reference to other men and women. Together, these two theories provide a means by which I am able to understand both internal and external factors that affect men's creation of masculine identities.

## 1.4    SUMMARY

Both the White House and the Institute for International Education have made calls to dramatically increase the number of students from the United States who take part in study abroad programs. As the field of international education seeks to increase participation in these programs, I believe that it is crucial to take steps in increase male participation in study abroad. Working within a framework of human, cultural, and social capital, as well as normative and dialogic masculinities, I seek to understand whether or not the experiences of men who have

studied abroad are present in marketing materials.  My study will show that the most important motivations and outcomes of successful male study abroad participants are not prevalent in online marketing materials and will offer recommendations to create marketing materials that appeal to male students.

## 2.0      REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Through this literature review, I will show that the lack of male participation in overseas programming is likely the result of negative perceptions that are rooted in the history of study abroad that is often disguised by more concrete and tangible rationale.  To begin, a brief understanding of the history of study abroad is crucial as it provides context for the long-standing belief that study abroad is a feminine pursuit.  Next, I will explore the idea that study abroad programs do not provide coursework for majors and disciplines that are typically pursued by men.  Afterwards, I provide a review of the literature demonstrating that, contrary to widely held beliefs, study abroad helps to develop career-ready students.  This is followed by an examination of the influence (or lack thereof) of peers, parents, and university faculty and staff.  Finally, a brief review of literature around the marketing of study abroad shows that negative perceptions of study abroad are likely the common thread that connects the barriers to participation that men often cite.

## 2.1    HISTORY OF STUDY ABROAD

To explore the history of study abroad as an educational experience is to explore its history as a "feminine" pursuit.  Although men in the early United States often chose to pursue an education overseas, this is often attributed to a lack of well-developed colleges and universities in the early

history of the country.  As the quality of education, especially in the math and science fields, grew in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the country saw a decrease in the number of men studying overseas. After all, if men could receive the education they needed to find work in the United States, what would the rationale be for going overseas (Gore, 2005)?  Except in rare cases, the improvements in higher education in the United States marked the end of international education until the late-19<sup>th</sup> century.

It was during this time that professors at women's colleges began leading "groups of young ladies on educational tours of Europe, visiting museums, cathedrals, and the like" giving birth to study abroad as we know it today: "an institutionally sponsored, group activity" (Twombly, Salisbury, Tumanut, & Klute, 2012, p. 15).  Gore (2005) contends that these faculty-led, overseas experiences, often hosted by small, private, liberal arts and women's colleges, provide the root of the understanding of study abroad as a "Grand Tour of Europe."  While educational in nature, these early study abroad experiences were often viewed as more of "finishing trips" to prepare women for marriage than educational experiences.  By traveling overseas to experience art and culture first-hand, an educated woman could make herself even more desirable to suitors looking for wife that could hold her own in conversations at social events.

As changes to curricula and the introduction of electives found their way into the higher education system post-World War I, the number of students participating in study abroad programs began to grow (Twombly et al., 2012).  Despite this growth, in nearly every year since 1923, women have outnumbered men as participants on study abroad programs (Gore, 2005). Even today, as the rationale for study abroad programs has shifted from enculturation to the development of professional skills that make one a competitive member of the global economy

18

(Twombly et al., 2012), women continue to outnumber men in study abroad at a rate of almost three-to-one (Institute for International Education, 2014). As I will demonstrate in the next section, women participate in study abroad at higher rate than men due to the traditionally held male belief that study abroad is not compatible traditional academic pursuits.

## 2.2 ACADEMIC MISCONCEPTIONS

When asked why they chose to not participate in study abroad programs, men will often cite concerns about academics as a primary deterrent despite a diversification of programming options in recent years. Upon further exploration, the literature shows that this belief is more nuanced and can be broken down into two parts. First, men do not see study abroad as an academic pursuit. The literature will show that this belief is ultimately linked to history of the field that has already been provided. Second, men assume that study abroad programs do not offer the curriculum that they need. In line with concerns about curriculum are concerns about on-time graduation, another often-cited reason for not participating. However, there is a lack of evidence to support the assumption that study abroad programs are not available for traditionally "masculine" disciplines or that men have greater concerns around on-time graduation that their female counterparts. Ultimately, as will be seen with other factors thought to limit participation, these academic concerns are guided by incorrect perceptions of study abroad programs.

Fischer (2012) finds that "study abroad has had a reputation as a female pursuit, the last image of one of Seven Sisters students steaming overseas for a grand European tour of art and culture, a *refining gloss for a marriageable young women"* (emphasis added, p. 2). With such a reputation in the past, it should come as no surprise that male students do not view study abroad

as an overly academic pursuit. Gore (2005) writes, "…that more women than men study abroad as undergraduates and more in humanities than in professional fields may exacerbate the perception that undergraduate study abroad lacks in seriousness of purpose" (p. 44).

In qualitative interviews conducted with men who were both participants and non-participants in study abroad programs, Lucas (2009) finds that "study abroad could generate some gender role conflict for young males with traditional ides about their masculinity" (p. 237). As Gore (2005) notes, "Women were assign the role as 'guardians of culture' while men had to earn a living, supporting families, and find professionally relevant educational experience. All of these associations reflect deeply held cultural assumptions on the part of American academics." For men who may hold traditional, hegemonic views of masculinity as the "bread winner," it is easy to understand while an educational experience that has traditionally focused on culture and art, rather than academic development, is not a priority.

The student who overcomes gender biases and considers study abroad often assumes that it is not possible for him because he is studying in the STEM fields, business, or other traditionally male dominated disciplines. Twombly et al. (2012) write, "Foreign language majors…have typically been logical candidates for study abroad based on the assumption that immersion is requisite for linguistic fluency" (p. 50) This argument makes sense – countless studies have shown that students gain greater linguistic fluency when surrounded by a language as opposed to speaking with peers and faculty. The same argument can be made of other "traditional" study abroad fields – one should visit the Louvre to truly understand art or must visit London when studying English literature.

With relation to concerns of delayed graduation, men who do not participate in study abroad programs show a high level of concern with delayed graduation but that those who did

end up participating in study abroad programs showed no more concern about graduation time than their female counterparts. Although Lucas (2009) finds that "many non-participants…discussed the availability of required classes, [and] the difficulty of their curriculum as obstacles to their participation" (p. 247), Goldstein and Kim (2006) find that "academic and career measures indicated no significant gender differences among those participating in study abroad or concerns about completing the major, graduating on time, or perceptions of future employers" (p. 516). Furthermore, Goldstein and Kim (2006) find that women reported the same level of concern with an on-time graduation as their male counterparts. I believe that this illustrates the negative perception of academic relevancy that many men hold towards study abroad programs.

The fear of a delayed graduation comes from the assumption that study abroad programs do not offer the courses that students need. However, data from the Institute for International Education shows that the percentage of study abroad students coming from traditionally "feminine" disciplines, that is to say the arts, humanities, and foreign languages, has decreased while the percentage from traditionally "masculine" disciplines, such as business and engineering have increased. During the 2012-2013 academic year, foreign language majors comprised only 4.9% of the study abroad population, compared to 8.2% during the 2000-2001 academic year. Humanities majors comprised 10.4% of the population compared to 14.5%, and art majors 7.8% compared to 8.5% (Institute for International Education, 2013). Furthermore, academic majors and fields that have *not* traditionally comprised large parts of the study abroad population have seen growth in recent years. During the 2012-2013 academic year, 22.5% of all students that studied abroad were enrolled in programs in science, technology, mathematics, or engineering. 22.1% of students were enrolled in the social sciences, and 20.4% in business and

management (Institute for International Education, 2013), fields which have historically been dominated by male enrollment (Fischer, 2012; Redden, 2008). (Note that, due to reporting issues, such as undeclared students, these totals may not add up to 100%). Even within these disciplines, women still significantly outnumber male students. Table 1 below illustrates the changes that have occurred in the study abroad population.

**Table 1. Comparison of majors of study abroad population, nationally**

| Subject | AY 2000/1 | AY 2012/3 |
|---|---|---|
| Foreign Languages | 8.2% | 4.9% |
| Humanities | 14.5% | 10.4% |
| Fine or Applied Art | 8.5% | 7.8% |
| STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) | 16.6% | 22.5% |
| Social Sciences | 20.3% | 22.1% |
| Business and Management | 18.1% | 20.4% |

With regards to academics, the deterrent for male students to participate may not be the actual availability of courses of their impact on completing degree requirements but rather their *perceptions* of the ability to do so.

## 2.3     STUDY ABROAD AND FUTURE CAREERS

Although limited in scope, current research (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Anderson et al., 2006; Gomstyn, 2003; Thirolf, 2014) shows that men are less inclined to participate in study abroad

programs because they assume that they will miss professional opportunities, such as internships or research, at home.  Furthermore, they assume that studying abroad does not offer the opportunity to develop concrete skills.   Some researchers (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Gomstyn, 2003; Thirolf, 2014) believe that these assumptions are specific to men and rooted in the male tendency to seek experiences that have clear goals and offer quantifiable outcomes.   However, like with academic concerns, men's assumptions are misguided as international experience is highly valued by today's employers. I believe that, due to their misguided assumptions, men are not taking advantage of the professional development opportunities that are available on overseas programs.

Conducting qualitative interviews with a number of male students who both did and not study abroad, Thirolf (2014) finds that,

"...[both sets of] participants wanted to invest in experiences over the summer that they perceived as leading to concrete outcomes.  These outcomes included doing directly related to their academic and career goals, making money and getting a corporate job or gaining work experience" (p. 251).

For all but two of the twenty students who participated in the study, they did not believe that a study abroad program offered any of concrete outcomes that they were seeking, whether financial, academic, or career oriented.  Instead, these students sought summer plans such as "participating in an internship or employment at a job directly related to their major, taking summer courses, or studying for the MCAT" (p. 251).  One student went so far as to describe participating in a study abroad program as "an abstract benefit because there's more jumps to make the connection that it is applicable to one's academic or career goals" (p. 251). These students made a cost-benefit analysis of participating in a study abroad program and found that it

did not offer *tangible outcomes* such as research or professional experience. Based on their goals, both the financial and opportunity cost of studying abroad for the summer significantly outweighed the *perceived* benefits of participation. Ultimately, Thirolf finds that these men were attracted to study abroad programs but finds that they did not meet their needs. Unfortunately, Thirolf's research is relatively new and the only literature I found available that specifically looked at *opportunity cost* as a deterrent to participation. Thirolf's research also only focuses on *summer* opportunities, which provides a skew view of these perceptions as it does not provide insight into the value that men place on study abroad over other experiences during the academic year.

I find it troubling that the men interviewed held negative views of studying abroad given both the personal and professional benefits that result from participation. Anderson et al. (2006) find that students who studied abroad for a semester "showed greater gains in intercultural development than did their on-campus counterparts…providing convincing support for the proposition that participation in a semester-length study abroad experience yields a significant increase in the participants' intercultural development" (p. 97). In a later study, Anderson and Lawton (2011) find that even students who participate on shorter length programs show gains in these areas compared to their non-study abroad peers. Anderson and Lawton's research is support by Kitsantas (2004), who finds that "study abroad programs enhance student's cross-cultural skills and global understanding" (p. 447). Development of cross-cultural understanding is often touted as one of the most important benefits of study abroad, offering students the opportunity to grow in a way that staying on campus, regardless of the students' experience, cannot offer.

On an individual level, these types of development may have a lasting impact.. A survey conducted by the Institute of International Education found that, among study abroad participants from 1959-1999, 90% of study abroad participants reported seeking a greater diversity of friends, 59% reported returning to their host country, and 69% percent of those who participated in an internship said that the experience had an impact on their *career choices* (Gomstyn, 2003). This research may suggest that the personal benefits of study abroad, which I believe men view as "abstract" or "not concrete," can ultimately affect their professional development.

While the individual benefits of study abroad may be important, Stroud (2010) finds that "…students are studying abroad because potential learning outcomes, such as development of intercultural communication and global understanding, have become an economic commodity with high value in the global marketplace" (p. 503). What was once perceived as an individual benefit of study abroad has now become a competitive tool for students entering the workforce after graduation, placing men who hold misguided perceptions of the benefits of study abroad at a disadvantage compared to their peers who did participate. Trooboff et al. (2008) find that, of international education experiences, employers place the same value on a study abroad experience as majoring or minoring in a foreign language. For the employers surveyed, study abroad experience was second only to majoring in a subject relevant to the firm, especially for firms with an international focus. Perhaps more importantly, the research shows that employers believe that studying abroad greatly enhances more than half of the personal qualities found desirable in potential candidates.

If men are concerned with participating in experiences that give them a competitive edge against their peers and has a low opportunity-cost (Thirolf, 2014), participation in a study abroad program should be a logical choice. However, much in the same way that Fisher (2012), Gore

(2005), and Lucas (2009) have shown that men have misguided perceptions of the *academic* benefits of study abroad, I believe that the research shows that the same phenomena exists with regards to career benefits.

## 2.4     PARENTS, PEER, AND UNIVERSITY INFLUENCE

Researchers have considered the role that both parental (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2010; Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2008; Shirley, 2006) and peer influence (Fischer, 2012; Lucas, 2009; Salisbury et al., 2010) can have on men's decision to study abroad.  In general, women receive more support from their parents in the study abroad process than do their male counterparts.  More importantly, for college-aged men, peer groups and role models play an important role in the decision making process.  Men who have peers who have studied abroad are more likely to go abroad themselves, and this peer influence is much more significant for men than women.  The peer influence model poses a "chicken and the egg question" –  how can men have more peers to influence them to go abroad without more men studying abroad? I will show that peer influence *does* have an effect but cannot work on its own to increase male participation in study abroad.

Parental influence on participation can be defined in two ways: level of education and support of the decision making process.  Salisbury et al. (2008) find that levels of parents' education is positively related to the probability of planning to study abroad but that the effect was limited only to women – parents' level of education has no effect on a male student's decision to study abroad or not.  The authors attribute this to the autonomy given to men by their parents as opposed to their female counterparts (Salisbury et al., 2010).  Furthermore, Shirley

(2006) finds that women generally receive more parental support in the process than their male counterparts but not in staggering amounts, although she does not define what "parental support" means. Of the respondents in the study, 66% of women said that their parents influenced their decision to go abroad as opposed to 54% of men. Without further research explaining why the differences in support exist, I am unconvinced that parental influence is an explanation for low male participation in study abroad.

Compared to parental influence, peer influence may have an effect on male students' decision to participate in a study abroad program. Lucas (2009) finds that "male students seem to associate with people of like-minds, so for nonparticipants, peer messages related to study abroad were limited" (p. 225). This presents a problem for professionals in the field. If male students are taking into account the decisions of their peers when making their own decision to study abroad, this may make it more difficult to increase participation. In fact, Salisbury et al. (2010) found that, for men, increased peer interaction led to a decreased probability of studying abroad for both participants and non-participants. The same was not true for women. Overall, male students are "far more reluctant to leave their campus social groups to go overseas" (Fischer, 2012, p. 2). As I have already shown with men's perceptions of academics and career benefits, it may be the case that the *perceived* cost of leaving one's peer group is simply not outweighed by the perceived benefits of studying abroad.

Gore (2005) notes that, beyond parents and peers, study abroad administrators can serve as role model for students. As with study abroad participation, women significantly outnumber men as professionals in the field, meaning that the overwhelming majority of study abroad advisors are female. This may further male students' perception that study abroad is a female pursuit.

## 2.5     MARKETING AND OUTREACH

In reviewing the effects of academics, career development, and parental and peer influence on study abroad, I believe that the lack of male participation can ultimately be seen as a problem with marketing and outreach. Professionals in the field have assumed that an increased variety in programming (including cost, length, theme, and location) would lead to greater diversity in study abroad participations. Although this has been true of the academic majors that participate in study abroad, it has little effect on gender and race (Institute for International Education, 2013). This may suggest that the way in which study abroad is marketed does not align with the needs of the average male college student.

McLellan (2007) explores ways in which colleges and universities can increase participation of underrepresented populations in study abroad, writing, "…we must provide concrete, relevant, and cost-effect programs, regardless of whether they run for two weeks, a quarter, a semester, or an academic year" (p. 2). By increasing the number and types of programs that are offered to students, it would be reasonable to assume that it would lead to an increase in the number of participants and greater diversity. While the total number of students studying abroad has increased since 2007, the profile of the student has not changed. "Efforts aimed at diversifying education abroad, such as offering shorter, cheaper trips and unusual destinations" have had virtually no impact on the percentage of male students participating on study abroad programs (Fischer, 2012, p. 1). This leads me to believe that there must be a problem with the way in which study abroad offices are marketing programs to students.

Overwhelmingly, study abroad programs are still marketed to women, with the vast majority of promotional materials used by third-party providers (independent organizations that serve as liaisons between students and overseas universities or programs) featuring photographs

28

of women abroad (Redden, 2008). Without marketing materials that show men abroad, it may be difficult for men to picture themselves taking part in a program.

Lucas (2009) finds that "males did not respond well to general study abroad marketing messages and found them lacking in depth related to academics and the experiential aspects that most interest them" (p. 226). I have already shown that male students have misguided perceptions of the ways in which study abroad can benefit them. "Males wanted to see a clear benefit to them based on their participation…for all males, the major value was the ability to have an experience that support their academic/career goals" (Lucas, 2009, p. 227). The problem is, however, that study abroad *does* offer students clear benefits by participating – both academic and professional. The solution to getting men to study abroad may be in the ways in which colleges and universities speak about the benefits of participation and follow through with investments in personnel, such as specific advisors for graduate students, business students, or engineering students.

In investigating ways in which marketing can be adapted to speak to men, it is important to keep in mind the academic focus of study abroad. Doing so, however, means that typical marketing strategies used to appeal to men are not relevant. Through my research, I found the literature on marketing to men to be very lacking in terms of both quantity and quality. In an article published in *Marketing News*, Sims (1994) wrote that the three things marketers need to keep in mind when marketing to men are "sex, toys, and freedom." Sixteen years later, Costa (2010) wrote that, "Championing masculinity…is key for brands to expand their engagement with consumers." Although neither article is specifically related to education, it is important to understand that these are the ways in which brands believe they can appeal to men.

However, the literature has shown that men are not interested in the sex appeal of study abroad or the "freedom" that it might offer. Thus, it is imperative that professionals in the field have a clear understanding of what men seek and gain from overseas experiences in order to adapt marketing accordingly.

## 2.6    SUMMARY

Through this literature review, I have shown men's negative perceptions of study abroad may be a prohibiting factor in their participation in such opportunities. Research has shown that the external factors discussed in this literature review (peer influence, parental support, major applicability, course availability, etc.) are applicable to *all* students in one way or another (Dessoff, 2006; Deviney, Vrba, Mills, & Ball, 2014; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2014; McLellan, 2007; Salisbury et al., 2008; Stroud, 2010) and cannot be used to explain the difference in participation rates between the genders.

Based on this literature review, I find the greatest gap in the practice literature to be a lack of systemic analyses of marketing materials in the study abroad and how those marketing materials may influence the perception of the experience. My study seeks to fill this gap by investigating whether or not the experiences of successful male study abroad students are present in online marketing, specifically Facebook and general webpages promoting study abroad. By comparing interviews with male students with the marketing materials themselves, I will show that the most important aspects of study abroad for male students, namely academics, are not prevalent in general marketing materials.

I construct my study within a human, cultural, and social capital framework as a means to understand the motivations and outcomes that men have for their study abroad experiences. As students and their families continue to shift towards a consumerist view of education, they expect to receive returns on their investment (Tomlinson, 2015). Human, cultural, and social capital theories provide a lens through students' perceived outcomes can be viewed as a return on their educational investment. Normative and dialogic masculinity provided a framework for analysis of the role that men's understanding of gender and gendered expectations play in these decisions as well. Together, these frameworks allow me to address the gap in the literature by analyzing both men's experiences and marketing materials in a systematic and comparative way.

# 3.0    METHODS AND STUDY DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to understand whether or not the initial motivations and outcomes of men who successfully studied abroad are reflected in study abroad marketing materials. To complete this study, I interviewed a total of 19 men from various programs and schools at a mid-sized research institution. These interviews were compared against social media and program-specific marketing materials to determine whether or not the men's motivations and outcomes were reflected well and to understand if marketing materials would speak to men who are considering studying abroad. This chapter provides an in-depth review of the methods and study design.

## 3.1    RATIONALE FOR COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

In recent years, a growing number of studies have been published that seek to understand low male participation in the study abroad. As evidenced in the literature review, Gore (2005), Lucas (2009), and Thirolf (2014) show that men's perceptions of the marketing that study abroad offices and providers use may play the greatest role in the lack participation. Although each of these studies makes recommendations on how offices might be able to improve based on participant feedback, I believe that they are lacking in two areas. First, the overwhelming majority of these dated studies focus on what men perceive to be barriers to participation, many

of which have already been addressed as the field has grown (such as the variety of programming options) or affect men and women equally (such as the cost of programming). Second, although many studies have made recommendations as to how to change marketing materials to appeal to men, none have conducted an analytical comparison of men's actual experiences abroad and whether or not marketing materials accurately reflect those values and priorities. I believe that a key to increasing participation in study abroad programs may be to ensure that the way in which study abroad is promoted is aligned with the criteria that men have for education experiences.

Based on his mixed-methods study, Lucas (2009) makes a series of recommendations on how study abroad offices can improve male participation, including crafting messaging based on a wide variety of goals and motivations, featuring more men in marketing materials, and creating a balance between the "image of study abroad as a fun, additive activity, and as an organized field trip" (p. 261). Seven years later, my study seeks to show that these recommendations have not been implemented as evidenced by participation rates.

## 3.2    INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

The University of Pittsburgh (Pitt) is a state-affiliated, mid-sized, R-1 institution situated on an urban campus in the Oakland neighborhood of Pittsburgh. In addition to the Oakland campus, the University also has four regional campuses that serve populations throughout Pennsylvania. This study will focus solely on the Oakland campus of the University and any references made to "the University" or "Pitt" should be assumed to refer to the Oakland campus.

Serving a total of more 18,000 undergraduates in the 2014-2015 academic year, Pitt is the largest institution of higher education in Pittsburgh. Although nearly 70% of students at the

University are residents of Pennsylvania, the University has a growing number of students from across the United States (22%) as well as an increasing international student population (8%).

More than 60% of undergraduates at the University are enrolled in the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences, which offers more than 50 majors in a variety of fields across the humanities, physical and social sciences, and the arts. In terms of enrollment, the second and third largest schools at the University are the Swanson School of Engineering (approximately 15% of undergraduates) and the College of Business Administration (approximately 11% of undergraduates). The University also offers graduate and professional programs in social work, education, health and rehabilitation sciences, nursing, information sciences, and more.

### 3.2.1   Study Abroad at the University of Pittsburgh

The Study Abroad Office at the University of Pittsburgh is situated within the University Center for International Studies and has a staff of 15 individuals who serves both undergraduate and graduate students across all colleges and schools of the University. Both the Swanson School of Engineering and the College of Business Administration have dedicated staff who advise, develop, and manage study abroad experiences for those specific populations.

The University of Pittsburgh offers undergraduate students more than 350 study abroad programs that include approximately 100 faculty-developed and led programs ("Panther Programs"), 50 bilateral exchanges, and 200 third-party programs that are approved for students. Although various student organizations arrange and lead overseas experiences, including service learning, these are not considered to be "study abroad" by the University. Because the scope of my study is to deal specifically with study abroad, these students are not included in the study.

The University of Pittsburgh was selected as the site for this study for key reasons. First, the range of programming options means that students have a significant amount of choice in experiences, with programs ranging from one week to an entire academic year. Programs at the University include programs in English, the host language, or both; cultural immersion; hands-on experience, such as internships; and programs designed for specific majors and minors. Second, the University's focus on study abroad for both business and engineering students allows it to create study abroad programs that are specifically designed for majors where enrollment is primarily men. Third, the University sends, on average, 1300 students abroad each year from the Oakland campus, allowing for a wide pool of students from which to recruit. Fourth, the University was chosen because the breakdown of participants across gender and school is in line with national averages as reported by the Institute for International Education.

### 3.2.2   Study abroad participation at Pitt

During the 2014-2015 academic year, a total of 1,780 students studied abroad, approximately 1,300 of whom were undergraduates from the Oakland campus. Of those undergraduate students, 64% were women and 36% were men, percentages that are in line with nationally reported statistic from the Institute for International Education (2015) at 65% and 35%, respectively.

As the three largest schools on campus, students from the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences, the College of Business Administration, and the Swanson School of Engineering comprise the overwhelming majority of the study abroad population at 51%, 21%, and 20%, respectively. Engineering aside, the participation of liberal arts and business students in study

abroad programs in aligned with nationally reported statistics from the Institute for International Education (2015).

## 3.3    PHASE 1: INTERVIEWS

The primary source of information and data for this study comes from interviews conducted with 19 male students at the University of Pittsburgh who had participated in study abroad programs in the previous 6 months to three years.  Students were selected to make the interview population match, as closely as possible, the demographics of the larger male study abroad population at the University.  Interviews with students focused on areas that I identified as being most important in understanding their study abroad experience: academic and personal background, motivations for participation, criteria for program selection, and the students' perceived outcomes from participation.

### 3.3.1   The Researcher's Role

As my research was conducted from an interpretivist view, it is important that I disclose my role and connection to the research question.  I am graduate and employee of the University of Pittsburgh.  During my time as an undergraduate at the University, I studied abroad with a third-party organization that was a recognized program at the time.  In 2009, I spent the second semester of my sophomore year in Granada, Spain, studying Spanish language, literature, and culture.  My primary motivation for studying abroad was to gain fluency in hopes of becoming a high school Spanish teacher.  That is to say that I went abroad with a very specific goal in mind.

Participating in a study abroad program changed my career goals and, in 2011, I was hired as the study abroad advisor for the undergraduate business school. In 2013, I was promoted to program manager for three of the University's largest study abroad programs in addition to a portfolio of other programs across the globe. In my current role as Senior Program Manager, in addition to the oversight of study abroad programs, I also take primary responsibility for the Study Abroad Office's marketing and outreach efforts, including the oversight of print, web, and social media materials. I purposefully selected my graduate program because it provided the flexibility to conduct academic research that I could also find professionally gratifying.

Due to my own experience as well as the fact that I am conducting "backyard research," I recognized that this might affect the way in which I interpret the data that I have collected. I conducted this study with the understanding that study abroad is an intensely personal experience and that a variety of factors motivate students to participate in these programs. In order to counter the power structure created by my role as programs manager (some of the students had been my advisees and/or participated on programs which I had managed), I only conducted interviews with students who were considered alumni of study abroad programs, defined as having their grades officially posted to their transcripts and not having an active study abroad application. Additionally, to ensure students' comfort and ability to answer questions honestly, all interviews were conducted outside of the Study Abroad Office in a conference room provided by the School of Education. Finally, to ensure students' comfort, I did my best to position myself as a peer, that is to say another man who had studied abroad, by sharing my own experiences throughout the interviews.

### 3.3.2 Interview Population

For this study, a total of 19 male students who were currently enrolled at or had recently graduated from the University of Pittsburgh were selected as interview participants. Contact information was obtained using the University's application management system and included students who had studied abroad between the summer of 2013 and the spring of 2015.

A total of 540 students received the recruitment email to which approximately 30 responded. Of those who responded, 19 were selected to ensure that the interview population accurately represented the larger population of male study abroad participants. The following factors were considered in selecting informants: primary college or school of enrollment; type of program; length of program; and program location. Based on my previous knowledge of the students who responded, as well as information gained during the interviews, it became clear that the students who responded had overwhelmingly positive experiences with study abroad and saw this interview as an opportunity to talk about those experiences. Although I do not believe that this impacts the results of my study, I imagine that other researchers would receive responses from a similar population.

In total, 19 informants had a total of 23 study abroad experiences with three informants having participated on multiple programs. Of the 19 informants, 8 were enrolled in the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences (42%), 8 were enrolled in the Swanson School of Engineering (42%), and 3 were enrolled in the College of Business Administration (16%). Although not perfectly aligned, this breakdown is fairly representative of the enrollments of the total number of students who received the recruitment email, which were 40%, 32%, and 26%, respectively. Given the small sample size, it would have proved difficult to align the study participants with the eligible population exactly.

**Table 2. Comparison of informants versus eligible participants, by primary school of enrollment**

|  | Study Participants | Eligible population |
|---|---|---|
| **Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences** | 42% | 40% |
| **Swanson School of Engineering** | 42% | 32% |
| **College of Business Administration** | 16% | 26% |

The University offers a wide range of program lengths but, for the purpose of this study, available programs have been classified as "long term" (a semester or academic year abroad) and "short term," a summer or spring break program. These categories are in line with Institute for International Education reporting standards as well. Of the 23 total study abroad experiences among the 19 informants, 18 were short term (78%) and 5 were long term (22%), which is only slightly skewed from the overall average of 75% and 25%, respectively.

**Table 3. Comparison of informants versus eligible participants, by program length**

|  | Study Participants | Eligible Population |
|---|---|---|
| **Short Term** | 78% | 75% |
| **Long Term** | 22% | 25% |

In terms of program type, 16 of the experiences were on faculty-led programs (70%), 6 were on university-recognized third-party programs (26%), and one was a bilateral exchange experience (4%). The informant pool is more skewed towards third-party programs than the overall larger population with a breakdown of 83%, 11%, and 6%, respectively. In order to address other factors within the study, like program location and length, it was necessary to skew the percentage of participants towards university-recognized programs. Otherwise, the study

participants would have been more heavily skewed towards short-term programs than they already were.

**Table 4. Comparison of informants versus eligible participants, by program type**

|  | **Study Participants** | **Eligible Population** |
|---|---|---|
| **Faculty-Led** | 70% | 83% |
| **University-Recognized** | 26% | 11% |
| **Bilateral Exchange** | 4% | 3% |

Finally, with regard to program location, 13 of the 23 experiences took place in Europe (57%), 6 in Latin America (26%), 2 in Africa (9%) and 2 in Oceania (9%). Unfortunately, I was not able to recruit a participant who had studied abroad in Asia, which skews the percentages towards Latin America. Within the 30 students who responded to the initial request, I did my best to select a diverse range of regions and countries within each region.

**Table 5. Comparison of informants versus eligible participants, by program region**

|  | **Study Participants** | **Eligible Population** |
|---|---|---|
| **Europe** | 57% | 83% |
| **Latin America** | 26% | 11% |
| **Oceania** | 9% | 4% |
| **Africa** | 9% | 1% |
| **Asia** | 0% | 22% |

In sum, although there are some discrepancies, the demographics of the informants in terms of primary school of enrollment, program type, program length, and program region are representative of the larger male population that was eligible to participate in the study. It should

be noted that although I did collect data on the race/ethnicity of students as well as their sexuality, I made a purposeful decision to not include the information in this research report. Additionally, social class is excluded the study. Although the intersectionality of race, sexuality, class, and gender are important and worthwhile to study, I believe the limited size of the study population would have made it difficult to draw meaningful and well-grounded conclusions. Furthermore, data from the Institute of International Education, which is used for comparisons in my study, does not address the intersection of these demographics, a fact that further complicates comparisons. In future studies, considering these demographics may allow researches to create even more nuanced marketing materials for students. Regardless, I believe that my purposeful selection of the interview population has provided me with the data I need to draw meaningful conclusions and make justified and implementable recommendations.

### 3.3.3   Data Collection and Instrument

Data for phase one of the project was collected from the 19 informants in the study through the use of a semi-structured and open-ended interview protocol. Because a large body of study abroad research already exists that addresses the barriers to entry in study abroad, and since all of the informants in the study were successful participants in an overseas program, the protocol limited the emphasis placed on barriers to entry and instead focused on the student experience throughout the process.

Interviews were divided into four parts and structured in a way that followed the students' thought process through study abroad. First, informants were asked demographic and background information, including their year in school (both at the time of their experience and now), race/ethnicity, sexuality, and basic details of their study abroad experience. The next

section of the interview sought to gain information from students regarding their motivations for deciding to study abroad, including outside actors that may have had a positive or negative influence on that decision. This section is important in helping to understand whether or not the program(s) met the expectations that men had for their study abroad experience(s). Afterwards, students were asked questions about their process for choosing a program and to describe the factors that were important in the decision, including marketing materials. In doing so, I hoped to gain information into the decision making process of students, allowing a comparison between the needs of men choosing to study abroad and whether or not those needs are reflected in marketing materials. Finally, I asked students to reflect on their experience and to consider what they perceive to be the benefits of participating on the program. This final component of the interview serves two purposes. First, Lucas (2009) shows that the presence of other men and their experience in marketing materials can influence male students considering study abroad. Second, having a clearer understanding of the perceived benefits of male study abroad alumni may lead to a better understanding of how to adapt marketing efforts in a way that speaks to the academic and professional desires of men and to ultimately gain parity in participation.

In addition to a voice recording of each interview, I completed an interview protocol. Doing so allowed me to make notes for follow up questions and record non-verbal cues from the interviews. Additionally, notes on the paper protocol provided the initial structure used to build node trees while waiting for transcriptions of interviews (see 3.4.4 Data Analysis below).

### 3.3.4   Limitations

Qualitative research, especially when conducted from an interpretivist view, almost always presents space for personal bias, perhaps the most important limitation of the first portion of the

study. To combat this bias, I have done my best to ensure that interviews were consistent as possible in questioning. Informant answers were clarified throughout the interview process to avoid ambiguity in their responses and to minimize room for misinterpretation of answers. My interview protocol was grounded in the prior literature reviewed for the study and I worked with both my faculty advisor and committee on revisions to ensure that questions were as clear as possible.

Second, my role as a staff member at the university and a former advisor to some students may have presented bias in informant responses. To minimize the bias, I interviewed only students who had successfully completed their study abroad programs, made use of pseudonyms in both written and recorded materials from the interviews, and conducted interviews in a "neutral space," that is to say one that was not associated in any way with the study abroad office.

Next, a possible limitation is the informants themselves. That is to say that out of the more than 500 students contacted, only 30 chose to respond for an interview, of which 19 were selected. The willingness of the students to meet over the summer and during the school year for a 45-60 minute interview signals a commonality that I found while interviewing – the students, on the whole, had positive experiences studying abroad. They were excited to have the opportunity to discuss their experience and to re-engage with their time overseas in a new way. Given the purpose of the study and the guiding research question, I do not necessarily view this as a limitation but rather something about which the reader should be aware.

## 3.4     PHASE 2: MARKETING

My initial plan for the marketing analysis phase of the project was to focus on program-specific materials. However, after an initial review of the interviews, I came to realize that, for the most part, students did not arrive at the program selection process without either an intrinsic desire to study abroad or without knowing that a study abroad program would fit into their academic plan. With that in mind, I decided to focus the majority of my analytical efforts on what I would classify as "pre-decision" materials. I also selected a small sample of program-specific materials.

In both cases, I attempted to place myself in the position of a student who has just heard about study abroad and began looking into the opportunity. If a friend told him about a program in Barcelona and he decided to visit the website or if he received a flyer with a link to the University Study Abroad Office's Facebook page, what impression of study abroad would he be given? Is that impression of study abroad aligned with what the motivations, goals, and outcomes of his peers who have already participated in a program?

Materials collected included Facebook posts, websites about study abroad, and some program-specific pages. To determine whether or not these materials were reflective of the informants' motivations, goals, and outcomes, I used the same coding scheme to analyze the materials as I did the informant interviews.

### 3.4.1   General Advice Pages and Social Media

Study abroad offices and providers across the country use social media as a way to reach a wide variety of students, including prospective students, current students, and alumni. For this reason,

the primary focus of my analysis of "general" marketing materials (that is to say those that are not specific to any one program) was on Facebook. Using NCapture, I imported posts from the university's study abroad office page, as well as the pages of two peer institutions. Additionally, I imported posts from the six largest study abroad providers (in terms of student participation from the University of Pittsburgh). For each, I analyzed the first 25 posts in terms of text, links, and photos. Additionally, I analyzed the top three results from Google for the search terms "study abroad" and "why study abroad," which I classify together as general advice pages.

### 3.4.2  Program-Specific Materials

Given that yearly changes are made to many study abroad programs and that there is a lack of historical data in terms of program-specific marketing materials, the materials that were selected were analyzed as they published at the time of the study. In selecting programs to include in the analysis, I considered creating a sampling of programs that were representative of the participation rates of the case university. However, upon further consideration, I realized that doing so would exclude a large number of third-party organizations. Instead, I selected a total of three faculty-led programs, both short- and long-term, as well as at least one program from each of the major third-party providers considered in the "general" marketing materials. In total, eight program-specific pages were analyzed in the study.

From my experience working with students at the University of Pittsburgh, I know that once a student has decided to study abroad, the website becomes his primary source of information in selecting a program. For this reason, the website or landing page of each program was all that was considered. Screenshots were taken of the page of each selected program at the time of writing (January 2016).

### 3.4.3   Limitations

Because of the lack of historical materials, I see the primarily limitation of this phase of the study as the ability to pinpoint the specific materials that each student would have seen and the time at which he saw them.  Knowing this would be the case, I specifically asked each student if he remembered the marketing materials for his program, what it was about the materials that he remembered, and whether or not they were reflective of how he viewed his program and overall experience.  In doing so, I was able to gather information about the students' relations to the materials and incorporate that into my analysis of the present-day materials that were used in the study.

### 3.5     PHASE 3: DATA ANALYSIS

To begin analyzing data, I started with the written interview protocols.  Throughout the interviews, I utilized the protocol sheet as a way to note what I believed to be the most important aspects of the men's answers to each question, specifically keeping in mind my capital- and masculinity-based theoretical frameworks.  Using the protocols, I created initial lists of students' motivations and outcomes, which were then sorted into larger themes such as "foreign language," "differentiation," and "social networking."  After completing this initial sorting of men's motivations, criteria for program, and perceived outcomes, I began to construct the initial codebook.

The sorting of the descriptive codes into broader categories of human, cultural, and social capital was done using interview transcripts for context.  Because the differentiations between

each broad category can be subtle, especially between human and cultural capital, the full transcripts of the interviews provided meaningful context that allowed me to create a codebook that I believe to be reflective of the informants' experiences. In addition to the capital theories, I created codes for both normative and dialogical masculinity. To prevent code drift, before beginning in-depth analysis of the interview transcripts, I wrote clear and concise definitions for each code, which I referred to frequently throughout my data analysis.

The final codebook (Appendix A) captures the strength and nuance of the final nodes and node trees that I created using NVivo. Transcripts of each interview were imported into NVivo and were coded according to the definitions I set in the codebook. After the initial coding of each interview, I ran queries for each code that pulled together excerpts from all interviews. By comparing the quotes from all 19 interviews for any given code, I was able to ensure that I was consistent in following the definitions set for each code and avoid code drift. When necessary, I reevaluated and recoded sections of interviews to ensure consistency.

With coding complete, I re-ran the initial queries to build final sets of information for each code. The results of each query allowed me to evaluate larger trends that were shared across students, find anomalies and abnormalities, and draw meaningful conclusions about the importance of each motivation, criterion, or outcome. The prevalence of each was measured by the total number of informants who discussed each code as a factor in their experience. Additionally, although the students were not asked to rank their motivations and outcomes, context from the interviews was used to evaluate the importance of each.

After completing the coding of informant interviews, I turned my attention to the defined set of marketing materials that were to be compared against the interviews. In order to compare the prevalence of men's experiences against marketing materials, the same codebook was used

for analysis.  Beginning with Facebook posts, each organization's posts were treated as a whole set and analyzed individually.  Using NVivo's sorting tools for imported social media posts, I filtered the data to ensure that only posts made by the organization that owned the page were included.  Using the codebook, I reviewed the first 25 posts of each organization and coded for instances of human, cultural, and social capital.  As with the interviews, after all coding was complete, I ran queries to pull together the data for each code in order to review and ensure consistency in coding.  The same process was repeated for the "why study abroad" pages as well as the program specific information.  In the analysis of marketing materials, each type was analyzed independently of the others, which is reflected in the presentation of the data throughout my study.

The strength of my study comes from the comparative analysis that I was able to complete between the two sets of data.  First, by treating student interviews as an independent data set from the marketing materials and analyzing it as such, I was able to provide a clear understanding of the multiple motivations, criteria, and outcomes that men have for their study abroad experience. Independently, each set of data is meaningful on its own.  However, by comparing the two I am able to draw meaningful conclusions about the presence of male experiences in study abroad marketing materials.  While the prevalence of each code is measured quantitatively and used for comparison, the qualitative data provides an additional layer that further emphasizes the presence, or lack thereof, of the male experience in marketing materials. The ability to compare and contract each set of data allows me to address the problem of men's perception of study abroad in a manner that had not previously been done.

# 4.0     FINDINGS AND ANALYIS: CULTURAL CAPITAL

In creating a coding scheme, separating cultural and human capital proved to be a difficult task. For example, is a student who said that being immersed in another culture helped him develop problem-solving skills developing human or cultural capital?  In building the coding scheme, I kept in mind one of the simplest definitions I've heard for cultural capital – it comes from Dr. Maureen McClure.  She once described cultural capital as "what it takes to navigate a Star Wars bar."  That is to say that culture capital is that which helps one navigate scenarios that bring together the different styles of communication and expectations that come from different cultures.  With that in mind, I explore the motivations and outcomes of men's cultural capital development in five realms:   foreign language development; cross-cultural communication; gaining a global context of one's field of study; cultural immersion for the sake of experiencing a new culture; and finally, the ability to travel.

## 4.1     FOREIGN LANGUAGE

A total of nine students participated in study abroad programs that were taught in a foreign language or had language instruction courses available alongside coursework in English, only four of which were seeking an academic credential in a foreign language.    As I will explore

below, there was a desire among the students to at least begin the language of their country to better situate themselves culturally.

Frank, a German and Psychology major who spent a summer in Augsburg on a university-recognized program, had planned since his freshman year to participate in a language and culture program to help with his language competencies. He said,

> [I]t wasn't until freshman year and my one professor said, "Hey, you're good but you can really improve if you went over to Germany…" I wanted to learn the culture but knew if I really wanted to improve my speaking and communication skills in the language the best way would be to go and actually live there where it is spoken natively.

By being immersed in coursework with German students, Frank felt that his language competencies improved significantly and gained a newfound confidence in his speaking abilities. With plans to apply to graduate school at a German institution, Frank saw the improvement in his language competencies as both a successful academic and professional outcome of the program.

David, like Frank, had a major in a foreign language: Spanish. He spent a semester abroad in Havana, Cuba, to learn about the political system but to also improve his Spanish. Speaking of both his motivations for going abroad and the benefits he received from it, David said,

> In focusing on the language, I thought that it was crucial to develop my language skills in speaking, comprehending, and classwork, and just dealing with people from a different culture in general. So academically, I learned how to conduct myself in an academic setting that's not geared towards English speakers, and that was helpful because it's something that I'm also professionally seeking to do. Additionally to that, being successful in a country that doesn't speak my native language very commonly at all. It's hard to find somebody that speaks decent English.

Again, David was a student that saw multiple benefits from not only learning a foreign language, but in doing it overseas. Immersion in a classroom setting conducted entirely in Spanish and being in a country where there was little English spoken helped David to develop himself both

academically and professionally.  Academically, David believed that he had more to gain from learning a language from native speakers and within a local context.  Professionally, David believed that learning a language overseas would demonstrate his proficiency to future employers.  Additionally, David mentioned in his interview that the language was a gateway to further cultural immersion, especially when it came to making friends with local students.

James, an industrial engineering student, was inspired to start studying a foreign language at the university after participating on a short-term, faculty-led experience after his freshman year.  When I asked James why he thought that studying abroad to learn a foreign language was so important, he said,

> For me, especially in my career, going more toward the business side and wanting to do international work, being able to communication with people on a different level…especially with French, I really want to do something, work in France at some point, and I just think…I won't be as effective if I don't know the language.

James ended up spending a summer in Nantes, France, studying language and culture on a faculty-led program.  While James mainly frames his experience from a professional point of view – wanting to learn a language to better be able to do business – he was also sure to note that part of learning the language was to be immersed in the culture as well.

Also concerned with learning a language within a professional setting, Rafael took a different approach than his peers in the study by choosing to participate in a full-time summer internship in Madrid.  His experience of working full-time at a Spanish company as the sole bilingual employee, as well as his homestay, helped him make great strides in his Spanish competencies.  When I asked him if he accomplished his goal of gaining a higher level of fluency, he said,

> I definitely met the goal while I was over there. I wanted to come back having the fluency of almost a native speaker and having... I do, occasionally sometimes dream in Spanish

51

which happened while I was over there, and sometimes... My friends can tell when I'm really angry, 'cause if I start ranting, half the time it's in Spanish and I don't even realize it. Or if I get really, really excited, or if I'm a little under the influence, I can't really tell which language it is I'm using, so that kind of... That was a good sign for me.

Jokes and situational-specific instances of fluency aside, Rafael's ability to improve his language competency while overseas outside of the classroom and in a professional setting shows that the availability of non-traditional programming (that is to say, programs that do not focus on classroom based language and cultural immersion) overseas to help students meet what might otherwise be considered "traditional" goals of study abroad is an important step in the field.

Unlike Rafael, David, and Frank, Tyler had little interest in learning a foreign language before going overseas. I was especially interested in understanding Tyler's decision to spend a semester abroad in Florence on a faculty-led, English-speaking program. When I asked him how he chose a program, he said,

> I wanted to go some place where I wouldn't be completely alienated because of not speaking that language and I think that attracted me to places that did speak English...I wish I would have looked into more places, but I think I eliminated places like Russia and Germany and places like that just because I didn't necessarily want to speak to it.

Tyler ultimately settled on the program in Florence when a friend told him that he was planning on doing the program as well. Because Tyler was concerned with being alienated by not speaking the host language, he started taking Italian the semester before he went abroad. He said,

> Once I had actually started to take Italian, I think I realized that I really liked the language because I had a really bad experience with language in high school so I didn't expect myself to like learning a foreign language, but I really did. So that just kind of affirmed my belief and solidified my decision.

Tyler continued studying Italian while in Florence, a decision that led to him declaring an Italian major upon his return to the university's campus.

52

These students all saw foreign language as being integral, or at least, initially, as beneficial to their academic path at the university, whether they made that decision before or after studying abroad.  For one student, Daniel, although his foreign language learning was isolated to only his time abroad, it proved to be an important part of his development overseas. Daniel studied abroad on a faculty-led summer program in Tanzania, which also included a required Swahili class.  He elaborated on how the language integrated into the larger experience, saying,

> [W]e got to learn Swahili and not only do it in the classroom, but also interact with people at the orphanage and teaching English every single night and actually apply it. And also, the Public Health Course and the Cultured Course, they were very unique things where you actually got to immerse yourself in the country while you were there. And then, there was also the volunteering aspect of it where we got to teach English. And that taught me about developing lesson plans and overcoming language barriers, which was a huge obstacle for us there.

Daniel's take on learning a foreign language abroad was unique, especially given that he was on a pre-med track.  Throughout the rest of his interview, Daniel came back to learning Swahili as the aspect of the program that allowed him to better understand not only the culture but how medicine and public health worked as well.  He recognized that the single summer of language left him far from fluent but that it was important to make attempts to learn the language to accomplish his larger goals for the program.  Daniel was concerned with gaining a local context of medicine while in Tanzania and believed that at least attempting to learn the language would give him more opportunities to learn more about the local culture and context.

As a professional in the field, I must say that I was surprised by the number of men in the student for whom learning a foreign language was an important part of their program, whether they knew this before or learned this while abroad..  As study abroad has continued to move away from traditional language and cultural immersion programs towards more programs with

coursework in English, it is important to remember that foreign language competencies are important to students.  As I will elaborate below, the marketing of study abroad seems have to left foreign languages behind.

### 4.1.1  Marketing Analysis

In all instances of the marketing considered for this study, which included 225 Facebook posts, eight study abroad program pages, and six "why study abroad" webpages, learning a foreign language was mentioned a total of seven times – four in social media posts and three as reasons to participate in overseas programming.

First, considering the websites that speak to why one study abroad, the rationale offered for studying abroad from a foreign language perspective was in line with what many of the informants in the study said. Below is an example of how learning a foreign language is framed within the context of general study abroad marketing:

> Chances are if you're planning on studying abroad, one of the major draws is the opportunity to study a foreign language. Studying abroad grants you the opportunity to completely immerse yourself in a new language, and there is no better way to learn than to dive right in. In addition to the considerable language practice you will get just in day-to-day life, your host university will likely offer language courses to provide you with a more formal education. Immerse yourself in a new culture and go beyond a purely academic experience.

This certainly rings true to the experiences of students like David, Rafael, and Frank.  Whether formally learned in the classroom or not, the students who were interested in a foreign language had goals that extended beyond academics.  The two other websites that listed learning a foreign language as a reason to study abroad offered much the same rationale as the one quoted above.

Where the ability to learn a foreign language was surprisingly most absent was on the Facebook pages of the providers and universities that were analyzed as a part of this study,

showing up in only four of 225 posts.  Of these four, the most in line with the informants'
relationship with their foreign language learning was the following post from a university-
recognized study abroad provider.

**Figure 1. Foreign Language in Social Media**

"When I boarded my flight back to the U.S., I found myself with a renewed interest in and passion for indigenous language. As cliché as it may sound, I feel that a part of me never quite left my beautiful neighborhood of Miraflores – at the very least, there was a seed of an idea planted in my mind."

The Plight Of Indigenous Languages: How Quechua Opened My Eyes
Courtney finds purpose in the preservation of indigenous languages during her semester in Peru.

In this case, the post is making connections to the student's cultural immersion and the impact
that learning a foreign language had on her experience.  What is notably lacking in the social
media around foreign language is the connection that the informants made to their academic and
professional development.  For multiple students, learning another language was at least partially
motivated by post-graduation employment, a fact which is not demonstrated in the social media.

In sum, the presence of foreign language learning within study abroad marketing is
lacking.  Although statistics from the Institute for International Education show that number of
foreign languages *majors* studying abroad has decreased as a percentage of all study abroad
students, my research suggests that students outside of traditional foreign language majors are

still interested in gaining second (or third) language competencies, a fact that should not be neglected when planning marketing.

## 4.2    CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Distinct from learning a foreign language (and less prevalent among the informants), 7 of the men discussed the ability to better communicate with others, both personally and professionally, as an outcome of their study abroad program.   Given the emphasis placed by employers on communication abilities, I was surprised by how few of the men interviewed discussed improvements in cross-cultural communication as one of their outcomes.   However, for the students who did, it was an important part of their experience overseas.

For example, Clarence studied abroad in London on a semester-long, faculty-led program, which included a part-time internship.   Like most students who study in London, Clarence seemed to be a bit taken aback at first by the diversity of individuals with whom he was working in his internship.   He described the experience as follows,

> I think professionally it was really interesting at the internship. This is for London probably somewhat exclusively. Because I've never since experienced a workplace that was as diverse as that one was. There was people from... My manager was from Scotland, one of my other... Not really my manager, my overseer. I don't know if that's the right word. She was from Romania. People from Hungary, Argentina, Brazil. All these people ended up coming to London, United Kingdom…There's very vast differences between some of those people and Americans, for example. And even British people and Americans, a lot of times Americans are a lot more... When you ask them, "How are you doing today?" Or, "How are... " Probably that's how an American would ask that question, first of all. But if you said that to a British person they'd say, "I'm fine." Whereas Americans tend to be a lot more overstated. Like we'd say, "I'm great." So just one of those differences you notice. It kind of... I think helped me build my awareness of workplace culture and things like that, professionally.

Though he did not use the words directly, within the larger context of his interview it was clear that Clarence learned a great deal about cross-cultural communication within a professional setting.

The development of these types of communication competencies was a common outcome for students who participated on programs that included internships, whether in English or a foreign language. Rafael, beyond learning Spanish from his internship, learned about interacting with individuals from other cultures. He said,

> Both academically and professionally, I gained a much higher sense of cross-cultural communication, language abilities and kind of just a perception of how to read people in different situations and taking into consideration that body language is different not just from person to person, but from ethnicity to country and other factors like that.

Thus, for Rafael, being immersed in another language and culture not only forced him to gain a better understand of the mechanics of Spanish, but also all of the communication that happens outside of spoken language. Other students who studied a foreign language while abroad, like James, had similar views on their communication competencies development.

However, it should be noted that this was not limited to only students who interned or intensely studied a foreign language. Tyler, although he was studying elementary Italian while in Florence, saw that he developed these competencies even when interacting in English. He said,

> I would say it helped me in learning to develop skills to interact with people that aren't necessarily like myself and also to progress me professionally and let me know what I might actually want to do professionally as well. And it's kind of taught me that I can live in a different work setting and still succeed because I was able to do so great. So professionally speaking, I think it's evolved me as someone who can interact with different types of people.

Each of these students perceived that his ability to communicate with people who are not like themselves improved as a result of their study abroad experience. One student in particular, Eugene, was able to give a concrete example of how this ability has impacted his professional

life.  He participated in a short-term, faculty-led engineering program in Florence and did not

speak Italian while abroad.  Not knowing the language, he found that,

> …there were times when it was very difficult to communicate what I wanted when I was talking to someone there, so whether it was me getting food, or me getting directions, or anything like that. because I experienced that, I guess, hardship of communication, I now have a whole new respect for foreigners who are here in America, and they have a hard time talking. So, and it really showed up later. I started working at AT&T part time after I got back, so a lot of customer service. And some of my coworkers would be very short with the different foreign people who came in there when they were trying to explain things. After they said it one or two times, they would get very frustrated, and be like, "You're not listening, da da da, just understand." But I could kind of relate to them saying, "They're in a country that's not home. They're speaking the language they're not 100% fluent in. It's not their first language. They really just wanna be understood and just some of the stuff is getting lost in between." So, I think that was really good.

In this sense, Eugene had truly embraced his experience from Florence and applied his newly

developed competencies, an example of cultural capital that other students were hoping to use

when given the chance professionally.

It is clear that although the development of cross-cultural communication was not

initially a top priority for the majority of the men interviewed, the development of these

competencies was an important outcome of their study abroad program.  The development of

these competencies spans program types, program lengths, and the majors of the students who

made these claims.

### 4.2.1   Marketing Analysis

Unfortunately, despite the importance that the development of cross-cultural communication

skills played in the experiences of these students and the desirability of these competencies by

employers,  of the five cultural capital-based motivations and outcomes discussed by the

informants, cross-cultural communication competencies are the least present in the study abroad

marketing that I analyzed.  In total, cross-cultural communication was present a total of three times across two social media posts and a single program-specific page.

Within social media, although cross-cultural communication was mentioned, it was not in the same way that students discussed it.  That is to say, it did not focus on the development of cross-cultural communication competencies and their relation to the professional or post-graduation goals.

The first post, by the institution of this study, made the connection between communication differences within English speaking countries by linking to an external article about phrases that mean different things in Ireland versus the United States.  The second post, by one of the university's recognized providers is more academic but still unrelated to the outcomes discussed by the informants in this study.  It reads,

> Professor Emeritus Dr. Alvino Fantini has concluded a major new research project, Exploring Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Multinational Perspective. Using data from The Experiment in International Living centers in eight countries, Fantini explored the long-term outcomes of an intercultural experience. The study validated the important role that the homestay experience plays in the development of intercultural skills. The full study is available through the Donald Watt Library's Digital Collection.

Thus, in both cases, although the concept of cross-cultural communication was minimally present, it is clear that it was not within the same realm as the students thought of their development.  While the second post talks about the role that homestays play in intercultural (or cross-cultural) communication, only one of the informants who cited it as an outcome participated in a homestay.  This illustrates a clear disconnect, within this particular skill at least, between students' valued outcomes and how the experience is portrayed in marketing.

In fact, the only piece of marketing that discussed cross-cultural communication in a way that was aligned with student outcomes was for an internship program in Berlin.  The program

description read, "An [provider name] Internship in Berlin develops your professional skills and your ability to communicate across cultures, and provides substantive work experience to jump-start your career in today's competitive job market." It is surprising that this is the only mention of cross-cultural communication competencies within program-specific marketing since all of the other programs offered internship experiences or the ability to interact with locals in one way or another.

More importantly than the outcomes of the informants of this study, given the value that employers place on cross-cultural communication competencies, the field is doing its students a disservice by not more explicitly advertising the ways in which study abroad experiences can help develop this competency given the importance of them. I provide recommendations for improvement in the conclusion.

## 4.3    GLOBAL CONTEXT

For many students, the ability to gain an understanding of their field of study within a global context served as both a motivation and an outcome of participating in a study abroad experience. I expected that many of the students studying business would cite this as a reason for choosing to study abroad, but also found that it spanned all of the schools represented in the study. Additionally, students found that even short-term programs (some as short as two weeks) offered them a globalized context that they could use to better understand their field of study.

Andrew, an industrial engineering student, studied abroad the summer after his freshman year on a two-week program that is designed to give business and engineering students a better understanding of how the two fields work together in non-American contexts. The goal of the

program was not lost on Andrew who said that it was "useful and talking to the professors there seemed to give me a better idea of international business in engineering and just South American and Chilean cultures." There was a similar sentiment from the other informants in both business and engineering that participated on the program.

Max, another engineering student, participated in an overseas research program in Germany. He said, "Obviously, I wanted to build my experience, I wanted [it] to be related, of course. But more so, I wanted to see how the same field is approached by people from another culture, or in different settings or different experience…" In his interview, Max admitted that he chose to apply to a research program overseas after his freshman year because he thought that he would not be able to find an equivalent experience in the United States based on his age. Max accomplished this goal, but it is also interesting to note that his motivations included not only the experience itself but also a desire to better understand the experience of doing research within another context.

Daniel, who we have already met, also saw a global understanding of his future career plans as a benefit of his summer in Tanzania. When I asked him how he frames his experience within his applications to medical schools, he said,

> I just talk about the fact that I got the global perspective of medicine, which I think is another really big professional thing. Not just doing medical volunteering here, but also doing it abroad, and getting a new diversified understanding of how it really works in different countries. So, that's the professional one.

Daniel's case specifically attracted my attention because he was a student who was studying science, majoring in both neuroscience and chemistry, and wanted to gain an understanding of his field outside of the United States.

Peter, who also participated on the summer program in Tanzania, also found that having the ability to shadow medical professionals in a foreign setting gave him a better understand of his future profession.  He said,

> I think if I see a procedure that someone is doing, understanding that everything... 'Cause they don't actually have a lot of resources there. I think it's easy to, in med school, to think about how there's maybe always a simpler solution because there are people working and studying where there's so limited resources. And that's one of the things that got... One of the physicians I was following around, he'd constantly tell me about ways he'd go about approaching problems 'cause he had actually been to Europe and done some surgeries up there. He knows what we had, and an example would be cataract surgeries. He took a Bunsen burner and a glass rod to cauterize the eye to make sure it stops bleeding, versus in America, he's like, "Oh, you guys have these fine precision tools to do that." So, those kinds of things where you kinda are almost humbled by the way that they practice there it kinda makes you more appreciative of what we have in Western society.

Both Daniel and Peter partially frame their experience overseas a way to develop cultural capital.  Each of the men believed that having an understanding of the global context of medicine would prove beneficial in dealing with both patients and problems that may present themselves in the future.

In much the same way as Daniel and Peter, Rick was able to articulate *why* his global context is important.   A mechanical engineering student, Rick spent time in Brazil conducting an independent group research project on the strength of bamboo as a building material.  His entire project was situated within the local context but Rick was able to expand the implications of his research beyond Brazil.  He explained his project, saying,

> [S]o we choose to study the structural properties of bamboo and build a small test configuration to test the compressive strength because the current machines they have to do that are about a hundred thousand dollars.  And if we could do something similar with a bottle jack and a couple sheets -- plates of steel, we can made this accessible for people in third world countries.  And why that is important is, places like India where bamboo is extensively built with, they won't insure because there's no structural data and no information on bamboo as a material and the joints and how they connect it.  But if you can create some sort of method for tabling that data, you can get these people who

live in what is considered a substandard structure, but really isn't, you can get them insurance on their building which is a huge benefit where there's a lot of natural disasters.

Rick's understanding of the importance of engineering principles in developing countries was one of his major takeaways from his study abroad experience, and was present throughout the rest of his interview.

I found that students who discussed global context as a part of their experience found it to be one that was rewarding both professionally and personally. Furthermore, students like Daniel and Peter demonstrated that having that global understanding of their field played an important role in achieving their post-graduation plans, in their cases being accepted to medical school. Throughout the interviews, the men proved to be very pragmatic about their experiences and the ways in which study abroad related to future endeavors. It is for this reason that I believe that the men saw gaining a global context of their field as an important benefit of studying abroad.

### 4.3.1 Marketing Analysis

My analysis of study abroad marketing shows that gaining a global context for one's field of study is much more prevalent within program-specific marketing materials than other cultural-capital framed experiences like foreign language and cross-cultural communication. This is understandable as it is easier to discuss the cultural capital that is gained when it can be specific to both the academic theme of a program and location in which it is set. The presence of this same concept, however, is lacking in social media posts (only four out of 225 mention it) and is only somewhat visible when exploring pages related to the benefits of study abroad (just one of six).

More than half of the 8 programs analyzed for this study included information on how the program would help students to gain a global understanding of the academics offered. Two stood out in particular in that the way in which they discussed the global context of the program was most in line with the informants in the study.

The first, a faculty-led summer program in Florence, focused on the comparison between mental health in the United States and Italy.  The very first paragraph of text on the program's website read,

> This program compares global mental health in Italy and the United States. Students will examine the demands for mental health services, the scope of services within each profession and issues concerning access to, costs of, and payment for services.
> Over the course of the program students will explore and compare the scope of services within the primary mental health professions of psychology, social work and counseling. The students will cross culturally review topics such as: education and training, ethics, professional identity and psychotherapy practice. In addition, students study historical developments, critical issues in governmental policies and funding for services.
> Through lectures and structured site visits, students will develop an appreciation for the differences and similarities of the professional roles and identities of psychologists and the context in which each profession is practiced in Italy and the United States.

Daniel, Peter, and Rick were all able to articulate *how* their experience led them to a better global understanding of medicine and engineering, respectively. This program description serves as an exemplar of what would speak well to men because it specifically addresses academic themes of the program and how those themes are dealt with within the local context.

A second program offered through a university-recognized provider gave clear examples of the questions that the academics of the program sought to answer.  Again, the first paragraph of the website opened with this lead,

> Learn how communities around the world understand and strive for health and wellbeing. This program will strengthen your ability to understand, interpret, and compare the socio-cultural, ecological, economic, political, and biological factors that affect human health. From North America to South Asia and Africa to South America, in city neighborhoods and rural villages, you will learn to listen to and understand multiple voices: people in

local communities, governing bodies and nongovernmental agencies, caregivers, and those receiving care.

The description of this multi-country program gives clear examples of how undergraduates can develop cultural capital. The program addresses various topics and issues and provides a clear understanding of the stakeholders that are involved in each. This gives participants the ability to understand a variety of world issues from multiple cultural viewpoints, creating a large amount of cultural capital.

Although program-specific materials place great importance on advertising the context in which students can learn, the opposite is true of social media. Only two of 225 Facebook posts highlight the importance of learning within a specific context. One that can serve as an example of how the field can market this aspect of study abroad in a general context was written by a staff member of a university-recognized study abroad provide and reads,

> Study abroad is even more important today that it was back in the 1970s. The wave of globalization which has transformed our world had not begun in the 70s. Globalization is not something you do or don't believe in. It is a fact – just like the economy. It is not a moral fact. People have to put the ethics into the reality. Students need to understand more about that reality, how other people live, and what the options are for living in a globalized world and making it sustainable. We do some things here in the U.S. very well, but we don't do everything as well as it can be done. I'd like to see students go abroad, learn, and bring back the best of everything. Whether it is a way of saving water in your household or a way of moving away from using wood fires in Africa. These are the kinds of things that will energize students who study abroad.

Without speaking to a specific program, this Facebook post touches all of the major points that the informants in the study did by emphasizing that the way in which the world operates requires that individuals understand the impact of their decisions beyond their local communities.

In considering the global context that study abroad provides, it is clear that a greater emphasis should be placed on it within general marketing materials. Because of their nature, program-specific materials tend to contain more information on how the location itself can lead

65

to a global understanding, but providers and universities should be sure to include it for all programs. I provide further recommendations in the conclusion.

## 4.4    CULTURAL IMMERSION

Within the context of this study, the idea of cultural immersion was one that was difficult to separate from many other motivations and outcomes that men discovered because it is so intertwined within them. The two men in this section that discussed cultural immersion as a motivation for participating did so without initially creating any deeper links to their personal or academic development. Although both students learned to frame the cultural experiences that they had in a way that was developmentally relevant, they stood in contrast to other men in the study whose desire for cultural immersion was motivated by other factors such as developing cross-cultural communication competencies or foreign language competencies. This is an important distinction to make because this desire for cultural immersion that is not linked to practical and pragmatic goals is somewhat of an anomaly compared to the rest of the motivations and benefits men discussed in the study.

First, Bryan, a chemical engineering student, participated on a two-week, faculty-led summer program in Chile. Although Bryan had other motivations for participating in the program that will be explored later, the ability to experience cultural immersion was also an important one. He said,

> So it just seemed like a way to broaden my horizons -- experience a new place. I had never been abroad before that at all. Well I went to Canada for half an hour; my family was staying in Buffalo, New York. But I mean I had never really experienced another culture and lived there for a period of time…study abroad is really about, like, embracing yourself or another culture and immersing yourself there for a period of time.

66

Bryan's use of the phrase "embracing yourself" in his interview called my attention because it plays into the types of phrases that are currently used in study abroad marketing. Although I did not press Bryan further on the issue, he says in his interview that his study abroad program was truly his first time being out of the country. His desire to learn more about himself through study abroad and cultural immersion is one that I have seen in many students that I have worked with, especially those with little to no prior overseas experience. Although cultural immersion was a motivation for Bryan to participate in study abroad, after returning from his program he learned how to frame his experience in more professionally and academically relevant ways.

Second, Francisco's motivations for participating in a semester-long program in London were primarily for professional development and differentiation (see Section 5.4) but the ability to grow personally from cultural immersion was important for him as well. He said,

> That's one of the things I looked for whenever I was studying abroad, and I really experienced in London is a different appreciation, and you get to take a step back from your own culture and delve into this new culture. And then you can really weigh your values against those of this new culture, and it gives you the ability to say, "Oh! I'd never know, knew I did this. This is such a better way to do it," or "Why did I put so much weight and value and effort into this when it really is meaningless?" Or, "Oh! That's how it's like over at different places. Wow, I'm so glad I had this." And it's not just in your own life that I gained that from.

Francisco's motivation for cultural immersion also affected the decisions he made regarding certain aspects of the program, most notably his housing. His desire for cultural immersion led Francisco to choose to stay with a British host family rather than in a flat with other American students. In doing so, Francisco put himself in a position to be the only American (he did not have a roommate) in his living situation, a decision that he believed allowed him to connect more deeply with the culture. Living with a host family also meant a longer commute from the suburbs. Given the fact that students who live in flats tend to live in areas that are inaccessible to

most Londoners because of the price of real estate, living further from the city center connected him to a more typical British lifestyle.

The fact that only two students discussed cultural immersion as a motivation for participation does not mean that it was not important to other students. This is illustrative of a larger trend that is evident throughout my study: practicality. The informants were very pragmatic in their decision making in that the majority had an academic or professional goal for that they hoped to fulfill through cultural immersion.

### 4.4.1   Marketing Analysis

Working with the distilled definition of cultural immersion used for this section, I found that little emphasis (in fact, almost none) was placed on immersion without connection to professional and academic goals across program-specific, social media, and the "why pages."   In fact, in only one instance was cultural immersion, in this sense, listed as a benefit of study abroad.  As an example, one website promoting study abroad as an experience read,

> Many students who choose to study abroad are leaving their home for the first time. When they arrive in their new host country, they are fascinated by the distinct cultural perspectives. When you study abroad you will find incredible new foods, customs, traditions, and social atmospheres. You will find that you have a better understanding and appreciation for the nation's people and history. You will have the opportunity to witness a completely new way of life.

Other pages speak to cultural immersion, but do so in a way that connects it to larger professional and academic outcomes and motivations of study abroad.  For example, another "why study abroad" page promotes cultural immersion as follows:

> Study abroad allows you get to know another culture first-hand. Cultural differences are more than just differences in language, food, appearances, and personal habits. A person's culture reflects very deep perceptions, beliefs, and values that influence his or her way of

life and the way that s/he views the world. Students who experience cultural differences personally can come to truly understand where other cultures are coming from.

It is immediately followed by this:

> Study abroad will help you develop skills and give you experiences a classroom setting will never provide. Being immersed in an entirely new cultural setting is scary at first, but it's also exciting. It's an opportunity to discover new strengths and abilities, conquer new challenges, and solve new problems. You will encounter situations that are wholly unfamiliar to you and will learn to adapt and respond in effective ways.

In this specific example, the marketing is actually aligned with the ways in which the majority of men in the study framed cultural immersion with relation to developing other skills (See Section 5.3).

Overall, I was surprised by both the lack of importance given to cultural immersion by both the informants and marketing. In both cases, although the concept is present, it is ultimately linked to other aspects of the program, namely foreign language development (see Section 4.1), soft skill development, and differentiation from peers, all of which are explored in Chapter 5.

## 4.5    TRAVEL

Much like cultural immersion, the ability to travel - that is to say the opportunities for independent exploration that become available by being in another country – was not an important motivation for the men interviewed. If anything, the ability to travel affected the men's choices as to where to study abroad, but only in cases in which other requirements, such as coursework or the availability of an internship, were met first.

In deciding on the research opportunities to which he wanted to apply, Max "settled with Europe because I thought it would be a nice place also to travel on weekends because it's so

close, which is exactly what we did. We had a lot of organized excursions, and also students broke off into groups and just toured around Europe." Although Max was concerned with being in Europe so that he could travel, his choice of program was ultimately based on whether or not it was a high-quality program that offered opportunities within his specific field of study.

When I asked Jason what made him choose his program, one of the things that he said was,

> I got to jump around Australia and see the whole Eastern side of the country. So I guess when they explained that and kind of explained what you'd be doing in each city... So the backpacking in Darwin and the skydiving in Cairns, It was kinda like, "that's what I wanna be doing."

The opportunity to travel to different parts of the country and have non-academic experiences outside of the classroom were important to Jason. However, when Jason and I discussed his criteria for picking his program during the interview, he said that the location, field of study, and the ability to complete courses towards his degree requirement were the most important factors in making a decision. For Jason, while the travel and cultural aspects of the program were nice, they were not sufficient motivators on their own. Travel was an added benefit to a program that already met Jason's requirements.

Max's and Jason's experiences were typical of the men who mentioned travel as a motivation or outcome of their experience. If anything, the ability to travel led students to certain programs or limited their program search to certain regions of the world. However, at least in the context of these interviews, students seemed more focused on the ability to grow academically and professionally.

### 4.5.1 Marketing Analysis

Overall, the presence of travel within the marketing for study abroad is more evident than cultural immersion but not as prevalent as I had initially expected. In all, a total of 12 Facebook posts pointed specifically to travel in some way, whether it was giving advice on avoiding tourist traps, places to see in a country, or students discussing their travel experiences. The ability to travel overseas is often cited as a reason to think about studying abroad as well. However, travel outside of the auspices of academics is rarely mentioned within the general overviews given in program-specific materials.

**Figure 2. Travel Tips for Study Abroad**



Posts like this one from the university's Facebook page are those that are often most linked to travel. Similar posts from other providers and universities include "How to make your next adventure the trip of a lifetime!" and "If you're new to traveling and need some pointers on picking out the perfect backpack, look no further! We've got everything that you need here!"

This type of "travel fluff" was present on the Facebook of all eight study abroad providers and universities considered as a part of this study and included a variety of different types of posts, including blogs written by students currently participating on program, photographs submitted by students, and links to external sites such as BuzzFeed and The Matador Network. I understand why providers and universities include these posts as they are appealing to various constituents, including current students who are looking for inspiration and opportunities while abroad as well as prospective students who are drawn in by the allure of international travel. However, as I will continue to explore throughout this study, their presences versus more academic and professional postings should be concerning.

The ability to travel was listed as a benefit on three out of the five "why study abroad" pages that I analyzed for the study. In fact, one listed the ability to travel as the number one reason to study abroad above any academic or professional motivations. The page says,

> The biggest reason you should consider a study abroad program is the opportunity to see the world. By studying abroad, you will experience a brand-new country with incredible new outlooks, customs and activities. The benefits of studying abroad include the opportunity to see new terrains, natural wonders, museums and landmarks of your host nation.
> In addition, when you're abroad, you won't be limited to traveling in just the nation in which you are studying – you can see neighboring countries as well! For example, if you study in France, you'll have the option to travel through various parts of Europe including London, Barcelona, and Rome. (See Figure 3)

It would be a fruitless effort to deny that extra-curricular traveling is a part of a study abroad experience. However, the fact that this website - which is ranked second in a Google search of "why study abroad" – listed the ability to travel as the number one reason to study abroad, claiming it be more important than education and language competencies, should be concerning as it is the inverse of what the informants sought out and, afterwards, most valued in their experiences.

**Figure 3. General Advice Page Example**



# 10 Benefits to Studying Abroad

Studying abroad may be one of the most beneficial experiences for a college student. By studying abroad, students have the opportunity to study in a foreign nation and take in the allure and culture of a new land. Here is a list of the top 10 reasons to study abroad!

## 1. See the World

The biggest reason you should consider a study abroad program is the opportunity to see the world . By studying abroad, you will experience a brand-new country with incredible new outlooks, customs and activities. The benefits of studying abroad include the opportunity to see new terrains, natural wonders, museums and landmarks of your host nation.

In addition, when you're abroad, you won't be limited to traveling in just the nation in which you are studying – you can see neighboring countries as well! For example, if you study in France, you'll have the option to travel through various parts of Europe including London , Barcelona , and Rome.

✈ Checkout our International Student Travel Center for information on how to find discounts on airfare, accommodations, rail passes, and more.

## 2. Education

Another reason you might consider studying abroad is for the chance to experience different styles of education. By enrolling in a study abroad program, you'll have the chance to see a side of your major that you may not have been exposed to at home.

Another post, written by a student for a similar website, also gives the impression that travel may be the most important aspect of a study abroad program. The passage read,

> There will be a moment while abroad when you'll realize that you've made the right decision: Treasure that moment. Mine was on a beach in Spain during a one-week vacation in November. There I was shirt and shoes off, staring into the 75 degree Mediterranean Sea thinking about how all my friends were in class, possibly bored out of their minds and probably freezing in the cold New England weather.

While each student can decide for him or herself what the defining moments of a study abroad experience are, there was not a single man in the study who spoke of their experience as happening while on a side trip. Again, that this is listed as a reason to study abroad on three of the top six hits on Google should be concerning.

In sum, although not omnipresent in social media, the ability to travel is somewhat prevalent. More concerning is the priority that is placed on travel as a reason to participate on a study abroad program, overshadowing coursework and professional opportunities. The framing of study abroad in this way is disconnected from the experience of the nineteen informants in this study and is rarely present in program-specific marketing. If this is the case, it begs the question as to why it is so present otherwise. From my experience, even the most academically or professionally motivated students often take advantage of the opportunity to travel as a part of their experience. I believe that the field takes advantage of this broad appeal of the desire to travel because of the belief that it speaks to a wide variety of students.

## 4.6    CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Within the context of this study, I was most surprised by the data concerned with the creation of cultural capital. First, there were a greater number of men that I anticipated for whom learning a foreign language was, or became, a primary focus of their time overseas. Given that IIE statistics (2014) show that the percentage of foreign language majors in the overall study abroad population has decreased, I expected that the number of men interested in learning a foreign language would be lower. Furthermore, based on my daily interactions with students I also expected that more men would be concerned with finding coursework in English and would have tried to avoid learning a foreign language abroad. My impressions are reflected in the marketing – little emphasis is put on learning a new language as a reason to study overseas. Instead, we should celebrate and promote programs that offer the ability to begin or continue learning a foreign language while offering additional coursework in English.

With regards to developing cross-cultural communication competencies, again, the data did not reflect what I expected. More students discussed the ability to learn a foreign language as a motivation or outcome of their program than the ability to develop cross-cultural communication competencies. Given the emphasis that employers put on communication competencies, I believe it would benefit both students and the field to place a more explicit emphasis in promotional materials on the ability to develop these competencies while overseas.

Cultural immersion (without direct links to professional and academic development) and travel both played very minor roles in students' experiences overseas yet were more prevalent in social media than aspects of programming such as foreign language. I believe that this is a result of having multiple audiences for social media and organizations attempting to cater to current participants looking for travel tips. However, it is also important to consider the impression that it might give to men just beginning to explore study abroad.

Finally, what proved to be most important to the men in the study in terms of creating cultural capital was gaining an understanding of the global context of their field. Students across all disciplines – including business and STEM fields – said that understanding the way that their field of study can be applied internationally was one of their primary outcomes of study abroad.

While it is true that men did not place a large emphasis on the creation of cultural capital, at least without linking to human capital, the idea of culture and travel was much less prevalent in the marketing than I expected. However, as I have shown, the problem with recruiting men may not be that there is too much culture but that there is not enough emphasis placed on other motivations and outcomes of study abroad.

# 5.0    FINDINGS AND ANYALSIS: HUMAN CAPITAL

Based on my interviews with the informants, I found four motivations and outcomes that were consistent with my theoretical understanding of human capital: the ability to complete academic requirements abroad; the availability of internships and research experience abroad; the development of soft skills; and differentiation from one's peers through participation.  Data from the interviews show that students place the greatest weight on the ability to complete academic requirements overseas, a fact that is wholly underrepresented in the marketing relative to what men valued. At varying levels, students are also concerned with internships and research, soft skills, and differentiation and, like academics, the marketing fails to reflect the importance that students place on these aspects of study abroad.

## 5.1    ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS ABROAD

The availability of courses overseas and the ability to fulfill academic requirements, including courses within majors, minors, and certificates, as well as general education requirements, was the single most discussed motivation for participating in a study abroad program among the men interviewed for the study.  In fact, only two students of the 19 interviewed did *not* cite fulfilling academic requirements while overseas as a requirement for participating in the program.  This was true across all schools, majors, and academic levels.  While each student may have had

nuanced reasoning for picking his programs, many of which extended beyond classroom academics, the tie that binds is the fact that studying abroad helped the students move towards completing their degrees in one way or another.

For Daniel, who is on a pre-med track, he was attracted to his short-term, faculty-led program in Tanzania for a variety of reasons: it had a public health focus, was "off the beaten path," and, most importantly, allowed him to fulfill multiple general education requirements. When asked why he chose the program, he responded, "It had the public health component which the other one didn't. And it knocked down all three gen-eds which was actually a really big deal to me, instead of just two and then having to come back and take another one…I thought about it a lot, actually." In Daniel's case, any number of programs could have fulfilled his general education requirements, so there were other aspects of his faculty-led program in Tanzania that were important to him, but regardless of the focus of the program, he was concerned with fulfilling certain requirements as a part of his program overseas. Because of his participation on the program, Daniel also decided to complete an area studies Certificate in African Studies through the university's international studies center, a credential that he said he would not have pursued had it not been for his overseas experience.

Tyler, a student in Arts and Sciences who studied abroad in Florence during the spring semester of his sophomore year, found himself in a situation similar to Daniel's. In discussing the academics of his program, he said,

> I also knew that it would knock off a lot of gen-eds and it would get rid of all my cultural requirements in school as well…I also took "Political and Economic History of 20th Century Europe…which counts towards my P and P (Politics and Philosophy) major.

Like Daniel, Tyler's time abroad inspired him to pursue an additional field of study – in this case, Italian Studies. Although he admits that he "had no intention of doing Italian prior to going

77

abroad", after taking Italian before his semester abroad he "really started to like it and then I thought I might want to do an Italian minor, and then while I was there, I decided I might as well make it a major." Taking part in a study abroad program not only allowed Tyler to complete requirements for the degree that he was already pursuing but also afforded him the impetus to further his education with a major in another field.

Some of the students interviewed participated in their study abroad program in part because it was a requirement of a major or certificate that they were pursuing. One example of this is Andrew, who was a senior in Industrial Engineering at the time of his interview. Andrew participated on a short-term, faculty-led study abroad program designed specifically for business and engineering students after their first year on campus. He said,

> Actually, [in] our freshmen seminar for engineering, we get introduced to each of the engineering majors. Industrial Engineering…when they gave their presentation…they said that it was a requirement. That's when I learned about the requirement, so that kind of just gave me a little another nudge towards doing study abroad…I was just kinda getting the requirement knocked out of the way.

Andrew was not the only student who needed to fulfill a study abroad requirement for his degree. Clarence, a student in the business school, used his semester in London to fulfill the majority of the requirements for his international business certificate, one of which is an international experience of at least six weeks. Additionally, Clarence studied abroad to complete general education and major requirements. He said,

> I knew I wanted to do that international business certificate, I think actually that was probably a huge part of it as well…'cause I knew I wanted to do that certificate and I had to study abroad and I think maybe my thought process was, "Might as well pick up as many of those classes as well... Just loop that in with that semester." Actually, yeah… that that was probably a deciding factor… it made it really easy to pick that up because you're fulfilling a lot of requirements just by being abroad in addition to the foreign culture and stuff like that.

Clarence continues the trend: regardless of their other motivations for studying abroad, the overwhelming majority of men interviewed were deeply concerned with the applicability of classes towards their major, minor, and certificate requirements.

Francisco is another example. Beyond fulfilling requirements, he needed to make sure that his study abroad program allowed him to graduate on time, a fact that he says was the most important factor in deciding to study abroad and in choosing a program, saying,

> The biggest thing to me was, "Do these classes fit in my schedule?" Because I did study abroad the last two semesters, so the last semester and then this semester, both had to be 18 credits. So to graduate on time, I needed to be able to knock out nine... I technically did nine credits and then a three-credit internship, so those nine credits had to fit in to help me graduate.

Francisco explicitly states what most students implied in their interviews and that men who do not study abroad often cite as a reason for not participating: being able to graduate on time. However, for all of the men interviewed, participating in an overseas program had no *negative* impact on their ability to graduate on time, a point that study abroad professionals should heavily emphasize in marketing.

Somewhat distinct from most of the other participants in the study, Josh, a senior studying supply chain management, had multiple overseas experiences, each one of which he used to fulfill a requirement towards his degree. Josh first participated in a two-week program in Germany after his freshman year; followed by a semester-long Pitt-recognized program in Spain during his sophomore year; and finally a short-term, faculty-led program during the summer of his junior year. Josh has a unique academic motivation compared to the rest of them in the study in that he was interested in the ability to take courses that were not offered on campus but still fulfilled degree requirements. Speaking specifically about a faculty-led, short-term program in Cyprus, he said,

… I've always had an interest in it because I knew it offered maritime supply chain, I knew it was an island in the northern Mediterranean, so it just had that appeal. And then once I started to see if it was feasible or not, I actually realized that the one course would fulfill my last class in my West European certificate, the one sociology course and then maritime supply chain would fulfill an elective in supply chain and it was a course that I'd never seen anywhere else before. And so even though it was a little more money that I had to spend than I normally would have, because I was able to fit it into my curriculum nicely it worked out.

Even though he was drawn to the program by the location, by participating in study abroad programs that fulfilled degree requirements through he unique courses Josh was able to avail himself of human capital advantages versus his peers.

Josh was not alone in location being a primary factor in his study abroad decision. Zach, a senior studying media and professional communications, spent the summer after his sophomore year in Sydney, Australia, on the university's faculty-led program there. When I asked Zach why he studied abroad, he said,

Well, I've always wanted to go abroad since I was in high school…I decided to do Sydney [instead of Florence] and I don't regret it at all. Like, I loved it a lot. The classes I was able to take transferred over here and I was able to use those as two of my electives for my major…It was more about location. And, I mean, the classes were obviously…If I was taking a history class or something, I probably wouldn't have gone, but the two classes were very beneficial to me as well.

Josh's pragmatism towards the academics of his program is a commonality that he shared with many of the other men interviewed in the study. The majority of these men and their concerns with academics fell in line with the literature in that their top priority in participating in a study abroad program was making sure that the academics of the program made sense and that their graduation would not be delayed. In some cases, like Josh, the students were lucky in that they were able to study abroad in their top choice location because of the courses that were offered. In other cases, like Francisco, the students' choice of location was determined by the coursework that was offered. Regardless, whether on their own or with the help of the study

abroad or academic advisors, these students were able to determine how to make study abroad beneficial for them academically.

### 5.1.1  Marketing Analysis

While it is clear from student interviews that academics and the ability to make progress towards completing their degrees were crucial factors in participating in study abroad, the same fact is notably absent from most marketing of the experiences.

First, in considering all of the social media, academics were highlighted in only eight of the 225 Facebook posts that were analyzed and, of those eight, only one post was made by a university study abroad office; the remaining seven were posted by third-party providers.

One provider used student voices to highlight academics on their programs in two posts. The first links to a video blog of a male student studying abroad in Sydney in which he offers a tour of the classroom space of the program and offers an in-depth discussion of the content that he has learned in his courses so far.  The second links to a blog post by a female student studying abroad in Florence in which she writes that "Classes have begun and I actually love them. The faculty is really great. I'm taking Italian Film, the Italian Language, Italian Art and Italian Architecture. I'm learning not only things that are useful and interesting, but I'm learning about them in the place they were created! It's incredible to think about, really."  Beyond this, however, there is no further mention of her classes in her blog post.  Instead, she focuses on excursions that she has taken with the program and the new friends that she has made.  While these are certainly important aspects of the study abroad experience, the post is otherwise lacking with reference to academics.

Figure 4 includes a photo of a group of male students in a factory and highlights the fact that students from a variety of STEM disciplines participated in a short-term, summer study abroad program that offered them the opportunity to see real-world applications of academic concepts through academically-focused site visits.  While this post is an exemplar of ways in which professionals can better market to male students, it is atypical of what is commonly found on social media.  Based on my review of 225 social media posts, to see a photo posted that are not in front of monuments or landscapes is uncommon; it is even less common to see a photo with almost all men.

The remaining social media posts were notably lacking in their specificity with regards to academics or the ability to complete course requirements and the like.  As many students see study abroad as an investment in human capital, it is important that professionals make explicit the ability to complete coursework that is going to fulfill academic requirements.

**Figure 4. Academics in Social Media**



This week, Northshore Technical Community College students returned from a two-week faculty-led program in the United Arab Emirates, funded by CIEE's inaugural Generation Study Abroad Access Grant. The students came from a variety of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) backgrounds including drafting and design, welding, and industrial maintenance technology. Program highlights included academic site visits to Cummins Inc, Total, and Arabtec Construction, LLC, as well as a desert excursion, boating outing, and a trip to the tallest building in the world!

Websites and articles that focused on the benefits of studying abroad put more of an emphasis on academics and the ability to take courses overseas, but not in the same way that the male informants did. While the informants were primarily concerned with the ability to complete specific degree requirements, the websites analyzed focused more on the ability to take courses that are not offered on one's home campus. As an example, one site wrote,

> Study abroad gives you the opportunity to break out of your academic routine. Study abroad is likely to be much unlike what you are used to doing as a student. You may become familiar with an entirely new academic system and you will have the chance to take courses not offered on your home campus. It's also a great opportunity to break out the monotony of the routine you follow semester after semester.

Although Josh was in the minority in choosing a program specifically because it offered courses that were *not* available on his home campus, it is important to remember that the applicability of these courses towards his degree requirements was still a factor in moving forward with his participation in the program. In writing general advice pages, it is important that authors keep in mind that they are appealing to a wide range of students with different motivations for participating in study abroad programs. Focusing on only one population (in this case the population that uses study abroad as an academic exploration) may isolate students for whom fulfilling academic requirements is a requirement for participating.

Finally, when considering the program-specific pages, it should be noted that much more emphasis is placed on academics, the coursework available to students, and/or the academic outcomes of the program when compared to social media posts and general advice pages. Perhaps the best example comes from SIT's Health and Community Program, which leads with the following:

> This program will strengthen your ability to understand, interpret, and compare the socio-cultural, ecological, economic, political, and biological factors that affect human health. From North America to South Asia and Africa to South America, in city neighborhoods and rural villages, you will learn to listen to and understand multiple voices: people in

local communities, governing bodies and nongovernmental agencies, caregivers, and those receiving care.

The overwhelming majority of the programs considered for this analysis, which included both faculty-led and university-recognized programs short-term and long-term programs, placed a similar emphasis on the academic goals and outcomes of the program. However, it should be noted that this is not always the case. For example, one organization's page for a program in Barcelona reads,

> Barcelona (pop. 1.5 million) is the heart and capital of the region of Cataluña in the northeast corner of Spain. The origin of this Mediterranean city goes back more than 2,500 years and is crucial to the history of Spain and Catalonia - ruled by Carthaginians, Romans, Visigoths, Moors, and Franks until it finally became part of the Spanish empire in the 17th century.
>
> Barcelona is, for all intents and purposes, now a bilingual city as inhabitants of the region speak both Castilian Spanish and Catalán, the official language of Cataluña. Barcelona offers visitors eccentric creativity, cultural diversity, and endless amounts of energy. The architecture in Barcelona is stunning and unique, ranging from medieval gothic castles to the mosaic buildings of Antonio Gaudí.
>
> Also known for the cubist and surreal artists Picasso and Dalí, Barcelona will satisfy art lovers of all types! Bordered by wooded hills, Barcelona's surrounding area offers an escape from the bustling city life. A few hours away are the Pyrenees Mountains as well as the vineyards and orchards of the Cataluña region.
>
> Studying in Barcelona provides the perfect blend of culture and fun, so what are you waiting for? Come study abroad in Barcelona!

In this case, I find it troubling that academic goals and outcomes, or courses offered, are not mentioned at all and that "studying" is mentioned in the same context as "culture and fun." Describing a program in this way creates a disconnect from the criteria men sought their programs.

The fact that all 19 men in this study, who came from a broad range of disciplines and majors, were able to take courses that counted towards their degree requirements demonstrates

that this is a realistic outcome of study abroad. With this in mind, the absence of information on academics and the ability to make degree progress from study abroad materials is problematic. As I will further discuss in the recommendations section, the field of international education needs to place a greater emphasis on the availability of coursework that allows students to fulfill their degree requirements while overseas.

## 5.2     INTERNSHIPS, RESEARCH, AND HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES

Beyond academics, some of the students were interested in gaining hands-on experience in their field as a part of their study abroad program, whether it is through internships, research, or other work experiences.  The availability of these experiences was a major factor, not only in choosing to study abroad, but also in selecting a program as well.

For Rafael, an international internship was his sole goal in participating in a study abroad program. He said,

> I knew from the get-go that I wasn't going to be as excited to go abroad if I were to take classes as opposed to work or do an extra-research kind of deal. Being a student [in the business school] where they nail into your head how important it is to have a well-rounded background and different kinds of experiences and things that distinguish you from other students… I found that [interning abroad] to be more appealing and I thought in the future it would be more useful, and I just thought I would have more fun with it, 'cause I'm more of a doer as opposed to an academic, so I thought to get the most out of the experience I didn't wanna be doing homework. I wanted to be doing actual work-work.

I will further explore Rafael's intentions for completing his program in the "Differentiation" section below. Rafael is an important student to include here in this study because he was one of two who did not take classes while overseas, but instead focused solely on an internship or research experience.   As a student who was also studying Spanish as a foreign language, it was

important for Rafael to gain professional experience that would help to develop both his technical skills within his field as well as his foreign language ability in a professional sense.

Max, who is majoring in bioengineering, used an international research program to get access to experience as a freshman that he would not have been able to get within the United States. Like Rafael, Max's experience focused solely on researching while abroad and did not include any mandatory classwork. He said,

> Obviously, I wanted to build my experience, I wanted to be related, of course. But more so, I wanted to see how the same field is approached by people from another culture, or in different settings or different experience, because in Germany, the undergraduate degree is much more intensive than here.

Because of the rigidity of his major, the availability of a research program was not only important to provide him with research experience, but also was necessary for him to be able to participate in a study abroad at all.

Other students, like Clarence, combined an internship with other coursework while overseas. As I have discussed, the ability complete degree requirements overseas was an important part of studying abroad for Clarence, but so was the availability of part-time internships while in London. When asked what he gained most from his program, Clarence talked about his internship. Beyond the diversity of his coworkers, Clarence talked extensively throughout his interview about what he gained from his internship in terms of technical skills as well as personal and professional skills. In fact, for Clarence, although he said that there were a variety of factors that influenced his decision to study abroad and his program choice, in discussing his program, the internship component was the aspect of the program that he brought up the most frequently nearly two years after returning from England.

For Peter, a student on a pre-med track who studied abroad in Tanzania, the academic rigor that came with conducting research overseas was an important criterion. He said,

I have heard of some programs where they're just very, very simple, maybe the classes are easier. I do hear some programs that they spend a lot of their time maybe just drinking a lot. It's a great time, and it's great for them, but the substance of the program that I was interested in, it was there, it was there. [The substance] was being directly involved in a hospital setting…creating a research paper to see kinda how these people live. It was called the Paradigms of the Sub-Saharan African Physician, and so, I basically had to capture their motivations, lifestyles, coping strategies, all those kinds of things.

As I will discuss below, part of Peter's motivation for conducting research and studying abroad was differentiation from other medical school applicants. Regardless, throughout his interview, it became very clear that Peter was a dedicated student and that academics and related experiences were at the core of the decisions he made regarding his degree. The availability of research, courses that fulfilled degree requirements and an air of seriousness were crucial to his participation in a study abroad program.

Much like academic requirements, students who wanted to gain research or internship experience overseas placed it as one of the top motivators for studying abroad, a major factor in program selection, and one the primary outcomes that they discuss when asked about their programs. Although each student had different experiences overseas, the common threat among all of them were that the internship or research experience would help them build skills that would benefit their post-graduation plans and that would differentiate them from their peers. As I will explore below, skill building and differentiation proved to be important for students not participating in these hands on experiences as well.

### 5.2.1   Marketing Analysis

Like academics, very little emphasis is placed on the availability of internships overseas in general marketing for study abroad and even less is placed on research experiences. However, the programs analyzed that did include internships or research experience placed a good deal of

emphasis on the availability and benefits of these components of the program. But overall, internships and research have little visibility in the larger marketing picture.

With regards to promoting internship experiences as a part of study abroad programs, a university-recognized provider sets a very good example with a video posted to their Facebook page. The short, two-minute clip follows the experience of a female student athlete who completed a summer internship in Sydney, exploring the obstacles that she faced in studying abroad, her responsibilities in her internship, and how the experience has benefited her after returning to the United States.

Another post by one of the University's partner organizations features a male student who completed an internship in Dublin post-graduation. The organization makes use of a dynamic quote to draw the reader to a longer blog entry. The quote reads,

> I started my CAPA internship immediately after graduation. I added the experience onto my resume and began applying for jobs. Turns out, with the CAPA internship added, I only needed to send one. I was hired for the first job I applied for with the leading Healthcare IT provider in the US. In my interview, all they wanted to know about was my experience in Ireland.

Both the video and the blog post are examples that I believe are representative of the experiences of the men interviewed as a part of this study. However, based on my analysis, they seem to be the exception to the rule as only 10 of the 225 social media posts were related to internships. While other providers posted links to internship programs and opportunities, they lacked an emphasis on the actual student experience of interning abroad.

Again, like academic coursework, more substance regarding internship opportunities is provided on programmatic specific materials for programs that offer internship placements. For example, the university's semester program in London describes internships in the following way,

> More than 75 percent of [program] students complete an internship, and with good reason. Whether your post-graduation plans include entering the workforce, going to graduate school, or pursuing a different path, professional work experience always stands out on a resume. Internships in London are 20 hours per week, excluding commuting time. In addition to workplace experience, you will also meet with peers and faculty for internship seminars to help you get the most out of the experience. Internships are always unpaid, always for three credits, and always pass/fail.

The way in which the program describes internships is more reflective of the ways in which students who participated in internship describe their experience, especially with regards to their motivation for participating in the experience, compared to social media. Another program describes their internship program, writing,

> Go home with real-life skills by interning with a Chinese company, a multinational corporation, or an international nonprofit. You might help with data collection for FTI-International Risk, a leading risk mitigation organization; lend project management support to Asian Sourcing Link, the world's leading supply chain management company for promotional products; or work for Broadway International, a sales, marketing, and manufacturing company.

Again, in this program-specific material, the provider speaks to the ranges of fields in which placements are available, the ability to work with locals and build professional skills, even going so far as to give specific examples of internships that may be available. The other internship programs that I reviewed shared many similarities in the ways in which the internship experience was described. To promote internships in ways that are aligned with men's motivations for and outcomes of participating in internships, organizations should attempt to frame them on social media in the same way that they are framed on program-specific pages.

Unlike internships, the ability to complete research overseas is given very little presence in marketing, both general and program specific. None of the eight programs considered offered research experiences. In fact, of the 350 programs available to students at the host institution, less than 10 offer the ability to conduct structured research overseas. Within social media, research experience was only present in a single post.

89

Surprisingly, the ability to complete an internship or research overseas was not mentioned in anywhere the multiple pages that spoke to the general benefits of studying abroad. Overall, much like the ability to complete academic requirements overseas, less importance is placed on the availability of internships on study abroad programs in general study abroad marketing when compare to other motivations such as traveling, learning a new language, or personal growth. Within program specific pages, internships and research are described in much the same way as which students who took part in the experiences did, speaking to the concrete benefits of completing one. Again, I find that more emphasis needs to be placed on the availability of these professional and academic experiences in general study abroad marketing, rather than limiting it program-specific efforts.

### 5.3 SOFT SKILLS

In exploring the skills desired by employers, Spring (2015) notes that "soft skills" such as the ability to work with others, the ability to make decisions and solve problems, and critical thinking were those that employers found most lacking in students. Other research has shown that skills such as adaptability and independence are important for employers as well (Trooboff et al., 2008). The students interviewed as a part of this study often cited the development of these types of skills as one of their motivations for participating in a program as well as one of the important outcomes of having done so.

David, who spent a semester in Cuba, talked extensively about the skills that the gained from studying abroad, beginning with gaining independence. He said,

I think personally, it was a big personal goal to be able to go off on my own. I don't live at home, but I don't live very far away from home, and that was like a personal test too, to see how do I conduct myself away from that. It was difficult at first, but it wasn't something that was extraneous or very difficult for me.

As David later discussed in his interview, what started as a personal challenge ended up being, in his mind, a skill that he gained from going overseas – the ability to function outside of his traditional support networks.

Gary, who participated in an exchange program in Barcelona, was also motivated to study abroad in part by developing this type of independence. Talking about a discussion that he had with a professor in the business school, Gary said,

And [the professor] said, and this was kind of what I believed all a long, that at least to some extent it's evidence that you can handle yourself and not be a disaster when sent to another country, you know, with the idea being that evidence might help for employers, say if I need to send this person abroad for a period of time for whatever reason. Can they get by day-to-day and not, you know, have to come home, you know, after a month, because they are, they're homesick because they are acting out, because they are breaking laws or societal norms. So, yeah, that kind of confirmed my suspicion. One of the reasons why I wanted to go.

Gary noted that he accomplished this goal of developing these skills and that his "ability to handle himself in another country on his own" has been a talking point in interviews for internships and permanent placements since he has returned to the United States.

Josh, who was applying for full-time positions at the time of his interview, has highlighted his study abroad experiences in his cover letters, noting that

For rotational programs where you need to move around the US for two years and I think the fact that I have lived abroad for more than three months, twice now was something that showed that I am able to relocate without an issue, get acclimated to an environment very quickly and so I talked about that in those cover letters.

It is clear to see that for many of the students, the ability to gain independence and function within a culture that is not their own is not only an important part of their personal development but also in their professional development as well. As Bachelors-level students who were

currently or would soon be seeking entry-level positions, it was important to the men that they were able to develop and cultivate human capital that employers value.

David further elaborated on the skills that he developed, noting that studying abroad in a country like Cuba requires a certain amount of flexibility and ability to think on one's feet. He said,

> […]you can't plan for anything to go the way you want it to in Cuba. Something goes wrong every time. Every time I had a plan or thought out something, especially travel plans, it was like, "No, this isn't gonna work out." And you're like, "Okay, so I'm in the middle of the island, and I have class tomorrow, how do I get home? Time to go find a taxi that'll drive me across the country."

David believed that these types of experiences, of which he had many in Cuba, have allowed him to develop the skills that employers will value, especially given his plans to work in international education or the Foreign Service after graduation. Adaptability and problem solving skills are two themes that were present throughout the rest of David's interview.

Other students, like Nicholas, also discussed the ability to adapt to new cultures and social expectations as a skill that was developed during the program, while others spoke to the importance of time management as while overseas. All in all, almost three-quarters of the men interviewed discussed the development of soft skills as an important part of their study abroad program.

## 5.3.1 Marketing Analysis

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the ability to develop soft skills by means of studying abroad was present on every list of reasons that students should go overseas. While each site used slightly different wording, it was very much along the lines of the following,

> Study abroad will help you develop skills and give you experiences a classroom setting will never provide. Being immersed in an entirely new cultural setting is scary at first, but it's also exciting. It's an opportunity to discover new strengths and abilities, conquer new challenges, and solve new problems. You will encounter situations that are wholly unfamiliar to you and will learn to adapt and respond in effective ways.

The informants who discussed soft skill development very much described their experiences in these ways.  While it does present a "chicken and the egg" question (Do the men describe their experiences in these ways because they have been told to do so or does the field discuss it in these ways because we know that this is what students say they get from it?), I find it to be positive that, at least in this sense, the most basic study abroad marketing is reflective (or perhaps predictive) of men's experiences.

Continuing the trend that has already been seen in social media, very little emphasis is placed on soft skills as a benefit of study abroad, with a total of three posts from the sample addressing the concept in one way or another but never in a holistic way.  For example, the following two posts, from the same provider, touch on different soft skills but address them in a way that is distinct from how the men in the study characterized them:

> In life we forget that we're super resilient as humans, and study abroad is an opportunity to really realize that every day. In really small ways—trying a new restaurant or talking to a stranger—and in big ways too. So, I know you're going to love the independence that you gain through studying abroad.

> Study abroad presents many challenges, and the interesting thing is, you're going to find you fall in love with a lot of those challenges.

Both address soft skills that students discussed, and discussed with frequency, including gaining independence and overcoming challenges. What these pages lack, however, is the more complex and complimentary connections that men were able to make between the development of these soft skills and the academic and professional experiences of their programs.

Finally, it should be noted that soft skills were not discussed in any way in program-specific marketing.   Instead, the program-specific marketing tended to focus on skill development that was specifically related to the goals and academics of the program or the field of study within the program.  Although I cannot speak for other professionals in the field, as a

93

creator of program-specific marketing materials, I do not include information on general soft skill development because I operate under the assumption (perhaps incorrectly) that students who are investigating specific programs already understand the broad benefits of study abroad. I view program-specific marketing materials as a way to communicate the benefits of a specific program, not study abroad in general.

The development of soft skills has for a long time been one of the selling points of study abroad, so it comes as no surprise that a good deal of emphasis is given in the general advice websites for study abroad. Greater visibility of soft skill development should be a part of social media outreach and program-specific marketing should give examples of how the international context of a location can contribute to these developments. As I have shown and will continue to demonstrate throughout this study, men are pragmatic in their decision-making and want to have a clear understanding of how any given program or experience will result in capital development. Providing more specific and contextualized information on program-specific pages with regards to soft skill development may better speak to this pragmatism.

## 5.4    DIFFERENTIATION

Whether it was through a hands-on experience overseas, like an internship or research experience, or through the development of soft skills, more than half of the men interviewed admitted that differentiating themselves from their peers was an important factor in deciding to participate in a study abroad program, although they did not specify whether they meant male peers, female peers, or both. This was shared across students from all levels in education and program types and was not limited to students within business and engineering. Students

participating in a study abroad program gain a certain amount of capital simply by virtue of their participation, regardless as to whether or not students develop the skills and outcomes that have been shown to come from study abroad. This fact did not go unnoticed by many of the informants.

For example, Bryan, an engineering student who participated in a two-week, faculty-led program after his freshman year, admitted, "in different interviews or job fairs I'm able to talk about that because it's unique. Because, as a freshman, you don't have much experience when you're talking to employers and things like that." Bryan did further expand on what he gained from his program and how he frames it professionally, but the benefit of just studying abroad was not lost on him.

Francisco, a business student who studied abroad in London, received advice from his professional contacts with regards to studying abroad. He said, "They basically said, like, 'Do this for your resume…' Do it for your resume and they also said for the experience, but I think mostly resume. It helps you stand out. ..That's what really did it for me…Well, I shouldn't say it's the only thing but it was, definitely, heavily weighted." Francisco's perspective is interesting because his choice to study abroad to differentiate himself came not just from his own ideals but also from advice given to him by corporate leaders and business mentors.

While Bryan and Francisco simply saw the experience of going overseas as a differentiator, other students elaborated upon *why* their participation sets them apart from their peers. When I asked David why he chose to study abroad in Cuba, one of his primary reasons was that it was would make him "stand out as an individual." He continued,

> Cuba just sounded really cool. I was like, "That's different. That's not something that I've ever heard anybody do before." And I think that on top of, adding on to, that it's an interesting place. It's something that would separate me in the job market of... 'Cause I wanna go into some kind of international relations and even not knowing that relations

were going to improve or some kind of talks were gonna happen, for my own opinions, I think the situation with the embargo is something that needs to be reevaluated. So that was something that would give me better knowledge about it, is living there.

Although David initially thought that going to Cuba alone would set him apart, he came away from his experience with a deeper understanding of why that is the case and with concrete examples to provide to future employers or graduate schools.

Perhaps of all of the men, Daniel had the clearest understanding of how to articulate his experience overseas in a way that made him stand out. He said that differentiating himself was an important factor in choosing where to study abroad and what experiences to have while he was there, saying,

> I also wanted to go somewhere that was more unique, and that was Tanzania. I write about Tanzania for literally every single med school application, which means I've written over 15 essays about it so far. I think is another really big professional thing. Not just doing medical volunteering here, but also doing it abroad, and getting a new diversified understanding of how it really works in different countries.

For some students, like Francisco, differentiation was a motivation to participate in a program at all. For others, like David, the ability to differentiate himself from his peers was a factor in choosing both his program and his country. As with the other factors of human capital development, although each student had a distinct rationale for choosing his program, it is evident that for those who prioritized differentiating themselves from their peers the decision to do so greatly factored into the decisions that they made around their program.

### 5.4.1 Marketing Analysis

Overall, the men who participated in the study were keenly aware of the advantage that they gained for post-graduation plans by participating in study abroad. Because men were pragmatic in choosing to study abroad and saw it as an opportunity to develop capital, I was not surprised

that they viewed the ability to differentiate themselves from their peers as a motivation for participating. Like soft skill development, I found that differentiation as a benefit of study abroad is more present in the very broad "why" marketing materials, is given some, although not much, presence on social media, and was not present at all in program-specific materials.

All six of the general advice pages spoke in one way or another to the comparative advantage that one can gain from studying abroad. Some sites focused specifically on employment, emphasizing that "Globalization is changing the way the world works, and employers are increasingly looking for workers who have cross-cultural competence and cutting-edge technical skills" while others expanded to include graduate school:

> Like future employers, graduate school admissions boards look very highly on study abroad experiences. Students that study abroad display diversity and show that they aren't afraid to seek out new challenges or put themselves in difficult situations.
> Most importantly, students who have studied abroad show just how committed they are to their education. Graduate schools regularly look for candidates who will bring a unique aspect to their university. Students who have studied abroad have shown that they have the curiosity and educational acumen to be a leader in graduate school.

Regardless of whether the focus lie on employment or graduate school, like the informants, the trend in the marketing is to not only make the claim that study abroad provides this comparative advantage but also to create a connection with soft skill development.

Differentiation is somewhat present in social media – six posts make mention of it in one way or another whether through linking to internships or articles (like those considered in this study) that count the benefits of studying abroad. As noted above, discussion of how study abroad "sets one apart from the crowd" is not present in program specific materials.

## 5.5    CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The development of human capital played a large, if not the most important, role for the majority of students who participated in the study.   My marketing analysis shows, however, that content creators do not place the same amount of emphasis on these aspects of study abroad as the men did.  While each of the four aspects of human capital were included in one way or another in the marketing, the presence and weight given to each almost seemed to be the inverse of that of the men in the study.  If study abroad professionals are to increase male participation, we need to give more emphasis to the concrete outcomes, especially human capital drive outcomes that men seek.

This inverse is most notable in regards to the ability to completed academic requirements overseas.  While all but two students cited the ability to continue to make progress towards an on time graduation (through fulfilling requirements while abroad) as one of their primary motivators both choosing to study abroad and participating in particular programs, a total of only seven of 225 social media posts referenced the academics of study abroad in one way or another. Websites and articles that provided general study abroad advice often included academics but not in the same way that the men in the study did, often citing the ability to take courses *not* available at the student's home institution rather than the ability to take care of *required* courses overseas.  Even program-specific marketing, beyond listing courses available, was sparse with references to the ability to fulfill degree requirements overseas.  Like academics, general advice pages and social media were sparse with information related to internship experiences and those that included it did frame the experience in the same way as men.  For programs that offered internships, program-specific materials framed the experience in ways that were more in line with men's view of their experiences interning overseas.

In this sense, it comes as no surprise to me that men often cite the inability to finds courses that work towards their major or the inability to graduate on time if one studies abroad as barriers to participation in the program. Despite studying abroad being an academic pursuit, the field has emphasized the fun and cultural aspects of study abroad in marketing perhaps at the cost of focusing on the tangible academic benefits of participation. Further recommendations for improvement are offered in the concluding chapter.

# 6.0     FINDINGS AND ANAYLSIS: SOCIAL CAPITAL

In considering the development of social capital, interviews with students showed that they made a distinction between the creation of a network of personal friends and a professional network. The OECD (2001) defines social capital as "networks together with shared norms, values, and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups" (p. 41). Surprisingly, less than half of the students mentioned friendships or professional networking as a motivation or outcome of participating in their study program. Those that did placed a greater emphasis on personal relationships rather than professional relationships. Marketing materials are more reflective of the data gathered from students – the creation of social capital is mentioned but given little importance in comparison to other benefits and outcomes of study abroad.

## 6.1     FRIENDSHIP AND THE PERSONAL NETWORK

When discussing the idea of gaining new friendships from their study abroad experiences, the 8 men who said that making new friends was a part of their experience were split evenly between new friendships being a motivation for participating in the program and an expanded social network being a personal gain from going abroad.

For one student, Zach, meeting new people was a primary motivator for both his trip overseas and his selection of a program. While some students expressed concern about not knowing anyone participating on their program, Zach saw this as an advantage, saying,

> [I]f I went with somebody I knew we'd always be hanging out…and yeah, we'd meet new people but you wouldn't be able to really, I don't know, be yourself if you had somebody else with you…you'd be going off with them a lot but not with other people who were there. who were probably in the same boat as you were. I met, my best friend now, I met her in Sydney and we both go to Pitt. And we came back and we're just best friends now.

In considering the rest of Zach's interview, this ideal towards friendship is not surprising. Zach's attitude towards his study abroad program very much reflected his view of the experience as something that would allow him to grow as person – he was one of the few students who did not put academics at the forefront as a motivation of his experience.

Although Josh was deeply focused on academics, like Zach, he was excited by the prospect of not knowing his peers on his program. He said,

> [A]s a sophomore with a program that had very few Pitt students or had students from other universities, it was real exciting to just jump out of your comfort zone and just go with a group of people that you'd never met before. And then [the program in] Cyprus was kind of a mix of both 'cause I knew some people on the trip, there was a lot of Pitt students I didn't know, but then ended up getting to know towards the end of it.

For both Zach and Josh, the prospect of not knowing other students on the program was liberating – allowing them to meet new people and "get outside of their comfort zone" was a major factor in their program choices.

Finally, Jason's experience of seeing the relationships that some of his friends had built overseas was a motivation for him to study abroad as a sophomore. He said,

> C]ause that's kind of what my friends in the past have been like... I'm still best friends with these guys, like we do a yearly trip, a yearly get-together, still to this day, four years after the fact that we went abroad. So I was definitely excited for that and I was excited for... So I guess this is another motivation for me.

In this sense, Jason's decision was motivated both by his peers and by the prospect of adding new people to his social network.

On the other hand, perhaps because he was an out-of-state student and already had the experience of moving to a new university, Tyler admitted that the social aspect of the program was one of the fears that he had before going overseas. Although it did not deter him from participating in his program in Florence, he admitted, "…I was nervous that I might have people I didn't get along with or that I didn't necessarily like to be around, and it ended up being the opposite. I ended up making some of my best friends while I was abroad."

For all but one of the eight, the new additions to their social networks were either from their home institution or from other U.S. universities who happened to be on the same program. Clarence, however, made it a point to socialize and form bonds with individuals from both London and across the globe. He said,

> That was what London represented to me. I think it was all about... The motivation for me was all about exploring new people, new places, learning things about other cultures that are in contrast to the US and maybe in contrast to me... I think as much as I gain professionally and academically, I think my favorite part was playing soccer and playing football and just becoming friends with people who weren't from America. I still have those friendships today. The one guy came and visited me this past summer.

It is to be expected that Clarence was able to form friendships with "locals" – the idea of expanding his network, both personally and professionally, with international peers was something that was evident throughout his interview.

Overall, although some of the students mentioned meeting new people and creating new friendships as a motivation for or an outcome of their experience, when placed into the larger context of their individual interviews, the expansion of their social network was not a particularly important part of the experience, at least compared to the human and cultural capital they gained while overseas.

### 6.1.1   Marketing Analysis

Within the marketing materials considered for this study, making new friends, meeting new people, or the importance of expanding one's social network is only mentioned a total of six times across social media, program-specific pages, and general advice pages.  Three of the general advice pages were listed making new friends as one of the reasons to participate in a study abroad program.  For example, one of the sites notes that,

> One of the biggest benefits of studying abroad is the opportunity to meet new lifelong friends from different backgrounds. While studying abroad, you will attend school and live with students from your host country. This gives you the opportunity to really get to know and create lasting relationships with your fellow students.

While this may have been the case for Clarence (the only student who mentioned meeting "locals" or non-Americans on his program), the overwhelming majority of the students interviewed for this study participated on programs in which they were *not* enrolled in courses with international students.  More realistically, another site writes,

> Study abroad affords you the opportunity to make friends around the world. While abroad, you will meet not only natives to the culture in which you are studying, but also other international students who are as far from home as yourself.

Beyond these small nods to making friends overseas, very little emphasis is otherwise placed on the ability to meet new people and create meaningful connections while overseas.

In total, making new friends is only mentioned twice on social media.  First, although it was written by a popular website, one of the study abroad offices posted a link to an article titled "18 Things All Study Abroad BFFs Know to Be True." Another article, posted by a university-recognized provider, points to a student blog article entitled "Forging Friendships in a Foreign Land."  Although making new friends was not the highest priority for the students interviewed, the fact that it is mentioned only twice in more than 225 social media posts shows that it is an

aspect of study abroad that could be better emphasized by the field.  If nothing more, doing so would reassure students, like Tyler, who might be deterred by the fear of having to make new friends and meet new people while overseas.  Beyond social media and general advice pages, none of the program-specific pages that I reviewed included any mention of the ability to interact with locals, make meaningful connections with other students on the program, or otherwise build one's social network.

## 6.2    THE PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Perhaps more surprising than the number of students who put an emphasis on making new friends was just how few of the men interviewed discussed the expansion of their professional network overseas.  Despite the fact that 9 of the 18 students participated in some form of internship or research experience as a part of their program, only three of the 9 expressed professional networking as either a goal or outcome of their program.

Only one student of the three participating on a formally sanctioned internship or research opportunity as a part of his program, Max saw his time in Germany as an opportunity to make connections that might benefit him in his future, saying,

> Well, they had talked about all these workshops they did about sort of explaining the differences between working in European culture, not just German specifically, compared to the US, in case I would want to pursue a Master's degree in Germany. So I thought that was also very nice as well, because now that I have this experience, I've made contacts in Germany, and I can rely on that later on in my career should I choose to pursue a graduate degree there.

Interestingly, Max did not feel that he was making these connections as a part of his research opportunity.  He noted that "[Y]ou don't really work with the professors much at all…it's much

more structured hierarchy…I got a lot more experience with people who were just a few years ahead of me." So, despite being overseas for a research program, Max found that attending optional lectures that were outside of the research experience better expanded his professional network.

David took advantage of being in a location that not many students have had the opportunity to study an extended period of time: Havana, Cuba. As previously noted, David went to Havana with the goal of improving his Spanish language and gaining a better political understanding of the country. When asked about the other benefits he gleaned from studying abroad, he said,

> Professionally, I got to meet with a bunch of people that are in a higher academic standing. Not just from the University of Havana, but other people that came visiting. I talked to other professors, other program providers that'd come in and want to make connections with the IFSA, the provider that I went through. So I got to talk with them. I got to develop a lot of professional connections with international education… I got to talk to some people from the intro section about what it's like and how they got to the jobs that they're in. That's what informed me about the option of going into the Foreign Service. That's what I want to do.

Thus, it is clear that for David, the opportunity to network while overseas went beyond adding to his professional network and actually had an influence on his future career choices. Beyond being interested in the Foreign Service, David mentioned in his interview that he might also be interested in working in international higher education after graduation and that the connections that he made with both the University of Havana and his program provider may prove to be useful in the long run.

While I can only speculate, it seems that the desire to continue working overseas post-graduation was a motivating factor for Max and David in making an effort to network as a part of their study abroad programs. Although neither student mentioned networking as a *motivation* for participating in a study abroad program, it was clearly an important outcome for both. Despite

105

the fact that many of the other informants took part in professional internships that were related

to their field, they did not mention networking as a motivation or outcome of their experiences.

Neither, however, did they mention a desire to continue working overseas.  As I addressed in

both the human and cultural capital sections, those who did intern overseas saw more benefits

from skills that would help them get a job in the United States after graduation, not necessarily

abroad.  Marketing should mention both as possible outcomes of study abroad experiences.


**6.2.1   Marketing Analysis**


Interviews with students showed that the men participating on programs, for the most part, put

the least emphasis on the creation of a professional network while overseas. Of all of the social

media posts considered as well as the 8 program pages, professional networking was only

mentioned two times, both of which were specific to programs.

The first, for the university's partner in Sydney, mentions professional networking by

writing,

> As one of the largest internship providers in Sydney, [provider name] built an extensive
> network of internship sites in businesses, nonprofit, and nongovernmental organizations.
> Intern with locals and enhance your resume! Build professional skills and gain
> perspective as you engage a network of international contacts in your field.

The second mention comes from a university-recognized program in Shanghai, which writes on

their program brochure page, "On [Provider Name]'s Business, Language, and Culture program,

you'll learn the causes behind, and challenges of, China's rapid economic development and

emergence on the world stage through coursework, networking with corporate leaders, an

internship, and more."   In both of these instances, professional networking is presented in

relationship to an internship, which is an understandable relation to make.  It is not, however, the only way that these men built their professional network.

It should be noted that two additional programs that were considered in the analysis offered internships but made no mention of professional networking as a benefit of the program or internship.  Furthermore, the two students who spoke highly of their ability to network overseas, Max and David, participated in programs that did *not* offer internships as a part of the program yet still provided the students with opportunities to build their professional connections overseas through connections created with local academic and professional organizations.

## 6.3    CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The creation of social capital while overseas, whether professional or personal, did not serve as a motivating factor for any of the students who participated in the study.  However, for those students who did view the expansion of these networks overseas as an outcome, although it was not a motivation for participating in a study abroad program, it was important nonetheless.

Given the range of marketing considered, I do not believe that, with regards to the creation of social capital, the field is accurately representing the outcomes valued by men who have successfully completed study abroad programs.  Furthermore, specifically with regard to the development of professional social capital, given the number of students participating on internships and research experience overseas, I believe that the lack of emphasis placed on the creation of such a network may contribute to the little emphasis placed on it by the students.  Bringing such opportunities to the forefront and making them featured and well-known in pre-

departure marketing could plant the seed that would lead students to make the most of the

opportunity at hand.  Further recommendations are given in the concluding chapter.

## 7.0    MEN'S RELATION TO STUDY ABROAD MARKETING

Through this research study I seek to draw my own conclusions regarding how study abroad marketing materials relate to men's experiences overseas. In the process, I have come to regard my informants' understanding of marketing materials for both study abroad and their specific programs as important novice consumers.  Overall, I found that when asked to think back on their interactions with the materials for their programs, the majority of the men who were able to discuss the marketing they remember either believed that they had little importance in their decision or that they were not reflective of their own experiences.  In total, 13 men responded to the question, four of whom said that it was not a factor and 7 who believed that the marketing was not relevant to their experiences.  This is important because it further reflects the conclusions that I have drawn through the chapters on human, cultural, and social capital – that study abroad marketing materials do not portray that actual experiences of male students.

## 7.1    MARKETING OF LITTLE INFLUENCE PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

In considering the men for whom marketing was not a large factor in their decisions around study abroad, I found that they were four men who had previously discussed other more significant influences in their decisions.  For example, Clarence said that "I certainly looked through [the brochures]…I don't remember if they played a factor or a significant factor.  I

should say I can't remember if they played a significant factor, I'm sure they would've played a factor into it." In his interview, Clarence could recall in more detail the other influences he had in study abroad: his sister was a study abroad alumna, he had the support of both of his parents, and he worked extensively with his study abroad advisor to find a program that would work for him.

Gary, who spent a semester in Barcelona, said of the materials for his program, "Maybe…it wasn't memorable enough. All I remember from the thing for this program, is like, there was one page with a, kind of, aerial view of the university." Gary sought advice from his professors, parents, and advisors in finding a program and thus the marketing materials played less of a crucial role.

## 7.2    NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF MARKETING POST-PROGRAM

While for these students marketing may have been a non-issue, other men in the study believed that, in retrospect, study abroad marketing, whether general or program-specific, was not reflective of the experiences that they had overseas. When I asked James what he thought of the university's marketing efforts towards study abroad, he said,

> I would say culture is a big thing. I mean, I personally have been trying to find an abroad thing, a working internship, or something abroad, and we don't really have anything like that. And especially, [Nantes] was -- I mean, we had class, but everything, all of the excursions and stuff we did, was more for fun, cultural things, which is good, but…

James did not finish this thought but implied that the "fun, cultural things" were not necessarily sufficient for having a holistic study abroad experience. He is an important example because he participated in what would be considered a "typical" study abroad program. That is to say that

he went to Europe for language and cultural immersion, lived with a host family, and ultimately had the goal of improving his French skills. Yet James' response in the interview points to the fact that he was looking for more out of the program (which he found) but did not believe that was accurately reflected when looking at a promotional materials and comparing them to his own experience. Furthermore, it is important to note that at the time that James participated in his study abroad program, the university did in fact offer internships in various countries throughout the world as well as the opportunity to conduct research and co-op. The fact that James was not aware of those opportunities shows that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on them early in the process, when promoting the types of experiences that are available, as well as when advising students on choosing programs.

Nicholas, who also participated in a language and culture program, found that although the presence of study abroad was felt on the university's campus, the messaging that was being delivered was not necessarily aligned with his goals. He said,

> So I think there's definitely a population of people that are going abroad for truly, maybe philanthropic or social justice oriented reasons. There are definitely people going abroad for personal academic reasons. And then I think there are people going abroad for fun. And I don't think there's anything wrong with either of those options. Certainly, they can be executed poorly, all three of them. But I didn't, I guess this is maybe, what am I trying to say here? I think we kind of treat everyone, my experience going through the [university] thing was that we almost treat everyone as if they're going for the third reason…. So there was very little talked about, so if someone wanted to go for social justice or philanthropic reasons, there was very little to say, "This is how you'd go about doing that." Or, "This is how you might falter in trying to accomplish your goals this way." For someone who was really trying to seek out a way to stand out on their resume, or they were thinking about foreign service after school or something, there was very little to talk about how you might structure your study abroad to accomplish those goals. So I felt like we were kind of catering to a low average.

Nicholas' comments above were specific to the marketing and pre-departure meetings at the university. However, as I have shown with the comparative analysis, the same can be said of internet marketing materials for study abroad, especially those on social media. The perception

that study abroad is a fun activity is further emphasized through BuzzFeed style (for example, Figure X) posts that place a larger emphasis on the non-academic activities that can be done overseas rather than the academic and professional development that can take place overseas.

As a final example, Rick, a recent graduate with degrees in nuclear and mechanical engineering, found that reflecting on the marketing materials during the interview caused him to challenge his own assumptions around study abroad. Rick's second study abroad program, the one that he specifically talked about in terms of marketing, was a two-week program in France that explored the nuclear industry through lectures and site visits. When I asked Rick if he saw himself in the marketing materials, he responded,

> I don't really see myself in the marketing materials, like, it all seemed really cool, but that just didn't seem like a program that I would go on just because, you know, I thought Paris was cool looking at it, like, in the brochure, but, like, oh, you know, like, my preconceived notion was like, oh, fancy smancy liberal arts people go there.

Deciding to participate on a study abroad program forced Rick to consider and understand the preconceived notions and stereotypes that he had. However, it is also important to note that it was not the *marketing materials* that changed that perception – it was participating on the program and seeing what could be accomplished while overseas. It is problematic that the latter was not reflected in the marketing materials for the study abroad program.

## 7.3    CONCLUDING THOUGHTS.

Of nineteen men, only one of the informants had an overall positive response to the marketing materials for his program, either during the study abroad process or when reflecting on them in the interview. Tyler, who studied abroad in Florence and was interested in Italian history and

112

culture, believed that the website for his program was part of what attracted him to it. When I asked him if he saw the type of experience he wanted to have reflected in the marketing materials before departure, he said,

> I did. There are some pictures of students standing in front of historic landmarks and eating Italian cuisine and stuff like that. And even when you go to the website and you click on classes, I think the background that the classes drop down to is a really nice sculpture. So I saw myself definitely exploring the art and stuff like that.

Beyond this, however, no other student saw the marketing materials as being important to their decisions. That is not to say that the men did not use the marketing materials – for the majority they were important in looking up classes, understanding deadlines, and logistics. However, what is important to keep in mind about most of the men who were interviewed is that there was some other factor that was important in their study abroad decision – they had a professor who helped them understand the importance of the experience, a sibling or peer whose time overseas inspired them, or an intrinsic desire to go overseas. Many men acknowledged that without seeing how study abroad played an important role in these people's lives or the realization that they could complete necessary coursework overseas they may not have gone abroad. Although marketing materials may not have been the most important thing for these students, it may play a factor in the decision making process for men who do not have these types of influences – a point for further research.

# 8.0    MEN'S VIEW OF THE GENDER DIVIDE

As a man who studied abroad, it was not until I became a professional in the field that I was aware that there is a gender discrepancy in study abroad. It was not until I thought back to my own cohort that I realized that less than a third of the students were men. With this in mind, I wanted to give the men in the study the opportunity to reflect upon the gender divide in study abroad and to provide their thoughts. Surprisingly, only when prompted in the interview did the men mention gender as a part of their experience. I encouraged men to explore their own views of gender with relation to study abroad by asking them why they believe there is a disparity in participation between men and women. By asking a broad and open-ended question I believe that I was able to get responses from the men that were more reflective of their own views of gender.

As I will explore below, men approached the question from two separate perspectives, which I interpret through the lenses of normative masculinity and dialogic masculinity. That is to say that men viewed the gender difference as either being a factor of men wanting to enter college and do what they need to do to graduate and begin earning money or; they viewed a study abroad experience as something that separate men from women as well as themselves from other men.

## 8.1    NORMATIVE VIEWS

Normative masculinity allows us to understand how men view their masculinity in relation to and as being defined by a set of certain social norms. In the case of college students and study abroad, Gore (2005) acknowledges that the norm that is often set forth is that a man's role is to enter college for a practical degree that will allow him to graduate as quickly as possible and begin earning money. A small set of the men in the study viewed this as the reason that their male peers do not participate in study abroad programs.

When I asked David, who studied abroad in Cuba, why more men do not study abroad, he had a few different ideas. First, he believed that women tend to major in fields, like foreign language that are more directly related to traditional study abroad experiences. Through our conversation, David eventually arrived at the following conclusion:

> From my perspective, seeing other men, I don't see them much as risk takers. And I think it's just like I can get into college, I can get done in four years, and that's it. I think a lot of people are under the conception that Study Abroad might put them behind on graduation, that maybe it's not a necessity. It's expensive. And I don't think that's as much of a thought for just from my perception really. It seems like those concerns may not be the same for women.

David touched upon many of the concerns that other informants in the study discussed in relation to their own experience, especially the ability to graduate on time. To get in and get out of college means that one can move on to what is next (most likely a job) sooner. Although David did not mention it explicitly, this does play into the normative view of a college man's role: get in, get out, and get a job.

Nicholas, on the other hand, saw normative masculinity as being very important in preventing men from studying abroad. He said,

> I also think that there is a certain masculine view of education where you should... An education is good for making money. Making money is masculine. But maybe being

smart or being academic or being intellectual isn't always seen as an inherently masculine thing. And I think especially with the maybe more professionally driven or professional... Especially if you have a health professional student population we have, I think this kind of an attitude of get in, get your credentials, or whatever you need to move on to the next step and then make your bucks afterward. And so, I think maybe that certain opportunities like study abroad and other educational opportunities are seen as superfluous or unnecessary or a distraction to making the big dollar signs down the road.

Nicholas' interpretation of the gender disparity is directly linked to the desire to develop human capital that all of the men in this study discussed. James' support Nicholas' view, succinctly saying, "I think maybe men are kind of more concerned with working, and getting straight into the workforce, and not really viewing study abroad as vital to that."

When asked to reflect on gender, these three men made explicit references to societal norms that define college as a means by which a man can gain the credentials and experience that he needs to get a good job and make money. Although not explicitly, the 16 other men in this study implied the same view of the responsibilities as men through the ways in which they framed their experiences, frequently connecting their motivations and outcomes to capital development. While cultural aspects of the program, such as immersion and learning a foreign language, were important to many of the men, they were almost always discussed in a job-enhancing framework. From their perspective, exploring new places gave them planning skills; having so much to do and to see taught them time management; an overseas internship was a greater differentiator than a domestic internship. While each did it in a different way, the overwhelming majority of the men in the study implied that their study abroad experience was helping them towards achieving a masculine norm.

## 8.2    DIALOGIC EXPLORATIONS OF MASCULINITY

While only three of the men explicitly viewed the difference in study abroad participation as a result of social norms for men, 8 of the men were able to explore the difference in participation as a difference of gendered expectations.  In their view, women study abroad because they have qualities that men do not.   The men rationalized their peers' lack of participation in international educational opportunities by defining them as not having certain qualities.  As Reeser (2010) writes, "A man does not simply say something about women, but in responding to a woman, he defines his masculinity relationally….The dialogue implies not a single definition of the other as not me, but a continual process of not me's" (p. 42). Various manifestations of this dialogue are presented below.

> Jason, who was in a fraternity, explained,
>
> But I think it's kind of once you get to college and you have a group of male friends, there's a lot... For me, I probably wouldn't have studied abroad if it was a semester because I would have had the "FOMO," the fear of missing out... I think, especially when guys get in groups of friends, it's tough to break them out. Getting out of your comfort zone, it's tougher to get out of your comfort zone in a group of male friends. Whereas, I have female friends who have gone abroad and it seems like to me, they go abroad at the same time.

Thus, Jason understood the influence that his male friends have as being different from that of his female friends.  He is actually claiming that in both cases, peer influence is important in studying abroad.  However, he defines the male influence by comparing it to the female influence – that women go abroad at the same time while men stay at home in groups.

> James also rationalized the difference in study abroad participation by finding intrinsic differences between men and women.  He said,
>
> And potentially, girls are more -- I don't want to sound sexist -- focused on exploring the world and stuff. I think more girls that I talk to want to go travel and stuff and have fun. Whereas, most of my guy friends aren't as adventurous and would rather stay and do

things in America, I guess.  I think, especially in France, I think the guys kind of took things more seriously and had a very "We're doing this, this, and this." And the girls wanted to go explore. I don't know -- just go off on their own. And it's hard -- I don't know. It's hard. I'm thinking about the classes. I think the guys took it more seriously, you could say, especially with the courses. I think guys take it more for academics and work experience, and maybe the girls approach it more as a cultural, fun experience.

I understand James' preoccupation with sounding sexist.  After all, making the claim that men are more focused on academic position creates a position in which men are seen to be superior to women.  As I previously explored, James believed that gendered expectations of men to get out of college as quickly as possible was a prohibiting factor in studying abroad.  Here, James is rationalizing the difference between men and women by reinforcing this normative view.

Rick further expanded upon the seriousness of purpose between men and women who study abroad, saying,

So I think there is a lot of reasons, but the initial thing that comes to mind is any form of media you really see about study abroad, like, in pop culture is, like, college girls going on, like, spring break trip. We're going on some study abroad because it's, like, the cool thing to study abroad in France, like, for a girl. And that's something that -- I don't know if that's just me that gets that impression, but whenever I see, like, movies or, like, TV shows, it's always, in my opinion, mainly girls going.

As important as it is to show the academic and professional experiences of men abroad it is equally important to do the same for women to show that the experience can be both professional and include aspects of fun regardless of gender.  Otherwise, updating marketing materials creates the potential for reinforcing ideals of traditional masculinity.

## 8.3    CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

When considering study abroad participation, it is clear that normative masculinity and dialogic masculinity work hand-in-hand.  Normative masculinity provides the framework in which men

118

are able to rationalize participation in a study abroad experience by making connections to capital development. The overwhelming majority of men who participated on programs did so because they believed that it would provide benefits for their post graduation plans.

With this norm in mind, the men are also able to engage in dialogic masculinity to understand why men and women participate at different rates. For example, men may view women as more willing to take risks in college. That is, masculinity is defined by *not* taking risks because women do. Study abroad is seen as a risk, thus something that is for women and not for men. Dialogic masculinity also provides the basis for the misconception regarding academics and study abroad, as evidenced by James and other students. Men may see themselves as being more academically motivated than women. Women study abroad, thus study abroad is not something for men.

When the current state of marketing for study abroad, especially in terms of social media, is brought into the fold, it is clear that, in some ways, study abroad marketing is reinforcing these gender divides. By focusing on the fun aspects of study abroad, rather than academic and professional development, marketing creates a gendered problem in two ways. First, it continues to reinforce the stereotype that study abroad is not an academic pursuit, a stereotype that degrades the importance of the experience for alumni. Second, it creates a disconnect between men and the potential benefits of study abroad. Without men studying abroad, the first problem is reinforced, and so the cycle continues.

This chapter explores masculinity and femininity and the role that they play in men's perception of and participation in study abroad experiences. Ultimately, adapting marketing to appeal to men may change overall perceptions of the experience in a way the benefits all participants, regardless of gender. More insight is offered in the executive summary.

## 9.0    FINDINGS AND ANAYLSIS:  OTHER MUSINGS

My primary focus in this study has been to consider whether or not study abroad marketing reflects those motivations and outcomes that were important to men who successfully completed study abroad programs.  However, both the literature and my interviews with the informants have shown that factors outside of marketing may also affect a student's decision to participate in a study abroad program. Below, I offer an exploration of these factors  including advisor and faculty influence, peer influence, family influence, and the ability to continue work or research in conjunction with study abroad.

### 9.1    PEER INFLUENCE

In line with what previous research has shown, the influence of the informants' peers, to varying degrees, was an important factor in the decision-making processes around study abroad.  In fact, 16 of the 19 informants discussed the role that their peers and friends played in various aspects of the process, whether it be in deciding to study abroad, picking a location, or creating additional barriers that the men needed to overcome. Examples of each are explored below.

Jason's fraternity brothers played a large role in his decision to look into study abroad programs because he was able to see the positive experiences that they had while overseas.  He said,

So within my fraternity, kinda like the older guys, they were going... And a lot of the guys in my fraternity were engineers. So it was a great way and a lot of them were going to Brazil, going to Vietnam, doing these small trips that can fit into an engineering kinda curriculum and help them out. And I saw these guys doing it and I heard these stories and I'm like, "Man, that sounds awesome. I would love to do something like that." So I guess, not one person in particular but definitely people around me who had experienced, had great experiences abroad definitely persuaded me to at least look into it.

For Jason, his fraternity brothers and their experiences played two important roles. First, their stories of their experiences and making new friends - a point that Jason later discussed – showed him that study abroad was something that he could be interested in. Second, it was important for Jason to see that his peers were able to fit study abroad programs within their engineering curriculum. Getting courses to fulfill requirements while abroad was important factor in Jason choosing to go oversees and he attributes knowing that he could do so to his fraternity before anyone else.

Bryan was an engineering student who participated on a short, two-week program after his freshman year. At first, Bryan made the claim that his decision to study abroad was independent of any peer influence. However, in probing deeper into his decision to study abroad, Bryan admitted,

So as a freshman, there were five students that went to Chile that were also in that program with me. So knowing that they were coming too -- knowing that they were coming I was like, yeah this is gonna be really fun. Not only will I be doing cool things, but I'll be experiencing them with my friends too.

I then asked Bryan if he would have participated in the program had his friends not gone. He responded,

Honestly I would lean towards no. That I wouldn't have gone through with it. It would have been something I would have pursued partially but I don't know I would have gone through with it and this might have even been something I said to my parents too. Okay like all my friends are going too.

Bryan's and Jason's explanations of the role of peer influence were exemplars of what other men in the study discussed. Multiple students talked about the importance that knowing someone else who had gone overseas, whether a man or a woman, in pushing them to look into the opportunity themselves, even if not at the same level to the students included above.

Tyler, who spent the spring semester of his sophomore year in Florence, talked about the role that a friend had in choosing a location. When I asked him if friends had influenced him to stay abroad, he responded,

> As far as studying abroad, no. As far as where I was going to go, yes. At the time -- you might know of Tommy. He's another guy that went abroad. He was originally going to fly into Florence and he kind of convinced me into it because I was thinking I might want to do a non-western country. So it was to knock off the non-western part of the gen ed, but he kind of convinced me into it and brought up how I love Roman history and everything and convinced me, and I ended up applying to Florence and then ironically, he didn't go to Florence. He went to London.

Tyler ended up studying in Florence anyway, but he did discuss later in his interview that not having peers on the program and having to meet new people was a point of stress in studying abroad. The interaction between Tyler and Tommy proves to be especially interesting because I advised both of them throughout the study abroad selection process and both were equally concerned with having friends on the program. However, Tommy ended choosing London because the academic of the program worked better for him, further emphasizing the importance that academics play in the process.

Nicholas said that his desire to study abroad was primarily self-motivated as he wanted the opportunity to explore whether or not living and working overseas would be a reality for him. However, his peers did play a role in choosing both a program and provider. He said,

> I had a lot of friends who had studied abroad with Global Brigades, the... The group has traveled quite a bit. So I was in no shortage of people to kind of ask about their experiences. But two good friends of mine, one had done ISA in Chile, and one had done ISA in Argentina, and they both spoke very highly of the experience.

Nicholas knew that he wanted to study abroad in Madrid but the university offers multiple approved programs in the city. The ability to speak with friends who had worked with a specific provider helped Nicholas make his decision.

While many of the men had positive influences from their peers, that was not true for all, a fact that created internal conflict for some of the informants. Two in particular, David and Clarence, dealt with having to reconcile their decision to study abroad for a semester with the impact that it would have on their friendships at home. Clarence described the internal conflict that was created by pressure from his friends, saying,

> I think maybe there's an underlying pressure, as we call it in layman's terms, like FOMO. Fear of missing out on what your friends are doing back at school. I felt bad up and leaving one of my best friends and roommates the second semester. I don't think there was any explicit pressure to not study abroad from anyone that I talked to but maybe internally I felt a certain implicit pressure that I'd be leaving some stuff behind.

Clarence's experience in not uncommon. In fact, I distinctly remember dealing with the same feelings when making my own decision to study abroad for a semester. Although many students make new friends overseas, Clarence included, the idea of leaving one's social network behind can be a daunting undertaking.

David, who spent a semester in Cuba, dealt with similar issues with his peer group. Beyond them questioning his decision to study abroad in Cuba in terms of safety and location, the difficulties in communication were a preoccupation for his friends as well. David and I discussed the issue at length, a condensed version of which is offered below.

> [F]riends at home, they knew that I wouldn't be in contact with them so they're like, "Oh, when do we all get to talk to each other?" And I'm like, "In a couple of months. I can message you online every now and then. It's a little more difficult, but not impossible." So I'm working around things to better myself for it. Especially just in college right now, I think that's a moment for you to decide that that's, "Hey, this is what I wanna do to better myself in my academic career and I wanna take all the opportunities I can…" It

was a mix of two and it was hard to feel what was the right feeling, I guess. Like quote unquote "right". 'Cause I was really excited for myself, but then it was a little hard seeing your friends like, "Okay," move on like, "Well, you're not gonna be here next semester," and accept that, but also be not resentful, but kind of feels like it. It wasn't something that was gonna weigh my decision either way.

The conversation with David was interesting because I believe that it shows that study abroad is not a decision that students necessarily enter into lightly. David had very specific goals and reasons for wanting to study abroad and he allowed those goals to weigh more heavily than outside influences on his decision.

In the interviews, I often had to press the men to explore the role that peer influence had on them. Like advisor influence, they wanted to position themselves as being independent of external influences in their decision-making process. Based on my conversations with them, I believe that many of them were not aware of how much their peers factored into their decisions until they were to do reflect upon it. It is clear from these interviews, along with previous research, that peer influence plays a large role in men's decisions to study abroad, the programs they pursue and more. However, the role of peer influence very much creates and a "chicken and the egg" question. Men influence other men to study abroad but we need more men to study abroad to influence other men. This is one reason why it is important to ensure that marketing materials for study abroad speak to men. As professionals in the field, we can and should leverage alumni to be ambassadors for our programs and influence their peers but we need to ensure that we are creating materials that speak to students who do not necessarily have peers who have studied abroad.

## 9.2    FAMILY INFLUENCE

Although the influence of family members, whether it was parents, siblings, or extended family, was something that 14 of the informants discussed, regardless of whether their families were supportive or not, the students seemed to place less emphasis and concern on their parents' influence than that of their friends.  This was evident to me through the interviews and the amount of time that the men spent discussing peer influence versus familial influence.  While five of the students who discussed their parents said that they were not supportive or were concerned about their participation in a study abroad program, the remaining 11 students found support in their parents or other family members.

### 9.2.1   Parental Concerns

For those students whose parents were concerned about their participation in a study abroad program, the main factors boiled down to the cost of the program or the safety of traveling overseas.  Francisco's parents were concerned about financing his semester in London.  He said,

> They weren't discouraging but they played devil's advocate.  To the amount where they just questioned, "We're gonna have to take out extra loans. Are you sure you can pay this?" But, once the professional contacts who knew my mom had gotten wind of this, they essentially said it'll pay itself out in dividends in the future.

Francisco essentially used the same reasoning to convince his parents that a study abroad experience was worthwhile that his professional contacts had used to convince him – the future returns that he would see on the investment.  He said that his parents also become more supportive of the idea once they realized that the coursework that he completed overseas would fulfill degree requirements and would not delay his graduation.

James, who completed two study abroad programs, was encouraged by his sister's study abroad experience to pursue his own. After his two-week program in Chile, James decided that he wanted to spend a summer in France as well. Like Francisco, James' parents were concerned with financing a study abroad program. He said, "My parents were kind of -- I mean, I really pushed them. They didn't really care either way, as long as I could come up with the money." The ability to finance study abroad programs is a concern shared by both students and their parents and so it is not surprising that, for men like Francisco and James, it was one of the obstacles to overcome in gaining parental support.

Rafael, who spent a summer interning in Madrid, dealt with his father being uncomfortable, for various reasons, with his participation in a program. Rafael said,

> My dad discouraged me from going abroad because I was very, very interested in taking it... Just going zero to 60 in no seconds flat. I wanted to go to Spain. I wanted to go to Cuba. I wanted to go to Argentina. I wanted to see every country out there, and my dad said that he was very uncomfortable with me traveling to areas that he was not familiar with. He wasn't comfortable with different states of the economy or their relations that they had with America, and my dad is just very much a stay-at-home guy as opposed to a world traveler. It's one of those things. You either understand the travel bug or you don't, and he just doesn't get it. So, it just didn't click with him.

Although his father was not initially necessarily supportive of his decision to study abroad, Rafael's mother supported the decision and ultimately helped to gain his father's support. Although I cannot know for sure, based on the way in which Rafael described his father's reaction, it appears that his objection to study abroad was aligned with what some of the men in the study described as a deterrent for men studying abroad – a preference to stick with what one knows.

Gary, who participated in a year-long exchange program in Spain, found that his parents were his greatest champions in making study abroad a reality for him. He said,

As for those who encouraged me, it was parents, friends, definitely a few professors along the way. …[T]hey've gone to Italy a couple of times on what were basically vacations, but they do not speak any other languages. They just knew this was something I was working towards. Again with the Spanish. Really, Spanish is the foundation of all this. [T]hey would miss me, but they supported me and they, you know, several nights during the process I'd call them and talk about what my adviser had told me, or whatever, and we made it happen.

In closing his statement with "we made it happen," I believe that Gary showed the crucial role that his parents played in his study abroad experience. Like Francisco and James, Gary's parents were supportive of his study abroad experience because they recognized that the experience would be important for the development of the foreign language skills that he sought.

### 9.2.2 Family Support

Given that the informants in the study had successfully completed study abroad experiences, I expected that, for the most part, they would have had the support of their families in pursuing the experience, an assumption that was confirmed by the interviews. Nearly half of the study population (9 men in total) discussed ways in which their families encouraged them to study abroad. The remaining men's parents were either concerned with their participation (see above) or the men did not discuss their families' opinions about study abroad.

Clarence, who participated in both a short-term summer program in Chile and in a spring semester program in London, was encouraged to study abroad by his sister's experience in Ireland. Of the experience, he said,

I think a lot of the motivation for the Chile trip just stemmed from when I was in high school, my sister, she studied in Ireland for six weeks, and I was able to visit her at the end of that trip for like 10 days. That was the first time out of the country for me, so it was just... Very exciting, and eye opening kind of experience. I knew, I gotta try something like that again.

In addition to the motivation he received from his sister studying abroad, the fact that Clarence's mother worked at the university and received tuition benefit made study abroad financially feasible. He said that because it was "something familiar, my parents value a lot especially when my sister did it. I think they value those kind of experiences 'cause to them it's kind of like this is the period in your life where you often times get to do that and don't always have the chance to do that later on." Clarence was not alone in having an older family member help convince his parents in studying abroad. James, Andrew, and Nicholas also had siblings and cousins whose experience with study abroad made it easier for them to gain their parents' support.

The common thread that connected the experiences of these men is that they had an understanding of what they sought to gain from their study abroad experiences and how it would affect their academic and professional development. Including this information in study abroad marketing is important so that the students can understand the importance of studying abroad and can communicate this to their parents. Based on my interviews with the men, their parents also had concerns that went beyond the capital creation available through study abroad programs. Understanding parents' concerns and creating marketing to combat them is outside of the scope of my study but is worth of further research.

## 9.3 ADVISOR AND FACULTY INFLUENCE

When asked who influenced their decision to study abroad, more than half of the men interviewed said that it was a decision that they made on their own. This ideal of being independent in decision making plays into normative ideals of masculinity that the men expressed throughout the rest of their interviews. As I will explore below, although these men

claimed that they did not receive advice or assistance from their advisors, either study abroad or academic, they in fact did. However, by initially claiming that they were able to navigate the process on their own with little to no help or outside influence, the men in the study positioned themselves of achieving a masculine ideal of independence.

When these men made the claim that they made the decision to study abroad on their own, I was skeptical and pressed them for more information. In many cases, because of my position as their study abroad advisor or program manager, I knew this to not be true. In the end, seven of the men discussed the role that an advisor had in their decision making process. Only two of the men discussed the impact that a faculty member had on their decision to study abroad.

For five of the men, their academic advisors played little influence in making the decision to study abroad or in choosing a program or location. For these students, working with their advisor before committing to a program was primarily about making sure that classes on the program would fulfill requirements in their majors, minors, or certificates. One case is James, the engineering student who studied abroad in France. In his interview, he said, "…My advisor was accommodating. I wouldn't say that she was for or against it. Kind of just 'Whatever you want to do.'" Eugene, another engineering student, had a similar sentiment, saying,

> It came up in conversation with my advisor, and I think it was something along the lines of, "Hey, I'm thinking about studying abroad. I'm thinking about going to Florence." And she was like, "Oh, that's really cool. I know people who go there and they like it. Da da da da da. What made you decide this?" So like a general conversation like you would have with a friend about it.

For both James and Eugene, their advisor did not play a large part in the decision making process. However, it is important to recognize that for both of these students the endorsement of their advisor was important in their decision to study abroad.

On the other hand, students like Jason relied much more on their academic and study abroad advisors in the decision making process. Worried about his decision to study abroad, Jason reached out to his engineering academic advisor who then directed him to the engineering study abroad advisor. He said, "So I guess, she [the study abroad advisor] definitely... At least put my mind at ease when I was thinking about doing it and that it wasn't a crazy idea to go study in Australia." Jason needed reassurance of his decision to study abroad in Australia and first sought that from his academic advisor. Her connection with the study abroad office within engineering allowed her to make a further connection to help Jason get the information that he needed to be confident in his decision to study abroad and his program choice.

Daniel, who studied abroad in Tanzania during his sophomore year, found the study abroad advice he needed from a scholarship advisor. He said,

> I took a bunch of the packets to her when I was still trying to figure it out. And she kinda helped me break down, figuring out what's actually important for me in a study abroad program. If it was the classes, or volunteering, or what type of stuff like that. And I guess that kind of helped me eliminate a couple of them, and I went from there.

Like the other students, Daniel had already decided that he wanted to study abroad when he reached out for support. Nonetheless, it is evident that his scholarship advisor played an important role in helping him decipher his options and find the experience that met the goals that he had set for himself.

Though fewer students relied on the input of faculty members for study abroad, Frank's German professors were important figures in not only pushing him to go overseas but in having an immersive experience while in Germany. When I asked Frank when he started thinking about study abroad, he said,

> …[I]t wasn't until freshman year and my one professor said, "Hey, you're good but you can really improve if you went over to Germany…" The professor that I had of the fall of sophomore year he is actually from [my host city] so I would talk with him about stuff to

do in the city. So that was really neat to be able to connect with someone who is from there, and somebody that could give me something more of what the locals do because that's really what I wanted to do with the experience is blend in and always speak German and try to make it like I was one of them and not this random person who was over there and didn't want to stand out.

As a German major, improving his language skills was an important goal for Frank but study abroad was not something that was on his mind as a way to improve his skills. Knowing that working building cultural and social capital was Frank's goal, his professor was able to give him advice that would help him get closer to that goal.

From the informant interviews, it is clear that, even for students who have already decided to study abroad, the input of their academic and study abroad advisors and faculty can play an important role in reaffirming their decisions to participate overseas. In interacting with students, advisors and faculty should be aware of the positive role that they can play in helping students have a successful overseas experience.

## 9.4    ABILITY TO PURSUE OTHER EXPERIENCES

As I have previously shown, the ability to complete degree requirements was a major factor in the study abroad decision-making process. To a lesser extent, the men in the study were also concerned with how study abroad fit in to an overall plan that included other experiences such as summer research, jobs, taking summer courses, or other activities. Out of the 7 students who discussed this as a factor, six chose to study abroad on programs that took place early in the summer. David, the only outlier to this, decided to study abroad during the spring term so that he would have his entire summer to work.

Those students who studied abroad in the summer had various other opportunities around which they were planning their study abroad experience. Bryan, for example, needed to take a summer course. The fact that his study abroad program ended in mid-May allowed him to take a course during one of the summer sessions at the university. Rick, who studied nuclear engineering in France, chose his program because it was only two weeks long and fit within his co-op schedule. Andrew chose his program because it allowed him to have plenty of time in the summer to work.

In my work with students, I find that examples like those above have become the norm for college students. It is important to keep in mind both when planning programs and marketing the programs that many students are interested in knowing how they can make a study abroad experience work with other opportunities that they feel are worthwhile.

## 10.0    EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To the reader: the following executive summary is offered in place of a standard conclusion and recommendation section.  Its length and format is appropriate for submission to *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Study Abroad Journal, the Journal of Studies in International Education,* or *The Journal of Higher Education.*

## 10.1    INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, a growing emphasis has been placed on the importance of intercultural exchanges through study abroad programs both nationally, through White House initiatives, and locally at the college and university level.  In 2009, President Obama announced the "100,000 Strong China Initiative," charging U.S. colleges and universities with increasing participation in study abroad programs in China alone to 100,000 students per year.  Two years later, in 2011, President Obama announced a "100,000 Strong in the Americas" with the same goal: increasing the number of students participating in study abroad programs in Central and Latin American to 100,000 students per year.  More importantly than increasing the number of total participants studying abroad in these locations each year, the President's initiative also set a goal of *diversifying* the population of students that take advantage of these programs (U.S. Department of State).  The field of international education has expanded upon President Obama's goals with

"Generation Study Abroad," an initiative led by the Institute for International Education (IIE). The Institute has set a goal of sending 600,000 students abroad by 2020 and seeks to do so by providing resources to colleges and universities, including scholarship funding (Institute for International Education, 2016).

During the same time, there had been a steady and continued increase in the number of students participating on study abroad programs. During the 2000-2001 academic year, a total of 154,168 students from U.S. institutions of higher education studied abroad. In a little over a decade, the number of students studying abroad has almost doubled to a total of 289,408 students abroad for the 2012-2013 academic year (Institute for International Education, 2013).

Despite this growth, the ratio of female students to male students studying abroad is still disproportionate to total enrollments in college.. Since the 2000-2001 academic year, men have consistently comprised only 35% of the total number of students studying abroad (Institute for International Education, 2013), despite the fact that men accounted for 44% of total undergraduate enrollment at all four-year institutions since the early 1990's. (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). However, the same statistics from the Institute for International Education show that trends in study abroad participation have addressed many issues attributed to men not studying abroad, including availability of courses and length of program, and yet the number ratio of men to women remains unchanged. The percentage of students participating in semester- and year-long study abroad programs has decreased as students shift towards short-term programs that do not require leaving campus. Additionally, there has been a diversification in the fields of students studying abroad, with STEM fields and business students comprising a larger portion of the study abroad population than 10 years ago (Institute for International Education, 2013). Both of these factors signal a change in the types of programming offered

overseas. However, what has changed is not enough. It is clear that the profile of the typical study abroad student has not changed. She is in her junior year of college, white, and is most likely studying in the social sciences (Institute for International Education, 2013).

Recent research (Gore, 2005; Lucas, 2009) has shown that low male participation in study abroad programs may be result of negative perceptions of the experience as one that is non-academic, frivolous, and that does not offer concrete experiences (Thirolf, 2014). While these studies provide a rationale for the lack of male participation in study abroad, they do not examine how these perceptions are perpetuated. This article offers a comparative of analysis of male study abroad alumni's experiences with universities' and third-party study abroad provider's marketing materials (primarily social media and program-specific marketing) to determine whether or not the most important experiences, outcomes, and views of their own masculinity are present in marketing materials. I show that the most important factors for men who study abroad are not adequately present in these materials, which may contribute to disproportionate participation rates. The goal of this article is to provide recommendations for study abroad professionals to create marketing materials that speak to the motivations and desired outcomes of male students.

## 10.2    LITERATURE REVIEW

Low male participation in study abroad has been attributed to a variety of factors. Gore (2005) traces the root of study abroad, as the field as it is known now, to early 19th century faculty-led experiences at small, liberal-arts universities. It was during this time that professors at women's colleges began leading "groups of young ladies on educational tours of Europe, visiting

museums, cathedrals, and the like" giving birth to study abroad as we know it today: "an institutionally sponsored, group activity" (Twombly et al., 2012, p. 15). While educational in nature, these early study abroad experiences were often viewed as more of "finishing trips" to prepare women for marriage than educational experiences. By traveling overseas to experience Western European art and culture first-hand, an educated women could make herself even more desirable to suitors looking for a wife who could hold her own in conversations at social events.

As changes to curricula and the introduction of electives found their way into the higher education system post-World War I, the number of students participating in study abroad programs began to grow (Twombly et al., 2012). Despite this growth, in nearly every year since 1923, women have outnumbered men as participants on study abroad programs (Gore, 2005). Even today, as the rationale for study abroad programs has shifted from enculturation to the development of professional skills that make one a competitive member of the global economy (Twombly et al., 2012), men continue to participate at lower rates than their female counterparts.

Previous studies on low male participation have viewed the phenomenon through one of two lenses. First, low participation can be viewed through a capital development lens. Research has shown that men do not participate in study abroad programs because they believe that domestic opportunities, such as an internship or research, are more valuable to their future careers (Gomstyn, 2003; Thirolf, 2014) despite the fact that employers highly value study abroad experiences (Twombly et al., 2012). Studies have also shown that men believe that studying abroad will delay graduation because courses for their majors are not available overseas (Lucas, 2009). However, women often have the same concern as their male peers yet participate at higher rates (Goldstein & Kim, 2006). With such a reputation in the past, it should come as no surprise that male students do not view study abroad as an overly academic pursuit.

Second, low participation can be viewed through a masculinity lens. In qualitative interviews conducted with men who were both participants and non-participants in study abroad programs, Lucas (2009) finds that "study abroad could generate some gender role conflict for young males with traditional ides about their masculinity" (p. 237). As Gore (2005) notes, "Women were assigned the role as 'guardians of culture' while men had to earn a living, support families, and find professionally relevant educational experience. All of these associations reflect deeply held cultural assumptions on the part of American academics." For men who may hold traditional, normative views of masculinity as the "bread winner," it is easy to understand that an educational experience that has traditionally focused on culture and art, rather than scientific and professional fields, is not a priority.

However, data from the Institute for International Education shows that the percentage of all study abroad students who came from traditionally "feminine" disciplines, that is to say the arts, humanities, and foreign languages, has decreased while the percentage from traditionally "masculine" disciplines, such as business and engineering have increased.

**Table 6. Majors of study abroad students, nationally**

| Subject | AY 2000/1 | AY 2012/3 |
|---|---|---|
| Foreign Languages | 8.2% | 4.9% |
| Humanities | 14.5% | 10.4% |
| Fine or Applied Art | 8.5% | 7.8% |
| STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) | 16.6% | 22.5% |
| Social Sciences | 20.3% | 22.1% |
| Business and Management | 18.1% | 20.4% |

This trend reinforces the need to view low participation through a capital theory lens. Although it Trooboff et al. (2008) have shown that employers value study abroad experiences and that study abroad affords students the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Anderson et al., 2006; Clarke, Flaherty, Wright, & McMillen, 2009; Gomstyn, 2003; Hendershot & Spreandio, 2009; Mapp, 2012; Williams, 2005),  men continue to believe that study abroad does not provide the same cost-benefit as other available experiences, such as domestic research, internships, and the like (Thirolf, 2014).

## 10.3    THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The study seeks to understand men's experience in study abroad through a capital theory lens, including human, cultural, and social capital, tested via the men's motivations for participation and perceived benefit and outcomes from the program.  Additionally, men's views of the role of their gender in experience is framed through lenses of normative and dialogic masculinity, tested via their perceptions of the difference in participation rates between men and women.

### 10.3.1  Theoretical Framework

Because students and their families increasing view higher education as an investment from which they expect significant returns (Tomlinson, 2015), I use human, cultural, and social capital as a framework to understand men's motivations and outcomes.  Additionally, participation in study abroad program also shapes one's identity.   Therefore, I use normative and dialogic

theories of masculinity as a framework to understand the difference in participation by gender. Together, these frameworks provide the advantage of understanding multiple facets of the study abroad experience for male students by allowing me to address the two primary factors that often viewed as barriers to participation.

**10.3.1.1     Human, Cultural, and Social Capital**

The Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), provides a modern and concise definition of human capital: "the knowledge, skills, competencies, and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social, and economic well-being" (2001, p. 18).   This broad understanding of human capital that extends beyond formal education allows my analysis to include other attributes, such as soft skills, that are developed during a study abroad experience.

Bourdieu (1986) defines cultural capitals as the ways in which an individual can accumulate cultural understandings in a way that will serve them productively.  Individuals are able to develop cultural capital by not only seeing and appreciating the signs and objects of another culture but through understanding the importance of those signs and objects as material manifestations of the history, values, and norms of the host culture. The ability for a student to study, live, and potentially work abroad provides an opportunity to develop cultural capital in ways that he would not be able to do should he decide to remain on-campus for his academic career.

The creation of social capital, defined by OECD (2001) as "networks together with shared norms, values, and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups" (p. 41) is another piece of the capital puzzle that allows an understanding of men's motivations to study abroad. Schultheis (2014) emphasizes the importance of creating these networks, writing

"such connections are worth their weight in gold…We then say that we have to build, cultivate, or sustain our connections, not let them fade, and if they have faded, we must 'revive' them again…" (p. 152). As many study abroad programs bring together students from different universities and colleges across the country, as well as various disciplines within the same university, it provides the opportunity for students to expand their social networks. Programs that include research or internship components may also provides students with the ability to expand their professional networks as well.

In sum, human capital theory provides the framework for understanding the skills that students can gain during their experience. Cultural capital theory provides a means through which the importance of cultural experiences overseas can play in the development of human capital. Finally, social capital theory provides the ability to better understand the importance of the social aspects of study abroad.

### 10.3.1.2    Normative and Dialogic Masculinity

Gore (2005) believes that men fail to participate in study abroad programs because they perceive it to be a pursuit of women. Thus, it is important to have an understanding of how men view their experience in study abroad with relation to the social norms expected of them.

Reeser (2010) provides an understanding of the importance of normative views of masculinity in relation to decision-making, writing,

> Masculinity plays an important role in this exertion of power: because there are certain advantages and privileges accord to it, masculinity functions as an effective carrot to normalize those within discourse. If you allow power to make you into what it wants, you will receive the benefits of masculinity in exchange. (p. 31)

In studying male participation versus female participation in study abroad, a binary is created that further entrenches gendered differences. What this binary does not allow for, however, is an

understanding of the masculinity of men who have studied abroad. After all, if study abroad is a viewed as a feminine pursuit, the binary would require that men who study abroad see themselves as feminine, or at least less masculine than their peers who did not.

Despite research that shows the numerous professional and academic benefits of study abroad, the social norm continues to stand that men have more to gain by remaining in the United States and pursuing domestic opportunities rather than experiences overseas. In deciding whether or not to participate in study abroad programs, men may be considering whether buying into the social norm of "staying home" outweighs the benefits of a program in a foreign country. Normative masculinity offers a way of understanding how societal norms may affect this decision.

A dialogic approach to masculinity allows for the understanding that masculinity can change throughout time and space, a concept that Reeser (2010) explains, writing,

> A man does not simply say something about women, but in responding to a woman, he defines his masculinity relationally….The dialogue implies not a single definition of the other as not me, but a continual process of not me's. There is no simple opposition between male and female, for instance, but a series of oppositions that never end and that are each slightly different from each other. Thus, the opposition of masculine and feminine might be frequent, but the separation of the genders is a constant process, and has to be repeatedly established rather than taken as a given. (p. 42)

Beyond allowing for an ever-changing understanding of the difference between the masculine and feminine, the creation of "not-me's" can allow men to further understand their masculinity in relation to other men. In seeking to understand why men study abroad and how they view the experience in relation to their own masculinity, it is important to have a framework that allows one to understand it in terms of their peers' masculinity as well.

In sum, normative masculinity theory provides the framework for understanding the interaction between men's study abroad experiences (or lack thereof) and the social norms for

141

the gender performance that they aspire to. This provides the framework for internal understanding. On the other hand, dialogic masculinity theory affords the opportunity to understand men's interaction with women as well as other men regarding their study abroad experience.

### 10.3.2 Methodology

This study, conducted during the summer and fall of 2015, used qualitative interviews with male students who had successfully completed study abroad programs. Approximately 500 male students who met the criteria for participation in the program, which included having completed at least one study abroad program, having grades posted, and not having a current application for another study abroad program, were contacted; 30 in total responded to my request. A total of 19 men were selected to participate in the study. The sample population was purposefully selected to be representative of the overall male study abroad population at the host institution, including primary school/department of enrollment, type of program, length of program, and location of program.

Using capital theory and masculinity theory frameworks, I created a codebook that served as the basis for analysis of interviews as well as marketing materials for the host university, its peer institutions, and third-party study abroad providers. A comparative analysis was then conducted to determine if men's experiences with study abroad programs were effectively incorporated in marketing materials.

### 10.3.2.1 Institutional Setting

The study was conducted at a mid-sized, public-affiliated, R-1 university in the northeast United States. The university serves an average of 18,000 undergraduates at its primary campus, approximately 1,300 of whom study abroad each year. This university was chosen because it is relatively reflective of national averages around study abroad. Approximately 36% of the study abroad population is male. The study abroad population includes students from all schools, but primarily arts and sciences, business, and engineering. There is a large emphasis placed on faculty-led programming.

### 10.3.2.2 Data

In total, 19 men who had completed study abroad programs were interviewed for this study, including students from arts and sciences, business, and engineering. The sample was representative of the larger male study abroad population in terms of program type, program length, location, race, and primary school of enrollment. Although demographic information was included in the interview protocol, because of the small sample size, factors such as race, class, and sexuality are not included in the analysis. It should also be noted that the students who decided to take part in the study had overwhelmingly positive experiences and may have self-selected to participate because they may have been excited to talk about their programs, how valuable it has been, and receive acknowledgement and affirmation for their participation. While no students cited these as a reason for participation, it is important to keep in mind.

In addition to informant interviews, study abroad marketing materials were collected for comparative analysis. Marketing materials were selected to represent those that a student who was just beginning to research study abroad opportunities might encounter. These materials include: a total of 225 Facebook posts from the host institution, peer institutions, and third-party

study abroad providers; the top five webpages of a Google search for "why study abroad"; and 8 program-specific pages, including both faculty-led and approved third-party programs at the host institution.

**10.3.2.3 Data Analysis**

Audio from informant interviews was recorded and transcribed to provide a verbatim transcript. Using this transcript, along with notes taken during the interview, descriptive coding was used to categorize the students' responses to questions about their motivations and outcomes of study abroad into human, social, and cultural capital development. Once defined, the same coding scheme was used to analyze the marketing materials that were included in the study and to determine the prevalence of these motivations and outcomes.

To analyze the data for this study, I chose to use NVivo qualitative data analysis software, which has several advantages. First, I used NVivo to create a coherent and consistent coding scheme. Because NVivo is able to work with multiple forms of media, including text, photos, and social media posts, I was able to apply consistent coding across my entire data set. With all of my data stored in a single location and coded using the same schemes, I was able to use queries and data visualization tool to effectively compare information gained from informant interviews against coded marketing materials for analysis.

**10.4 THE ROLE OF CAPITAL**

My research supports previous findings that men who study abroad are pragmatic in choosing study abroad as an experience. This pragmatism also has an influence in the length of program,

locations, and courses that students choose as a part of their experience.  In discussing their

motivations for study abroad, the overwhelming majority of men in the study cited academic

reasons, primarily fulfilling degree requirements overseas, and to a lesser degree, professional

reasons, such as pursuing an internship or research experience.  Although only two of the men

expressed the desire to travel or experience a culture as a part of their experience, more than half

of them related cultural experiences to professional and academic development.  Finally, the

creation of social capital played little importance for the men, in both a personal sense and a

professional sense.  Overall, although program-specific marketing often prioritizes the human,

cultural, and social capital related motivations and outcomes that men sought from study abroad,

the same cannot be said about broader study abroad marketing, especially social media.

For the men in the study, the single most important factor in studying abroad, whether

considered a motivation or outcome of the program, was the ability to take courses on the

program that fulfilled degree requirements, including courses for majors, minor, certificates,

general education requirements, or fulfilling an experiential requirement. Tyler, a student in Arts

and Sciences who studied abroad in Florence during the spring semester of his sophomore year,

was concerned with choosing a program that would fulfill his academic requirements.   In

discussing the academics of his program, he said,

> I also knew that it would knock off a lot of gen-eds and it would get rid of all my cultural
> requirements in school as well…I also took "Political and Economic History of 20th
> Century Europe…which counts towards my P and P (Politics and Philosophy) major.

Tyler was not along in prioritizing fulfilling degree requirements as a part of his program. In

total 17 of the 19 men said that requirement-fulfilling coursework was a primary motivation for

studying abroad.  The remaining two students cited fulfilling academic requirements as an

unexpected benefit of their study abroad program as well.

Despite the importance that academics played for these students, it is notably lacking in broader study abroad marketing. None of the generic advice pages mentioned the ability to take courses towards requirements as a benefit of participation. In fact, one of the pages actually promoted the ability to take courses that *did not* count towards degree requirements as a benefit of study abroad because it allows for students to explore interests that they would not be able to on their home campus. These pages, written by various organizations seeking to promote study abroad, are meant to provide students with compelling reasons to take advantage of the experience. However, as my study shows, their rational for study abroad is, at times, in direct opposition to the motivations that men have for participating.

The Facebook pages of the universities and providers that I included in this study serve a broader range of students, including prospective students, current participants, and alumni. With this in mind, it is to be expected that posts would cover a broader range of topics related to study abroad. However, only five of the organizations made any reference to the academics of their programs on Facebook, a fact that resulted in a total of 8 posts (out of 225) referring to classes abroad.

Program-specific marketing, by its nature, included much more information on academics, often within the first few paragraphs of a given website.

**Table 7. Human Capital Factors in Interviews and Marketing Materials**

|  | Student Response n=19 | Social Media Organizations n=9 | Social Media Posts n=225 | Program Materials n=8 | Generic Advice Pages n=6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Degree Reqts** | 100% | 55% | 3.5% | 88% | 0% |
| **Internships** | 26% | 67% | 4.4% | 63% | 0% |
| **Soft Skills** | 42% | 33% | 2.2% | 0% | 67% |
| **Differentiation** | 52% | 44% | 2.6% | 38% | 100% |

What the analysis of marketing materials show is that, overall, the human capital driven motivations and outcomes that were important to men in their study abroad experience are not present in the marketing materials, especially generic advice pages and social media. This further perpetuates the misconception that study abroad programs are frivolous experiences. Beyond academics, more than half of the men viewed study abroad as way to differentiation themselves from their peers. Daniel, a senior studying neuroscience and chemistry, saw his experience in Tanzania as a way to stand out from his peers when applying to medical school. He said,

> I also wanted to go somewhere that was more unique, and that was Tanzania. I write about Tanzania for literally every single med school application, which means I've written over 15 essays about it so far. I think is another really big professional thing. Not just doing medical volunteering here, but also doing it abroad, and getting a new diversified understanding of how it really works in different countries.

The remaining men who discussed the importance of differentiation were able create similar links between their experiences abroad and post-graduation goals. As less than three percent of the Facebook posts included any mention of differentiation as a result of studying abroad, I believe that universities and providers are missing an opportunity to promote study abroad as an experience and specific programs in a way that speaks to men. The same can be said of the remaining human capital factors as well.

Although academics played a large role in the decision making process for the men in the study, it should be noted that the creation of cultural capital was also important. The students were concerned with creating cultural capital that would provide them academic or professional benefits in the future. For example, more than half of the students interviewed said that gaining global context of their field of study or desired profession was important motivation or outcome of studying abroad. Although 5 of the 8 programs analyzed provided information on how the program would help students gain this understanding, references were sparse on social media with only three of 9 organizations giving examples of the context provided by their programs. Furthermore, only 1 of 6 generic advice pages discussed the ability to gain a global understanding of one's field. Study abroad is designed to provide local and global context for the academics of a program and yet little emphasis is given to this aspect of the experience in general marketing.

The informants in the study viewed cultural experiences and the creation of cultural capital as a means through which they could augment human capital development. The students that discussed the motivations and outcomes listed in Table 9 made explicit links to their professional and academic development. For example, Rafael, a business student who participated on a summer internship program in Spain, said,

> Both academically and professionally, I gained a much higher sense of cross-cultural communication, language abilities and kind of just a perception of how to read people in different situations and taking into consideration that body language is different not just from person to person, but from ethnicity to country and other factors like that.

This pragmatic approach to cultural competencies was present in more than half of the interviews that I conducted. Whether the ability to develop these competencies was a motivation for men to study abroad or an outcome of their program, it was second in importance only to the creation of human capital.

However, as Table 9 illustrates, marketing materials do not frame cultural aspects of study abroad in the same way. Other cultural aspects of the program that were important to students, such as learning a foreign language or gaining the ability to communicate across cultures, were not given much emphasis. Instead, cultural aspects of study abroad are framed in a more "fun and adventurous" point of view, especially on social media. Posts related to culture were often travel tips, lists of the best places to eat in any given city, or photos of students in front of sites of historical or cultural importance. I do not and would never argue that these are unimportant parts of the study abroad experience. In fact, more than half of the men in the study acknowledged that more "tradition" cultural experiences were part of their time overseas. It is important to acknowledge that, overwhelmingly, the men in the study saw these as a bonus to more pragmatic aspects of their program. Having the ability to speak at length with each of the informants in the study led to a more complex understanding of their experiences as opposed to simply inventorying marketing materials.

**Table 8. Cultural Capital Factors in Interviews and Marketing Materials**

|  | Student Response n=19 | Social Media Organizations n=9 | Social Media Posts n=225 | Program Materials n=8 | Generic Advice Pages n=6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Foreign lang.** | 47% | 67% | 3.1% | 0% | 50% |
| **Cross-Cult Com** | 37% | 2.2% | 1.3% | 12.5% | 0% |
| **Global Context** | 53% | 33% | 1.8% | 62.5% | 17% |
| **Cult. Immersion** | 10% | 67% | 3.1% | 50% | 33% |

Finally, the creation of social capital, including both personal capital and professional capital, was of little concern for the majority of students, a fact that is also reflected in broad and program-specific marketing materials. However, although the *creation* of social capital proved

149

to be relatively unimportant in the men's decisions to study abroad, the influence of the men's *existing* social network was especially important. Sixteen of the 19 informants said that their peers played an important role in deciding to participate in study abroad, choosing a program, or creating additional barriers (such as "fear of missing out"). Thus, the creation of social capital was not a much sought-after motivation or outcome. Rather, *existing* forms of social capital were input factors in making decisions around study abroad.

It is important in planning marketing materials that universities and providers keep in mind the impression that they are giving of study abroad. The majority of men in the study said that the marketing materials to which they were exposed during the application process were not reflective of the actual experiences that they had overseas. Overall, the men found the materials to place a large emphasis on the fun side of cultural immersion and very little on the practical experiences that they gained from their programming. Although the men did not have any significant complaints regarding the marketing materials for their specific programs, they did acknowledge that they were, in general, not aligned with their own experiences.

As study abroad offices continue to strive to increase participation and diversify the population of students by gender that study abroad, it is important that marketing materials appeal to a broad range of students. The fun, non-academic, and extra-curricular aspects of study abroad should certainly still be present in marketing as students said that they were an important part of the experience. However, a concerted effort should be made to increase the presence of more capital-building aspects of study abroad, recommendations for which are provided below.

# 10.5    THE ROLE OF MASCULINE IDENTITY

As a man who studied abroad, it was not until I became a professional in the field that I was aware that there is a gender discrepancy in study abroad.  It was not until I thought back to my own cohort that I realized that less than a third of the students were men.  With this in mind, I wanted to give the men in the study the opportunity to reflect upon the gender divide in study abroad and provide their thoughts.  Surprisingly, this was the only place in the interview that the men mentioned gender as a part of their experience.

Men approached the question from two separate perspectives, which I interpret through the lenses of normative masculinity and dialogic masculinity.  That is to say that men viewed the gender difference as either being a factor of men wanting to enter college and do what they need to do to graduate and begin earning money or; they viewed a study abroad experience as something that separate men from women as well as themselves from other men.

The first was that in making pragmatic decisions regarding study abroad, that is to say ones they believed would give them an advantage against their peers or have some other professional benefit, men were engaging with a very normative part of masculinity identity.  When I asked David, who studied abroad in Cuba, why more men do not study abroad, he had a few different ideas as to why.  First, he believed that women tend to major in fields, like foreign language that are more directly related to study abroad experiences.  However, his exploration of the gender differences ultimately led him to the following conclusion:

> From my perspective, seeing other men, I don't see them much as risk takers. And I think it's just like I can get into college, I can get done in four years, and that's it. I think a lot of people are under the conception that Study Abroad might put them behind on graduation, that maybe it's not a necessity. It's expensive. And I don't think that's as much of a thought for just from my perception really. It seems like those concerns may not be the same for women.

David touched upon many of the concerns that other informants in the study discussed with relation to their own experience, especially the ability to graduate on time. To get in and get out of college means that one can move on to what is next (most likely a job) sooner. Although David did not mention it explicitly, this does play into the normative view of a college man's role: get in, get out, and get a job.

Men also engaged in a dialogic understanding of masculinity to rationalize why women participate in study abroad more than men as well as a way to further differentiate themselves from their peers who do not study abroad. For example, a man may believe that study abroad in non-academic and that women study abroad because they are less concerned with academics. Whether this is a conscious or unconscious thought is irrelevant. However, when that man decides to study abroad, he engaged again with his masculinity by rationalizing that he is doing it, for example, to boost his resume. James, an engineering student who studied abroad in France, unpacked this idea in his interview, saying

> And potentially, girls are more -- I don't want to sound sexist -- focused on exploring the world and stuff. I think more girls that I talk to want to go travel and stuff and have fun. Whereas, most of my guy friends aren't as adventurous and would rather stay and do things in America, I guess. I think, especially in France, I think the guys kind of took things more seriously and had a very "We're doing this, this, and this." And the girls wanted to go explore. I don't know -- just go off on their own. And it's hard -- I don't know. It's hard. I'm thinking about the classes. I think the guys took it more seriously, you could say, especially with the courses. I think guys take it more for academics and work experience, and maybe the girls approach it more as a cultural, fun experience.

James' preoccupation with sounding sexist is certainly understandable given the claims that he is making. However, dialogically, James is rationalizing his and other men's decision to study abroad in France by positioning himself as more academically serious than his female peers. In doing so, he is able to preserve his own masculinity despite studying a foreign language in a country that is typically viewed as a destination for women. James is just one example of how

men used dialogic masculinity to understand their gender identity in relation to their study abroad experience.

As I have shown, the creation of capital is a crucial motivator and outcome of men participating in study abroad programs. Understanding the ways in which men relate to the social norms and expectations placed on them by their gender provides context for the pragmatic and practical nature of their motivations and outcomes of study abroad. Professionals in the field will not be able to increase the participation of male students in study abroad programs without addressing and working within the same frameworks of masculinity as the students. Placing greater emphasis on the capital building aspects of study abroad begins to address the men's concerns with normative views of masculinity. Additionally, the inclusion of a wider range of men and their experiences in study abroad marketing materials can provide men with dialogic understandings of how a study abroad experience can relate to their own masculinity.

## 10.6    RECOMMENDATIONS

I find that, overall, broader marketing, especially social media, is lacking in posts and materials that speak to these pragmatic ideals that men hold. In fact, when considering all of the motivations and outcomes that were found in the study, less than one-quarter of all social media posts were related to them. More than three-quarters of posts on social media I found to be related to the "fun" aspects of study abroad in one way or another. Whether it was a blog post by a student that told the story of her finding her favorite restaurant or a photo of a male student riding a camel, social media especially lacks the academic and professional purpose that men were seeking in their study abroad programs.

As both the literature and this study has shown, men prioritize pragmatic skills when making decisions about study abroad opportunities that they believe may enhance their professional or academic position. Men's peers also play a large role in the decision making process around study abroad as they seek to understand how participating in a study abroad experience affects their perceptions of their own masculinity. Based on this knowledge, as well as the outcomes of this study, I suggest that study abroad professionals consider the following recommendations when creating marketing materials if they wish to increase the number of men participating in study abroad programs.

### 10.6.1  Overarching recommendations

*1. Appeal to pragmatism and practicality.*  Study abroad marketing focuses heavily on cultural aspects of the programs in photos, program descriptions, social media posts, and more.  Study abroad professions should diversify the experiences shown in marketing to go beyond these surface-level moments to show students engaging in professional and academic moments while overseas.  In doing so, professionals can address men's desire to use study abroad experiences in the creation of all types of capital.  Additionally, professionals need to reassure students that employers will catch on and value these forms of capital.

2. *Address issues of masculinity in study abroad.*  Men who decide to participate in study abroad may have to deal with resolving conflicts between their own ideals of masculinity and study abroad as a feminine experience, whether they are able to explicitly articulate it or not.  Study abroad professionals should make efforts to include more examples of men in study abroad marketing materials and should rely on male study abroad alumni to help promote the experience.  In doing so, professionals can address the importance that peer influence plays in

the decision making process. Furthermore, including more men in study abroad marketing materials may help to counter the belief that study abroad is a "feminine" experience.

3. *Emphasize that which cannot be done on campus*. Many of the men in the study expressed the ability to have professional and academic experiences overseas that would not be available to them on campus and to gain through those experiences particular skills that they believed would prove to be beneficial. Programmatic aspects that provide students with global contexts for their fields of study, internship and research opportunities, and others should be emphasized in marketing. By including these types of experiences in marketing materials, study abroad professionals can show students that the opportunities afforded by study abroad experience are equal to or greater than those provided by domestic experiences.

### 10.6.2  Social Media as Marketing

4. *Include a wide variety of men's experiences*. More so in social media than any other marketing considered, a large emphasis is placed on fun and adventure. Social media is a tool that is used to market to a wide variety of audiences, including prospective students, current students, and alumni. Professionals managing social media accounts should ensure that they are promoting, professional, and extra-curricular aspects of study abroad. Doing so ensures that a holistic impression of study abroad is given to prospective students which addresses men's concerns about the seriousness of study abroad experiences.

5. *Focus on successful students*. The literature shows that the perception remains that study abroad is an experience for students studying foreign language and liberal arts. By focusing on students with varying academic careers and showing that they made study abroad work for them,

it may change the perception that it is for a limited subset of students. Including a wider range of students may allow more men to "see themselves" in study abroad programs.

6. *Promote specific and unique programs.* Given that a concern of men is the ability to differentiate themselves from their peers, study abroad marketing on social media should seek to promote specific and unique programs that offer experiences that one could not have in the U.S. If possible, emphasize academic and professional aspects of the programs. Doing so speaks to the capital building desires of men who study abroad.

### 10.6.3  Program-Specific Marketing

7. *Have and promote clear goals and outcomes*. Overall, men seek to have experiences that can be clearly defined. Study abroad professionals should make it clear what the goals and outcomes are of specific programs and how they relate to both the academic and professional development that the program offers. Including outcomes as a part of programmatic marketing may allow men to more quickly create links between their own goals and study abroad programs, helping them understand the relevance of the experience to their own professional and academic development.

8. *Provide specific information on requirements filled by courses, if possible.* Given that the ability to fulfill requirements was a primary concern of the men in the study, if possible, program-specific materials should include information on the various requirements that students may be able to fulfill by participating. In cases where it is not possible, providers and universities should do their best to provide as much information as possible about courses, including descriptions and syllabi, as well as resources for students to determine course applicability. My study has shown that men are much more likely to continue moving forward

with the study abroad process when they have a clear understanding of the applicability of courses towards their degree requirements.

9. *Emphasize extra-curricular experiences that relate to academics.* Program-specifics, such as excursions and site visits, should include information on how they relate to the academics and goals of the program. The men in the study were able to create links between cultural experiences and their academic and professional development. Providing students with the information earlier in the process may help them see greater value in the cultural aspects of studying abroad.

### 10.6.4  General Advice Pages

10. *Place a greater emphasis on skills and competencies.* The overwhelming majority of general advice pages that I analyzed in my study framed study abroad as an abstract experience with a focus on personal development. Instead, authors of these pages should frame study abroad as the multi-faceted experience that it is by including more human capital-based rationale for participation. Emphasis should be given to specific skills and competencies that can be developed through study abroad, such as cross-cultural communication and foreign language skills, rather than just personal growth. Doing so would make them more reflective of actual students' experiences overseas.

11. *Recognize the academic side of study abroad.* The majority of advice sites that I included in the study positioned academics as secondary to the experiential aspects of study abroad. Given that students increasingly see their education and related experiences as investments, it is important that these sites emphasize the ability to continue making progress towards graduation and to fulfill academic requirements as an important benefit of studying abroad.

## 10.7    FURTHER RESEARCH

This study provides an understanding of the motivations and outcomes that male study abroad alumni had around their study abroad experience as well as how men's view of their gender affects their experience. As the field seeks to continue gaining an understanding of and change the gender differential in participation in study abroad, I see the framework of this study applying in other cases. First, a similar study should be conducted with female study abroad alumnae to compare if their motivations and outcomes of study abroad differ from those of their male counterparts and to understand the role that gender and gendered expectation play in their decision making process. Doing so would provide the field with a greater understanding of how all students understand and frame their study abroad experience. Additionally, a similar framework that incorporates capital development and masculinity theories could be used to understand how students who chose *not* to participate in study abroad experiences rationalize and defend their decision beyond often cited barriers such as course availability, cost, and the like.

Finally, research should be conducted to understand how parents relate to marketing materials for study abroad and how that translates into encouragement or discouragement of their sons and daughters pursuing the experience. Fourteen of the 19 men in this study discussed the role that their parents played in their decision to study abroad, although my study did not go in-depth in understanding their influence. Exploring this more in-depth may allow for the creation of marketing materials that help parents understand the value of study abroad and encourage their students to participate.

## 10.8    CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The study abroad experiences that are available to college students will likely only continue to grow.  By understanding the aspects of study abroad that effectively and most frequently motivate men to participate in programs along with the outcomes that men feel they gained from programs, the field can continue to adapt marketing materials in a way that appeals to a broader range of students, both male and female. It is clear that cultural exchange and immersion is not sufficient as a recruiting mechanism for men. It may be possible to help men see study abroad as an experience that is as, if not more valuable, than domestic opportunities such as internships, research, and the like. In doing so, it is also possible to address men's concerns around the ways in which they define their own masculinity in relation to a study abroad experience.

# APPENDIX A

# CODEBOOK

I created the following codebook for analysis of interviews and marketing materials. The codebook emerged from my analysis of the interviews based on larger trends that cut across multiple students.

**Human Capital:** those motivations and outcomes which informants believe provide some advantage in either academic or professional pursuits

1. **Academic requirements:** the informant wanted / was able to fulfill graduation requirements as a part of the program (including study abroad requirements)
2. **Internship or research experience:** participation in an internship or research experience that is a sanctioned component of the study abroad program
3. **Soft-skills:** traits such as time management, confidence, independence, etc., that the information believes will benefit him *professionally*
4. **Differentiation:** the belief that the informant's experience(s) overseas makes him a more competitive candidate in any post-graduation pursuit (graduate school, medical school, workforce, etc.)

**Cultural Capital:** experiences that provide the informant with the skills and knowledge necessary to interact with as well as the ability to navigate other cultures

1. **Foreign language**: learn or improve foreign language skills when the program takes place in the host language

2. **Cross-cultural communication:** learn or improve professional and personal communication skills *in English*, regardless of the host language, through internship, research, or other practical experiences
3. **Global context of field of study:** development or understanding of the informant's field of study or professional aspirations within another cultural context
4. **Cultural immersion**: the informant's belief that he fully experienced the culture of his *host* country for the sake of cultural immersion itself, without any professional or academic motivations
5. **Travel**: the informant's ability / desire to travel *outside of his country*

**Social capital:** the development of relationships that facilitate some type of action for the

information

1. **Friendships and the Personal Network:** the information believes that he can expand his *personal* next to create new friendships. Does not imply "networking" in a professional sense.
2. **Professional Network:** the informant believes that he can expand his *professional* network in a way that will benefit him

**Authority / Influencers:** individuals that played a role in a student's decision making process,

whether positively or negatively. These fall outside of the "capital" framework but are important

nonetheless

1. **Peer influence:** an informant was influence by his *university* peers in the decision to study abroad or in the program selection process (positively or negatively)
2. **Parental influence:** an informant was influenced by his parents in the decision to study abroad or in the program selection process (positively or negatively)
3. **Family influence:** an informant was influence by members of his family (including extended, excluding parents) in the decision to study abroad or in the program selection process
4. **Advisor and Faculty Influence:** an informant was influenced by a member of the university community (faculty or staff) in the decision to study abroad or in the program selection process

**Masculinity:** men's thoughts and musings on the role that gender plays in the descrepncy between male and female participation in study abroad

1. **Normative Masculinity:** those thoughts and ideas that showed how men viewed their masculinity in relation to and as being defined by a set of certain social norms.
2. **Dialogic Masculinity**: those thoughts and ideas that showed how men viewed and rationalized their masculinity in relation to other individuals, both male and female

**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

**Pseudonym:** _____

*1. Read the Introductory Script (Appendix C).*
*2. Ice-Breaker Questions*
    *a. Tell me a bit about yourself.*
        *i. Major _____*
        *ii. Year in School: _____*
        *iii. Race (self-identified): _____*
        *iv. Sexuality: _____*
        *v. Other details:*
    *b. Tell me a bit about your study abroad experience:*
        *i. Term: F Sp Su SpBr*
        *ii. Year: F S J S +*
        *iii. Other:*
*3. Pre-Program Motivations*
    *a. Why did you decide to study abroad?*
    *b. When did you make this decision?*
    *c. Who influenced you to make this decision?*
    *d. Was there anyone who discouraged you from studying abroad? Who? Why?*
    *e. How did you feel about making the decision to study abroad? What were you most concerned about, excited for, anxious about, stressed, etc.?*
*4. Program Selection*
    *a. Walk me through the process you went through to pick a study abroad program.*
    *b. What criteria did you have for the program?*
    *c. Why were these important to you?*
    *d. Was it easy for you to find a program that had what you were looking for?*
    *e. Did you see yourself in the marketing materials for the program?*
*5. Post-Program Perceptions*
    *a. Reflecting on the program, what did you gain from studying abroad? Personally? Professionally? Academically?*
    *b. If this were a job interview, how would you talk about your experience abroad?*
    c. *Why do you think that more men do not study abroad?*

6. *Closing details*

# APPENDIX C

**Figure 5. Institutional Review Board Approval**

**University of Pittsburgh**
*Institutional Review Board*

3500 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 383-1480
(412) 383-1508 (fax)
http://www.irb.pitt.edu

## Memorandum

To:       Brice Lynn
From:    IRB Office
Date:    6/29/2015
IRB#:   PRO15050257
Subject: Culture Isn't Cutting It: Reworking Study Abroad Marketing Materials to Appeal to Male Students

The above-referenced project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board. Based on the information provided, this project meets all the necessary criteria for an exemption, and is hereby designated as "exempt" under section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2)
.

Please note the following information:

- Investigators should consult with the IRB whenever questions arise about whether planned changes to an exempt study might alter the exempt status. Use the "**Send Comments to IRB Staff**" link displayed on study workspace to request a review to ensure it continues to meet the exempt category.
- It is important to close your study when finished by using the "**Study Completed**" link displayed on the study workspace.
- Exempt studies will be archived after 3 years unless you choose to extend the study. If your study is archived, you can continue conducting research activities as the IRB has made the determination that your project met one of the required exempt categories. The only caveat is that no changes can be made to the application. If a change is needed, you will need to submit a NEW Exempt application.

**Please be advised that your research study may be audited periodically by the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office.**

# APPENDIX D

## Table 9. Informant Information

| Pseudonym | School | Major | Current Year | Experience 1 Year | Experiecne 1 Location | Experience 1 Length | Program Type | Experience 2 Year | Experience 2 Location | Experience 2 Length | Experience 2 Program Type | Experience 3 Year | Experience 3 Location | Experience 3 Length | Experience 3 Pr... |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Andrew | ENGR | Industrial | SR | FR | Chile | ST | FL | | | | | | | | |
| Bryan | ENGR | Chemical | JU | FR | Chile | ST | FL | | | | | | | | |
| Clarence | BUS | Finances, Economics, CPIB | SR | FR | Chile | ST | FL | SO | England | LT | | | | | |
| James | ENGR | Industrial, French Minor | SR | FR | Chile | ST | FL | SO | France | ST | FL | | | | |
| Josh | BUS | Supply Chain Management | SR | FR | Germany | ST | FL | SO | Spain | LT | UR | JU | Cyprus | ST | FL |
| Max | ENGR | Bioengineering | SO | FR | Germany | ST | UR | | | | | | | | |
| Francisco | BUS | Finance, Economics, Supply Chain Management | SR | JU | England | LT | FL | | | | | | | | |
| Gary | BUS | Supply Chain Management, Spanish Minor, CPIB | GR | JU | Spain | LT | EXC | | | | | | | | |
| Peter | AS | Bioinformatics, Conceptual Foundtaions of Medicin | GR | JU | Tanzania | ST | FL | | | | | | | | |
| Eugene | ENGR | Electrical | GR | SR | Italy | ST | FL | | | | | | | | |
| David | AS | Political Science, Spanish | JU | SO | Cuba | LT | UR | | | | | | | | |
| Tyler | AS | Politics and Philosophy, Italian Studies | JU | SO | Italy | LT | FL | | | | | | | | |
| Daniel | AS | Nueroscience, Chemistry | SR | SO | Tanzania | ST | FL | | | | | | | | |
| Frank | AS | Psychology, German | SR | SO | Germany | ST | UR | | | | | | | | |
| Jason | ENGR | Mechanical Engineering, Energy Cert | SR | SO | Australia | ST | UR | | | | | | | | |
| Nicholas | AS | Psychology, GSWS | JU | SO | Spain | ST | UR | | | | | | | | |
| Rafael | BUS/AS | Global Management, Political Science | JU | SO | Spain | ST | FL | | | | | | | | |
| Rick | ENGR | Mechancial, Nuclear | GR | SO | Brazil | ST | FL | JU | France | ST | FL | | | | |
| Zack | AS | Media and Professiona Communications, Fim Studi | SR | SO | Australia | ST | FL | | | | | | | | |

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