“It’s Not Just What You Have, But How You Use It:” The Impact of Race and Class on the Usage and Activation of Cultural and Social capital in the Study Abroad process

Jennifer Renee Simon

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/sociology_theses

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/sociology_theses/17

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Sociology at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sociology Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gsu.edu.
“IT’S NOT JUST WHAT YOU HAVE, BUT HOW YOU USE IT:” THE IMPACT OF RACE AND CLASS ON THE USAGE AND ACTIVATION OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE STUDY ABROAD PROCESS.

by

JENNIFER SIMON

Under the direction of James Ainsworth

ABSTRACT

Despite efforts of U.S. education institutions to encourage study abroad participation, Black and low income students are severely underrepresented compared with their White and higher income peers. Literature reveals that a combination of individual and institutional factors influences study abroad involvement; however, they fail to address how these factors work to limit the participation of interested students. Qualitative interviews were conducted with 21 Black and White students to investigate how they navigate the study abroad process. Cultural and social capital theories were used to understand their experiences. My findings demonstrate that for students that did not study abroad, Blacks compared to Whites encountered more difficulties when trying to activate their available resources to navigate the process. Also, non participating White students were more likely to make the conscious decision not to invest their class privileges to study abroad compared with their Black counterparts. Together, these findings suggest that race and class play a role in the activation and usage of cultural and social resources to study abroad.

INDEX WORDS: Study Abroad, Race and Class Inequality, Activation of Social and Cultural Capital, Habitus, Micro-political processes
“IT’S NOT JUST WHAT YOU HAVE, BUT HOW YOU USE IT:” THE IMPACT OF RACE AND CLASS ON THE USAGE AND ACTIVATION OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE STUDY ABROAD PROCESS.

by

JENNIFER SIMON

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master’s of Arts

In the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2007
“IT’S NOT JUST WHAT YOU HAVE, BUT HOW YOU USE IT:” THE IMPACT OF RACE AND CLASS ON THE USAGE AND ACTIVATION OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE STUDY ABROAD PROCESS.

by

JENNIFER SIMON

Major Professor: James Ainsworth
Committee: Elisabeth O. Burgess
Thosi Kii

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
August 2007
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank a number of persons who helped me along in this academic journey. To Dr. Jim Ainsworth, I am so grateful for the time you took to give me such a quick turn-around with several drafts. I thank you for your unwavering support, invaluable guidance and enthusiasm towards my work during this thesis and throughout my years in the department. To my committee members, Prof. Kii and Dr. Burgess for their insights and suggestions that helped enrich my research. To my parents, for their constant words of encouragement and motivation. Thank you both for being my pillars of strength. To Charlie, for your compassion, understanding and humility throughout this process; thank you cannot express how grateful I am for this. To the interviewees, thank you for the honor of allowing me to share a part of your worlds. To my friends, who are like family; I truly appreciate your numerous words of encouragement, your invitations for coffee and dinners to take my mind off writing, and most importantly, your understanding when I failed to return phone calls. You all make me realize how lucky I am to have such wonderful people in my life. Thank you all.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Objectives and Questions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of broad terms /concepts</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the Barriers to Study Abroad</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The impact of structural advantage and disadvantage</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of barriers to access resources</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of finances</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inequity in access to valuable networks of information</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support from faculty and administration</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages of the Study Abroad Process</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Applicability of Social Reproduction Theories</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class privilege and resource advantages</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession and activation of resources</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Capital and the process of activating resources</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of gatekeepers in valuing and devaluing resources</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Capital: connections which help produce advantages ........ 35
Habitus: The way of viewing the world ................................. 38

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS ........ 41
Data Collection .................................................................................. 41
Sampling .......................................................................................... 41
Limitations ....................................................................................... 45
Questionnaire ................................................................................... 46
Interview Schedule ........................................................................... 47
Issues of Confidentiality ................................................................. 47
Sample Characteristics .................................................................... 48
Data Analysis ................................................................................... 50

CHAPTER FOUR: THE ASPIRATION STAGE ................................. 61
Conceiving Of The Idea of International Travel ......................... 61
Having a “global” worldview ......................................................... 61
Socialized to have a global worldview: The role of the habitus ...... 64
The Families’ influence on the habitus ........................................... 64
Extra-familial influence on the habitus ......................................... 66
Creating cultural capital: The role of resources and the habitus .... 68
Activating cultural capital by pursuing study abroad .................. 75
Motivating the commitment to pursue study abroad .................. 81
Acquiring and Activating resources .............................................. 82
Acquiring resources from social networks and the family .......... 82
Assessing resources from institutional agents ............................ 86
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Demographic Questionnaire</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Interview Schedule</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Informed Consent Form</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Demographics of Characteristics of Respondents</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Axial Coding Diagram of study abroad process</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: Table of sample population............................................................ 42
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Axial Coding Diagram of study abroad process.............................. 236
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Disparities in study abroad participation in U.S. institutions of higher education among various racial groups and social classes have been well documented (Mattai, and Ohiwerei, 1989; Cole, 1990; Ganz, 1991; Carter, 1991; Council on International Educational Exchange, 1991b; Fels, 1993; Hembroff and Rusz, 1993; Hayes, 1994; Lambert, 1994; Carroll 1996; Washington, 1998; Hoff, Van Der Meid and Doan, 2002; Chichester and Akomolafe, 2003). Reports consistently indicate low level of Black\(^1\) student participation in study abroad compared to Whites and the majority of other racial minority groups (Open Doors Reports, 2004, 2006). Also, findings from several studies suggest that low income students are less likely to study abroad than their higher income counterparts (Lambert, 1989; Posey, 2003; Booker, 2001). For example, data from The National Center for Education Statistics, Education Trust and Open Doors Research on study abroad participation revealed an overrepresentation of White college students compared to Black students. Even when the population of students in four year degree granting institutions was taken into account, it was found in the fall of 2001/02 that whereas White students comprised 64\% of the population, their representation in study abroad programs was 84.3\% compared to a meager 0.9\% Black student representation from a college population of

\(^1\) Throughout this study, the racial category “Black” will be used to refer to participants of African descent instead of the term African American, so as not to exclude those persons who were born overseas or whose parents were born outside of the United States.

One obvious reason for the stark disparities in participation of Black students and low income individuals stems from the historical development of study abroad programs. Typically, before the 1980s, study abroad programs were considered “luxuries” for many, and were mainly associated with the children of the wealthy. This was due, in part, to the high cost to participate in these programs, which were self funded. These high costs were also compounded by the steep price of airfare to travel overseas during this period (High, 1998). Other factors that contributed to this disparity in participation included, an elitist perception of study abroad, the duration, which may be one semester, and the fact that study abroad was only offered at the most exclusive schools, which overwhelmingly consisted of wealthy White students (Lambert, 1989; High, 1998).

By the late 1980s and the early 90s, study abroad programs enjoyed a rapid increase in enrollment in response to globalization and the increased international orientation in college curricula across the United States (Washington, 1998). During this time, enrollment patterns changed to include students from mostly middle classes and also few students from lower socioeconomic statuses. In addition, these programs saw an increased enrollment among minority groups, because public and private institutions started to offer a variety of these programs on their campuses, and the cost of air travel was substantially decreased.

Despite this improvement in diversity, present enrollment in study abroad is restricted to mostly White, affluent, middle or upper middle class female students,
studying the humanities or social sciences, whose parents are highly educated professionals (Booker, 2001; Johnston and Edelstein, 1993; Advisory Council for International Educational Exchange Report, 1988). However, this progress still excludes a significant portion of the U.S. college population, such as Blacks and low income students.

Previous studies and reports have acknowledged the historical inequities of access to study abroad programs and a variety of explanations were offered for the persistence of these gaps in participation by the Black population in particular. The majority suggest that these disparities result from a combination of institutional factors, which include lack of support from faculty and staff to study abroad; (Washington, 1998; Cole, 1990), lack of access to information and peer networks (Mattai, and Ohiwerei, 1989), limited program options (Carter, 1991; Washington, 1998), individual constraints such as lack of finances to fund study abroad (Cole, 1990; Carter, 1991; Hembroff and Rusz, 1993; Mattai, and Ohiwerei, 1989; Stoop, 1988), limited family support (Cole, 1990) and the perception of study abroad as something that is beyond the reach of Black students (Dessoff, 2006). None of these works, however, provide a detailed understanding of how a combination of these factors explains the difficulties of the study abroad process that limit the participation Black students who have decided to pursue study abroad. But research has challenged the stereotypical notion that Black students are not interested in study abroad (Carroll, 1996; Washington, 1998) and they are less likely to pursue it; Also, few studies have yet to reveal the implicit requirements of the study abroad process
which may penalize students who make the effort to pursue it but who lack the these resources to comply with the cultural and race based standards.

In order to fill these important gaps in study abroad research, the focus of this study examines the impact of structural factors of the educational system (Carbonaro, 2005: 27) and the micro political process (how the relations of power and privileges manifest themselves in the institutional dynamics) in institutions of higher education on the involvement of Black and White students who made the decision to pursue study abroad. Through semi-structured in-depth interviews, I decided to compare the experiences of 21 Black and White students who have all participated in the study abroad process, and have achieved different results. Both Black and White students were divided into a group who have completed the process of going overseas, and another group who dropped out of the process along the way. This design of the study was used in order to gain a sense of the role of institutional dynamics on the outcomes of these groups, especially with regards to Black and low income students who ended up not participating in a study abroad program.

From a theoretical perspective, if the results of this study suggest that there are indeed structural constraints of the school administration that discourages Black and low income students from considering study abroad, this may indicate problems within the higher educational system. These problems of Black under-participation may not only be based on individual factors related to minority problems in education. If this view is reflected in my results, it would be consistent with research on social structural theories of education that seek to explain why racial disparities continue to exist in the school system (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Kozol, 1991; McLeod, 1995;
Farkas, 1996; Ferguson, 1998a, 1998b; Carbonaro, 1998; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). The consequence of this exclusionary process may be another way in which school personnel are inadvertently restricting Black and low income students from gaining a valuable resource to improve their social circumstances, and their understanding to critically evaluate global cultural and social issues as well as their own nation’s parables. This exclusion is illustrated in research focusing on the overwhelming placement of Black students and low income students in lower tracks in the elementary and secondary school system (Oakes, 1985; Useem, 1992; Lee, Smith and Croninger, 1997; Lucas, 1999).

From a practical perspective, the findings could also provide policy makers and institutions of higher education with insights into barriers that exist in their training opportunities. Therefore, the results of this initial study may serve to formulate strategies that could effectively promote greater Black involvement in study abroad programs. For instance, it would provide meaningful insights for the Georgia State University Office of International Affairs whose mandate is to increase the number of study abroad participants from 410 to 700 in the forthcoming years (Walker, 2005). Fulfillment of this mandate would require effective mechanisms to increase overall participation; this can be initiated from the results of this study which would provide a basic understanding of how institutional factors affect Black and low income student participation in the study abroad process.

While no one would deny the importance of study abroad to all Americans, Black students trail every other minority (except Native Americans) in acquiring various types of international experiences from study abroad programs; this has severe
implications for their future as global citizens and their educational and future careers. These programs offer cultural emersion and experience of life in a new and unfamiliar environment, with distinct advantages for participants; many of these experiences have been well documented (Burn, Cerych, and Smith, 1990; Carlson, Burn, Useem, Yachimowicz, 1990; Hembroff and Rusz, 1993). Advantages include, a reduced propensity for ethnocentric and prejudicial behaviors, (Hembroff and Rusz, 1993) improved cultural awareness, a more expanded worldview (Hamilton, 2003), and adoption of a more critical analysis of events in their home countries (Burn, Cerych, Smith, 1990). It has also been predicted that participants of study abroad programs have the potential to impact on foreign policy goals and government sensitivity to other countries’ needs; this is due to their exposure to different viewpoints (Alger, 1980, as cited in Bachner and Ulrich, 1994).

When all aspects of this study are considered, the results should identify institutional limitations to Black and low income students participation in study abroad programs. The perception of these students on study abroad programs should also be improved especially in relation to development of the competence for the local and globalized job market. Today, this overseas experience is now a major advantage in the domestic and international job market, especially in foreign policy and other internationally related occupations. Moreover, study abroad is considered to be a prerequisite for careers in the international arena including organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank in addition to the Foreign Service of the national government (Carlson, Burn, Useem and Yachimowicz, 1990; Chichester and Akomolafe, 2001). Black students are more likely to be excluded from these
opportunities because of their low participation in study abroad programs; this is a cause for concern and it must be addressed for improvement in the educational and career opportunities for this population.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS**

*Main Objective:*

To examine how race and class based inequalities in the institutional dynamics of the university affect the participation of Black and White students in the study abroad process. The following research questions, based on the literature review were used to guide the study:

*Research Questions:*

1) **Availability and Nature of support**

*General Question:* What support systems were available/not available to Black and White students in their experiences with the study abroad process to help in their decision to (a) participate, (b) not to participate, (c) delay participation in study abroad?

**Aim 1:** To examine the *nature, composition and the structure of the support systems* that Black and White students had available to them to help in their decision to participate in study abroad.

**Aim 2:** To explore the differences, if any, in the kinds of resources Black and White students and low income students utilized to participate in study abroad.

2) **Access to support**

*General Question:* How were Black and White students’ able to access support systems and with what effects?
Aim 1: To investigate the *mechanisms through which Black and White students accessed support systems* that helped them in their decision to participate in study abroad.

Aim 2: To ascertain how Black and White students applied and utilized cultural and social capital to access support to help them pursue study abroad and with what results.

3) Stages/Organization of the study abroad process

General Question: What were the experiences with the organization of the study abroad process for Black and White students who decided to study abroad and those that did not participate or delayed participation?

Aim 1: To examine what norms are conveyed to Black and White students when pursuing study abroad throughout the process

Aim 2: To explain how the possession and usage of social and cultural capital help Black and White students’ comply with the norms of the study abroad process.

Definition of Broad Terms/Concepts

The following terms are defined as used in the study:

**Study Abroad**: Study abroad can be defined as “programs that occurs in countries other than the U.S., bears university level credit, and is held outside of the U.S. for academic reasons. Moreover, these programs must have an international component, either through learning in a foreign language, immersion in foreign institutions and /or structured social situations, or rigorous study of international content either in the classroom or outside it” (University of Kansas Study Abroad Task Force Report, 2001: 1).
**Study Abroad Process:** The study abroad process can be defined as the University’s requirement of explicit and implicit steps that students must complete in order to depart on a study abroad program outside the United States.

**Applicant:** An applicant can be defined as a potential participant in a study abroad program who has complied with the appropriate application regulations who has submitted all paper work by the required deadline (Booker, 2001).

**University sponsored study abroad programs:** These are programs designed, administered and managed by an academic unit at a University Institution (parts of definition taken from Michigan State University Office of International Studies and Programs, 2003).
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

UNDERSTANDING THE BARRIERS TO STUDY ABROAD

*The impact of structural advantage and disadvantage*

Surprisingly, little research has focused directly on the impact of social class on student’s participation in study abroad. However, most research do allude to social class as a reason for disparate participation (Cole, 1990; Surridge, 2000; Chiceffo, 2001, Booker, 2001; Miller, 2004). They reveal that the advantages and resources associated with being in a middle or upper class position compared to being in a low socio-economic status (SES) make it easier for these students to decide to participate in study abroad programs.

Social class may be viewed not only as the economic position people occupy in a society, but as “attitudes, beliefs, experiences and perceptions of ones social world” or what Bourdieu (1977) terms the “habitus.” Belonging to a particular social class or SES, particularly the upper and middle classes, can make it easier for these groups, unlike the lower SES group, to comply with the expectations, selection process, application and the narratives of the study abroad educational experience.

In an early study, Lambert (1989) made the observation that members of lower socio economic classes are underrepresented in study abroad. This is due to a number of factors, among which inadequate finances was primary, since members of lower SES would be least likely to afford study abroad. Booker (2001) found similar results in his study, and noted that participants in study abroad are more likely to come from
the middle class, be full-time student, be a non-minority and be mainly female. They, compared to their lower income counterparts, also tend to be less reliant on financial aid and employment to attend college (p. 34).

Similarly, in Fordham’s (2002) ethnography of a Rotary sponsored study abroad program, she found that middle and upper class privilege is infused through out the study abroad process. This contributed significantly to the decision to participate in study abroad and led to a predominance of these types of students in this area and ultimately, the perpetuation of social inequality. For this particular program reported by Fordham (2002), the function of study abroad was essentially to “assist in the preparation of young, middle and upper class students to take their place among the cultural elite” (p. 35). Support for this conclusion is based on the fact that the programs were infused with “hegemonic narratives about class and race,” and the perception that “seeing the world” and encountering “difference” and in some cases contact with the racial “other,” through “safe” middle class homes and families will help to develop character and personal growth (p. 35-36). This process is illustrated by Bourdieu’s notion of social reproduction whereby bourgeoisie ideology and culture is validated and transmitted through these programs but they remain unchallenged. Therefore, individuals, such as students with high SES who recognize the cultural capital that is being promoted through these programs, will more likely be influenced by the message to participate in study abroad programs (Bourdieu, 1973).

This reproduction of elite norms is also seen with university sponsored study abroad programs, where class biases are built into the curricula and program organization. Patterson (1999) illustrates this finding, and argues that many examples
of host culture focus on middle class or elite social realities but they fail to take students beyond the world of their SES that question the status quo. Thus, social class privilege and power are perpetuated and cemented in these various processes.

Studies also reveal that there is little familiarity with the long term advantages of participation in study abroad programs (Greely and Doan, 2002; Washington, 1998; Fels, 1995). Only students with study abroad experiences know whether participation in these programs provides them with cultural capital that is useful and advantageous in life and in preparation for the future. The focus on this worldview of study abroad programs is a major influence on middle and upper class students to pursue study abroad, especially because of their familiarity with the advantages from this experience.

From a middle class student perspective, the marketing of study abroad as the escapist concept of “going away to find yourself,” contributes to the decision to embark on an international education experience. As Nieoczym (2004) suggests, the concept of “finding yourself” is a middle class construct and study abroad can appeal to this need to escape their present situation for those who have the time and money to do so. Hence, the decision to participate in study abroad appeals to this perception of adventure and discovery for those who have the free time, and the finances to engage in this activity.

*Perceptions of barriers to access resources*

A study done by Carroll (1996) on interest and perception of barriers of historically underrepresented students in study abroad at Colorado State University found that Black students expressed very high levels of interest in broadening their
educational experience overseas. However, they were the group most likely to report perceived barriers to study abroad (See Downey, Ainsworth and Qian, (2005) for a similar argument with regard to Black youth\(^2\)). These barriers included inadequate information on foreign educational opportunities, lack of institutional funding, the fear of discrimination, and the lack of promotion from faculty and staff. These results are consistent with other findings (Cole, 1990; Ganz, 1991; Carter 1991; Fels 1993; Hembroff and Rusz, 1993; Washington, 1998), which also identified numerous factors that contributed to low Black participation in study abroad. Factors that were identified included, the high percentage of Black students who do not complete their college education, a campus culture that lacks the commitment to cultural diversity, the belief that Black students compared to other racial groups do not have access to the same information about international exchange opportunities, the fact that most minorities are underrepresented in humanities programs, language barriers, limited commitment to international education, lack of knowledge of other cultures and family and safety concerns. Upon closer inspection of these factors, they suggest that institutional barriers in higher education seem to play a considerable role in the low participation of Black students in study abroad programs.

**Lack of finances**

In study abroad, economic factors are seen as the main hindrance for students to participate, especially Black students (Mattai and Ohiwerei, 1989; Cole, 1990; Hembroff and Rusz, 1993; Carroll, 1996; Jarvis and Jenkins, 2000). According to Hembroff and Rusz (1993), many minority students are on some kind of financial aid.

\(^2\) In their study they argue that Black adolescents face significant barriers to succeed in their educational careers, even though they have positive attitudes towards their educational attainment (p. 24)
program or work during the summer, when study abroad programs typically occur; this situation presents a difficult decision for the student who must consider either to forego an income or to incur new costs in order to go abroad. A further dilemma is that Black students are three times more likely than Whites to come from families with annual incomes below $20,000 (Cole, 1990). Because of this, some Black families simply cannot afford to send their child abroad and may have to rely on Federal aid that may not be applicable to overseas education (Cole, 1990). However, Chichester and Akomolafe (2001), argue that financial constraints, although a serious barrier, are not the main impediment to study abroad for Black students. They contend that the majority of campuses in the U.S. have separate funding in the form of scholarships and grants for students who wished to go overseas to study. Moreover, there are study abroad programs that have work components to aid students who have financial limitations or who wish to gain work experience (Hembroff and Rusz, 1993).

Chichester and Akomolafe (2001) suggest that the major reason for the low Black participation is the failure of most institutions to promote these financial options to minority students. Furthermore, they hypothesize that the school administration is not doing enough to encourage Blacks to pursue the resources available for study abroad. In a similar argument, based on his research at Florida State University, Posey (2003) found that the level of parental income was not a main determinant of who participated in study abroad. He revealed that the majority of study abroad students were White, in the lowest parental income category, (under $20,000) and were using financial aid to study abroad. In his sample, Posey (2003) reported that three out of four students were using their financial aid to study abroad. Thus, this
finding demonstrates that it is possible for Black college students in the lowest parental income category, to participate in study abroad. The finding also suggests that factors other than finances seem to hinder Black participation in study abroad.

**Inequity in access to valuable networks of information**

In her study on factors that influence participation in study abroad and internships, Miller’s (2004) interviews shed light on the mechanisms that sustain inequality in these educational activities. She noted that participants reported that their decisions to study abroad were influenced by information from their social networks on how to navigate the study abroad process. These social circles include friends, family members, and even high school teachers; many of these “networks began even before the student went to university” (p. 123). Thus, a middle class position allows its occupiers to tap into resources that lower socioeconomic (SES) students may not be able to access (Lareau, 2000).

Lareau (2000), in her work on home advantage influences on educational placements at elementary schools, reported that upper middle class parents are more likely to have relatives and family friends who are educators, and this allowed them to acquire inside knowledge and information about the specifics of the school system. This significant factor put them at a distinct advantage in securing advanced placements for their children, compared with persons who lack this resource. It follows that middle class Whites would be more likely to have this “inside knowledge and information” about the study abroad process, since they may have relatives with experience of living and studying overseas, and who have worked with people who lived and studied abroad; They may also have contacts within the educational system.
These individuals may provide guidance to access for participation in study abroad programs. Additionally, the children of Middle and Upper class Whites compared to those of lower income families would more likely to be exposed to earlier international travel opportunities, and to interact or know friends who have gone abroad (Cole, 1990). These experiences have significant influence on Middle and Upper class Whites student’s decision to study abroad.

The problem of Black and low income student under-representation in study abroad may also lie in the lack of access to networks that provide support from faculty, school personnel and other important sources. According to Van Der Meid (2003), the best resources of promotion for study abroad are returning students, who can relay their international experiences to encourage other potential participants. Although this network of returning students is lacking for Black students at most colleges and universities, it was shown to have worked in historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) such as Morehouse College and Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia; they experienced a 3,000 percent increase in study abroad during a seven year period, due in part to this factor (Ganz, 1991). Typically, Black students interested in studying abroad lack this important ‘formal’ resource network available to middle class White students. This is mainly because the majority of Blacks may not have family and friends (informal network) who have experienced study abroad.

In light of these facts, Black students seem to be deprived of the guidance from strong peer networks which is necessary to navigate and to choose the appropriate programs to participate in study abroad. Even more unfortunate is the fact that the majority of students are not even aware that an office of International Education or
Study Abroad office exists at their institution, therefore, most students do not access these valuable networks of information (Van Der Meid, 2003; Hembroff and Rusz, 1993; Carroll, 1996).

In addition to the limited access to knowledgeable peers and faculty, Carter (1991) argues that minorities are also absent in the study abroad recruitment faculty. This has the tendency to create a limited frame of reference for Black students who may be interested in studying abroad or who are deciding on careers with an international focus. She posits that this deficiency in staff of color could send the subtle message to minority students that study abroad and even future endeavors that require international experience may not be applicable to them. As a consequence, these students may be unwilling to share their intentions of overseas education with staff who they perceive as not understanding their social constraints or goals (Carter, 1991). Additionally, minority students have several concerns about the study abroad experience such as issues pertaining to race and discrimination abroad, which is not often addressed because of discomfort if not brought up by a culturally sensitive advisor. Educational research supports this view and reveals that social relationships between minority youth and ‘institutional gatekeepers’ (school personnel, advisors, recruiters) are “often marred by social distance and distrust” (cited in Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch, 1995: 117; Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991).

Inequity of access to networks between middle class Whites and Black and low income students in study abroad may be explained by the differences in the kind of connections these two groups forge when trying to obtain important information. These differences are seen in Stanton-Salazar’s (1993) work, where he examined the
impact of weak ties of poor Hispanic students in a high school. He notes that even though these students may forge informal association called ‘weak ties’, which are the connections maintained with socially distant individuals (i.e., acquaintances), these ties are salient for gaining access to information and services that are not available in a relationship characterized by ‘strong ties’ (i.e., friends and family). Also, Smith-Maddox (2001) argues that this association can be seen when low-income students establish weak ties with a teacher who provides them with useful information about pathways to various occupations. Often, these weak ties are “important for diffusing societal opportunities for upward mobility” (Smith-Maddox, 1999:2). Even though these “weak ties” or weak networks may not seem as formidable as stronger social ties, they are essential to Black students who may not have the access to any kind of social networks.

Network analysts (Lin, 1990; Montgomery, 1992) posit that people of color and those of lower socioeconomic status, have more to gain from the use of weak ties than do White and wealthy people. Yet, some researchers contend that low-income and minority students are denied access to most kinds of social networks, including these “weak” networks (Braddock and McPartland, 1987; Wilson, 1987). Consequently, “social class and race may play a crucial role in the structure and strength of an individual’s social network.” (Smith-Maddox, 1999: 3).

This disjuncture in access to information indicates that there is a definite need in the study abroad process for wider interpersonal networks and improved information flow to Black students. This view is echoed by findings of Booker (2001) and Washington (1998), who reported that students who did not participate in study
abroad, perceived that faculty and advisors offered little encouragement about international exchange and they hardly provided any in-depth information about study abroad to aid them in applying. These previous studies highlight the need to investigate the differences in the availability, access and support to formal and informal networks among Blacks and Whites, and the impact on study abroad participation.

**Lack of support from faculty and administration**

Washington (1998) found that Black students lack of access to information and support from administration was the largest factor that contributed to low participation in study abroad. This finding is consistent with those of other studies that examine student underrepresentation in study abroad (see Booker 2001:144; Cole, 1990; Ganz, 1991; Lambert, 1994; Chieffo, 2000; Surridge, 2000). According to Carter (1991), the reason for this neglect by school personnel is that most international education professionals have the perception that the Black population is not interested in study abroad. This opinion is based on racial stereotypes that view all Blacks as poor, and lacking the educational requirements necessary to pursue these programs which are not relevant to their lives. Carter (1991) also argues that even though in most cases, many Black students may be looking pursue study abroad in the Third world such as to Africa, for a better understanding of their cultural heritage, university administrators have the inaccurate perception that few opportunities for overseas study are available in developing countries (p. 9). In this regard, university administrators believe that Blacks may only be interested in going to Africa, but they have little inclination to go to Europe, where the majority of the study abroad opportunities are located (Carter,
However, Carter is also quick to point out that “all minority students must have access to international education, whether they choose to study about their ethnic origin or any other cultural influence in the global community” (p. 8).

Based on these results, it is evident that a problem lies in the perception of Black interest leading to shortsightedness of institutions of higher education to create programs that have linkages to the Black experience. Also, the literature suggests that faculty discouragement and apathy are pivotal factors in dissuading students from undertaking study abroad, therefore a need exists for an in-depth examination of this potential lack of institutional support and the barriers for Black students compared with White, these students’ during the pursuit of study abroad programs.

**STAGES OF THE STUDY ABROAD PROCESS**

Since there is a lack of literature that documents the navigation process for students who wish to participate in study abroad programs, I had to develop my own model. When conceptualizing the elements of this process, I borrowed and built on the work of Werkema (2004), Hossler and Gallagher (1987), and McDonough (1997), who helped to create an understanding of the process involved in the selection of a college for high school students. Combining and collapsing the stages of earlier paradigms of college choice, Hossler and Gallagher (1987) divide the college choice process into three stages. These include the Predisposition stage which is the period when students decide whether to continue their education beyond high school; the Search stage involving investigation of institutions and the Choice stage which involves selection of a particular institution (Tobolowsky, Outcalt and McDonough, 2005). This three stage paradigm can also be applied to the study abroad process,
whereby, the Aspiration stage\(^3\) or Predisposition stage is characterized by consideration of a plan to pursue study abroad for the fulfillment of a desire to travel overseas. However, unlike Hossler and Gallagher who suggest that this stage occurs when students are in kindergarten to the 8\(^{th}\) grade, in my model, this stage can occur before enrollment in college or during college enrollment. Also, at this stage, students first become introduced to the idea of study abroad and decide whether or not to commit to the pursuit of this educational opportunity. Next, at the Search stage in the study abroad process, similar to that of Hossler and Gallagher’s model, students would begin to investigate information about the availability of study abroad programs, that suit their interests and they would also address concerns about finances and travel. Finally, the Choice stage, which is comparable to that of Hossler and Gallagher’s model; this would be used by students to choose and obtain details of the application process of a particular study abroad program. These demarcations of elements in these stages do not suggest that these stages are mutually exclusive. Thus, elements in one stage can and do overlap with elements of another. For instance, students can investigate and select in the Search stage as well as in the Choice stage.

Throughout these stages, specific attention is given to the impact of structural conditions and institutional factors on the opportunities of students to successfully navigate the study abroad process. The importance of these factors was emphasized by Werkema (2004) and McDonough (2005) who identified the explicit and implicit cultural capital requirements in each of the stages of the college choice process that work to block the opportunities of those who do not have the structural advantages or

---

\(^3\) The term “Aspiration” stage was developed by Paulsen (1990) who modified Hossler and Gallagher’s (1987) term for the first stage of the college choice process the “Predisposition” phase.
those who (usually low income students) are not familiar with the institutional standards which may include these assumptive requirements. The literature indicates factors such as social class, familial resources and support, parental education, academic ability, school resources, peer and guidance counselor encouragement and access to information (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; McDonough, 2005; Tobolowsky, Outcalt and McDonough, 2005; Cabrera and LaNasa, 2000), all of which help students to comply with standards of requirements for the different stages. In one example, McDonough (1997) found that the college admissions process at certain high schools favored students whose schools wrote detailed letters of recommendations. Implicit in this requirement for letters of recommendation is the assumption that students and their schools possess resources and the organizational competence to produce these extensive documents (p. 102). Typically, middle income students attend schools with greater resources to facilitate this demand for specific admission requirements. Furthermore, guidance counselors at these schools have connections to admissions officers at several universities, and these officers would inform them of the specific documents required for admission. In addition, affluent parents would hire private college coordinators to help advise their children on the necessary letter requirements. In contrast, resource deficit schools lacked these lucrative connections and the human and material resources to comply with the letter writing standards (McDonough, 1997).

In a related matter, during the Choice stage, Werkema (2004) highlighted the “de facto” barriers of the application process that penalized students who had limited access to these cultural capital resources (p. 21). These obstacles included the high
level of jargon laden financial aid application forms which require informed guidance for completion with assistance from knowledgeable persons, such as a college educated family member. Moreover, the complex design of financial aid forms did not facilitate students who were responsible for their own finances and it ignored students who could not readily ask their parents to “prove” their annual incomes (p. 23). While there is agreement that these implicit and explicit requirements of the study abroad process are similar to those found in the college choice literature, it can be argued that if racial dynamics are taken into consideration it would complicate these standards even further. For example, Black students compared to their White counterparts are less likely to come from families that studied abroad, therefore when they decide to apply they are less likely to have the cultural knowledge necessary to know what is required to fill out financial aid or study abroad application forms. Additionally, given that Black students compared to White middle class students are more likely to lack access to these ties to knowledgeable persons, they may have to depend solely on the information from agents when searching and applying for a suitable program.

However, research reveals that, when institutional agents (faculty, administrative staff) are making decisions about students to whom resources should be transferred they tend to evaluate students based on middle class standards and biases (McDonough, 1997; Lewis, 2003; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Royster, 2003; Lareau, 2000; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Lopez, 2003, Delpit, 1995; Farkas, 1996). Thus, an agent may decide not to give valuable information to a student because of institutional biases or racialized prejudices based on White middle class norms and values (Lopez, 2003). Because of this inequality in the transfer of resources, Black students may
drop out at the stage of the process where specific guidance is needed. The Search and Choice phases are the mostly likely stages for this occurrence, as was reported in studies by Horn and Chen (1998) and Werkema (2004) who stated that at-risk students were most likely to exit the college choice process after the first two stages, which included taking entrance exams and submitting applications. These are the stages when students require assistance outside of college and from family members.

Similar paradigms of the college choice process will be used in my model of the study abroad process to obtain a better understanding of whether the design of the study abroad process at GSU perpetuates the social reproduction of inequality by favoring those who possess the resources to comply with the standards of these stages, while disadvantaging those who lack the structural privileges and cultural capital to satisfy these various requirements.

THE APPLICABILITY OF SOCIAL REPRODUCTION THEORIES

The social reproduction of class advantage through the school system is a salient issue in educational research (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; DiMaggio, 1982; Cookson and Persell, 1985a; Lamont and Lareau, 1988; Useem, 1992; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 1993; Ferguson, 1998a, 1998b; Carbonaro, 1998; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). Reports of these researches reveal that class position and race influence educational outcomes and achievements (Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999), as well as children’s progress through schools (Brantlinger 1993; Useem 1992) and the behavior of students and parents towards the educational system (Useem 1992; Lareau and Horvat, 1999).
In order to understand just how class advantages are transmitted through the school system and how they influence students’ educational trajectories, Bourdieu (1977a, 1977b) has introduced researchers to the notions of social and cultural capital and the habitus. These concepts will be applied in this study to understand the impact of class and racial advantages on students’ experiences with the study abroad process; the results are expected to provide insights into why and how social inequality in this area is maintained.

The theories of habitus, cultural capital and social capital will give an understanding as to why the following matter for successful pursuit of the study abroad: a) the understanding of how study abroad would impact future career and personal development, b) cultural background, c) economic resources, d) familiarity with the dominant culture of the educational institution, and e) social networks and educational experience (Miller, 2004; McDonough, 1997).

**Class privilege and resource advantages**

According to Laureu (2000) and Useem (1992), who both examine the influence of social class on schooling opportunities, inter-institutional linkages between class and family background and the school system are prominent factors in explaining differential outcomes in educational opportunities of students. They argue that upper middle class White parents use their social and cultural resources to successfully secure educational advantages for their children in the form of higher track placements, university selection, and preferred course assignments. This finding can be used to explain in part, the traditional predominance of middle class Whites in study abroad programs (Posey, 2003).
Social and cultural resources are defined in terms of cultural and social knowledge, financial resources, social networks, and other attributes (Useem, 1992). It is possible that these resources may have enabled Whites throughout the years 1993/94 to 2002/03 to contribute 80% or more representation in study abroad programs. This is in comparison to 2.8% and 3.8% Black representation during those years (Open Doors Report, 2004). Availability of finances is a contributor to this disparity in representations because a number of study abroad programs are very expensive and they are more likely to be afforded by financially stable families. Additionally, families with study abroad experiences would be found among the more privileged middle and upper classes who are overwhelmingly White due to historical, social and economic privilege in society.

Specific reasons for minimal Black participation in study abroad include the fact that Black students are usually the first of their generation to go to college; the majority of Black students are on financial aid and cannot afford the additional expense of an overseas educational experience; Black students “are more likely than White students to come from families with incomes below $20,000” (Washington, 1998; Cole, 1990: 3). These reasons suggest that social class and access to resources as well as race play a pivotal role in those who elect to participate in study abroad programs. Black students are less likely to fully satisfy these requirements; therefore they are overwhelmingly excluded from study abroad programs.
Possession and activation of resources

In the study *Home Advantage* Lareau (2000) provided evidence suggesting that structural privileges matter when it comes to gaining advantages in the school system. She found that upper middle class parents were more likely to have relatives and family friends who were educators; this allowed them to acquire “inside knowledge and information” about the specifics of the school system. However, this is not to suggest that merely possessing these resources automatically give middle and upper class individuals’ knowledge and information about the study abroad process for instance. Instead, these class based resources must be “activated” in order to gain a social advantage (Lareau, 2000: 177-178; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Monkman, Ronald and Theramene, 2005). In this regard, activation of resources requires conscious negotiation and strategizing. But, the knowledge of how to “adequately” invest and utilize these resources to obtain advantages is usually skewed towards those of a higher socio-economic status.

The appropriate knowledge of how to activate resources is highlighted in findings by Useem (1992) who reported that well educated American parents are much more likely than less educated parents to use a variety of strategies such as their familiarity with academic placements from their college experience) to ensure that their children are placed in more advanced math tracks. These tactics include intervening in their children’s placement decisions by talking to teachers about their preferred placement choice and even overriding a teacher’s decision by consulting with the school principal and using his suggestions to gain legitimacy. These parents utilized their resources (the comfort to interact with a principal on equal terms and the
confidence that persons in authority will take their demands seriously) by realizing a social advantage of employing these resources (that it would help to secure their children a higher placement). Thus, they made the purposive decision to “activate” their resources by talking to the principle or teacher about their concerns. The same process of activating capital can also be applied to the study abroad process. For example, students that come from highly educated families that have studied abroad will possess resources such as knowledge of the appropriate courses to satisfy study abroad program requirements. They can activate these resources by talking to a knowledgeable faculty member with whom they can comfortably interact to discuss their plans to study abroad and to obtain course recommendations that can satisfy their program requirements.

Unfortunately, not all students enjoy the same level of ease to activate these resources available to them. The literature suggests that lower income and minority students compared to White and middle class students are more likely to lack the “natural familiarity” of knowing how to invest their resources to comply with the standards of the institution (Lewis, 2003; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Carter, 2005; McDonough, 1997). Also, schools standards are based on the norms and values of the White elite (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1977; Collins, 1979), and those students without these attributes will have a hard time succeeding in this environment. For instance, in Carter’s (2005) study on the use of Black cultural capital by African American students in a low income school, even though these students possessed their own resources, such as slang and other community based status symbols (p. 69), when they decided to activate these
resources at school, these actions were interpreted as “disruptive,” or as displaying “sassiness.” The students tried to conform to the standards of the school by displaying strong academic effort, but these students presentation of self did not comply with the standards of the institution and some teacher’s personal standards of decorum. Consequently, their demeanors ultimately tainted the minds of some teachers, who continued to have low expectations of them (p. 67-68).

It would be noted however that schools are not “neutral” institutions, but highly political organizations that work to reproduce existing inequality by privileging the norms of the elite; this process may be unintentionally designed in a way that rewards those who possess the appropriate norms that comply with the standards of the institution. Higher educational institutions are not excluded from exercising the norms in study abroad programs. Students must have therefore have the comfort to constantly approach faculty and staff for information about study abroad or they must have the “familiarity with communication channels for the transmission of information” (McDonough, 2003: 91). But not every student is equipped with these kinds of cultural repertories referred to as “cultural capital” that are considered to be norms in institutions of higher education.

**Cultural capital and the process of activating resources**

For Bourdieu, cultural capital is regarded as “the general cultural background, knowledge, disposition and skills that are transmitted from one generation to the next.” (Bourdieu, 1977: 496). Similarly, Lamont and Lareau (1988) define cultural capital as “widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion” (p.156).
Based on Bourdieu’s (1977) conceptualization of cultural capital and the privileges given to certain classes and groups in the educational system, schools mirror and perpetuate the social structure and organizational patterns of society. This is reflected in schools and institutions of higher education by the overwhelming presence of values and norms of the dominant middle and upper-class of society. Inequality is inherent in this educational system because school personnel tend to consciously and unconsciously give privileges to those persons who have the dominant class attitudes, practices and worldviews while devaluing the norms of the lower classes; this process may be occurring in study abroad programs.

Reports suggest that the study abroad process and programs may have certain standards and criteria that disadvantage Blacks more than Whites (Carter, 1991). That is, there may be particular criteria that may be seen as “normal” or “typical” to recruiters who may unintentionally disadvantage Blacks. This was seen in Fordham’s (2002) study on Cultural capital and youth exchange programs, which found that the process of choosing students to go on the Rotary Club sponsored study abroad was implicitly racial and culturally biased in favor of White middle class students. She found that expectations of recruiters assumed that those who applied for these positions already possessed a specific form of bourgeoisie cultural capital. These expectations excluded persons who do not conform to the bourgeoisie standard, and were based on the assumption that all students participated in extra curricula activities and come from “well adjusted” nuclear families, who lead active lives in clubs and societies; This ultimately disadvantaged students of a certain class who worked part-time and who did not have time to undertake rigorous extra curricula activities.
Minority students fell into these categories and they were disproportionately underrepresented in this particular program.

The reason for this disparity may be argued on the basis that Black students may be less likely to have the “typical qualities” of study abroad applicants, because a large portion of these students may not have the time to join clubs or undertake extra curricula activities valued highly by study abroad recruiters. They are also more likely have multiple jobs or come from families that are less likely to have a strong financial background, but they are less likely to travel abroad. Furthermore, it has been argued that in study abroad, students are seen as “ambassadors” of their schools. Blacks, are less likely to considered by school personnel to fit this representation of the “typical” American college student, who is usually White and middle class (Cole, 1990; Fordham, 2002: 115-117).

Although these attributes of the middle and upper classes are important for gaining access to privileges in the educational system, greater importance is placed on how to invest these resources. According to Lareau (2000) possessing valuable resources or advantages is only one part of the equation of gaining profitable outcomes. A three stage process was posited by Lareau for transformation of resources into cultural capital and then into social benefits. Firstly, cultural resources need to be possessed. Next, the value of these resources must be recognized so that it can be converted to cultural capital. Finally, this cultural capital must be activated or invested so that a social benefit or profit can be produced (p. 179). It should be noted however that process of converting cultural capital into a social profit is not automatic. Persons in positions of authority must recognize the value of these resources before
they use their powers to deny or to allow the conversion of these resources into socially desirable outcomes. Typically, race and class are important basis for these persons in power to delegitimize resources in the educational system and in wider society. This practice raises the question whether such devaluation of resources is occurring in the study abroad process.

The role of gatekeepers in valuing and devaluing resources

Researchers now realize that racial minorities compared with their White peers are faced with significant disadvantages relating to possession of cultural resources in the education system (Farkas, 1996; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). Consequently, “there is an unequal reward structure for attributes that differ not just by class but by race as well” (Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999: 171). Evidence of this occurrence was provided by Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) who showed that despite having a SES similar to Whites, Black students received less returns for their educational resources and cultural capital. This may be a reason why Blacks despite their socioeconomic status, participate minimally in study abroad. It may also be construed from the evidence of Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) that the education system may act in an exclusionary way to unintentionally prevent minorities from participation in study abroad programs.

An explanation for this disparity in educational returns and its relation to study abroad was provided by Bourdieu’s (1977), concept of cultural capital. He posited that the effect of cultural capital may vary, based on the status of the possessors and the dominant culture that determines the power structure of the institutions (Light and
Gold, 2000; Bourdieu, 1977). According to Lareau (2000), these institutions (colleges and universities) and the school system are comprised of gatekeepers who establish their own sets of unwritten and written rules and regulations for the standards of speech, for instance (Carter, 2003) that determines the level of intelligence. These gatekeepers are considered to be “those individuals who have the capacity and commitment to transmit directly or negotiate the transmission of institutional resources and opportunities” (Stanton- Salazar and Dornbusch, 1995: 116). Among these resources and opportunities are transmission and negotiation of information relating to study abroad programs, mentoring, tutoring, and academic advising etc. These gatekeeper functions in reference this study are applied to faculty, study abroad advisors, program directors among other institutional personnel.

In the study abroad situation, Posey (2003) found that a high mean GPA and academic standing were major factors that differentiated between study abroad participants and non participants. Generally, these performance standards are preconditions for compliance with institutional standards as Lareau (2000) found in her research; the social class of parents and children provides an advantage in discovering and complying with these standards because of their access or possession of certain resources, which include computers, rich social networks and active involvement in their children’s education. However, unwritten institutional rules in may apply to one person or racial group in one situation, but apply to others in another circumstance. For example, although Blacks might have dominant cultural capital, this might not be translated into a resource by gatekeepers such as professors or school administration. Also, Black students from historically Black institution may
experience a difference in value of their cultural capital when they attend a predominately White institution. The difference in valuation is reported to be based on the inadequate level of understanding of Black cultural knowledge, the power structure at these institutions, the “process through which individuals activate their social capital, gatekeepers, and the “possession of certain kinds of credentials or attributes.” (Lewis, 2004: 170). An example of this difference in valuation may occur with Black students who wish to study abroad in Kenya compared to White students who may prefer studying abroad in Europe. The Black students’ interest may not be valued as highly as the White students because of institutional preference for European study abroad programs.

According to Roscigno and Ainsworth –Darnell (1999), “much research has overlooked the important micro-political processes that occur in schools and classrooms that may have consequences for whether cultural capital and household educational resources function similarly …for Blacks and Whites” [in the school system] (p. 159). Therefore, having financial resources and social networks will yield completely different opportunities and rewards for students from Black middle class families compared to students from White upper class families because they may not have the opportunity to use and negotiate their cultural capital. Ultimately, not only class, but also race becomes a mediating factor in how a student’s cultural or social capital is used for advantage in the classroom. This may also be applied to the study abroad process which may be skewed in favor of persons who are more likely to have access to these resources and who possess forms of cultural capital deemed valuable by certain “gatekeepers.”
Social Capital: connections which help produce advantages

Social capital is another concept that can be used to explain the social class and racial disparity in study abroad participation. It can be defined as “social relationships from which an individual is potentially able to derive institutional support, particularly support that includes the delivery of knowledge-based resources” (Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch, 1995: 119; Paxton, 1999).

In and outside of the school system, informal and formal networks transmit knowledge-based resources to parents and students alike and this tends to assist in informing and improving educational experiences and opportunities (Lewis, 2003). In this regard, Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995) found that, “analysis of social networks reveals [that] success within the educational system, for working class and minority youth is dependent upon the formation of genuinely supportive relationships with institutional agents” (p.116). Additionally, college choice research suggests that guidance from parents and counselors is essential in taking the necessary steps to complete the college pipeline (McDonough, 1997). These informal (friends) and formal (institutional agents) social networks are considered to be of paramount importance in acquiring the appropriate knowledge about school programs, such as, study abroad for instance. Understanding the functional importance of these networks in the study abroad process is crucial when investigating the impact of these connections on Black and White student experiences.

However, valuable knowledge and knowledge-based resources (including cultural capital) are usually transferred through informal and formal social networks that are typically segregated by race and class (Royster, 2003; Smith-Maddox, 1999;
Braddock and McPartland, 1987; Wilson, 1987). Consequently, low income and racial minorities are usually excluded from crucial social networks that provide the most up-to-date and accurate information about educational opportunities. This exclusion can have an impact on the decision of whether to participate in study abroad or not. Van Der Meid’s (2003) finding confirmed that certain social networks are valuable when considering study abroad, and these are provided by networks of returned students who are the single most important resource for students considering an international student exchange. It can be argued that these networks are not readily available to Black and low income students because of low participation of these groups in study abroad programs. Also, Black and low income students may not have the opportunity to formulate social capital because of limited access to resources contained in these networks which are sources of valuable information on the study abroad process and the benefits of choosing one program over another.

Social networks also contain relationships which tend to differ in their structure quality and nature. The relationships within these networks are characterized as “weak” and “strong” ties and they relate to the degree of intimacy among individuals within these networks (Granovetter, 1973, Portes, 1998). Based on these types of network associations, the level and types of social capital contained within them differs. Building on Granovetter’s conceptions, Putnam (2000) distinguishes between these different dimensions of social capital as “bridging” and “bonding” social capital. Bridging social capital is considered to be social capital derived from connections between individuals who are racially, culturally and socially dissimilar (p. 22). These connections are usually informal and the quality of these relationships is usually weak.
Despite the tentativeness of these relationships, these ties are important for gaining valuable resources not widely available in a segregated network. An example of this relationship in the study abroad context would be the connection between a Black student and a White professor whose classes the student is taking. Even if this relationship is temporary and emotionally unsupportive, the student may be able to derive important resources from this professor. These may be in the form of information about available study abroad programs from which the most appropriate selections can be made. In contrast, bonding capital is characterized by relationships between persons who are socially similar (Putnam, 2000). These relationships are more exclusive and emotionally supportive. Additionally, information contained within these ties are more substantive than those in bridging relationships (Williams, 2006: 6). Research shows however, that a combination of these ties is more effective for accessing capital and gaining valuable knowledge-based resources (Horvat, Weininger and Lareau, 2003). Most importantly, race and class impact the formation and structures of these social networks which affect the development of social capital (Stantaon-Salazar, 1997).

Children of middle or upper class families usually have a variety of networks available to them, while poorer families typically have only “weak” networks to rely on (Granovetter, 1973). In this regard, the children of families with a variety of important social networks have better opportunities to engage in study abroad programs because these networks may comprise friends and family members who have knowledge and experience of study abroad programs. These social networks may also include acquaintances who are members of certain clubs and organizations
that emphasize international learning. These resources can greatly influence their experiences with the study abroad process, since these networks can provide recipients with opportunities to become more acquainted with the study abroad process and the prerequisites for admission into these programs.

**Habitus: The way of viewing the world**

The concept of habitus is seen as one’s orientation toward the world, and is largely based on one’s class position (Horvat, 2004). Swartz (1997) describes the habitus as “a set of deeply internalized master dispositions that generate action.” (Swartz 1997: 101) “Habitus, like cultural capital, plays a large role in the reproduction of social inequality” (Dumais, 2006:85). For example, Dumais (2006), in his consideration of children from lower SES backgrounds, and exposure to family members and adult neighbors who have not attained college or university education, argues that these children internalize the idea that post secondary education is not for them. “These internalized beliefs result in actions (cutting class, not studying) that lead to self-fulfilling prophecies, reproducing the current class structure” (p. 85).

Horvat (2004) reinforced the suggestion in her report which stated that the outcomes of the lives of some students are influenced by their internalization of the structure of the world around them.

Based on the aforementioned information, it can be argued that parents who are educated or are professionals etc., occupy the most appropriate habitus that would influence participation in study abroad programs; this is due to their different class and race histories. These families compared to lower class families, would be more likely to have exposure to international travel, foreign culture and materials about
international experiences. It follows that the children of these privileged families would internalize the belief that study abroad is a "natural" thing to do and that it fits well with their educational trajectories. Consequently, they are more likely to take courses such as foreign languages to satisfy study abroad requirements, and they pursue other opportunities that encourage participation in study abroad programs. Fordham’s (2002) study illustrates this theory, thorough findings that the class position of middle class parents put them at a significant advantage when it came to interviewing for the Rotary club study abroad program; this advantage was gained for the knowledge of how to access the program and navigate the system.

Generally, there is a basic misconception among some students and their families that study abroad is all fun and games, with no relevance to future careers or academics (Greeley and Doan, 2002). However, students from families who were exposed to study abroad or to other international opportunities are more likely to see the usefulness of these programs and their relevance towards achievement of their educational and future goals. These students occupy a different kind of habitus from those who consider study abroad programs as “luxuries.” It is very likely that due to the class position of the latter group, they have no close contacts with persons that have study abroad experience, not do they live or go to schools in areas that foster an international outlook; instead, they develop a limited frame of reference whereby study abroad is not a part of their world view and not for persons like themselves. Consequently, they self-select themselves out of this decision. This is because the habitus of students and parents tends to shape their expectations and conceptions of
study abroad programs. In this regard, the habitus has a significant impact on the decision of students and their parents to pursue this educational opportunity.

When all of these various theoretical perspectives are considered, they give insights into the subtle patterns and processes in the educational system and class experiences that may impact persons’ decisions whether to participate in study abroad programs. It is clear that race and class are persistent barriers in lower SES and Black students’ decisions to participate in study abroad programs. Therefore, the results of this study is expected to contribute to an ever growing body of knowledge which suggests that class and racial inequality are some of the most persistent forces to affect the life chances of students in all educational areas, including the opportunity to study abroad.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

DATA COLLECTION

In order to gain descriptive accounts of these students’ experiences with the study abroad process, I utilized the qualitative research technique following a semi-structured interview format. Seidman (1998) and Denzin (1970) argue that interviews are the most appropriate methods that would help a researcher to become knowledgeable about individuals’ experiences or “stories” in addition to understanding of how these persons define their own social realities (i.e. their thoughts and meanings). Since interviews are also appropriate for testing theory, answering specific research questions and collecting data, it satisfied the research objectives of this study. In order for me to define the parameters of the study more clearly and answer specific predetermined research questions that are important to the study objectives, I choose to conduct semi-structured interviews. Moreover, this method gave the researcher enough leverage to probe beyond the predetermined interview questions.

SAMPLING

The total sample for this study consisted of 21 respondents; five self-identified White students and six self-identified Black students who have participated in a study abroad program while enrolled at Georgia State University (GSU) in the last two years; There were also four self-identified White students and six self-identified Black students who were either interested in participating in study abroad or who applied to
a study abroad program in the last two years but did not participate in the program (Table 1).

**Table 1**

Table of sample population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents’ racial identification</th>
<th>Respondents who participated in a study abroad program</th>
<th>Respondents who were interested in study abroad or applied to program, but decided not to study abroad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were recruited by purposive convenience sampling with a snowballing effect. Recruitment was done as follows: through the directors of various study abroad programs located at GSU, through colleagues who participated with me on a study abroad program to Egypt, through email requests, and from flyers distributed in several classes around campus. I also contacted the Office of International Affairs, Study Abroad Programs for additional assistance with recruitment and they provided me with a list of emails of persons who satisfied my recruitment criteria. Upon receiving these addresses, I emailed these students a recruitment letter in order to explain the nature of the study and to solicit their participation (Appendix A).

At the start of the research, my goal was to interview equal numbers of White and Black students (n=10) who were participants and non-participants in study abroad (for a total of 20 respondents). However, five months into the data collection phase, I
realized that I only interviewed one White student who applied to a study abroad program, but did not participate in study abroad. I made several attempts to recruit more of these White respondents by contacting the campus study abroad office numerous times and by distributing flyers in several classes on campus (Appendix B). These attempts, however, were futile. Because of the low response rate, I decided to add to the recruitment criteria not only students who applied to go on a program, but those that were interested in study abroad, but had not applied to a study abroad program. For this group of respondents, I defined interest as having attended an information seminar at the campus study abroad office, which is usually the first step students take to access information when they make the decision to pursue study abroad. Despite my efforts of including new recruitment criteria, my overall number of White students only increased by three. Nevertheless, I noticed that instead of recruiting White students, I was recruiting more Black students who fit these criteria. Based on this reality, I decided to increase the number of Black respondents in both categories (participants and non-participants) which would allow for more clarity as to why Black students are underrepresented in study abroad and also, which students in this population are managing to study abroad.

Even though my initial goal was to utilize face to face interviewing for the study, I decided to conduct five telephone interviews. This format was decided upon due to the low response rate to my request for interviews. It should also be noted that some of the respondents who agreed to do these telephone interviews currently reside

---

4 The difficulties I experienced in accessing this population can be due to fact that Whites who were interested in studying abroad, are more likely to actually apply and eventually participate in study abroad than interested Blacks. Furthermore, they may be less likely to perceive barriers to study abroad than interested Blacks, due to their greater access to resources such as finances, help and support from families and the university community than their Black counterparts (Carroll, 1996; Washington, 1998).
out of state, while the others I interviewed over the phone worked full time and attended classes part time. The phone interviews each lasted for about an hour to an hour and fifteen minutes. The remaining 16 interviews were face to face. Fourteen were conducted in the research supervisor’s office, while two were conducted at the respondents’ homes at their request in the Atlanta area. Each face to face interview lasted for about one hour and a half to two hours. During the interviews, I took notes which recorded the non-verbal cues communicated to me. After of the interviews, all respondents agreed to be contacted either via email or telephone to address emerging issues and to provide better clarity to responses they provided.

Most respondents, especially those who studied abroad, revealed details of their experiences of the study abroad process with comfort and ease. This was encouraged by sharing my own experiences with the study abroad (I studied abroad in Egypt during the summer of 2006). Also, while conducting interviews with the majority of Black respondents, my position as a Black female helped to build a rapport of trust and comfort between myself and these mostly female respondents. This allowed them to talk about issues pertaining to race without hesitations. However, this is not to suggest that when questions about race emerged, every respondent was comfortable to give into details about their experiences. One Black respondent even questioned my reasoning for asking questions dealing with race. It is also interesting to note that asking for details about the experiences of non-participating respondents brought up some very poignant emotions for some these interviewees; this caused me to stop the tape temporarily in order for them to recollect themselves. Additionally, my position as a participant in a study abroad program may have allowed some respondents,
especially those that did not study abroad for financial reasons, to perceive me as “privileged” and thus, may have inhibited truthful answers about financial situations or barriers they personally experienced. However, I tried to remedy this situation by asking non-confrontational probing questions that allowed me greater contextual and conceptual understanding of their situations, while simultaneously maintaining respect and treating the information obtained throughout the interview with sensitivity.

LIMITATIONS

Due to the number of interviews, significant limitations were observed. Firstly, since my sample was small and was collected by the convenience sample method, generalizing interpretations of the results from this study must be done with caution. The advantage of a smaller sample size however, was that it enabled me to examine the phenomena under investigation in greater detail, since a significant amount of time was spent with the respondents understanding their social realities. Based on my usage of grounded theory methods that were adapted to meet my study requirements, my sample was more focused on theory construction as opposed to making representative statements related to the general population.

Secondly, I found that the face to face interviews were better at establishing connections, building rapport and developing overall trust between myself and the participants than telephone interviews. These phone interviews were difficult at times to understand respondent’s answers to certain questions. Thirdly, I realized that the majority of respondents were overwhelmingly female (n= 15); while the single male respondent that studied abroad in the sample was White. To some degree, this statistic mirrors the study abroad population in general, whereby males of all races, especially
Black males, are severely underrepresented in study abroad participation (Open Doors IIE, 2006). However, since this research is exploratory in nature, I believe that the advantages of the study outweigh the shortcomings. Finally, to some, the focus on Black and White respondents in this study may seem to overshadow the experiences of other racial and ethnic groups in the study abroad process. However, national figures indicate that Blacks are the minority group least likely to study abroad, while Whites are the group most likely to participate (Open Doors 2004 Report; Booker, 2000; Johnston and Edelstein, 1993; Advisory Council for International Educational Exchange Report, 1988); These reports provide the justification for my focus on these populations in order to examine the reasons for these stark disparities so as to develop a better understanding of why this disturbing trend persists. Drawing attention to these patterns that can explain disparities will present a framework that others may follow to investigate participation of other populations in the study abroad process.

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

A short five page questionnaire was administered to each participant to ascertain basic demographic information which was important for data analysis. Some of these questions included: “Have you ever traveled or lived abroad before your study abroad experience?” This question was asked in order to see if there was a relationship between prior international exposure and the decision to participate in study abroad. Other questions included highest level of education of mother, father or guardian, and level of family income which were used as measures of socioeconomic status (Appendix C).
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The interview schedule was used as a guide to focus the interviews. It was organized in accordance with the research questions I proposed in the Research Objectives and Questions section in Chapter one. The schedule was divided into three sections. The first section was focused on support systems that were available to Black and White students to help in their decision to study abroad. The second section examined the students’ access to support systems. The third section investigated the organization of the study abroad process for Black and White students, and the final section focused on the experiences of respondents who participated in a study abroad program (Appendix D). Two pilot interviews, one conducted on February 27, 2006 and the other on March 12, 2006, helped to refine the interview schedule.

ISSUES OF CONFIDENTIALITY

All the interviews were audio taped and then transcribed verbatim and saved onto a word processing software. For the telephone interviews, with the respondents’ permission, I recorded our conversations using a multi-phone recording controller that was connected to an audio tape recorder. All audio tapes were stored in a locked filing cabinet and the transcribed data was stored on a computer that is password protected. Pseudonyms were used instead of the participant’s real names to ensure confidentiality. Alternative names were also used when respondents referred to persons with whom they had interactions. I also changed some of the names of the study abroad program locations in order to further protect the identities of participants. The key to these names were also kept in the locked filing cabinet. These facts were made known to the participants through an Informed Consent Form, which clearly
stipulated the right of any respondent to withdraw from an interview at any time (Appendix E). The respondents who were interviewed via the telephone, were sent a signed copy of the Informed Consent Form via email to review a day before the interview. When it was time to conduct the interview, I explained the contents of the form and asked them to sign the form. All the telephone interviewees gave me permission to sign a copy on their behalf for the purpose of record keeping.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

As indicated in Tables 1 and 1.1 (Appendix F), the sample consisted of fifteen females and six males (n=21). This trend is indicative of the general U.S. study abroad population according to the Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange, whereby males only account for 34.5% of a total of 205,983 study abroad participants in the United States during the 2004/05 academic year (IIE, 2006). The respondents ranged in ages from 19 to 63. At the time when these respondents were deciding to pursue study abroad, three were graduate students and the remaining 18 were undergraduates. Nineteen respondents were either Liberal Arts, Social Science or Business majors. Only one respondent pursued a double major in Math and Swedish. One respondent had not decided on a major at the time she pursued study abroad.

The majority of the sample (n= 15) came from families with incomes that were above $25,000 a year. In terms of family income for Black respondents, four of the Black respondents’ reported that their family incomes were less than $25,000 a year. One respondent reported their family income was more than $25,000 but less than $50,000. The remaining seven respondents had family incomes that were above $50,000 a year. Of the White respondents, three reported that their family incomes
were less than $25,000 a year. One reported that their family income was more than $25,000 but less than $50,000. The remaining five respondents had incomes that were more than $50,000 but less than $75,000 a year (n=2) and more than $75,000 a year (n=3). A significant portion of the sample came from highly educated families. All of the Black respondents reported that at least one parent was college educated. Two of the Black participants reported that their father’s received either Master’s and/or Ph.D. degrees as their highest level of education. All except one of the White respondents reported that they had at least one parent that was college educated (Tables 2 and 2.1, Appendix F).

Two of the Black respondents were born outside of the United States (Jamaica and United Kingdom), while all of the White respondents were U.S. born. Five of the Black participants reported that at least one of their parents was born outside of the United States (Nigeria, Jamaica, India, Trinidad and England). This finding may indicate that this select group of Blacks, with international parentage may be more likely to study abroad than the general Black population in the U.S. Before participation in study abroad, two of the Black and three of the White respondents traveled overseas to such places as Western Europe, Nigeria, Iraq and Jamaica. Reasons given for these trips include church mission trips, military service, family vacations and a high school enrichment program. Three Black respondents and two White respondents lived overseas for a period exceeding three months. Of the non-study abroad participations, only one (Black respondent) had no prior international travel experience. Of the population that studied abroad, four had no prior travel experience before going on a study abroad program at GSU. Two of the Black
respondents had studied abroad before their enrollment at GSU (Tables 1 and 1.1, Appendix F).

Of the respondents that studied abroad, the majority (n =11) reported that they financed the majority of GSU education with grants, scholarships and student loans. When it came to financing study abroad, the majority (n =8) utilized a combination of scholarships or grants and personal finances to study abroad. Of the non-study abroad participations, two respondents relied primarily on their families to finance their higher education while the majority used a combination of personal income, loans and scholarships. All of these respondents (n= 10) planned on using personal finances to study abroad. Four respondents (two Blacks and two Whites) planned to solely use personal finances to study abroad, while the remainder of the sample planned to use a combination of scholarships/grants and personal finances for their study abroad programs (Tables 3 and 3.1, Appendix F).

**DATA ANALYSIS**

In order to analyze the data generated, I employed the Grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). However, I relied heavily on the interpretation of grounded theory methodology (GTM) by LaRossa (2005). LaRossa’s approach to GTM is a simplified version of the original methodology developed by Glaser and Strauss, later modified by Strauss and Corbin. The distinctions between the two interpretations will be mentioned in the body of this section.

The grounded theory process allows the researcher to be involved in simultaneous data collection, analysis and theory development as well as advancement (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In keeping with Strauss and Corbin’s typology, LaRossa
(2005) outlines three phases of GTM—open coding, axial coding and selective coding. I began with the open coding phase which is defined as “a procedure where data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomena reflected in the data” (Strauss and Corbin, 1988: 102). In order to analyze the data systematically, I employed the variable-concept-indicator model, first described by Glaser (1978), but refined by LaRossa (2005) and “which is predicated on the constant comparison of indicators (words or phrases)” (LaRossa, 2005: 841).

Based on this model, the first step in my analysis was to conduct a careful line-by-line analysis of all pages of my transcripts. I started to conduct open coding after I transcribed the first five completed interviews. For each transcript, I noted and examined words, sentences phrases or themes. Indicators reoccurred constantly. For example, I found indicators in the form of phrases such as: “I’ve always wanted to do a study abroad,” “I didn’t really know that much about study abroad,” “I wasn’t aware [of study abroad] until I took the class.” From these indicators, I created the concept degrees of “Awareness.” I started to dimensionalize (create new concepts from one concept) this “Awareness” concept even further and created the following new concepts: “High awareness of study abroad opportunities,” “Limited awareness of study abroad opportunities,” and “No awareness of study abroad opportunities.” From these concepts, I generated the variable “Degrees of Awareness of study abroad opportunities.” In LaRossa’s version of GTM, he suggests that the term “variable” be substituted for “category” “in order to emphasize the dimensionality among concepts” (p. 843). In addition, I dimensionalized these concepts even further to create the sub-
variables: “Levels of Pre-College awareness of study abroad” (low to high) and “Types of means of becoming aware of study abroad opportunities” (through college promotion, not through college promotion). I noticed that other indicators were present that supported the concept “Awareness of study abroad opportunities.” Indicators such as “I talked to my roommate who told me about the study abroad fair,” “[My professor] told me about her putting together this program for Rio,” and also “The idea [of study abroad] was reinforced to me several times in class,” made me think about the different ways these persons were being made aware of study abroad opportunities.

Based on the respondents’ answers, I noted on a memo that interviewees can become aware of study abroad through various means, such as from Faculty, Friends, Promotional materials, and previous experience; under these conceptual headings, I created multiple tables in a Word file to record my findings. Next, I used this memo to create several concepts such as “Becoming aware through faculty,” and “Becoming aware through friends.” However, I noticed that because I created so many concepts, there were not enough indicators for each of its dimensions. For instance, I noticed that the concepts “Promotional materials” only had a few indicators, while other concepts such as “Media” had only one indicator. Ultimately, this paucity of indicators would prevent the theoretical saturation of the concept and the eventual variable. By constantly comparing the indicators, I proceeded to subsume several concepts into only two main concepts that created greater depth, without compromising precision and remaining relevant to all the indicators found. Thus, I created the concept “Not through college promotion,” and under this, I placed
concepts such as “Becoming aware through travel” and “Becoming aware through family.” When this concept became theoretically saturated i.e., in which the contained numerous indicators and the addition of new indicators which added no new insights to the concept (LaRossa, 2005), they were used to generate the variable “Types of means of becoming aware of study abroad opportunities.” Examples of other theoretically saturated variables generated at this stage included: “Quality of guidance from institutional agents” (Weak to Consistent), and “Types of support to study abroad” (Verbal, Financial, Informational, Positive Attitude, Child Care).

After open coding, I moved on to the axial coding process of GTM. Axial coding involves “developing hypotheses or propositions” (LaRossa, 2005: 848) and also involves “the process of relating categories to their subcategories” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 123). Drawing on Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) paradigm model, I examined the causes, consequences, contingencies, covariance and contexts of the data (LaRossa, 2005). When employed, these procedures allow for the refinement and modification of concepts, the abstraction of categories as well as the development of theory.

During this process, I examined how the variables I created had an effect on or a causal connection with subsequent variables. I was basically looking for a sequence of events that would expand my knowledge of the various variables and the elements of the relationship among variables. I made sure that my variables took into account the process of time. For instance, from the variable “Types of international exposure” I created another variable by reviewing my questions from the transcript that pertained to international exposure to see if there were explicit references to time, frequency or
duration of international exposure. After reviewing the transcript, I found words and phrases such as “always,” “frequently traveled,” “never.” I grouped these indicators into concepts that I had dimensionalized in my memos, such as Constant, infrequent, and no international exposure. Once these distinct concepts were determined, I began to conceptualize the variable “Duration of international exposure.” I therefore transposed the concept of international exposure into a set of variables (LaRossa, 2005: 850).

Throughout this refinement and modification process (which occurred with numerous other concepts and variables), I also thought about developing hypothesis and propositions among certain variables. For the variables developed, I temporarily choose one as the main focus of analysis and this is typically called a focal variable (LaRossa, 2005). This process was repeated until I went through each and every variable, in order to recognize a causal relationship between certain variables. For instance, for the variable “level of social support,” the higher the level of social support a person received (Focal Variable), the more likely they are to feel confident enough to pursue study abroad (Consequence). Also, the more likely a person is to become aware of studying abroad, through a professor for instance (Cause), the more likely they are to receive a higher level of social support from them. However, this relationship can be affected by intervening conditions such as, the “level of connections with a professor” or “race.” Hence, even though a student may be getting support in the form of verbal encouragement from a professor to study abroad, the level of support depends on the relationship between this student and the professor, and is also influenced by the race of student and the professor. Based on social
network literature, the more cultural and racial similarities that exist between persons, the more likely they are to form strong ties (Putnam, 1995). It follows that because of these strong ties, students and professors, who are ethnically and culturally similar, are more likely to share emotionally substantive relationships than those who are dissimilar (Granovetter, 1983).

After I created these links between variables, I refined these relationships by developing a diagram that not only illustrated all of the possible connections between variables (Figure 1, Appendix G), but helped me to think abstractly and logically about the data which helped in fine tuning various hypotheses. In Figure 1, I demonstrate that there was one consequential variable Participation in study abroad and six major causal variables (Forms of international exposure, Types of travel desires, Types of motivating delivery of study abroad information, Nature of social support, Means of obtaining study abroad information, Quality of guidance) that were linked and which impacted the pursuit to study abroad. The horizontal arrows in the diagram represent the direction of the relationship between these causal variables and the interactions between them. For instance, the types of delivery of study abroad information such as scholarships which can be announced by a professor in class; this influences the nature of social support (gaining information about finances from a professor). The vertical arrows represent intervening conditions, which alter the impact of these causal relationships. The final variable in the diagram (Participation in study abroad), shows the consequences or the outcomes of the causal relationships (non-participation or participation in study abroad).
I noticed that these causal variables were the most theoretically saturated and they followed a sequential process similar to the model outlined in the college choice literature, which provides details of the process used by high school students when applying and selecting a college to attend (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987). For instance, in order for the majority of respondents to have a travel desire, they must have had some international exposure; thus “forms of international exposure” influenced the “types of travel desires.” This sequence of events would take place in the “Aspiration” stage of the study abroad process, whereby respondents were beginning to formulate the idea of studying abroad. Even though stages phases progress in a linear fashion, they were not always mutually exclusive because some elements of one stage overlapped into another stage.

In order to develop hypotheses, I used the diagram in Figure 1 to formulate several linkages in the data. For example, respondents who lived with a parent born outside of the United States (Forms of international exposure) were considered to have had consistent international exposure (Duration of international exposure) due to the experience of family members who lived abroad. This high frequency of international exposure through family members (talking with parent about life in another country) influenced the “types of travel desires” of these respondents. For instance, a respondent who lived with a foreign born parent was taught that traveling to different countries would help to become more “cultured.” This travel desire would be influenced by many intervening conditions such as SES of the family and the “pre-college awareness of study abroad.” Consequently, those respondents who were knowledgeable about study abroad opportunities in addition to having enough
discretionary income to travel, were more likely to consider the feasibility of their travel desires. They are also more likely to see study abroad as a means to fulfill these desires which have a direct impact on the “motivating delivery of study abroad information,” presented to them in the form of positive words and career advice about the benefits of study abroad. The influence of this information is also based on the perceptions of study abroad (negative/positive) for instance. A more detailed discussion of the trends in this diagram is presented in the Discussion and Analysis section of the thesis.

I also paid particular attention to strategies, tactics, maneuvers, negotiating, positioning, dominating and ploys employed by the respondents to see how they negotiated their social situations (LaRossa, 2005). All the students engaged in some form of negotiating and strategizing to help them in their decision to study abroad. For instance, in terms of program choice, many students choose a location where they felt some degree of “comfort.” Also, because of prior travel experience to a particular location that was being offered as a study abroad program option, some students felt that they were comfortable with the local people and they could easily “blend in” or find “cultural connections” with the locals. Additionally, some students chose programs because of the comfort in knowing that a competent professor or program director was there to facilitate understanding of the host society.

Finally, for the selective coding phase, I selected a core variable i.e. a central phenomenon that has emerged from the axial coding process (LaRossa, 2005). This core variable allowed for the development of a theoretical framework of interrelated concepts that showed posited relationships between central concepts. Thus, the core
variable must be related in some way to all other variables generated and must possess “analytical power” to explain variation in the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 146).

“Variations in the possession and usage of resources” was the core variable selected for this investigation of the study abroad process. The rationale for this selection was based on recognition of its connective power through review of my memos and variable tables. I also noticed how respondents differed not only in their possession of resources (types of social support) (such as information about study abroad programs, finances, institutional help with locating a program), but also how they transformed their resources in order to produce the desired goal of studying abroad. This variable emphasizes not only the structural privileges these respondents possessed, but most importantly, the advantages they derive from the exertions of agency. For instance, even though some respondents possessed these aforementioned resources, some decided not to transform their capital (having finances to study abroad and recommendation of viable programs) into benefits that would produce a desired outcome of studying abroad; instead, at the end of the process, they chose not to study abroad. I found that this variable created the most interesting and compelling story, and had clear implications for the theories of social and cultural capital. Eventually, I related this core variable to all my other variables, some of them representing contexts, conditions, actions, interactions and consequences. The core variable also explained variation among my other variables (Strauss and Corbin 1998:147).

From the theoretical implications of this variable, I hypothesized that “variations in the possession and usage of resources” in the study abroad process had a direct impact on “Forms of international exposure.” For instance, it was deduced
that some respondents, who had traveled abroad on vacation with their families, (considered a cultural resource), had to realize that this resource was valuable in order to conceive of travel desires. For some of these respondents, traveling and interacting with different populations overseas allowed them to challenge stereotypes they had harbored about these persons. Prior travel overseas was also recognized by some respondents as a factor that shaped their travel desires to gain a better “understanding” of other populations through travel. In other words, they used their resources (previous travel) and transformed it into something beneficial (cultural knowledge), which allowed them to eventually see study abroad as something that would fulfill this travel desire (greater understanding of cultures).

The core variable also impacted the “nature of social support” respondents received from agents, and peers. Most importantly, this core variable also accounted for the variations among Black and low income students and Whites who decided not to study abroad. Some respondents, especially Black respondents who did not study abroad, had significant “variations in the possession and usage of resources” which impacted the “quality of guidance” they received. Some were unable to possess resources such as information about the availability of study abroad programs. This was because of their “level of connections with (certain knowledgeable) agents” were weak and thus were unable to utilize this information (resources) in order to choose a program to study abroad. This, however was in contrast to Whites who did not study abroad; they possessed a variety of resources which impacted their “quality of guidance,” but they failed to utilize these resources for the benefit of studying abroad.
In addition to the above value of the core variable, it has clear implications for more general theoretical development (Strauss 1987: 36) because it can lead to a better understanding of the decision making process of how and when individuals choose to purposefully reproduce their privileges in a wide variety of social settings beyond the educational environment.

Throughout the findings of this study there is an integration of the core variable “variations in the possession and usage of resources.” Overall, the study is presented in the form of findings which are divided into chapters. Each chapter represents the major stages of the study abroad process. Chapter Four details the “The Aspiration Stage;” Chapter Five outline the “The Search Stage;” while Chapter Six documents the “The Choice Stage.”
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

THE ASPIRATION STAGE

In the following section, I offer insights into the processes that comprise the “Aspiration Stage:” the first of three stages in the study abroad process. These elements play a seminal role in shaping the desires and motivations of students to eventually study abroad. The results at this stage demonstrate how this sample is predisposed to studying abroad, since they each possessed resources and cultural capital, which enabled them to easily conceive of and subscribe to the idea of international travel. I reveal how respondents varied in their activation and usage of cultural capital resources generated from their social environment. By choosing to take advantage of these privileges, participants became aware of and eventually accessed study abroad opportunities to achieve their international travel goals.

CONCEIVING OF THE IDEA OF INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Having a “global” worldview

Before the respondents’ even conceived of the idea to study abroad, they first had to aspire to travel abroad. Historically, educational travel in particular, was a way in which affluent Europeans could become acculturated to the wider world by seeing “difference” in order to prepare them to take their place in civilized society (Clark, 1999; Leed, 1991; Willinsky, 1998; Withey, 1997). Despite the increase in ease and access to international travel opportunities in the modern era, it is still associated with elite consumption and privilege (Clark, 1999). The majority of respondents had both the financial resources and international exposure to comfortably conceive of this idea.
of travel. Additionally, they tended to reproduce these ideologies of “difference” in their travel desires and worldviews.

Respondents’ travel desires were fueled by their “global imaginations,” a mindset which allowed them to envision their life’s possibilities existing beyond their national boundaries (Nieoczym, 1997). As such, these aspirations could only be fulfilled by visiting different countries. For instance, respondents mentioned that travel could achieve a multitude of objectives for them. These included “seeing something new,” “experiencing something different or exotic,” “gaining a different perspective about the world,” or to just “escaping from the U.S.” Implicit in these sentiments are the ways in which dominant, middle class cultural narratives of travel inform them. One of the main ways in which this reproduction of the power structure is achieved is through the construction of visions of the world outside of the United States as “exotic,” “new,” and “different;” these are descriptions learnt by way of socialization from the mass media especially (Urry, 1990). These notions subscribe to a hegemonic ideology that is informed by dominant discourses whereby travel is analogous to “shopping” and international travel is related to seeing “difference” or something “exotic” (Fordham, 2002:165). In order to see “something new,” one has to go somewhere else to experience it, and thus “encounter it and consume it”; travel, therefore, “is a spectacle to be viewed and encountered” (165). Furthermore, to label a place “different” speaks to the preoccupation with the distinctiveness of a culture of a nation in relation to the traveler’s country of origin (usually located in the West) in which the culture is usually defined as “normal” and some cases “superior” to the host society’s culture which is usually non-Western (Said, 1979; Urry, 1990). Ultimately,
framing travel in this particular way perpetuates class privilege, since an individual needs material and non-material resources to comfortably believe and subscribe to these discourses. The influence of the dominant ideology on respondent’s ideas about international travel is reflected in Natasha’s (a White female who studied abroad in Brazil) following statement, when I asked her how she became interested in study abroad:

For me to travel, just to be able to travel. I’ve always wanted to be able to see different places. You know, we live in a globalizing [sic] world and we have the internet and T.V. and so you get to see all this stuff on T.V. and just the fact, the knowledge, that you could have the chance to see it in person, and experience it in person, is very tempting to me... Like, I've always wanted to go to say, Egypt or Ghana.

Natasha has consumed many of these images of the world mostly from the media, which informs how she views the travel experience. Urry (1991) calls this outlook the “tourist gaze,” in that, the way in which travelers “see” the world is constructed and influenced by social institutions. Her assumption that visiting another country will be an authentic vision of the host country that she has to “see it in person” is negating the fact that she has a preconceived notion about what she will see, mostly informed by media constructions. Thus, she ignores the fact that these places are “signified through discourse even before she ventures there” (Urry, 1990: 2; Fordham 2002: 163).

Similarly, Rachael’s (a White female who is interested in study abroad, but has not applied to a program) response to the same question, also mirrors a world image mediated by dominant discourses of the “Other.”
I guess I just kinda had this idea that if you go anywhere it’s gonna feel cool, just cause its different because... I think especially other cultures like, we were talking about Japan earlier, I mean just because it’s so different, I couldn’t get bored. I would just be like “Ohhh!,” its so different here

Rachael is not only reproducing a popular notion of the “other,” that reflects popular Western stereotypes of the East, but her perceptions of this “difference” are also inadvertently shaping her future cultural encounters (Said, 1979). The previous examples suggest that by ascribing to these worldviews about travel, it sustains and reinforces dominant middle class cultural narratives about difference. Not surprisingly, the majority of my sample, both Black and White, either had the financial resources and/or experiences to subscribe to this worldview comfortably. Because of their access to these resources, this worldview played a key role in influencing the habitus or disposition of persons in my sample.

Socialized to have a global worldview: The role of the habitus

The Families’ influence on the habitus

The hegemonic perceptions about international travel played a significant role in informing each of the respondents’ habitus (the habits, attitudes, values, and judgments) that individuals receive from their social milieu (family, community, social networks) (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1997). Just under half of my sample (n=9) received knowledge about travel experiences based on the meanings gleaned from family members experiences. Patrick, a Black male, was interested in studying abroad in China, experienced traveling abroad before he enrolled in college, he was able to get the impression from his parents experience of traveling and living abroad, that international travel allowed you to become more “worldly,” This is reflected in Patrick’s response that follows:
My parents were born in England and I guess by default they moved with their parents to Guyana at a young age and they moved back to England so they already kinda have that journey or the willingness to I guess, look at new cultures, adapt to new cultures and stuff like that.

Furthermore, Alexis, a Black female who studied abroad in Egypt, associated international travel with becoming more “cultured” i.e. being educated about cultures and the world outside of the United States; She developed this impression and desire to travel from her mother’s insistence that she visit India, her mother’s country of origin.

My mom is not originally from America. I think this allows her to be more supportive of the idea of international travel you know. She encourages any opportunity that presents itself to help me become more, I guess, cultured... It is her dream to get me to go to India, where she is from, and experience her homeland.

These two examples illustrate the centrality of the popular upper middle and middle class narratives of travel in these respondents’ lives. In order to be “worldly” and “cultured,” one must travel to experience these transformations. Furthermore, these hegemonic notions are accepted, validated and reproduced by their families’ cultural backgrounds, lifestyles, overseas experiences and attitudes towards international travel.

By virtue of having at least one parent who is foreign born, the previous respondents’ desires for travel are validated and are seen as something that is possible worthwhile and directly contributing to their habitus. This consistent exposure therefore, had a tremendous impact on their habitus. Clearly, these particular families had the ability to reproduce privilege by passing on the nuances of international travel
to their children from an early age; this in turn informed these respondents’
dispositions (Horvat, 2003; Swartz, 1997; McDonough, 1997).

Other respondents were directly exposed to international travel through personal
experiences such as numerous vacations and church based missionary trips with their
families. The constant exposure to these experiences cemented the idea that
international travel was the norm and allowed them to have a first hand understanding
of what an overseas experience entailed. Brianna, a White female, who is interested in
studying abroad, but has yet to participate in a study abroad program, was able to
identify the particulars of what she wanted out of a travel experiences based on her
family vacation to Europe. She states:

_This summer, I went to Europe and that was fun. I went to Italy and Greece. It
was a vacation. I loved Italy! However, the way my parents travel it’s like let’s
bring the U.S. to another country and it’s just like different scenery. So we
stayed in you know, American standard of living type places and we know, did
the tourist thing and stuff which was great, you know, but that’s not the way I
like to travel. I like to you know, stay with a host family or you know, stay in a
hostel and actually get immersed in the culture._

Even though her family stressed the importance of travel during several other tourist
and mission trips, Brianna realized she did not want to Americanize her travels. Thus,
by experiencing international trips with her family, she had the opportunity to critique
these experiences and decide on what she preferred on her travel experiences. This
mindset, therefore, contributed to her habitus (disposition).

**Extra-familial influence on the habitus**

Some respondents were also exposed to international stimuli outside of their
immediate family and these contributed significantly to their habitus or disposition,
which in turn influenced their aspirations to travel. These stimuli included growing up
in a multi-cultural community with frequent contact with persons from different countries, being a part of a social network that was comprised of international peers, participating in international exchange trips while in high school, and taking courses in college with international components. For Carla, a Black female who studied abroad in Ghana and Brazil, her experiences of growing up in a “primarily West Indian neighborhood” in New York and being surrounded at school “with a bunch of Panamanians, Russians, Jewish people as well as Irish, and Italian people,” made her more aware of cultural differences and diversity. This exposure influenced her attitude and aspirations toward travel; It also encouraged her to “learn more about other cultures” that were new and unfamiliar to her and to learn “something new.” Other respondents like Rosa, a Black female who studied abroad in Spain, mentioned that growing up in an “ethnically diverse community” where she played mostly with Hispanic kids, exposed her to Spanish language and culture which influenced her to learn more about Spanish culture through travel.

In addition to illustrating the effects of growing up in a multicultural community on the habitus, respondents also gained international exposure from interacting with international friends in their social networks via the social space of work and school. For example, Andrew, a White male, who studied abroad in Egypt, mentioned conversations with this Egyptian workmate how discussed cultural differences his friend encountered during his first trip to the United States. These revelations socialized Andrew to the fact that traveling to certain regions of the world would expose him to inequalities that he has not experienced personally in the United States. He recalls as follows:
[My Egyptian friend] told me about his first experiences when he had come over to the United States being directly, only living in Egypt before and then coming over and living in the United States. He’s putting together a volleyball tent cause they were gonna have a party and play volleyball, and he’s putting the poles together and he’s pushing and he’s pushing and just can’t get these poles together and his friend who’s also from Egypt comes over to him and puts his hand on his shoulder and says [in a serious tone] “Hakim, you’re in America now, if it doesn’t fit your doing it wrong.” And so to me, that just told a whole story! A whole story, you know, about those differences, just the [cultural] differences like when I would go there over, what I would expect...

The previous accounts illustrate the influence of neighborhoods and social networks outside of the immediate family environment on the habitus of my respondents (Small and Newman, 2001; Reay, 1995; McDonough, 1997). These attitudes, judgments, experiences and knowledge gained from their social milieu, contributed largely to their ideas about travel and to the notion that travel was a worthwhile opportunity to work towards.

Creating cultural capital: The role of resources and the habitus

The majority of participants in my sample also had a variety of cultural and social resources at their disposal, which they utilized to help them realize that international travel was possible and viable. Social and cultural resources can be defined as cultural and social knowledge, financial resources, or social networks, among other attributes (Useem, 1992). Many of these respondents were endowed with this capital by virtue of the fact that they were born into families that possessed significant amounts. Some respondents’ families provided such resources as finances, due to their family’s socio-economic status (SES), and international knowledge acquired through their foreign born parents. Allison for example, a Black student who studied abroad in Brazil and Argentina, has Nigerian parents both of whom have university degrees; her father has a Ph.D. degree and she reported that her family
income was over $75,000 a year. Furthermore, she also traveled abroad with her family, visiting Nigeria on a vacation. Not only did Allison gain international knowledge from her parents in regards to what it was like being in another society, but she experienced this herself through travel. From her own travel experience, she was able to realize more fully the vast difference between seeing African populations on television and actually interacting with these people.

For other respondents, they accumulated additional resources or gained resources through their family’s influence, which was manifested through support of international related activities. These included family members stressing the importance of international travel and study abroad. They also emphasize the long term benefits of international travel, the exposure to cultural and social activities with international components such as vacations and other activities abroad. Brianna’s following statement was indicative of her family’s possession of a variety of these valuable resources. When mentioning the influence of her parents encouragement about study abroad, she stated: “[They said], you know, this is the only time in your life that we’re gonna pay for your travel and you know it’s a really great advantage because you don’t have anything tying you down like a family or a job or anything.” In Brianna’s case, we can see that she enjoyed the benefits of little fiscal responsibility along with the assurance that if she studied abroad, her parents were willing to pay for this expenditure. She also traveled extensively with her parents, going on vacations to Europe with her family some summers, and also visited friends on her own personal trips to Venezuela and France. Moreover, her parents were college educated, having both attained Master’s degrees, and she reported her family income as being over
$75,000 a year. Clearly, Brianna had access to a wealth of material and non-material resources in shaping her decision to travel.

Finally, students acquired resources outside of the family environment, via communities, schools or at work. Participants accessed resources in these spaces by socializing with people from different countries at work and at school, joining an international organization at school or on campus, and maintaining friendships with friends who were foreign born. It should be noted that these examples were not mutually exclusive, and that some respondents acquired resources from multiple, if not all, of the aforementioned examples. For instance, Rosa gained significant knowledge-based resources about international travel from her mother who traveled extensively to the Caribbean, and from socializing with her best friend who was Mexican, and also from growing up in an ethnically diverse community.

Despite the fact that most of the participants possessed certain types of capital, access to these resources, however, was mediated by race and class (Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Roscigno and Anisworth-Darnell, 1999; Lewis, 2003; Lareau, 2000, 2003; Roscigno, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Oliver and Shapiro, 1995; Ogbu, 1994). For instance, of the 12 Black students interviewed, nearly half (n =5) got this international exposure from sources outside of the family compared with two (2) out of the nine (9) White respondents interviewed. Whites, therefore, were more likely to be knowledgeable about international experiences based on resources from their families than from external sources. Interestingly, the majority of the Black participants who eventually studied abroad were more likely to gain knowledge-based resources from extra familial sources than from their families.
One explanation for this situation is that White families are slightly more likely to have the financial resources to facilitate these international experiences than Black families (Mattai and Ohiwerei, 1989; Cole, 1990; Hembroff and Rusz, 1993; Carroll, 1996; Jarvis and Jenkins, 2000; Ganz, 1991; Carter, 1991). In the sample, White students were slightly more likely to come from families with higher incomes than Black families (See Tables 2 and 2.1). It follows that due to historical and contemporary day inequalities among Blacks and Whites in the U.S. (Oliver and Shapiro, 1997; Bonilla-Silva and Lewis, 1999; Massey and Denton, 1993; Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith, 1997; West, 1994; Johnson, 2006), the majority of the White families compared to Black families in this sample would have greater access to finances and more likely to have greater access to discretionary income for international activities such as vacations or sending their children on high school overseas exchanges. Because of these structural advantages, Middle class White children especially, would be exposed earlier to travel opportunities or international experiences than lower income and African American families (Cole, 1990). For some of the Black respondents, their international worldview was fostered through extra familial contacts, such as at school or in college; This was because their families were not foreign born, had never experienced international travel, had negative perceptions international travel as “unsafe” and “a waste of time” or just did not have the financial resources to facilitate it.

However, I noticed that Black participants with at least one foreign born parent, were more likely to have higher incomes than their Black counterparts with American born parents. The foreign born parents in this sample were either from Africa, the
Caribbean or Asia, and were mostly university educated. This finding supports the literature that shows the average Black immigrant from the British Caribbean islands and Africa are slightly more educated and make higher earnings than native born African Americans (Massey et al, 2007; Kalmijn 1996; The Economist 1996; Waters 1999). Moreover, according to the U.S. 2004 Census, the median income for Africans is just over $45,000 compared with $41,000 for Afro-Caribbeans and just under $36,000 for native-born African Americans. Similar to my sample, all of the Black participants with foreign born parents (n = 5) reported incomes of over $50,000 compared with incomes of less than $25,000 for the majority of Black respondents with American parents (n = 5). Only two Black respondents with American parents reported that their family income was more than $75,000 a year. Consequently, the children of these immigrants will be exposed to financial and cultural resources that would impact their habitus from an earlier age, and are more likely to come from families who are supportive of the idea of international travel than native-born Blacks who lack these resources.

Based on their habitus (the attitudes, values and knowledge they acquired from their socialization about international travel), the majority of my respondents knew how to effectively utilize these cultural resources that they acquired from various environs. Nevertheless, they realized that they needed to invest in these resources to achieve their desires for international travel. The interviewees underwent a process whereby they realized advantages from their habitus; a process defined as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1998; Lareau, 2000:177). Thus, the habitus allows individuals to learn how to convert resources into cultural capital.
Lareau (2000) suggests that resources are transformed into cultural capital through a three part process. This involves “Possessing cultural resources, Activating and investment of these resources and finally, Attaining social profits from these investments” (178). Following these steps, the majority of my sample, despite having fairly similar middle class SES, used their resources in different ways to create cultural capital; this was based on their individual dispositions or habitus (Lareau, 2000). These differences can be seen in how the following respondents transformed their resources into cultural capital. As mentioned before, Allison went on a family vacation with her parents to Nigeria before she attended college. Before she traveled abroad, she mentioned that she had a negative perception of Africa based on media depictions of the continent. However, her visit to Nigeria and interaction with locals changed her perception. She states:

*Once I went on the trip to Nigeria I was like, I really need to travel. Cause I mean you get a different perspective when you go to that country, when you interact with the people than how you’re I guess, how the media portrays people here uhm, how you see people you know, just through T.V. and everything here. That was one of the main reasons [I want to travel], just to learn about different cultures and interact with different people....*

Based on Allison’s comments, finances (which facilitated the trip) and her travel experiences were some of the resources that she possessed. Her habitus, which included knowledge of international travel (based on parents’ overseas experiences and her own), her families’ positive attitudes towards international travel (taking their family on a vacation) and experiences of international travel allowed her to transform these resources into cultural capital by realizing a social advantage from these privileges. This was done by Allison through realization of some of the advantages of travel, that it has the ability to challenge preconceived notions and to transform her
way of thinking about different cultures through direct interaction. This realization and knowledge helped her to see that travel was indeed beneficial and worthwhile. She also gained insights from this experience about future travel; this would be considered cultural capital.

Another respondent, Andrew, who never traveled overseas before his study abroad experience to Egypt, possessed resources from his social network; these included international friends who exposed him to their culture, an aunt who worked as a travel agent and who talked about her travel experiences, and a friend who is a diplomat to whom he spoke regularly. Andrew mentioned during our interview that the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks on U.S. soil was “a wake up call” for him in terms of the realization that there was a wider world outside of U.S. borders, and that he hardly took the time to seriously understand this world. Due in part to this event, Andrew consciously made the decision to know about the wider world by talking to his international friends (resources) and (whom he already had relationships with and some of these friends already told him about their experiences) and engaging them in conversations about their cultures and various happenings around the world. In this regard, Andrew transformed his resources into cultural capital by deciding to take the steps to gain information and about international issues and travel from his friends. The fact that he knew how to use his resources at the right time, and also knowing that he could talk to his friends about September 11th incidents, is considered his habitus. In this case, his habitus was guiding his decisions because he was accustomed to talking with his international network about their experiences and this allowed him to understand more about their lives. Andrew was therefore aware that
his resources could yield social benefits (seeking out his friends and talking with them, awareness of other cultures and countries) which would eventually help him when he travels internationally.

These preceding illustrations show that cultural capital is a very elusive concept to identify and to pinpoint, because attitudes, knowledge and decisions were so integrated into the lives of these students that it seems so “commonsensical” not only to them but from an outsider’s perspective as well. Furthermore, these accounts also reveal that their habitus, which informs these actions and decisions, is dialectical, in that, there is an intersection between individual’s actions and the social structures that shape these actions (Horvat 2003; DiMaggio, 1979).

**Activating cultural capital by pursuing study abroad**

Research has shown that merely possessing cultural capital does not automatically translate into social advantages. Cultural capital therefore, has to be “activated” for it to lead to a profit (Aschaffenbur and Maas, 1997; Lareau and Horvat 1999; Horvat 1997; Lareau, 2000). As such, Lareau and Horvat (1999) make the distinction between “activated” and “unactivated” cultural capital (Lareau and Horvat 1999: 38; Lareau, 2000 177-179). Relating these concepts to my respondents’ experiences, I noted that the majority of my sample turned their “unactivated” cultural capital into “activated” cultural capital in a variety of ways. One of these ways was by deliberately pursuing study abroad as a means to achieve their travel goals.

The majority of my respondents (n= 14) were aware of study abroad opportunities before they attended GSU. They got this information from a variety of sources including college promotion literature, family members and members, of their
social networks who have experienced or knew of study abroad, participation in international exchanges in high school and attending schools that promoted these programs. For some respondents who were enrolled in graduate school at the time of the interview, they learned of studying abroad from personal experience, through participation in programs as an undergraduate at a college other than GSU. Finally, other respondents such as those who transferred to GSU, discovered these opportunities from taking classes with international components at their former institutions where study abroad was seen as a way to achieve greater competency in a subject area such as in a foreign language class. This awareness and knowledge of study abroad opportunities can be considered a resource that the majority of respondents possessed. For instance, the majority of Shannon’s family members participated in study abroad and they were able to provide direct knowledge about the benefits and advantages of the opportunity as a way to travel. When asked what her family told her about study abroad, she replied:

_Uhm, all of them [family members] are really positive about it [study abroad], they said that it was best thing they’ve ever done and that uhm I guess that no matter what your, what your field of study going abroad gives you a different view of it...._

For Shannon, a White female, who applied to go on a program to France but did not end up going, she gained insight into what study abroad entailed, in that, it could be applied to whatever major she decided to pursue in college and that it could enrich any subject area by exposing her to new perspectives. Other participants such as Ricardo, a Black male who has an interest in studying abroad but has not applied to a program as yet, knew about the career advantages associated with studying abroad from this
cousins who participated in exchanges in college. Thus, these and other students were aware of their privileges (knowledge of study abroad) and took advantage of them by activating their resources and pursuing study abroad. Conversely, those respondents who had minimal exposure to study abroad had very different perceptions of it compared with the previous examples. According to Natasha, a White female who studied abroad in Brazil, she perceived study abroad as an expensive activity that only the more affluent in society could afford. Since she did not think she had enough discretionary income to put towards study abroad, she imagined that it was beyond her reach. She recalls:

*I actually, I had assumed that I was too broke to go ever go on study abroad. Growing up, I always imagined that like certain...that was something that rich people did, something in movies or whatever. Its you know, usually its people that are well off who are going on study abroad, you know that’s something that rich people do, they go backpack through Europe when they graduate high school or college*

Similarly, Alexis, a Black female who studied abroad in Egypt, she first heard about study abroad opportunities from friends and through promotions in her Spanish classes and she believed that people engaged in study abroad to learn a foreign language. But Spanish was not her major, therefore she got the impression that study abroad could not be applied to her major areas of interest. Additionally, she presumed that it was very expensive. She describes her initial feelings towards study abroad, when I asked what got her interested in it:

*I wasn’t even really thinking about studying abroad, kinda had like a negative perception of it. I thought it was gonna be like, a big waste of money. I thought the price was gonna be ridiculous. Yeah, I did think it wasn’t gonna be worth my money. My scope was narrowed to only seeing study abroad as a way to travel overseas and learn another language. Honestly, like, I never really thought*
about study abroad as encompassing a pool of other subjects that could, in fact, be ten times more interesting and or relevant to what I am truly interested in.

The variations in these respondent’s perceptions of study abroad can be explained by the habitus, which is generated by the social conditions of the lived experiences of these respondents (Swartz, 1997). The majority of students both Black and White, who had a positive perception of study abroad, indicated that they were supported and encouraged by family members, who expected them to study abroad. As such, this influenced their decision to look into study abroad as a way to achieve their travel goals. Some respondent’s parents explicitly stated that they wanted their child to study abroad when they got to college, or encouraged them to attend study abroad fairs while at college. In addition to providing direct encouragement, other structural based resources such as finances, was instrumental in shaping the perception that study abroad was possible. Similar to MacLeod’s (1995) research on working class social reproduction, in which the low-income Hallway Hangers only aspire to working class employment positions, the respondents’ whose families were less financially stable, they and their family members especially, could not envision study abroad as part of their reality, due to the perception of its high cost (Dessoff, 2006). However, not only were these respondents’ habitus shaped by class, but it was also influenced by race (Horvat and Antonio, 1999; Lewis, 2003; Horvat, 2003; Lareau, 2000; Carter, 2000). This is exemplified in an interview with Tiffany, a Black female, who studied abroad in Brazil, Sri Lanka and Mexico; she mentioned that her peers and mother (who was native born) got the impression that study abroad was “something White people do”
and beyond her reality, and thus she was not exposed to the idea of participating in study abroad. She recalls:

*In high school, they had an exchange program and, it wasn’t even like kinda an option for me go. I feel like, its funny, I tell her [my mother] all the time, like I feel like a lot of White parents encourage their kids to go abroad, cause they like backpacking and stuff. So I think for her its kinda like, what? What is it?, Why do you wanna do this? I feel like a lot Black people just don’t engage in that kinda stuff. Where’s just kinda like, that’s a White thing to study abroad, that’s a White thing to travel. Like a lot of people from Chicago [where respondent grew up] don’t venture out of Chicago*

Even though the majority of the Black respondents got positive affirmations from family members to study abroad, this important example is a trend found widely in the literature as a reason for the low level of Black participation in study abroad in general (Hembroff and Rusz, 1993). The reason for this disparity in this particular sample could stem from the fact that the Black respondents with at least one foreign born parent, were more likely to gain encouragement to study abroad from these family members, as opposed to respondents with native born parents who had limited or no international exposure. The interviewees who were more likely to know about the benefits of study abroad and what it entailed, had a more positive perception of it (knew that it was a way to achieve their travel goals) and ended up taking the initiative to intentionally pursue study abroad opportunities in college. These participants, therefore, “activated” their cultural capital. However, despite the fact that my sample were from similar socio-economic classes, “they decided whether to activate their capital and they had different levels of skills in activating it when they wanted” (Lareau and Horvat 1999: 42). For instance, respondents activated their cultural capital, by intentionally pursuing study abroad (n = 12 ), through researching study abroad opportunities by going to the campus study abroad office, investigating the
study abroad opportunities online and talking to college administration such as an academic advisor or career advisor about study abroad possibilities. One respondent, Antonio, a Black male who applied to go to a program in Russia but did not go, even activated this capital by deliberately retaking a class for the opportunity to study abroad. Some went about inquiring if it was feasible to study abroad during a specific year, or if the university even had study abroad opportunities. For others, they activated their cultural capital or cultural knowledge in other ways. Some respondents took language classes or class with international components such as an international business class; Andrew and Rachael are representatives of this group, they both majored either in international business or in subjects with an international focus with the intention of studying abroad later in their university career.

Although not representative of the majority of participants at this stage of the study abroad process, a few possessed “unactivated” cultural capital in which they had the cultural knowledge of what international travel entailed or had an idea about study abroad due to their cultural resources income, social networks and exposure to international stimuli, but they did not invest their capital to gain advantages, which in this case is the investment of these resources for the goal of studying abroad. The case of Allison illustrates that without taking deliberate action in investing her resources, they are rendered irrelevant. Allison came from a family that possessed resources in the form of finances and knowledge about international travel. She also knew about study abroad opportunities as a sophomore. This information was obtained from friends that participated in exchanges at GSU. Even though she possessed these dispositions and realized a social advantage from these resources (she knew where to
locate information on campus about programs because her friends were “constantly”
telling her about them when she expressed interest about traveling to them), she did
not activate these resources (put them to use) until her final year of college when she
decided to pursue study abroad.

The preceding examples suggest that the majority of participants choose to
“activate” their cultural capital in many different ways. For the portion of the sample
that activated their cultural capital by deliberately pursuing study abroad, they had a
more sophisticated understanding of what studying abroad entailed; these include the
associated benefits and advantages, and they were more likely to receive support from
their families and put this knowledge to use by investigating study abroad
opportunities online, visiting the study abroad office for information and proposing the
idea to administrative staff to see if it was feasible. Others activated their cultural
capital by majoring in areas that had an international focus; this was done with the
intention of studying abroad later to further some of their travel goals, such as learning
a foreign language. The remaining few respondents possessed “unactivated” cultural
capital, but they did not consciously invest the resources which were bestowed to them
from their families, social networks and from personal experiences to gain social
benefits from them. These results highlight the importance of not only structural
conditions, but human agency in making the decision to study abroad.

**MOTIVATING THE COMMITMENT TO PURSUE STUDY ABROAD**

In this aspiration stage of the study abroad process, acquiring knowledge about
the details of studying abroad is crucial in making the decision of how feasible it is for
an individual to study abroad. Students in this sample gained access to this
information either through the home environment such as through family, or at college from institutional agents and promotional materials. However, this knowledge was gained as a result of different forms of capital used by the students in the study and via a multitude of ways depending on the context. Respondents either showed an awareness of cultural capital relative to study abroad and activated this capital, while others gained access to this capital through social capital-defined as “instrumental and supportive relationships with institutional agents and the networks that weave these relationships into units” (Stanton-Salazar, 1997: 7-8; Smith-Maddox, 1999; Coleman, 1988) and through relationships with institutional agents or by other means.

**Acquiring and Activating resources**

**Acquiring resources from social networks and the family**

Consistent with the literature on study abroad participation, my data revealed an overwhelming influence of the respondents’ social networks and families in providing valuable knowledge-based information to motivate the pursuit of study abroad in this early stage of the process (Cole, 1991; Washington, 1998; Van Der Meed, 2003). The analysis above emphasized the importance of the family in providing key structural resources (finances) and cultural resources (knowledge of international travel) to respondents to help formulate the idea of international travel and study abroad; this process is largely attributable to these students’ habitus (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Since, families and peers shape and influence the values, practices, knowledge and behaviors of individuals, it is no surprise that some respondents were motivated to pursue study abroad because of these factors. For instance, Brianna mentioned how she was motivated to pursue study abroad from
several family members who participated in study abroad themselves while in college. She recalled that her parents especially, “always encouraged her to study abroad.” This was done through verbal encouragement, promises to pay for the experience if undertaken and telling her about the advantages of educational travel while in college. Most notably, when attending a freshman orientation on campus with her parents, her father went as far as pointing out to her the study abroad promotion booth and reminded her that she should consider studying abroad. These displays of support and encouragement are indicative of the social class standing of her family and also the wide repertoire of resources she had at her disposal. Interestingly, Brianna also realized this class disparity in study abroad participation, when she acknowledged that “the message of study abroad seemed to be only heard by affluent students.” I asked her why she thought this was the case. In her response, she directly acknowledged the role of the familial class structure in the reproduction of values and attitudes about study abroad by using her own family and friends as examples:

Rich kids, they go and look for it [study abroad opportunities] because like my parents, ‘Fiona’s’ [a friend] parents told her that she needed to study abroad and ‘Stacy’s’ [friend] parents told her that she needed to study abroad and it’s just like a focus on education and not only on education but in-depth education. So that’s who looks for it [study abroad] I think. People who are encouraged and have been pre-exposed [sic] to the idea of study abroad because we don’t, I mean, if someone had never heard of study abroad and came to GSU chances are they could leave the school still having never heard about study abroad. So, I think people find it who look for it, who already know about it

Based on this developed example, we can see that Brianna’s social network made up of friends and peers, occupied the same social class standings and received similar messages from their parents about study abroad. She also emphasized the fact that “rich kids go and look for it;” this was a subjective understanding of how cultural
capital was used by herself and friends. They were not only aware of their privileges, they also activated their cultural capital by their approach to the study abroad process (they purposively sought out study abroad opportunities), this was not something that students without knowledge, encouragement and other structural resources would engage in. Additionally, Brianna’s friends were also involved in the study abroad process at GSU, and this also “normalized” study abroad as something that was possible, achievable and played a role in influencing her decision to pursue study abroad. Similarly, Patrick’s case illustrates how the influence of the family and the extended social network operates for some Black students at this stage to practically consider study abroad as a way to fulfill their travel desires. Speaking about what motivated him to study abroad Patrick stated:

Patrick: Different people saying, yeah, maybe I could study somewhere. They were just giving me different ideas where I could study at some point, you know, maybe I could go study history in ahh I don’t know, you know India in four weeks or something. Just giving me ideas…

Interviewer: Who were these people giving you ideas?

Patrick: Uh, aunts, uncles sometimes, just giving me different ideas. Aunts, Uncles, Grandma’s. My Grandmother, sometimes she would hear, like one of her church mates children visited Mexico for two weeks or something and she was relayed the information like, “Yeah, you could you to Mexico, have you ever thought about going to Mexico?” and thinking about I guess world events and talking about the cultures in general and then thinking about how nice it would be to study there…

Additionally, through conversations with his extended social network (employees at his mother’s law office), Patrick was able to acquire more knowledge-based resources that alerted him to what he needed to focus on to help him pursue study abroad.

Patrick recalled:
They [Mother’s work mates] were helpful in terms of showing me like different stuff that I should think about, hmm, in terms of airfare, that’s an important thing. In terms of, how are you gonna relate this experience to uhhmm later on in terms of getting a career. And also, if you like international travel so much some of the jobs you can have as an international ahh, that are internationally focused I guess…

Patrick capitalized on these resources by deciding to activate this cultural capital. In this regard, he made the decision to pursue study abroad and he sought out agents who were familiar with study abroad opportunities at GSU and he also researched study abroad opportunities online.

Whites compared to African Americans are more likely to come from families with a tradition of study abroad participation (Stoop, 1988; Hembroff and Rusz, 1993); Black respondents, however were influenced by their family to study abroad, and they were more likely to come from families with at least one parent/spouse born outside of the U.S and with higher incomes than native born Blacks. Furthermore, despite the fact that some of their family members did not participate in study abroad, their social network (workmates, church mates) consisted of someone that did. This finding emphasizes how social class can play a role in influencing the decision to study abroad. Literature reveals that most social networks are segregated by social class and race (Massey and Denton, 1993; McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001, MacLeod, 1995; Royster, 2003; Waldinger, 1996; Portes, 1994; Lareau, 2002; Horvat, Weininger and Lareau, 2003). More than likely, these respondents social network consisted of persons of similar class backgrounds. Thus, because these students grew surrounded by middle class networks, they will more likely mirror these middle class
habits and behaviors such as engaging in study abroad; this is in contrast to persons without these peers in their social circles. Although this sample is not completely composed of Black students with parents born outside of the U.S., these examples are significant to the extent that they illustrate the variation in how knowledge-based resources are acquired by Blacks from different classes and ethnicities. Black students without a foreign born parent were less likely to have a social network comprised of persons who have knowledge of study abroad than their counterparts with non-native parents. Therefore, they were not exposed to more detailed information about study abroad opportunities as their counterparts, and thus activated their cultural capital through institutional agents. In addition to activating study abroad resources from the family, some of these students invested their capital by deliberately attending a study abroad fair, reading brochures, researching study abroad options online, and most significantly, investing it through institutional agents.

**Accessing resources from institutional agents**

Just over half of the sample (n= 11) credited an institutional agent with motivating them to seriously consider study abroad while at GSU. These institutional agents (professors, administrative staff, study abroad staff, academic advisors) were instrumental in helping them to seriously think about study abroad as an immediate option and they should work towards pursuing it. Nicole mentioned:

*The teacher [class professor] was you know, kinda like a catalyst kinda like to get me interested in it so. I think also, like I’ve always wanted to go abroad and so uhm, I knew there was going to be an opportunity to go abroad through study abroad, because it was mentioned in class*
At this stage of the process, these institutional agents, which I would define as "individuals who have the capacity and commitment to transmit directly or to negotiate the transmission of institutional resources and opportunities," (Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch, 1995:117), were able to provide resources such as information related support about the availability of study abroad opportunities, how to access to general information about study abroad opportunities at GSU, help with planning for study abroad and mentorship. Agents also helped those participants who deliberately pursued study abroad to become familiar with the specifics of the study abroad process at GSU.

When discussing how agents helped to shape their aspirations about pursuing study abroad, respondents that ended up studying abroad were more likely to articulate the tremendous value of knowledgeable institutional agents that are necessary in understanding the study abroad process. This is exemplified in an interview with Natasha. She provided me with the following explanation of how her professor, Dr. Pearson, helped her to see that study abroad was something that she should pursue.

*Natasha: Growing up I always imagined that like certain...that was something that rich people did! [laughter]. Umm and when my professor was talking about it.. it just sparked my interest and I just decided to figure out if I could find a way to do it. And I did! [laughter]*

*Interviewer: And what did your professor say to convince you to go?*

*Natasha: Umm basically you know that umm that you can get...you can get student loans taken out, you can find grants and umm also that there are ways to make it happen...ummm whether its having your own fund raiser or whatever like she let me know that it wasn’t out of my reach.*

Based on Natasha’s explanation, she was able to access cultural capital from her professor in the form of knowledge of major details of the study abroad process. But
most importantly, for Natasha and the majority of respondents that did go abroad, agents were integrated into the participants’ social networks. For instance, Natasha mentioned that she took several classes with Dr. Pearson and came to know her better from these constant interactions inside and outside of class. Because of this incorporation into these social networks, students were in positions to gain significant social capital in the form of social support from these facilitating agents. According to Granovetter (1983), these networks form connections with the agents and eventually, these develop into “strong ties,” which are characterized by comfort, the maintenance of sustainable contact and the development of mutually trusting relationships (202, 220).

In this sample, those that developed strong ties with agents such as professors and program directors, were most likely to take classes with these professors multiple times, and they considered them more as friends than instructors. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of these respondents were most likely to end up studying abroad. Because of these relationships with their professors, Natasha and other interviewees social capital have now yielded cultural capital that can be activated for use in the study abroad process.

**Activating resources through institutional agents**

Despite the fact that students received important cultural capital from agents to help them seriously consider study abroad, not all students in the sample shared “strong” ties with them. For instance, Nicole’s relationship with her professor, who motivated her to pursue study abroad, could be characterized as a “weak tie” (a casual relationship with infrequent contact) (Granovetter, 1983). Nicole, a Black female,
who applied to go on study abroad program to Brazil and Argentina but forfeited the
program, had no history of contact with this professor, since it was the first time she
was taking a course taught by him. Despite their limited interaction, she was able to
acquire information about study abroad when he brought up the subject in class. In
fact, Nicole considered this professor to be “very helpful and easy going” and felt
comfortable approaching him and asking questions about the study abroad process,
such as “details about what it is that you do on the trip” and “an itinerary” that
motivated her study abroad consider it as a viable option. In essence, even though the
nature of her relationship with her professor differed from Tiffany’s, this “weak tie”
still produced social capital which was used to acquire cultural capital in the form of
knowledge about the study abroad program in which she was interested.

Within the context of institutional agents convincing respondents to pursue
study abroad opportunities, the portion of the sample that intentionally pursued study
abroad opportunities, activated their cultural capital differently from those that came
to pursue it unintentionally. As noted earlier, these students had a more detailed
awareness of study abroad opportunities from family and friends. However, the most
important facet of how they utilized “cultural knowledge” was how they found ways
to achieve a social benefit from their resources. For some, this was done by
approaching institutional agents such as professors and program directors about their
intentions to study abroad. Louis, for example, a Black male with an interest in study
abroad, mentioned that he approached his academic advisor “in a serious way” to find
out more about the study abroad process at GSU. He stated that they mostly discussed
topics such as if study abroad would interfere with his graduation schedule, “credit
transfers” and the variety and length of programs his department had to offer. Louis’ approach agreed with Lareau and Horvat (1999) who reported that unlike lower income counterparts middle class families are more likely to possess the cultural know-how or what Delpit (1995) refers to as the “culture of power,” (p.39) which is the utilization of resources sanctioned by institutional powers; However, lower income respondents may experience disparity because more affluent families are likely to be a part of social networks which contain persons with this knowledge or have “natural” familiarity with how to utilize resources with which they have had consistent experience. For example, like other respondents who knew the details of the study abroad process from friends, their networks and from personal experience, Louis knew which contacts to pursue and what questions to ask, because he was helping his son, who was enrolled in another college to study abroad as well. He explains:

*Having a son college uhm, I had talked to him about it [study abroad]. Uhm, you know, about going and you know, doing overseas study and stuff like that, and so actually, in looking for him, I kinda looked for myself too, cause I encourage my son to you know talk with his mentors, you know, about opportunities or join a club. I told my son, you know, uhm initially as far as ahh you know getting money for something like that [study abroad] you know, applying for some scholarships*

This general familiarity with the study abroad process that he acquired from helping his son, is cultural capital that he possessed. Louis therefore, activated his cultural capital by making the decision to go and seek out agents such as his advisor, and eventually the study abroad office to help him understand the unique process at GSU.
SUMMARY

This chapter charts the beginning of the study abroad process for the sample. I revealed that the majority of the respondents were pre-disposed to the idea of travel based on their habitus. Most of the sample came from families that were from predominately middle to upper middle class backgrounds that could comply with the idea of international travel. However, even though some respondents did not come from these families, they lived in an environment that allowed them to subscribe to this middle class construct. For a portion of my sample (participants with foreign born parents and ones with higher income White families), the benefits of being in this type of class position provided these respondents with the cultural resources and tools (finances, positive attitudes about international travel, values and practices-having overseas travel experience) to subscribe to the typically middle class idea of international travel; that is, a way to “find yourself,” and “learn about differences.” The majority of the students created cultural capital from these resources because they realized the privilege and opportunities that this knowledge could accrue. For instance, some knew that these resources such as knowledge about international travel could be applied to study abroad while in college. However, respondents had to activate this cultural capital in order to yield a social profit since cultural capital does not automatically translate into social benefits (Lareau, 2000). Respondent’s cultural capital would be largely irrelevant if they did not take deliberate action to activate their resources from their families, communities and personal experiences. Some invested their resources by deliberately pursuing study abroad opportunities, while others activated these resources through social relationships with agents. These
actions emphasize the important role individual agency plays in the reproduction of advantages. The data offers insight into the various methods by which students in this sample activated their resources based on their different social locations and contexts in order to pursue study abroad.

The next chapter, the “Search phase,” outlines how this sample, once committed to the pursuit of study abroad, continues to utilize their resources gained through social capital or by activating their cultural capital in different ways to find appropriate study abroad programs that suited their needs and requirements. Most importantly in this chapter, I reveal the role that the institution plays in transmitting resources and in evaluating them together with the cultural capital of the participants.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE SEARCH STAGE

After making the decision to pursue study abroad, interviewees entered the second phase of the study abroad process, the “Search stage.” The elements of this stage included finding an appropriate study abroad program that suited the interviewees criteria (i.e. if the destination was appealing to them, if they were going to receive enough credits for the program); investigating the availability of institutional and personal funding; looking for information and guidance on how to access institutional funding and finally, trying to address general concerns about studying abroad such as inquiring about specifics of the culture they were interested in studying and how to pack for an overseas trip (McDonough, 1997; Werkema, 2004).

Underlying the elements of this stage however, are certain cultural capital assumptions that respondents had to comply with and understand in order to successfully complete this stage of the study abroad process. Unfortunately, they faced multiple barriers at this stage if they lacked the appropriate resources or had problems accessing these resources to fulfill these cultural capital requirements. Most importantly, I reveal that race and SES mediate who is more likely to access specific cultural capital resources, gain social capital or activate cultural capital to comply with the implicit assumptions of this stage (Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Horvat, 2003; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Kalmijn and Kraaykamp, 1996).
ELEMENTS OF THE SEARCH STAGE

Cultural Capital assumptions

Implicit in each element of this stage, are “taken-for-granted” cultural and knowledge-based assumptions (cultural capital) that respondents had to satisfy in order to successfully complete this stage (Bourdieu, 1987; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Sikes, 2003). Due to the context specific nature of cultural capital, these assumptions varied for each element of this phase (Lareau, 2000; Carter 2003, 2005; Monkman et al, 2005; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Farkas, 1996). For instance, one of the first things participants tried to do at this stage was to find an appropriate study abroad program that fit their criteria. In order to find an appropriate program, respondents needed a) the time to research options, b) frequent access to technology (internet access), c) knowledge of who to contact for the most up-to-date information (this warrants having easy access to knowledgeable agents) and d) have familiarity with how to navigate a variety of program choices.

Similarly, in their search for viable financial options to fund study abroad, respondents needed to know which agents to approach for this information. They also needed to have an awareness of financial aid and scholarship options which must be investigated in a timely manner. They must also have an understanding of the specific elements of the program that these scholarships and aid would cover (for instance, some scholarships can only cover program fees). Respondents also require access to additional funding to cover fees not included in scholarships offered for study abroad programs. Specific country information about places of interested can be obtained at this stage in order to address concerns such as racial prejudice against visitors.
Gaining this information about a country assumes that the respondent is already familiar with the host society, or has contact with someone familiar with the culture of the country the interviewee is interested in visiting. It also assumes access to resources such as books and technology and the time to research these issues. Most importantly, when inquiring about discrimination abroad, participants needed to access someone not only familiar with the host society, but with whom they are comfortable to express concerns about race and gender issues.

Previous sociological researches noted the intuitive nature of these “taken for granted” assumptions (cultural capital) in the middle and upper class educational setting (Bourdieu, 1987; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Horvat-McNamara, 1996; McDonough, 1997; Werkema, 2004; Lewis, 2003; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Farkas, 1996; Lamont and Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 2000; DiMaggio and Mohr, 1985; Teachman, 1987; Sikes, 2003). This intuitive nature is a feature of the “hidden curriculum” found in the majority of schools that privileges those students who can understand and comply with implicit schools standards. The concept of the hidden curriculum can be applied to the design of the study abroad process, since the process innately favors students that can understand and comply with the necessary “insider knowledge” that is expected by the institution (Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Bieber, 1994; Lynch, 1989). The respondents more likely to comply with the implicit social rules of the institution are those that have access to “middle class” structural and culturally appropriate knowledge-based resources from their families and social networks (Lareau and Weinginer, 2003; Lareau and Horvat, 1999). In addition, they are able to form effective ties with institutional agents (Stanton-Salazar, 1997;
Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch, 1995). As the following sections show, when it came to acquiring resources and accessing appropriate cultural knowledge to exhibit compliance with these standards, there were distinct differences among various students.

ACCESSING CULTURAL CAPITAL FROM AGENTS

The role of “weak ties” with institutional agents

For the majority of the respondents (n=13), institutional agents such as study abroad administrators, professors and program directors were crucial at this stage of the process. Agents were instrumental when it came to guiding students to select the most appropriate study abroad program, find appropriate funding options and to address concerns about traveling. Because the majority of these respondents (n = 11) were encouraged by these agents to pursue study abroad opportunities, it was not surprising that they continued to utilize these same agents as resources for information and knowledge about the process. What is especially noteworthy is that if respondents were taking a class taught by a professor who was also a director of a study abroad program, these persons had distinct advantages over others when it came to accessing information based resources.

Even though resources could be acquired through the professor/program director, the relationship between the respondent and these agents may not facilitate this, because these agents may only be acquaintances functioning as “weak ties” (Monkman et al, 2005). The classroom setting was the typical location for the development of these weak ties in addition to providing space for the acquisition of cultural knowledge and information from the program director; this contact gave some
respondents an immediate opportunity to activate this cultural knowledge. As Nicole, a Black female non-participant who applied to a Brazil and Argentina business program, acknowledges:

Nicole: My business teacher, actually did one of the study abroad programs, he was the teacher like in charge and so he would just talk about it in class and then you know, try and you know get students interested in it.

Interviewer: What did he mention in class?

Nicole: Uhm [thinking] well the program was going to Brazil and Argentina so he was kinda talking about how you, visiting different companies in Brazil and Argentina and meeting with some government officials who were kinda in charge of bringing international business to these countries. Uhm then he also was talking about some times, its not always that you’re gonna go visit, there’s time that you would have some down time, so that you can experience some of the culture and stuff of the countries...

Interviewer: Did you ask him about more specific details about the trip?

Nicole: Uhm kinda, I was just asking about kinda more details about what it is that you do on the trip and I think he actually maybe gave us an itinerary in class and he also, [pause] he also was telling us about you have to take some classes over the summer to you know, so you’re getting prepared, you’re learning the culture and such of those countries...

As a result of being in the class of the director for the Brazil and Argentina study abroad program, Nicole and other respondents in similar positions were able to gain first hand information about study abroad programs as they were being developed and amended. Additionally, because of their location (the classroom), they were easily able to access and talk to the program director, who was an avenue for obtaining detailed information about the study abroad program; this was Nicole’s experience, when she asked the program director for more details about the program (resources). This weak connection with an agent allowed respondents to access social capital,
which in turn, gave them the opportunity to acquire cultural capital. For instance respondents such as Nicole realized a social advantage of having informational resources. In this regard, Nicole recognized that this newly acquired information about going to different companies can be used to evaluate the advantages of this program. Thus, like other respondents, Nicole chose to activate her cultural capital by putting these resources to use with the aid of this new information; this enabled her to weed out other potential programs.

Respondent’s who took a program director’s class, were also exposed to up-to-date information about financial options to fund study abroad. This is illustrated by Ann’s comment. Ann, a White female who studied abroad on a hospitality program to Western Europe, mentioned that while in class, her professor/program director “recommended us going to the study abroad office, to find out additional scholarships and information”. In this case, the loose social interaction between Ann and her professor/program director enabled her to become familiar with places on campus where funding information could be located such as the study abroad office (resources). This funding knowledge, which was accessed through this loose connection, allowed her to also acquire cultural capital, because she knew she possessed bodies of knowledge (knowledge of where funding options were located) that could be used for educational benefit (funding a study abroad program). She later “activated” this cultural capital by making the decision to research various scholarship options that the school offered to fund study abroad.

Even though some respondents were not taking classes with a program director at the time of their program search, they were still able to gain valuable information
from these agents; this was accomplished by utilizing the ties they developed with this professor through previous interactions in class. For example, Antonio, a Black male who applied to go on a program to Russia but did not go, was studying Russian and wanted to go on an exchange program to further develop his language skills. Since he knew that the language department did not have their own Russian study abroad program, he went to inquire about options from the head of the Russian unit, Dr. Franklin, from whom he had taken many Russian classes. He mentioned that: “She was the one that was like, you know, if you’re going to go [on study abroad], you should do this new [St. Petersburg] program that the department was going to sponsor.” She also told him that the St Petersburg’s program’s “tuition was cheaper” compared with most others, and that it provided the cultural immersion experience necessary for excelling in the language. In addition to outlining the strengths of choosing this particular program over others, she gave him prior warning about an emerging program the department was sponsoring. She also instructed him on which study abroad program he should apply to.

One of the most important resources that respondents could possess at this stage of the process was the access to knowledgeable professors who could give guidance on advantages of participation in specific study abroad programs. The advantages of having direct access to this information meant that respondents had the option of not relying solely on published information, which was limited in transmitting detailed information about programs. Gaining knowledge directly from an informed professor allowed respondents to access cultural capital that was already validated by this agent. (Powell and Smith Doerr, 2005; Royster, 2003). In this regard, when Dr. Franklin
informed Antonio about the strengths and weakness of a particular program in relation to others and stressed one specific program as the main choice, she transmitted cultural capital in the form of information that she sanctioned.

One important trend in the data reflected the concept of Embeddedness (Royster, 2003). This concept is defined as a position in which individuals are integrated into multiple relationships of social networks. Consequently, these networks can connect individuals to several persons with valuable opportunities and resources (Royster, 2003: 28). Some respondents who had “weak ties” with agents were able to access additional knowledge about study abroad programs and funding opportunities because they were referred by these agents to other persons in these same agents’ social network. The case of Rachael offers a clear example of this phenomenon. Rachael, a White female, who was interested in studying abroad in Spain but postponed the trip, mentioned that several professors gave her advice about choosing programs along with the contact information of students who studied abroad. Additionally, they also recommended to her other professors who ran their own study abroad programs. She illustrates how she was put in touch with these different contacts through her Professor Dr. Armstrong’s network:

*I remember [talking with] ‘Dr. Armstrong’ and I asked her, you know I really wanna study abroad do you know of any good programs? And she said, I personally don’t, but talk to ‘Dr. Consuelo’ he’s in charge, talk to him.*

Rachael was also able to gain additional information in the form of cultural capital from persons in Dr. Consuelo’s network of contacts because of this recommendation.

*‘Dr. Consuelo’ gave me two email addresses of two girls and they actually work in the department. And I was, like, “Did you guys study in Spain?” and they said, Yeah, oh and I was, like, ‘Dr. Consuelo’ told me about about you! Cause they...*
A common feature in the majority of accounts in the data is the concept of “bridging” social capital (Putman, 2000). This social capital is based upon the mutual respect between parities, whereby social relationships are formed between persons across different social and racial backgrounds. Research in educational settings reveals that bridging social capital is common among minority student populations and White institutional agents (Briggs, 2003; Stanton-Salazar, 1995). For instance, the majority of respondents had weak connections with these mostly White, middle class agents (n= 9) (only one was Asian and two were Hispanic). Even though these ties are generally tentative and loose in nature, they are crucial for attaining different perspectives and for “diffusing information” (Stanton-Salazar, 1995; Putnam, 2000:22). Nevertheless, these ties are less likely to provide “substantive support and strong emotional support” (Putnam, 2000:22, Granovetter, 1985).

Despite the weak nature of this relationship, the majority of respondents mentioned that these agents “would help them with anything,” and they were also “very encouraging” in their decisions to study abroad; this signified a form of mutual respect demonstrated by the professors through verbal encouragement and advice to interviewees. As my analysis continues to show, because of the disparity in the nature of these ties, the quality of social and cultural capital tends to vary among respondents. Therefore, although respondents gained significant information from weak ties with agents, those respondents who possessed “bonding” social capital with agents (which is characterized as having dense, multi-functional ties and strong
localized trust between individuals as reported by Portes, 1998) as opposed to “bridging” social capital, formed “strong ties” and were more likely to gain more substantive information and the emotional support from these agents.

The role of “strong ties” with Institutional Agents

When discussing the types of information they acquired from agents, some respondents revealed that these resources were accessed through strong social relationships. Similar to the preceding analysis, these relationships facilitated access to cultural resources and eventually cultural capital through social capital received from that network association. The differentiating factor however between these connections and other weaker ties was the greater depth of these relationships and substantial quality of cultural knowledge they acquired. For instance, when examining Tiffany’s response, it was revealed that she had “strong ties” with her professor who was a part of her social network and who was also the program director for a Brazil study abroad program.

_Tiffany: I think going through her [her professor] program is easy cause you could just easily work with her...[When] I found out about it [the study abroad program] and I just kept up with the ‘Dr. Pearson’ about it. And she kept, she kept me updated about what was going on and about what I’d be doing there._

_Interviewer: How did she keep you updated?_

_Tiffany: Uhm email. I would talk to her in class or she would call me or I would call her, just like that, so I knew I was going... But me and her got really cool and she told me all about it so..._

_Interviewer: What do you mean by really cool?_

_Tiffany: Like uhm, we hang out, like, I definitely consider her to be my friend, she’s just, well...a really nice person. I can have conversations with her about race without her like tensing up. So like, that makes me comfortable with her and I trust her to do a good job with me..._
These comments give the impression of a very causal relationship between Tiffany and her professor. By accessing cultural capital through strong social capital developed between Tiffany and Dr. Pearson, she had an easier time gaining knowledge-based resources about study abroad program information compared with those respondents who characterized their relationships with agents as formal (Stanton Salazar, 1997; Smith-Maddox, 1999). This ease in interaction is reflected in some of Tiffany’s comments. She mentioned that “she would call” Dr. Pearson for information and that Dr. Pearson would do the same to up-date her. Furthermore, she mentioned that she “hung out with her [professor]” which would lead to a greater exchange of information. Finally, Tiffany made comments about Dr. Pearson being “a friend” more than a professor and someone she could “trust,” and she felt comfortable talking with her about race. Her example illustrates the concept of “bonding social capital,” in which she was able to form a close emotionally supportive relationship typical among close friends and family members. This connection rarely develops between minority students and White agents, due to a lack of cultural competence between the two parties (Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 2000: 22; Briggs, 2003; McPherson, el al, 2001). In Tiffany’s case, the fact that she could feel comfortable conversing about race with Dr. Pearson indicates a relationship where “bonding” social capital was developed. This tie facilitated the transmission of up-to-date information about the program (cultural knowledge) which Tiffany realized was important since it meant that she could access information conveniently if she chooses this program as opposed to others.
As noted previously, some respondents were embedded in an agent’s social network in which they are able to access other resources through these agents’ networks (Granovetter, 1985). Through his strong connections with his advisor/mentor, Howard, a White male who applied to study abroad in Sweden but did not go, was able to access information about a study abroad program through his professor’s contacts. His Swedish professor not only recommended a study abroad program to him, but also went as far as personally contacting the program director to inform her about his interested student. He explained how he came to find out about this particular program:

*Interviewer: Tell me about Central University’s Swedish program. For instance, how did you find out about it?*

*Howard: Because it was a recommendation from a teacher…*

*Interviewer: Where and how did you go about researching this information about the different programs?*

*Howard: [My professor] he let me know what was available. Two, he let me know which one’s would satisfy the requirements. My Swedish professor found the “Central University” program, which I had not looked at, and contacted the program director for me.*

Howard also mentioned that his professor even gave him prior warning about a particularly demanding program director for a program in which he was interested; this prepared him for that encounter. He recalls what his professor told him:

*He’s [professor] been on a couple of trips with her in the past and he had long ago told me that she doesn’t respond to emails from anybody and hmm that the programs are good and that she’s got a set of strict requirements, but the results are excellent and she also has access to a lot of people that are useful for networking…*

Howard’s relationship with his professor exemplifies the benefits of belonging to social networks and having connections with institutional agents. In this example, this
tie was able to be transformed into cultural capital that was empowering and strategic
or “leveraging” information (Powell and Smith Doerr, 2005: 385; Stanton-Salazar,
1997). As a result of this information about the program director’s networking
abilities and strictness, Howard was able to make concrete decisions about choosing a
program that was not articulated through public channels.

The previous examples reveal that interviewees quickly came to the realization
that obtaining information about study abroad programs is predicated upon the
development of supportive and trusting relationships with knowledgeable institutional
agents, (Briggs, 2003). Thus, respondents gained cultural capital from agents because
they were able to develop “Bonding” or “Bridging” social capital with them.
Consistent with the literature on social capital, Black students that studied abroad were
able to negotiate “bridging” social capital rather than “bonding capital.” Nevertheless,
it still allowed them to gain cultural knowledge from these agents who were
overwhelmingly White (Briggs, 2003; McPherson, el al, 2001). However, as the
following analysis will show, when it came to researching program options and
voicing concerns about travel, Black respondents who did not study abroad were more
likely to have problems accessing agents compared with White and Black
counterparts who studied abroad. Thus, they were less likely to possess social capital
and have greater difficulties accessing and activating cultural capital.

DIFFICULTIES ACCESSING AND ACTIVATING CULTUAL CAPTIAL

Preventing the formation of ties

Some Black respondent’s spoke of the difficulties they experienced forming ties
with agents. As a consequence, they did not gain access to knowledge-based resources
to help them with their program and funding search. This situation was clearly illustrated by Ricardo’s experiences. In his quest for help with finding suitable study abroad programs, Ricardo, like the majority of respondents in the sample, approached professors in several departments for advice. Since he was a Journalism major and had an interest in Spanish, Ricardo’s objectives were to find a Spanish language program “to further develop his everyday experience in learning the language fluently” in order to “understand and actually get immersed in the culture and language on a daily basis, by hearing it, reading it, speaking it everyday, all day.”

Even though Spanish was not his major, he took a number of Spanish courses with the intention of making it his minor. Ideally, he wanted to find a Journalism program in a Spanish speaking country. However, he was also willing to just take a Spanish language course if he didn’t find anything that suited his criteria. With these ideas in mind, he approached both a language professor, whose class he was enrolled in at the time, and a Journalism professor, whose class he previously took. On both occasions, he mentions below that he was met with cold, unhelpful responses:

One professor in my department [Journalism] I went to, he’s totally, like, wiping his hands of it [study abroad]. He’s, like, go just go pursue. Go to the [study abroad] office and investigate it on your own. Dr. ‘Maxwell’ a professor of Spanish I had that semester was, like, not really at all trying to be a part of whatever. Like, pretty much it was independent. It’s available [programs], but go find out and pursue it on your own.

Despite Dr. Maxwell’s knowledge of the availability of Spanish programs, he was indifferent to Ricardo’s requests for advice on who to contact or where to access information about these “available” programs. Because of the unsuccessful interactions with this agent, the respondent perceived a barrier when trying to gain
access to both social capital (forming a relationship) and cultural capital (knowledge-based resources) (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). In a similar experience, Patrick, a History major, who was interested in studying abroad in China, “threw the idea out there” about studying abroad to one of his History professors. When I asked him what his professor told him, he replied: “he told me that was cool [idea].” However, he did not receive any insights or substantive information as how to proceed with studying abroad. Based on his actions, Patrick’s approach could be interpreted as testing the “receptivity” of his professor to the idea of him studying abroad; this allowed Patrick to gauge whether the professor would offer him any help. Throughout the interview, Patrick kept mentioning that he just figured that he would “have to do things for himself” during the study abroad process. In his situation, Patrick’s approach may be an indication of his perception of the lack of help he would receive from agents generally. Because of his professor’s lukewarm response, where no social capital was accessed, this action could have prompted Patrick not to probe for additional information on this issue. Eventually, he went to the study abroad office for help with his research, and did not ask any other professors in his department for insights or information on this issue.

In light of Patrick’s and Ricardo’s experiences, the responses of the professors were unhelpful compared to those given to Rachael as indicated in her comments in the previous section. Despite the fact that she was a Business major taking Spanish courses as minor, when she approached these professors, she utilized her “weak” ties and as a result, she was given access to their networks (social capital) and to other knowledgeable persons in these agents’ networks. This information allowed her to
build more social capital and access cultural capital such as knowledge and information about program opportunities.

What is apparent in these previous examples is that Black respondents (n=5) had problems gaining access to cultural capital (knowledge-based resources) such as professors, even though they frequently took classes with them because they could not formulate ties with these agents than Whites (n=1). As the data and existing literature emphases, one of the main ways in which “consistent and reliable sources of information from which [students] can learn appropriate decoding skills” are transmitted through the school system is from social ties with agents. (Stanton-Salazar, 1997: 15; Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch, 1995; Monkman et al., 2005; Smith-Maddox, 1999; Qian and Blair, 1999; Royster, 2003). The literature on social reproduction suggests that minority students who developed both formal and informal “genuinely” supportive relationships with institutional agents in the school setting were more likely to have greater degree of successes in the educational system (Austin, 1999; Hackett and Byars, 1996; Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch, 1995: 116; Terenzini et al., 1982; Brown and Robinson, Kurpius, 1997; Griffin, 1992).

Nevertheless, social antagonisms between students and agents exacerbated by institutional barriers can make access to social capital problematic for minority and working class students (Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch, 1995; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Smith-Maddox, 1999).
Factors that limit the development of ties with agents

Limited time to establish ties

One of the main institutional barriers that prevent the profitable connection of minority students with agents is the structure of the university system. Large public universities, (one of which was the location of this research), with its large class sizes, short semester systems and the usually hectic schedules of institutional agents, make it very difficult for students to develop interpersonal trust and strong solidarity with agents (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). For example, one respondent, Patrick, spoke to his professor about his study abroad goals in an elevator while they were both on their way to classes. This example emphasizes the lack of time both agent and professor had to develop rapport on this topic and foster more solidarity. In addition to this brief encounter, it also highlights the superficiality of the kinds of information that can be generated when the contact between agents and students is brief and transitory (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

In a more developed example, Carla’s quote clearly emphasizes the inequity in access to informative networks and resources within these relationships for certain students; she also notes how the school’s fragmentation contributes to this inequality in access:

I just hate that you have to network to get resources that you’re paying out your pocket for and its tax payers that are paying for us to have! They should be readily available and given to everyone, but its not, its like you have to be in the good ole’ boy’s system or network and talk and kiss someone’s ass just to get information. I’m like, it’s not corporate America! You’re at school. So that’s how I feel its [the school] run and even within departments and your own college, you won’t even know [about opportunities]! And its not like its set up in such an atmosphere where there is a lot of you know, social structure so people will get chances to really you know, network with each other, you know do this and that with each other where you will find out. It’s kinda like, it’s a commuter school,
you go to school and you go home. But unless you talk to the right people, you won’t know anything [sighing]

What makes this quote significant is that Carla directly acknowledges “the culture of power,” of the institution – the knowledge of how to utilize resources that conforms to the standards of those in power (Delpit, 1995: 25) – in which gaining valuable information is predicated upon networking. However, she also realizes that the fragmentation the school fuels a “corporate America” type organization with a “good ole boy’s system” is which is ultimately not conducive to easily forming ties with agents.

Along with the ridged structure of the university, respondents’ limited opportunities to develop and nurture effective ties with agents were compounded by the fact that those in the sample who could not access these agents were employed, and happened to be mostly Black (n= 4). As a consequence, they were hardly on campus to develop ties or if they worked on campus, were not fully integrated into their departments. As Ricardo articulates in the following excerpt, even though he made the effort to try and reach out to certain agents, such as calling and emailing them, and visiting some program directors offices, it was futile because of either their inaccessibility or his work schedule:

[What has been difficult for me] is umm actually getting in touch with people and hearing back from people... I mean I do know that ok it’s not always applicable for me especially during the semesters when school is going on you know to just umm have time to follow up every single day whenever I need to or every moment I can think about it. I mean I have academics, other classes, work, other concerns and other things going, and it still doesn’t happen when you make an effort for things to go through you know, and you have to follow back up again. And it’s not always accessible to do it the very next day or next hour or what have you.
He reveals that in order to achieve results at this stage of the process, especially when searching for programs, respondents need to keep in constant contact with specific agents, such as program directors. Therefore, time needs to be allocated to do this, because if not, sustained interaction will not occur. Ultimately, this limits the creation of social capital and the access to pertinent information (cultural capital).

In contrast, the majority of Black and White respondents who managed to form successful ties with agents and accumulated social capital because of these ties either did not work or spent the majority of their day on campus. For instance, Tiffany was not employed outside of the institution, and worked as the professor’s assistant which facilitated consistent interaction with her professor/program director. Similarly, Howard was retired and spent most of this time on campus. Finally, Catherine, a graduate student who studied abroad in Chile, worked closely with her professor/program director on one of her Master’s projects. Other participants also mentioned the frequency with which they took classes with their professor who was also the program director, which led to more familiarity between these two parties.

On the basis of these results, it can be argued that this stage of the process is designed around middle class norms, catering to students who have access to certain resources, which includes: such as not being employed on a regular basis, having access to additional means of income. Because of these advantages, these respondents will have the resources and time to spend on campus forging these ties.
Feelings of discomfort and distrust

Another obstacle that impeded some Black respondents’ from developing social capital from agents was the feeling of discomfort when asking them for help with a variety of issues at this stage of the process (Allen, 1987; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Smith-Maddox, 1998; D’Augelli and Hershberger, 1993). Carla, who studied abroad in Ghana while she was an undergraduate at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU), was interested in studying the African influences on the culture of a predominantly Black country outside of the African continent. However, she felt that both her department and the study abroad office were not conducive spaces to bring up her interests. Nevertheless, despite her reservations, she went ahead and informed the study abroad office about her interests and asked for help in finding a program that would satisfy her goals. She mentioned that they seemed to have little interest in working with her and casually “pointed to some random materials.” As she anticipated, she interpreted their help as “cold,” signaling detachment and disinterest. (Willie, 2003; Gossett, Cuyjet, and Cockriel, 1998). Interestingly, Carla believed that this agent’s approach was representative of the university’s general discomfort with race and superficial attitudes towards multiculturalism (Carter, 2005). She elaborates:

Interviewer: You mentioned that many of the school’s programs did not provide the cultural element you were looking for. To what extent did you ask the study abroad personnel and faculty in your department to help in locating a program that provided these elements?

Carla: No, nah [shaking her head] Because I really didn’t think they would really try to include that because of my experience at Georgia State. I didn’t feel that they would really try to include a lot of you know [thinking]. I got that in theory yes. In practice no, as far as including cultures at GSU…

Interviewer: Why do you say in theory and not in practice?
Carla: Cause in theory you know they [the institution] say, “Oh well we’re a multicultural institution, we have this, this percentage and this many people we need this quota blah blah blah.” Yeah they do, but when it comes down to pedagogy, when it comes down to uhm what they actually teach, why they teach it and the basis of everything. Like I hear for undergrads you have to pass…ahh you have to take a U.S. history course to finish your degree. I’ve never heard of that before. But it’s kinda like what U.S. history are you really teaching, you know? Its still like, there’s a lot of issues on this campus so. I guess that’s what I mean by in theory yes we are you know, so multicultural and this and this, but in practice it’s you know, who’s tenured and all. So No No and hell no. You know. But it seems like its hard to get in contact with anybody there [at the study abroad office] to really to sit down and talk with them about what your interested in and why and what are your genuine options as a college or grad student are for that matter you know.

Interviewer: To what extent did you try to talk to them at the study abroad..[Interrupted by respondent]

Carla: I did, I did. But it just didn’t seem like it was fair that you know how you walk into some places and you know it’s warm [shaking her head] nah.

Interviewer: Was it a cold sensation?

Carla: Yeah, yeah, or like you’re doing this, we’re giving you information that’s available, that’s it.

As Cole (1990) and Carter (1991) suggest, the fact that minority students are not seeing their cultures and interests being represented as choices for study abroad programs, sends the signal that their heritage and passions are not worthy of being considered. On the other hand, when non-White regions are featured as program choices, the nature of these programs is unconsciously influenced by Eurocentric interpretations of these societies (Said, 1979; Willinksy, 1998). Unfortunately, this tends to cement and perpetuate negative stereotypes about non-Western cultures and regions of the world. The direct acknowledgement of this tendency is illustrated by Maxine’s experience. Maxine, a Religion major, who applied to a study abroad program in France, had an interest in several non-Western countries such as Egypt,
China and various African countries to study their languages and religious texts.

However, she found that these programs were limited in their scope and content:

> There weren’t many destinations that appealed to me. The programs that would have ended me in China and Africa were all some developing country “look at these poor people type”, and I wasn’t going to be depressed. I understand and I do think that it’s everybody’s duty to make the world a little bit better, but I wasn’t trying to spend three months looking at kids with swollen stomachs that was not what I trying to do. So no, there wasn’t much that appealed to me.

These illustrations confirm two common themes in social reproduction literature. For one, they reveal Eurocentric nature of the contents of study abroad programs and secondly, they highlight the role of institutional gatekeepers who block the conversion of students’ resources into cultural capital (Carter, 2005; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Farkas. 1996; Lewis, 2004; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Willinsky, 1999; Hilliard, 1979). For instance, as Maxine pointed out, the majority of program options perpetuated a class and racial bias that tends to unfairly privilege those who happen to be White and middle class, while invalidating the culture and heritage of non-Whites (Carter, 1991; Willinsky, 1999; Hilliard, 1979). Since Europe was overwhelmingly represented as program choices and non-Western destinations were portrayed condescendingly, these options validated dominant Euro-American cultural capital, based on the worldview and experiences of Euro-Americans. As a consequence, student’s whose interests and cultures fell outside of these norms like Carla, had a hard time legitimizing their interests to institutional gatekeepers, which reward students with the “right cultural signals” (Carter, 2005). In this case, Carla’s surmised that the agent’s “cold” and disinterested response towards her choice invalidated her cultural resource, which was an interest in African cultures (which, to these agents was not
seen as the “right” cultural signal). In this regard, Carla believed that these agents blocked her resources from becoming cultural capital (not realizing an advantage from this resource- the agent did not validate this interest, so see it as worthwhile). As a consequence this action created more social distance between the two parties.

Conversely, when Shannon, a White female, wanted advice on choosing the most appropriate French program, she displayed the “right” cultural signal (interest in French) and thus, easily complied with the agents’ standards (it was a popular destination and the office had familiarity with this request before). Thus, by recommending a variety of French programs to her, the value of her resources was legitimized and converted to cultural capital.

Other respondents that felt that they faced invalidation of their capital by agents, ended up choosing programs that did not satisfy their true interests or tried to find programs by themselves with varying degrees of success. Thus, Black respondents who recognized that agents reinforced the hierarchy of the dominant culture in relation to their own, had a hard time trusting agents and developing ties (social capital) with them. This perception ultimately blocks the transmission of resources and cultural capital.

Continuing in the context of relationships between minority students and White agents, the case of Ricardo further illustrates the delegitimization of resources by institutional “gatekeepers” that further exacerbates the climate of distrust between agents and minority students (Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Stanton- Salazar and Dornbusch, 1995; Stanton-Salzar, 1997). After several unsuccessful attempts to access information from agents in his departments and numerous difficulties
contacting several program directors from various universities around the state, Ricardo went to the study abroad office for program information about Spanish language programs. While at the office, he told an agent about the non-responsiveness of these directors and problems gaining any substantial information from anyone. The agent at the study abroad office told him to continue contacting these program directors, and after he gets a response, to come back to the office again with this information. Only then will the office try and contact the program director. Frustrated with still no concrete guidance, Ricardo went to his former academic advisor at this previous university from where he transferred, looking for advice. Coincidentally, his old advisor knew a senior staff member at the study abroad office and told him to talk directly to them about his difficulties. Thinking that finally he could get some concrete help, Ricardo went to this agent at GSU and told them about his frustration with finding a program. Unfortunately, the senior agent told him that he needed to go back to the study abroad office and get someone to deal with this issue. Frustrated, Ricardo went back to the office and causally mentioned that he spoke to this staff member who referred him back to the office. This name dropping did not elicit the response he was hoping for—help with finding a program. Taken aback by his revelation, the agent was so surprised that he actually spoke to this person that she proceeded to question the legitimacy of his interaction rather than offering solutions to his dilemma.

This lengthy episode demonstrates some important patterns found in the social reproduction literature about the power of gatekeepers to “differently reward” students’ for their resources (Lewis, 2004: 176). Ricardo tried to activate his
symbolic capital (displaying his cultural knowledge-interaction with of an influential person) to gain some leverage with this agent at the study abroad office. However, he perceived that efforts of activation were rebuffed by this institutional gatekeeper (questioning the veracity of his claim), and did not produce the cultural capital that would gain him social advantage (contact with a program director) (Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Lewis, 2004). Again, he was left out of the information loop when it came to knowing how to effectively access program directors that he needed to contact. At this point, Ricardo, who had began searching for programs for just under a year, did not know who else to turn to for information and as a consequence, was stuck at this stage of the process. Thus, race matters in attaining and activating various forms of capital in the institutional setting, which can impede efforts to get through this stage of the study abroad process.

Although access to certain agents when searching for programs was problematic for more Black respondents (n = 4) than Whites (n = 2), a few White students also voiced concerns about the lack of guidance and unhelpfulness they received from some agents. At the same time, they acknowledged the importance of networking with these same agents to gain access to information at the university (Granovetter, 1979, 1993; Lin, 1990). When Brianna called the study abroad office for advice on where to find information about programs in general, she mentioned that she felt slightly intimidated by the attitude of the person on the other line. She explained:

Brianna: [The conversation with the study abroad personnel] was just kinda like rushed I had more questions and like sorta forgot them or didn’t really feel comfortable asking them you know...

Interviewer: Why didn’t you feel comfortable?
Brianna: I guess just because if I feel like someone doesn’t have the time you know, and I just feel rushed and it just makes me feel like Alright! Alright I’m going you know...

In addition to reporting discomfort, Brianna also reiterates the concept of social networking and social capital to gain information from agents. She believed she would not have received this reception if she were socially connected to someone at the office. Based on this and other incidences, she came to the conclusion that in order to get adequate service at the university, she needed to have connections. When I asked her what made her think this way, she elaborated:

Like if I’m calling a professor and I’m in their class and they know who I am, and its one thing, but if I’m calling an office and I don’t have like, I just feel like there is a huge environment at this school where like so few people know each other because it’s such a commuter campus and then that feds into like you know, if I don’t know you then you know, what’s my responsibility to help you and that’s sorta the attitude that I feel most of the time when I call offices of departments either that I’m not in or just other offices services. And that’s not to say I haven’t had any good experiences because I have I definitely have. But, they haven’t been the overwhelming majority..

Clearly, in order to gain access to resources respondents, like Brianna, had to understand the “culture of power” (Delpit, 1995: 39), whereby gaining resources is predicated upon networking, in which the university and society in general operates. Even though there was an acknowledgement of this practice by Black respondents, they were the ones most likely to stress the lack of opportunities they had to network and gain knowledge-based resources. Some believed that this was attributed in part, to the discomfort they felt around agents and the superficial gestures the university makes towards amending race relations (See Gramsci, 1971 and Sallach, 1974).5

---

5 These superficial gestures made by those in power are key components of Gramsci’s (1978) notion of hegemony. Gramsci argues that in order to get the general population to subscribe to ruling class’s
Overwhelmingly, Black respondents (n = 8) mentioned that they felt “uncomfortable” asking agents certain questions, especially when it came to the issue of how race would affect their program choices and experiences in these countries.

For instance, even though Antonio got on well with his Russian professors, he felt very uncomfortable discussing how he may be treated as an African American male in Russia, even though he was “preoccupied” with this concern:

*I didn’t feel comfortable discussing the race thing with them [professors]. I mean I’ve hung out with my Professors before. We’ve gone to restaurants; we’ve had dinners together. I’ve even been invited, one time I was personally invited over Spring Break to go to dinner with me and the teacher you know, kinda feel like a teacher’s pet [laughing]. I didn’t know if I should go, but I went, and it was, they are all very enjoyable people outside of the classroom. But when you out to eat dinner they’re all normal. Uhm, but because they’re native Russian I don’t think they could offer the proper [racial] perspective that I need. You can only get that from somebody else who has been through it*

Similarly, Allison was grappling with whether to ask her professor about the racial issues she might experience in Brazil and Argentina as a Black woman, because she thought the classroom space was not conducive to bring up such a topic:

*Interviewer: To what extent did you voice concerns to your professor about how you would be treated as an African American woman for instance, in these two countries?*

*Allison: I was kinda hesitant to ask. I’m just too tentative to ask that question cause I thought I would be really stepping out of the bounds. I was like, I think since, I guess [it] depends on the type of study abroad trip. Cause I was looking at what is the significance of actually talking about that [racism].*

Even though race is “hypervisible” for racial minorities in America, and is a collective identity that cannot escape them, because the classroom operated on a

---

ideology, and in order for the ruling class to maintain power, they grant consent and concessions to appease minority populations. Thus, by embracing multiculturalism or including token efforts of diversity, on the surface, this may seem like subordinated groups are disrupting or are being included in the power struggle. However, in reality, dominant White hegemony is maintained (Sallach, 1974, Hall, 1995).
“color-blind ideology” in which race was not explicitly mentioned (Lewis, Chesler, Forman, 2000), Allison had to basically ignore part of her identity which usually cannot be ignored (Hochschild, 1995; Gallagher, 1997; Lee, 2000). Even in the information session at the study abroad office, Carla mentioned that she also felt uncomfortable voicing concerns about race abroad, and stated that this atmosphere was a microcosm of the university on the whole:

Interviewer: Did you feel comfortable talking about race in this setting [study abroad seminar]?

Carla: No, cause you can’t really bring that up in any other aspect in this college, so you really can’t bring it up in study abroad. Cause its always like the thing that you don’t talk about and even if people don’t they aren’t uncomfortable, they change the subject, they twiddle their thumbs, they move their feet you can tell there’s like, there’s not like, Oh come on lets all talk about this and be candid and honest, no they don’t want to be honest .no they want a comfortable experience.

Other Black respondents mentioned that they were “concerned” about race issues abroad, especially when considering studying in a racially homogenous society such as China and the Czech Republic, but did not know whom to approach to talk about these issues.

These students’ discomfort when talking about race with agents is not unique. As the literature states, college campuses around the U.S. are rife with institutional racism which creates an uncomfortable climate for race issues to be openly and honestly discussed (Allen 1982; Fleming 1984; Nettles, 1986; Willie, 2003; Feagin et al, 1996). Because of this limiting atmosphere, Black participants were less likely to approach agents that they read as “culturally insensitive,” and whom they believed lacked respect for cultural diversity (Carter, 1991: 12; Lewis, Chesler and Forman, 2000). As a result of their impressions of these agents and the university environment,
Black respondents believed that they were limited in their access to pivotal resources that would have helped them understand and prepare for racism abroad (such as referrals to persons of color who may studied abroad in these locations, or if agents exhibited a general comfort talking about these issues).

In stark contrast, Whites in the sample such as Howard, were more likely to feel comfortable around agents, which was signified by the ease with which they could elicit help from them:

*Howard: I asked [professors] for help. Most people don’t. Or they don’t know that they can. Hmm if I ran into a problem then I don’t try to solve it by myself. I try and find the people who are most knowledgeable…*

*Interviewer: Helping in what way this? Was this information, encouragement?*

*Howard: I don’t need encouragement [laughter]. Ahh just giving me background information and things that people experienced, or maybe a person to see that can remove a roadblock or be able to help you. I think every teacher I had has been a resource. And even most teachers were resources as well. Most of the students that you interact with also. [When it comes to professors] I would have to say Daniel Bailey [Swedish professor], he’s been, but I mean, he helps everyone. You state where you’re at, what you need to do, and sometimes he’ll tell you what you need to do.*

Whites were more likely to report that their exchanges were productive and perceived spaces such as the study abroad office as “warm,” and “cozy.” Furthermore, they did not reveal any insecurities and hesitations in talking about their concerns or problems with finding programs, especially when it came to race. Even when they were considering study abroad at predominantly non-White nations such as Chile, Brazil and Egypt, none of the White students reported that being White abroad was a concern for them. This demeanor is consistent with the literature on the operation of “Whiteness,” in the American society whereby Whiteness is considered such an
“unmarked norm” that Whites would not even think to acknowledge their race in the majority of situations. By contrast, race is “hypervisible” for minorities at all times (Rasmussen et al, 2001: 20; Gallagher, 1997; Tatum, 1997; Fine et al: 1997). Similar to Lareau and Horvat’s findings (1999) “Whiteness” was a resource for these respondents because being White was a form of cultural capital since it complied with the standards of smooth exchange and interactions with White agents (Lareau and Horvat: 1999: 42).

Based on these respondents’ perceptions of the interactions they had with agents, it appears that Black participants were at a disadvantage in accessing social capital and cultural knowledge from agents. They also mentioned that they had more problems converting their available resources into cultural capital than White respondents. In addition to the lack of access to social and cultural capital and their subsequent activation for Black participants, the following section continues to show the consequences of a lack of support from agents for Black respondents, especially the quota that did not study abroad. It reveals that White respondents compared with their Black counterparts that did not end up studying abroad, seemed to be less dependent on “official” institutional agents, which catered solely to helping students study abroad. Because of their network affiliations with other more knowledgeable agents, White respondents compared to their Black counterparts were able to garner more concrete information to help in their decision to study abroad.

**Dependence on agents with limited information**

Within the context of searching for study abroad programs, certain agents were more beneficial for accessing information than others. The study abroad office, whose
main function is to support students in their efforts to study abroad, provided an
information session for students who needed an overview of what the process to study
abroad entailed at GSU. After this session, students were welcome to come back for
one on one advising at select times, for further assistance with the preparations. This
help could include choosing programs and finding funding. However, several
respondents (n =7) used the study abroad office as a source for supplementary
information rather for their main sources of information, especially if they fostered
relationships with a knowledgeable agent. Conversely, for those that could not
develop relationships with agents (n = 4), the study abroad office was their primary
avenue for information. Nevertheless, the quality of information gained from either a
knowledgeable professor or program director seemed to be more beneficial than the
general information given by the study abroad office, especially when it came to
researching programs. This is exemplified in interviews with Howard and Natasha.
Howard was looking for a program in Sweden that satisfied his criteria of a course
longer than three weeks with an immersion component. When I asked him if he relied
on the study abroad office for help with finding programs that satisfied this criterion,
he replied:

No, because of two reasons. One, I had already done extensive research to see
what was available around the state and that was a criteria that was available
for the state and...Daniel Bailey [Swedish teacher] was so helpful in that area,
and we discussed [program options] several times...

Another respondent, Natasha, provided me with the following explanation of how
her professor, Dr. Pearson, helped her understand the study abroad process, despite
receiving information from the Study Abroad Office.
Dr. Pearson was like the biggest help in all of this, she really was the one that talked me through everything and so like everything they told me at the Study Abroad Office was stuff that I’d already been told by Dr. Pearson. So, for me I wouldn’t say that it [the information session at the Study Abroad Office] was that helpful, but for other students I would probably say it would be helpful, you know, especially if you don’t have a relationship with a professor to just walk you through it then its probably very helpful to other people…

Compare Natasha’s response with Ricardo’s comments on the information he received that the information session:

_It [The information from the study abroad office] was helpful, simply because it did have some information. Umm I don’t really wanna say it wasn’t helpful except sometimes stuff doesn’t you know, appear to be really smooth to follow. Like there is too much to follow up on by yourself when you’re not familiar with any of it anyway…_

Because of the sparse information, respondents like Andrew, had to be dependent on others, such as his aunt, to supplement this information:

_Andrew: I breezed right through the literature. So it really wasn’t all that productive for me. Everything else you have to like ask people about…_

_Interviewer: Which people were these?_

_Andrew: My aunt ‘Lucy.’ My aunt Lucy’s a travel agent. She’s been all over the world_

Based on these excerpts, the limited information given by the study abroad office on program selections and the study abroad process, there seems to be reproduction of inequality. This inequality occurs because those respondents with access to appropriate cultural capital such as cultural knowledge on available programs and contacts can apply these to succeed; this is in contrast to those that do not have these resources. As cultural capital is defined as “the knowledge that elites value yet schools do not teach” (McDonough, 1997: 9), White (that comprised both persons who did and did not end up studying abroad) compared with Blacks were more likely
to have a relationship with an agent that could “walk them through” aspects of the process that was excluded from the “formal” literature. Furthermore they were more likely than Black respondents to have access to cultural knowledge through family and peers to supplement these data. Ultimately this allowed them to activate their cultural capital (put these resources to use to achieve their aims, such as following the directions of helpful agent and applying to a program), which facilitated the completion of this stage of the process (this will be further developed later). Unfortunately, those with little access to additional resources such access to concrete guidance, were more likely to drop out or face huge barriers at this stage, or had to work though all these steps unaided (Werkema, 2004).

*The hollow promise of finding funding*

When it came to researching opportunities for study abroad, many students relied on both the study abroad office and agents in their social network for this information. However, these resources became limited when it came to providing concrete information about how to practically access viable funding opportunities. Consequently, respondents were not given the appropriate resources to access or activate cultural capital.

When they inquired about funding options, especially scholarships, respondents reported that agents promoted the general school based scholarship, which ranged from $250 to $1000, whereby the amount of money awarded is dependent on the time frame of the study abroad program. However, a significant portion of the sample (n = 8), including Shannon, viewed the amount of the scholarship as too little to offset the total cost of studying abroad, which included program fees, food, airfare and in some
cases, health insurance. Furthermore, they felt that along with promoting study abroad, agents needed to also promote more realistic financial options. Consider Shannon’s comments about the financial options that GSU offered:

*Interviewer: You stated that you didn’t really get much financial backing from GSU when looking for options to fund study abroad. Can you elaborate on that?

Shannon: Uhm [pause] I don’t know I kind of, kinda feel like if they’re, if they’re putting all this, “Go, go abroad, go abroad” they should put there money where their mouth is. Uhm and [pause] instead of giving you know, I don’t know, maybe giving need based and uhm maybe having seriously competitive scholarships for going abroad like…I don’t know. A thousand dollars is just kinda one of those numbers I feel that scholarship funds like just, “oh you wanna compete for your scholarship, you get $1000!” Whoopee! It helps, but [it] means, you have to look for more places to get money..

Others, like Maxine, mentioned that even though they searched meticulously for other school based and federal scholarships to study abroad, few were available. Yet, agents such as Maxine’s program director of the French program she was considering applying to, and her religion professor who she went to for advice about studying abroad, would tell her that “aid was out there;” however, she was not told specific information on how to access this money:

*People tell you what they know to tell you, “there’s money out there!” you just gotta find it. Tell me where the money at! [laughing] Tell me, cause I was on the Internet, I didn’t even have Internet access, I was up here [at school] on the Internet for hours, every week [looking for money]*

Even though Rachael critiqued this rhetoric, she still bought into the promise of finding funding (Similar to MacLeod, 1995: 127):

*They [agents] say there’s a lot of study abroad money, like aid out there, and you know…but uhm..that’s what I hate, I hate hearing, like ‘Dr. Ortiz’ has told me this a hundred times, like there’s so much money out there, they have more money they don’t even know what do with it, I’m like, so why don’t they give it*
Therefore, in order to find these additional financial options, students needed other cultural capital resources, such as the allocation of additional time to research options in addition to consistent access to technology.

This rhetoric espoused by agents about the wide availability of money to study abroad is similar to the achievement ideology MacLeod (1995: 14) found in his work that critiqued the social reproduction of inequality in the educational system. The central premise of this achievement ideology is that individuals are responsible for their own academic destiny. Consequently, students’ successes or failures are based on their own merit and not the result of differentially rewarded merit and opportunities (MacLeod, 1995; Apple, 1990). Relating this ideology to the study abroad situation, when an agent proclaims, “there’s money out there, just look for it” they are giving the impression to respondents that there is indeed a plethora of funds available to study abroad. Because of this perception of the wide availability of funding, if these students do not find money to study abroad, they consider this failure to be as a result of their own personal inadequacies. This is irrespective of the efforts that these students’ exerted to find funding which they were told existed. (Such as with Maxine’s case in the previous paragraph).

In actuality, the pool of scholarship resources to fund study abroad is slim nationwide (Cole, 1990; Washington, 1998). This limited availability necessitates students having to find innovative ways to fund study abroad, such as having a funding raiser, taking out loans and grants or paying for it with personal funds. As a
consequence, this hollow promise of the availability of “lots of funding” inadvertently reinforces the structure of class privilege. Those respondents with additional resources, such as discretionary income and those who have families that offer to provide funding will be in a better position to activate these resources (cultural capital) and be able to afford the expenditure of studying abroad. This inequality in access to resources was recognized by Rachael who reflected on the types of students she met at the information session at the study abroad office:

*I really, really want to study abroad, I really do [need to study abroad], like I’m in international business, I need it. And then there are so many people who don’t really need it, there just kinda doing it, like for a vacation, like they’ll go on this you know, three week summer programs and.. you know I think its fun and I think its great that they do it, but I’m saying I wish there was more money available….I need to study abroad and yet, I’m not qualified for anything [scholarships] because my GPA is bad. Where as somebody can have a 3.0 and not even care and like their parents could write a check and they could go. It just doesn’t, doesn’t seem fair..

Since it was rare that there were scholarships “out there” that would take care of the majority of the study abroad fees, respondents who were more likely to study abroad had access to additional financial resources to help them. These peer and familial networks were crucial in not only accessing financial resources but also attaining important knowledge-based resources, such as program information at this stage of the process.

ACCESSING CULTURAL CAPITAL FROM PEER NETWORKS

In many instances, respondents found that their peers who studied abroad were among the most valuable resources for assistance with the study abroad process. These peers who either attended GSU along with the respondents or were enrolled at other universities, gave respondents practical information that helped them become
more informed about certain aspects of the study abroad process. These resources included exposure to program options, or information about the quality of certain programs and information about a study abroad destination. This wide variety of information was usually absent from the institutional entities set up to provide this support for interested students, such as the study abroad office (Royster, 2003).

However, these peer networks were more likely to be found among White respondents as opposed to their Black counterparts.

While searching for programs, peers would assist respondents by supplementing the information that agents provided them or by offering advice about a particular study abroad program. For instance, Shannon went to the study abroad office for assistance with choosing a French language program. They recommended to her a program that was conducted through “Educational Immersion (EI),” a company that ran their own study abroad programs, since it was a popular program choice for many students who wanted to learn French. However, Shannon already heard about the program and also its benefits from a peer’s experience with the company:

*Interviewer: What led you in the direction to consider the EI French program as an option?*

*Shannon: [Laughing] Uhm [pause], well because hmm my friend who rode my MARTA bus with me, she’s a History major here. Uhm and she’d gone on an EI program and was like yeah its really good uhm, she’d gone to Italy. But hadn’t tried to get language credit, so she had done it for something else and so she said yeah it was good.*

*Interviewer: Did they give you any advice about EI?*

*Shannon: Uhm She had gone and gotten uhm credit from the history department uhm and she was like, “Oh the History department is sooo easy to get credit from!” So like saying that it was easy to get credits transferred through them...*
Additionally, by talking with peers in her network who studied abroad on a local university’s French program, Shannon was able to weed out certain program options. Based on this person’s unsatisfactory experience, Shannon decided not to make this program an option for her:

*I talked to a girl at ‘Mount Hope’ small liberal arts college and you know, she went with a Mount Hope program and [she said] it was like, [Sarcastically] “I talked to people, we talked in English, we were in France.” So hmm like her regret was that she didn’t speak enough French, she didn’t get enough out of it. So I didn’t want to go with a group of Americans or what have you, so I was looking for a program that either pulled from a bunch of different universities or put you in a French university.*

Similarly, peers were also some respondents’ primary source of information when it came to details about certain programs. For example, Marie, a White female, was interested in studying journalism in England for a semester. Fortunately for her, she had friends who were also journalism majors that studied abroad in England through a company called “World Citizens (WC).” Because of these associations, she was able to ask them details about the program and the school they were enrolled in while in England. She recalls:

*I had a friend who actually a semester before me [who] went through the same program, he also goes to Georgia State and went through “World Citizens” to London to the same school. Umm he said that it was an absolute blast. Most people that I talked to didn’t say as much about it being academically challenging as much as like really opening their mind to a lot and just being a really amazing experience…*

Because of knowing friends who went on a program she was interested in pursuing, Marie was able to gain additional information about the complexity of academics at this school; this was information that she did not receive from conversations with institutional agents when she sought out programs.
The examples above highlight the significant role of peers in providing knowledge-based resources that helped respondents in their search for study abroad programs. For Shannon and Marie, the information that they received from their peers (resources) along with validation of this information from an agent, built cultural capital (because they realized the advantage of the knowledge they possessed). They also “activated” this cultural capital (using these resources for a social advantage, in this case, making sure that they made the right decision about a program option) when they mentioned to these agents that they were aware of these programs, in addition to asking agents to validate their choices. Most importantly, their peer networks gave them information about details of particular programs, which in some cases, supplemented cultural knowledge agents already transmitted to them.

Additionally, before they embarked on their search for programs, peers also provided respondents with details of the study abroad process at GSU. For instance, Andrew mentioned that his roommate told him about study abroad fairs on campus and about the information seminars at the study abroad office. Thus, even before he did extensive research in program options, he knew beforehand that these avenues for information existed. Similarly, Brianna gained information from a close friend who was studying abroad at the time, about some of the steps of the study abroad process at GSU:

My best friend ‘Fiona’ is studying abroad, she goes to GSU but is studying abroad in, through the University of Colorado [program] in Paris and so she sorta, I would like hear about when her application was due or recommendation or whatever, I mean, I know that you have to apply and I know that at GSU you have to take an [information] seminar...
Prior knowledge about the steps of the study abroad process was vital in creating cultural capital for some respondents. For instance, in Brianna’s case, this information about application timelines and rough knowledge of when information sessions at the study abroad office were held would be considered resources. However, she possessed “unactivated” cultural capital because she decided not to invest her resources. For example, Brianna knew this information would give her time to prepare and plan for a study abroad program; however, she made the decision not to pursue study abroad beyond the search stage. Therefore, in order for Brianna to receive a social advantage (study abroad) she needed to activate her cultural capital (actually use this information to plan to study abroad). On the other hand, in Andrew’s case, he activated his cultural capital by taking his friends advice and going to the fair to inquire about study abroad programs.

Peers also provided information about how to prepare for the societies that respondents were interested in visiting. For instance, Dizino, a Black female, who studied abroad in Spain, never traveled to Europe before her experience. Before she left, her peers who visited Europe, told her what to expect when traveling there:

Dizino: I spoke to many people who actually went to Europe on study abroad and told me about it...

Interviewer: And what did they say?

Dizino: Some of them said I mean, well a lot of them talked about culture shock and so far they said, well for the most part they talked about their own problems such as understanding the culture..like the fact that everything closes there early, for the siesta, so you have to prepare for that..

In another interesting example, Antonio wanted to understand what life was like for a Black persons living in Russia. However, he did not have any Black peers who
traveled there before. Upon the recommendation of his father, he joined an online forum called “Black Russia” in which Blacks who lived or traveled to Russia, could share their experiences. He states how this mentally prepared him for life as a Black person in Russia:

My dad even pointed me to a site that was a forum of Black people in Russia and that’s where I began receiving alot of information. I started conversing with them about what is it like for you? [They said] Eventually you get used to it [the racism] and after a while It’s no longer, in the neighborhoods your in, you’re no longer a Black guy in Russia. You get still it, but it never fully goes away from what I gleaned from them, but you get more and more, ok there’s an American in our neighborhood, it gets more and more to that point.

Research has shown that Internet forums are new ways for persons to develop “weak ties” and “bridging” social capital (Williams, 2006; Price and Cappella, 2002). This is because the forums allows persons who are socially different and from different geographic regions, to share and access new ideas and information. In this regard, Antonio gained “bridging” social capital from these online conversations, which transmitted resources in the form of information about racism in Russia. He realized a social advantage from these resources, in that the information gave him insights to better understand the society. As a result, he gained cultural capital from this information. However, in order Antonio to access this information, time and technology are obvious prerequisites. Fortunately, Antonio had the resources to comply with this requirement. As a result, his resources put him in a position to develop social capital and gain cultural capital through these exchanges.

Overall however, Black respondents, especially the portion that delayed studying abroad, had fewer peers to offer recommendations of programs. This
occurred because their peer networks were less likely to include someone that studied abroad. As a result of this absence of guidance from peers when selecting appropriate programs, the majority of Black students in this category were confused as to which program to choose to study abroad. Most of them turned to official agents for assistance with program selection, although they were not comfortable approaching these individuals because of previous unsuccessful interactions. Unfortunately, this was an inadequate substitute for more frank conversations with an “informal network” of peers. The importance of peer advice at this stage of the study abroad process is exemplified by Rachael’s following statement:

A really good source [of information] is like to hear from somebody who’s done it and find out how they did it, who they did it with, like you know, how they got their money, how did they you know, how did they’re credits transfer, which classes did they take, did they stay with a family, you know what I mean. Like stuff like that. Yeah definitely like word of mouth, just students in general.

One of the possible reasons for this inequality in the peer networks of Black and White respondents may lie in the fact that Black respondents are more likely to have racially similar individuals as part of their peer networks than White students. This is as a result of the pattern of social segregation still prevalent in the wider society and at schools (Tatum, 2003; McPherson et al, 2001). Because Black students in general are less likely to study abroad (Cole, 1990; Open Doors Report, 2004), their social networks would be less likely to contain person who studied abroad than Whites’ social networks.
ACCESSING CULTURAL CAPITAL FROM THE FAMILY

As Lareau (1987, 2000) notes, social class provides cultural capital when it increases student’s chances of complying with the standards of an institution. Similar to Lareau’s findings, in the search phase, respondents who came from middle class families compared with those from lower SES, had an easier time complying with the standards of the study abroad process; this ease in compliance was facilitated by their access to a variety of cultural capital resources that their families possessed. These resources included support from their families in the form of offers or promises to help pay for the study abroad program if the respondent decided to participate, verbal encouragement, assistance with choosing programs with their children, and help with addressing concerns that they had about traveling abroad.

Because scholarships could not cover all the expenses of studying abroad, such as program fees, respondents needed to have access to personal funds. Thus, the majority of the respondents (n= 14) asked family members to consider supplementing or completely paying for their perspective programs. In Brianna’s case, she mentioned that her parents promised to pay of her entire trip if she decided to study abroad:

*Brianna: I wouldn’t pay for it [study abroad], I wouldn’t have to worry about it, my parents would pay for it. I wouldn’t have to worry about the cost or taking loans or anything…*

*Interviewer: How do you know that your parents are going to pay for it?*

*Brianna: Uhm, they told me. I think they know that they really want me to go [study abroad] and they know that if they don’t pay for it that the chances of me going are much lower, so it’s kinda like, if they want me to go they don’t really have a choice [laughing].*
For the majority of respondents, family members offered to pay for portions of their expenses. For instance, Shannon reported that her parents promised to assist her financially if she decided to study abroad. Similarly, Patrick mentioned that when he told his mother that he was interested in studying abroad in China, his mother told him she would help contribute $500 toward his airfare. Respondents’ relatives were also helpful in promising to assist with lost expenditure while their family members were studying abroad. Natasha, who was living with her partner, asked him if he would be willing to pay her share of the rent and bills while she would be away in Brazil. In this regard, Natasha possessed a valuable resource, a partner who was financially stable. She turned this resource into cultural capital by realizing possessing this resource was an advantage, in that, she could potentially depend on him to pay for rent and other expenditure while she studied abroad. She then turned her unactivated capital into activated capital by asking him if this would be possible. When he agreed to cover her bills when she would be away, her cultural capital was turned into a social profit.

Compare these experiences with Rachael’s situation. As previously mentioned, Rachael was struggling to find viable financial options because she could not depend on her family to help with lost expenditure. Evidence of her financial constraints was revealed that she’s had to financially support herself “from the time she was 18” and she knew “it was only natural to pay for college myself.” Because of her lack of structural advantages, Rachael was stuck at this stage trying to find funding and keeping the option of using loans to study abroad. However, since she did not want to incur additional debt, this option was a last resort for her.
Thus, based on these examples, the majority of the sample could depend on financial support from their families to help fund study abroad. Social class therefore, played in role in the possession and acquisition of financial resources to help make study abroad feasible for these students (Lareau, 1987, 2000; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Horvat, 2003; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). These structural advantages allowed these respondents to comply with the cultural capital requirements of the process (the need for additional money to fund a program). It was at the next stage where respondents invested their familial privileges (cultural capital in the form of financial resources) and applied to the program of their interest.

Family members also helped some respondents to better evaluate their program choices, especially those family members who participated in study abroad programs themselves. For instance, Ann’s mother studied abroad in London while she was in high school and offered Ann advice on what to look for when choosing a program. Ann states:

*My mother’s support and speaking about her experiences abroad in addition to my previous trip encouraged me to research what programs were available through GSU and which of those programs would fit with my interests and major requirements… she was the one that really pushed in the right direction to going ahead and sign up*

Furthermore, since Ann was looking at a hospitality program that visited three countries in Western Europe, which were places that she and her family had visited on a previous vacation, her parents were able to remind her about things to do and see in those countries.

It is also interesting to note that although some Black respondents’ families had the financial resources and were enthusiastic about their family member’s travel plans,
they were less likely to provide respondents with any practical assistance when searching for programs. Rather, the nature of their support was verbal encouragement. This was clearly stated in Maxine’s following comment:

_Interviewer: So how did your family respond to your decision to study abroad?_

_Maxine: Hey baby that’s good, you can do it, you can do it.[laughter] I mean, they ain’t got nothing to contribute_

_Interviewer: What do you mean by nothing to contribute?_

_Maxine: I mean like money, information…_

Similarly, when I asked Rosa how supportive her family was in her decision to study abroad, she replied:

_Very [supportive of my decision to study abroad]. They live in Connecticut [laughter], and I’m like a full-fledged adult now, but they were just like, go and do your thing… I wouldn’t say they discouraged me but they were like I could do whatever I wanted so I decided to go ahead._

The distance that separated her and her family, and the fact she was “a full-fledged adult” may have contributed to Rosa’s lack of parental guidance. Compared to than White respondents in the sample, Black respondents lived further away from their families; as a result, they could not sufficiently utilize their families for guidance when choosing a program. Additionally, the majority of Black respondents who reported that their families mostly gave them verbal encouragement were above the age of 25 (n = 4) and mentioned that they were either living by themselves or were fully independent of their families. In contrast, White respondents who’s families helped them with program choices (n = 3) were either more likely to be below 25 and were still residing with their parents or they had easy access to their parents (who lived in the same state as their children). Furthermore, White respondents’ families who
guided these respondents with their program search compared with those respondents’ families that provided little help were more likely to have participated in study abroad. Overwhelmingly, Black respondents’ were less likely to come from families that studied abroad. Consequently, these families lack of familiarity with the process would limit the kind of guidance given to their family member that is interested in studying abroad (Cole, 1991).

Respondents, whose family members participated in study abroad, were more likely to receive practical assistance from these relatives. This practical assistance included general information about what to look for when searching for programs. For instance, in Ann’s case, her mother stressed the importance of inquiring about credits when she decided to pursue a study abroad program. Even though this general information is not a substitute for guidance from a knowledgeable agent at GSU, this practical direction helped respondents make more informed decisions when searching for and eventually choosing a program. Furthermore, their family member’s guidance also signaled to respondents that their relatives were genuinely supportive of their interest to study abroad. Because of this resource (practical direction), White interviewees, who were more likely to have this resource than their Black counterparts, gained advantages when they utilized these directions. For example, Ann eventually utilized her mother’s advice to ask her program director about how many credits she will be receiving if she decided to study abroad on a European hospitality program.

Finally, family members showed their support in other meaningful ways to respondents, in some cases, offering to provide childcare for their family members
who were pursuing study abroad. The case of Catherine is a prime example. Catherine was a mother to a five-year-old son and even though she was looking into studying abroad to Chile, her first priority was finding adequate childcare for her son while she would be away for three weeks. With this goal in mind, she asked her father and stepmother if they could look after her son if she decided to study abroad in Chile. Her parents replied, “They didn’t see any reason why they couldn’t.” In Catherine’s situation, she possessed valuable resources; family members who were dependable, had free time, and who frequently took care of her son while she was away at college and at work. She turned these resources into cultural capital by realizing possessing them was an advantage; that she could potentially depend on her family for childcare while she studied abroad. She “activated” her capital by asking them if it would be possible for them to commit to this child care request. When they agreed, Catherine’s cultural capital was turned into a social profit, her family agreeing to look after her son.

The examples in this section demonstrate how the study abroad process favors those students who possess resources to overcome institutional deficiencies. These students’ resources allow them to comply more easily with the cultural capital requirements of the process than those who lack these advantages.

**SUMMARY**

As my analysis in this section revealed, there were distinct class and racial differences in how some respondents were better able to access resources that allowed them to gain and activate cultural capital more easily than others. The respondents who were successful at this stage of the study abroad process were able to access
resources from a combination of sources, such as institutional agents, their families and peers; this was in contrast to respondents who had to depend on a single source. Nevertheless, I revealed that some Black and White respondents were advantaged over others because they formed ties with agents who provided more substantial forms of cultural knowledge. Irrespective of the quality of resources gained from these connections, respondents needed to “turn these resources into capital and purposefully activate them to yield profits” (Lareau, 2000: 177; Monkman et al, 2003: 29). When it came to gaining profits from these resources, some respondents were more successful than others. For instance, some respondents believed that they were denied access to social capital when they tried to activate their resources (which seemed to be the case with more Black respondents (n=4) than Whites (n=1) such as in Ricardo’s case). On the other hand, others did not have the resources to comply with the cultural capital standards of the institution (In the case of Rachael who could not find money to study abroad). Finally, some respondents chose not to activate their cultural capital even though they fulfilled the “rules” of this stage (In the case of Brianna who decided not to continue with studying abroad even though she had the financial means and knew several persons who went through the study abroad process at GSU).

The final stage of the study abroad process, the “Choice Stage,” demonstrates how respondents were able to use their available resources to comply with the necessary steps of this stage. I continue to reveal that the differences between the portions of my sample that eventually studied abroad and the others that did not go overseas illustrate the effects of both agency and structure in the social reproduction of inequality.
CHAPTER SIX

THE CHOICE STAGE

This stage details how respondents utilized accumulated non-material resources gained from their habitus which was informed by their social networks, community, family and knowledge-based resources acquired from the university (from agents, promotional materials), to eventually participate on a study abroad program. Due to the insufficiency of “official” institutional resources to allow respondents to comply with cultural capital requirement at this stage of the process (such as the transfer of information to understand how the financial process works), some interviewees were forced to employ additional resources not widely available to every respondent, to ultimately go on a study abroad program. These resources included knowledge of the paperwork needed to apply for a passport or Visa, knowledge of who to contact to help with transferring credits and discretionary income that they could utilize to help fund study abroad. Unfortunately, because of race and class based barriers, Blacks and lower socio-economic respondents, compared with their White and high SES counterparts in the sample, did not possess a reservoir of resources to adhere to these particular requirements at this stage (Rocisgno and Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999).

Finally and most interesting, a distinct segment of the sample, who were primarily White and middle class, had the cultural and social resources to facilitate compliance with the dominant standards of this stage. Yet, they choose not invest these resources to gain a social profit, which in these case, were ways that would allow them to go overseas to study abroad. Thus, similar to what Lareau and Horvat (1999) acknowledged in their research on parents activation of cultural capital in the school
setting, structural advantages and individual agency both play a significant role in achieving a social profit.

**ELEMENTS OF THE CHOICE STAGE**

*Cultural Capital Assumptions*

As with the “Search Stage,” the Choice phase also required respondents to possess specific cultural capital in order to satisfy elements of this stage. Similar to the “Choice Phase” noted by Hossler and Gallagher (1987) this phase was characterized by respondents finally choosing or committing to a study abroad program with the aim of going overseas to study. The elements of this stage included applying to program, paying for the program and accumulating travel and country specific information.

Implicit in these elements however, are requirements that are not explicitly stated, yet are standards that respondents had to adhere to in order to achieve a result. For instance, when applying to a program, respondents needed to have an interest in the destination (which entails adapting to the program offerings, thus privileging those persons whose interests and experiences comply with program offerings). They also needed to have the time and guidance to understand the details of application process for specific programs (such as the language of the application, requirements, understanding how credits transferred) and had to have an understanding of the paperwork involved (knowledge of how to apply for a passport, health insurance). When paying for the program, respondents must have an understanding of the details of the costs (for instance, health insurance is not covered in some programs), they must also be organized and start months or in some cases a year in advance to gather information.
on the availability of scholarships, loans and grants. Furthermore, respondents must have the money up front to cover program expenses, since most scholarship money is paid as a reimbursement to expenses rather than it covering costs when payments are due. In the following sections I suggest that these assumptions at this phase, like at other stages, are raced and classed.

**USING RESOURCES TO ACTIVATE CULTURAL CAPITAL**

*Finding a program destination*

*Familiarity with a location based on travel experiences*

Studies on the reproduction of inequality in the school system have repeatedly revealed that White, middle class perspectives dominate and influence American school curricula (DiMaggio and Mohr, 1985; Ogbu, 1990; Farkas, 1996; Giroux, 1981; Horvat, 2003; Carter, 2005; Hilliard, 1979; Delpit, 1995). Relating these findings to the study abroad process, clearly, those whose values, beliefs and experiences (habitus) comply with the standards of the dominant group in society and who also exhibit the knowledge to display that they understand the “rules of the game” (the game ultimately being the study abroad process), will have an easier time finding program options that appeal to them. Thus, some respondents (n= 5), were better equipped than others with resources to comply with the standards for finding and choosing a program destination. One of these resources included personal experiences with the location respondents decided to choose for study abroad. For instance, a year before enrolling in a journalism study abroad program to England, Marie visited a friend in London. When I asked her what influenced her decision to choose a program in England, she mentioned that among having a familiarity with the city and admiring
its “easy-to-navigate and expansive Underground [train] system,” she stressed that she relished the “feeling of being like a local to outsiders” while she was there.

Along with the ability to pass as a local in the host society (a sentiment expressed by some respondents as the reason they choose particular programs over others, which would be explored in greater detail later) and the familiarity with society, she also possessed additional resources that persuaded her to choose this location and program. Marie also gained significant information about this particular program from other friends who studied abroad on the same program. Before she choose this program, her peers were able to inform her of its strengths and weakness (that the school was not academically challenging, but there were opportunities for site seeing), and they also stressed the benefits of experiencing a journalism course in another English speaking country (which was easier and more convenient than taking this program in a non-English speaking country). Since this information was not supplied by the institution, Marie was forced to depend primarily on these knowledge-based resources acquired through social capital from her peer network. For instance, her journalism department did not promote the idea about the “potential career advantages” she would gain from studying journalism in another society, which would expose her to new perspectives. She mentioned that she gained this information from friends. Additionally, when she went to the study abroad office to inquire about program options, she was not referred to persons who may have given her insights into these strengths and weakness of the program. As Lareau and Horvat (1999) and Lareau and Weinginer (2003) show in their studies on the social reproduction of advantage by middle class parents, Marie was advantaged because she possessed
knowledge-based and cultural resources absent among respondents who did not have a knowledgeable peer network and personal experiences in country of their interest. Therefore, Marie was not solely reliant on the institution for guidance. This aspect of social reproduction also underscores a class element to her privileges. This is because persons more likely to travel overseas for leisure and have friends who studied abroad, come from predominantly White middle to upper class families (Burn, Cerych, Smith, 1990; Hembroff and Ruzs, 1993).

Because she possessed resources such as previous experiences in the host society (where she felt comfortable) and information about a perspective program, Marie consciously decided to choose a study abroad program situated in London. Based on this decision, it can be argued that Marie realized a social advantage from her resources, for instance, she felt comfortable in the country, she could get around easily and she knew which program to choose, based on her friends information. By choosing this program, Marie activated (invested) her resources by choosing a program that complies with the program choices of the intuition (mostly a variety of European nations). Thus, she converted her resources into activated cultural capital and now used this capital to place herself in a better position to study abroad.

When examining the notion of passing as a local which Marie alluded to in her explanation of factors that influenced her destination and program choice, it underscores some respondents’ preoccupation with not being considered an “other” in a foreign environment (Talburt and Stewart, 1999: 171). Ann, a White female, also acknowledged the importance of blending in as a reason why she chose her destination and program. Ann, like Marie, who chose a study abroad program to Western Europe,
previously visited the region on vacation with her family. When I questioned her about her reasoning for choosing this location, she mentioned that she felt “very comfortable around the native Western Europeans,” and also that she “loved the culture.” She also added that she liked the feeling that she could “just be herself” in that environment. These feelings comfort in regions with populations who racially and culturally alike is a similar sentiment voiced by African Americans when they consciously choose destinations in Africa and the Diaspora in order to explore their heritage (Morgan, Mwegelo, Turner, 2002; Landau and Moore, 2001; Day-Vines, Barker, and Exum, 1998). Studies reveal that because African Americans feel a sense of alienation and “otherness” in American culture, the privilege of not being a cultural and racial minority, is an important factor as to why they choose these predominantly Black regions as study abroad options (Morgan, Mwegelo, Turner, 2002: 349).

Furthermore, according to McNair (1997) when African Americans choose countries in the African Diaspora to study abroad, “it reveals a consciousness of these individuals common ancestry, color, culture, history” to these particular societies (Morgan, Mwegelo, Turner, 2002: 339; McNair, 1997).

Based on these findings, this need to experience commonalty in order not to experience “otherness” and “hypervisibility” is also a reason for White respondents’ destination choices. By choosing Western European countries, by default, these students are privileged in having the automatic option to study abroad in places that represent their heritage and culture; this is because the majority of study abroad programs are located in these regions (Cole, 1990). Since Western Europe is very similar to North America in terms of economic parity and racial similarity between
natives and Euro-Americans, White respondents can use their Whiteness as a connection to these regions (Landau and Moore, 2001:1). Thus, for Marie and Ann for instance, “their sense of belonging to the environment came so easily” (Horvat and Antonio, 1999: 334). Their individual habitus (which is natural common-sense way of understanding the world), was consistent with the dominant culture of those societies. As a result, this connection allowed them to feel comfortable and ultimately belong (Horvat and Antonio, 1999). These and other respondents did not have to drastically amend their dress or norms to “fit in,” and had the privilege of not being constantly reminded of their outsider status. Thus, Whiteness was used as sources of connection to these locations. This was privilege not conferred to Black respondents whose heritages were hardly represented in the program options.

As previously mentioned, not only was this notion of blending in articulated by White respondents, but Black respondents also acknowledged that the cultural and racial similarities with certain host societies were factors that influenced their eventual program choice. Carla, for example, studied abroad in Ghana as an undergraduate before she came to Georgia State. She mentioned that the sense of connection she felt toward the Ghanaian culture influenced her in choosing a location to study abroad with a strong African influence such as Salvador de Bahia in Brazil. She explains:

*My own reason for going to Brazil kinda was the reason that I went to Ghana and it bounced off a Ghana. I was like, ok where do I go next? Then I found out about Brazil and its cultural connections to Africa and exactly how strong they were and so that’s why I went to Brazil...*

For some, as in the case of Tiffany, a respondent’s *discomfort* in a largely non-Black country influenced her decision to choose a program location with a sizable Black
population. Before enrolling at GSU, Tiffany studied abroad in Mexico as an undergraduate. Because of the racism she was subjected to while over there, she faced varying degrees of discomfort around the native population. She explains:

_I was definitely the Black girl, and everybody in Mexico, even though they were Mexican they were like White people, like they almost didn’t have an ethnicity, they’re like White people who spoke Spanish. I felt like I was around a whole bunch of White people. And I just don’t like to be around a whole bunch of White people all the time. Its just kinda, it’s definitely uncomfortable and somebody always says something stupid and it’s hard for me to relate to people who don’t get me and then my hair and the way I talk and all that stuff. When I was in Mexico these little kids kept coming up to me and kept, I had braids, kept trying to touch my hair and stuff, and I was like Jesus Christ, and one guy kept talking about Snoop Dogg to me and stuff like that and I was just like, “All Black people do not listen to rap music, I do not like rap music, that’s not my thing.”_

These feelings of being “othered” when persons “kept touching her hair,” and treated her as a representative of her race, made her feel “uncomfortable” and out of place. Because of this negative racialized treatment, Tiffany decided to choose the Brazil program to “see what the Black people were doing there.” She expands further:

_Tiffany: I was wondering what the Black people are gonna be like when I got there, I definitely was like, I wanted see the Black people, take me where the Black people are…_

_Interviewer: Why was it important to see other Black people?_

_Tiffany: Cause, when I go abroad I feel like I’m around a whole bunch of White people and that’s so odd!_

She continued to mention that when she “found out that there’s so many Africans [people of predominantly African decent]” in Brazil it piqued her interest to choose this country. Thus, the unease she felt in this non-Black location positively influenced her decision to choose a study abroad program in a predominately Black country (Morgan, Mwegelo, Turner, 2002).
Unfortunately, since the majority of the program choices were overwhelmingly situated in Western Europe, a trend that is significant among most universities that offer study abroad programs (Carter, 1991; Washington, 1998; Landau and Moore, 2001; Carroll, 1996), respondents who have no interest in European culture and heritage, but have a desire to learn more about non-White cultures and histories, will ultimately be disadvantaged when it comes to program options. Carla acknowledges this deficiency in the narrow program choices for people who are interested in non-European countries. The absence of these options sent the message to her that her culture and heritage were not valued (Carter, 1991):

_I don’t think they [the school] really care about whether I wanted to go to a country or not that wasn’t in Europe, because those are the countries that are actually up there, for what I’ve notice, to study abroad. They have the most different, different types of programs and things like that. To find a way to go to a country in South America, is like hard, and they only have one that they go to in Africa, you know two [choices] South Africa and Ghana from what I understand, and Africa is like how big? [Laughing] You know, Africa is like two times the size of North America…_

As these examples continue to reveal, being “White” is a form of cultural capital which complies with the standards of program choices (Lareau and Horvat: 1999: 42). Unlike White students, Black students do not have these choices that would give them the peace of mind of going to countries with similar ethnicities and cultures; this may be because their habitus is not in harmony with the culture of the dominant host society (Lareau and Horvat: 1999: 42). Race, therefore, allows White respondents to profit more from hidden institutional benefits than their Black counterparts (McIntosh, 1996).
Familiarity with a location through curricula exposure

Similar to respondents who choose their program locations through personal experiences, other interviewees were motivated to choose a certain destination because of exposure to those societies via their curricula. For instance, Catherine took an anthropology course that was focused on Chilean culture. Because of this introduction to the culture, Catherine realized that she was fascinated by aspects of Chilean art. This love for this culture’s art was also a connection that she shared with the professor who taught that class, Dr. Baker. By taking these courses and sharing an interest with Dr. Baker on aspects of the culture, Catherine possessed resources from which she realized a social advantage; for instance, she realized she had a connection with this professor and could develop this interest more by going on her professor’s study abroad to Chile. Thus, this realization allowed her to gain cultural capital. Eventually, she invested this cultural capital by making the decision to pursue this program.

Catherine also had other equally valuable resources at her disposal which was used to activate her cultural capital to gain social advantages. For example, since Catherine worked on a Master’s project with Dr. Baker, this facilitated her establishing a relationship and gaining specific information about the Chile program as it was being formulated. Due to this relationship, she was able to form “bridging social capital” with her professor that facilitated an easy exchange of information (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1998). Furthermore, Catherine extensive knowledge about South America’s culture and scenery, since she did extensive research on South American environmental health issues as part of a Master’s project. Catherine realized
that possessing these resources were assets, that could be help her when choosing a location to study abroad. When I asked Catherine what made her choose Chile as a destination, among other responses, she mentioned that her research in the region prompted her interest:

*I mean honestly South America, I’ve been interested in that region and I’ve done a lot of research with on it, for my practicum I had to do was on Environmental health issues in South America and so I was doing things with them for a while…*

By talking to Dr. Baker and asking her to send her information about this study abroad program, Catherine activated her cultural capital. Clearly, her cultural resources and the purposive action that she took to invest these privileges helped her choose this program (Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Lareau, 2000; Reay, 1999; McDonough, 1997).

Within the context of using resources to choose programs, although some respondents possessed a reservoir of additional resources and exerted their agency when it came to choosing a program destination, they believed that they were impeded in their attempts to activate their cultural capital by institutional gatekeepers. The case of Antonio offers an example of this phenomenon. Antonio, who was majoring in Russian, mentioned that he learned a great detail about their culture when he took Russian business classes. He utilized his knowledge-based resources from classes and supplemented his knowledge about the culture’s norms and traditions with information he gained from his network of friends who studied abroad in this country. By taking these approaches, Antonio realized an advantage by possessing these resources. For instance, that familiarity with the society, the norms, and especially information from the business courses, allowed him to acquire a more detailed understanding of the
culture that he could utilize when traveling there. Furthermore, Antonio also shared a “weak tie” with his Russian professor Dr. Franklin, who validated his interest in studying abroad in Russia. At this point, Antonio possessed “unactivated” cultural capital (Lareau, 2000: 178). However, he invested this “unactivated cultural capital” to produce “activated cultural capital” by approaching Dr. Franklin, whom he had confidence to interact with, and inquired about broadening his language skills. This activation produced a social advantage when Dr. Franklin recommended a St. Petersburg program to him. Antonio’s decisions are similar to what Horvat, Weininger and Lareau (2003) found, in that middle class persons compared with lower income counterparts, are able to rely on a wider variety of ties to access and supplement their information.

When he tried to suggest cheaper programs to Dr. Franklin (based on information from his friends), the Professor dismissed his suggestion and told him to focus on one program alone. As a result of this response, he perceived that he was denied the opportunity to activate his capital. He elaborated on this interaction as follows:

*If I brought other things [program options] to the table it was like, it was like well, it was never actually implicitly stated, but its definitely, from being in the office when people are talking about other opportunities and myself even bringing up others, it’s always the overbearing aura of we’re really not gonna talk about that right now, because you need to focus your sites on this over here. I know my friend that went for three months spoke with her [Dr. Franklin] on every option, what about this one? What about this one? But eventually it got to a point where everything had gotten turned down. Everything that was practical for him. It was like, I can do this one cause the costs are in line, this is in line, but [she said] this isn’t worth your time. But if someone can only afford the third tier school, we need to find the best one of the third tier. Cause if they don’t get the scholarship or it doesn’t coincide with proper times, we need to have the best of the tiers available to them. That’s what I think is being overlooked.*
Dr. Franklin’s actions underscore the importance of the “gatekeeper” role of institutional agents who legitimize resources based on their own sets of formal and informal standards (Lewis, 2003; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Carter, 2003; Farkas, 1996; Lareau and Weininger, 2003). Based on Antonio’s account, Dr. Franklin rebuffed his and his friends’ deployment of cultural capital (his knowledge about the variety of other potential programs) by creating her personal standards and evaluations. In this case, she assumed that Antonio and his counterparts were financially secure enough to fund the programs that she recommended, and failed to consider if these programs were “practical” for them in terms of timing and financial expenditure. Similar to Lareau’s (2003) findings in Unequal Childhoods, whereby teachers would judge working class parents absence from PTA meetings as “disinterest” in their children’s education, while ignoring that these parents did not have the luxury to take the time off from work to attend meetings, Antonio’s professor based her judgments not on the reality of Antonio and his peers circumstances, but on “middle class” standards (timing, adequate funding); this standards however, are unequally distributed across the society. Thus, her suggestions ignored the reality of Antonio and his friends’ social situations.

These examples reflect the subtle classed and racialized nature of choosing study abroad programs. Clearly, persons that conformed to many of these standards, (Have an interest in the narrow program selection mostly to Europe, have the money to fund the options presented to them, and have the time and additional resources to supplement the insufficient school based information) will be able to find study abroad programs comfortably. Conversely, persons who are deficient in these criteria will
have defer their dreams of studying abroad or change their interests to fit the standards of the institution.

**Understanding the application process**

**Completing Paperwork**

When it came to applying to study abroad programs, some respondents continued to use their available resources in a variety of different ways. Even though the application process differed from program to program, their formats were very similar. For Antonio, who choose to apply to a St. Petersburg Russian language program, his application process was comprised of “an essay, two letters of reference and an interview with the review panel.” For Maxine, who applied to go on a “World Citizens” French program to France, she recalls there “was a lot of paper work” involved, which consisted of “passport applications, two recommendations, a letter of intentions, passport documentation,” and emphasized the fact “it was a long process.” Patrick also realized that aspects of the process took a lot of time and effort to coordinate and without adequate help, persons may run the risk of making mistakes or getting lost. This was especially the case when studying abroad with programs not sponsored by the university:

*It takes an effort, you know, to put everything together in terms of applications, talking to different people, cause many of the programs are not offered through GSU, so it will take a little bit more effort on my part to reach out and try to find the information about the programs, and how they are and just talk to somebody I guess.*

In order to understand these application requirements, all the respondents at this stage (n = 19) sought assistance from institutional agents, such as the program director of their prospective program, or the study abroad office. Those that had
access to additional resources, both school based and informal, used a combination of these to understand and satisfy paperwork requirements. Tiffany for instance, utilized the “bonding social capital” (Putnam, 2000) she gained from her professor/program director Dr. Pearson. This strong connection allowed her to gain concrete information about the application process of the Brazil anthropology program that she considered applying to. In the exchange below, Tiffany elucidates the intellectual resources she was able to attain through her “strong ties” with Dr. Pearson (Granovetter, 1973):

*Interviewer:* When you decided to apply to this program what was the application process like?

*Tiffany:* I think when you work closely with a like a program director you’re fine…

*Interviewer:* What do you mean work closely?

*Tiffany:* Like uhm she just told me what to do and I did it. If I had any problems I could call her or go to her office, so I was just really easy cause I just gave her what she needed. If she needed something else she would let me know. So I was just easy. I think going through her program is easy cause you could just easily work with her, so I think some program directors can really make it really easy and really hard for students. So she just kept up with me on my forms and stuff like that to make sure that I gave her what she needed.

*Interviewer:* And what did you get help with specifically, when it came to the application?

*Tiffany:* Oh if I need help for anything she’d help, I don’t need to ask.

As noted above, Tiffany’s resource was the relationship with Dr. Pearson. This strong connection between the two parties facilitated the “easy” exchange of information about navigating passport applications. She realized a social advantage from possessing these resources (the fact that she could depend on her for “anything” which was exemplified in other situations when she needed assistance). Next, Tiffany made
strategic usage of this cultural capital when she “called” or “went to her office” with problems with the study abroad process. Ultimately, this action resulted in her gaining practical assistance with filling out passport documentation and other application forms that the program required. What is significant about Tiffany’s comment is that she also realized that she was privileged in gaining information from her professor/program director compared with other respondents. She mentioned that “some program directors can really make it really easy and really hard for students,” which underscores the importance of the gatekeepers in not only legitimizing resources of students, but also remove barriers or simplifying bureaucratic procedures (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Nevertheless, in order for these barriers to be removed, relationships “based on trust and understanding” have to be developed between agents who have this ability to navigate these bureaucratic hurdles and students in order to gain valuable social capital (Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch, 1995). As mentioned in detail in the previous chapter, when race and class based antagonism come into play, formulating these ties can be problematic for some students (Smith-Maddox, 1999; Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

Despite the fact that Dr. Pearson was considered to be an invaluable resource in helping Tiffany understand the paperwork involved in the application process, the following situation alludes to the fact that having a access to multiple sources of resources (having an extensive network of contacts with access to information and resources – greater social capital) is better than depending on just one or two sources (Portes, 1998, Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Under the direction of Dr. Pearson, Tiffany filled out paperwork for a passport and eventually, mailed her completed
documentation. After more than three months of waiting for her passport to arrive, she realized that her passport processing was being delayed. When she called the embassy to inquire about the reasons for the processing delay, the officials told her she did not submit a self addressed envelope along with her documentation, and this was what was holding up the mailing of her passport. Tiffany mentioned that if students who are unfamiliar with intricacies of the study abroad process do not get individualized attention from agents, incidents like these would continue to occur:

*Tiffany: It [studying abroad] is difficult cause there’s so much to do like, my passport, I thought I wasn’t gonna get that back because I didn’t send them a self addressed envelope so they weren’t giving me uhm my passport back. So I just sent an envelope and then it came back. And that was a little bit before I had to go I was like damn man…*

*Interviewer: And nobody told you that you needed to have requirements?*

*Tiffany: No. I didn’t know about the envelope, like I kept with uhm, ‘Dr. Pearson’ on that, kinda like how to fill the passport applications out and stuff like that so she helped me with that, but I missed the envelope part.*

*Interviewer: Would you have liked some additional help with all those details?*

*Tiffany: Yeah, it would be nice, it would be nice if somebody kept with people. Like people who say they’re gonna go [study abroad], if you had somebody who would check up on you, like with the email, “I wonder if you have any questions about your passport, and about your program and about funding and like scholarships.”*

*Interviewer: Why do you think that additional help is important?*

*Tiffany: Cause otherwise people might get discouraged and just say forget it! Or because people like, it makes them feel like somebody’s like, caring about them and its easing a little bit off of them and then sometimes you’re just overwhelmed like who do I ask? So you wouldn’t have to ask that question if somebody like came to you first…*

Based on this and other situations, it was generally assumed by university agents that students had a “universal” understanding of the nuances of the application process.
(Lareau and Weininger, 2003: 596). However, students unfamiliar with the assumptions of the process will have problems complying with its requirements. In these cases, guidance with various aspects of the study abroad process is crucial. Yet, this assistance is typically absent from the institutional entities developed to help students understand these procedures.

Maxine’s experience further illustrates the need for an extensive network of ties to gain social capital, so as to help with the paperwork process of applying for a study abroad program. Unlike Tiffany who had strong ties with her professor, Maxine had “weak ties” with her History professor who encouraged her to pursue study abroad. Despite his verbal encouragement for her to pursue study abroad, she did not get any concrete direction from him when it came to filling out paperwork; even though she activated her cultural capital (knowledge that she could rely on his help) by making the decision to go to him when she was encountering problems with the application:

Interviewer: To what extent did he [her professor] help you with the paperwork?

Maxine: I mean, he was there as a sounding board, he was there for somebody to talk to and to tell me his experience, its not like we went through the paperwork together or anything you know...

As this comment suggests, guidance from this agent to help simplify the paperwork process was minimal. Frustrated, Maxine then went to the study abroad office for help with her problem; however, she noted that there was not enough staff that could assist her with understanding her application. She remembers:

I think it would have been nice to have you know..umm...more people maybe that worked there [at the study abroad office] who could actually take an interest in several students and kinda mentor them through it. Cause [thinking] [when I went to the study abroad office] they didn’t
have a large staff cause it was like three people who worked there, two or three student aids

As the preceding example illustrate, for respondents that did not have additional resources at their disposal, such as social networks to draw on for forms of assistance with the paperwork they encountered, they were forced to rely solely on formal or official sources, such as the study abroad office (Perna, 2006; Royster, 2003: 116). In Maxine’s case the lack of staff support at this office was a “structural barrier,” that tends to “problematize and thwart access to institutional support and therefore to key institutional resources” (Stanton-Salazar, 1997:24); McDonough, 1997; Rosenbaum, 2001). In this regard, respondents who lacked additional social networks of contacts that could provide guidance and who solely relied on ineffective “official” sources, were ultimately disadvantaged in this phase of the study abroad process.

Overwhelmingly, Black respondents (n= 4) were more likely to possess fewer resources to help at this stage than White respondents (n= 0) in the sample. They also had no choice but to rely on “official” assistance at a greater rate than Whites (Perna, 2006; Cabrera and LaNasa, 2001; Freeman, 1997; Horn et al., 2003; Terenzini, Cabrera, and Bernal, 2001). For instance, Ricardo, who was looking into applying to several Spanish study abroad programs, stated that he was confused with certain program application requirements and wanted guidance as to how to adequately complete the documentations; especially since the majority of programs he was interested in were sponsored by GSU. Unlike Marie (who had friends to assist with the “confusing” paperwork), Ann (who went over the paperwork together with her parents) and Howard (who had his professor help him with application details), Ricardo lacked these additional resources to guide him. Since he could not get in
contact with program directors for information, by default, he had to rely on official sources for resources such as the study abroad office:

For all of the applications my focus was to be in touch with program directors, I guess for clarity to make sure I was getting everything I needed and there wasn’t something omitted that I needed that wasn’t listed in the program online or on the application.

Thus, due to Ricardo’s lack of access to knowledgeable contacts, he did not have the opportunity to acquire social capital and by extension cultural capital that is usually not transmitted through public channels. For example, he could not access specific instructions or directions on how the bureaucracy operates, especially since he was choosing a non-GSU program to study abroad. In the following excerpt, he continues to allude to this disadvantage:

[What would have helped me] I think is that if someone, I don’t know who specifically, but somebody that knows people for you to follow up with. That so, if you haven’t been able to get whatever part of the process they would be able to give you specific instructions and directions and follow up points, persons to be followed up with to insure that things continue to be done.

As studies have shown (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Lareau, 1987; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Lewis, 2003; McDonough, 1997; Horvat, Weininger and Lareau, 2003), minorities and the working class are less likely to possess multiple and mutually reinforcing networks such as having friends and family that studied abroad who could clarify aspects of the paperwork. Consequently, they were forced to rely on institutional agents for guidance. Without access to these additional resource networks which provided crucial information when institutional resources were limited (Schneider and Stevenson, 1999), interviewees were more likely to be stuck at this stage of the process.
Although Black respondents lacked access to certain resources, this is not to suggest that their networks were completely irrelevant (Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau, 2003). Like White participants, Black respondents overwhelmingly reported that certain aspects of the paperwork process were relatively easy; especially writing essays and getting recommendation letters. Similar to their White counterparts, Black participants were also able to access random agents in their networks for recommendation letters, such as a professor who they took a class with or an influential agents at a former institution they attended whom they developed a relationship with. They also were able to depend on friends and family to help proofread their personal statements and essays. Despite these forms of assistance, the help that was most needed at this stage was with the administrative aspects of the process. These aspects included how to transfer credits when applying to non-GSU program and directions on how to interpret certain aspects of the application forms. These all required persons with experience working in these areas.

**Help with transferring credits**

The preceding analysis reveals that when a respondent chose to apply to a non-GSU sponsored program, guidance from persons who were familiar with the steps of the non-GSU program was essential when it came to getting certain paperwork approved. This guidance also extends to understanding how credits are transferred from one institution to another. In Howard’s case, he chose a Swedish program through “Camden University” based on the recommendation of his Swedish language professor. Because of this activation of social capital (he learned of the program through this professor), his professor “made sure to find a program where he satisfied
the credit requirements.” Unlike most students at this stage, he was relieved from exerting the effort of finding out how the credit transfer process worked; his professor, who was knowledgeable about the procedure, “took care” of those elements for him. Due to this professor’s help with understanding his credit situation, Howard did not need to depend on the study abroad office for clarity. However, he reported that he only went to the study abroad office “to make sure I got a handle on things” and to just “sign off on the paperwork.”

Contrast Howard’s relatively easy experience with transferring credits with Shannon’s case. Shannon was going to study abroad program to France through a company called “Educational Immersion” that was not affiliated with GSU. However, she lacked effective guidance on how the go about this process, even though she went to several agents, including her departmental advisors, for clarity. Unfortunately, this lack of guidance played a significant role in her deciding not to study abroad. She explains:

Interviewer: So what influenced your decision to not go on this program?

Shannon: Uhm, well, partially the fact that I didn’t feel like I could get a straight answer from anybody. But I went to, I went to uhm, I went to my faculty advisor in the department and he said, well you have to go talk to the academic advisor and then I went to the academic office and the new French advisor didn’t have any idea so like I guess the ahh head advisor was like “No, you’re department has to do this” and he said, so I went back to my faculty advisor who’s like well I can clear you for these two hour credits, but when I went back to talk to the academic advisor and they were like, well you have to talk to the program and blah, blah, blah.

Interviewer: So are you saying you couldn’t find anyone who could guide you on what to do?

Shannon: Yeah, I couldn’t find anyone who was like “Oh I’ve done this, we’ve taken care this before”. It was just like...ok, I mean, it was like, other people
were as lost as I was. All I can say this tentatively but I can’t give you a real answer…

Because the design of the process favors persons who have the social capital requirements to help navigate the credit transfer requirements, those persons who cannot comply with these requirements face severe bureaucratic barriers. Howard’s following statement also lends credence to this finding. He acknowledges that the bureaucratic nature of the study abroad process is a microcosm of the wider university environment. Furthermore, he mentioned that since the university was a commuter campus, which contributed to its disjointedness, it necessitates knowledgeable agents who can help students understand how “the rules of the game” work (Horvat, 2003: 7).

Persons who lack access to these ties would be left out of the process. He states:

Howard: It’s [The school system] a bureaucracy. It’s a very big bureaucracy. It works, but it works because you have people that will intervene and help you. And if you didn’t have those people intervening and not doing their job stepping out then you wouldn’t get anywhere.

Interviewer: How were you able to get help?

Howard: I asked for help. Most people don’t. Or they don’t know that they can. Hmm if I ran into a problem then I don’t try to solve it by myself. I try and find the people who are most knowledgeable…

Howard’s comments are significant because he alludes to two important trends found repeatedly in social reproduction literature – that there are specific rules of the game governing different fields of interaction and that the activation of cultural capital by those who possess it is considered to be natural and universal, but is actually taught and developed because of their habitus. Firstly, Howard mentions in the study abroad process (the field of interaction) there are specific “rules of the game” that govern its
operation (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Horvat and Antonio, 1999; Horvat, 2003; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Delpit, 1995). Institutional agents are seminal resources that assist students in “decoding” these rules, either through the use of additional networks or information. Without these institutional maps to help navigate the bureaucratic process, students will get lost or become stuck and eventually drop out of the process at this stage (Stanton-Salazar, 1997: 33; McDonough, 1997; Horvat and Antonio, 1999; Horvat, 2003). Secondly, Howard continues to mention that all he had to do was “ask for help” with decoding the rules of the game. His flippant response suggests that he underestimates the difficulties of accessing agents for help, which in reality, is more difficult for people who have problems forming ties with institutional agents. In this sense, Howard was already advantaged because he could easily form ties with agents, such as his Swedish professor who guide him through aspects of the study abroad process, which impacted his habitus – that asking agents for help is possible because he gets a good reception from them. As this research and others continue to show, students need to develop supportive relationships with these agents in order for resources to be transmitted (Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Stanton-Salazar and Dornbush, 1995). However, for Black respondents especially, developing these relationships take special efforts to gain trust and understanding especially if their experiences with the institution have not been favorable.

Another interesting point made by Howard and Shannon was the admittance that the university was disjointed and the lack of communication between various departments and offices was poor when dealing with student issues. In her work on the college choice process of high school students, McDonough (1997) found that
some institutions in her study were not equipped to provide the guidance and support, such as time and human resources that students needed to understand how to apply for college. In this regard, structural barriers such as the work load constraints of agents and limited staff availability (which many respondents including Maxine mentioned as an obstacle to receiving knowledge-based resources at the study abroad office) limit the effective distribution of intellectual resources to students. Moreover, “bureaucratic policies at many institutions aimed at administrative efficiency, take precedence over the consideration of the needs of individual students” (Stanton-Salazar, 1997: 18). For instance, Shannon mentioned that the study abroad office “wanted to help” her with her credit transfer situation, but they were waiting for the go-ahead of the department before they signed off. As such, these structural barriers play a significant role in limiting student access to resources and cultural capital (cultural knowledge) to help simplify this stage of the study abroad process.

**Using Financial aid**

When it came to accessing finances, socio-economic disparities played a major role in the types of difficulties respondents had when deciding how to finance study abroad. For the majority of respondents (n= 10) they decided to apply for financial aid to study abroad based on information they gleaned from the study abroad office and from other agents (Table 3 and 3.1, Appendix F). After attending the study abroad information session, Rachael for instance, reported that she found out that the HOPE scholarship (a State scholarship program that awards students entering universities with the financial assistance based on their GPA), “could be used to cover tuition.” Similarly, Dizino, who chose to apply to a GSU sponsored Spanish language program
to Spain, attended an information session at the study abroad office where she became aware that based on her GPA, she was eligible for the university study abroad scholarship. Other respondents who attended the session, such as Tiffany and Rosa, were made aware that loans and financial aid could be used to pay for their study abroad programs. This was based on their realization that one general scholarship that the university offered could not cover the majority of costs abroad.

In Tiffany and Rosa’s cases, these respondents’ habitus (familiarity with the financial aid) allowed to them to realize that loans were a viable option to fund study abroad (McDonough and Calderone, 2006). Similar to Perna’s results in her research on the relationship between low income student’s financial aid knowledge and their behaviors towards college, some respondents may be hesitant to take out loans to fund study abroad. This is because they may be unwilling to borrow money due to cultural, social and psychological factors which considers the borrowing of money as a burden rather than a relief (Perna, 2006). Thus, respondents who were more familiar with the loan process (for instance, if they funded aspect of their college education with loans already) were more likely to understand and be willing to fund study abroad in this manner than other respondents who may not have utilized this method before. This point was illustrated by Rosa, who chose a Spanish language program to Spain. She articulated how easy it was for her to understand the financial aid process:

*I already have a college degree so a big chunk of my student loans have already been taken out, so I didn’t go through private loans, private student loans. So I just applied online through Citibank. So uh I was able to get that and just was able to go from there. I’m pretty much familiar with the financial aid process and just used what was available to me…*
Rosa’s habitus allowed her to see that borrowing money for study abroad was no different from funding her undergraduate education, and based on this previous experience, saw loans as a possible and realistic option. Because the information about financial aid presented at these information sessions were only rudimentary (mentioning only that you can use aid to study abroad), it assumed that persons had a familiarity with the details and variety of aid available to study abroad. It also assumed that students had a disposition towards using aid (habitus). On the other hand, since she was considering how much debt she would incur by borrowing loans, Rachael was conflicted about whether to use financial aid to fund study abroad. This concern was attributed to her limited financial support. Once again as Perna (2006) reveals, socioeconomic characteristics is positively correlated with borrowing money from lending agencies (1630). Thus, Rachael’s apprehension to borrow money is a function of her present financial insecurities. However, the study abroad process does not consider those students who fall into this category.

Because some respondents only acquired basic information about how to utilize their financial aid, this information was insufficient to activate their cultural capital and produce a social profit. For instance, Tiffany possessed resources such as familiarity with using loans and information that she could use aid to study abroad. She possessed “unactivated capital” because she realized a social advantage from these resources based her habitus (confidence to use loans again to fund study abroad, this could help her fund study abroad). She activated her cultural capital by investing her resources – going to the financial aid office to find out about loans and apply for them. Initially, she believed that efforts at activating her cultural capital were going to
be rebuffed by the financial aid office, since some of the staff could not understand her financial aid situation. Because of this initial misunderstanding, it seemed as if Tiffany was not going to get enough loans to cover expenses. However, she had in her possession other resources to help activate her capital (she was a graduate assistant for a professor in her department and thus got her department to help her pay tuition). Therefore, she got her department to pay for her tuition (spoke to the department about her situation and they took care of the fees) which activated her capital, (she was able to use her loans to go abroad) which produced a social advantage. Thus, using the study abroad information alone (the fact that she could use loans) was not enough to help produce a social advantage. She needed additional resources help finance her program.

In a related vein, Maxine recalled the vague information agents told her about financing study abroad and alluded to the fact study abroad advisors failed to mention details about how she could finance study abroad if scholarships and grants did not pay for her fees:

*If you gonna go study abroad that there should be more aid available, that’s like in your face, you know. I think she [study abroad advisor] said I would get to save my tuition with HOPE scholarship and Pell [grant], but I still have to think about program fees. I think Pell and HOPE should give you more money. I think you know it should be like if you’re studying abroad you gonna this much you know. I think that there needs to be a section devoted to study abroad you know, this is realistically [respondent’s emphasis] how can finance your education abroad.*

Additionally, Carla also noticed this shortcoming when she went to the study abroad office information session, and mentions that the information session excluded students who were not financially privileged:
I feel like I felt like the session made it seem as though people were more I guess ahh monetary secure than what they thought. And I don’t think that they really...[pause] I don’t think that they reached as many people as they could if they were to be a little bit more inclusive of what everyone’s issues or money issues may be.

In similar instances, some respondents who had great financial responsibilities, felt that their financial situation was not representative of the conventional study abroad student. As a result, they felt awkward talking to agents about their “atypical” situations. A good example of this scenario comes from Antonio, who was a home owner, and was concerned about paying his mortgage while he was away studying abroad in Russia for a year. When I asked him to what extent did he approach anyone in the university community with these concerns, he said that initially, he was reluctant to mention his situation to his professors and advisors. Eventually, he mentioned that he deliberately gauged the receptivity of these agents by causally bringing up his financial situation in a conversation. He admitted that he approached the situation in this tentative manner because he wasn’t sure how interested these agents were with dealing with his issue. He recalls:

I really didn’t have anyone to go to [to talk about his financial situation]. I don’t think that a lot of times my advisors, I didn’t speak with them at length on the issue. Uhm often times cause I got the feeling, like, I would mention it, kinda like fishing I would throw it out there to see what kinda bite I got. And it never really seemed like it was a bite like “Let’s find out what you can do about your house.” Uhm, you know, “lets see what options are there for you. You know, what’s your GPA? What’s your scholarships options? Uhm, you know Freeman Asia even if you won $5,000 that’s four months of mortgage for you. If you plan on being there for year, we gotta come up with 8 months more mortgage.” And it uhm, that topic was never broached in any depth really. It seemed, and I mean, probably because honestly there’s never been a precedent for that. And it’s not something that I felt like you know, I can’t talk to them and they’re worthless. It’s more like what 22, 23 year old Black person owns a house!?
Like Carla and Maxine, Antonio alludes to similar things in his comments. His comments reveal that the design of the study abroad process is made “with a certain student in mind,” one which has unlimited financial resources (Werkema, 2004:20). Therefore, respondents like Antonio with substantial fiscal obligations such as paying a mortgage for instance, will be excluded from the process. Secondly, he perceived that his advisors had preconceived notions of who the “typical” study abroad student was. Since he believed that he did not comply with their notions, these agents did not provide any options or solutions to his problem. However, most importantly, Antonio mentions that because he deviated from the typical stereotype of a Black male, one that owns a house at a young age, his advisors would be preoccupied with this anomaly, rather than his situation. Thus, he argues that this was one of the reasons that prevented him from talking to his advisors seriously about his concerns.

Antonio’s actions share some similarities with the “Stereotype threat” documented in Steele and Aronson’s (1995) work. This threat, prevalent among African Americans, is seen as a reaction to negative racial stereotypes. This results in a climate of intimidation and fear that can affect the academic achievement of these students (169). “This fear comes not from internal doubts about their ability, but from situations, such as testing, class presentations, or token status, where concerns about being stereotyped can cause anxiety and self-consciousness” (Taylor and Anthony, 2000: 189). In Antonio’s situation, he was aware that he belonged to a minority group that is typically not noted for their early home ownership. As such, he believed that his advisors would stereotype him as an “anomaly” because possessing a home was not representative as something “typical” young African Americans would have.
Because of his “atypical situation,” he perceived that his advisors would be more preoccupied by this revelation than with helping him find solutions to his financial problems (negative stereotype). Thus, because he perceived they would judge him using a racist ideological lens, their reaction to his achievement as being one of overwhelming surprise, he decided against telling them about his financial issues. In this regard, Antonio would lose out on the opportunity to gain cultural capital (knowledge-based resources) which could have helped him find some solution to his financial situation.

Finally, in a related vein, some respondents who also did not fit the “typical” image of a study abroad participant tried to employ different ways to finance their study abroad program when they realized that despite having scholarships and loans, the cost to study abroad was still substantial. Maxine, for instance, did not have access to additional financial resources. She lacked a family who could contribute funding for the remainder of her expenses (such as the majority of the sample) or receive a scholarship that took care of the majority of study abroad expenses (like Marie and Ann). Furthermore, she did not have a boss like Catherine’s, who gave her a cash advance to go abroad, to activate cultural capital (finances) to pay for her study abroad program. When she found that the program to France through “World Citizens” would cost nearly $15,000, she tried to activate her cultural capital. In order to lower her program fees, she suggested to her program director that she could stay with a family that she knew in France instead of staying in the dorm which accounted for the bulk of program fees. Despite her creative suggestion, her idea was rejected (her activation of cultural capital was rejected and was not turned into a social profit-
using this option to reduce her fees). Additionally, Maxine worked as a waitress at a local restaurant and tried to ask for a cash advance from her boss, which was also denied. She mentions that she was so financially strapped that she was thinking of “becoming an egg donor and stopped smoking for three months” to try and amass enough funds to study abroad. However, she decided against taking such a drastic step. Because she lacked financial capital, Maxine ended up foregoing the program and not study abroad. Indeed, the inflexibility of the financial process and poor guidance from institutional agents towards students without additional financial resources disadvantages those who lack the resources to comply with institutional standards (Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Lareau and Weininger, 2003).

**Dealing with Travel Logistics**

When it came to the logistics of traveling, such as getting visas, knowing how to pack for a particular country, and satisfying health requirements, interviewees who could rely on resources and information outside of general program orientations conducted by program directors were at a distinct advantage. Students who traveled abroad either on vacations or on previous study abroad programs were privileged when they came to adhering to certain cultural capital requirements. These included knowing where to go to acquire visas, vaccinations or other general travel information. For example, Carla, who studied abroad in Ghana before she enrolled at GSU and was now going on a program to Brazil, acknowledged how privileged she was knowing how and where to go and who to contact to get her Visa and vaccinations to go on her program. However, she realized that her program orientation and information sessions neglected to mention these important details:
Carla: I already knew how to go and get my visa and you know, whatever little stamps and immunizations and stuff in my passport that I needed so I just, I knew how to do this cause I already had that prior experience with study abroad before.

Interviewer: Was this information was provided your Brazil program orientations?

Carla: No…

Interviewer: Where to get immunizations for instance?


Respondents who were male and Black, were more likely to report that some program orientations were geared towards the typical study abroad participant – a White female (IEE 2002: 58-68). This sentiment is articulated by Andrew, who chose a study abroad program to Egypt. As one of two males attending the program orientation, he mentioned that he felt the male perspective was excluded in the discussions, since the orientation was focused primarily on women and how they should prepare for life in a Muslim society:

Interviewer: How did you feel about the orientation being focused primarily on women?

Andrew: It was all about you know what you could wear and pretty much it was almost like a fashion [laughing] thing, it was pretty bad I’m like gosh you know. Talking about hygiene and other stuff like that and, ahh [sighing] I’m like yeah, it’s like I really don’t mind but its like, can we get something that I can use. Uhm yeah, instantly from the get go I get felt left out, so to speak. Being that I was a guy and the entire focus at first was all about girls because all that were there were all girls and stuff like that and in the orientation the professor was a girl, so yeah, I think that uhm not thinking from a guy’s perspective really, no knowing a guy’s perspective really kinda alienated me because they just didn’t think about it…
Similarly, Allison mentioned that her Brazil and Argentina program orientation neglected to talk about race, which in hindsight, was necessary based on the harassment she and her mostly Black female friends experienced in the racially homogeneous Argentina.

_interviewer:_ To what extent were racial issues mentioned in the program orientations?

_allison:_ No it wasn’t! I wish they kinda mentioned that cause they really didn’t go into detail about you know how everybody might be affected differently. Or how the women would be affected cause we really didn’t like expect that [harassment] at all

Based on Allison’s report, the format of the orientation was operating on a “color-blind ideology” whereby race was seen as something that does not “matter.” This ultimately, minimized the role it plays in the lives of individuals (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). In actuality, the orientation was actually geared towards the “general” student experience, being a White individual abroad (Talburt and Stewart, 1999). Allison realized that the absence of conversations about racial dynamics in the host societies, inadequately prepared students for the reality of how racial privilege operated abroad and how some students were treated differently by the locals based on their racial positioning. Because race issues abroad were not addressed, Allison, and other respondents who were unfamiliar with other Black persons who studied abroad in these regions, believed that they were denied resources to study abroad. These included information that would mentally prepare them for their encounters abroad, such as what to expect in these societies. Thus, at these orientations, all students, irrespective of race, are being held to comply with the “normative” White standard. As Green (2001) states, due to the lower status of dark skin universally, African
Americans compared with Whites are more likely to face unfavorable treatment abroad. Therefore, students who do not fit this White model will be inadequately prepared to deal with “the persistence and permanence of racism and the construction of people of color as “Other,” even in an international environment (DeCuir and Dixson, 2004).

Similar to the ignorance of Whiteness in the racial discourse of program orientations, in Andrew’s case, the non-recognition of males as a gender, sets the standard of males as “normal” (McIntosh, 1988). Although Andrew was “privileged” in a sense because he was visiting a Muslim society, the daily norms for men were not as ridged as those for women, the un-acknowledgement and lack of dialogue about privilege and positioning suggests that foreign countries cultural contexts are similar to America. This neglect tends to “ignore the variability of the American position in a new cultural context.” (Talburt and Stewart, 1999: 173). In this regard, by not acknowledging gender in the orientation, just like White privilege, it cements the idea that men are the “normative” standard and will be treated in a foreign as such; despite the fact that race, nationality and gender intersect to create unique experiences in different parts of the world.

**MAKING THE DECISION NOT TO ACTIVATE CULTURAL CAPITAL**

*The Underutilization of resources*

Although some respondents were structural advantaged in the study abroad process, based on their class and race position, (such as possessing the financial capital and social networks to provide them with resources to secure advantages in the study abroad process) they made the conscious decision not to activate their cultural capital.
By deciding not to invest their privileges, as a result, no social benefits were produced. Overwhelmingly, this was a major reason why the majority of White respondents in the sample (n =3) did not study abroad.

Within the context of choosing a study abroad program, Brianna, for instance, was interested in searching for “any” Spanish program to broaden her language skills. With this in mind, she took a couple of Spanish classes taught by program directors who would promote their respective programs in their classes. She remembered that in one course, the program director of a Mexico exchange would alert the class about upcoming program application deadlines and of times when initial orientation sessions were held. Additionally, another program director would post information about his program to Spain on the language department’s bulletin boards. These various promotional techniques made Brianna aware of the availability and content of certain Spanish programs. Most importantly, Brianna repeatedly mentioned that her parents promised her that they would pay for any study abroad program that she chose. As a result, she was free from assuming any financial burden of paying for a program herself. Moreover, she also got information as to when study abroad information sessions were held at the GSU study abroad office from friends who were participating in programs. Even though she realized a social advantage from possessing these resources, (she made mention throughout the interview that “she didn’t make a huge effort” to utilize the information that was around her, an admittance of an awareness of her advantages), she failed to exert her agency and activate her cultural capital by not making a decision to utilize the resources at her disposal (information and program
choice information). Thus, because of her inaction, no social benefits were achieved, such as, choosing a program.

The case of Howard also provides an illustration of the underutilization of resources, which impacted his eventual decision not to study abroad. Howard, applied to a Swedish program at “Camden University,” based on the recommendation of his professor and peers. When he applied, his application got rejected because he did not meet the grade criteria on one of the school’s Swedish proficiency tests. Howard mentioned in the interview that before the test, he had choice of options between this program and one at another “Central university.” He also stated that both his professor and his peers told him that the Central university program was “second rate,” but was still a good program if spots at Camden were all taken. Despite having this other option, Howard decided to take a “break” from pursuing study abroad programs, and decided that with the help of his professor, he might try at a later date to get into the second tier program. In this case, Howard possessed “unactivated cultural capital” since he had resources at his disposal (a second program option to Sweden along with his professor as a source of help) but decided not to use these resources at this time.

Finally, in the following excerpt, the case of Rachael also highlights the need for purposive action to activate cultural capital to produce a social advantage. Although Rachael found it very difficult to fund study abroad on her own, she mentioned that her mother was willing to help pay for some of her expenses:

*My mom has made comments like she wants to help [her pay for a study abroad program], cause she knows I haven’t studied abroad because of the financial expense, but and she’s made comments, like, you know, “She would like to help me.” She said I can’t pay for all of it, but I’d really like to help you with part of*
However, even though Rachael possessed this resource (mother’s offer of financial assistance) and realized an advantage from having it (that it could help pay for her plane ticket), she refused to activate her cultural capital. This was because she did not utilize the resources her mom offered and gain a social advantage from them, which in this case was paying for a study abroad program. Instead, she continued to look for ways to completely fund study abroad herself. Rachael also mentioned that she “definitely knew where to find” students with information about how to go about choosing a variety of Spanish language study abroad programs and what to look for to cut costs. However, although she realized a social advantage from possessing these tools, Rachael failed to activate these resources because she did ask these persons questions that would help her find a program and cut expenses. In stark contrast, Maxine, a Black female who could not afford to go on study abroad, did not have family that offered to contribute any finances towards her program fees. As opposed to more concrete assistance with the process, her family only gave her verbal encouragement. Moreover, Maxine lacked access to wide network of ties with students who could help her with program information.

For these aforementioned White respondents, this underutilization of their privileges did little to interrupt their middle class positions. This is because they had the privilege of finding other alternatives to achieve their goal of international travel or could easy activate these resources to study abroad when they felt they wanted to resume the completion of the study abroad process. For instance, since she
experienced problems with approving her credits, Shannon decided that pursuing a study abroad program to France was not worth the effort. Through her church connections, she was able to find a job in France and work there for the summer while learning the language. On the other hand, Black students who did not study abroad did not possess these other opportunities to travel. As such, this emphasizes how social inequality is still reproduced even when these White students underutilized their cultural and social capital.

As these examples continue to illustrate, Black respondents who did not end up studying abroad, were more likely to be stuck in the “search” stage than their White counterparts. As a result, they were still trying to gain basic information in order to make concrete decisions about choosing a program. A major reason for these respondents delays is due to the fact that their peer networks were segregated (being comprised mostly of persons who did not study abroad), and thus, they had less effective networks to tap into for knowledge-based resources (Cole, 1990). For instance, Louis, who was still in the process of choosing between a business program to Northern India and the other to Eastern Europe, mentioned that he was actively searching for scholarships to cover the majority of costs to study abroad. He was also looking for experiences persons to talk to about their experiences studying abroad in these societies; in addition to asking persons about resources they utilized to fund study abroad. Unlike the majority of White students who did not study abroad, Louis lacked networks of formal and informal ties with faculty and peers to direct him on how to accomplish these matters:

*Interviewer: What do you think you need to help you along towards your goal of study abroad?*
Louis: Uhm, I would say if someone helps me with getting scholarships that would help, that would help me a lot. If I were to maybe to do some one on one perhaps with faculty or students that have participated I think that would help me along. Uhm, and probably those two things...

Interviewer: To what extent have you talked with faculty about your search for scholarships?

Louis: No I haven’t, still uhm, you know, still trying to figure out who will be people I talk, cause I need to get that information from [pause]and that’s still a little unclear to me at this point. I’m still unclear about some of the folks...

Finally, when it came to activating their resources, Black respondents compared with their White counterparts who did not study abroad, perceived that they were more likely to be rebuffed by institutional agents. The case of Antonio, mentioned earlier, provides an illustration of this pattern. Antonio applied to a Russian program that was recommended by his language professor, Dr. Franklin. Even though he made it to the interview stage of the application process, he was not accepted into the program. Antonio mentioned that in the event that he does get accepted to this program, just as a precaution, he suggested a variety of other Russian programs to his professor. However, he stated that she did not approve of any of these selections. Compared with Howard’s situation, in which he and his professor both came to mutual decision about program criteria and options, Dr. Franklin did not suggest any “practical” alternative options for Antonio; nor did she consult with him about options he would prefer. Antonio mentioned that she always recommended options that were either expensive or too lengthy in terms of the period of time spent overseas. Thus, in this case, even though Antonio possessed cultural capital (the knowledge of alternative programs to Russia), he perceived that his attempts at activating them were rejected.
Based on studies that document the problematic relationship between agents and students who are racially and ethically dissimilar cultures (Stanton-Salazar, 1995, Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch, 1995; Smith-Maddox, 1999), race could have played a significant role in the lack of communication and mutual misunderstanding based on antagonisms between this respondent and this agent.

**SUMMARY**

The data reveals very distinct differences between those respondents who did not study abroad and those who eventually completed the study abroad process. In both situations, White participants were more likely to have access to multiple sources of resources (social capital) which was an avenue through which (potential) cultural capital was transmitted (Monkman et al., 2005). Despite the fact that Whites in this sample that did not participate in study abroad were socio-economically and culturally situated to access resources, overwhelmingly, they were less likely to make conscious attempts to activate their cultural capital. This finding is consistent with literature that examines usage of cultural capital in the school setting (Lareau, 2000; Aschaffenburg and Maas, 1997; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Lewis, 2003; Reay, 1998; McDonough, 1997). These studies point out, individual actions as well as structural forces (class based resources) are necessary in activating cultural capital and in ultimately reproducing social inequality.

Unlike their White counterparts, Black respondents who did not study abroad either did not possess an extensive pool of resources, or were less likely to be successful in their attempts to activate their cultural capital. As previously mentioned, this was due to institutional as well as individual racism. For Black respondents who
eventually studied abroad, even though they possessed fewer resources than their White counterparts, they were able to gain resources from knowledgeable institutional agents; even though the majority of these ties were weak. This Chapter continues to demonstrate that race and class played a significant role in respondents’ access to cultural capital and its potential activation.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which institutional dynamics of a large urban southeastern university affect the involvement of Black and White students in the study abroad process. Previous literature that addresses the reasons for a gap in study abroad participation among Black and low-income students seem to suggest that financial reasons and disinterest alone do not account for this disparity. Although these studies identify barriers to study abroad for these populations, they do not offer explanations of how, where and why these barriers manifest itself in the study abroad process. My contribution to the study abroad literature was to present a more nuanced understanding of this disparity in participation by documenting the requirements at each stage of the study abroad process to explain how these standards panelize mostly Black and low income students. Furthermore, I provided a detailed understanding of where in the process these populations are most likely to drop out.

Based on the narratives of 21 students who participated in the study abroad process at Georgia State University, I reveal that institutional agents who design the various elements of this process and contribute to maintaining these standards, assume certain “taken for granted” assumptions about the availability of resources needed to successfully complete the main steps of the study abroad process. These main elements include finding a study abroad program, choosing a program and applying to a program in order to eventually study abroad. I found that similar to previous
literature on micro-political processes such as institutional evaluation standards in educational settings that perpetuates inequality (DiMaggio and Mohr, 1985; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Lareau, 2000; Lareau and Weininger, 2003; Carter, 2003, 2005; Reay, 1998; Monkman et al, 2005; Lewis, 2003; Smrekar, 1996; McDonough, 1997), the process at GSU privileges those students whose knowledge and skills comply with the cultural capital assumptions of the institution (dominant institutional standards). As a consequence, these assumptions inadvertently disadvantage those students who do not have the socio-economic and cultural resources to adhere to these standards. Overwhelmingly, the students that lacked these resources happened to be Black or from low income backgrounds. Most importantly however, I found that the students’ activation and usage of cultural and social capital was more important than their possession of these resources. Thus, although the White students who did not study abroad were structurally advantaged and possessed a multitude of social and cultural capital resources to comply with these institutional standards, they purposely decided not to invest these resources to study abroad. Conversely, I found that Black students who attempted to study abroad but did not, either possessed none of these resources to help them comply with the standards of the process or when they did possess capital, they perceived that their attempts were denied, unlike their White counterparts, to activate their cultural capital by institutional gatekeepers such as professors and study abroad administrators. This important finding is consistent with the literature which reveals that race is a mediating factor in the conversion of resources into cultural capital in the educational setting and it plays a significant role in the low academic achievement of Black students compared with Whites (Roscigno and Ainsworth-
Darnell, 1999; Farkas, 1996; Lewis, 2003; Lareau and Horvat, 1999). Interestingly, for the Black students who succeeded in studying abroad, even though they had fewer resources at their disposal than White students in the sample, they were lucky enough to access valuable knowledge-based resources through ties with an institutional agent, especially when it came to choosing a study abroad program and applying to a program.

Although the majority of existing literature on the social reproduction of inequality in educational settings agree that investment of resources is more important than possessing capital (Lareau, 2000; Monkman et al, 2003), many of these studies do little to explain in detail how the process of activating and non-investment of resources operates, especially when it comes to the underutilization of resources.

One major strength of this study is that it clearly identifies the processes by which individuals “activate” and underutilize their cultural capital, which contributed significantly to the race and class disparities in study abroad participation. I found that the difference between the White students that participated in study abroad and those that did not, was that the latter did not exert efforts to activate their cultural and social capital, although the majority possessed a wide cache of these resources. The advantages of these resources include networks of peers who studied abroad and provided these students with information about program strengths and weaknesses. These students also have the ability to formulate ties with agents who referred them to knowledgeable persons in their networks when searching for information about choosing a program. Furthermore, these students were more likely to come from families with the financial resources to fund study abroad. This White population was
also aware that these privileges could be used to study abroad (unactivated cultural capital). But White respondents who did not go abroad, consciously decided not to talk to peers that they knew who had information about how best to fund study abroad, or they decided not to ask a willing agent to help them find a study abroad program, even though this faculty member helped them before in this capacity. Thus, White respondents had enough resources and the opportunity to employ their capital to study abroad at the time, but choose not to invest these privileges, due to other opportunities that arose while they were navigating the study abroad process. These included finding alternative purpose such as a vacation to travel to their destination of choice. Because of these and other favorable opportunities, these students decided that pursuing study abroad was not worth the effort, or just made a personal decision to delay study abroad.

This underutilization of their privileges did little to shift this population’s middle class position because some of these students have the privilege of finding other similar alternatives to achieve their goal of international travel or they could easily activate these resources to study abroad when they felt that they wanted to resume the completion of the study abroad process. However, Black students who did not study abroad, possessed none of these other opportunities as alternative options to travel; My study therefore, contributes to an understanding of how respondents activate and choose not to activate their resources to study abroad, and how social inequality continues to be reproduced even when White students’ underutilized their cultural and social capital.
Another strength of my study is that it expands on the mechanisms of acquiring and accumulating social and cultural capital in the educational setting. Previous studies focused on the role of parents acquiring these resources for their children in the high school and elementary school setting. My study shifts this focus to adults in the higher educational setting to examine how they acquire social and cultural capital through their familial structural advantages, and through their own interactions with institutional agents in order to progress through the study abroad process. The obvious differences in these educational environments is that at the university level, these individuals, who are adults or are persons entering the adult stages of their lives, may not be dependent on direct parental attempts to gain social and cultural capital for them, because they may not be living with parents. Also, because this particular field of interaction (the university setting) differs from the pre-college educational setting, the activation of social and cultural capital will be very different (Lareau and Horvat, 1999). Thus, the dependency on parents to acquire social and cultural capital resources may not work have the same advantage for a student in the university setting as it would in elementary school. For example, when parents/families activate cultural capital by volunteering to help out in a classroom during reading hours in elementary school, this action would be read by gatekeepers as parents being “involved in the education of their child,” and therefore, legitimize these parents cultural capital. However, in a university setting, the outcome would be different if a parent tried to activate their capital by coming to talk with a professor about their child’s course grade. This strategy of the parent would be read by the professor as “meddling” and may reflect badly on the student who may be considered “immature.”
Consequently, this parental action may result in the professor’s rejection of this investment of cultural capital. In essence, students in higher education are treated as adults and therefore, the onus is on them to gain cultural capital through social capital by forging relationships with key agents. This was a popular strategy utilized by students in the study.

Developing relationships with institutional agents or knowledgeable persons who are familiar with the GSU process were pivotal resources in helping to understand the specific cultural capital requirements of the study abroad process. Thus, some students formed “bridging” and “bonding” ties with institutional agents and this generated and built social capital and leading to the transmission of cultural capital in the form of knowledge-based resources for the study abroad process; these included how to choose the most appropriate study abroad program, information about application deadlines and paperwork instructions etc. However, race and class played a role in how some respondents were better able to access resources that allowed them to gain and activate cultural capital more easily than others. I revealed that some students were advantaged over others because they formed ties with agents who provided more substantial forms of cultural knowledge than those who could not. However, for Black respondents that did not study abroad, they had problems even accessing these valuable ties, which included forging relationships with knowledgeable agents in order to gain cultural capital. As a consequence of this lack of access to knowledgeable agents, these students had to depend on “formal” sources of information which was limited in quality and content.
A final unique contribution of this study is that it breaks new ground by documenting the specific stages of the study abroad process by examining the specific requirements needed to complete these steps, which contributes significantly to explaining the reasons for the gaps in study abroad participation by Black and low income students. In keeping with the tradition of college choice literature, I identified three linear, but intersecting phases of the process. By outlining these phases, I was able to clearly emphasize the role that individual agency (activating resources) and structure (class based resources) play in perpetuating inequality in the study abroad process.

For instance, in the Aspiration stage, the majority of the respondents were predisposed to study abroad because of their class-based resources (financial and cultural resources) that complied with the idea of international travel. However, these students chose to activate their resources (knowledge about the benefits of study abroad) by pursuing study abroad intentionally, through agents from whom they inquired about study abroad at GSU. Other students took classes with the aim of studying abroad. On the other hand, even though other students knew about study abroad, they intentionally did not pursue these opportunities because they decided not to invest their resources to study abroad. Eventually, they activated their resources (familiarity with study abroad) when a professor motivated them to pursue study abroad opportunities.

In the Search Stage, which involved students searching for study abroad programs, researching funding options and addressing concerns about studying abroad, the respondents who were successful at this stage, were able to access
resources from one source, but from a combination of sources. These included institutional agents, their families and peers. Access to these resources was distinguished by race and class differences, and this determined the ease with which respondents gained and activated cultural capital. Successful students activated their resources by utilizing the advantages of having access to resources. For instance, some respondents utilized their social capital with agents and asked them for help when searching for programs. Others asked their families to take care of their children, if they decide to study abroad. Conversely, respondents who were unsuccessful at this stage perceived that they were denied access to social capital that transmitted cultural capital (this was expressed by more Black respondents than Whites because some agents refused to entertain their ideas about study abroad); Other reasons for their lack of success include not having the resources to comply with the cultural capital standards of the institution (some students could not find money to study abroad), or chose not to activate their cultural capital even though they fulfilled the “rules” of this stage (had financial resources to fund study abroad and had in-depth knowledge about the study abroad process at GSU).

Finally, the Choice Stage also revealed how agency and structure impacted students’ attempts to study abroad when it came to choosing and applying to a program. Similar to the Search stage, White participants were more likely to have access to multiple sources of resources (social capital) which was an avenue through which (potential) cultural capital was transmitted in order to achieve the goal to study abroad (Monkman et al., 2005). This stage necessitated guidance from agents who were familiar with applying to the program, filling out the required paperwork, and
applying for financial aid. For the majority of respondents, guidance was not easily accessible or readily available. Thus, those students who had access to multiple sources of guidance for this stage gained advantages in this stage of the process. However, as discussed earlier, the exertion of human agency was necessary to attain a social profit, to eventually complete the study abroad process and go overseas.

When these stages are considered together, they indicate that structural realities (class based resources at an individual’s disposal) shape human agency while at the same time, individual agency shapes the social setting (reproducing their class privileges), which contributes to the perpetuation of social inequality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

My recommendations are two fold. They address both the macro and micro inequalities that work simultaneously to produce the disparate outcomes for Black and low income students in the study abroad process found in the data. As the results of this study demonstrate, access to resources such as information, is segregated by race and class. Consistent with literature on race and class-based inequality in United States, residential segregation not only fuels this unequal access to resources, but also compromises the quantity and quality of socioeconomic resources (Horvat, Weininger and Lareau, 2003; Oliver and Shapiro, 1995; Massey and Denton, 1993; Kozol, 1991; West, 1994; Lewis, 2003). As I have shown, White middle class respondents were at a greater advantage when it came to possessing a wider reservoir of resources compared with Black and low income students. Many of these resources not only supplemented, but in most cases exceeded institutional resources. These resources, which included access to bridging and bonding social capital in the form of
relationships with social equals such as friends and peers who served as avenues for
the transmission of knowledge-based resources about study abroad; these resources
are largely dependent on the racialization of social space. The most segregated of
these spaces are the neighborhoods in which people reside, and which contribute to
other segregated patterns of contact found in schools and other institutional spheres
such as distant interactions, due to the lack the opportunity for sustained interaction
(See Sigelman et al., 1996; Rickles and Ong, 2001). A solution to this inequality for
access and concentration of resources, is the creation of opportunities for Black and
low income individuals to attain more socio-economic parity with the White middle
class population. For instance, social policies need to place a premium on integrated
neighborhoods whereby these populations can have access to more bridging and
bonding social capital that would allow for the transmission of knowledge-based
resources in particular. Unfortunately, even though the climate for race based
integration efforts are unpopular (Orfield and Lee, 2004; Greenhouse, 2007), these
social policies need to be put in place to ensure that these populations have access to
these opportunities. However, the first step is to create a climate for pluralistic
interactions between these populations whereby all parties involved feel that they can
benefit from each other.

Although sustainable results cannot be guaranteed without macro level
interventions, complementary micro-level solutions also need to be enforced. By
documenting the stages of the study abroad process, it not only identifies the
institutional role in perpetuating inequality, but also gives an indication of where
specifically institutional amendments are needed to alleviate some of the barriers in
the process. In general, institutional decision makers need to reexamine the taken for
granted assumptions of the study abroad process and acknowledge the socio-
economic and cultural realities of the student populations they serve. Even though
some barriers are easier to alleviate than others, I have highlighted the obstacles that
disadvantage those students who were motivated to pursue study abroad, and who were
academically sound and had the determination to study abroad, but were not given a
chance to study abroad because of institutional inadequacies. These students should
have the opportunity to make an informed choice irrespective of their decisions to
study abroad; they should not be prevented from making these decisions by barriers
that challenge equality in educational opportunity “related to race, institutional

Greater exposure to international opportunities

Findings in the study revealed that being pre-exposed to the idea of
internationalism is a critical factor in students envisioning international travel, and
study abroad as possible and worthwhile. Obviously, not all students belong to
environments where international exposure is encouraged. The best way for students
to be exposed to this idea is through the educational system. As such, students need
to be exposed to a more internationalized curriculum throughout their pre-college
education that broadens their global knowledge and introduces them to international
perspectives. Currently these experiences are lacking in most elementary and high
schools around the nation. Studies from the Asia Society in 2001 and National
Geographic Society/Roper 2002 Global Geographic Literary survey found that
American high school students compared with students from eight other industrial
countries are next to last in their knowledge of geography and international affairs. Thus, in order for this problem to be realistically addressed so that students can see study abroad not as a ‘special’ educational opportunity but a norm, they must be engaged in international education from as early as in elementary and high schools. Also, this type of educational content must be sustained at the university level where global perspectives are consistently integrated in the curricula of all subject areas including the social and natural sciences. When the curriculum does not include international content, students see international issues as peripheral, and having limited impact on their lives. This false impression would limit students from considering study abroad as something relevant to their lives. But, as Carter (1991) highlighted, even when international issues are introduced into the curricula, it neglect to link international experiences with minority student’s perspectives. Instead, international experiences continue to be presented in terms of a White middle class frame of reference that ‘others’ students who do not fall into this category. According to Delpit (1995), a solution to this Eurocentric bias is that “institutions must work to change courses that must not only teach what White Westerners have to say about diverse cultures, they must also share what the writers and thinkers of diverse cultures have to say about themselves, and their culture” (p.181). In this study, Black students experienced this Eurocentric bias when looking for study abroad programs; this was reflected in many of the program selections outside of Europe which were presented in a format that reinforced instead of challenge stereotypes about non-Western populations. The result of this portrayal is further marginalization of students whose culture study abroad programs are intended to recognize.
Even though the perception of international travel has a tendency to magnify differences, because it is typically viewed as encounters with “exotic” others, it can be challenged with more genuine culturally sensitive approaches to travel and learning. For instance, institutions can develop forums or clubs where international students on brief exchanges and those enrolled in U.S. universities have the opportunity to interact with American students to talk about their lives and cultures (Jackson, 2005). An advantage of this activity is that it facilitates sustained interaction with those perceived as “culturally different others” and in this regard, change these preconceived notions when traveling to these societies.

**Having culturally sensitive faculty and staff**

The Black student experiences with the study abroad process revealed the persistence of “social distance and distrust” between minority youth and ‘institutional gatekeepers’ (faculty, study abroad office staff, advisors,) (cited in Stanton- Salazar and Dornbusch, 1995, p. 117; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Fordham and Ogbu, 1986). When gatekeepers were not interested in the issues confronting students of various social class and racial groups, they tended to isolate those students because they do not share their world view. This behavior identifies the need for faculty and administration to be more sensitive to the experiences and needs of students of different ethnic, cultural and racial groups. One solution to this problem is to have program directors and study abroad administration involved in special training that would expose them to the problems students face in general and issues minority students face in particular; this training would equip them to find ways to talk about and address these issues with students. Faculty and staff in study abroad must also
have a general understanding of different persons responsible for study abroad information at the institution, especially the person in charge of study abroad financial aid. Therefore, if one particular agent does not have an answer to a question or concern, the student can be referred to someone who has the information to assist them (Phillips, 2005: 4). Follow up via email to check whether students have accessed the help they needed is crucial to ensuring that they do not miss important steps in the process or drop out because of institutional barriers. Another approach is to encourage more diversity among program directors and staff administrators to achieve balance in terms of ethnicity and cultural backgrounds of students instead of the current predominance of Euro-American study abroad agent. According to Carter (1991), the lack of diversity in study abroad administration sends a subtle message to minority students that study abroad is or is not a part of their reality, consequently, they may be hesitant to seek assistance from agents who they feel do not share their concerns. Thus, having a diverse staff creates an atmosphere of comfort and familiarity for students.

*Greater access to information*

It appeared that at various stages of the study abroad process respondents had problems gaining a wide variety of important information such as details about program directors of externally sponsored programs, how to fill out paperwork, how to apply for travel visas and how to find genuine sources of finance study abroad. The study abroad office is one of the main places where students go can obtain for these details, therefore it should have all the relevant information about study abroad programs and it should be easily accessible to students. Also, most of the information
should be posted on-line on a study abroad website where students can access this information at their convenience. For instance, the website can offer sample passport application or sample program applications with the corresponding instructions. If students request specific help with these issues, such as with contacting program directors, the study abroad office should help them to locate the contact person and should follow up with students to resolve their specific issues. If in some cases, the staff does not have time to address these student issues, available alternative is to have an alumni of study abroad programs to work with these students. Additionally, fellow applicants may have valuable information to share, and forums such as list-serve should be made available for these students to share their resources.

Another important recommendation is that greater communication should be encouraged among program directors, academic advisors and the study abroad office, because up-to-date information is not being disseminated to the wide population, especially when dealing with issues such as credit transfers. The study also revealed that some faculty from departments sponsoring a study abroad program knew nothing of these programs or even if they knew, they were unwilling to help some students acquire basic information about the programs. It follows therefore that if a department is sponsoring a study abroad program, it should be the department’s responsibility to inform all faculty about the basic information of the program and the business manager or program director should be clearly identified for assistance to students.

**Greater guidance and mentorship for students**

My findings revealed that throughout this process, students that were most likely to study abroad had consistent guidance and mentorship from peers or institutional
agents. In order to provide guidance to those students that lack these resources, a program should be established to provide these students with knowledgeable mentors, who may be students that studied abroad on a similar program or faculty and study abroad administrators with familiarity of the steps of the study abroad process. These individuals would provide guidance to complete the process; this may include help with application instruction, financial aid forms, and funding opportunities. This would require either hiring of more study abroad administrative staff or training faculty advisors on how to help students navigate the study abroad process.

More realistic aid options available and a clearer understanding of the various aid options

Students in the study reported that agents would continuously tell them that “there was [study abroad] money out there,” but they were not told how or where to locate this information. Even though this rhetoric may be an encouragement for students to study abroad, it shattered the expectations of students who failed to find funding and therefore the experience was considered to be burdensome. In order for students not to become disengaged by this experience, more realistic financial options need to be presented to those who are interested in studying abroad. This may be achieved by offering more scholarships based on need as well as merit. Additionally, institutional agents that work in the study abroad arena should promote other options such as work abroad and non-academic options which may be cheaper but just as valuable (CIEE Committee on Underrepresented Groups in Overseas Programs, 1990: 40). If these scholarships are not widely available, agents may suggest fund raising ideas to help financially strapped students offset costs. But most importantly, agents
need to work on democratizing information about affordable program options and avenues for funding that target a wide range of students. These avenues can include dissemination of information via mentors, who may be an assigned faculty or a student who is made aware of the variety of funding opportunities available to study abroad. Also, information cannot be solely disseminated via the internet, since many students may not have easy access to this resource. It is therefore recommended that study abroad information should be disseminated both in print and via the World Wide Web where all students have access to this information; other methods of dissemination of study abroad information include university list serves in which messages may be attached to interested students email accounts and in departmental brochures. With access to this information, students will be able to consider a variety of options for financing study abroad. Of equal importance, are financial aid officers who should give students clear guidance about financial requirements for study abroad, and these requirements as well as funding options should be integrated into orientations so more students can be informed.

**FUTURE RESEARCH**

In terms of implications for future research, it would be valuable to expand this study to include the reports of institutional agents, such as the “gatekeepers” involved in the study abroad process. This would facilitate examination of in order to examination of the personal standards used by these agents to evaluate the cultural capital of students involved in the study abroad process. Moreover, by including these agents in a future study, researchers can ascertain how these persons decide to forge ties with students and the type of resources they provide to students; such analysis
would give indications of how these actions of agents contribute to inequality in study abroad participation. It would also be interesting to study the experiences with access, activation and usage of cultural and social capital of other racial and ethnic groups such as Asians and Latinos, who are also underrepresented in the study abroad process; these experiences can be compared with those of the Black and White students in the present study. Finally, this research can be extended to other institutions such as private universities and Historically Black Colleges and Universities to explore the specific norms and requirements of the study abroad process at these institutions.

This focus of sociological research on higher education in the reproduction of social inequality will continue to seek explanations for the myriad of ways in which educational stratification thwarts the process of gaining essential learning skills. This is exemplified in the present study of comparative participation of Black and White students in study abroad programs that have the potential for acquisition of a greater understanding of the wider world. However, it is not enough to just highlight these problems. Solutions to these problems must be found by identifying the nuances of these processes that contribute to the reproduction of social inequality. In this regard, the findings of this study are meant to contribute some explanations.


Jackson, Marilyn J. (2005, November). Breaking the Barriers to Overseas Study for Students of Color and Minorities. In D. Anderson (Ed.) Underrepresentation in Education Abroad Newsletter. NAFSA Association of International Educators (pp. 2-4).


Appendix A: Email Correspondence

Dear …………..,

You are asked to participate in a research study about factors that affect various students from participating in college study abroad programs. This study is being conducted by Jennifer Simon, a sociology Master’s student at Georgia State University, and will be the thesis component of the degree program. Ideally, this research will further understanding on how to increase in the participation of historically underrepresented students in study abroad.

This study involves an interview and a short survey, which should take approximately one hour and 40 minutes and will cover your views and experiences with regard to study abroad at Georgia State University. I would like to schedule an interview with you at Georgia State University Downtown campus, between……….. Is there a date and time that would be convenient for you?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you will not be penalized in any way for non-participation. Should you decide to participate, you may decide to withdraw from the study at any time. Your information and data generated will be completely confidential.

Thank you for your assistance with this research project. Should you have any questions or concerns you may contact me via email at jsimon4@student.gsu.edu or jennybelle27@yahoo.com, or call me at 404-816-2518.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Simon
Masters Candidate
Department of Sociology
Georgia State University.
Appendix B: Recruitment Handout

Did you have a study abroad experience at GSU?
My name is Jennifer Simon, a sociology Master’s student at Georgia State University (GSU). For my thesis, I am conducting a study on factors that limit various students from participating in study abroad.

Length and content of interview

This study involves an interview and a short survey, which should take approximately one hour and 30 minutes and will cover your views and experiences with regard to study abroad at Georgia State University.

Eligible interviewees

1. Students who have gone on a study abroad program while at GSU in the past 2 years
2. Students who have applied to go on study abroad in the past 2 years (i.e. sent in an application to go on a program) but did not go overseas.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you will not be penalized in any way for non-participation. Your information and data generated will be completely confidential.

If you are interested in participating in this research study please fill out the information below. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me at the following email address and phone number.

Jennifer Simon
Email: jennybelle27@yahoo.com or jsimon4@student.gsu.edu
Phone #: 404-816-2518

Thank you!

Please complete the following if interested in participating in the study

Name:

Racial/Ethnic identification: (Please circle the option that applies to you)
Black/Non-Hispanic, Caucasian/Non Hispanic, Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander, Native American, Other

Which of the following options applies to you?: (Please circle the option that applies to you)
1. I have gone on a GSU study abroad in the past 2 years
2. I have applied to go on study abroad in the past 2 years (i.e. sent in an application to go on a program) but did not go overseas.

Contact information where you can be reached:
Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to provide demographic information to supplement the interview. All information is confidential and participation is voluntary. The questionnaire should only require 10 minutes to complete. Please write in or check the response where appropriate. Thank you!

Please choose your own pseudonym ..............................................................

**Background Data**

1. Age on last birthday.................
2. Sex: ...................... Race..............................................................
3. What is your present nationality?..............................................................
4. What was your nationality at birth?..............................................................
5. Where were your parents born?
   Father Country of birth..............................................................
   Mother Country of birth..............................................................
6. Have you ever traveled or lived abroad before your study abroad experience?
   Yes, Country (ries)
   ........................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................
No. (Please go to question 7)

**If yes, type of experience?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of time</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of time</td>
<td>Where</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending school/ University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touristic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Have your parents, brothers/sisters or guardian lived for a considerable period of time (minimum of three consecutive months) in a country other than that in which they are currently residing?

- Father: YES  Country: No.
- Mother: YES  Country: No.

8. What is the highest level of education your father and mother or Guardian has reached? (If you are not sure, please give your best guess.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade School</th>
<th>Father or Guardian</th>
<th>Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. What was your major field of study when you decided to pursue study abroad?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

10. What was your grade point average when you applied to or where considering study abroad?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

11. How have you financed your studies in higher education? Please estimate percentages

**Cash or other contributions from parents**
(e.g. rent free while living with them)

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………%  

**Income from your own work**

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………%  

**Grants, scholarships, loans**

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………%  

**Other, please Specify** ………………………………………………………………………………………%  

**Total** 100 %

12. Family you grew up in level of income per year

……Less than $25,000

……More than $25,000 but less than $50,000

……More than $50,000 but less than $75,000

……More than $75,000
If you did not complete study abroad at this university, please skip the following questions

**Study abroad Information**

13. Please indicate the department(s) and course(s) that were affiliated with the study abroad Program(s) at Georgia State University that you participated.

   ........................................................................................................................................
   ....
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ....

14. Please indicate your enrollment status when you went on study abroad

   Freshman.........Sophomore.........Junior.........Senior.........Other.........

15. Location of your study abroad program(s) (City, Country)

   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................

16. Semester/Year of your study abroad program(s)

   **First Program**

   Spring.......Maymester.......Regular summer session.......Fall....... Year........

   **Second Program**

   Spring.......Maymester.......Regular summer session.......Fall....... Year........

   **Other** ..............................................................................................................

17. Duration of period you spent abroad

   First Program ............................................
Second Program .................................
Other ..............................................

18. How did you finance your study abroad program(s)? (Choose all that apply)

Student Loans.............
Scholarships/Grants......
Personal Finances.........
Other (please specify)........................................

THANK YOU
Appendix D: Interview Schedule

Date and Time:  
Location:  
Interviewee pseudonym:  

Questions on the availability and nature of support to study abroad

Tell me about what got you interested in study abroad? (How did you first hear about study abroad?)
- How did you first get interested?
- Who did you first talk to about study abroad when you decided to consider it?
- Did you know other people who did it? Family? Friends?
- What was the first step you took at GSU to go about study abroad?
- How did you go about it?

What can you tell me about who encouraged you to pursue study abroad?
- Family? Friends?
- An organization?
- Staff? Professors?

Have you traveled overseas before you decided to participate in a study abroad program? Tell me about those experiences?
- Where?
- Why?
- When?
- How often?

To what extent did your prior travel help prepare you for study abroad?

What countries were you interested in going to?

To what extent did you have problems finding a study abroad location?
- Why?

What made you decide on a particular country?
- Previous travel?
- Major?
- Culture?
- Familiarity?
- Lack of options?
- Faculty?

Questions on access to support to study abroad

How did you prepare for study abroad?

How did they help?

Did you have a formal orientation?

Was it helpful? In what ways was it or not?

Who was involved in the process?

Were minority affairs experts involved?

Walk me through the orientation process

Who was involved in the process?

What was said?

What issues or concerns were brought up?

Was it helpful? In what ways was it or not?

Were minority affairs experts involved?

To what extent were the orientations helpful?

To what extent did you speak with other interested students during the orientation?

What did you talk about?

Did you know of someone who has participated in study abroad?

Did you speak with them about their experiences?

What kind of feedback did they give you?

What was your experience like getting finances to study abroad?

Who helped you prepare to finance study abroad?

Family, Study Abroad Staff?, Friends, Own Savings, parents?

Tell me what were you most concerned about when considering study abroad?


Who did you speak with about these concerns?

Administration? Faculty? Students? Alums of Program?

How did people respond to your concerns?

Stages of the study abroad process

Once you got interested in study abroad, what happened next?

To what extent did you consider applying to a particular study abroad program?

If you did apply, when did you decide? How did you decide?

If not, why not?
If applied for study abroad: Tell me about the application process you had to undergo when applying for study abroad?
- What did it consist of?
- How long? How extensive?
- What kind of paper work was involved?
- Did you think it was fair? If not, why?
- Did you ask for help with it? Who did you ask for help?

In your opinion, what encouraged or discouraged students from participating in the study abroad programs that you applied to or were interested in?
- Major/Subject restrictions? Money? Faculty?
- Why do you think so?

(For those students that did not go overseas)

Why did you decide not to participate in a study abroad program?

What would encourage you to participate in study abroad?

Would you like to add anything else to the interview?

Experiences abroad (For those students that participated in study abroad)

Tell me about your experience studying abroad?
- Where did you go?
- For how long?
- What did you do?
- Did you like it?
- What would you change?

Looking back, how do you think the orientation and classes helped to prepare you for your experiences and the culture abroad?

Would you recommend study abroad to your peers? Why or Why not?

This there anything else you would like to add?
Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

Georgia State University, Department of Sociology

Informed Consent Form

Advisor: James Ainsworth, Ph.D.
Researcher: Jennifer Simon, BSC.

You are being asked to participate in research which will be conducted by Jennifer Simon, a sociology Master’s student at Georgia State University. This study will examine factors that limit various students from participating in college study abroad programs. The study will include approximately 20 participants. You are selected as a possible participant because you fit the criteria for participation.

This study is designed to provide the university with an understanding of the factors that contribute to limited student participation in study abroad.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview and a short demographic survey. These two tasks will last about an hour to an hour and 40 minutes. The interview will be done individually. It will be conducted by the researcher in a location that is convenient and comfortable for you at a time you indicate is acceptable. The interview will be tape recorded. However, you may refuse to be tape recorded or request that the tape be destroyed after usage.

There is a risk that asking about your past experiences may cause you some discomfort. However, we do not anticipate any other risks.

You may not benefit directly from this study. The information gained will assist educational professionals in understanding the factors that contribute to limited participation of students in college study abroad programs.

Participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or discontinue participation at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled or affect your standing with the University.

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. You and all participants will be given pseudonyms, and these will be used on study records rather than your name. Any consent forms, audio recordings and all records that bear your name will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the Faculty advisor’s office. Only the researcher and the advisor will have access to the data. The transcripts of the interview will be kept on a secure computer which will be password protected. Access to the computer will be secured.
by use of specific passwords known only to the researcher and the adviser. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results.

The results of your participation in this study will appear in a Master’s thesis, and will be available to the public. You will not be identified personally.

Please call Jennifer Simon at 404-816-2518 or email her at jsimon4@student.gsu.edu or Dr. James Ainsworth at (404) 651-1849 or by email at socjwa@panther.gsu.edu if you have questions about this study. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-463-0674 or svogtner1@gsu.edu.

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research please sign below.

Subject________________________________Date_________________

Investigator____________________________ Date_________________

If you are willing to have the interview audio taped please sign below

Subject________________________________Date_________________

Investigator____________________________ Date_________________
Appendix F: Demographics of the Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1.1 Characteristics of Sample who studied abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Present Nationality</th>
<th>Father's Birthplace</th>
<th>Mother's Birthplace</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Have you ever traveled or lived abroad before you studied abroad?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Psychology and Counseling</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiffany</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Film and Video</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dizino</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Hospitality Admin</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1.2 Characteristics of Sample who did not study abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Present Nationality</th>
<th>Father's Birthplace</th>
<th>Mother's Birthplace</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Have you ever traveled or lived abroad before?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louis</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Managerial Science</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maxine</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Trinidad</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Linguistics</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brianna</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Math and Swedish</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>International Business/Spanish</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shannon</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>French Literature</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 Socio-Economic Status (SES) of Respondents who studied abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Family income</th>
<th>Father’s highest level of education</th>
<th>Mother’s highest level of education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>&lt; $25,000</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>&lt; $25,000</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiffany</td>
<td>&gt; $25,000 but &lt; $50,000</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis</td>
<td>&gt; $75,000</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>&gt; $75,000</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dizino</td>
<td>&gt; $50,000 but &lt; $75,000</td>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>&lt; $25,000</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>&lt; $25,000</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>&gt; $25,000 but &lt; $50,000</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>&gt; $50,000 but &lt; $75,000</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>&gt; $75,000</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.1 Socio-Economic Status (SES) of Respondents who did not study abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Family Income</th>
<th>Father’s highest level of education</th>
<th>Mother’s highest level of education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louis</td>
<td>&lt; $25,000</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maxine</td>
<td>&lt; $25,000</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>&gt; $50,000 but &lt; $75,000</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo</td>
<td>&gt; $50,000 but &lt; $75,000</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio</td>
<td>&gt; $75,000</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>&gt; $75,000</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brianna</td>
<td>&gt; $75,000</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard</td>
<td>&lt; $25,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>&gt; $75,000</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shannon</td>
<td>&gt; $50,000 but &lt; $75,000</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 Financial Resources of Respondents who studied abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Cash or Other Contributions from Parents/Family</th>
<th>Income from your own work</th>
<th>Grants, Scholarships, Loans</th>
<th>Financing Higher Education (%)</th>
<th>Financing Study Abroad</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiffany</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dizino</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1 Financial Resources of Respondents who did not study abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Cash or Other Contributions from Parents/Family</th>
<th>Income from your own work</th>
<th>Grants, Scholarships, Loans</th>
<th>Student Loans</th>
<th>Scholarships/Grants</th>
<th>Personal Finances</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louis</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maxine</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brianna</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shannon</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G: Figure 1. Axial Coding diagram of the study abroad process

Context: Before and During Enrolment at GSU University
Types of information

- Quality of info from peers, study abroad office, professors, materials
- Race
- Levels of Connections with agents
- Levels of Comfort with agents
- Intensity of contact with knowledgeable agents

Quality of guidance

- Institutional barriers
- Levels of reliance on information and guidance
- Levels of responsibilities and obligations

Participation in study abroad

Types of info from agents
Types of info from friends
Types of info from promotional materials

Phase 2 Search cont’d.
Slightly overlaps with Choice Phase

Phase 3 Choice