EDUCATION ABROAD FOR ALL: MOVING BEYOND DEFICIT NARRATIVES AND
AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED STUDENTS

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by

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Abstract (English)

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For generations, study abroad opportunities were only accessible to the most privileged students in higher education (Brewer & Ogden, 2018; Hoffa, 2007; Mukherjee, 2012). As society has moved into the 21st century, the U.S. government has recognized the value of funding international student mobility programs (Contreras, 2015). An increasing number of higher education institutions around the world are incorporating study abroad into their internationalization plans. In the United States, although some gains have been made in the actual numbers of students studying abroad, participation from historically marginalized students (e.g., students of color) remains disproportionately low compared to overall representation in higher education (Hanson, 2022; Institute of International Education, 2021; NAFSA, 2021).

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of institutional conditions that support or hinder study abroad participation for students from historically marginalized communities. Although there have been a number of studies on underrepresentation in education abroad since Dr. Johnnetta B. Cole, then president of Spelman College, gave a riveting address at

the 1990 Council on International Educational Exchange Conference, their focus has primarily centered around individual student characteristics (e.g., socioeconomic status, first-generation college student) as the reason for lower participation numbers. The rationale for lower participation rates has been explained from a deficit perspective (e.g., lacking financial means or not receiving family support). This perspective diminishes the responsibility of institutional administrators and faculty in addressing the issue.

The study took place at Rocky Mountain University (RMU),[1] a R1 Carnegie Classification Institution of Higher Education (i.e., research intensive and doctoral granting institution) in the United States, with a long-standing history of education abroad. A total of 22 participants took part in the study, who identified as meeting one or more criteria: (a) Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC); (b) first-generation college student; (c) high financial need student; and/or (d) mature-aged student. All participants had been accepted on a study abroad program. This project was unique because it centered on the experiences of marginalized students who applied and were accepted into a study abroad program and either withdrew post-acceptance or did study abroad. This particular moment in time in the study abroad lifecycle has been under researched; therefore, it represents a gap in the collective knowledge of the international education field. An outcome of the study was the creation of guiding questions and recommendations for the education abroad community to reduce equity gaps in education abroad and widen participation in student mobility.

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[1] Name changed for confidentiality.

Keywords: higher education, internationalisation/internationalization, inclusion, equity, diversity, inclusive internationalization/internationalization, underrepresented students, minority students, student mobility, deficit model, marginalized, habitus and capital, critical race theory, social identities, widening participation, diversity abroad, global pandemic

Abstract (Italian)

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Per molte generazioni, le opportunità di studio all'estero sono state accessibili solo agli studenti più privilegiati dell'istruzione superiore (Brewer & Ogden, 2018; Hoffa, 2007; Mukherjee, 2012). Con il progressivo ingresso della società nel XXI secolo, il governo degli Stati Uniti ha riconosciuto il valore dei programmi di mobilità internazionale degli studenti (Contreras, 2015). Un numero crescente di istituti di istruzione superiore in tutto il mondo sta incorporando lo studio all'estero nei propri piani di internazionalizzazione. Negli Stati Uniti, sebbene siano stati fatti alcuni progressi nel numero effettivo di studenti che si recano all'estero, la partecipazione degli studenti storicamente emarginati (ad esempio, gli studenti di colore) rimane sproporzionatamente bassa rispetto alla rappresentanza complessiva nell'istruzione superiore (Hanson, 2022; Institute of International Education, 2021; NAFSA, 2021).

Lo scopo di questo studio è stato quello di comprendere più a fondo le condizioni istituzionali che sostengono od ostacolano la partecipazione a programmi di studio all'estero degli studenti provenienti da comunità storicamente emarginate. Sebbene siano stati condotti numerosi studi sulla scarsa partecipazione agli studi all'estero da quando la dottoressa Johnnetta B. Cole, all'epoca presidente dello Spelman College, tenne un discorso avvincente alla

conferenza del 1990 del Council on International Educational Exchange, l'attenzione si è concentrata principalmente sulle caratteristiche individuali degli studenti (ad esempio, status socioeconomico, studenti universitari di prima generazione) come causa di una minore partecipazione agli studi all'estero. La motivazione dei tassi di partecipazione più bassi è stata spiegata da una prospettiva di deficit (ad esempio, mancanza di mezzi finanziari o di sostegno familiare). Questa prospettiva sminuisce la responsabilità degli amministratori istituzionali e dei docenti nell'affrontare il problema.

Lo studio si è svolto presso la Rocky Mountain University (RMU),1 un'istituzione d'istruzione superiore con classificazione R1 Carnegie (cioè ad alta intensità di ricerca e di dottorato) negli Stati Uniti, con una lunga storia di formazione all'estero. Hanno preso parte allo studio 22 partecipanti che si sono identificati come corrispondenti a uno o più criteri: (a) neri, indigeni, persone di colore (BIPOC); (b) studenti universitari di prima generazione; (c) studenti con elevate esigenze finanziarie; e/o (d) studenti in età matura. Tutti i partecipanti erano stati accettati in un programma di studio all'estero. Questo progetto è unico nel suo genere poiché è incentrato sulle esperienze di studenti emarginati che hanno fatto domanda e sono stati accettati in un programma di studio all'estero e che si sono ritirati dopo l'accettazione o hanno studiato all'estero. Questo particolare momento del ciclo di vita di uno studio all'estero è stato poco studiato e rappresenta quindi una lacuna nella conoscenza collettiva del settore dell'istruzione internazionale. Uno dei risultati dello studio è stata la creazione di domande guida e raccomandazioni per la comunità dell'istruzione all'estero per ridurre i divari di equità nell'istruzione all'estero e ampliare la partecipazione alla mobilità degli studenti.

Parole chiave: istruzione superiore, internazionalizzazione, inclusione, equità, diversità, internazionalizzazione inclusiva, studenti sottorappresentati, studenti di minoranza, mobilità studentesca, modello deficitario, emarginati, habitus e capitale, teoria critica della razza, identità sociali, allargamento della partecipazione, diversità all'estero, pandemia globale

DEDICATION

To my mother, Hazel Ann Harris

and

In loving memory of my father, Dr. Manning Marable

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When I reflect on my research journey, I feel a sense of gratitude for the experience. Like many graduate students working full time, I encountered a number of joys and challenges. Caring for two school-aged children, a demanding job, cross-country move, and a global pandemic - while pursuing a Ph.D. - was no easy task. I had to get comfortable asking for help.

During the data collection process, I learned a great deal about my subjects and myself. I realized the critical importance of creating psychologically safe spaces for participants to recount painful memories and reflect on the impact of the pandemic. I also recognized how my intersecting identities as an African American woman, diversity, equity, and inclusion professional, and study abroad alum, influenced and shaped my project.

In spite of the obstacles, there have been many positive outcomes. The genuine support that I received from my thesis supervisors, Elspeth Jones and Ly Tran fueled me, even during challenging times. I am deeply grateful for the kindness and support of my colleagues at Rocky Mountain University: Alicia Cook, Laura Thornes, Aimee Jones, Craig Chesson, and Jody Donovan, who have imparted wisdom, insights, and laughter throughout these four years. I would additionally like to thank members of the CHEI faculty: Fiona Hunter, John Dennis, Hans de Wit, Rosalind Raby, Catherine Montgomery, Amanda Murphy, and David Killick.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

My PhD journey began in Fall 2018 when I attended the Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation seminar at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, Italy for the first time. I knew I wanted to focus on historically marginalized students in education abroad, but I was not exactly sure which avenue I wanted to take with this research project. Throughout the thesis, the terms historically marginalized and historically underrepresented may be used interchangeably. Later in this chapter, I will further elaborate on and provide definitions for populations that have been historically underrepresented in education abroad, including the four historically marginalized groups examined in this study: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), High Financial Need, First Generation College Student, and Mature-Aged Student.

1.1 Personal Motivation for the Study

Since the 1990 Council on International Exchange Conference, there have been many studies around underrepresented students and study abroad. I was a study abroad practitioner for the 20 years prior to this study; as a Black woman who studied abroad as an undergraduate student in the mid-1990s, I can recall moments of feeling loneliness during the study abroad application process. My father studied abroad as an undergraduate student in 1970. I grew up hearing about his experiences at the University of Nairobi. In fact, my name comes from a famous Swahili song, *Malaika*, which was the inspiration behind my name. This precollege exposure to the concept of study abroad, along with the knowledge passed down from my parents on how to navigate college admissions and scholarship processes, afforded me an unearned advantage that propelled my study abroad journey.

In early July 1997, I stepped on a plane bound for Canberra, Australia. Throughout the predeparture study abroad orientation process on my home campus, I noticed I was the only African American student in the room. When I arrived in Australia, I also noticed I was just one of two African American study abroad students at my university. Shortly after I arrived, my advisor, Gary Rhodes, reached out via email to check on me. This check in was a practice he continued on a monthly basis, throughout the entire semester. Back then, we did not have social media or smartphones, but Gary's monthly email check in was the reassurance I needed. This small act of kindness really meant the world to me, and later, when I became a study abroad advisor, it was a practice I continued. After my study abroad experience in Australia, I decided I wanted to enter the field of international education. My primary goal was to widen access and increase awareness of study abroad opportunities for students from historically underrepresented backgrounds.

In the summer of 2000, I was a graduate student intern in the study abroad office at a local university. For my internship project, I wanted to create a resource guide for students of color who were considering studying abroad. I had my own experiences to draw from, but I also wanted to tailor the guide to the local university students so I could present resources and information that would be most useful for them. My mentor was an advisor in the office. She was also African American and shared an interest in widening study abroad participation to underrepresented groups. Together, we decided to host an after-hours get together for Black students who had applied to study abroad but had not gone for a variety of reasons. Six students came to the office that evening. We ordered pizza and asked the students to introduce

themselves. The advisor and I shared a bit about our backgrounds and study abroad experiences before opening the floor for a wider conversation.

The students expressed gratitude to us for creating a psychologically safe space where they could be themselves and speak freely. One young woman spoke up, and I will never forget the moment when she said, "The reason why I couldn't go abroad was because I didn't have health insurance." I was stunned, because it was not something I had ever worried about, which reflects class privilege. This young woman was all set to study abroad in Japan. Her courses were selected, housing confirmed, and she was excited about the program. One of the requirements of the student visa was a chest X-ray. The student had not been made aware of this requirement prior to applying for her program and had to scramble to find the money to pay for the X-ray, which required a visit to the doctor's office. Sadly, the student did not have enough time to come up with the funds; as a result, she lost the opportunity to study abroad.

In reflecting on the student's story, I wondered if there could have been a different outcome. I also wondered what responsibility the Education Abroad office had, if any, in advising the student in advance regarding this expense. Perhaps, there was an implicit assumption that all students had health insurance or could get quick and easy access to capital if they needed additional funding at a moment's notice. There may have been interventions that could have been deployed by the study abroad office, which would have enabled this young woman to study abroad. This story stayed with me for over 20 years; the young woman who wanted to go to Japan but was unable to do so was the inspiration behind this project.

Throughout my career in international education, I have worked in a variety of settings, including large public research institutions, small nonprofit organizations, NAFSA: Association

of International Educators, and for-profit study abroad providers. In all of these positions, I witnessed a recurring issue (i.e., colleagues, leaders, and faculty making assumptions about historically marginalized students). Significant gains have not been made across the field with respect to widening participation for historically underrepresented students. Previous studies on underrepresentation in study abroad tended to take an individual, deficit perspective; if a student elected not to go abroad, it was due to individual circumstances such as a lack of finances or family support (Perkins, 2020; Raby & Rhodes, 2018; Sweeney, 2013; Whatley & Raby, 2020; Wick et al., 2019).

A deficit position is problematic because it diminishes the responsibility of study abroad advisors, administrators, and faculty who create, design, implement, execute, and evaluate study abroad programs. Statements such as, "If only their parents valued the experience, more racial minority students would go abroad" is an example of deficit thinking. Additionally, this perspective does not consider historic and contemporary institutional inequalities that disenfranchise marginalized communities and create barriers to accessing education abroad opportunities. A counter to deficit narratives, Raby (2008) found the financial cost to study abroad was not the lone deterrent. Perkins (2020) also challenged deficit framing of underrepresentation in education abroad and posited that equity gaps are systemic and must be "addressed comprehensively and be inclusive of the resources these students use to navigate educational spaces, structures, and opportunities designed without their strengths, values, and communities in mind" (p. 162). These formative experiences – studying abroad 30 years ago, coupled with my lived and professional experiences as a Black woman, have directionally shaped this study, along with my transformative worldview. I have a strong desire to uplift the

counterstories of historically marginalized students and encourage the field of international

education into action.

1.2 Scope of the Study

This study took place at Rocky Mountain University (RMU), a R1 (i.e., top-tier research)

institution, located in the central northern part of the United States. RMU is a pseudonym for the

university to protect confidentiality. As a public, land-grant institution, the university was funded

by the Morrill Act of 1862, a U.S. government initiative, which provided technical education for

middle- and working-class U.S. students (Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities,

n.d.). This access mission, coupled with a strong commitment to research, has greatly influenced

the institution's mission and commitment to inclusive excellence and principles of community

(i.e., inclusion, integrity, respect, service, and social justice; RMU, n.d.-a).

RMU is considered a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Although not an official

classification by the U.S. Department of Education, the term is prevalent in higher education and

is considered to be a college or university with 50% or more of the student population identifying

as White/Caucasian (Bourke, 2016). More than a percentage of the student population, PWIs also

embody systemic practices that are grounded in Whiteness (Bourke, 2016).

> The PWI operates not only from Whiteness as a system but also from "middle and
>
> professional classness" as a system. The PWI is organized to best serve middle and
>
> professional class white student populations rather than first-generation college student
>
> populations of any racial or Indigenous identity. In this regard, the PWI engenders
>
> a hidden curriculum that also shapes our "inherited" teaching practices. (University of
>
> Minnesota, n.d.)

RMU has come a considerable way since the late 1800s. In 2010, RMU founded the Office of the Vice President for Diversity (present day, known as the Office for Inclusive Excellence).

The institution is committed to supporting and protecting students, faculty, and staff through inclusion of identities such as "age, culture, different ideas and perspectives, disability, ethnicity, first generation status, familial status, gender identity and expression, geographic background, marital status, national origin, race, religious and spiritual beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and veteran status" (RMU, n.d.-f, para. 1). Outreach to historically underrepresented students has increased over the years, from less than 10% self-identifying as students of color in the late 1990s to 25% students of color at the time of this study - 2018-2023 (see Table 1). The institution has devoted resources to supporting centers for race and ethnicity, first-generation college students (i.e., the first person to graduate in the family with an undergraduate degree; see Table 2), veterans and nontraditional-aged students (see Table 3), and students with high financial need (see Table 4; RMU, n.d.-f).

Table 1

RMU Enrollment by BIPOC Status

Racially minoritized status	Fall 2018		Fall 2019		Fall 2020	
BIPOC (minoritized)	5,814	23.85%	6,216	25.27%	6,208	26.32%
Nonminoritized	18,558	76.15%	18,378	74.73%	17,375	73.68%
Total	24,372	100.00%	24,594	100.00%	23,583	100.00%

Note. BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, People of Color. Adapted from "Mission & Vision," by RMU, n.d.-f, *Commission on Diversity and Inclusion*.

Table 2

RMU Enrollment by First-Generation Status

First-generation status	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
First generation	6,067	6,047	5,642
Not first generation	18,305	18,547	17,941
Total	24,372	24,594	23,583

Note. Adapted from "Mission & Vision," by RMU, n.d.-f, *Commission on Diversity and Inclusion*.

Table 3

RMU Enrollment by Traditional Student Status

Student status	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
Traditional	20,845	21,261	20,410
Nontraditional	3,527	3,333	3,173
Total	24,372	24,594	23,583

Note. Adapted from "Introduction: Interactive Reporting," by RMU, n.d.-d.

Table 4

RMU Enrollment by Pell Grant Recipient [e.g., representing high financial need] Status

Pell Grant recipient status	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
Pell Grant recipient	5,428	5,339	4,746
Not Pell Grant recipient	18,944	19,255	18,837
Total	24,372	24,594	23,583

Note. Adapted from "Mission & Vision," by RMU, n.d.-f, *Commission on Diversity and Inclusion.*

The Office of International Programs at RMU is composed of several centers: Education Abroad, International Student and Scholar Services, International Enrollment, an offshore study center, English Language Institute, and Global Engagement. A concerted focus on increasing diversity in education abroad was already underway when I began this study in 2018. Between academic years 2018–2020, the percentage of White students studying abroad decreased from 75.1% to 70.8% (see Figure 1). Conversely, the percentage of BIPOC students going abroad rose from 23.4% to 29.2%. The percentage of first-generation college students remained consistent during the same time period (see Figure 2) and the number of Pell Grant recipients increased slightly during the years 2018-2020 (see Figure 3).

Figure 1
Race and Ethnicity of RMU Students Abroad

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Hawaiian	0.1%				
American Indian	0.8%	0.3%	0.5%	0.2%	
Hispanic Latino	3.3%	2.2%	2.7%	1.5%	1.7%
Black	3.5%	2.6%	1.9%	3.1%	3.3%
Asian	4.3%	4.7%	5.2%	5.2%	2.5%
Multiracial / Multiethnic	13.6%	13.9%	14.7%	19.2%	23.1%
White	74.3%	76.4%	75.1%	70.8%	69.4%

Note. Adapted from "RMU Education Abroad Participation Data," by Office of International Programs at RMU, n.d.-b, *Education Abroad Statistics*.

Figure 2
RMU First-Generation College Students Abroad (Undergraduates Only)

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
UG - First Gen	23%	22%	19%	23%	22%

Note. Adapted from "RMU Education Abroad Participation Data," by Office of International Programs at RMU, n.d.-b, *Education Abroad Statistics*.

Figure 3
RMU Pell Grant Recipients Abroad (Undergraduates Only)

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Pell Grant Recipient	17%	19%	22%	19%	23%

Note. Adapted from "RMU Education Abroad Participation Data," by Office of International Programs at RMU, n.d.-b, *Education Abroad Statistics*.

This study focused on four select dimensions of diversity that have been historically underrepresented at RMU: race and ethnicity, high financial need, first-generation college students, and mature-aged students (i.e., students 25 years of age or older as an undergraduate student). These communities also correlate with historically underrepresented groups in previous study abroad research (Ecker-Lyster & Kardash, 2022; Lörz et al., 2016; McHan, 2019; Simon & Ainsworth, 2012) and are prioritized groups of focus for the RMU study abroad office. Prior to the start of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the aforementioned groups were underrepresented in study abroad participation in comparison to their overall representation in higher education. The pandemic has had a negative impact on representation in higher education of historically marginalized communities. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022b):

The percentage of adults 18 years old and over reporting that all plans to take classes in fall 2021 had been canceled for at least one household member varied by race/ethnicity of the reporting adults. The percentage was higher for Black adults (21 percent) than for White adults (15 percent), which was in turn higher than the percentage for Asian adults (9 percent). The percentage for Hispanic adults (17 percent) was not measurably different from the percentages for Black and White adults. (p. 3)

The impact of the pandemic on marginalized students' participation in higher education will likely have a ripple effect in education abroad. In Chapter 2, I further detail and define underrepresented groups in higher education and education abroad, both from international contexts and a U.S. context.

1.3 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The theoretical framework anchoring the study was Bourdieu's (1977) theory of habitus and capital (HCT). *Habitus* is the internalized structures or schemes of perception that impact how someone views the world and how they are supposed to exist in the world (Bourdieu, 1986; Dumais, 2002). These thoughts, ideas, and actions are shaped and influenced by a person's social and cultural capitals. I selected this theory to better understand broader, societal factors that influence and shape individual thoughts and behaviors. I wanted to approach the study from a perspective not often applied to examining equity gaps in education abroad. This framing is helpful when approaching the topic of widening access to study abroad for students from historically marginalized backgrounds. Rather than solely placing blame of underparticipation on individual student characteristics, the theory invites international educators to consider alternative possibilities, which may not be easily identifiable, but have a strong influence on a person's perception of their ability to participate in a study abroad program.

The qualitative research methodology I selected to address the research questions was framed by critical race theory (CRT). CRT centers and honors the lived experiences of people

from historically marginalized groups. Critical race theorists have argued the myth of meritocracy only serves to perpetuate systemic social inequality and dismisses the impact of racism and other forms of oppression, which are present in all aspects of an individual's life (Solórzano et al., 2000; UCLA School of Public Affairs, 2009). By focusing on the post-acceptance phase of a student's study abroad journey, I wanted to remove doubt about a student's intentions to study abroad. Integrating the two theories (i.e., HCT and CRT) was critical in understanding the lived experiences of study participants and honoring their intersectional identities.

1.4 Participants and Global Context

All students who participated in the program were highly motivated and had gone through the extensive process of choosing, applying, and being selected into a study abroad program at RMU. Prior to embarking on the study, I had several meetings with the director of the Education Abroad office, who shared that nearly 40% of accepted students withdrew before taking part in a study abroad program. Out of the group of students who withdrew, the majority were students from historically underrepresented backgrounds. I wanted to better understand why some historically marginalized students withdrew before taking part in their study abroad experience, whereas other students from similar backgrounds did study abroad. I wondered if the reasons were solely due to individual characteristics, or deficits; if there were systemic barriers beyond the student's control; or if it was a combination of both. I also wondered if I would be able to uncover a theme that could empower education abroad advisors, faculty, and administrators to create a set of interventions that would widen access to study abroad for historically marginalized students.

About midway into this research project, in March 2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic quickly descended across the globe and lockdowns followed shortly thereafter. People began panic buying at the supermarket. Confusion and uncertainty about a virus that initially stumped scientists brought waves of anxiety and triggered widespread societal, emotional, and mental health problems. Teachers and faculty who had not had prior experience in a virtual classroom environment were metaphorically building the plane as they flew it. Millions of school aged children were at home with caregivers, struggling to keep up with work and school. Service, hospitality, and travel industries took massive revenue hits and millions of people lost their jobs or had work hours reduced (Fisher, 2022).

In the field of international education, the study abroad community reacted to the COVID-19 global pandemic by swiftly canceling programs; booking travel home; and corresponding with host institutions, embassies, host families, accommodation providers, insurance companies, families, the media, and many other key stakeholders (International Association of Universities, 2020). International borders started to close, and students were suddenly unable to continue taking classes in person and pivoted to virtual learning. Job insecurity swept international education and higher education with furloughs, salary reductions, layoffs, and more. People experienced high anxiety while navigating a scary and unprecedented time. During this time, I submitted my institutional review board (IRB) proposal for this study (see Appendix A). Classes went online in March 2020 and the campus remained virtual through the Fall 2020 semester (i.e., August through December). This virtual environment necessitated significant changes to my planned methodology. I had to adjust my strategy to connect with potential participants and conduct interviews virtually.

I began data collection in November 2020. As a reminder of the context, many schools and universities were conducting online learning only, including RMU (Rocky Mountain University Covid Information and Resources, n.d.). Additionally, during this time, clinical trials for a COVID-19 vaccine were underway, but a vaccine had not been approved for public use by the U.S. government (Mayo Clinic, n.d.). The director of the Education Abroad office invited students who had applied and been accepted into a study abroad program in 2018, 2019, or 2020 to participate in this study (see Appendix B). Additionally, students had to self-identify as a member of one or more of the following historically marginalized groups: (a) Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC); (b) first-generation college student; (c) high financial need student; or (d) mature-aged student (i.e., undergraduates 23 years of age or older). In all, I interviewed 22 students between November 2020 and April 2021, during two rounds of semistructured interviews. During this time period, the world was still grappling with the uncertainty of a global pandemic and millions of people had died (World Health Organization, n.d.). On top of this, the United States had gone through a tumultuous summer of protests and collective calls for social justice after the violent murder of George Floyd, and far too many unarmed Black people in the United States (Fisher, 2022).

In November 2020, I started my interviews, and it quickly became clear that I needed to ask additional questions specifically related to the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The compounding, socio-political forces could not be ignored as they had a direct impact on the participants and myself as a researcher, who was working full time and raising two children. I applied for an IRB amendment (see Appendix C) and was granted permission to refine my interview questions (see Appendix D) to the same group of participants. Prior to the global

pandemic and subsequent calls for racial and social justice, the external factors that I had considered were primarily institutionally focused. The macro environment events of 2020 influenced the questions asked in the second interview but did not reframe the original research question.

The second round of interviews commenced February 2021 and concluded in April 2021. After the interviews had concluded, I transcribed each interview and began an extensive coding procedure, which involved several phases of deductive and inductive coding. Once the coding phases had been completed, I arrived with four emerging themes. From that point, I organized the findings into pairings that supported the themes. A discussion of the findings, limitations, and implications for future research are featured in Chapters 3, Theoretical Framework, Chapter 4 Methodology, Chapter 5, Findings and Discussion, Chapter 6, Impact of COVID-19, Study Limitations, and Implications for Future Research.

1.5 Research Questions

As I began drafting the research question and subquestions that would guide the study, I started with several broad questions:

- Why do some historically marginalized students study abroad and not others? Is it solely for individual reasons (e.g., lack of interest, lack of family or faculty support, lack of financial resources, fear), or are there other/additional reasons such as structural inequalities (e.g., lack of support or belonging at the institution, study abroad program structure, institutional financial aid award and disbursement structure, unconscious biases of faculty, administration, demonstrated acts of bias and discrimination in host country and/or with U.S. students who are part of the program)?
- What assumptions have study abroad offices, university administrators, and faculty made about why marginalized students do not travel at rates proportional to their peers?
- What steps can study abroad advisors and faculty take to foster an equitable study abroad experience for all students?

With these questions in mind, my lived experience as a Black study abroad student, and professional knowledge from directing international education initiatives, I began my literature review to further identify and solidify a question that would guide my study. With tremendous support and guidance from my thesis supervisors and input from fellow doctoral students and the academic community, I landed on the following question and sub-questions:

> **Research question: Are there institutional barriers or enablers that support or hinder study abroad participation for students from historically marginalized communities?**

- o **Sub-question 1**: To what extent do social, cultural, or other capitals enable or hinder study abroad participation for students from historically marginalized communities?
- o **Sub-question 2**: To what extent, if any, does a student's ability to navigate their marginalized identities influence study abroad participation?

1.6 Contribution to International Education

Higher education has embraced study abroad and a number of institutions have study abroad as a requirement for majors or academic programs. A few institutions have even mandated a study abroad requirement for all students (Fischer, 2008). Despite these positive strides, widening participation in study abroad has continued to be a struggle (James, 2007; Lincoln Commission, 2005). During the 2018–2019 academic year, 347,099 students studied abroad from U.S. institutions (NAFSA, 2021). In that time period, the percentage of students of color studying abroad was 31% (see Figure 4). The following year, in 2019–2020, study abroad numbers plummeted by 53% to 162,633 as a direct result of the COVID-19 global pandemic (Institute of International Education, 2022).

As an outcome of my research, in Chapter 7, I will provide a list of guiding questions and tactical recommendations for education abroad administrators, faculty program directors,

advisors, and directors to consider. The research question above, with the context of the study being after students have been accepted onto a program, thus makes a direct and novel contribution to the field.

Figure 4

Race and ethnicity of U.S. Students Studying Abroad

Note. Adapted from "Race/ethnicity of U.S. Students Abroad," by Institute of International Education, (n.d.), *Open Doors* (https://opendoorsdata.org/infographic/race-ethnicity-of-u-s-students-abroad/)

The underrepresentation of historically marginalized groups in study abroad continues to be an ongoing conversation in higher education. Since the early- to mid-2000s, the call to action has grown louder, with the emergence of government and private organizations in the United States such as U.S. Department of State, Diversity Abroad, Black & Abroad, and NAFSA's Diversity and Inclusion (Contreras, 2015; Diversity Abroad, n.d.; NAFSA, n.d.; USA Study Abroad, n.d.-b). Similar organizations and parallel calls to widen access have existed in the United Kingdom, across Europe, and Australia (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2022; European Association for International Education, n.d.).

Disappointingly, the topic of diversity and inclusion in student mobility/study abroad has not been extensively researched and published in major peer reviewed journals (Salisbury et al., 2011; S. Walker et al., 2011). Earlier studies tended to focus on students' deficits (e.g., lacking

financial support), but more recent studies have explored hypotheses beyond financial barriers to include strength-based approaches to understanding equity gaps in participation (Raby, 2008; Raby et al., 2014; Rausch, 2017; Wick, 2011; Wick et al., 2019; Willis, 2015). However, the current study did not begin with this assumption that participation rates for historically marginalized students are solely due to individual characteristics and deficits. Instead, the study centered on deepening the understanding of the lived experiences of historically marginalized students as they navigated their respective study abroad journeys.

1.7 Operational Definitions of Key Terms

While writing this dissertation (i.e., 2018–2022), terminology and definitions used to describe historically marginalized groups continued to evolve and move into—or out of—popular discourse. The dual pandemics of COVID-19 and calls for racial justice functioned as an accelerant that exposed systemic inequities in society. Some of these terms used to describe historically marginalized groups include disenfranchised, disadvantaged, underrepresented, marginalized, and minoritized. Cultural nuances, which are shaped by historical and contemporary context, are significant factors driving the evolution of terms. The following terms are used frequently throughout this manuscript.

1.7.i BIPOC/Students of Color

At the time of the study, *BIPOC* was the abbreviation most commonly used to describe or identify students of color and students who identify as multiracial in the United States; it was an emerging term in some other countries (The BIPOC Project, n.d.). The term BIPOC was created to center the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups, which served to acknowledge that people of color experience varying degrees of racism and systemic injustices. Additionally,

centering Black and Indigenous people acknowledges the impact of slavery and genocide (The

BIPOC Project, n.d.). The term BIPOC is not universally accepted. A contrasting viewpoint is

that BIPOC generalizes a wide swath of experiences. In this instance, the term *racialized*

people(s) are preferred rather than BIPOC because it recognizes race is a social construct and

racism is a manifestation of systemic social inequality, not individual acts (Lane, 2021).

1.7.ii Education Abroad and Study Abroad

Historically, the term *study abroad* was frequently used in U.S. contexts to describe a

program that takes place outside of the country for academic credit (The Forum on Education

Abroad, n.d.). As the field of international education has expanded to include many variations of

international experiences (e.g., for credit, not for credit, internships, service learning, research,

various durations), the term study abroad began to fall out of favor, and *education abroad*

became the umbrella term for international learning engagements (The Forum on Education

Abroad, n.d.). The terms *study abroad* and e*ducation abroad* will be used interchangeably

throughout the dissertation. In this particular study, program term (e.g., year, semester, summer,

spring break) was not one of the criteria factored into the analysis.

1.7.iii First-Generation College Students

First-generation college students are students who are the first in their immediate family

to receive a bachelor's degree (RMU, n.d.-c). This classification is also not universally shared

across institutions in the United States. This definition is also subjective, according to

institutions, governments, and contextual framing of who is considered to be first generation. For

the purposes of this study, a first-generation college student is a person whose parents have never

earned a bachelor's or graduate degree (RMU, n.d.-c).

1.7.iv High Financial Need Status

For the purposes of this study, *high financial need status* refers to students who are eligible to receive a U.S. Federal Pell Grant (Federal Student Aid, n.d.). Pell Grants are only awarded to undergraduate students who demonstrate significant financial need and have not earned a bachelor's, master's, or professional degree. The amount awarded is determined by several factors: expected family contribution, cost of attendance, status as a full- or part-time student, and duration of study.

1.7.v Historically Marginalized

Historically marginalized communities are groups who have been excluded from mainstream economic, social, educational, and/or cultural life (National Institute for Health, n.d.). This marginalization is reinforced by unequal power dynamics and systemic inequality. In a U.S. context, groups who are historically marginalized may be for reasons of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, language, and/or immigration status (National Institute for Health, n.d.).

1.7.vi Mature-Aged Students

The definitions of *nontraditional student*, *nontraditionally aged student, mature-age student, and adult learner* vary by institution and context. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), adult learners comprise over 41% of postsecondary students. Voorhees and Lingenfelter (2003) defined mature-aged students as someone 25 years of age or older. For the purposes of this study, this is the definition adopted.

1.7.vii Underrepresented Groups

The term *underrepresented students* or *underrepresented groups* in education abroad refers to students who study abroad in numbers that are disproportionately lower than their higher education enrollment. As an example, definitions and dimensions of underrepresentation in education abroad could include home state, institutional type (e.g., historically Black college and university, community college), ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, discipline of study, or any combination of these factors (The Forum on Education Abroad, n.d.). The term *underrepresented* is gradually being replaced by *historically marginalized* to emphasize systemic power dynamics and inequality that is prevalent in society and institutions.

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1.8 Chapter Summary

</div>

The beginning of the chapter discussed the purpose of the study, which was to better understand and unpack equity gaps in education abroad participation in the United States for students from historically marginalized communities. The study took place at RMU, which is a research intensive and doctoral granting institution and has a long-standing history of education abroad programs. A key motivator in embarking on this journey stemmed from my own lived experience as a Black woman who studied abroad in the mid-1990s and my experience working with historically marginalized students to widen access to education abroad opportunities. What makes the setting unique is the period of time in which the investigation took place. All of the subjects had applied and been accepted to a study abroad program. The two groups of students I interviewed were: (a) students who applied and were accepted but withdrew before taking part in the education abroad experience; and (b) students who applied, were accepted, and did take part in the education abroad experience.

To qualify for the study, students had to have met one or more of the following characteristics: they were BIPOC, were a first-generation college student, had high financial need, and/or were a mature-aged student. The study has potential to make an impact with education abroad practices and contribute to scholarship in international education. The period of time in which the research took place, i.e., after acceptance onto a study abroad program, has not been widely studied previously; therefore, it represents a gap in collective knowledge. Additionally, this study was centered around students' lived-experiences and institutional barriers or enablers that support or hinder study abroad participation, while enabling students' assets to emerge from their stories of that experience - instead of focusing on individual deficits or characteristics, which has been a central theme of previous studies on historically marginalized groups in education abroad (Sweeney, 2014; Wick, 2011; Wick et al., 2019).

The research question I aimed to explore throughout the course of this research was: **Are there institutional barriers or enablers that support or hinder study abroad participation for students from historically marginalized communities?** I also wondered what institutional behaviors prevented or inhibited participation. Throughout the 4 years of writing this dissertation, the evolution of key terms have evolved and continued to move in and out of mainstream discourse. At the time of publication, the key terms used to describe historically marginalized students was current; however, I recognize that as language continues to evolve, there will also be a shift in terminology.

In the next chapter (Chapter 2, the literature review), I examine systemic and institutional barriers to widening access to education abroad, then move into a framework of inclusive excellence and internationalization. This discussion is followed by a narrowing of focus to the

context of the U.S. education abroad landscape. Then, I look at historically marginalized students in the education abroad context along with relevant research, which leads to identifying gaps in the literature and a note on the significance of the current study. In Chapter 3 (theoretical framework), I start with my research paradigm, followed by the theoretical frameworks guiding this study (i.e., CRT and HCT). I discuss intersections of internationalization and diversity followed by discussion of theoretical critiques. In Chapter 4 (methodology), I delve into the research design and rationale and further describe the institutional context, participant recruitment and profile, data collection and ethical considerations, trustworthiness of the study, research reflexivity, and limitations. Chapter 5 (Findings and Discussion) includes a detailed profile of the participants, followed by findings from the interviews, including reflections from students who studied abroad and from students who withdrew before taking part in a study abroad experience. Additionally, this chapter includes advice from participants to students from historically marginalized communities, who are considering study abroad. In Chapter 6, I discuss the impact of COVID-19, study limitations and implications for future research, leading into the Chapter 7 recommendations for policy and practice, reflections, and gratitude.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I present a review of relevant literature and scholarship, which provided context for the study. Beginning with a macro view of access and equity in higher education, I transition into inclusive excellence in higher education, followed by inclusive internationalization. Then, I examine the literature on students from historically marginalized backgrounds in education abroad. Afterward, I discuss the historic *four Fs*: Finances, Faculty, Family, and Fear (i.e., a framework that has endured in the education abroad community for over 30 years) that rationalizes lower participation rates of historically underrepresented students in education abroad, including Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students; first-generation college students; high financial need students; and mature-aged students (Cole, 1990; Contreras et al., 2017; Sweeney, 2014). The four Fs have unintentionally perpetuated a deficit narrative around underrepresentation in education abroad (Contreras et al., 2017; Sweeney, 2013). Assumptions that BIPOC student participation rates trail White, middle-class counterparts because they lack family support or financial resources places the blame on student characteristics and circumstances and ignores culpability of education abroad administrators, faculty, and historic inequality in higher education. Finally, by addressing gaps in the literature, I present the theoretical frameworks that guided the direction, methods, and analysis of the research questions and significance of the study.

2.1 Widening Access to Higher Education in Global Contexts

Higher education has been demonstrated to be a critical pathway for social mobility (Hubble & Connell-Smith, 2018). This pathway does not look the same for every student because historically marginalized communities have several hurdles to overcome (Thiem &

Dasgupta, 2022). There is a strong correlation between school achievement and socioeconomic status; namely, people from wealthier socioeconomic backgrounds stand a greater chance of being admitted into university (Baldwin & James, 2010; James, 2007). Once they enter college, students from significantly resourced backgrounds have an advantage to navigate the complex higher education system (Morley & Lugg, 2009).

Wong (2007) presented a holistic view of access and equity in higher education, which is influenced by four factors: (a) historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion in the institution, including affirmative action and legacy policies; (b) structural diversity (i.e., the number of underrepresented students on campus); (c) psychological climate (i.e., perceptions of prejudice or openness of students, staff, and faculty); and (d) behavioral dimensions (i.e., acts of discrimination or inclusion by students, staff, and faculty). Most institutions focus on structural diversity and pay far too little attention to historical legacy, psychological climate, and behavioral dimensions (Wong, 2007).

Definitions of access and equity in higher education are shaped by global, regional, national, and sub-national priorities (Burke, 2016; Clancy & Goastellec, 2007). Governments recognize that having an educated workforce in the global economy is mission critical. Universities UK was invited by the former Minister of State for Universities and Science, Jo Johnson MP, to conduct an analysis and offer policy recommendations on higher education as a means for upward social mobility (Universities UK, 2016). Several years later, another Universities UK study was published, which centered around closing the achievement gap of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic students (Universities UK and National Union of Students, 2019) In 2009, the Council of the European Union declared that "promoting equity, social

cohesion and active citizenship" (p. 2) was one of their strategic objectives. The U.S. Department of Education has shared a similar mission, which is "to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access" (Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2016, p. 1).

In Europe, the rise in diverse, immigrant populations were a catalyst that sparked the INVITED project (Claeys-Kulik et al., 2019; European University Association, n.d.). In addition to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, the founders sought to encourage dialogue and exchange of best practices across partner institutions through collaborative research and peer learning seminars. Latin American higher education institutions have evolved from serving the elite to widening access to students from lower socioeconomic classes and serving as drivers of upward social mobility (Brunner & Labraña, 2020). In sub-Saharan Africa, present-day socioeconomic factors and apartheid era practices—such as those in South Africa—have had an impact on access to higher education (Ilie & Rose, 2016; Wangenge-Ouma, 2013).

The impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic has accelerated the urgency to address inequality and access to higher education (The World Bank, 2021). A recent collection of scholarly work by leading figures in higher education across Africa, the Caribbean, Brazil, Australia, Asia, Austria, Thailand, Ireland, and the United States posed "questions about whether equity should remain a priority for the sector" (Atherton, 2021, p. 7). Additionally:

> Immediate considerations of delivery continuity (largely via technology), institutional and systems financing, community health, campus safety and security were more pressing, perhaps, in sustaining the sector through the earliest stages of the crisis (which shows no sign of abating in much of the low- and middle-income world) . . . . But, as resilience activities embed many adaptation changes into standard operations, it is imperative to ask who is losing or missing from these future-forward adaptations. (Atherton, 2021, p. 7)

De Wit and Altbach (2021) concurred with Atherton (2021) and posited that the pandemic has further exacerbated inequalities in higher education and will require collaboration across multiple stakeholder communities to solve these challenges.

These studies offered a strong critique to the supposed meritocracy of higher education (i.e., if an individual student works hard enough, has the right attitude, strong moral character, and integrity, they can rise above any challenge and achieve success). There are a "variety of non-merit factors that suppress, neutralize, or even negate the effects of merit and create barriers to individual mobility" (McNamee & Miller, 2004, para. 2). Situating inclusive access to education abroad in this context challenges deficit narratives around historically marginalized populations.

2.2 Inclusive Excellence in Higher Education

The American Association of Colleges and Universities (n.d.) developed a framework for inclusive excellence in higher education. The core principles of the framework "endeavors to develop 'equity-minded practitioners' who are willing to engage in the necessary, and sometimes difficult, conversations and decision making that can lead to transformational change for student learning and achievement" (The American Association of Colleges and Universities, n.d., as cited in University of Wisconsin Whitewater, n.d., para. 4). Williams et al. (2005) developed an Inclusive Excellence Scorecard founded on these principles and supported by empirical research. The scorecard unpacks dimensions of diversity, equity, and inclusion and guides practitioners toward the goal of equity mindedness, which is essential for confronting systemic inequalities in higher education (Bensimon et al., 2016).

In an international education context, equity mindedness begins with placing historically underrepresented students in education abroad at the center. This position is counter to the prevailing deficit mindsets that have persisted in education abroad discourse to explain inequitable representation, such as what has been seen in higher education discussions around student characteristics (Bensimon et al., 2016; Clayton-Pedersen et al., 2013; Costino, 2018; Whitehead, 2015). Taking an equity-minded approach shifts the conversation away from an outreach or access problem and identifies it as a systemic design problem (Serrano et al., 2022). Table 5 illustrates the inclusive excellence framework, which includes the following components: diversity, inclusion, equity, and equity mindedness.

Table 5

Inclusive Excellence Framework

Component	Description
Diversity	Individual differences (e.g., personality, prior knowledge, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability and cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations).
Inclusion	The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in the curriculum, in the cocurriculum, and in communities (e.g., intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact in systems and institutions.
Equity	The creation of opportunities for historically underrepresented populations to have equal access to and participate in educational programs that are capable of closing the achievement gaps in student success and completion.
Equity mindedness	A demonstrated awareness of and willingness to address equity issues among institutional leaders and staff

Note. Adapted from "Making Excellence Inclusive," by The American Association of Colleges and Universities, n.d.

The inclusive excellence framework was adopted by Rocky Mountain University (RMU) and became ingrained into campus culture:

> At [RMU], diversity, equity, and inclusion are more than words – they are a call to action. Through proactive efforts and meaningful progress, we are working towards our vision of an inclusive university community that welcomes and affirms diversity of people, perspectives, and ideas. (RMU, n.d.-a, para. 1)

Founded in 2010, the Office of Inclusive Excellence at RMU, formerly known as the Office of the Vice President for Diversity, is responsible for creating an inclusive campus environment. This goal is accomplished through programs and initiatives that are directed toward individuals

(e.g., students, faculty, staff, administrators), organizations (e.g., departments and affinity groups), and systems (e.g., capturing data via climate surveys and policy).

2.3 Inclusive Internationalization in Higher Education

Internationalization is defined as:

> The intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of postsecondary education, to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society. (de Wit et al., 2015, p. 29)

Although international mobility has risen steadily since the 1990s, it is still only enjoyed by a small percentage of the world's student population (de Wit & Jones, 2018). Even more alarming, in this small, elite group, the percentage of students who come from historically underrepresented backgrounds (relating to low socioeconomic status, physical disabilities, immigration status, and race/ethnicity) is even slimmer.

Historically, approaches to internationalization in the West have been heavily influenced by Western, neocolonial perspectives with insufficient consideration of unequal power relations in international engagement (Buckner & Stein, 2019; Jones & de Wit, 2012). The international community has begun to take notice and calls to address inequity accelerated during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Moreover, in 2008, the International Association of Universities issued a policy statement recognizing the need to diversify internationalization and address historical inequalities in the field.

National governments have also taken action to widen access to study abroad (Go International, 2015; Lincoln Commission, 2005; Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2016). The Gilman Scholarship, funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, is a well-known example of this effort. The Gilman

Scholarship aims to increase access to study abroad opportunities for students with limited financial means (i.e., Federal Pell Grant recipients) to better prepare them to succeed in a globalized economy (Institute of International Education, 2019). Although over 22,000 students have received scholarships since the program's inception in 2001, this number pales in comparison to the ambitious Lincoln Commission's goal of 1 million U.S. students studying abroad annually. Increased funding is not the sole answer to the question around underrepresentation; thus, a deeper investigation into systemic issues is warranted.

Institutions and consortia have also been tackling inclusive internationalization head on. One such example is Centennial College in Toronto, Canada. In June 2018, Centennial held its 10th Annual Conference, and the theme was inclusive internationalization. With a keynote address delivered by Professor Elspeth Jones, the conference was designed to "promote dialogue and critical reflection on how to further develop innovative internationalization learning initiatives in teaching practices and learning and services within postsecondary institutions through a lens of inclusion" (Centennial College, 2018, p. 8). Inclusive internationalization has also made some strides in Europe. For example, a group of nine institutions created a consortium called the Aurora Universities. One of the key components of this consortium was the formation of the Inclusive Internationalization Project, which aimed to widen access to internationalization opportunities for historically underrepresented communities (Aurora Universities, 2018).

Taking an inclusive approach to internationalization initiatives as previously cited by de Wit and Jones (2018) includes teaching practices, curricular, and co-curricular engagements. Although the formal curriculum in higher education institutions is overseen by independent accrediting bodies, Killick (2016) describes the *hidden curriculum* as "privileging the

perspectives and/or behavioral norms of majority-student and majority-academic groups" (pp. 20–21). Killick (2016) further explains, "the very terminology we use to categorize students contributes to the negative impact of the hidden curriculum on 'non-majority' groups. (pp. 20). The message is clear - words matter; the use of deficit language by study abroad professionals and faculty can be particularly detrimental to students' self-esteem and efficacy, and lead to greater alienation, negatively impacting the student's opportunity for success (Anzul et al., 2001; Smit, 2012). In spite of this influx of national resources and institutional commitments, the gap between historically marginalized students and other students from dominant identities persists.

The current context of the global pandemics (i.e., COVID-19 and racial injustice) have had a profound impact on higher education. Jones et al. (2021) made a strong argument for the need to align internationalization and university social responsibility as part of the third mission of higher education and contribute to the global common good. Stein (2021) offered a thoughtful critique on traditional internationalization studies and asserted, to address the systemic hierarchies that perpetuate dominant/subordinate global relationships and inequality in higher education, "we will need to go beyond quick fixes and look deeply and unflinchingly at the assumptions that we hold about ourselves and our institutions and how change is made" (p. 3). As further described in the upcoming section 2.4 of this Chapter, internationalization discourse romanticizes the past as a golden age of international education and historically has not put a spotlight on inequality. Therefore, it is imperative to "identify and denaturalize how racial, economic, national, and other power structures as well as individual choices, strongly determine how people are unevenly positioned in relation to the process and policies of internationalization in higher education" (Stein, 2021, p. 6).

The discussion of inclusive internationalization in a global context grounds the conversation of underrepresentation in U.S. education abroad. To begin, in the following section, I describe the origins of education abroad in the United States, beginning in the late 1880s into the present day (i.e., 2020s). Understanding where, how, and for whom education abroad was initially designed and offered in the United States helps shape understanding of the current state of underrepresentation, whereby historically marginalized students are not represented in study abroad programs to the same degree as their overall presence in higher education.

2.4 Education Abroad Landscape in the United States

2.4.i Early Beginnings

The earliest records of study abroad in the United States date back to the late 1800s, when Indiana University created an opportunity for students to enroll at several European universities during the summer months (Brewer & Ogden, 2018; Hoffa, 2007). Accompanied by faculty, students had an opportunity to study languages and cultures, and were able to receive academic credit (Brewer & Ogden, 2018). These opportunities were small and afforded opportunities for children from elite U.S. families to network with wealthy families abroad.

Study abroad continued to be selective and directed toward White male students from wealthy backgrounds into the early part of the 20th century. In 1923, the University of Delaware formally established study abroad programs for undergraduate students and Smith College followed shortly thereafter in 1925 (Contreras, 2015). According to Contreras (2015), the study abroad programs at the University of Delaware and Smith College were a distinct departure from the European Grand Tour narrative. This reframing of study abroad centered around the cultural and academic benefits for participants.

As I read through the historical retelling of study abroad in the United States, I noticed the historical retelling of education abroad does not mention that the University of Delaware remained racially segregated by law until 1950, when the Delaware Supreme Court ordered the university to begin admitting Black students (Manser, 2021). This context ties back to the research question, which explored institutional barriers or enablers that influence participation in education abroad for students from historically marginalized communities.

2.4.ii Post-World War II

International education gathered momentum after World War II, when an influx of students began attending U.S. higher education institutions due to the G.I. Bill, which provided financial aid for veterans to earn college degrees (U.S. Department of Defense, 2019). Between 1940 and 1950, the number of U.S. college degree holders doubled. The 1946 Fulbright Act catalyzed inbound and outbound international student mobility, study abroad, and faculty exchange across borders (Brewer & Ogden, 2018). In 1948, the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors was established to coordinate international education efforts among higher education institutions, private organizations, and government agencies (NAFSA, n.d.).

2.4.ii Education Abroad Expansion

The Higher Education Act of 1965 enabled colleges and universities to use federal financial aid for study abroad (Mukherjee, 2012). Throughout the 1960s–1980s, study abroad programs were primarily semester and year long and consisted of bilateral exchange agreements, faculty-led programming, and consortia programs (Brewer & Ogden, 2018; Hoffa, 2007). Education abroad program types, locations, and durations began to diversify and expand during

the 1990s and 2000s with the rise of nonprofit and for-profit study abroad organizations (Faupel, 2021).

2.4.iv Focus on Diversity in Education Abroad

With the rise of diversity in higher education throughout the 20th century, the conversation around diversity in education abroad began to accelerate. Notably, at the 1990 Council on International Educational Exchange Conference, Dr. Johnetta Cole—then president of Spelman College, a historically Black college for women in the southeastern United States— gave a riveting speech about Four Fs -family, finances, faculty, and fear - that were significant barriers to study abroad for historically marginalized communities, referenced in further detail later in this chapter. As calls to widen access for education abroad continued to grow louder, the U.S. government established several programs, including the David L. Boren National Security Exchange Program in 1991 and the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program in 2001, which actively encouraged students from historically marginalized communities to apply (Contreras, 2015).

In 2006, Diversity Abroad was founded with a vision to widen access to students from underrepresented and marginalized backgrounds. Since its inception, Diversity Abroad has secured over $1 million in scholarship funds for high school and college students, produced award-winning conferences and professional development opportunities for professionals, and changed the education abroad landscape. The Project for Learning Abroad Training and Outreach was the first online platform and curriculum designed to support students throughout their study abroad journey before, during, and after the experience. Participants who successfully completed the online program were awarded a Global Scholar certificate upon completion.

Supported through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement

of Postsecondary Education comprehensive program, Program Director, Dr. Gary Rhodes,

prioritized the development of resources and mentors for students of color and other historically

marginalized communities (Rhodes, n.d.). Along with programs and funding, Diversity Abroad

resulted in increased attention on research and scholarship, most notably Dr. David Comp's

annotated bibliography on underrepresentation in education abroad literature (Comp, 2008),

which was the first comprehensive body of work to capture research on historically marginalized

students by demographic (e.g., people of color, sexual orientation) and underrepresented

academic discipline (e.g., engineering, health sciences).

In addition to study abroad organizations, colleges, and universities beginning to address

diversity in education abroad, the U.S. government attempted to put forward the Senator Paul

Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act of 2007 (i.e., H.R. 1469 and S. 991), legislation intended to

increase education abroad participation to 1 million undergraduates by 2016–2017 (Brewer &

Ogden, 2018). This legislation unfortunately did not pass, but the work continued by the Institute

of International Education in 2014 with the creation of Generation Study Abroad. NAFSA (n.d.)

increased attention and calls to action around diversifying education abroad through several

initiatives: (a) NAFSA Award for Impact in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in International

Education; (b) NAFSA Representation, Inclusion, Support and Empowerment Fellowship; and

(c) a partnership with the Fund for Education Abroad. Additionally, the U.S. Department of State

created the Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for U.S. Students Program, which was

designed to support the diversification of U.S. foreign policy talent and goals (USA Study

Abroad, n.d.-a)

2.5 Students From Historically Marginalized Communities in International Contexts

One of the challenges of identifying research and previous studies on students from

underrepresented backgrounds is that underrepresentation is contextual. Who counts as

underrepresented is dependent upon the history of marginalization in the country or region. For

example, in the United States, study abroad administrators have generally accepted Bell et al.'s

(2018) definition of underrepresentation to include identity groups that have historically been

underrepresented or limited in accessing higher education:

- Racial and ethnic minority groups
- First-generation college students
- Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds
- LGBTQIA+
- Students with disabilities

In the United Kingdom (Go International, 2015), historically marginalized students include:

- Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds
- Students from low participation neighborhoods
- Black and minority ethnic students
- Students with a disability
- Students who are care leavers

The Australian Government Department of Education (2016) defined historically marginalized

students as:

- Students from a low socioeconomic background
- Persons with a disability
- Indigenous Australians
- Regional and remote students
- Students with a non-English-speaking background

2.6 Underrepresentation in U.S. Education Abroad

Across the globe, the most consistent definitions of underrepresented or historically

marginalized students include racial and ethnic minorities, first-generation students (i.e., first in

the family to graduate with an undergraduate degree), high financial need students, or mature-aged students. I explored how study abroad demographics compared to the overall proportion of racial and ethnic student diversity in higher education. According to the Institute of International Education (2018), the U.S. nonprofit organization that collects annual data on international mobility on behalf of the U.S. Department of State, 332,727 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit in 2016–2017, an increase of 2.3% over the previous year. For the 2018–2019 academic year, study abroad numbers increased 1.6% from 341,751 students to 347,099 students (NAFSA, 2021). For the 2019–2020 academic year, study abroad numbers dropped dramatically as a direct result of the COVID-19 global pandemic (see Table 6). Race and ethnicity distributions held steady to the previous year, with a slight increase in the percentage of White students going abroad and slight drop in the percentage of African American students going abroad (Institute of International Education, 2021).

Table 6

U.S. Study Abroad Participation by Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity	2006–2007	2011–2012	2016–2017	2018–2019	2019–2020
White	81.9	76.4	70.8	68.7	70.0
Hispanic or Latin(a)	6.0	7.6	10.2	10.9	10.6
Asian or Pacific Islander	6.7	7.7	8.2	8.9	8.6
Black or African American	3.8	5.3	6.1	6.4	5.5
Multiracial	1.2	2.5	4.3	4.7	4.8
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.5
Total U.S. students abroad	241,791	283,332	332,727	341,751	162,663

Note. Adapted from "Student Profile," by Institute of International Education, 2021 (https://opendoorsdata.org/data/us-study-abroad/student-profile/).

At first, it appears that progress has been made to widen access to study abroad for underrepresented students. However, when overall higher education representation and distribution is considered, BIPOC communities are still underrepresented. In the United States, as of 2022, 55.2% of college students were White, 19.5% were Hispanic or Latino, 9.6% were Black or African American, 7% were Asian, 3% were Pacific Islander, 3.9% were multiracial or of two or more races, and 0.7% of the student body was American Indian or Alaska Native (Hanson, 2022). The data showed students from underrepresented backgrounds have lower participation rates relative to their overall enrolment numbers in higher education (Institute for International Education, 2021). Although the years for each data set do not match up perfectly, in 2019–2020, White students comprised 70% of the total number of students who studied abroad, even though their overall higher education enrolment was only 55%.

2.7 The Four Fs Framework

As first mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the prevailing framework for explaining underrepresentation in study abroad is the four Fs (i.e., family, finances, faculty, and fear), which are often viewed as the primary culprits for why students from underrepresented backgrounds are not studying abroad as often as their White, middle-class counterparts (Sweeney, 2014). The four Fs were coined by Dr. Johnetta Cole, President Emerita of Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, at the 1990 Council for International Education Exchange Annual Conference (Cole, 1990; Contreras et al., 2017; Sweeney, 2014).

To better contextualize the four Fs, Table 7 is an example of questions that students from underrepresented backgrounds may grapple with when considering education abroad. In the table below, the first three Fs – family, fear, and finances are outlined. The fourth F, faculty, is further described in the paragraph following Table 7.

Table 7

Four Fs Framework

Family	Fear	Finances
I do not know anyone who has studied abroad before.	Will I be safe?	How much does it cost?
My family does not understand why I want to study abroad.	Will my host family be accepting of me?	Can I afford it?
How can I convince my family that I will be safe?	How will I get around if I do not speak the language?	What scholarships are available?
Can my family visit me?	Should I worry about racism or homophobia/transphobia?	Does financial aid apply?
Will I be able to contact my family?	Will I be able to get supplies and support (e.g., medical, mental health, hair care) that I need?	Will I be able to hold onto my part-time job at home if I go abroad?

Note. Adapted from "Turning the Tide – Ensuring Access for Underrepresented Students in Study Abroad" [Conference presentation] by L. Lopez-McGee & M. Serrano, 2018, Bmore Abroad Education Abroad Think Tank, Baltimore, MD, United States.

One F in the framework is faculty. Students often rank faculty as a major influencer – both positive and negative - in their decision to study abroad (Lopez-McGee & Serrano, 2018). This category often extends beyond faculty themselves to include study abroad advisors and general institutional administration. More explicitly, it is the institutional policies which can be helpful to students or create difficulties (e.g., ease of academic credit transfer, program design/duration/destination) that are created or influenced by faculty, program administrators, and key stakeholder departments (e.g., financial aid offices). Although many faculty members and study abroad administrators are supportive, roadblocks to study abroad still exist for students from marginalized backgrounds (Salisbury et al., 2009).

2.8 Research Questions

As noted previously in this chapter, the definitions of historically marginalized students vary depending on context and national mobility priorities. For the purposes of this study, I defined students from historically marginalized backgrounds as students coming from low socioeconomic backgrounds, first-generation college students (i.e., first in their family to complete a bachelor's degree), students of color, and/or mature-aged students. These definitions were repeatedly cited in the literature in numerous international contexts (Australian Government Department of Education, 2016; Bell et al., 2018; Doyle et al., 2010; Findlay et al., 2006; Go International, 2015; Netz, 2015; Sánchez et al., 2006). Central to the formation of the research questions, qualitative method of inquiry, and semistructured interview questions is to amplify the voices of historically underrepresented students and present their counterstories. Their narratives and experiences provide a more complete understanding of the data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

As noted in Section 1.5, the following research question and subquestions guided this study:

- Research question: Are there institutional barriers or enablers that support or hinder study abroad participation for students from historically marginalized communities?
  - Subquestion 1: To what extent do social, cultural, or other capitals enable or hinder study abroad participation for students from historically marginalized communities?
  - Subquestion 2: To what extent, if any, does a student's ability to navigate their marginalized identities influence study abroad participation?

Historically underrepresented students in study abroad represent a wide range of demographics, including students of color, high financial need students, first-generation college students, mature-aged students, veterans, LGBTQIA+ students, students with disabilities,

community college students, rural students, student athletes, and men. Not all of these demographics are commonly captured in study abroad student data. In the case of the host institution, I was able to identify students among four demographic areas, which are also consistent with international literature around underrepresented study abroad students. For this study, I analyzed four demographics: (a) BIPOC, persons of color, or multiracial students; (b) first-generation college students; (c) high financial need students; and (d) mature-aged students.

2.9 Significance of the Study

This study aimed to unpack institutional barriers to study abroad for historically underrepresented students. Studies have been conducted on historically underrepresented students in education abroad (Doerr, 2020; Gieser, 2015; Kasravi, 2009; Rausch, 2017; Sweeney, 2014; D. L. Walker et al., 2019; Wick, 2011; Wick et al., 2019). Earlier studies tended to uphold deficit-based approaches, which inadvertently reinforce stereotypes that place the blame of underrepresentation on historically marginalized communities themselves, without considering historical and structural inequalities (Sweeney, 2014; Wick, 2011; Wick et al., 2019). More recently, scholars have begun to challenge deficit narratives with counternarratives and asset-based approaches, notably drawing upon Yosso's (2005) seminal work around community cultural wealth (Doerr, 2020; Sweeney, 2014; Wick, 2011; Willis, 2015).

Identity development and negotiation are also themes that have emerged in the literature around historically underrepresented students in education abroad (Downing, 2015; Salisbury et al., 2011; D. L. Walker et al., 2019). Applications of critical race theory (CRT) have also entered international education discourse and research (Gathogo & Horton, 2018; Sweeney, 2014; Timm, 2016; D. L. Walker et al., 2019). Habitus and capital (HCT) is another theoretical framework that

is prevalent in research students that seek to understand societal and structural barriers to education abroad (Miller & Shaw, 2014; Salisbury et al., 2011; Simon & Ainsworth, 2012). Further discussion of CRT and HCT is in Chapter 3 (theoretical frameworks).

In Chapter 5, Report of Findings and Discussion, excerpts from the interviews with students who studied abroad and those who withdrew before taking part, are organized along the four themes developed through the coding process for the current study. The period of time for the data collection (November 2020-April 2021) was also an unprecedented time in our history with the global pandemic and calls for racial justice still very present in everyday life. As discussed further in Chapter 6, Impact of COVID-19, Study Limitations, and Implications for Future Research, the context of the global pandemic had a significant impact on the participants and influenced the recommendations put forth to the international education community in Chapter 7, Recommendations for Policy and Practice, Reflections, and Gratitude.

2.10 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I started with a high-level overview of access and equity in higher education from international perspectives. Wong (2007) framed the campus climate and four contributing factors that create inequitable environments: (a) historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion, (b) structural diversity, (c) psychological climate, and (d) behavioral dimensions. Institutions have a moral obligation to address inequality and systems that have historically disenfranchised students from marginalized backgrounds (Jones et al., 2021).

The framework of inclusive excellence in higher education directly confronts historical legacies of inequality, psychological climate, and behaviors of key decision makers and influencers (e.g., faculty and administrators) toward embracing equity mindedness. In

international education, conversations around inclusive internationalization have been accelerated by the COVID-19 global pandemic, which exposed social inequalities (Chasi, 2021).

Definitions in the diversity, equity, and inclusion space are fluid. At the time of writing this dissertation, a more intentional and asset-based approach was used to describe students who have been historically excluded and disenfranchised from higher education and international education programs. Although moderate progress has been made, BIPOC communities are still disproportionately underrepresented in education abroad opportunities compared to their White counterparts (Institute of International Education, 2021). The questions and investigations around underrepresentation by student demographics has also called attention to the diversity of study abroad administrators themselves (Diversity Abroad, n.d.). In 2018, Diversity Abroad launched *Survey of Diversity & Inclusion Among International Educators*, one of the first national U.S. comprehensive reports of its kind, to assess the demographic composition of the field of international education (Lopez-McGee et al., 2018). A key outcome from this, and subsequent annual surveys by Diversity Abroad demonstrated that the proportion of White students going abroad mirrored the percentage of White study abroad administrators in the United States (Lopez-McGee, 2020). This key finding pushes the discussion of student underrepresentation beyond individual characteristics and invites conversation around representation (or lack thereof).

Previous research on historically marginalized students in education abroad ascribed deficit narratives to student characteristics or circumstances (e.g., first-generation students, high financial need students; Rausch, 2017; Wick, 2011; Wick et al., 2019; Willis, 2015). An alternative perspective is to examine whether institutional barriers or enablers influence program

design, delivery, and evaluation of education abroad programs. The current study investigated if institutional factors have a negative or positive impact on the study abroad participation of historically marginalized students.

Data on underrepresentation abroad have demonstrated a trend that has persisted for years (i.e., students from historically marginalized social identities are consistently underrepresented in study abroad, relative to their overall numbers in higher education; Institute of International Education, n.d.). National governments and institutions have made widening access a priority and international education organizations have also begun addressing the issue of underrepresentation in study abroad.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the theoretical frameworks that underpinned the study. My transformative worldview guided the decision to conduct this study through the lenses of CRT and HCT. My goal was to identify factors that negatively influence study abroad participation among historically underrepresented students and develop an intervention to increase participation rates. While addressing gaps in the literature, I noticed very few studies have looked into the experiences of historically underrepresented students in education abroad who began the process to study abroad but withdrew. Anecdotally, when students are asked to state a reason for their withdrawal, either no response is given or a short response such as financial or course selection may be given, but little follow up by a study abroad office or administrator to establish the real reason(s) occurs. Viewing the research question (i.e., factors that influence persistence to study abroad) from the framing of habitus and capital with a CRT lens was a means to investigate and understand the factors that influence persistence to study abroad by placing historically underrepresented students at the center of the conversation.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I present the theoretical frameworks and lenses used to guide and shape the study. I begin by stating my research worldview, which is grounded in social justice and an anti-deficit lens. Next, I introduce two prevalent theories often cited in higher education research, critical race theory (CRT) and Bourdieu's theoretical concepts of habitus and capital (HCT), which examine historical and social inequalities in society. Combining these frameworks provided analytical tools that helped me unpack systemic factors that may enable or deter study abroad participation for students from historically marginalized backgrounds. Then, I transitioned to internationalization and diversity in higher education. Finally, I close with a summary that leads toward Chapter 4 (i.e., methodology).

CRT was initially developed by legal scholars, with the core objective of exposing how race and racism permeate all facets of society, infrastructure, and power dynamics (Crenshaw, 1989). Beyond individual acts of discrimination or racism, CRT asserts that racism is systemic and structural. This framing presents a direct challenge to the myth of meritocracy, or *bootstrap* narrative (i.e., that everyone has the ability to lift themselves up by their bootstraps with hard work and perseverance), which was created to elevate and maintain the privilege of European/White aristocracy in the United States (Skinner-Dorkenoo et al., 2021).

The theory of HCT was developed by 20th century sociologist and philosopher Bourdieu, who examined power dynamics in society with "Outline of a Theory of Practice." HCT examines the habits, skills, and dispositions that people have acquired throughout their lifetime (Bourdieu, 1986). In the context of higher education, HCT offers tools that help to examine the cultural, social, and economic capital a student possesses prior to embarking on their higher education

journey. These theories are not without critiques, which are discussed later in the chapter. Only

certain elements of Bourdieu's complex concepts are relevant to this thesis. Specifically, his

concept of cultural, social, and economic capital and its relation to habitus and field are

discussed in this chapter and later in the analysis and discussion sections.

As cited in the literature review, previous studies on underrepresentation in education

abroad have been told primarily through a deficit lens (Sweeney, 2014; Wick, 2011; Wick et al.,

2019). Combining HCT with CRT enabled me to gain a better understanding of factors that

influence study abroad participation of historically marginalized students. Instead of approaching

the issue from an individual or deficit perspective, I wanted to take a different approach by

investigating the participants' lived experiences along with wider societal and infrastructure

realities that may present barriers for underrepresented students. Finally, HCT and CRT shaped

the interview question design, formed the a priori coding for data analysis, and provided context

for the relevance of this study, which are discussed in Chapter 4 (Methodology) and Chapter 5

(Findings and Discussion).

3.1 Transformative Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is an approach to identify and codify a scholar's worldview, which

is guided by a belief system and philosophical assumptions that inform their approach (Guba &

Lincoln, 2005; Mertens, 2010). Mertens (2010) succinctly outlined the four belief systems that

construct a holistic research paradigm, including: (a) axiology (i.e., the nature of ethics), (b)

ontology (i.e., the nature of reality), (c) epistemology (i.e., the nature of knowledge and the

relationship between the knower and what would be known), and (d) methodology (i.e., the

appropriate approach to systematic inquiry). Mertens (2010) described the transformative

paradigm as "a framework of belief systems that directly engages members of culturally diverse groups with a focus on increased social justice" (p. 410). This framework may begin with social justice themes, including "oppression, domination, and inequality" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 10) as the researcher strives to lift the voice of historically underrepresented participants and assert that knowledge inquiry is connected to a social justice or political agenda.

This study was guided by a transformative research paradigm, which is a common lens used in qualitative analysis because it allows for culturally and historically situated interpretations, motivations, value structures, and patterns (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). When I embarked on my research journey, one thing was clear from the beginning: I wanted to deepen my understanding of systemic barriers to study abroad for historically underrepresented populations. My goal was to raise awareness and drive action toward widening access to study abroad opportunities for all students.

As a seasoned professional in the international education space, I was aware of deficit framing in the international community, to explain—or excuse—the equity gap in study abroad participation. My goals for conducting the study were to unpack and better understand systemic barriers to education abroad for students from historically underrepresented communities. This position and belief system is squarely situated in a social justice framework; as I began to map out my research project, it became clear that I needed to pursue the work through a social justice lens.

The research question and subquestions are based upon the phenomenon of underrepresentation in study abroad, by examining barriers and enablers to study abroad for historically marginalized communities. As discussed later in this chapter, Critical Race Theory

(CRT) is one of the theoretical lenses I applied to the study. Central to CRT, is amplifying the voice and visibility of people of color by presenting "counternarratives". Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) defined counter-narratives as "naming one's own reality" or "voice" by critical race theorists through "parables, chronicles, stories, counterstories, poetry, fiction and revisionist histories to illustrate the false necessity and irony of much of current civil rights doctrine" (p. 56). By presenting a counternarrative to prevailing education abroad discourse, which is often influenced by deficit thinking by practitioners and faculty, this study was designed to illuminate a new path forward. This worldview allows for complexity and contextual factors and acknowledgement of how individuals make sense of the world.

3.2 The Theory of Habitus and Capital (HCT)

Bourdieu (1986) developed several theoretical frameworks, including HCT, which was used in this study. Bourdieu's work primarily focused on power dynamics in society, particularly on the more subtle ways that power is transferred, resulting in social classes remaining intact and being transferred to the next generation. Bourdieu argued that educational systems assume and codify the possession of the cultural capital (e.g., knowledge and skills) and habitus (e.g., dispositions and embodied ways of standing, sitting, moving, and acting) of the dominant culture for students to be successful in their education. As stated in the introduction, this thesis did not address all dimensions of Bourdieu's rich body of work. To move away from deficit narratives and perspectives, I needed to grasp the concept of systemic power dynamics and how power is retained and/or transferred through various forms of capital. Presenting counternarratives and amplifying the lived experiences of historically marginalized students, centers on assets and

strengths. The following section discusses Bourdieu's framing of various forms of capital:

cultural, social, economic, and intercultural.

3.3 Cultural, Social, Economic, and Intercultural Capitals

The following section explores Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) which

entails the theory of cultural, social, and economic capitals, concepts of habitus and field. The

section concludes with intercultural and mobility capitals.

3.3.i Cultural Capital

Cultural capital includes a person's social assets, including material and symbolic goods

such as education, style of speech, or style of dress that they acquire as a member of a social

class, which confers social status and power (Bourdieu, 1986). Siisiäinen (2000) further

explained:

> Cultural capital has three forms of existence. It exists, first, as incorporated in the habitus;
> and is to a large extent created through primary pedagogy, that is, in (early) childhood.
> Second, cultural capital is objectivized in cultural articles. Third, it also exists
> institutionalized in cultural institutions and is expressed in terms of certificates, diplomas,
> and examinations. (p. 11)

Sharing similar forms of cultural capital with others (e.g., the same taste in movies, a degree

from an Ivy League school) creates a sense of collective identity, group position (i.e., "people

like us" or "cultural fit") and can also influence conscious and unconscious biases.

Cultural capital is accrued throughout childhood and certain forms of cultural capital are

more valued than others (Siisiäinen, 2000). As an example, a person who grew up in an

environment where college and academic achievements were highly prized and celebrated might

be placed on a college-ready academic track in school. They are continuously exposed to

different facets of academic life including advanced coursework, visiting, and becoming

acclimated to the physical spaces of college, which boosts the individual's agency to be successful in this space.

3.3.ii Social Capital

Social capital encompasses networks and relationships, including social groups, shared norms and values, and trust. Bourdieu (1986) described social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 243). Interpersonal relationships and a shared sense of identity are central. Social capital is determined by the value of tangible resources (e.g., property) and intangible resources (e.g., people). It is the functioning of social groups through interpersonal relationships, which must be continuously maintained and fostered over time for them to be called upon quickly in the future (Bourdieu, 1986).

In the context of education abroad, a student possessing the social capital of being predisposed to the idea and opportunity of study abroad prior to entering a university can set them on a path or trajectory to go abroad. In this study, I asked participants if they first learned about study abroad before they entered university or upon entering university. Students who had already had exposure to the idea were primed to explore the opportunity as soon as they reached university. Thus, planning to go abroad may require lining up academic and financial aid or support. Awareness of study abroad structural elements such as timelines and deadlines are key to being able to move forward in the process and students who have access to this knowledge in advance, can prepare.

3.3.iii Economic Capital

Bourdieu (1986) proposed that all forms of capital stem from economic capital. Economic capital describes material assets that are "immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242). The two other primary forms of capital in Bourdieu's theory (i.e., social and cultural) are derived from economic capital. Those forms of capital are powerful in part because the relationship or connection to economic capital is not always apparent (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). In a higher education example, economic capital (e.g., financial resources) can be used to pay for tuition and other expenses related to school. In an education abroad context, the timing (i.e., date or period during the academic year – before or after study abroad applications are due) and availability of economic capital can have either a negative or positive impact on a student's ability to study abroad.

In this study, I asked participants, "Did anyone or anything present a barrier or detract from you studying abroad?" The open structure of the question allowed for any response that was authentically true and relevant for the students. As a conceptual framework, using a Bourdieu-based approach to study social inequalities was suitable to the nature and aims of my study. Earlier studies on barriers to study abroad often cited individual student deficits (e.g., lack of interest) as a reason or the primary reason why students from historically underrepresented communities were not going abroad at similar rates as students from White, middle-class backgrounds (Sweeney, 2014; Wick, 2011; Wick et al., 2019). The focus of this study was to understand structural barriers and enablers to study abroad for historically marginalized students. Bourdieu's framing of cultural capital highlights how the "value" of ones' capital can vary

depending on context and is, "mediated by the relationships of power and knowledge in different social fields." (Grant & Wong, 2010, pp. 176).

3.3.iv Habitus and Fields

Habitus refers to the ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions people have acquired because of exposure and life (Dumais, 2002). Bourdieu (1986) theorized that habitus was developed and acquired through imitation and socialization. This framing guides how individuals navigate, perceive, and respond to their social environment. Responses are often shared across cultures, or across people who grow up in similar social environments, including class, religion, nationality, race, ethnicity, and education, among others.

Bourdieu (1986) described society as being divided into distinct fields or spaces like education, work, markets, and academic disciplines, among others. Each field has its own *doxa*, or rules, which dictate how individuals should look, talk, act, and behave in the space. Additionally, there are social and cultural indicators that signal an individual's position in the space relative to other individuals. When an individual enters a space (e.g., university, work), their habitus influences how they approach and engage with others. Edgerton and Roberts (2014) stated:

> Contrary to these positions, we argue that cultural capital and habitus taken together—in conjunction with the concepts of practice and field—still hold significant explanatory potential. Moreover, we argue that these concepts can be incorporated into a scientific realist "structure–disposition–practice" (SDP) explanatory framework that seeks to address the misalignment between Bourdieuian relational constructs and standard positivist quantitative research methods. Such reframing can help generate practical, actionable knowledge of the mechanisms underlying persistent socioeconomic disparities in educational attainment. (p. 194)

3.3.v Intercultural and Mobility Capitals

Bourdieu (1986) described cultural capital as the material and symbolic goods an individual acquires over their lifetime and confers to social class, identity, and power. Applied in internationalization contexts, Murphy-Lejeune (2002) codified the term *mobility capital*, which includes "family and personal history, previous experience of mobility including language competence, the first experience of adaptation, which serves as an initiation, and finally, the personality features of potential wanderers" (p. 52). Pöllmann (2013) introduced the concept of *intercultural capital* as a distinct form of cultural or symbolic capital. Although intercultural capital is a form of cultural capital, a unique characteristic is how it "functions as a potent marker of social–cultural distinction within a wider range of contexts of (re)production and is likely to retain, or indeed enhance, its exchange value when 'moved' across more distance fields" (Pöllmann, 2013, p. 2).

For members of historically marginalized groups, their intercultural capital is not always recognized or valued. This lack of value leads dominant groups to stereotype and approach historically underrepresented communities from a deficit perspective, attributing blame or failure to progress on individual or cultural dimensions, rather than considering institutional and systemic barriers (Pöllmann, 2013, 2021; Yosso, 2005). For students from historically underrepresented backgrounds who move into higher socioeconomic and/or educational achievement, Holguín Cuádraz (2006) cautioned that deficit-based myths surrounding the academic achievement and advancement of these students are the "politics of exceptionality" (p. 83). Additionally, Holguín Cuádraz (2006) stated:

> By individualizing their achievements and focusing on their characteristics as individuals, the focus of social policies with respect to educational attainment remains focused on the

individual achiever and not on the institutional processes and structural opportunities that maximize the possibilities for achievement. (p. 83)

3.4 Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT began as an academic movement in the legal studies community in the 1970s and was adopted by scholars outside of law to interpret systemic social inequalities in education (Gillborn, 2006; Goldoni, 2017; Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn et al., 2002; Sweeney, 2014). CRT is rooted in the belief that race is a social construction and asserts racism is codified and embedded in social systems and structures, including public policies, and continues to perpetuate social inequalities.

Critical race theorists assert that structural and institutionalized racism is ingrained into the fabric of society. Truth is situated in White privilege, which is supported by the disenfranchisement of historically marginalized communities (Solórzano et al., 2000). CRT challenges deficit narratives and discourse by exposing the "false picture of a meritocracy; everyone who works hard can attain wealth, power, and privilege while ignoring the systemic inequalities that institutional racism provides" (UCLA School of Public Affairs, 2009, para. 2). This framework also seeks to critically examine the laws, policies, and practices as CRT intersects with issues of race and other identities, including gender, sexuality, religion, and others. CRT transcends racial and gender binaries because it examines whole experiences of oppression.

Yosso et al. (2001) articulated a CRT approach in higher education. The following excerpt summarizes key tenets of CRT and its adaptation into education contexts, including citations from additional scholars:

1. CRT starts from the premise that race and racism are pervasive and permanent. CRT in education centralizes race and racism, while focusing on the intersections of racism with other forms of subordination.
2. CRT in education challenges the traditional claims of the educational system such as objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. Critical race theorists argue that these traditional claims act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society (Solórzano, 1997, as cited in Yosso et al., 2001).
3. CRT in education challenges us to envision social justice as the struggle to eliminate racism and other forms of subordination while empowering groups that have been subordinated (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). CRT seeks to advance such a social justice agenda.
4. CRT recognizes that the experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education. CRT in education views this knowledge as a strength and draws explicitly on the lived experiences of students of color by including such methods as storytelling, family history, biographies, scenarios, parables, *cuentos* (i.e., stories), chronicles, and narratives (Delgado, 1989).
5. CRT draws from the strengths of multiple disciplines, epistemologies, and research approaches (Scheurich & Young, 1997). CRT in education challenges traditional, mainstream analyses by analyzing racism and other forms of subordination in education in historical and interdisciplinary terms (Delgado, 1989).

(Adapted from Yosso et. al, 2001).

Central to CRT is amplifying the voices of individuals who have been historically marginalized. CRT is a theoretical framework that has been increasingly cited in literature surrounding underrepresentation in study abroad (Goldoni, 2017; Sweeney, 2014; Timm, 2016). This recognized framework is a pathway that challenges and supports folks by disrupting injustice and false racial hierarchies along with transforming, reimagining, and reshaping policies and practices. As noted previously, the respondents of the study overwhelmingly self-identified as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and multiracial. Recognizing the lived experiences of people of color as a strength and drawing out these examples through storytelling was a driving force in the qualitative inquiry design for this study.

3.4.i Social Identities and Intersectionality

Social identity as a theoretical framework was first described by Tajfel in 1978 as the formation of a person's sense of self, based on their group memberships (Hogg & Williams, 2000; Islam, 2014; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). People are told which group(s) they belong to, from the earliest stages of life onward. Group membership is reinforced by parents, school, houses of worship, family, neighbors, institutions, and the media, among other social/societal structures.

Identities play a critical role in garnering a holistic view of students from all backgrounds (Hahn Tapper, 2013). Thus, understanding social identities is central to CRT (Anderson & McCormack, 2010). Social identity theory opens the door to *intersectionality*, or the acknowledgement that individuals are multidimensional and identities frame and shape how we view the world and how the world views us. Intersectionality has its foundation in feminist scholarship. Notably, one of the pioneers of intersectionality, famed African American scholar and activist, hooks (1984), argued gender was not "the primary factor determining a woman's fate" (p. 14).

Legal scholar and social theorist, Crenshaw (1989), took hooks' work a step further and coined the term *intersectionality* as a framework to describe the oppression of Black women. Intersectionality, in the context of CRT, addresses "the question of how multiple forms of inequality and identity inter-relate in different contexts and over time, for example, the interconnectedness of race, class, gender, disability, and so on" (Gillborn, 2015, p. 278). Central to CRT are the narratives or counternarratives of historically marginalized populations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Howard, 2008; Solórzano et al., 2000).

Dhamoon (2011) noted intersectionality has entered mainstream discourse and has been defined as "the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups" (Merriam-Webster, n.d., para. 1). Both CRT and intersectionality have been applied in global contexts (Gillborn, 2015). These counternarratives give voice and agency to individuals from historically marginalized communities and are central to empowering students from underrepresented backgrounds in education abroad.

3.4.ii Deficit Narrative

Deficit narrative thinking places the blame of underachievement on historically underrepresented populations, without accounting for institutional and structural inequalities (Anzul et al., 2001; Han & Thomas, 2010; McKay & Devlin, 2016). This framework has been highlighted in primary and secondary educational contexts and is prevalent in the higher education space and education abroad. The deficit model framework also directly supports the CRT assertion that institutionalized racism and inequalities encourage false narratives around marginalized populations. Unconscious biases present themselves; as a result, teachers/administrators discount and ignore the assets students from underrepresented backgrounds have developed over a lifetime (Palmer & Witanapatirana, 2020).

It is my belief that it is time for the wider field of international education to call out and name deficit narrative frameworks in the context of examining study abroad for historically underrepresented groups which is the foundation for this study. Education abroad practitioners must listen to the voices of students who started the study abroad process and either withdrew

before taking part or did study abroad, to understand systemic barriers and identify solutions to widen access. The four Fs framework (i.e., family, finances, faculty, and fear) discussed in the literature review as main reasons for lower participation rates of historically marginalized communities has been the predominant narrative for over 30 years at the time of the study. Although the framework was a good starting point to advance discourse on underrepresentation in education abroad, pervasive deficit thinking in the field has corrupted the original intent of Dr. Cole's message. Rather than serving as a moment for collective reflection and acknowledgement of systemic inequality inherent in higher education and potential impacts on international education, the conversation centered around student deficits. A full generation has passed, and the international education community still holds onto beliefs that underrepresented students are lacking finances (without taking into consideration institutional policies that make it difficult to access financial aid or adequately promote scholarships) (Simon & Ainsworth, 2012). Rather than blaming students, it is time for international educators to look inward and reflect on how education abroad policies and systems throughout Predominantly White Institutions were not designed with marginalized students in mind. In contrast, HBCUs (historically black colleges and universities) were created with a mission to serve African Americans, who were legally denied access to both publicly funded and private institutions (HBCU First, n.d.).

3.5 Intersections of Internationalization and Diversity in Higher Education

Researchers have used HCT in studies related to the internationalization of higher education (Miller & Shaw, 2014; Salisbury et al., 2011; Simon & Ainsworth, 2012; Tran, 2016). It provides guidance for understanding both apparent (e.g., economic) and less apparent (e.g., social and cultural capital) reasons for social inequality at a systemic level. Acquiring the kinds

of social and cultural capitals needed to successfully integrate and succeed in a system that was not originally designed for underrepresented students is difficult (see Chapter 5, Findings and Discussion and Chapter 6, Impact of COVID-19, Study Limitations, and Implications for Future Researchs). Instead, institutions should acknowledge and validate the social and cultural capitals that students from historically marginalized groups are adding to the fabric of the university community. Additionally, Bourdieu's (1986) concept of habitus (i.e., the embodiment of social, cultural, and economic capitals) opens the door to question how the field of education abroad is constructed and the doxa (i.e., rules to successfully partake in education abroad programs) have been established and maintained over time.

CRT is a powerful lens to interpret and lift the voices of historically marginalized communities and presents a counternarrative (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In the context of education abroad, CRT has been applied to numerous studies and is a frame often used to investigate phenomena surrounding the experiences of historically underrepresented students (Gathogo & Horton, 2018; Sweeney, 2014; Timm, 2016; D. L. Walker et al., 2019). Along with the amplification of historically marginalized communities, CRT challenges people to reexamine the status quo and unveil deficit thinking around the potential for achievement of BIPOC students. Scholars have demonstrated the devastating impact of deficit thinking by faculty and administrators toward underrepresented student communities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

3.6 Theoretical Critiques

All theoretical frameworks have strengths and limitations; the context in which they were created, and the social identities of the scholar are important factors. Yosso's (2005) theory of community cultural wealth is generally viewed as a strong critique of Bourdieu's (1986) HCT and how it has been interpreted. Yosso argued students of color and historically underrepresented students do have tremendous assets or cultural capital wealth; however, these resources may not be recognized, celebrated, or appreciated in a Predominantly White Institutional context, as referenced in Chapter 1. Yosso (2005) further explained:

> While Bourdieu's work sought to provide a structural critique of social and cultural reproduction, his theory of cultural capital has been used to assert that some communities are culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor. This interpretation of Bourdieu exposes White, middle-class culture as the standard, and therefore, all other forms and expressions of 'culture' are judged in comparison to this 'norm.' In other words, cultural capital is not just inherited or possessed by the middle class, but rather it refers to an accumulation of specific forms of knowledge, skills and abilities that are valued by privileged groups in society. (p. 76)

Yosso (2005) contended that CRT shifts the focus from a White, heteronormative focus to BIPOC and historically underrepresented communities. Although several education abroad studies have been grounded in HCT or CRT, few have brought the two theories in concert (Tichavakunda, 2019; Zewolde, 2020). Although I do not disagree with Yosso's (2005) assertion that BIPOC and other historically marginalized students carry cultural capital wealth, using Bourdieu's (1986) theoretical concepts of habitus and capitals has enabled me to better understand systemic inequities in the fields of higher education and study abroad.

The Predominantly White Institution context was important for this study because these institutions were not originally designed to support BIPOC and other marginalized communities (Holmes et al., 2000; Jack, 2016). My transformative worldview position aligns with calling out

the issues surrounding deficit thinking and the detrimental impact it can have on marginalized

communities. Adding an additional layer of generational context, most students entering

university at the time of the study are of Generation Z—who are also the most diverse generation

yet—and this demographic reality is being experienced by institutions across the globe (Giunta,

2017).

The rise of an increasingly diverse student body entering university contrasts with the

demographics of university staff and, importantly for this study, education abroad administrators

and faculty. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022a):

> Of all full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in fall 2018, some
> 40 percent were White males; 35 percent were White females; 7 percent were
> Asian/Pacific Islander males; 5 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander females; and 3
> percent each were Black males, Black females, Hispanic males, and Hispanic females.
> Those who were American Indian/Alaska Native and those who were of two or more
> races each made up 1 percent or less of full-time faculty. (p. 2)

The imbalance of a racially and ethnically diverse student body and majority White teaching

staff and administration is fertile ground for deficit narratives and microaggressions against

students from underrepresented backgrounds (Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso, 2005).

3.7 Chapter Summary

As noted in Chapter 2 (literature review), there is an equity gap in the percentage of

historically underrepresented students who study abroad compared to their overall representation

in higher education (Institute of International Education, 2021). The focus on individual student

or family deficits, without considering systemic or structural barriers that have created and

perpetuated inequalities, continuously places historically marginalized groups at a disadvantage

(Bauman et al., 2005; Sweeney, 2014). More alarming, this line of thinking creates an

opportunity for program administrators and faculty to not examine or address their own potential biases.

HCT provides a foundational framework to understand social inequality and power dynamics at system and institutional levels. HCT provides a grounding to understand social, cultural, and economic capitals and how these capitals interplay with an individual's ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions that have been developed and acquired over a lifetime. Including CRT as a lens to understand how systemic inequality is embedded in the fabric of institutions affords a pathway to better understand and interpret the lived experiences of students from racialized minority communities.

The context in which this study took place was Rocky Mountain University (RMU) in the United States, a historically White institution with a population of over 25% students of color at the time of the study. This study leveraged HCT as a framework and CRT as a lens to construct the methodology, including the interview protocol, questions, and data analysis and discussion. By applying the two theories to the framing, design, implementation, and analysis of my research project, I was able to better understand the experiences of the respondents and honor their intersectional identities. Although the study took place at a Predominantly White Institution, the majority of the 22 participants self-identified as students of color. If I had only conducted the study solely through a Bourdieuian lens, it would not have fully captured the lived experiences of students of color; therefore, it would have been incomplete. Additionally, the two theories enabled me to unpack several different, yet connected, contexts that students had to navigate to study abroad.

I selected a qualitative methodological approach to amplify the counternarratives of historically underrepresented groups. As discussed in Chapter 2, historically marginalized students represent a wide range of demographics and many of these dimensions of diversity are not commonly captured in study abroad student data. In the case of RMU, I was able to identify students among four demographic areas, which are also consistent with international literature around underrepresented study abroad students: BIPOC/persons of color, first-generation college students, high financial need students, and mature-aged (i.e., nontraditional aged) students. In Chapter 4, I discuss the methodology in depth.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the methodology I used for the study to investigate factors that influence study abroad participation by historically underrepresented students, including students who applied to study abroad but withdrew from the process and students who applied and did study abroad. As discussed in the literature review, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students; first-generation college students; high financial need students; and mature-aged students are historically underrepresented in study abroad. Limited research has explored these populations of students and the persistence to study abroad after applying and being accepted into a program.

The first section of this chapter presents an overview of the study, the research paradigm, and worldview. As described in the introduction, my personal experience as an African American student studying abroad in Australia greatly shaped and influenced my desire to increase access to historically marginalized students. While in graduate school, I had the opportunity to conduct a focus group with African American students who had started the study abroad process but withdrew before taking part. Now, 20 years later, that initial focus group inspired this research.

I conducted this study in two stages. In the interview stage, I interviewed 22 students individually from November 2020 through February 2021. Prior to conducting the interviews, I had several meetings with the education abroad director at RMU. We discussed my research interests and she kindly agreed to support the project by offering to recruit participants via email and encouraging faculty program leaders to share the study invitation with their students (see Appendix B). Because I was not formally affiliated with the institution, the office sponsored my

affiliate researcher status with RMU, which enabled me to go through the internal review board (IRB; i.e., ethics committee) process and conduct the study at RMU (see Appendix I).

I sent an email to all students who applied to study abroad in 2018, 2019, and 2020 (see Appendix G) . The education abroad director sent a follow-up email to the students about a week after the initial email and sent a third call about 3 weeks after the first email invitation. The second set of interviews occurred between February 2021 and April 2021. The same set of participants were invited to return for a second interview to further expand on themes that arose during the first set of interviews, in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic and calls for racial and social justice (see Appendix F and J).

The second section of the chapter highlights the theoretical frameworks guiding the study, critical race theory (CRT) and habitus and capital theory (HCT). As discussed in Chapter 3, these two frameworks align with the exploratory nature of the research questions and guide the direction of the interviews and data analysis. The third section of this chapter highlights the institutional context and the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic and racial injustice on the study. The fourth section of this chapter pertains to the research design and data analysis. Finally, the last section of the chapter centers around ethical considerations, internal and external validity, and transferability.

4.1 Restatement of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand factors that positively and negatively influence study abroad participation by students from historically underrepresented backgrounds in education abroad. The timeframe of the investigation (i.e., after a student has been accepted to an education abroad program) has not been thoroughly explored in previous research and

represents a gap in existing knowledge. Previous research has centered around students' deficits (e.g., lacking family or financial support) rather than assets (Sweeney, 2014; Wick, 2011). Institutional and structural barriers, such as study abroad program design and implementation, may also be critical factors that influence underrepresented student participation; however, these factors have also not been thoroughly explored in previous research.

By taking a transformative worldview, my goal was to amplify the stories of underrepresented students that had not yet been told. A qualitative approach enabled me to engage in in-depth exploration to understand the problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). This method also enables the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of participants and their points of view, allows flexibility with the research design, and centers the researcher as a primary data collection instrument (Young & Babchuk, 2019).

As my goal is to identify factors that both negatively and positively influence study abroad participation among historically marginalized students, using a qualitative approach enabled me to adapt my method of inquiry based on the first set of interviews. Initially, I had planned to interview participants face to face, but had to conduct interviews online. The rapidly evolving context of the COVID-19 global pandemic, summer of protests around anti-Black racism and anti-Asian hate, combined with contentious U.S. elections, raised new issues that were not present when I initially submitted my IRB proposal in early Spring 2020. The pandemic and related political and social justice tensions continued to escalate as I began conducting interviews during Fall 2020. While I had always planned to go back to participants for further clarification, it immediately became clear that I needed to address the rapidly evolving landscape

of the pandemic; thus, I adapted the questions in my second round of interviews, focusing this time on the effects of the pandemic and anticipated effects of study abroad for historically underrepresented students.

The study centered around 37 total (first and second round) semistructured interviews with students from underrepresented backgrounds, including BIPOC students, first-generation college students, high financial need students, and mature-aged (i.e., non traditionally aged) students. Semistructured interviews are a common form of data collection in qualitative research, particularly when the researcher is striving to identify information from respondents (e.g., personal experiences, attitudes, and influences) that can provide insights into a particular phenomenon (Bluff, 2005; McIntosh & Morse, 2015). With the fluid context of the COVID-19 global pandemic, this approach afforded the opportunity to frame the interview questions through the lens of the theoretical frameworks guiding this study and account for the unprecedented impact of the pandemic.

There are other historically underrepresented students in study abroad (e.g., active military and veterans, student athletes, commuter students) who were not part of the study. In the context of the global pandemics (i.e., COVID-19 and racial injustice), this agility was tremendously important for the study. During the midst of data collection, there were a series of monumental events that affected the subjects, the field of international education, and me as a researcher: the ongoing global pandemics of COVID-19 and racial injustice, the U.S. national elections, introduction of a vaccine for COVID-19, and the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol by White Nationalists.

4.2 Research Design and Rationale for Qualitative Research

Qualitative methodology attempts to increase understanding of why things are the way they are in the social world and why people act the way they do. According to Creswell (1998):

> Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports details of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

The purpose of the study was to explore a phenomenon while taking an asset-based approach. The qualitative inquiry centered on the counterstories of historically marginalized students and amplified their voice and visibility. This methodological approach was particularly suited for the research question, population of the study, and for understanding factors that influence participation of historically underrepresented college students.

Qualitative methods are designed to deepen understanding of subjective phenomena. This methodology also enables the researcher to "delve into questions of meaning, examine institutional and social practices and processes, identify barriers and facilitators of change, and discover the reasons for the success or failure of interventions" (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007, p. 1372) and emphasizes inductive reasoning (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Unlike quantitative research, which may lead to a generalization of findings, qualitative research seeks a broader understanding of a phenomenon and deeper understanding, which may or may not be generalizable to other populations or contexts. Nevertheless, it is important that these counternarratives are told. This study examined the lived experiences of historically underrepresented students. By taking a qualitative approach, I explored subtle and hidden nuances that may not have been apparent in a quantitative approach.

As indicated in Chapter 2, there has been scant literature that addresses the phenomenon at the core of this research project. At the center of the study are the untold stories and experiences of historically marginalized communities. Amplifying these voices and presenting a counternarrative to prevailing deficit frameworks in international education calls for a qualitative design to better understand the complexity of the issue and serve as an agent for social change.

4.2.i Research Questions

As noted in chapter 1, section 1.5 the following research question and subquestions guided this study:

- Research question: Are there institutional barriers or enablers that support or hinder study abroad participation for students from historically marginalized communities?
  - Subquestion 1: To what extent do social, cultural, or other capitals enable or hinder study abroad participation for students from historically marginalized communities?
  - Subquestion 2: To what extent, if any, does a student's ability to navigate their marginalized identities influence study abroad participation?

Underrepresented students in study abroad represent a wide range of demographics, including, but not limited to: BIPOC students, first-generation college students, high financial need students, mature-aged students, veterans, LGBTQIA+ students, students with disabilities, community college students, rural students, student athletes, and men. Unfortunately, not all these variables were captured in the data set provided by the RMU Education Abroad office.

For this study, participants needed to meet one or more of the following characteristics: (a) be BIPOC, (b) be a first-generation college student, (c) have high financial need, and/or (d) be a mature-aged student. Additionally, students were grouped into one of the following categories: students who applied to study abroad in 2018, 2019, or 2020 but did not study abroad; and students who applied to study abroad in 2018, 2019, or 2020 and did study abroad.

The four identity variables used in this study were collected by the RMU Education Abroad office and were consistent with the literature. Although it would have been useful to investigate all these dimensions of diversity, the data set used for this study did not include these variables. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, literature on underrepresentation in study abroad global contexts has centered around race/ethnicity (i.e., BIPOC students), first-generation college students (i.e., students who are the first in their families to attend college), students with high financial need, and/or mature-aged or nontraditionally aged students.

4.2.ii Interview Questions

For the interview, I created a semistructured interview guide that was approved by IRB prior to conducting interviews (see Appendix E). According to McIntosh and Morse (2015), semistructured interviews are:

> Designed to ascertain subjective responses from persons regarding a particular situation or phenomenon they have experienced. It employs a relatively detailed interview guide or schedule and may be used when there is sufficient objective knowledge about an experience or phenomenon, but the subjective knowledge is lacking. (p. 1)

Coming into the project, I had already spent years working with historically underrepresented students. As a woman of color and former study abroad student myself, this background knowledge, coupled with professional experience with study abroad advising, provided a foundation to build the questions. The interview questions were informed by literature related to historically marginalized communities in education abroad and guided by the theoretical frameworks guiding this study: (a) CRT and (b) HCT. Because the focus of this study was to better understand factors that positively or negatively affected persistence to study abroad and most of my respondents self-identified as persons of color, I asked several questions around social identities and navigating identity abroad, applying a CRT lens in data analysis. Most of the

questions were the same for both groups (i.e., students who had applied to study abroad but withdrew from the process, and students who applied and did take part in study abroad).

4.2.iii Critical Inquiry

The research question for this study sought to investigate factors that influence study abroad participation of historically underrepresented college students after they have applied for a program, why some students withdraw from the process before taking part, and why others do go abroad, which have not been thoroughly investigated in previous studies. Previous studies tended to focus on individual student characteristics, rather than systemic or institutional factors (Perkins, 2020; Sweeney, 2013; Whatley & Raby, 2020; Wick et al., 2019). My approach to the study was grounded by a transformative worldview and challenges embedded assumptions around historically marginalized students in education abroad. Critical research orientation is concerned with critiquing power, privilege, and oppression and may have a "strong participatory or action component" (Merriam, 1998, p. 4). Applying a critical inquiry lens in a transformative paradigm seeks to expose, oppose, and redress forms of oppression, inequality, and injustice (Charmaz, 2017). This framework also enables the researcher to critique, challenge, transform, and analyze power relations in the study's findings or results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Ideally, these recommendations may lead to the development of an intervention to increase participation rates and amplify positive factors that promote participation (Aurora Universities, 2018; Centennial College, 2018; de Wit & Jones, 2018).

4.3 Institutional Context

The study took place at RMU, a public, 4-year institution in the United States, and was selected because of its culture of excellence in inclusivity and strong support for education

abroad. Since the 2010s, RMU has made a concerted effort to cultivate a culture of inclusive excellence, recruitment and retention programs for historically marginalized populations, and strong support for study abroad and international endeavors. Although recent years have seen a shift in diverse student representation (see Chapter 1 Introduction, Tables 1-4), the hidden curriculum and embedded institutional practices continue to shape the institution (Killick, 2016; University of Minnesota, n.d.).

Prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, around 2,400 students submitted applications to study abroad annually at RMU. From that number, approximately 700 students withdrew from the process before taking part in a study abroad program. According to the education abroad director, this number has been increasing over the last few years prior to the study. When I approached RMU about conducting a study that included students who had withdrawn before taking part in education abroad, the director responded positively. She noted that, alarmingly, the rate of withdrawal for historically marginalized students was higher than rates for non-underrepresented students, but the study abroad advisors did not have the capacity meet with each student who withdrew.

For the 2018–2019 academic year, 21% of students at RMU self-identified as a first-generation college student (i.e., neither parent completed a bachelor's degree), 22% identified as persons of color, 14% were nontraditional (i.e., 23 years of age or higher as an undergraduate student), and 21% were Pell Grant recipients (RMU, 2019). For the 2019–2020 academic year, 25% of students self-identified as a first-generation college student at RMU, 25% identified as persons of color, 13% were nontraditional, and 22% were Pell Grant recipients.

International education has been highly valued at RMU. The Office of International Programs is the overarching unit that supports the following offices: Education Abroad, International Initiatives, International Students and Scholars, and the Confucius Institute. In Academic Year 2018–2019, there were over 2,100 international students and nearly 1,700 students who studied abroad. During the same time frame, approximately 21% of RMU graduates had a study, research, internship, and/or service-learning experience outside the United States (RMU, n.d.-g). In Academic Year 2019–2020, there were 2,034 international students and 11.5% studied abroad.

It was ideal to conduct the study at RMU. Having spent time at RMU previously, I was familiar with the institution and knew that inclusive excellence and principles of community were salient identities of the institutional culture (RMU, n.d.). The Education Abroad office embraced inclusive excellence and widening access to education abroad for all students. The office partnered with faculty of color to create and design programs that specifically target historically minoritized communities. The office also created a community of practice to additionally support faculty of color as they develop study abroad programming, specifically designed with equity in mind. The office has also partnered with the Office of Financial Aid at RMU and living–learning communities, whose mission is to provide "learning communities for first year, second year, and continuing students designed to honor the identities and strengths of each student to foster students transition to and through the University" (RMU, n.d.-e, para. 1).

4.4 Participant Recruitment

Participants were invited to participate in the study via email from the director of education abroad at RMU (see Appendix F). Over the period of 3 weeks, one initial email and

two reminder messages were sent to RMU students who applied to study abroad in 2018, 2019,

and 2020. Because I was not affiliated with the institution and did not have a connection with the

prospective students, I wrote a short message about myself and the goals of the study to

personalize the invitation and garner interest (see Appendix G). Many of the students who

responded mentioned they were excited about the study and wanted to contribute to widening

access to study abroad for historically underrepresented students.

Eligibility criteria for the study included:

- An RMU student who applied to study abroad in 2018, 2019, or 2020.
- Students who self-identified as belonging to one or more of the following identity groups that have been historically underrepresented in education abroad:
  - a BIPOC student,
  - first-generation college student,
  - high financial need student, and/or
  - mature-aged student (i.e., 23 years of age or older if undergraduate student).

Increasing access to international opportunities is a national goal and a priority for the

RMU Education Abroad office. For the RMU Education Abroad office and wider community,

this study had the potential to identify institutional factors that positively or negatively influence

students' decisions to study abroad. This project also had the potential to contribute to the field

of higher education internationalization globally.

4.4.i Participant Sampling

After submitting my first IRB proposal in March 2020, the world had begun to descend

into a global pandemic, brought on by the COVID-19 virus. In the months following, there was

tremendous disruption in nearly every sector of society—from education, employment, family,

health, financial security, and personal/emotional well-being. (CDC Museum Covid19 Timeline,

n.d.). My own doctoral studies were disrupted for 5 months as I struggled to maintain

employment, homeschool my children, and avoid contracting a deadly virus. Participant

sampling was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 global pandemic. I could only rely on

electronic methods of outreach, such as classroom presentations or posters; other traditional

methods of securing participants were not an option.

I selected purposeful sampling to amplify efforts to reach students who were at the center

of the study and further identify potential respondents who shared similar characteristics

(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Palinkas et al., 2015). This effort yielded a total number of 22

participants. After I had begun conducting the first set of interviews, it became clear from the

interviews that I needed to dig further into understanding the context of the COVID-19 global

pandemic, effects on participants, and the outlook for education abroad for historically

underrepresented students. In December 2020, I submitted an amendment to my original IRB

application to conduct a second round of interviews - this time focusing my questions on the

global pandemic.

4.4.ii Profile of the Participants

There were 22 students interviewed between November 2020 and February 2022 for the

first set of interviews. All 22 were invited for a second round of interviews and 15 agreed to

participate. There were seven students who applied to study abroad but withdrew before taking

part and 15 who applied and did study abroad. Most of the participants self-identified as persons

of color or multiracial students ($n = 17$) and the seven students who applied but withdrew from

the study abroad process held multiple underrepresented identities. Table 8 provides detailed

information on all 22 respondents and includes their race and/or ethnicity, whether the

respondent was the first in their family to graduate from a 4-year institution, if the respondent

was 25 years of age or older, and/or if the student had significant financial need as indicated by

Pell Grant eligibility. The students were also separated into two groups: (a) students who applied

to study abroad but withdrew before taking part and (b) students who applied and did study

abroad. Further description of the participants' backgrounds will be discussed in Chapter 5,

Findings and Discussion.

Table 8

Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	BIPOC	FGEN	PELL	NONTRAD	SA	NO SA	GENDER
Janae	x	x	x	x		x	F
Taylor	x				x		F
Ricky	x				x		M
Helen		x	x			x	F
Jasmin	x		x			x	F
Charlie	x				x		M
Christina	x		x			x	F
Alison	x	x		x	x		F
Michelle	x				x		F
Danielle		x	x		x		F
Mack		x	x	x	x		M
Simone	x	x	x			x	F
Spencer		x	x	x	x		M
Michael	x		x		x		M
Jason	x	x	x			x	M
Indhira	x	x	x		x		F
Becky			x		x		F
Alyssa	x	x	x			x	F
Gretchen	x	x	x				F
Malik	x	x	x		x		M
Jennifer	x	x			x		F
Carlos	x	x	x	x	x		M

Note. BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, People of Color, or multiracial; FGEN = first-generation college student; PELL = Pell Grant eligible; NONTRAD = nontraditional student, undergraduates 23 years of age or older; SA = applied to study abroad and did go abroad; NO SA = applied to study abroad but withdrew before taking part; GENDER = binary gender, male or female.

4.5 Data Collection

I conducted a total of 22 interviews in the first round between November 2020 and February 2021. The interviews were scheduled in 1-hour session blocks even though most

interviews took between 25–45 minutes. This timing allowed space to take descriptive memos immediately following an interview. Memos are "notes written during the research process that reflect on the process or that help shape the development of codes and themes" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pp. 248). These memos served as a resource when I began the coding stage of the study. In this study, interviews were scheduled with a maximum of two interviewees per day. Spacing the interviews in this manner enabled me to absorb each participant's response and note any repetitive themes or new insights. Students were invited to select a day and time that worked best for them using Calendly, an online meeting planner that interfaces directly with google calendar. I conducted interviews using the Zoom platform and all interviewees were asked for their permission prior to recording. I gave a copy of the IRB protocol to each participant during the first interview. During the second interview, I reminded participants they were still protected under the IRB protocol and could withdraw consent at any time and/or request another copy of the protocol (see Appendix G).

The interviews began with questions around their eligibility to take part in the study to confirm participants met the requirements before conducting the official interview. In some instances, I followed up with interviewees for additional clarification to their responses. This semistructured approach allowed for flexibility and responsiveness to each participant (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). I conducted all interviews using the Zoom platform. Once the interview was completed, I used the secure, online platform, Otter.ai, to conduct the initial transcription of the interviews. I took memos during and after each interview. Once this process was complete, I went back and manually cleaned each transcription. Afterward, I uploaded each of the transcriptions and memos into the NVivo software for coding and data analysis.

4.6 Data Analysis

The following section details steps in the data analysis process, including coding procedures and emerging themes. Further details regarding the outcomes of the coding procedure, emerging themes, and discussion will be covered in Chapter 5.

4.6.i Step 1: First-Order Codes: A Priori Coding

The first phase of data analysis involved *a priori* coding, which is a deductive coding process that uses codes developed prior to conducting the interviews, based on a theoretical framework (Saldaña, 2016). According to Saldaña (2016), "Pre-established codes that relate to attributes (gender, age, ethnicity, etc.) culture, values, attitudes, and beliefs, for example, are most likely essential to studies about identity" (p. 72). I developed the a priori categories from the theoretical frameworks guiding this study and included: (a) cultural capital, (b) social capital, (c) economic capital, (d) CRT, and (e) HCT.

4.6.ii Step 2: Second-Order Codes: Axial Coding

Axial coding is the process of relating codes to each other through both inductive and deductive thinking (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method helps identify core themes and is an intermediary step toward identifying emergent themes. I first began with a word frequency search, grouping my respondents into two categories: studied abroad and did not study abroad. From there, I began to run a series of queries in NVivo to identify relationships and patterns in the data. I grouped data together by the categories of study abroad and no study abroad. After completing the first step of analyzing the data using a priori categories, I analyzed the data using an inductive coding process. This process allowed themes to emerge directly from the interviews and helped capture the participants' diverse experiences. During this process, I drew on key

themes identified in the first-order coding and then coded to specific data. This step included color coding the transcribed text to identify patterns from the first-order (i.e., deductive) and second-order (i.e., inductive) processes. As a result, I was able to identify related codes using both inductive and deductive methods (Saldaña, 2016).

4.6.iii Step 3: Identifying Emerging Themes

The third and final step in the data analysis involved identifying emergent themes. During the third round of data analysis, I was able to visually compare the first-order and second-order coding stripes in NVivo and identified the following initial themes (see Appendix H). As described in Chapter 3, the following concepts were derived from CRT and HCT and the emerging themes were grounding in the following frameworks:

Field
- Barriers
  - Institution
  - Individual
- Supports
  - Institution
  - Individual

Habitus and Navigating Intersecting Identities
- Social Identity
- Habitus
- Perception of Others
- Others' Perception of Them

Capital Enablement and Support
- Capital Navigator
  - Getting Support From Someone
  - Creates Support for Others
- Navigating Finances
  - Study Abroad Program
  - Education and Life Expenses
- Organizational Capital Enablement
  - Receives Support (e.g., Program, Upward Bound)
  - Supports Others

Conversion of Hardship to Economic (or Financial) Capital
- Selling Hardship
- Not Selling Hardship

After I coded the data in the aforementioned emerging themes, I conducted a final analysis, comparing the coding stripes of both the first-order a priori categories, which were based on the theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter 3, and compared them to the second-order codes, which were derived from an inductive process. Then, I collapsed the emerging themes into four final themes: (a) Institutional Barriers and Detractors, (b) Capital Enablement and Support, (c) Habitus and Navigating Intersecting Identities, and (d) Converting Hardship into Economic Capital. In Chapter 5, I go into greater detail for each theme, accompanied by excerpts from interviews.

4.7 Ethics and Protection of Human Subjects

Interviews took place via Zoom and were recorded upon receiving verbal consent from the subjects. All data collected were stored in a secure, electronic location per IRB protocol. After each interview, the audio and video files were downloaded onto my personal computer, which was password protected and stored in a secure location. Then, I uploaded the auto file onto a secure, password protected cloud site, Otter.ai, for initial transcription. A copy of the raw transcripts was downloaded and stored on my personal, password protected computer and uploaded into the NVivo desktop version for analysis. In keeping with IRB protocol, data were recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects could not be identified. Additionally, any link to identifying information has been destroyed.

As a token to acknowledge the participants' time and contributions to the study, students had an opportunity to participate in a $25 Amazon gift card raffle. One card was awarded to a

person from the group of interviews with students who studied abroad. A second card for $25 was awarded to a person from the group of interviews with students who did not study abroad, for a total of $50. This remuneration was approved by the IRB (i.e., ethics committee) prior to conducting the interviews (see Appendix I). Participants were not aware of this incentive when they received the initial email solicitation to participate. It was only after they had expressed interest in participating in the study and appeared for the interview that they were informed of the incentive to participate. Participation in the research project was voluntary and participants were able to withdraw their consent and stop participation at any time, without penalty. Data related to individuals were kept confidential. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to ensure anonymity and protect personal identifying information.

4.8 Trustworthiness of the Study

The concept of *trustworthiness* was coined by Lincoln and Guba (1986) and encompasses four main aspects: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. It is a term that is commonly used in qualitative methods to evaluate the scholarly rigor of the study and validity of the results (Levitt et al., 2017). In this study, credibility, or internal consistency, was achieved through multiple interviews with each participant (Seidman, 2006), reflexivity, member checks, and peer debriefs (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) and an appropriate sample size (Morse et al., 2002).

4.8.i Reflexivity

In critical qualitative theory, the role of the researcher is central and the lens in which data are gathered and interpreted matters. It is important the researcher plays a neutral role to mitigate bias during data collection and analysis. In qualitative research, the investigator is an instrument in critical reflection and self-awareness is critical to upholding the integrity of the

study (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). My identities as an African American, cisgender woman, whose parents did attend college and were able to provide financial support, influenced how I designed the research project, constructed the interview questions, conducted the interview, and interpreted the data.

My previous experience as a study abroad student from a historically underrepresented community also shaped the questions I asked. My socioeconomic status and economic background also played a role in the questions I asked, and I came to realize this influence during the interview process. For example, it did not occur to me to ask if my participants worked while in school. This idea began to emerge in the interviews. I realized my privileged socioeconomic background contributed to researcher bias. It was also a fresh reminder that study abroad advisors are overwhelmingly White women with college degrees (Diversity Abroad, n.d.) and the identities people carry influence how they create programs and unconsciously invite or exclude members from communities that are underrepresented.

During the participant recruitment phase, I intentionally disclosed my racial identity in emails to prospective participants, stating that I was African American. I openly expressed my reasoning for conducting the study, which was to increase study abroad opportunities to historically marginalized communities. This disclosure helped establish my credibility and built rapport with participants. Throughout the interview process, I also realized my background played a critical role in the formation of the interview questions. For example, some students who self-identified as being first-generation college students spoke to me about study abroad not being accessible to "people like me." Using a critical race lens, I asked the students to further unpack what they meant, rather than taking the statement at face value.

When administrators and faculty set program fees and payment deadlines, they might not consider students who do not have access to capital to be able to pay for flights, passports, immunizations, visas, and other miscellaneous, yet critical, expenses, which are often due before financial aid is disbursed. Mature-aged students are often cited as being self-reliant, not having a parent or family to back them up financially. The culmination of these realizations also led me to determine that people who oversee program design, marketing, and study abroad program implementation are not coming from historically minoritized backgrounds either. These blinders may inadvertently present barriers to education about opportunities for historically minoritized communities.

Examining factors that affect a student's decision to study abroad—or not—after they have applied for a program may be incredibly useful for the field of education abroad. Analyzing the data along social identity dimensions may identify institutional or systemic issues that should be addressed. Rather than focusing on students' deficits (e.g., lacking family support) as previous studies have done, this project amplified counternarratives and disseminated potential solutions to increasing underrepresented student participation.

4.8.ii Member Checking

Interviews were all conducted via Zoom. Once the interview was complete, I downloaded a transcript onto my personal secure laptop and uploaded into a secure cloud service (i.e., Otter.ai), which initially transcribed the interviews. Once the first stage of transcription was complete, I went back and reviewed the transcriptions and cleaned them. After this process, I wrote summaries of each interview and shared them with participants for member checking to authenticate the validity of the interview, credibility of the findings, and ensure participants felt

comfortable with the response. Some of the participants replied and confirmed the transcription was an authentic replication of our discussions and several reaffirmed their interest and enthusiasm for the study, which was great feedback.

4.8.iii Memos and Peer Debriefing

During the interview process, I kept detailed memos during and after every single interview. Additionally, I discussed my observations and reflections—without violating confidentiality—with trusted colleagues who had experience in qualitative research. This memo keeping was in alignment with qualitative theory methodology because this qualitative approach is an interactive method. Consulting with colleagues and writing memos throughout data analysis are other reflexive practices used in grounded theory to maintain the researcher's rigor and trustworthiness (Cutcliffe, 2003). I kept notes during the interview and the semiconstructed design of the research questions enabled me to explore and delve further into topics lifted up by participants. This approach opened new doors to factors that aided or deterred participation, which I had not previously conceived. I also took memos throughout the data analysis portion of the study.

4.8.iv Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability is the practice of creating systemic processes to ensure the results accurately reflect the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of participants (Morrow, 2005). *Confirmability* is "the degree to which the findings of the research study could be confirmed by other researchers" (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 121. To obtain a high degree of dependability and confirmability, the researcher must take care to describe each step of the process, so that the study could be replicated (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

4.8.v Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the findings from one study can be transferred into another context or group (Elo et al., 2014). The process includes "a detailed chronology of research activities and processes; influences on the data collection and analysis; emerging themes; categories, or models; and analytical memos" (Morrow, 2005, p. 252). Several limitations to the transferability of the study arise from the fact that it was conducted at one institution, on a predominantly White campus, in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. A similar study conducted in another context might not render similar results. Despite this limitation, the diversity of participants (i.e., BIPOC students, first-generation college students, high financial need students, and/or mature-aged students) and the period in which the study was conducted (i.e., after students had been accepted into a study abroad program) are both unique factors and address a gap in knowledge. In Chapter 6, I will go into additional limitations of the study, including the impact of COVID-19.

4.9 Chapter Summary

This research project began with semistructured interviews with students from underrepresented backgrounds (i.e., BIPOC students, first-generation college students, high financial need students, and mature-aged students). There are other historically underrepresented students in study abroad (e.g., LGBTQ+ students, active military and veteran students, student athletes, commuter students) who were not part of the study. This study took an interdisciplinary approach to addressing the issue of underrepresentation in education abroad. Participants differed in terms of race and ethnicity, high financial need status, first-generation college student status, and/or mature-aged student status. Additionally, students participated in a variety of study abroad

programs including (a) short term and semester length programs, (b) English speaking destinations and countries where English was not the primary language spoken, and (c) faculty-led programs and programs hosted by affiliate partners.

The project took place at a predominantly White, 4-year institution with a culture of inclusive excellence, recruitment and retention programs for historically marginalized populations, and strong support for study abroad and international endeavors. These factors may influence participation rates for students from underrepresented backgrounds and could differ on a campus with less support. Although the findings of this project could be useful for RMU and contribute to greater knowledge of the field, the results cannot be universally applied to all persons from underrepresented backgrounds.

This study sought to disrupt the present-day conversation around diversity and inclusion in study abroad. Rather than solely focusing on students' deficits (e.g., lacking family support, money, interest) as previous studies have done, this project reframed the issue by investigating institutional factors that may influence a student's decision to study abroad and may contribute solutions to widening access. As a qualitative researcher, self-assessment and reflexivity are critical tools in the research process. Everyone was living through unprecedented times; just as the COVID-19 global pandemic deeply impacted my life, it also impacted the lives of participants. This factor heightened sensitivity and awareness, deepening my empathy and understanding. Although I self-identify as a woman of color, I did not share some of the other characteristics of the participants in this study when I was in college (i.e., first-generation college student status, high financial need status, or mature-aged student). As stated previously, my identities had positive impacts in establishing rapport but also may have influenced researcher

bias. Self-reflective memos and discussions with my advisors and academic thought partners were tactics used to mitigate or reduce bias.

In Chapter 5, the participant profiles will be presented in greater detail and depth. Excerpts from interviews with students who did not study abroad and interviews with students who did study abroad, and I discuss the four major themes in further detail: (1) Institutional barriers and detractors, (2) Capital enablement and support, (3) Habitus and navigating intersecting identities, and (4) Conversion of hardship into economic capital. The latter part of Chapter 5 highlights participant reactions to the global pandemic and predictions for study abroad participation rates for historically marginalized groups.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

I embarked on this research project to gain a deeper understanding of conditions that enabled or deterred study abroad participation for students from historically marginalized communities. This qualitative study was grounded by a transformative worldview with the goal of deepening understanding of why some students from historically marginalized groups withdrew before taking part in a study abroad program while others with similar backgrounds did go abroad. As discussed in Chapter 3, Theoretical Frameworks, utilizing Bourdieu's Theory of Habitus and Capital deepened my understanding of systemic social inequalities and applied a Critical Race Theory lens, aligned with my Transformative worldview and desire to amplify the voice and lived experiences of historically marginalized students. The findings and discussion in this chapter are organized around the four central themes that arose from data analysis and were described in detail in Chapter 4:

1. Institutional barriers and detractors,

2. Capital enablement and support,

3. Habitus and navigating intersecting identities, and

4. Conversion of hardship into economic capital

From November 2020 through February 2021, I conducted 30–45-minute interviews with 22 students from Rocky Mountain University (RMU). As described in Chapter 4 Methodology, it became clear that I needed to explicitly ask questions about the pandemic. The second round of interviews took place between February 2021 and April 2021. In the second round of interviews, 15 out of the original 22 participants agreed to participate. All the interviews were conducted via Zoom videoconferencing. Every participant had been affected by the COVID-19 global

pandemic in some way, shape, or form. A common theme among all participants was they wanted to participate in the study because they believed in widening access to study abroad opportunities for all students.

5.1 Participant Profiles

I am extremely grateful for the 22 students who volunteered to participate in this study. Each participant was special and provided unique perspectives of their lived experiences. In this section, I provide an overview of each participant's social identity, travel history, and identify whether they studied abroad. Pseudonyms were used to protect participant anonymity. As referenced in previous chapters, the dimensions of diversity that were examined in this study included: (a) Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color (BIPOCs); (b) first-generation college students; (c) high financial need (i.e., Pell Grant eligible) students; and/or (d) mature-aged students (i.e., undergraduates 23 years of age or older). For operational key terms, see Chapter 1, section 1.7.

5.1.i Participants Who Did Not Study Abroad

Seven participants in this study did not study abroad, including Simone, Jasmin, Helen, Christina, Janae, Alyssa, and Jason. This section includes participant profiles for these seven students as of the time of the study. The participants' names are in bold to emphasize their voice and visibility.

- **Simone** was a Black woman who was receiving a Pell Grant and was the first person in her family to attend college. She had planned to study abroad in Italy and was a human development and family studies major.
- **Jasmin** was a Pell Grant recipient and identified as a woman of color. She had planned to study abroad in Germany and was a business administration major.

- **Helen** identified as female, a first-generation college student, and Pell Grant recipient. She had planned to study abroad in Madagascar and was an anthropology major.

- **Christina** identified as a biracial woman (i.e., Latina and White) and was a Pell Grant recipient. She had planned to study abroad in Mexico or Italy and was a social work major.

- **Janae** was a mature-aged student who identified as a woman of color, a first-generation college student, and a Pell Grant recipient. She had planned to study abroad in Costa Rica and was an ecosystem science and sustainability major.

- **Alyssa** identified as a Black woman who was the first in her family to attend college. She received a Pell Grant and had planned to study abroad in Spain. She was a human development and family studies major.

- **Jason** identified as a first-generation Mexican American and was also the first person in his family to attend college. He first attended a local community college before transferring to RMU. Jason received a Pell Grant and had planned to study abroad in Mexico or Italy. He was a philosophy major with a minor in government and politics.

5.1.ii Participants Who Did Study Abroad

In this study, 15 participants did study abroad, including Taylor, Ricky, Charlie, Alison, Michelle, Danielle, Mack, Spencer, Michael, Indhira, Becky, Gretchen, Malik, Jennifer, and Carlos. This section includes participant profiles for these 15 students as of the time of the study. As stated in the section above, the participants' voices are bolded to amplify their voice and visibility.

- **Taylor** identified as a Black woman. She studied in the Czech Republic and was an economics major.

- **Ricky** identified as a Latinx man and studied abroad in Italy. He was a business major.

- **Charlie** identified as a male of color. He studied in Ecuador and was a biological science major.
- **Alison** was a mature-aged, first-generation college student who identified as a woman of color. Studied abroad in Costa Rica and was a social work major.
- **Michelle** identified as a woman of color. She studied abroad in Guatemala and was a conservation leadership studies major.
- **Danielle** identified as a White woman who was a first-generation college student and Pell Grant recipient. She studied abroad in Spain and was a business administration major.
- **Mack** was a White man who identified as a mature-aged student. He was the first in his family to attend college and received a Pell Grant. Mack studied abroad in Costa Rica and was a natural resources management major.
- **Spencer** identified as a White man who was the first person in his family to attend college. He was also a mature-aged student and received a Pell Grant. Spencer studied in China and was a mechanical engineering major.
- **Michael** identified as a biracial Black man and received a Pell Grant. He studied abroad in India and was a communications major.
- **Indhira** identified as a Latinx woman. She was the first in her family to attend college and received a Pell Grant. She studied abroad in Spain and was a political science major.
- **Becky** was a White woman and a Pell Grant recipient. She studied abroad in Ireland and was an engineering major.
- **Gretchen** was a woman of color who received a Pell Grant and was the first member of her family to attend a university.
- **Malik** identified as a Latinx man, was the first person in his family to attend college and received a Pell Grant. He studied abroad in a multicounty program and was a communications major.
- **Jennifer** identified as a woman of color and was the first in her family to attend college. She studied abroad in Italy and was a mathematics major.

- **Carlos** was a mature-aged student who was also a Pell Grant recipient. He identified as Latino with fair features (i.e., "White presenting") and was the first person in his family to attend a university. He studied abroad in New Zealand and was a horticulture major.

5.2 Findings From Interviews

The following section includes an overview of the high-level themes from the interviews with students who withdrew from the study abroad process and students who did study abroad. As referenced in Chapter 3, the theoretical constructs guiding the design, methodology, interview questions, and analysis of study were framed by critical race theory (CRT) and Bourdieu's (1977) theory of habitus and capitals (HCT). The findings from the interviews are categorized into four themes, as noted above and were derived from the coding procedure outlined in Chapter 4: Institutional Barriers and Detractors, Capital Enablement and Support, Habitus and Navigating Intersecting Identities, and Converting Hardship Into Economic Capital. Table 9 demonstrates the frequency in which students mentioned the following themes: barriers, capital enablement, habitus and social identity navigation, and the conversion of hardship into economic capital.

Table 9

Theme Frequency of Students Who Did Not Study Abroad

No study abroad	Institutional barriers and detractors	Capital enablement and support	Habitus and navigating intersecting identities	Conversion of hardship into economic capital
Alyssa*	11	14	9	0
Christina*	18	14	24	2
Helen*	7	0	8	0
Janae*	7	0	10	0
Jasmin*	12	0	10	0
Jason*	2	11	3	0
Simone*	8	2	5	0

*Asterisk has been placed next to the names of participants who did not study abroad. This indication will be carried throughout the remainder of the dissertation.

Table 10 shows the theme frequency of students who applied and studied abroad.

Table 10

Theme Frequency of Study Abroad Student Responses

Study abroad	Institutional barriers and detractors	Capital enablement and support	Habitus and navigating intersecting identities	Conversion of hardship into economic capital
Alison	2	0	14	0
Becky	4	0	7	0
Carlos	0	9	18	0
Danielle	3	0	8	0
Gretchen	8	16	22	1
Indhira	7	0	24	0
Jennifer	7	10	10	0
Mack	5	1	17	1
Malik	1	0	11	2
Michael	0	1	5	0
Michelle	0	0	7	0
Ricky	2	1	7	0
Spencer	4	1	15	3
Taylor	3	1	8	0
Charlie	4	0	10	0

In comparing Table 9 and Table 10, most of the recorded instances identified by participants were related to the themes of (a) Habitus and Identity Navigation and (b) Barriers. Interestingly, the Capital Enablement theme instances for students who studied abroad were proportionate to students who did not study abroad. Not surprising, students referenced multiple identities (e.g., first generation college, student of color) as having an impact on their journey to study abroad (Goldoni, 2017; Sweeney, 2014). The final theme, Conversion of Hardship into Economic Capital, appeared more frequently for students who studied abroad than for students who did not study abroad.

5.2.i Theme 1: Institutional Barriers and Detractors

Research Question 1 was: Are there institutional barriers or enablers that support or hinder participation abroad for students from historically marginalized communities? In the interviews, students named barriers to study abroad as falling into one or two areas: (a) individuals, such as a specific person with authority (e.g., financial aid office, instructor, faculty member) who deterred a student from studying abroad; and (b) institutional practices (e.g., policy) that presented a barrier for a student to study abroad. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Methodology, the study took place at a Predominantly White Institution, which may have impacted the results. This will be explored further in Chapter 7, as a potential area for future research.

5.2.ii Theme 2: Capital Enablement and Support

Research Subquestion 1 was: To what extent do social, cultural, or other capitals enable or hinder study abroad participation for students from historically marginalized communities? Capital Enablement and Support refers to the activation of cultural, social, and economic capitals to access study abroad, which can include policies, programs, and/or individuals who provided encouragement and support.

5.2.iii Theme 3: Habitus and Navigating Intersecting Identities

Research Subquestion 2 was: To what extent, if any, does a student's ability to navigate their marginalized identities influence study abroad participation? As noted in Chapter 3, habitus influences how individuals perceive and understand a new environment and subconsciously impacts the decisions they make (Bourdieu, 1986). In the examples provided in Chapter 3, students from historically marginalized communities had to enter and navigate a number of *fields*

during their tenure at university. The students' intersecting identities (i.e., race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, first-generation college student status, and/or mature-aged student) were central to how they perceived their environment and how others engaged with them.

5.2.iv Theme 4: Conversion of Hardship Into Economic Capital

Conversion of hardship to economic capital refers to a student's decision to leverage their lived experiences as a person from a historically underrepresented group to obtain access to study abroad programs by securing financial support (e.g., scholarships). During the interviews, it became evident students who had participated in pre-college programs had learned how to describe challenges and hardships they had overcome; institutional or external support (e.g., government or private funds) often required the applicant to tell their story. This finding was the greatest surprise and will be discussed further in Chapter 6 as a recommendation for future scholarship exploration.

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5.3 Findings From Students Who Did Not Study Abroad

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In the following section of this chapter, I discuss the four emerging themes from the perspective of students who applied to study abroad but withdrew before taking part in the program. Each subsection is headed by one of the four themes with a discussion section after each theme.

5.3.i Theme 1: Institutional Barriers and Detractors

This section examines institutional barriers and detractors to study abroad. The following passages highlight the power of institutional policy and individuals in enabling or detracting a student from study abroad.

Helen and Simone described the impact of one financial aid officer who devastated them and stopped them from going abroad. **Helen*** stated:

> In my sophomore year, I was looking at programs in Spain. I was talking with the financial aid representative for liaison for study abroad. At the time, I was just asking a bunch of questions: How would I be able to fund it? Could I use funding that I was already receiving? I remember, they told me that based on my financial [aid] and my background, that I would have a harder time finding aid, and that I wouldn't qualify for as much. . .. I would have to pay out of pocket. And so, my chances of studying abroad that year would probably be very little.
>
> I really felt discouraged because I was like, you're supposed to help me find options and find ways to do it, because I'm interested in it because I want to.
> I feel like I always had a problem with my FAFSA [Free Application for Federal Student Aid]. For one year, something came up from an old high school job of mine where I made like $750, like as a high school student. And that like, I can't even remember, it's a couple years ago, and then you do need to have this like, signed piece of paper from that person that I worked for. . .. So, it's like, kind of October to March, I feel like was always most kind of stressful time when my FAFSA would get in, and then that'd be a problem with it. And I'd be trying to get it figured out in time for the priority date.

The passages above from Helen, are an example of habitus (e.g., feeling discouraged based on previous interactions with the Financial Aid office and difficult experience navigating the FAFSA, coupled with feeling little support and empathy from financial aid administrators who knew the system and could offer additional guidance). Financial aid advisors tended to tell participants to try fundraising; however, fundraising requires social capital and a network with ability to contribute funds. When looking at the timeline of study abroad scholarship deadlines and program deadlines, they may not align with institutional timelines for financial aid, registration, and other important deadlines. Study abroad administrators need to be aware of

potential timeline conflicts because these periods of time can be particularly stressful for students receiving financial aid. **Simone*** shared:

> I think where I kind of just stopped everything in the tracks is after I went and talked to one of the financial advisors. . . . I definitely left that meeting feeling discouraged. . . . It wasn't really plausible for me unless I wanted to take out a loan or something crazy like that. . . . They mentioned a little bit of fundraising, but I just felt like there wasn't a lot of advice being given. . . . The program . . . was thousands of dollars, because it was just a short summer program. . . . In the summer, the scholarships available are more limited. . . . But she basically was telling me that I needed to either pick up more hours of work and try and save up, maybe do a little bit of fundraising. But I think by the time we had talked about this; the application was due in like a month and a half.

When Simone spoke with the financial aid advisor, they suggested she reach out to her network which is a form of cultural capital - for fundraising (Dumais, 2002). Although the advisor may have had good intent, the impact was hurtful. Simone's network did not include individuals with financial means to support her study abroad experience. The financial aid administrator's comments were a harsh reminder of her economic situation. This reminder can spark an otherness feeling for students and discourages them from believing they can study abroad.

Christina* identified as a biracial (i.e., Latina and White) woman and received financial aid via the Pell Grant. Christina was very motivated to study abroad but did not feel psychologically safe to disclose her financial hardships to her advisors and this, in turn, caused her to miss some scholarship deadlines. She shared:

> I just remember, like, when I got accepted, I was like, super excited. I was like, oh, my gosh, like this is happening. And I went to the meeting. And it wasn't just me who withdrew like a bunch of other students who would do just due to the cost. And they did try to help us a lot with scholarships. So, at that time, I just did not have the, again, time

to like, sit down and work through all those scholarship applications. Which really sucks because it's like, if I did have the time, I would have loved to have gone. So, I ended up withdrawing, like, a week after I got accepted into the program, just because I didn't really see, I guess, like the light to the end of the tunnel.

I know for a fact, like, I missed a couple of deadlines, because I still hadn't received my acceptance into the program. And I was like, wow, like, I wish I could have just told them I'm planning on doing it, can I please just get the money. I think also going back to like, my ability to receive a lot of financial aid because of my citizenship status.

Jasmin*, a Mexican American woman, described an incident of being talked down to by a White classmate in one of her business classes. This incident was one of many such incidences, which contributed to her feelings of exclusion and confidence in being able to successfully succeed at the institution. Jasmin shared:

I remember going to my professor, and I don't even know what it was about. But I was like, I'm the only Mexican in this class. And I feel so ostracized, whenever I speak my ideas, because it's so different. There's so you know, like, I remember I, like made a spiel about sustainability. And this one guy was like, "That's not what sustainability is." I was like, "Okay, I guess it's not," you know, and I just can't defend myself after that because it's like, I don't feel comfortable.

5.3.ii Summary of Theme 1: Institutional Barriers and Detractors

This study was centered at a Predominantly White Institution, which was an important context for the study, because these institutions were not originally designed to support BIPOC students and other marginalized communities (Holmes et al., 2000; Jack, 2016). The passages above highlight the impact of having a "financial safety net" on a student's self-confidence in studying abroad. It was also interesting that participants in the honors program (i.e., an enriched educational program of study for academically talented and motivated students at RMU) also

expressed feelings of inferiority despite being an honors student because they were continuously given signals they did not belong.

5.3.iii Theme 2: Capital Enablement and Support

Students described various forms of cultural and social capitals that provided support for them to pursue study abroad and made them feel welcome at the university. Although these students ultimately did not go abroad, Alyssa and Helen gave examples of how family members encouraged them to pursue these opportunities. Christina and Jason mentioned a specific teacher and university program that supported their enablement. Additionally, all four passages stand in contrast to some of the four Fs (i.e., family and faculty) mentioned as barriers (see Chapter 2).

Alyssa* shared:

I was talking to my grandma, and she's someone who's really influential and very supportive of a lot of things that I want to do in my life. . . . She was just telling me that if I'm going to go to college, then I should go and experience everything that's about college and I shouldn't feel discouraged about things such as my finances, because in the future, I'll be able to pay it back in some way, shape, or form. So, I just got interested in it. I was like, oh, wait, I'm going to make it a reality, then I'll figure out how to pay for it. I'll do it. I just want to go.

Helen* commented:

My immediate family, my mom and dad, were really supportive. I know that they were . . . a little bit nervous, but they kind of held that back and were verbally supportive, even though they can't be financially supportive. . . . My extended family definitely got some negative, some negative conversations with them about it. I think that that just comes from this place of . . . low socioeconomic status and my extended family, also to identify as in that class . . . kind of having this lack of knowledge about what the rest of the world

is like. I kind of encouraged them to do more research about Madagascar, and about, like, different continents in general, and like Africa, and so it worked in good conversations.

Christina* stated:

Back in high school, it was a one of my coaches for like a athletic program that I was part of and he got to travel a lot because of the athletics program that he was part of, and he like told me like, you know, you can really take that decision, like when you're in college to like, go and like, study abroad and like, be there for a couple of like, weeks or months if it's like, an opportunity you can find.

Jason* shared:

I was in a Latinx program at [RMU], and they helped welcome me as well. We went to the mountains together and stuff like that. So, that was a good day. I felt welcomed like the new group of people. They were like, in my situation. I think just getting involved has helped me a lot in life.

5.3.iv Summary of Theme 2: Capital Enablement and Support

The four Fs (i.e., family, finances, fear, and faculty) framework—often said to be the primary reasons why students from historically marginalized communities do not study abroad in proportion to their overall representation in higher education—is a persistent narrative in education abroad (Contreras et al., 2017; Sweeney, 2014). Although referenced in Chapters 1 and 2 as well as reported by some of the participants that "faculty" (including advisors and institutional policies, program design, etc.) functioned as a barrier, in other instances, faculty are characterized by some of the participants as be supporters and enablers.

5.3.v Theme 3: Habitus and Navigating Intersecting Identities

This section includes excerpts from students who applied to study abroad but withdrew before taking part. Prior to a student deciding to study abroad, their experiences at the university

can influence their feelings of empowerment and belonging. These spaces, or *fields* (see Chapter 3), have their own rules, or *doxa*, regarding how someone should present or behave in a particular space (Bourdieu, 1986). There are both social and cultural indicators that allude to a person's position in a space, relative to other individuals who are occupying the same space (Dumais, 2002; Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). Central to this theme is the concept of intersectionality, a term first coined by Crenshaw (1989). Delgado Bernal (2002) further explained, "What this means is that one's identity is not based on the social construction of race but rather is multidimensional and intersects with various experiences" (p. 119).

Economic capital describes material assets that are "immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242). In a higher education example, economic capital (e.g., financial resources) can be used to pay for tuition, books, institutional fees, and certain living expenses. In an education abroad context, the timing and availability of economic capital can have either a negative or positive impact on a student's ability to study abroad. In this study, I asked participants, "Did anyone or anything present a barrier or detract from you studying abroad?" The open structure of the question allowed for any response that was authentically true and relevant for the students.

Alyssa* shared:

Being a first-generation student, there's not a lot of resources that prepare you or give you enough information about things like this, that are a part of the college experience. It just seems like it's one of those things where oh, if you happen to hear about it, and you happen to take your own initiative, then maybe you can get that opportunity to do it. But until then, and if you're that kind of person, then you never know.

Christina* stated:

I think also other identities that I have really identified with at [RMU] is, um, I guess like my socioeconomic status. I see a lot more now, because like, I'm a lot more independent financially. So, it's not really like, the burden of my parents anymore. It's like the burden of our entire family. And just like finding resources that my mom would use to find for us like food pantries, it's like, now I have to do it for myself. I think being first generation for sure. There's this like a whole other added layer to it.

Helen* said:

A lot of the scholarships that I have found were due to word of mouth of other students that had applied to it or have heard about it. . . . Because sometimes it's intimidating. . . . I don't know if this is good enough. I know there are applications I've never turned in because [I thought] this is just not good enough.

Helen went on further as she considered her identity as a high financial need student. The impact on habitus or her perception of being able to achieve the goal of studying abroad was evident. She stated:

I was never confident that like, all my financial aid was going to go through every year, like, every single year, around the time when financial aid stuff was happening. It was like, a massive breakdown in my life. I felt like it never went smoothly. I was always in the financial aid office. I mean, like, I still, I graduated in May, and I still have these outstanding financial things that are just like, I don't even know how that was wrong. . . . I think my identity definitely had a big role to play … if I had had all pieces in place, I felt reassured that I was going to take out a private loan, which is what I was ultimately really scared of, I think that it would have been a different situation like I am, maybe would have been more open to going to a different country, then more open to kind of facing those other obstacles that ended up coming up.

Janae* commented:

And my age, because I mean, at this point in time, you know, when you're over the age of, I would say, 21 years old, I mean, your family's a lot less inclined to help you

financially because they figure you're an adult now, and you've got to kind of figure it out by yourself, or, you know, I'm, even though my family pressured me to go to higher education, it was kind of under the assumption that I would figure it out by myself. So, I couldn't rely on anybody to help me financially to do the study abroad, which I think was the other component of the pushback was, are you going to pay $7,000 extra for something that's like, 11 days long?

Edwin*and Jasmin both described feeling psychologically unsafe on campus and experiencing discrimination from classmates. Edwin stated:

I did notice like, my classes, I'd see less people like me. . . . I remember one time I was walking with a kid. And I started speaking Spanish to him. And he spoke Spanish too. And he was like, he was scared to speak Spanish back to me while we're walking. . . . I just kind of kept to myself and then just did work study, school, and stuff like that. Made a couple friends and just went to the rec center. I did notice it's just more White people at the school compared to my school and like, classes I'd see. Even fewer Mexicans or people of color in general. It was frightening at first, but I was just trying to adjust the best I could.

Jasmin* pondered the idea of being psychologically unsafe on campus further, and asked herself: "If it is hard to be a student of color on an American campus, what might it be like abroad?" Additionally, she shared:

If you don't have like, an advocate from that, like, the unknown is so scary, because like, even if the place that you grew up with, and like, you always have these like, cops and you know, discrimination, if you're at the store, and somebody, you know, yells a slur at you or you, you're, you're in your classes, and you don't even feel included, then how do you expect to go out into different countries and then feel excluded. . . . I feel like you have to break those barriers first and kind of establish that here before studying abroad even sounds appealing, because even if you want to study abroad, it's so scary, and it seems so far and removed away from you. . . . If you're from an underrepresented

community, then you have to, like, think about other things that other people don't have to think about.

Janae and Nina mentioned their socioeconomic status in relation to their peers who did not have the same financial constraints as they did. Peers in general did not have the same economic struggles as participants in the study. Janae discussed the stress of having faculty make assumptions about her capacity to flex, not bearing in mind that she was working full time. **Janae*** explained:

> It's hard overhearing conversations when you're marching home from campus to go work and you hear younger people talking about, "Oh, yeah, my parents sent me money." And I mean, good for them. I'm glad that there are people in this world who don't have to suffer and struggle. And I'm glad that my sister has not, and will not have to suffer and struggle, but, why not me? Why can't it be a little easier?
>
> I feel like the work–school balance is sometimes difficult. Sometimes, there's an assumption with professors who themselves went to school and maybe had things paid for or had a lot of financial assistance or didn't have to work while they were in school, [is a similar experience to] most of their students. So, they assign things and have expectations according to their own experience. I have friends in the [College of Agriculture] who are also adult students and work full time. . . . We're in four or five classes, and everybody assumes that you go home and do homework the rest of the day, when you're not on campus all day long. And that's certainly not true or that you only work, you know, 10–20 hours a week, and we work like 35–40 hours a week.

Nina* remarked:

> I have friends whose parents helped them out and I'm kind of always the one that's trying to figure out how to pay my own rent. I'm like, "Oh, I can't go out with you guys this weekend because I need to save money." . . . So, I feel like that's a big part of my experience here just because I kind of have to base my activities on it and stuff like that.

5.3.vi Summary of Theme 3: Habitus and Navigating Intersecting Identities

Habitus refers to the ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions people acquire because of exposure and life (Dumais, 2002). Not having a financial safety net influenced students' confidence that they could go abroad. Faculty made assumptions that students had similar lived experiences as their own, simply not being aware of students who were working to put themselves through school and did not have a financial safety net to rely on. Many respondents stated they felt alone in their experience. Students recalled experiencing racism and discrimination at home (i.e., on campus), which also deterred them from feeling like they would be safe studying abroad.

5.3.vii Theme 4: Converting Hardship Into Economic Capital

Christina*, a student who did not study abroad, questioned whether or not she should sacrifice her mental health for money. It is important for study abroad advisors and faculty administrators to understand students may feel embarrassed about bringing up their financial situations; the space in which they are asked to disclose extremely sensitive information cannot be taken lightly. Christina discussed how she was asked to disclose whether or not she needed financial aid or scholarships, but it was in the presence of other students. She shared:

> It's just really hard, because the applications tend to be very lengthy. . . . There was a lot of struggles within myself, because I'm in like, scholarship applications. I really have to almost sell my struggles, so I can get money, which is exhausting. Which sucks. I don't want to have to tell everyone exactly what I'm going through in order to get funding. But at this point, that's one of the only things that you can do. So, if you really want to go, you need to sacrifice a little bit of your mental health in order to like, talk about everything that you're going through.

So, I had to find a loophole through my honors program . . . but that also presented a lot of hardship, because being an honors student, it's not very diverse. So, off the bat, I was one of two other people of color in that room, which is intimidating, because everyone else is able to fund their program and I'm over here scrambling for scholarships. . . . It was only me and another female who were asking questions, and it was uncomfortable. So, there's a lot of stigmas that I sometimes don't want to break through, just because I don't want to, like, put myself in an uncomfortable situation.

5.3.viii Summary of Theme 4: Converting Hardship Into Economic Capital

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, this emerging theme was a surprise and expanded my view on the education abroad experience for historically marginalized students. During the interviews, I did not explicitly ask students if they had considered leveraging their hardship experiences as children (and in some cases, their current lived experience), to get scholarships or additional funding for study abroad. This revelation began to unfold when I was speaking with students who did study abroad. The ones who had converted hardship into economic capital had learned how to "tell their story" in powerful ways, which enabled them to obtain financial support. This will be discussed further in the following section of Chapter 5, section 5.3.viii.

In Christina's case, she was adamantly against "selling her struggles" for money. During our interview, she became very emotional when retelling this story. Her testimony was a significant revelation and challenged me to rethink how study abroad scholarship applications are assessed. Christina is likely not alone in feeling this way – it is an important finding to be amplified across the education abroad community, as this topic is not prevalent in existing study abroad literature. Study abroad administrators, faculty, and advisors must be equipped to create a psychology safe environment for students to be vulnerable and share intimate details. The

findings from this particular interview impacted the implications for study abroad professionals in Chapter 7.

5.4 Findings From Study Abroad Students

In this section of this chapter, I discuss the four emerging themes from the perspective of students who applied and studied abroad. Identical to the previous section for students who applied to study abroad but withdrew before taking part, each subsection is headed by one of the four themes with a discussion section after each theme.

5.4.i Theme 1: Institutional Barriers and Detractors

As first-generation college students, Karen, Jennifer, Mack, and Spencer described having to learn how to navigate college on their own. Additionally, intersectional identities such as race, socioeconomic status, and being an older undergraduate student impacted their experience (Willis, 2016).

Karen shared:

I wasn't really informed of the opportunities of going abroad. I felt, in part, that it was on me for not asking or reaching out. But in a Predominantly White Institution, it can be intimidating and hard to do that. . . . I'm a person of color. Every time I'm on campus, I feel like I hardly see any other people that look like me.

  I guess it can be intimidating, but I did that, you know, I've made it. . . . The small town that I come from, no one really goes to a 4-year university. . . . We go to a community college. . . . We have a lot of dropouts. . . . So, I feel like it could be intimidating to be at a Predominantly White Institution.

Jennifer commented:

I think [first-generation college student] is the most pressing [barrier] because a lot of other students have resources that I maybe didn't have when I came into college. I had to

do a lot without my parents. Our college advisor had to explain the whole college process where I came in. I feel like I've had to do a lot of things on my own versus other people, [who] have connections to their parents or something because they have a higher education. . . . As a person of color, too, there's not a lot of diversity on campus. So, I always tend to move towards people who look like me and find those people in that community.

Mack stated:

The [first-generation college student] part hasn't caused me any logistic issues. Everyone is nice to me; [I'm] not mistreated or treated differently. But I do think, being first generation, I didn't get the baseline training that some of these other kids do, on how to learn how to study and how to be on top of your work . . . and that puts me at a small disadvantage because I must figure it all out . . . and maybe I'm figuring it all wrong. So that's a mental thing.

The nontraditional age is a self-esteem thing. I'm excited to be done with school, start working, and be around people my age again. . . . I've kind of been on pause since 25, and 25, I was still trying to pretend I was 20. So, on some level, I'm 10 years older than these kids and still having the same lifestyle as them and I'm kind of over it . . . but I haven't received any grief logistically with the university or with other students about my age, they're just mental things.

Spencer said:

I never saw [going to a university] as an option. I really had no idea what to expect when I first got to college, and I didn't know how anything worked. . . . I think a lot [about] other kids whose parents [attended university;] they had a better idea of what was happening. As an older student, I had a hard time adjusting; everyone around me seemed young. So, it's kind of hard to fit in at first, because they all seem like little kids.

The program options students had for study abroad were particularly important and played a key role in whether they opted to go abroad. For example, Taylor talked about having to choose between two options to study abroad: an expensive program at the London School of Economics and a less expensive program in Eastern Europe. However, as a woman who identified as being African American, she had concerns about racism based on negative experiences her brothers had with police in Eastern Europe.

Taylor stated:

> I kind of only had two options of places to go, which wasn't very nice. . . . I wanted to make sure that if I did study abroad, I was able to apply the credits to my undergrad [degree program]; otherwise, it was just too expensive for me to just go. . . . They only had two programs for economics and one of them was at the London School of Economics, which is so expensive. It's a great school, but I could not afford it. So, I ended up choosing [Prague University of Economics and Business, Central and East European Studies Program], but that one also presented different negatives. . . . I'm not sure how many African Americans visit Eastern Europe and feel comfortable. . . . [There were] reservations within my family, especially because there is political unrest as well [in the region].

5.4.ii Summary of Theme 1: Institutional Barriers and Detractors

In the aforementioned passages, participants described a number of institutional barriers and detractors to studying abroad. Some of these barriers were more nuanced, such as feelings of intimidation and uncertainty of knowing how to navigate a new environment, which had an effect on a student's self-esteem. The unwritten rules or information about study abroad, scholarships, and other related factors, are things advisors and faculty may take for granted.

5.4.iii Theme 2: Capital Enablement and Support

Students talked specifically about faculty support and advisors who enabled them to study abroad. They also talked about the peer influence of former study abroad students and how important it was to connect with students from similar backgrounds. This observation underscored the point that representation matters.

Gretchen shared:

If it wasn't for my advisor [in my precollege program], I wouldn't have been at the university. I feel like I would have started off at a community college, because I wouldn't have thought that a 4 year was for me. But thanks to that program, I [thought], 4 years for me and I can do it.

In high school, I joined Upward Bound and they introduced me to the college process. . . . I began to learn about opportunities you have while in college, like studying abroad. In my mind, I had the idea [that], when I go to college, I want to study abroad as much as I can. I want to make sure I travel the world.

I went on the first generation abroad for global experience in Costa Rica. I had a lot of support while I was abroad . . . since the program is hosted within TRIO House, I feel like I've known them. I basically grew up with them throughout high school; they were my advisors, resources that I could look up to.

I feel like, thanks to the TRIO House, it has a lot of support systems for first-generation students. I'm a Pell Grant recipient . . . if you qualify for them . . . since I am from a low-income background, I qualified. And thankfully, I did receive it. I can't. I'm pretty sure it's Pell Grant, or community for excellence. I know how no worries are one or both. I just know I received the full scholarship to go abroad.

If it wasn't for Upward Bound, I wouldn't be here in my 4th year at [RMU] getting ready to graduate. . . . If I could do up or down all over again, I would 100% would.

Jennifer stated:

It was my decision [to study abroad]. My parents weren't huge supporters of the vision. The people who would come in and talk about their experiences, before I went into college and while I went into college, they started exploring those opportunities more. So, I'd go to like, sessions to learn about the session about the study abroad itself. . . . My final deciding factor was when I went to the information session about studying abroad. The students talked about the experience they had there.

Carlos commented:

The study abroad opportunity presented itself at [RMU] through with them being able to say, "Hey, here you go." And so, you can ask anybody in [RMU], anyone in the program at [RMU] that has been involved. And they just, it's something that they really want to encourage people to be able to see this hemisphere of the world and to kind of open people's opportunities to seeing what's available and what's out there. And so, that it was through that. And so, it was that [RMU] and Lincoln [host institution in New Zealand] have had a great relationship. And that opened the opportunity and then knowing that that's what was going to be accomplished and knowing that relationship is so solidified.

[At RMU,] there is an area where it's adult learners and veteran services, student services, and so that's why I would frequent, you know, to be able to have access to computers, printing, things like that. And you're also with like-minded individuals, or I'm sorry, you're with individuals who came from a similar background. And so being an adult learner, and/or veteran, that you're in that mix. And so, people just kind of know that you have one of those attributes about you? And so, yeah, I think that it's more the age and the veteran, I think that defines me more so than anything.

5.4.iv Summary of Theme 2: Capital Enablement and Support

Study abroad programs that are built into a major can be particularly important and impactful in widening access to study abroad for historically underrepresented students who may lack the appropriate capital to know/research other program options. The aforementioned

example from Carlos illustrates this idea. Additionally, faculty on the program had already established the course transfer credit and tuition, which created an optimal situation. This initial groundwork also fostered a greater sense of belonging for Carlos.

Gretchen embodied the concept of " stackable" historically underrepresented group support from high school into college and then into study abroad. In high school, Gretchen participated in an upward bound program that was designed to widen access for historically underrepresented students, primarily students coming from low socioeconomic backgrounds, first-generation college students, and students of color. When Gretchen arrived on campus, she connected with the TRIO program, which is a U.S. outreach and student services program designed to identify and provide services for individuals from marginalized backgrounds. These forms of stackable social and cultural capitals were converted into economic capital - scholarships and (free) access to university programs that supported Gretchen's persistence towards graduation.

5.4.v Theme 3: Habitus and Navigating Intersecting Identities

Yolanda expressed concern about entering a new environment. She wondered if she would be psychologically and physically safe. Becky noted being a woman in a predominantly male environment was difficult. Carlos talked about his experience as a White-presenting Latino man who grew up in a working-class, single-parent household and was the first in his family to attend college. Additionally, Carlos served in the U.S. Armed Forces for 20 years and was an undergraduate student in his 40s. In the passage below, Yolanda responded to my question around which dimensions of her social identities (i.e., high financial need, person of color, first-

generation college student, and nontraditional aged students) were most relevant to her at RMU, and how (if at all) did her identities have an impact on her study abroad application experience.

Yolanda shared:

I would say being a woman of color and also being a [first-generation college student]. Not only a first-generation college student, when I got my bachelor's to be a first-generation graduate student, within my family on both sides of my family, probably are the most salient because they, they speak to a couple of things. One, I think they, they speak to, for me as a woman of color, I think that like, systemic oppression that people face like, in some ways there, it wasn't meant for me to be in higher education, I think systemically, it's like, that feels like an achievement to be able to do that.

[As] a first-generation college student, while you can have familial support in the sense of encouragement, you really get a sense of how generational experience gives advantage to people, when you don't have anyone in your family that you can ask, "How do I do this application?" "What does this mean?" "Tell me how this works." "What's the best move here for me to make?" You're doing that all by yourself, because you don't have anyone else in your family that's ever done that before.

As a first-generation student, and also coming from a working-class family, I was not on a 2-week vacation; it was an expensive opportunity that I was excited to get right on how to take student loans to do. I have to make the most of my time there, because I'm not paying for a vacation. I'm paying to learn about the culture and the environment, and better Spanish and all of these things. So, I think that that first generation, it was kind of a combination of both the saliency of being a person of color and being somewhat comfortable and familiar with some of the cultural components and appreciating the different ones. And then, as a first generation, it was like, "This cost a lot of money."

I want to get the most out of this and I have a lot of questions to ask to make sure I'm understanding everything to the best that I can. So, both things where I think even though I don't consciously say because I'm a first-generation student, I'm going to ask this question. It's like, it's just my mindset, like, I've got to do this to be able to get

through to understand what it is that you know, is expected of me. I think that's a lot with being a first generation and a person of color. What is expected of me in this environment, what is expected of me because I want to, I want to learn and grow from it. I also want to be safe in this situation and if I don't know, then I risk not being safe – literally emotionally and mostly physically.

Becky commented:

Being a woman, I felt like people react differently to your presence. I noticed that I was a lot more fearful of society in general. . . . Going out at night and certain situations in my engineering classes, most of them are majority male. I had a couple of classes where I was the only female, and they wouldn't be nice to me, wouldn't really include me in anything, which was really frustrating.

Carlos said:

I don't look the part . . . that people would see; they don't even know me. They tend to forget some of the things that lend to resiliency and being able to do those things. . . . My age probably sticks out the most as far as my identity, because that's what people see. They see the gray hair and all that kind of stuff. I think my age is based on the fact that people think that I'm a professor at a university as opposed to a student. So, I tried to make sure to look the part, like having the backpack on and not wearing khakis and a polo shirt.

5.4.vi Summary Theme 3: Habitus and Navigating Intersecting Identities

In the aforementioned passages, students talked about their experiences or intersectional experiences being a person of color and a first-generation college student. Historically underrepresented groups are focused on achieving their goal, which is obtaining their college degree. Studying abroad is not just a nice thing to have; it is also a strategic decision for academic and professional advancement. Yolanda's statement drives home the importance of

clearly demonstrating the value proposition for study abroad. Advisors and program administrators need to clearly articulate this value when marketing programs to prospective students. These passages also underscore the importance of coaching first-generation college students to ask the right questions to enable them to become successful in studying abroad.

5.4.vii Theme 4: Converting Hardship Into Economic Capital

During interviews, I uncovered evidence that some students who studied abroad learned how to discuss hardships they experienced growing up—and, in some cases, their present-day economic situation—in applications and scholarship essays. This conversion of hardship into economic capital has not been discussed in study abroad literature to my knowledge and represents an opportunity for the field to explore. In Chapter 6, I will discuss this theme further as an area for future research.

Gretchen said:

They did ask [about] the price range of the trip, and I [said] $3,000. [The family said,] "You guys paid out of pocket." [I replied,] "No thankfully, I got the full ride scholarship." I don't think I really expanded on if it wasn't for that scholarship, I wouldn't be here. I do remember [the host family] saying, "You got the scholarship; you must be very intelligent." I don't think I really got to say, "I'm low income, and that's why I got the scholarship."

Mack stated:

Like my whole life story sometimes is kind of like, a lot for individuals to hear. So, I get to swing that like a battle ax. So, that was kind of cool. Applying for first-generation scholarships, or like, I got good responses, just telling my story. So, that was like, a good thing, so I applied for a Gilman Scholarship, and I was able to get that. And that was awesome.

I spent a lot of time thinking about these things, about these identity things that are somehow going to turn into money for me. And like, so that was a very interesting process. Yeah, it's nice being able to tell those stories and get paid for them.

Malik shared:

I had gone through adversity in my life and lived on very low finances, but it provided a pathway for me that I'm so grateful for, because it differentiated me [from other students]. For the first time, I felt like my story wanted to be heard and I could talk about it on applications, interviews, and [with the] coordinator . . . and that was transformative, because it allowed me to get into different scholarships for Semester at Sea.

It takes some courage to even let people—even [university administrators]— know that you're a first-generation student, a person of color, or someone who has high financial need. That, in itself, is the hardest part. . . . If you just tell your story and the reality of the adversity that you've confronted, it opens up so many doors. I feel like once you go into college, you want to hide [your background], because you don't want to stick out like a sore thumb, and you don't want to be demeaned by any other people.

I was taught to tell my story in collegiate programs I attended throughout high school. It really helped me leverage my disadvantages as advantages. . . . I was able to speak about [my hardship] and advisors would reach out; they really cared for me.

Spencer commented:

The scholarships really surprised my family and my friends. . . . I think they thought I was lucky, because they also didn't know that it was the thing. . . . Once I figured out you could write essays to get money, I got the Critical Language Scholarship. . . . All I had to do was write, and I could make more money in a year from writing an essay [than working]. . . . That just blew my mind.

5.4.viii Summary of Theme 4: Converting Hardship Into Economic Capital

The Costa Rican host family asked Gretchen how much the trip was, and when Gretchen replied and said she had received a full-ride scholarship (i.e., all costs were paid for), her host family assumed it was merit based. Gretchen did not tell them it was based on financial need. Mack felt empowered to tell his story. Once he realized he could get paid for telling a story, he continued to refine and iterate on it. He leveraged his experience to gain access to the Gilman Scholarship and then parlayed that experience into more prestigious scholarships. Malik demonstrated gratitude in his narrative, affirming for the first time that he felt validated for persevering through tremendous hardships. Pre-college programs gave him tools of preparation in the competence and practice in telling a story in a compelling way that resonated with advisors and opened doors. Spencer talked about how both he and his family were blown away at the opportunity to gain access to study abroad and other spaces that had previously been prohibitive due to financial barriers by simply writing an essay. Spencer also learned the stackability of scholarships and how one scholarship could open the door to additional scholarships later.

5.5 Participant Reactions to Global Pandemic

As previously noted in Chapter 1 Introduction and Chapter 4 Methodology, I began conducting interviews during the fall and winter of 2020–2021. Although I had initially planned to conduct face to face interviews and focus groups, I had to adapt my methodology to an online format. After conducting the first set of interviews, it became clear I needed to address the rapidly evolving landscape of the COVID-19 global pandemic. In December 2020, I submitted an amendment to my initial Internal Review Board (IRB) proposal, focusing on the effects of the

pandemic and anticipated effects of study abroad for historically underrepresented students. (see Appendix J).

The following section includes excerpts from the second round of interviews, which focused on the effects of the global pandemic, calls for racial and social justice, and the aftermath of the January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol. The passages are grouped by the themes outlined at the beginning of this chapter: Theme 1: Habitus and Navigating Intersecting Identities, Theme 2: Institutional Barriers and Detractors, and Theme 3: Capital Enablement and Support. Theme 4: Converting Hardship into Economic Capital was uncovered during the coding and data analysis process – after the interviews had been completed. Therefore, this theme was not a factor in the second round of interviews and is not discussed in this section.

5.5.i Theme 1: Habitus and Navigating Intersecting Identities

Christina* shared:

I see it going both ways—idealistic people push through [and] use this as an incentive to go after what they want and push down barriers and obstacles. [For example:] reevaluating programs, application processes, everything that goes into education abroad, and creating a space where students feel comfortable, prepared, supported during the application processes, and especially like once they're there, and when they come back.

At the same time, I see it going the other way, where people just get so drained. There's just so much you can do to continuously fight the system, departments, and [sometimes,] certain individuals. I think that's kind of where I see it going . . . because a lot of these underrepresented students have so much more going on than just school.

Karen stated:

For people like me, who are people of color, first gen, and low income, you don't really see them going abroad and with COVID, you will see them less. [Not because there are fewer] opportunities, but there are limited programs that don't apply to financial aid or

interest or whatever it might be. . . . [For me], coming from a Mexican background and having already had COVID in my family, [there is hesitancy not to] travel for safety reasons and our strict culture does not allow that.

Indhira commented:

I think there was already that hesitancy to go abroad and now, considering what happened with the kids who went for Spring 2020, they missed out on future study abroad opportunities. Some of them are stuck outside the U.S., and I think they just created more fear—not just from the student's perspective, but the parent perspective. Even more so now, they're not going to want their kids to go abroad, and then the students won't want to go abroad, either.

5.5.ii Summary of Theme 1: Habitus and Intersecting Identities

Christina, Karen, and Indhira all commented on perceived hesitancy and doubt that students from historically marginalized communities would be eager to study abroad in a COVID or post-COVID era. The time period in which these interviews took place – early spring 2021 – factors into the students' predictions.

5.5.iii Theme 2: Institutional Barriers and Detractors

The global pandemic highlighted social inequalities in our society. An acute concern – having a financial safety net (or lack thereof) – was mentioned several times as a potential barrier or detractor.

Janae* said:

I feel like a lot of students of color might be [thinking], "Okay, do I study abroad and risk getting sick and not being able to work when I get back?" "Can I even afford this?" "Can I afford the extra loans?" I feel like a lot of young people of color have this [internal battle], "Is it a necessity? Or is it selfish for me to pursue higher education, let alone do

all of these embellishments, like studying abroad or an internship?" Maybe they do as minimal as possible to get the job done, because they don't want to be in debt after they graduate, or [have trouble] finding employment in their field of study.

Charlie stated:

I'm not sure a lot of people are prepared for this to be an ongoing thing. This could ultimately impact our ability to travel abroad, which naturally will tax people who are from more impoverished communities, which often very much correlates with minority communities. I think it could end up being a more difficult process for a lot of people like me to study abroad in the future, due to all these different variables. [Although] I am optimistic [having lived through this past year] that people will be [driven to] make study abroad attainable, I still think it will be more difficult than it is now.

Jennifer commented:

My family was impacted by the pandemic, because both my mom and dad had their hours decreased at work, which reduced their income. . . . Connecting to student participation in study abroad, this would obviously affect it pretty drastically, because if students can't fund the program themselves, then they're not going to be able to go. I feel like underrepresented students in the abroad programs usually have trouble funding the program in general, and considering how COVID has impacted people's jobs, I think that's the biggest impact.

Ricky said:

It's going to be hard to get more people to [study abroad], especially marginalized people who don't have as much disposable income . . . they have to worry about rent and living expenses, not just tuition. I think that it's a challenge for a lot of people of color to study abroad, especially, it's almost intimidating. I wasn't as intimidated, mainly because I am always surrounded by White people in [my state], but I'd imagine it's pretty damn intimidating for people of color to study abroad.

5.5.iv Summary of Theme 2: Institutional Barriers and Detractors

As the students discussed potential detractors and barriers to study abroad in a post-COVID environment, a theme that repeatedly came up was the financial impact (or perceived impact) of study abroad on a student's family.

5.5.v Theme 3: Capital Enablement and Support

In the second round of interviews, I asked the students to describe the impact of the pandemic and calls for social justice, and whether or not they believed the events would influence future study abroad participation of historically marginalized students.

Alyssa* said:

Although it is kind of mind blowing, I feel like it's a good thing, especially in the sense of allowing people to understand and to really digest what's going on, and to make themselves more informed . . . especially in the summer of 2020, there's just so many countries who were behind the Black Lives Matter movement. I think that students would be interested in traveling to these places.

Taylor stated:

For some reason and for so long, we've allowed some entity of power to justify and tell us that we don't deserve this access to power. . . . I'm trying to find ways to diminish these systems of oppression and empower people to find access to what they want to do—in this case, students from marginalized backgrounds, to access to study abroad.

Charlie commented:

I think it's encouraging because in some really big capital cities, there were protests and I mean, it's not isolated. . . . International crowds recognize and want to say something about it, which is really nice to see. I think students of color would appreciate that and definitely look to traveling, or doing education abroad, at least within those countries.

In the [people of color] community, we're more cognizant of the fact that code switching

is a thing, right? Everyone does it in their own way. . . . Hopefully with [changes in] the

culture and social justice, people will be [able to be] who they are and be able to express

that in multiple, different contexts. . . . Maybe that will help people want to study abroad

more and to see that it's not that rich, White person thing.

5.5.vi Summary of Theme 3: Capital Enablement and Support

When I asked the students if calls for social justice and subsequent protests around the

world would impact study abroad, students reported mixed reactions. While some were unsure

whether it would cause a barrier (increased concern for personal safety as an historical

marginalized person), others – including Alyssa, Taylor, and Charlie – believed that students

would feel encouraged and empowered to study abroad, in response to the global reaction to

Black Lives Matter and calls for social justice.

5.5.vii Summary of Participant Reactions to the Global Pandemic

The period of time in which I conducted the interviews – November 2020 – April 2021,

necessitated an amendment to my original IRB proposal, to capture sentiments and predictions

around the future of study abroad for students from historically marginalized communities. As

mentioned in Chapter 4, Methodology, I had to adapt my data collection procedures from in-

person to on-line. In late 2020, RMU was still operating on a virtual-only schedule and the

students reported feeling "zoom fatigue" and mental and emotional exhaustion. The full impact

of COVID and Black Lives Matter on study abroad is still being examined at the time of this

publication.

A clear take away from the interviews is the student's concerns around the potential

financial impact of study abroad on their families. If something were to go wrong (e.g., an

emergency abroad) and students suddenly needed to travel back home, many of the students I interviewed felt that would have a negative financial impact on their families. A key takeaway – financial concerns about study abroad for historically marginalized students is not just about the program fee and incidentals – students voiced deep concerns around not having a financial safety net. Additionally, I heard students compare themselves with other students who appeared to have been in a situation where significantly more disposable income was available.

At the time of finishing this dissertation (spring/summer 2023), U.S. study abroad numbers had begun to rebound. According to Open Doors, in 2020/21, just 14,549 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit (Institute of International Education, 2022a). This represented a 91 percent decline from the previous year. The downward trend began to reverse in the summer of 2021, with a reported 525% increase in study abroad participation (Institute of International Education, 2022a). In 2022, 83% of institutions anticipated increased study abroad numbers for 2022-23 (Alliance for International Exchange, 2022)

5.6 Implications of Findings from Participant Interviews

In this section, I share insights and advice from participant interviews, both from students who studied abroad and students who applied to study abroad but withdrew before taking part in an international sojourn. These insights are grouped under the themes discussed earlier in this chapter: Theme 1: Institutional barriers and detractors; Theme 2: Capital enablement and support; and Theme 3: Habitus and navigating intersecting identities. Theme 4: Conversion of hardship into economic capital was completely unexpected. I did not explicitly ask questions surrounding this theme to the participants however, I discuss implications for future research regarding Theme 4 in Chapter 6.

During the interview process, one of the questions I posed to the participants was: "What advice would you offer prospective study abroad students from similar backgrounds to your own?" I intentionally asked them this question because it directly connected to critical race theory (CRT), which centers and honors the lived experiences and stories of historically marginalized communities (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Every participant responded enthusiastically to this question, regardless of whether they had studied abroad or not. All of the students I spoke to felt very strongly about paying it forward by encouraging their friends, family, and communities to consider studying abroad. They were all enthusiastic and felt a sense of responsibility to share the knowledge of the resources and experiences they had gained by going through the application process.

The research question for this study was: **Are there institutional barriers or enablers that support or hinder participation abroad for students from historically marginalized communities?** As previously described in Chapter 4, the first order of data analysis involved *a priori* coding, which uses codes based on a theoretical framework (Saldaña, 2016). During the second round of coding, I began with a word frequency search and ran a series of queries to identify relationships and patterns in the data. Finally, I was able to compare the first-order and second-order codes to identify emerging themes, which follow in the section below. Although discussed earlier in Chapter 5, Theme 4: Converting Hardship into Economic Capital, a completely unexpected finding. Although this theme is not presented in the following section. In the final chapter of this thesis, I offer recommendations for policy and practice in education abroad, based on participants' responses and data collected throughout this study.

5.6.i Theme 1: Institutional Barriers and Detractors

In the excerpts below, students discuss how barriers and detractors can take the form of individual or institutional policies. The first two comments are from Jasmin and Simone, who were accepted to study abroad programs but withdrew before taking part. The final comments are from Charlie, who did study abroad.

Jasmin* stated:

A lot of things that come easy to your peers are exhausting for you. When it comes to financial need, some people just do not have a job all throughout college. There is always a disconnect and it is exhausting. Sometimes it is really tiring, and it is frustrating. Some things do not come as easy to me, like being away from my family for a long time. Or even sitting down and writing like a long essay. . . . I need to think about it more because English is my second language.

Simone* commented:

I loved that I had a support system, but I wish there were more from the school. My family and friends were really supportive about everything, especially when I decided not to do it [and withdrew from the study abroad program].

I feel like no one at [Rocky Mountain University, RMU] took an interest in what I actually wanted or was supportive of my decisions, like the financial advisor. I did not feel great, like talking to them. I wish RMU had more support systems to offer, especially when you are talking about something so sensitive, like financials.

Charlie said:

The biggest thing that comes up for a lot of people is the price tag. I try to convince people to study abroad. I talk about my experiences, I try to convince other students like, "Hey, you should take this risk" and a lot of times the price tag is what comes up. It scares people away from applying for scholarships. [I tell students] you can go to the Ed

Abroad office, they will help you, and apply for as much as you can, because you never know what can happen. I got more money than I was expecting as a Gilman Scholar [a U.S. State Department funded competitive national study abroad scholarship]. I did not think that was possible. Always go for things that you do not think are possible.

Be honest with your family, because that is another major issue. . . . I have done a lot of [speaking on study abroad alumni panels] with the Community of Excellence [a living–learning community at RMU for historically marginalized communities, including first generation, high financial need, and students of color, and a lot of people, especially Latinos, have concerns about family.

All of the students above spoke of finances as a barrier, but the passages also illustrate the need to inquire further (beyond "finances" as a reason why someone did not study abroad) because there are additional considerations. In each instance, the students connected an institutional system or individual (study abroad office, financial aid advisor). This speaks volumes to the need for these offices (and staff) to be aware of the connection students are making.

5.6.ii Theme 2: Capital Enablement and Support

In the responses below, Simone and Christina, two students who did not study abroad, spoke candidly about the ways in which advisors could have supported them. Advice to prospective students from those who went abroad, identified individuals and support structures (e.g., program type, academic department) that enabled them to go abroad.

Simone* said:

I think if I had talked to advisors, a year in advance, and really pushed for the fundraising thing, I could have ended up doing it. The biggest advice is to like, think ahead and really start early.

Christina* commented:

The [study abroad] programs were about becoming global citizens and how to interact with different cultures. . . . Honestly, I've been interacting with different cultures my entire life. The only reason I want to go to Europe is because I have never been. As a low-income, first-generation student, I saw this as my only opportunity to do it, but I was scared that I was not good enough to be accepted into the program. . . . I guarantee, you are good enough. Sometimes, you just need someone to say, Okay, just change the grammar" [getting support with writing an essay], and then you're good.

The four statements below are from students who studied abroad: Alison, Jennifer, Malik, and Gretchen.

Alison commented:

Do not shy away from an immersion experience, because it may be slightly more affordable; it may still accomplish what you want, which is to experience another country and culture. For certain students, it might be more feasible than, you know, many months abroad. For somebody who is working full time like me, I was able to work with my employer and have enough vacation time, and then have support.

Jennifer said:

There are scholarships, you just have to apply for them early and convincingly. [Family concerns] might be something that is common in first generation homes. Tell them the specifics, if there is an itinerary [for the program], send your parents the schedule.

Malik shared:

There are so many resources at your university that you might not be aware of, all you gotta do is just start reaching out. [For example,] I never saw myself as a strong writer. But RMU has a writing center, you could go in there as many times as you want for free, and they will review and help you write the essays. That was a big help. I was surprised

people were willing to give me their time and attention. A lot of the people at the Study Abroad Office, they would have hour-long meetings with me that surprised me.

Gretchen said:

My best friend went with me on this trip, and I encouraged her to do it. So, it was neat to go abroad together and made me feel less homesick in a way. So that was neat.

The general theme lifted up in these passages is encouragement to prospective study abroad students. Additionally, tactical advice such as using the writing center, negotiating for time off with an employer (if applicable), starting the process early and applying for scholarships, is similar to advice often rendered by study abroad offices. Curiously, several students who studied abroad attributed their success to "luck." Statements such as, "I was lucky" to be able to study abroad were often followed by statements of gratitude - wanting to "give back" and encourage younger family members, friends, and people in their community to study abroad. In the final chapter, I will offer recommendations for policy and practice to the international education community, which are derived from my interviews.

5.6.iii Theme 3: Habitus and Navigating Intersecting Identities

In the statements below, students spoke about their intersecting identities and impact on navigating the study abroad process. The centering of "counter-stories" aligns with the framework of Critical Race Theory and amplifies the visibility of students from historically marginalized communities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The first passage is from Alyssa, who had been accepted to a study abroad program but withdrew before taking part in the experience. She emphasized the importance of not being afraid to ask questions and to continue pushing to make the dream of study abroad a reality, no matter what obstacles

are in your way. She further goes on to share how she plans to impart what she has learned with her siblings and family members.

> **Alyssa*** stated:
>
> Do not let anybody tell you it is impossible. . . . If I had not continued to ask questions or find someone who could provide me with more information and lead me to someone else who could give me a yes, or more opportunities, and, you know, be able to achieve what I want. Find out whatever I need to study abroad, not aggressive, but assertive in that way, and really advocating for yourself. I am continuing to do that.
>
> Never, ever letting anybody, especially on a campus that is predominantly White, tell you no, because of your identities, you are still a person, you're someone who matters, and you want to travel and go abroad. . . . That's something that should be honored and valued. I am sharing this knowledge with my siblings so that they can do the same thing. Feel comfortable and empowered to find opportunities for themselves. It really empowers me to be a woman of color because it is so important to have representation not just now, but just in the future.

In the passages below, students who studied abroad acknowledged potential obstacles – cost, fear of the unknown. The students also celebrated assets – the ability to navigate dominant identity spaces successfully – and the transferability of those skills in the study abroad space.

> **Becky** shared:
>
> Do it, it is 100% worth the cost, and there are ways of saving up. There are a lot of really amazing programs you can apply for, grants and stuff like that . . . even if it brings you down to the last $10 in your bank account, experience is worth it, because it changes you as a human. It changes your views on the world. There is so much more of yourself to discover, and your identity and who you are and the world.

> **Charlie** commented:

More access and more awareness. . . . If you are not first gen [first in your family to attend college] or you come from a wealthy background, it is easier to see all your friends doing study abroad trips and ask for advice. But if you are a first gen, and you are surrounded by other people who are first gen or have financial needs, it is harder to get advice and find resources you can use.

Indhira said:

Specifically, for those who identify as first generation, a woman of color, reach out and ask questions; do not be afraid, because there are many opportunities. I was really afraid of rejection or getting my hopes up and not getting anything out of it. But as soon as you reach out, you become aware of opportunities of which you do not know. So just do not be afraid and like, go for it. There is always someone that will genuinely want to help you.

Malik stated:

[Being] uncomfortable fuels growth and courage. As a person of color, we do not have the option to blend in with everybody else. We are constantly, in a way, always uncomfortable at a Predominantly White Institution. We already have the ability, if we like, and its advice that will stand as if you change your mindset to being uncomfortable and grow from that.

Ricky shared:

You gotta be able to experience things with which you are not comfortable. Getting past that barrier is the most important thing. Once you are there, you are there, and you are going to get comfortable or get acquainted with other people. Even if you are not happy with the destination at first, like I was, struck by culture shock, you have to make yourself uncomfortable in order to grow as a person. That is the whole reason I studied abroad, was to be more uncomfortable. I think, for people that are hesitant to study abroad, it is the best experience you could have, because you do have a support system,

when you are studying abroad. To me, there is no downside of doing that. And look for
scholarships early.

The recurring message from all of the students – regardless of whether they studied abroad – is
that potential study abroad students from historically marginalized backgrounds already possess
the wherewithal to navigate new environments, as they have already demonstrated the ability to
move across different spaces (e.g., college admissions, residential life, academic classroom) on
their home campus.

5.7 Summary of Implications from Participant Interviews

In this section, excerpts from participant interviews have been used —both students who
studied abroad and students who withdrew before taking part in a study abroad program—in the
context of offering advice for prospective study abroad students. The feedback provided insights
into how students navigated their intersecting identities, barriers and detractors, and support they
received, whether or not they studied abroad.

References to intersectional identities—notably, among first-generation college
students—highlighted how enablement, or lack thereof, was a critical factor in serving as a
catalyst or barrier to go abroad. During the interviews, I asked participants if they would offer
advice to prospective study abroad students from similar demographic backgrounds of their own.
They shared wisdom the international education community can learn from. This advice is
reflected in the aforementioned guiding questions and tactical recommendations. In the final
chapter of this thesis, recommendations for the education abroad community will be presented.

The participant responses highlighted in this chapter are examples of counternarratives,
which is central to Critical Race Theory (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The students often

referenced their intersecting identities and ways in which they'd learned to navigate spaces that favored dominant identities. Social capital in the form of peer-to-peer networks was another recurring theme. This information can be helpful for international education program administrators in planning and executing outreach initiatives to historically marginalized communities. Social networks – (i.e., if you are a first-generation college student, surrounded by other first-generation students), can impact awareness of study abroad opportunities. If a student is unsure how to start the process, this can become paralyzing.

Capital enablement – individuals (advisors, family members) and institutions (programs, policies) played key roles in a student studying abroad. Additional time is needed to give families an opportunity to better understand the study abroad opportunity. This time has a domino effect on scholarships; if a student is waiting to get approval before applying, they may miss deadlines, especially scholarship deadlines that fall before a program application is due.

Presenting students' counternarratives and centering intersectionality, disrupts deficit thinking and preconceived notions about students from historically underrepresented communities. Advisors cannot make assumptions about which identities are most salient for a student. For example, one of the participants named his racial and gender identity (i.e., a biracial Black man) as his most salient identity, both at home and abroad in India. He also identified as high financial need, but this identity was not as salient as his race and gender.

Another element that came through in the student shares was the experience of being a person of color at a Predominantly White Institution. These students have developed the skills necessary to negotiate and navigate through difficult circumstances. Additional advice rendered from students - the importance of getting comfortable being adaptable and flexible, seeing

tactical support, authoring essays for applications and scholarships. Finally, the students resoundingly implored that it is Ok to ask questions and to ask for help.

5.8 Chapter Summary

All of the seven students who did not study abroad cited at least two or more instances of encountering barriers trying to study abroad. Students who did study abroad also cited barriers as obstacles (e.g., institutional policies, specific individuals or departments that deterred them from study abroad). However, there was a distinction between students who studied abroad and students who did not, in spite of encountering barriers. Students who went abroad participated in pre-college programs for historically underrepresented students and learned how to tell their stories in convincing ways to obtain scholarship dollars. Additionally, these students described feeling empowered and gaining confidence upon receiving positive feedback from faculty and funding sources.

According to Bourdieu (1977), social capital is determined by the value of tangible resources (e.g., property) and intangible resources (e.g., people). In a higher education setting, the habits and cultural capitals that a student brings can provide an advantage if the capital is valued by administrators and faculty. In turn, students from privileged backgrounds can successfully negotiate the study abroad application process.

At RMU, there are numerous spaces that students must successfully move through (e.g., academic classrooms, student accommodations, study abroad office, financial aid office) to successfully gain access to study abroad. The insider information or tools needed to successfully navigate these spaces may require students from historically underrepresented communities

acquire or possess new forms of capital. With this lens, I was able to identify a theme that emerged from interviews with students who had participated in pre-college programs, prior to entering RMU. In these programs, they learned how to tell their story in convincing ways to gain access to financial capital and entry into the institution. These students later leveraged these learnings into gaining access into other fields required for study abroad (e.g., the study abroad office, academic classrooms, and financial aid office). By the time they reached the decision to study abroad, they jumped through numerous hoops, only to encounter another opportunity that was not originally designed with historically marginalized students in mind.

The conversion of hardship into economic capital was not on my radar going into this research, and this finding caught me completely by surprise. It was not derived from a question I asked in the interview; rather, it appeared through several rounds of coding. Five out of twenty-two of the students interviewed in this study spoke about how they had learned how to write about their life hardships and were rewarded with scholarship dollars or admission into a program based on their stories. The majority of these students (i.e., 4 out of 5) viewed this factor positively; they felt empowered to tell their story and felt the financial reward was a testament to their strength in overcoming adversity. They learned how to translate the cultural capitals acquired through their lived experiences as children from historically marginalized backgrounds, into language that appealed to administrators, teachers, faculty and others with authority to grant study abroad funding (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). This can further be explained by Lareau and Weininger (2003), who posit that, "cultural capital includes adaptive cultural and social competencies such as familiarity with relevant institutional contexts, processes, and expectations,

possession of relevant intellectual and social skills (e.g. 'cultural knowledge' and 'vocabulary'), and a more 'strategic conception of agency. (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014, pp. 194).

Conversely, Christina opted not to convert hardship into economic capital and did not study abroad. She described it as, "selling my struggles" and cited the emotional toll on her mental health as one of the reasons why she opted not to disclose painful memories. Advisors and faculty must acknowledge it takes courage for students to share their stories. Faculty and advisors are equipped to manage difficult conversations, but they should also know how to create a safety container that empowers students to present their full, authentic selves. Additionally, they should be able to draw lived experiences from students in a way that is empowering and not exploitive. In Chapter 6, I discuss the impact of covid19, study limitations, and implications for future research.

CHAPTER 6: IMPACT OF COVID19, STUDY LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of the study was to examine factors that influenced study abroad participation of students from historically marginalized communities. The time frame after a student has applied to study abroad has not been fully researched in previous studies; therefore, this study helped fill that gap in the collective knowledge of the education abroad community. Findings from this study can inform best practices that positively influence study abroad participation and identify potential institutional barriers that negatively impact participation of historically marginalized communities.

In this chapter, I will discuss the timing of COVID-19 on my research project, which necessitated an adjustment to data collection (all virtual instead of in-person) and the impact the global pandemic and calls for racial justice had on the participants and myself as a graduate student, working full time with school-aged children at home. Although the pandemic posed limitations on the study, the results yielded critical information (see Chapter 5, Findings and Discussion) and practical advice for the international education community (see Chapter 7, Recommendations for Policy and Practice, Reflections, and Gratitude).

6.1 Impact of COVID-19 and Study Limitations

The COVID-19 global pandemic had a tremendous impact on education abroad and also affected this study. I conducted interviews via Zoom because in-person interviews were not an option. Occasionally, connectivity issues interfered with the flow of the interviews. Additionally, several students missed their appointments because of confusion with time zone differences. As I started the interview process, it became very clear to me that I needed to include the context of

the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racial injustice into this project. I went back to IRB and submitted an amendment to go back to the original 22 interviewees and ask them a series of follow-up questions specifically related to the pandemic and racial injustice.

Participant recruitment was conducted via email. The email drafted and the accompanying letter was approved by IRB and was sent by the director of the Education Abroad office as per IRB protocol. I was a stranger; the students had never seen or heard of me before and I was not a staff or faculty member at the institution. Furthermore, I am not, nor have I ever been, an RMU employee. None of the participants had met me nor heard of me prior to receiving an email from the director of study abroad inviting them to participate in the study. This distance between myself, the institution, and participants may have also impacted participant recruitment.

I used a variety of electronic tools to schedule and conduct the interviews. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, I was unable to conduct interviews in person, nor was I able to physically visit classes, attend campus group meetings, go to living–learning communities, or go to other campus-sponsored academic or cocurricular space that supported the historically underrepresented groups in this study in order to seek prospective participants. During the time of my data collection (interviews from November 2020 – April 2021), videoconferencing fatigue or "zoom fatigue" had become prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bullock, Colvin, & Jackson, 2022).

In between the time of conducting the first round of interviews and the second set of interviews, a vaccine for COVID-19 became available in the United States. Conflicting messages on social media led to confusion and pseudoscientific health therapies (Bolsen & Palm, 2021). Additionally, the vaccine rollout was highly politicized and contributed to a hesitancy for the

general public to accept the vaccine (Bolsen & Palm, 2021) This was the social and political context in which I began conducting interviews.

During the second round of interviews, I asked participants pointed questions around the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racial injustice. I asked if they had personally been affected or their families. I asked about what impact, if any, they foresaw the pandemic—both current context and postpandemic—having on the participation of underrepresented students in study abroad. Most students reported the pandemic had impacted them to a certain degree, from quickly transitioning to online learning, to increased housing and food insecurity because of hourly employment being terminated or cut back, to supporting family and loved ones as they experienced economic hardship or health setbacks due to contracting the COVID-19 virus.

6.2 Restatement of Research Questions and Implications for Future Research

The overarching research question was: Are there institutional barriers or enablers that support or hinder participation abroad for students from historically marginalized communities? During interviews with the participants, I found institutional policy and key institutional stakeholders (e.g., financial aid officers), played a critical role in enabling or creating barriers for a student from study abroad. A repeated theme I heard from the students was that assumptions had been made about them by faculty and advisors (Solórzano et al., 2000). The recommendations for policy and practice, guiding questions, and tactical recommendations in Chapter 7, are based on data gathered from the interviews.

The context of the study took place at a Predominantly White Institution and the majority of the participants self-identified as racially minoritized or multiracial. Future research in this

area could include a similar study conducted at a minority serving institution or Historically Black College and University (HBCU).

Research Subquestion 1 was: To what extent do social, cultural, or other capitals enable or hinder study abroad participation for students from historically marginalized communities? In response to this research question, students described the various forms of cultural and social capitals that provided support for them to pursue study abroad and made them feel welcome at the university. As discussed in Chapter 2, the four Fs (i.e., family, finances, fear, and faculty) framework has historically been attributed as being the primary reason for equity gaps in education abroad participation by students from marginalized communities (Contreras et al., 2017; Sweeney, 2014). In contrast to this historical narrative, many participants specifically named family members, advisors, and other key institutional stakeholders as enablers. This finding indicates the need for future research.

Key enablement factors for students who did study abroad were institutional structures, including (a) programs designed to build social and cultural capitals for students from historically marginalized groups (e.g., TRIO, Upward Bound), (b) study abroad programs designed for historically marginalized groups (e.g., the first-generation program mentioned in Chapter 5), and (c) study abroad programs that are integrated into a student's major (e.g New Zealand program mentioned in Chapter 5). Additional studies have found that students are more likely to persist to graduation if they embody forms of capital that are valued by the institution (Berger, 2000). For future research, a study that compares the application conversion rates of historically marginalized students on (a) a program designed specifically for students from a marginalized community and (b) a program that is not designed for students from a marginalized

community could yield beneficial information to inform future study abroad programs and advising.

Research Subquestion 2 was: To what extent, if any, does a student's ability to navigate their marginalized identities influence study abroad participation? As first discussed in Chapter 3 and later exemplified in Chapter 5, students from historically marginalized communities must move in and through spaces that were not traditionally designed with them in mind. These spaces, or *fields,* have their own rules, or *doxa*, regarding how someone is supposed to behave or carry themselves in a particular space (Bourdieu, 1986).

The students' intersecting identities, including race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, first-generation college student status, and/or mature-aged student status, were constantly present. In the interviews, students of color often described frustrations and fears they had encountered while navigating a Predominantly White Institution. Students with previous exposure to precollege programs such as TRIO and Upward Bound noted they had been taught critical skills, which enhanced their social capital and ability to navigate the campus.

One of the most surprising findings was learning that some students had learned how to tell their hardship story in convincing ways that enabled them to gain access to study abroad scholarships. This factor was not something that I had thought about prior to conducting this study and was a surprising finding. Although I was unable to find converting hardship into economic capital (or similar themes) in my study abroad literature review, this topic has been researched in higher education (Megginson, 2021; Taylor, 2022; Trubrek, 2007). The practice of asking students to disclose personal experiences or trauma, can pose potential privacy violations, as the individuals who compose a scholarship selection committee are usually not trained

psychologists (Taylor, 2022). Asking students to "sell their struggles" as Christina*, a biracial

woman and Pell grant recipient who decided not to study abroad pointed out, can rob a student of

their dignity (Trubeck, 2007).

> Trauma-drama essays also assume that the trauma has been overcome, but for some
> students, painful experiences are still harrowing. The research on trauma and writing
> suggests that writing about, say, a parent's drug abuse may cause the writer either to be
> retraumatized or to dissimulate. Counseling students to be 'candid and personal' while
> tackling topics they consider embarrassing or disturbing gravely misunderstands how we
> process trauma. (Trubeck, 2007, para 11).

As an area of future research, a study abroad study could explicitly ask participants who (a)

studied abroad and (b) students who were accepted on a study abroad program but withdrew

before taking part: "Have you shared your personal story of overcoming hardship (e.g., economic

or forms of discrimination) as part of a scholarship application for study abroad? Why or why

not?" Explicitly calling out this factor and inviting participants to further explain why they opted

to share their hardship story, or why they chose not to do so, could be very impactful.

6.3 Chapter Summary

The global impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic is something that cannot be

ignored, diminished, overshadowed, or diluted. Beginning in March 2020, coinciding when I

submitted my initial IRB protocol, national and local governments began to implement

shutdowns to stop the spread of COVID-19 (CDC Museum Covid19 Timeline, n.d.). The

population for the study came from the years 2018, 2019, and 2020. Because of the pandemic,

students who studied abroad in Spring 2020 had to return to the United States before their

program had been completed. There were no students who studied abroad in the Summer 2020

nor in the Fall 2020 at RMU. As a result, the participant pool had a higher proportion of students

who were about to graduate or who had already graduated, which likely factored into the response rate. Fortunately, I did reach saturation (the point at which gathering new data no longer yields new insights), so response rate did not negatively impact the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In Chapter 7, the final chapter of my dissertation, I will share personal reflections of my Ph.D. journey including the impact of COVID19, amplify advice from participants to prospective study abroad students and recommendations to the education abroad community, which were informed by the data, and extend gratitude to the 22 students who participated in the study.

CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE, REFLECTIONS, GRATITUDE AND CALL TO ACTION

The final chapter of my dissertation includes a series of recommendations to the international education community, based on my doctoral research. It is my sincere hope that the guiding questions and recommendations serve a catalyst for self-reflection, reevaluation of the status quo, and create a sense of ownership and accountability in widening access to education abroad opportunities for historically marginalized communities.

In this chapter, I have also situated personal reflections as a doctoral student and learnings from the interviews. Embarking on a Ph.D. journey pre-COVID, conducting interviews during the height of the global pandemic and on the heels of international protests against racial injustice and the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, had a direct impact on the participants and myself, as a graduate student working full time and raising two school-aged children. In spite of the obstacles, I gave grown tremendously and feel deeply grateful for the experience, guidance from my thesis advisors, support from my classmates and friends, and above all, my family. My hope is that international educators feel inspired by the words and advice from students who participated in this project, just as much as I have.

7.1 Recommendations For Policy and Practice

The following section contains guiding questions for education abroad professionals, administrators, and faculty to consider when conceptualizing and reimagining study abroad programs, policies, and procedures. The guiding questions below are not written in a hierarchical order but meant to provide high level framing for discussion and consideration. The tactical recommendations are concrete action steps. Based on the findings of this doctoral research, the

guiding questions and tactical recommendations were derived directly from student interviews along with synthesis of the findings.

7.1.i Guiding Questions

- When students ask advisors about safety and advisors respond, are they speaking from their own perspectives and contexts or do they stop and realize: (a) their own identities and how they framed and shaped their experience; (b) historically marginalized students may have a different, and potentially negative, experience; and (c) recognize intersectionality and nuance amongst marginalized students?
- Are staff or faculty equipped to manage and counsel students when they talk about difficult circumstances?
- Why is the onus on historically marginalized students to navigate, assimilate, and learn the unwritten rules? Can advisors, administrators, and faculty be active allies?
- When people feel a sense of belonging, what can they accomplish? What does it take for individuals and institutions to cultivate spaces of inclusion and belonging?
- Are you approaching your work through an inclusive excellence framework?
- What financial literacy assumptions (of students) are being made by advisors and faculty?
- How are you actively fostering spaces of inclusion and belonging in your office? How are you building the diversity, equity, and inclusion acumen of your staff? What assumptions are you making?
- Does your faculty program leader training and program staff onboarding include appreciative advising techniques?
- How are advisors selling study abroad? Is there a focus on the return on investment? There are a number of ways to demonstrate the value proposition of study abroad. including examples and quotes from alumni (e.g., "I got this job internship or opportunity because of my study abroad experience.")

- Advisors can ask themselves: "What can I do to create a welcoming space for people to feel comfortable? What are requests for folks not feeling comfortable in the first place? What role do I have to play in creating spaces of inclusion and belonging?

7.1.ii Tactical Recommendations

Below are a series of tactical action steps and advice:

- Revise the student intake form. Ask students how many hours/weeks they are working and: "What concerns, if any, do you have about study abroad?"
- Include housing and food insecurity literature, posters, and information in your office and on the website.
- Ask if the student is receiving financial aid. If yes, ask them: What has your experience been like with financial aid and other institutional offices? Positive or negative?
- Advisors should take into consideration a student's mental health and privacy in disclosing sensitive information in an open-office environment, group settings, classroom presentation, and predeparture orientation.
- Create a pipeline with precollege programs (e.g., TRIO, Upward Bound, university-specific programs). Incorporate their best practices and engage with students early on.
- Align program and scholarship deadlines with institutional financial aid cycle.
- Create a prepaid study abroad scholarship similar to the Arizona State University model (ASU Global Education Planning Scholarship, n.d.).
- Have designated advocates in key business areas to support historically marginalized students.
- Advisors can put visible prompts in the office and Zoom backgrounds to encourage students to ask questions. Ask: "Is there anything I should know about you but didn't ask?"
- Create a financial planning map with dates and timelines.

- Use real-life examples of alumni who have paid for a study abroad program, including their budget timeline example: I applied for _____ in _____ and received _____. The cost of the program was _____.
- Advisors need to remember students may be the only or the first in their family or friend group to go abroad; do not make assumptions about what they know and do not make assumptions about their abilities.
- A deterrent from studying abroad is concern for family members. What if they got the COVID-19 infection? Students would not want to be so far away from them. Additionally, the cost of flying back to the United States in case of emergency could be cost prohibitive for some students.

7.1.iii Activation

How can educators lower the barrier of entry into education abroad for historically marginalized populations? First, educators need to start with an honest assessment of who the program is intended to serve (Ledesma & Serrano, 2019) by asking:

- Will it be accessible for all students?
- What is the recruitment plan and outreach plan? How are essential program requirements communicated?
- When are application, scholarship, program, and miscellaneous fees due, and how does this synchronize with financial aid disbursement? Are you penalizing students who do not have quick access to capital?
- Will the program create a welcoming and affirming space for all students as they navigate shifting social identities in a cross-cultural environment? How will students be guided through emotionally challenging learning experiences, and who will guide them?
- What is the current context in the host country? How does anti-Black and anti-Asian racism present? What are cultural attitudes toward sexual orientation and gender identity in the host country?

- Does your study abroad menu reflect various price points, academic opportunities, and destinations?
- How easy or difficult is it to obtain products for all hair and skin types in the host country?
- How difficult will it be to bring or obtain prescription medication in the host country?

7.2 Reflections on my Ph.D. Journey

Many people talk about their PhD as a journey and arduous process, sometimes with joy, tears, and pain. When I started this research, no one had any idea that a global pandemic was about to descend. I started my PhD in 2018 and was a 2nd-year student in the spring of 2020, getting ready to head out to Brescia, Italy. On February 29, 2020, the decision was made to cancel the in-person seminar, which began a flurry of flight and accommodation cancellations. I also planned to conduct a site visit for work so had to deal with all of that correspondence and cancellations. To be honest, I felt a little sorry for myself; however, the bigger piece was fear of the unknown of what was happening. Italy had started to close down several weeks earlier than the United States and I was concerned for friends and colleagues who were there and students who were studying abroad in Italy. About 2 weeks after the decision was made not to run the session in Brescia, my children's school closed. At first, school districts said they were going to close for 2 weeks but it became noticeably clear the school would stay closed for much longer. I remember the fear of running to the grocery store in a panic and being met by empty shelves; it was something I had never seen before. There was lots of misinformation swirling around and a profound sense of fear for my children and my mother.

Work changed dramatically during this time. We had hundreds and hundreds of students who were abroad who had to be brought back to the United States. Countries were closing their

borders and it was becoming increasingly difficult to get flights out of the country. Parents and loved ones were calling and writing to the office. Students were concerned about lost academic credits, struggling to get refunds for their program and related expenses, and coping with the overwhelming disappointment of having their study abroad plans cut short. It was becoming increasingly clear that the fiscal impact of the pandemic was going to wreak havoc on the field of international education.

About a month after the pandemic began, study abroad providers began to let go of staff. It was frightening to see and was something I had never experienced before in the higher education field. During September 11, 2001, I was living in Venezuela working as an English teacher and my work was not adversely affected by the devastating event. During the 2008 fiscal crisis, I was working at NAFSA: Association of International Educators. Although the association's finances were negatively impacted, I felt confident that my job would remain secure. This time was quite different. Psychologically living through a time where, at any moment, I thought my job was in jeopardy, was absolutely terrifying. My company at the time was larger than most organizations and we were able to financially weather the pandemic better than many of our competitors; however, we were still not immune to the fiscal impact of the pandemic. Everyone was finding their feet after the initial shock of bringing students back home and trying to figure out how the company could generate revenue. We wondered: How can we stay relevant? How can we keep our jobs? How can we keep contributing to the field of international education?

On May 26, 2020, the world was rocked again. George Floyd, an African American man in Minneapolis, Minnesota, was murdered by a White police officer, who had placed his knee on

George Floyd's neck for over 9 minutes (Toosi, Layous, & Reevy, 2021). This brutal footage was captured by bystanders and live streamed across the globe. Public outrage was immediate. Across the United States and around the world, protesters sprung to action. There were calls against police brutality, mass incarceration, and racial injustice, and calls for addressing systemic inequality. No longer could the public—particularly people from historically dominant social identities and/or communities—ignore what was happening. Corporate America responded with promises and pledges to support African American causes, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). White people and individuals from historically dominant communities formed reading circles to better understand and reflect on how they have benefited from systemic racism and continued to perpetuate social inequality, both consciously and unconsciously.

When I began the interviews November 2020, the United States was going through a very contentious election, and millions of people worldwide had been affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic and a vaccine had not yet been approved. Participants were taking classes virtually or had recently graduated and were seeking employment. All participants shared they had been personally impacted by the pandemic (e.g., lost/reduction of wages, increased housing insecurity, health insecurity, experienced sickness and death in the family). Summer 2020 protests and calls for social justice were still fresh, and many students shared how the events affected them and their loved ones. It became immediately clear to me that I needed to conduct a second round of interviews, focusing on the context of the pandemic.

In spite of these obstacles, I continued pressing forward. The human-centered support I received from my thesis supervisors, Professors Elspeth Jones and Ly Tran, continued to fuel

me, even during challenging times. The Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation family (i.e., students, academic faculty, and administration team) became a vibrant academic community, resulting in the development of deep friendships. Our Zoom seminars during the height of the pandemic kept the academic community together. My own family (i.e., my children, my siblings, and most of all my mother) continue to be a tremendous support and grounding.

During the interview process, I learned a great deal about my subjects and about myself. Something that became noticeably clear to me was how researchers have a tremendous responsibility in cultivating a psychologically safe space when asking participants to disclose and recount painful memories. I cannot underscore enough the importance of treating each story as a gift and the responsibility the researcher has to first take care of the participants when conducting the interviews by showing respect and honoring the stories. I am excited to share the result of 4 years of research investigating an important and timely topic (i.e., widening access to education abroad opportunities for historically marginalized communities).

7.3 Reflections During Interviews

Below are some of the self-reflections and personal take aways from the participant interviews:

- The COVID-19 global pandemic and calls for social justice played a central part in the data collection process of interviewing Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color (BIPOC) students during a global pandemic. When I initially crafted the interview questions, COVID-19 was primarily an outbreak in Wuhan, China. I naively thought it would stay there.
- During the time of authoring this dissertation, there were numerous changes to my professional and personal life (i.e., cross-country move, divorce, job change, industry

change) along with the stress of navigating the pandemic as a single parent with two young, school-aged children.

- The timing of data collection had an impact on the project. Interviews were conducted before and after the COVID-19 vaccine became available (November 2020–April 2021). The murder of George Floyd in May 2020, a summer of protests during the onset of the pandemic, and the January 6 U.S. Capitol insurrection were a lot to manage emotionally.

- I noticed that during my interviews, I engaged in *code switching*, the practice of selecting or altering linguistic elements to contextualize talk in interaction (Nilep, 2006), created a strong rapport with the participants. I also began to recognize some of the participants were reliving trauma when they spoke about barriers preventing them from going abroad. This issue was not something I had thought about before and was a humbling reminder that everyone has blind spots, even people who work in the diversity, equity, and inclusion space.

- I laughed a lot during the interviews and gave positive affirmations to the students, especially when they shared personal details.

- As previously mentioned in Chapter 5, students often attributed their success to luck. They said, "I was lucky," "I am fortunate," "I have to give back," and "I was surprised." All of the students—both students who studied abroad and students who withdrew before taking part in the study abroad experience—expressed gratitude.

- Historically marginalized communities are repeatedly asked to retell their trauma for a reward or benefit (e.g., scholarship, access into a program or opportunity). The more compelling the story, the greater the chance of receiving funding. This factor was revealed in interviews with students who went abroad and with students who did not. One student in particular made the haunting statement, "I didn't want to sell my struggles" for scholarship money.

- These students and their families were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic and economic downturn in its aftermath. Some got sick with the virus and others lost family members and close friends. Many had plans disrupted or

canceled; they had dreams put on hold and other sacrifices made. Engaging in discussions with me may have drawn out feelings of sadness.

- During the first interview, several students started crying. They did not expect to cry, and I wonder if some of them decided not to return for another interview because the first one was so triggering. I felt an ethical responsibility not to go back to these students and ask for another conversation; they had been through enough. The most honorable thing I could do was share their stories in a respectful and meaningful way. Sharing their stories was a gift that I had to repay by honoring appropriately.

7.4 Gratitude and Call to Action

Inclusive pedagogy invites people to consider how the social identities of all stakeholders—students, administrators, faculty, and families—influence how education abroad programs are designed, marketed, and administered. Humans learn which group(s) they identify with (e.g., race, sexual orientation, age, religion, immigration status) from the earliest stages of life onward. These identities are reinforced by parents, family, neighbors, schools, houses of worship, institutions, and the media. How identities present in one context might differ from another country and context. This difference can be particularly jarring to students, regardless of their identities.

Faculty members and study abroad administrators are often not prepared or trained to engage in conversations related to social identities and social justice. I have full faith and confidence that educators can do this, we just have to have the will to hold ourselves, our colleagues, and the field of education abroad accountable. I use science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) as an example (Serrano, 2020). In 2017, I was attending a local study abroad conference in the northeastern United States. A group of study abroad administrators were talking about widening access and I started a discussion about increasing access to students

of color. The record stopped, there was an awkward silence, and then one of the White women in the group changed the focus of the conversation to STEM. Immediately, I could feel tension relief in the room and the chatter picked up.

That moment is when I had the epiphany and I looked at all the White folks rallying around STEM. Do not get me wrong; I believe in supporting students in the STEM field and other academic disciplines that have been historically underrepresented. However, when examining Open Doors data over the past few years, STEM has become the largest academic population to study abroad (Institute of International Education, 2022b). I wondered how this happened and began to examine how STEM moved from the periphery of academic representation to the forefront in study abroad. The answer was intentionality and focused resources to combat the issue of underrepresentation. There are designated programs, national scholarships, faculty program director incentives, and entire conferences dedicated to promoting STEM and unpacking barriers to triangulate issues and offer solutions. If international education professionals and policy makers can get excited and support widening access to education abroad for STEM students, they can certainly garner this same level of energy and resources for students whose social identities have been historically marginalized in education abroad.

Colleagues from historically dominant groups may be wondering, "How can I (as a White person) effectively advise students of color?" Or "How can I, as a White person, make study abroad more attractive to students of color? What advice would you offer?" I hear these statements a lot, and my advice (which stems from experience directing study abroad programs and leading diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives) starts with the tenets of active allyship:

- Starting with the self, international educators must first decenter ourselves. Let us center our energy on the students and not get preoccupied on how we are feeling.
- Do the work. We all need education for spaces and communities we are unfamiliar with.
- Start from an appreciative advising or universal program design approach, which is grounded in assets and not deficit narratives.
- Listen to students from historically marginalized communities and believe them.
- Be authentic. If you are White, you do not know what the experience is like as a person of color. That does not mean you cannot also be a respectful, empathetic, and effective advisor.
- Pay it forward. Representation matters, and this field and the international education community need more BIPOC representation in professional and leadership positions.

The international education community collectively needs to be aware of how our own identities present in global contexts and begin having these conversations long before students begin their programs. Current discourse in education abroad around historically marginalized populations tends to center around deficits. Deficit thinking places the blame of underachievement on historically marginalized populations, without considering structural inequalities. In an education abroad context, it is critical to apply an equity-minded lens around how education abroad programs are designed, marketed, and implemented on campuses and in organizations. By framing the issue from a deficit perspective, it dismisses culpability of institutions and advisors. However, once educators become aware of deficit thinking, they can redefine study abroad programs and policies from deficit-centered perspectives to an equity-minded and culturally responsive perspective from which all students will benefit.

I invite the international education community to ponder these final questions: How are you finding ways to educate and empower students to tackle these challenges and work with

each other across racial, ethnic, and cultural lines? How are you collaborating with leaders on diversity, equity, and inclusion to address these broader challenges? Who are you mentoring, who are you inviting to be on your panels, and who are you engaging in scholarship with? What are some examples of actions that other institutions may take to increase productive collaboration across campuses and/or associations?

In spite of the challenges, I remain optimistic and encouraged by the increased attention on the topic of underrepresentation in education abroad and focus on historically marginalized students in the international education community. I will forever be grateful to Alyssa, Christina, Helen, Janae, Jasmin, Jason, Simone, Alison, Becky, Carlos, Danielle, Gretchen, Indhira, Jennifer, Mack, Malik, Michael, Michelle, Ricky, Spencer, Taylor, and Charlie, who took the time to connect with me, poured their hearts out, and in some cases, shared their disappointment of not being able to study abroad. Every single student told me that the reason they wanted to participate in the study was to widen access to education abroad for students "like them." The field of international education and all future study abroad students are indebted to you. Thank you.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Protocol and Participant Consent Form

Inclusive education abroad: Examining factors that influence university student participation by underrepresented groups in the USA

Introduction and Purpose
My name is Malaika Marable Serrano. I am a graduate student and Affiliate at RMU working with Dr. XXXXX, Professor Emerita in the School/Department of Human Development and Family Studies. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study, which looks at factors that positively and/or negatively impact students' decisions to study abroad.

Procedures
If you agree to participate in my research, I will conduct an online interview with you at a time that is mutually convenient. The interview will involve questions about factors that influenced your decision to apply for a study abroad program. It should last about 45 minutes. With your permission, I will record and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you choose not to be recorded, I will take notes instead. If you agree to being recorded but feel uncomfortable or change your mind for any reason during the interview, I can stop recording at your request. Or if you don't wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time.
I expect to conduct only one interview; however, follow ups may be needed for added clarification. If so, I will contact you by email/phone to request this.

Benefits
Upon completion of the interview, you have the opportunity to be entered into a raffle for a $25 Amazon gift card. The goal of this research project is to identify factors that influence study abroad participation—both favorably and unfavorably—and propose solutions to widen access for all students. This information will be valuable for both the RMU Education Abroad office and the wider international education field.

Risks/Discomforts
There are no known risks to participating in this study. As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality could be compromised; however, we are taking precautions to minimize this risk.

Confidentiality
Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used.
To minimize the risks to confidentiality, individual data will be kept confidential. Your name and data will be kept separately in an encrypted file, on a password protected computer, and accessible only to the research team.

We will transcribe the audio recordings as soon as possible after the interview, and then destroy the recording. When the research is completed, I will save the transcriptions and other study data for possible use in future research done by myself or the research team. I will retain notes and other study data for up to 5 years, for possible use in future research after the study is over. The same measures described above will be taken to protect confidentiality of this study data. We may be asked to share the research files with the sponsor or the RMU Institutional Review Board ethics committee for auditing purposes. Your identity/record of receiving compensation (NOT your data) may be made available to RMU officials for financial audits.

Compensation
Upon completion of the interview, you have the opportunity to be entered into a raffle for a $25 Amazon gift card.

Rights
Participation in research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate in the research and whether or not you choose to answer any questions or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Questions
If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at XXX-XXX-XXXX or XXX.XXX@XXXXX.com

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the Rocky Mountain University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at: XXX-XXX-XXXX, or e-mail XXX@XXXXX.edu

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CONSENT
Do you consent for your interview to be recorded?
___Yes
___No

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your own records.

_____
Participant's Name (please print)

_____ _____
Participant's Signature   Date

Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation – RMU Director of Education Abroad

March 26, 2020

██████████ University
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
██ General Services Building
Campus Delivery ████
███████████████

Attention: IRB Office

Dear IRB:

I am aware that Malaika Serrano is a graduate student in a PhD program through Universitá Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan and is conducting a research study entitled: "Inclusive Education Abroad: Examining factors that influence university student participation by underrepresented groups in the USA". She has shared with me the details of the study. We have discussed her plans for quantitative and qualitative research with students, who have considered studying abroad but have not completed their education abroad application. I feel comfortable that the participants in this study will be adequately protected, and I give Malaika Serrano permission to conduct this study through the ████ Office of International Programs, Education Abroad unit.

I plan to first solicit student interest in this study based on the contact information we have in our database for 2018-2019 applicants. We will direct interested student to reply to Malaika Serrano so that she can email the relevant students a survey and a request for an interview.

The ████ Office of International Programs requests that the ██████ name and identifiers of its students be kept confidential in the research results. Malaika Serrano has agreed to provide my office a copy of the ████ IRB approval document before beginning recruitment.

If there are any questions, please contact my office at ████████████, cell at ███████████, or email at ███████████████████. Because we are asked to work remotely, please accept this letter without an original signature and scanned PDF.

Sincerely,

████████████
Director, Education Abroad
Office of International Programs

Appendix C: IRB Amendment

IRB Protocol 20-9994H
Amendment Submission
December 11, 2020

Title: Inclusive education abroad: Examining factors that influence university student participation by underrepresented groups in the USA

Research Question
The purpose of this study is to understand factors that influence students from underrepresented backgrounds to participate in education abroad programs. The timeframe of the investigation—after a student has been accepted to an education abroad program—has not been thoroughly explored in previous research and therefore represents a gap in our current knowledge.
RQ: How do dimensions of social capital, economic capital, and social identity influence underrepresented students' participation in an education abroad program?

Research Design and Rationale for Second Interview
My original IRB protocol was submitted in March 2020 as the first cases of COVID-19 were beginning to appear in the United States. The request for this amendment is to conduct a second interview and purposeful sampling because I have modified my methodology from mixed design to qualitative methods. The proposed changes will not increase risk to participants, will maintain confidentiality, and the data will continue to be securely stored as approved in IRB Protocol 20-9994H.

According to the Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering (JHU CSSE), to date, approximately 68.8 million people around the world have contracted COVID-19 and over 1.57 million have lost their lives. Higher education and the international education community have been greatly impacted by the pandemic. Even as early as April 2020, McKinsey and Co. issued a Public Sector Practice brief outlining three epidemiological and public health scenarios, which described mid to long implications for higher education.

Against the backdrop of COVID-19, the calls for social justice propelled by the Black Lives Matter movement, have activated millions across the United States and around the world. As a researcher, I am aware of my positionality and how the dual pandemics (i.e., COVID-19 and racial injustice) have also affected me personally and professionally. June 2020 was a watershed moment for the United States and the world, beginning with the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. Students have become more vocal in demanding that institutions not only voice support for racial and social justice, but also demonstrate how they are doing this. Education abroad offices and organizations are being asked by their leadership to do more to increase access and participation of historically underrepresented communities.

Methodology and Participant Recruitment

I have adjusted my methods from a mixed design (i.e., explanatory sequential design) to qualitative methodology to deepen understanding of the complexity of the interview responses. Participants were initially invited to participate in the study via email from XXXXX, director of education abroad at Rocky Mountain University. The initial invitation yielded a low number of respondents, but this may be due to the pandemic, Zoom fatigue, timing of the call, and/or other competing priorities.

To extend outreach to potential candidates, the Education Abroad office will send reminder emails to students in programs with greater numbers of historically underrepresented students. This form of purposeful sampling will amplify efforts to reach students who are at the center of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). After participants have been interviewed, snowball sampling may be used to further identify potential respondents who share similar characteristics (Palikas et al., 2015).

Second Interview Questions:
1. How have you or your family been impacted by the global pandemic (COVID-19)?
2. How have you or your family been impacted by the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and calls for social justice?
3. What impact, if any, do you believe the global pandemic (COVID-19) will have on underrepresented students' participation in study abroad?
4. What impact, if any, do you believe the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and calls for social justice will have on underrepresented students' participation in study abroad?

Timeline
Invite students who participated in the first interview to participate in a second interview between January 2021 – April 2021. Estimated time is 20–25 minutes.

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Appendix D: Amended Interview Questions

IRB Protocol 20-9994H
Amendment Submission
December 2020

Title: Inclusive education abroad: Examining factors that influence university student participation by underrepresented groups in the USA

Research Question
The purpose of this study is to understand factors that influence students from underrepresented backgrounds to participate in education abroad programs. The timeframe of the investigation—after a student has been accepted to a study abroad program—has not been thoroughly explored in previous research and therefore represents a gap in our current knowledge.
RQ: How do dimensions of social capital, economic capital, and social identity influence underrepresented students' participation in an education abroad program?

Research Design and Rationale for Second Interview
My original IRB Protocol was submitted in March 2020 as the first cases of COVID-19 were beginning to appear in the United States. According to the New York Times, to date, approximately 62.5 million people around the world have contracted COVID-19 and over 1.46 million have lost their lives.

Higher education and the international education industry have been greatly impacted by the pandemic. Even as early as April 2020, McKinsey and Co. issued a Public Sector Practice brief, outlining three epidemiological and public health scenarios, which described mid to long implications across the higher education industry. My own organization, WorldStrides, filed for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy in August 2020 and completed the process in October 2020.

Against the backdrop of COVID-19, the calls for social justice propelled by the Black Lives Matter movement, have activated millions across the United States and around the world. Students have become more vocal in demanding that institutions not only voice support for racial and social justice, but also demonstrate how they are doing this.

As a researcher, I am aware of my positionality and how the dual pandemics (i.e., COVID-19 and racial injustice) have also affected me personally and professionally. June 2020 was a watershed moment for the United States and world, beginning with the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. Shortly thereafter, my work as the vice president for diversity and inclusion accelerated. Our university partners have also increased their requests for support in developing their diversity, equity, and inclusion acumen. Education abroad offices are being asked by their leadership to do more to increase access and participation of historically underrepresented communities.

I have adjusted my methods from a mixed design (i.e., explanatory sequential design) to qualitative methodology.

Second Interview Questions:
1. How have you or your family been impacted by the global pandemic (COVID-19)?
2. How have you or your family been impacted by the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and calls for social justice?
3. What impact, if any, do you believe the global pandemic (COVID-19) will have on underrepresented students' participation in study abroad?
4. What impact, if any, do you believe the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and calls for social justice will have on underrepresented students' participation in study abroad?

Timeline
Invite students who participated in the first interview to participate in a second interview between January 2021 – April 2021. Estimated time is 20–25 minutes.

Participant Recruitment
Participants were initially invited to participate in the study via email from XXXXX, director of Education Abroad. The initial emails yielded a low number of respondents, but this may be due to the pandemic, Zoom fatigue, or other competing priorities. Modification to include snowball sampling is requested to increase the number of participants. Hopefully, diversifying recruitment channels will increase the number of participants.

Appendix E: Semistructured Interview Guide

Interview Questions

Two groups of students to be interviewed:

1. Students from underrepresented backgrounds who **studied abroad**.
2. Students from underrepresented backgrounds who submitted a study abroad application but withdrew (**did not study abroad**).

Interview questions for students from underrepresented backgrounds who **studied abroad**:

1. Did you travel internationally before starting university?
2. When and how did you first become aware of study abroad?
3. Who influenced your decision to apply to study abroad? Did this occur before you enrolled at RMU?
4. Did anyone or anything present a barrier or detract you from studying abroad?
5. How did your family feel about your participation in study abroad? Your friends?
6. Which study abroad program did you select? What were the deciding factors that influenced your decision?
7. What kind of support system did you have during your time abroad (e.g., other study abroad students, local students, on-site staff, host family, family and friends back home, RMU study abroad advisor)?
8. Which dimensions of your social identities (i.e., high financial need, person of color, first-generation college student, and nontraditional aged students) are most relevant or salient to you at RMU?

In what ways do you think a dimension of your social identities impact on:

   a. The decision to study abroad and your predeparture experience?
   b. Your study abroad experience?
   c. Your re-entry experiences?

9. While you were abroad, which dimensions of your social identities became most relevant or salient for you?
10. What advice would you give to students who share similar social identities but are hesitant to study abroad.
11. Is there anything else you think I should know about you or your study abroad experience?

Interview questions for students from underrepresented backgrounds who were accepted into a program but **did not study abroad**:

1. Did you travel internationally before starting university?
2. When did you first become aware of study abroad?

3. Who influenced your decision to apply to study abroad? Did this occur before you enrolled at RMU?
4. Did anyone or anything present a barrier or detract you from studying abroad?
5. How did your family feel about your participation or non-participation in study abroad? Your friends?
6. Which study abroad program did you select? What were the deciding factors that influenced your decision?
7. What factor(s) led you to withdraw from your study abroad program?
   a. How do you feel about your withdrawal decision?
   b. In what ways do you think a dimension of your social identities impact on your decision?
   c. What did you do (during the term you would have been abroad) instead?
8. Which dimensions of your social identities (i.e., high financial need, person of color, first generation college student and non-traditional aged students) are most relevant or salient to you at RMU?
9. What advice would you give to students who share similar social identities but are hesitant to study abroad.
10. Is there anything else you think I should know about you?

Appendix F: Email and Consent Form for Secondary Interviews

Email for secondary interviews

Dear _____,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in my research study. Your testimony and insights have been incredibly helpful!

If your schedule permits, I have a couple of follow up questions I would like to ask, which should take no more than 20 minutes. This second conversation will involve several questions specifically related to the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racial injustice, and the anticipated impact on underrepresented students' participation in study abroad.

During the interview, I will collect your name and other personal identifiers, which will only be seen by members of the research team. When we report and share this information, we will combine the data from all participants. Your information will always be kept confidential; your name and data will be kept separately in an encrypted file, on a password protected computer, and accessible only to the research team.

If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the RMU IRB at: XXXXX@XXXXX.edu; XXX-XXX-XXXX. Reference IRB Protocol ID: 20-9994H.

Thank you for your consideration!

All my best,
Malaika Serrano
XXXXX@XXXXX.com
XXX.XXX.XXXX

Consent form for secondary interviews (will ask for verbal consent)

Rocky Mountain University
Consent to Participate in Research – Secondary Interview
Amendment to IRB Protocol ID: 20-9994H

Title
Inclusive education abroad: Examining factors that influence university student participation by underrepresented groups in the USA

Introduction and Purpose
My name is Malaika Marable Serrano. I am a graduate student and Affiliate at Rocky Mountain University working with Dr. XXXXX, Professor Emerita in the School/Department of Human Development and Family Studies. I greatly appreciate your participation in the first interview which inspired several additional questions I would like to ask. These questions are related to the dual pandemics (i.e., COVID-19 and racial injustice) and the anticipated impact on underrepresented students' participation in study abroad.

Procedures
If you agree to participate, I will conduct an online interview with you at a time that is mutually convenient. Our follow up conversation should last no longer than 20 minutes. With your permission, I will record and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you choose not to be recorded, I will take notes instead. If you agree to being recorded but feel uncomfortable or change your mind for any reason during the interview, I can stop recording at your request. Or if you don't wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time. If a follow up is needed for added clarification, I will contact you by email/phone to request this.

Benefits
The goal of this research project is to identify factors that influence study abroad participation— both favorably and unfavorably—and propose solutions to widen access for all students. This information will be valuable for both the RMU Education Abroad office and the wider international education field.

Risks/Discomforts
There are no known risks to participating in this study. As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality could be compromised; however, we are taking precautions to minimize this risk.

Confidentiality
Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used.

To minimize the risks to confidentiality, individual data will be kept confidential. Your name and data will be kept separately in an encrypted file, on a password protected computer, and accessible only to the research team.

We will transcribe the audio recordings as soon as possible after the interview, and then destroy the recording. When the research is completed, I will save the transcriptions and other study data for possible use in future research done by myself or the research team. I will retain notes and other study data for up to 5 years, for possible use in future research after the study is over. The same measures described above will be taken to protect confidentiality of this study data. We may be asked to share the research files with the sponsor or the RMU Institutional Review Board ethics committee for auditing purposes. Your identity/record of receiving compensation (NOT your data) may be made available to RMU officials for financial audits.

Rights
Participation in research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate in the research and whether or not you choose to answer any questions or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Questions
If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at XXX-XXX-XXXX or XXXXX@XXXXX.com

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the Rocky Mountain University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at: XXX-XXX-XXXX, or e-mail XXXXX@XXXXX.edu. Reference IRB Protocol ID: 20-9994H.

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CONSENT
Do you consent for your interview to be recorded (yes or no)?

If you wish to participate in this study, please verbally agree by stating "yes." You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your own records.

Appendix G: Participant Recruitment Email

Hello! My name is Malaika Serrano, and I am a doctoral student at Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation (CHEI) at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, Italy. I also work full time for a study abroad organization, International Studies Abroad by WorldStrides as the Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion. In this capacity, I have had the privilege of working in close collaboration with the RMU Education Abroad office for many years.

For my doctoral studies, I am conducting a study to learn more about factors that influence students' decisions to study abroad. Particularly, I am curious to learn more about the experiences of underrepresented students (i.e., students of color, nontraditionally aged students, first-generation college students, and high financial need students). By learning more about the experiences of **underrepresented students who begin the study abroad process but for a variety of reasons, are unable to go abroad AND those who are able to go**, my goal is to identify factors that can widen access and increase participation for all students.

If you meet the eligibility requirements below, please consider being part of this study.
1. Self-identity with one or more of the following communities:
   a. Person of color (including multiracial)
   b. 25 years of age or older at the time of your study abroad application
   c. First-generation college student (i.e., first person in your immediate family to earn a bachelor's degree)
   d. High financial need student (i.e., Pell Grant eligible)
2. You applied to study abroad as a Rocky Mountain University student in 2018, 2019, or 2020 through the Education Abroad office.

The study will involve a 45-minute interview, which will be conducted online. Upon completion of the interview, you have the opportunity to be entered into a raffle for a $25 Amazon gift card. During the interview process, I will collect your name and other personal identifiers, which will only be seen by members of the research team. When we report and share this information, we will combine the data from all participants. Your information will always be kept confidential; your name and data will be kept separately in an encrypted file, on a password protected computer, and accessible only to the research team.

There are no known risks associated with this study and if you would like to participate, please go to (link to online study) to complete a short questionnaire to determine whether you meet the eligibility requirements for this study.

If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the RMU IRB at XXXXX@XXXXX.edu or XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,
Malaika Serrano
XXXXX@XXXXX.com
XXX.XXX.XXXX

Appendix H: Participant Interview Codebook

Name	Description
EMERGING THEMES	
Advice for Future Students	
Barriers	
Individual	Discouraged or Blocked by People
Institutional or Environmental	Unwritten Rules, Doxa, Processes
Capital Enablement	Capital Navigators (person)
	Capital Enablement (organization)
	Awareness of Opportunity
	Navigating Finances
	Social Capital of Trauma
Navigating Finances	
Education and Life Expenses	Tuition, rent, food, phone
Study Abroad Program	
Organizational Capital Enablement	
Receives support (e.g., program, Upward Bound)	Benefit from an environment or program the encourages success
Supports others	Student creates and environment that encourages others' success
Social Capital Navigator	
Creates support for others	
Family Engagement	

Name	Description
Getting support from someone	
Field	
Supports	
Individual	
Institutional or Environmental	
Global Pandemic	
Habitus and Identity Navigation	Framing how they see themselves and their perceptions of other's experiences based on their social or demographic dimensions of identity. • Confidence capacity, belief in Self (How does this compare with Capital Enablement?) Social Identity Navigation skills Habitus – reconstruction of the self in the context of study abroad programs Perception of Others (commenting on how others are treated based on identity) Others perception of them (deficit framework)
Habitus	
Others' Perception of Them	Deficit framework
Perception of Others	Commenting on how others are treated based on identity
Social Identity Navigation	
Trauma as Economic Capital	
Not Selling Trauma	Deciding not to sell their trauma, maintaining privacy
Selling Trauma	Creating Trauma as a product
FRAMEWORK	Social, Economic, and Cultural Capital; Habitus; Field; Critical Race Theory

Name	Description
Critical Race Theory	
Cultural Capital	Cultural knowledge - education, style of speech, style of dress, etc that confer social status and power. Material and symbolic goods.
Economic Capital	
Field	A way of describing a network of objective relationships connected and anchored within different species of capital. Field theory examines how individuals construct social fields, and how they are affected by such fields. Social fields are environments in which competition between individuals and between groups takes place, such as markets, academic disciplines, musical genres, etc.
Habitus	Habitus comprises socially ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions. It is the way that individuals perceive the social world around them and react to it. These dispositions are usually shared by people with similar backgrounds (such as social class, religion, nationality, ethnicity, education, and profession). The habitus is acquired through imitation (mimesis) and is the reality in which individuals are socialized, which includes their individual experience and opportunities.
Social Capital	Economic, Social, and Cultural - Areas such as knowledge, experience and social connections that can give the individual or group power to succeed within their field.
THEMES	
Access	Inductive code
Affect	Inductive code
Afford	Inductive
Anxiety	Inductive Code
Application	Inductive

Name	Description
Apply	Inductive
Attach	Inductive with synonyms commit, connection, bond, tie
Available	Inductive Code
Belong	Inductive
Busy	Inductive
Care	Inductive
Chance	Inductive
Circumstance	Inductive
Compare	Inductive
Concern	Inductive. the synonym brought up worried, relate, relatives, interest, busy
Connect	Inductive
Continue	Inductive
Cover	Inductive
Deal	Inductive
Debt	Inductive
Embarrassed	Inductive code
Emotion	Inductive Code
Excite	Inductive code
Expect	Inductive
Expensive	Inductive

Name	Description
Faculty	Inductive, also includes staff
Family	Inductive
Fear	Inductive
Financial	Inductive
Fortune	Inductive
Friends	Inductive
Fund	Inductive
Gen	Inductive code for First Gen or First Generation
Give	Inductive
Help	Inductive Code
High Financial Need	
High School	Inductive code
Home	Inductive
Interest	Inductive code
Job	Inductive
Keep	Inductive
Low Income	Inductive code
Luck	Inductive
Make	Inductive
Need	Inductive
Open	Inductive

Name	Description
Opportunity	Inductive
Parents	Inductive
People Like Me	Inductive
Possible	Inductive
Pre-College Program	Inductive, pre-college program
Reject	Inductive
Relate	Inductive
Represent	Inductive Code
Require	Inductive code
Risk	Inductive
Safe	
Safety	Inductive
Scholarship	Inductive
Stay	Inductive
Support	Inductive, includes financial and emotional.
Take	Inductive
Tell	Inductive
Worry	Inductive

Appendix I: IRB Protocol

DATE:	April 23, 2020
TO:	Cook, Alicia, Human Devlpmt & Family Studies
	Fidler, Deborah, Human Devlpmt & Family Studies, mserrano, mserrano, Other
FROM:	Felton-Noyle, Tammy, Senior IRB Coordinator, BMR,⬤⬤U IRB Exempt
PROTOCOL TITLE:	Inclusive Education Abroad: Examining factors that influence university student participation by underrepresented groups in the USA
FUNDING SOURCE	None
PROTOCOL NUMBER:	20-9994H
APPROVAL or DETERMINATION PERIOD:	April 23, 2020

NOTICE OF IRB REVIEW FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review. We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above-entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects, specifically .

Exempt studies are subject to the ethical principles articulated in The Belmont Report, found at the OHRP Website www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Exempt determinations are active for five (5) years. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may change this determination for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and may require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, we wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Please direct any questions about the IRB's actions on this project to:

IRB Office - (⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤; RICRO_IRB@mail⬤⬤⬤⬤
⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤, Senior IRB Coordinator ⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤
⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤e, Senior IRB Coordinator -⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤⬤

Initial exempt determination has been granted April 23, 2020 to recruit with the approved recruitment and consent procedures. The above-referenced research activity has been reviewed and determined to meet exempt review by the Institutional Review Board under exempt category b (2)(ii) of the 2018 Requirements. Approved documents include: Serrano Malaika Interview Questions; Letter of Cooperation # OIP-eA; Serrano Malaika Methodology; Malaika Serrano Data Management Plan 3.24.2020; Serrano Malaika Verbal Consent Form; Serrano Malaika Email to Prospective Participants.

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None

Appendix J: Modified IRB Protocol

DATE:	January 25, 2021
TO:	██████████ Human Devlpmt & Family Studies
	Fidler, Deborah, Human Devlpmt & Family Studies, mserrano, mserrano, Other
FROM:	██████████ Compliance Review Assistant Administrator, CSU IRB Exempt
PROTOCOL TITLE:	Inclusive Education Abroad: Examining factors that influence university student participation by underrepresented groups in the USA
FUNDING SOURCE	None
PROTOCOL NUMBER:	20-9994H
APPROVAL or DETERMINATION PERIOD:	December 21, 2020

NOTICE OF IRB REVIEW FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to ██████████ IRB (CSU) (FWA0000647). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above-entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects, specifically .

Exempt studies are subject to the ethical principles articulated in The Belmont Report, found at the OHRP Website www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Exempt determinations are active for five (5) years. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may change this determination for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and may require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, we wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Please direct any questions about the IRB's actions on this project to:

IRB Office - ██████████
██████████, Senior IRB Coordinator - ██████████
██████████ Senior IRB Coordinator - ██████████

██████████

Amendment 1 has been reviewed on December 21, 2020 and determined to not alter the exempt determination. This amendment includes updated procedures to conduct a second interview. The IRB has determined that the risk level remains no more than minimal. Approved documents include: Email for Secondary Interview and Verbal Consent Form Docs.