

OUTSIDE THE HARVARD BUBBLE: STUDY ABROAD MOTIVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, AND BENEFITS

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***Abstract:** The time that Harvard students spend abroad is not particularly well understood. Using Pierre Bourdieu's reproduction theory as a starting framework, this project explores the extent to which study abroad perpetuates inequality by understanding the motivations that students have for studying abroad, the experiences that they have while abroad, the benefits they accrue from their abroad experiences, and the ways that all three of these aspects of the study abroad apparatus differ between first-generation college students at Harvard and Harvard students at large. Using publicly-available written evaluations of study abroad experiences, I captured the experiences and benefits that Harvard students, generally speaking, articulate as having gained from their study abroad experiences. Additionally, through seven semi-structured interviews, I learned about the motivations for, experiences of, and benefits to studying abroad as articulated by Harvard students who are the first in their families to attend a four-year university. Ultimately, among Harvard students generally, and even more so among first-generation students, the emergent patterns do not substantiate the hypothesis of Study Abroad as a tool primarily of class reproduction, as understood by students themselves. Ultimately, further inquiry should be dedicated to understanding a greater array of Harvard subgroups and/or the function of study abroad at other institutions.*

I affirm my awareness of the standards of the Harvard College Honor Code.

Ekemini Ekpo

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Ekpo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of the first name being a large, stylized "E".

Introduction

At least in my own experience, Harvard's study abroad programs feel as though they are shrouded in mystery. This sense is exacerbated by the fact that I do not personally know many students who have studied abroad. However, I know such individuals must exist, as more than half the students at Harvard College travel abroad in some capacity during their time here.¹ Also peculiar is that even among those few "study abroaders" that I know or know of, I know little more about their experiences than that they acquired (or lost) a tan along the way. And perhaps less puzzling and more concerning is that I am not confident that I am uniquely ignorant about the goings-on about study abroad; the extent to which study abroad is understood from a student perspective² is unclear. Further, on their part, I am unaware of the extent to which administrative forces within the College have explored the study abroad apparatus themselves.

From this gap in knowledge, the following question emerges: what purpose does study abroad serve for Harvard College students? Are study abroad trips simply acculturation for the upper class? Are they legitimized voluntourism? Are they good-faith intellectual exercises? Even more interestingly, how does the purpose of study abroad vary depending on the demographic profile of the student? Do the socioeconomic differences between first-generation college students and their more affluent peers materialize as a distinctly first-generation purpose for Studying Abroad? In this investigation, I define "purpose" as students' motivations to study abroad, the experiences that they have while abroad, and the benefits they accrue from going abroad. These three aspects of "purpose" map directly onto the three chronological phases of studying abroad: pre-travel, the duration of the trip, and post-travel.

This project was conceived with reproduction theory and its influence on elite institutions in mind. As it stands, all Harvard College students are incredibly privileged. The incubator that is Harvard College provides all who call *Fair Harvard* home an incredible amount of social and cultural capital. I aim to determine if study abroad as a specific program is primarily a vehicle for the accumulation of cultural and social capital in of itself, or if rather, the program fulfills more altruistic objectives. Further, my focus on first-generation students will investigate the extent to which study abroad becomes a tool for class mobility for less-privileged students, or if

¹ Access here: <https://college.harvard.edu/academics/enrichment-programs/study-abroad>

² A "student perspective" being students who have not studied abroad, such as myself

Outside the Harvard Bubble: Student Study Abroad Motivations, Experiences, and Benefits

alternatively, study abroad becomes a mechanism through which disparities in social and cultural capital among students is widened.

Because it takes place outside of the auspices of Harvard Yard, study abroad often feels like an entity that exists outside of Harvard entirely. I do not believe that that is the case. I am hard-pressed to believe that the same cycles of inequality that enable a place like Harvard to exist in the first place are somehow absent within a project of Harvard's own making. It is in this spirit of cynicism that I took on this project.

I took a mixed-method approach in order to explore the questions articulated above. I first consulted Bourdieu's work on reproduction theory and put his theories into conversation with more contemporary sociological research on study abroad in higher education. I then acquired study abroad evaluation forms from the Office of International Education and conducted seven interviews with first-generation college students, and content-coded both sets of data. From my analysis of this data, I found that reproduction theory is not an adequate explanation for the purpose of study abroad. Finally, I considered further extensions of my research to improve its specificity and/or generalizability.

Literature Review

Each of the three phases of studying abroad speaks to varying aspects of reproduction theory as articulated by Bourdieu. In this literature review, I will first articulate the pertinent aspects of reproduction theory. Then, I will survey more recent research in the field of collegiate study abroad and explicate how each phase of the study abroad experience is in direct conversation with Bourdieu. Lastly, I will discuss two different hypotheses emergent from the literature review.

An Overview of Reproduction Theory

According to Pierre Bourdieu, "the specific role of the sociology of education" is to "endeavor to determine the contribution made by the educational system to the reproduction of the structure of power relationships and symbolic relationships between classes" (Bourdieu 2018). In articulating this definition for the sociology of education, Bourdieu implies that the role of education as an institution is to perpetuate the unequal allocation of power within society. Operationally, Bourdieu argues that power in society is accrued through the obtaining of capital.

Outside the Harvard Bubble: Student Study Abroad Motivations, Experiences, and Benefits

In further theorizations, Bourdieu defines three types of capital: economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital. Economic capital is most simply understood as financial wealth. Social capital is the mass of resources accumulated through networks of social connections, i.e. "membership in a group." Finally, cultural capital describes one's faculty with cultures that are valorized by and understood to be of the upper classes. These forms of capital do not exist independently of each other, both cultural and social capital are convertible into economic capital (Bourdieu 2002). Further, all three forms of capital exist in the context of "habitus", a "predisposed, habitual state that describes and structures society" (Andres 2016). Habitus is the taken-for-granted undercurrent of society that tends to bend towards the maintenance of status quos that perpetuate social inequality.

Study Abroad (Anti-)Motivations and Capital

Within the framework of reproduction theory, motivations to study abroad would theoretically indicate a student's understanding of study abroad as a tool for the accrual of capital. In the case of study abroad, this is typically framed as international literacy in an increasingly global economy (Swinder 2016). Additionally, Nyaupane, Paris, and Teye (2010) found that university administrations included capital-gaining objectives such as acquiring a language, increasing career opportunities, and exploring a field of study that is not available at one's home institution as goals for studying abroad. However, among students themselves, motivations to study abroad included more "altruistic" objectives such as (re)visiting ancestral homelands (Nyaupane et al. 2010), personal development, and improving friendships (Janda 2016).

In addition to there being motivations to study-abroad, there may also be factors that deter students from studying abroad, or "anti-motivations." If these anti-motivations tend to be experienced predominantly by individuals of lower socioeconomic status, then that is evidence to suggest that access to study abroad is limited to already privileged members of society and is, therefore, a tool in the reproduction of inequality. For instance, study abroad incurs its own costs, often above and beyond the existing costs of attending an institution of higher education. Further, participating in a study abroad program may preclude a student from seeking employment that would contribute to covering the costs of their education. In this example, students that enjoy a higher socioeconomic status are less-likely to have a financially-motivated aversion to studying

Outside the Harvard Bubble: Student Study Abroad Motivations, Experiences, and Benefits

abroad. A preliminary literature review suggests that study abroad programs do reflect class differences; though there is diversity in the motivations for students to study abroad, there is less diversity among the students who study abroad themselves. Black and poor students are underrepresented in study abroad programs (Schulmann 2014, Simon and Ainsworth 2012). And though the finding that “students whose families travel abroad and are more comfortable with foreign cultures” are more likely to find value in studying abroad, and therefore pursue studying abroad, is inclusive both of students who are of an economic class to facilitate frequent international travel and students from immigrant backgrounds (Simon and Ainsworth 2012), the latter group tends to lack the financial means to participate in study abroad programs.

Time Spent Abroad and Habitus

In the context of the reproduction framework, the experience of studying abroad has the capacity to contradict or confirm the taken-for-grant preconceived notions of foreign countries that exist within the habitus of American society, such as American-centrism or xenophobia. Analogous to this notion of habitus is the concept of Discourse, “with a capital ‘D’”, as a tool for making sense of “a society’s socially and culturally contested practices and values”(Gieser 2015). These Discourses are taken for granted by individuals who exist within the societies in which they are employed, and once students leave their home countries, they are forced to reconcile their previous experiences with the dominant Discourses of their host country. Gieser observed the impact of Discourses among American study abroad students in South Africa and that their experiences tended to disrupt, rather than reaffirm, their notions of their own identities relative to the greater world. Of course, there is an argument that study abroad students are self-selecting; that is students who are most open to having their habitus disrupted are the students that travel abroad. For instance, one study found that in addition to language acquisition, students with low levels of ethnocentrism and less fear of interacting with different cultures were most likely to have favorable expectations about study abroad participation. (Kim and Goldstein 2005).

Post-Travel Perks and Capital Acquisition

In the context of reproduction theory, the success of study abroad at reproducing social inequality is in its ability to transmit capital to its participants. The literature suggests that there is a transmission of capital through study abroad, but the literature is less clear on if this

Outside the Harvard Bubble: Student Study Abroad Motivations, Experiences, and Benefits

transmission of capital materializes as long-term, economically lucrative outcomes. Benefits of study abroad include the development of human and social capital (Ingraham and Peterson 2010), improved cognitive ability (Grabau 2007), language acquisition (Cubillos et al. 2009) and greater academic success (higher GPAs, increased acquisition of advanced degrees) (Posey 2003). However, the work of Stephen Schmidt and Manuel Pardo (2014) found no net difference in earnings between students who study abroad and between students who do not over the course of a 43-year study at a highly-ranked liberal arts institution in the Northeastern region of the United States.

Preliminary Hypotheses

Based on my preliminary literature review, I articulate two hypotheses regarding the Harvard study abroad case. The first is seated staunchly in reproduction theory (*reproduction hypothesis*): students seek to study abroad because they identify study abroad as a means of acquiring capital, and they go abroad and return having had their pre-existing notions reaffirmed and having gained some form of social, cultural, and/or economic capital. Further, study abroad participants at Harvard are disproportionally upper-class, as varying factors inhibit the participation of students of lower socioeconomic status. The second hypothesis is informed by contemporary research in the field and takes a more expansive view of study abroad (*expansive hypothesis*). Study abroad participants will articulate a diverse array of motivations for studying abroad. The benefits that they articulate as having gained from studying abroad will be similarly varied. Further, they will articulate shifts in their understanding their own cultures and those of other people. Lastly, study abroad participants will be socioeconomically representative of the College.

Table 1: Hypotheses Summary

	Reproduction Hypothesis	Expansive Hypothesis
<i>Motivations</i>	Acquisition of Capital	Diverse
<i>Experiences</i>	Affirmation of Habitus	Disruption of Habitus
<i>Benefits</i>	Acquisition of Capital	Diverse
<i>Accessibility</i>	Predominantly High-SES students	Socioeconomically Representative

Data and Methods

This project relies heavily on content analysis in two contexts: student interviews and public-access Study Abroad Evaluations from the Office of International Education (OIE). In the section that follows, I will describe each source in detail, as well as my method for content coding each. I conclude this section with a discussion of the limitations of this project.

Student Interviews

I conducted seven one-on-one interviews with first-generation college students at Harvard College. These interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately thirty minutes. The interviewees included both individuals who have studied abroad and since returned to Harvard College (five people), an individual who is currently studying abroad (one person) and an individual that has finished their study abroad experience but took the following semester off (one person). The study-abroad experiences included term-time (five people) and summer trips (two people), and my sample of interviewed students included sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

Solicitation of interview subjects was conducted largely through purposive sampling of first-generation students and the solicitation of volunteers. I publicized my study over student email lists, aiming to include all first-generation students in my sampling frame. To this end, I advertised the study to 2/3 of the upperclassmen house-lists, as well as the Black and Latinx community email lists, the first-generation students' email list, and the Act on a Dream-internal email list.

The questions broached in the interview centered around the motivations that interview subjects had for studying abroad, their social and academic experiences as compared to Harvard, instances of cultural immersion and/or culture shock, the benefits that students received from studying abroad and the ways that respondents interact with Harvard after having spent a semester in another country.

I relied on semi-open coding when working with the interview data. I had established a list of variables for coding among the OIE student evaluations that I used to evaluate the student interviews, particularly pertaining experiences while abroad and the benefits of having studied abroad. Additionally, I took note of various themes and patterns that emerged from the interview data that were not consistently present in the OIE student evaluations, the most notable of these

Outside the Harvard Bubble: Student Study Abroad Motivations, Experiences, and Benefits

included the motivations that students had for studying abroad and the ways that socioeconomic class and the study abroad experience interacted. I narrativized the findings from the interviews based on the most recurrent themes.

OIE Study Abroad Evaluations

My written data came from a repository of student evaluations of term-time study abroad experiences on the OIE website [<https://oie.fas.harvard.edu/student-evaluations>]. This repository is extensive and covers every geographic region of the world. The dates of these experiences vary, but generally, the student evaluations are in reference to study abroad experiences that occurred between 2010 and the present day. Each evaluation includes the program, concentration, term abroad, and program type of each student participant. Further, each evaluation discusses academic and experiential learning experiences, comments on program administration and finances, the final recommendations of each student evaluator. According to the Office of International Education, these responses are voluntary and garner response rates of between 30% and 40%. This is the most comprehensive dataset available regarding Harvard undergraduate study abroad experiences.³

I used a closed method of content coding with the OIE student evaluation forms to evaluate the experiences and benefits of study abroad. The exclusion of motivations as a point of analysis occurred after a preliminary survey of the student evaluations showed that students tended not to articulate their initial motivations for studying abroad. Further, in order to make comparisons between the results of the content coding among interviews and among OIE student evaluations more intelligible, I content-coded only the student evaluations from the countries cited as destination countries by my interviewees. After content coding, I used basic descriptive statistics to quantify the remarks of students that had studied abroad on the lines of their academic and cultural experiences, as well as the benefits they took from studying abroad.

Table 2: Research Sub-Topics and Data Sources

Sub-Topic	Data-Source
Student Motivations	Student Interviews
Student Experiences	Student Interviews, Student Evaluation Forms
Student Benefits	Student Interviews, Student Evaluation Forms

³ According to Camila Nardozzi, the Director of the Office of International Education

Limitations

The limitations of this project are four-fold, and not necessarily reconcilable due to the limited scope of this project. The first limitation is that the Student Evaluations, and to a lesser extent the Student Interviews, were devoid of student demographic information. As such, it was impossible to investigate the extent to which different patterns, such as the benefits of studying abroad or country of destination, were correlated with race, gender or class in any way. The second limitation is that both the Student Evaluations and Student Interview portions of this project are contingent on students' voluntary responses. This fact calls into question the generalizability of my results to Harvard College as a whole.⁴ The third limitation of this project is that it is a study of Harvard individually. Harvard is not a typical school and the generalizability of this project is limited perhaps only to elite, private universities, if not only to Harvard College itself. The last limitation is that this project does not follow subjects post-graduation, nor does it include non-study abroad students as subjects, and cannot make any associative or causal claims about the influence of study abroad on capital acquisition long-term.

Results

Student Interviews

Motivations to study abroad were split between factors external to Harvard and factors specific to Harvard. The predominant external-to-Harvard motivator for studying-abroad was a desire to travel. Less prevalent motivators included vocational (1,5) and academic (1,7) interests. Additionally, these motivations tended to not be rooted in their interpersonal interactions with friends and family. In lieu of personal experiences, interviewees cited media as influencing their ideas on study abroad. One interviewee (2) imagined that the Lizzie McGuire Movie was demonstrative of the study abroad experience; another (3) cited the children's TV show Madeleine as a motivator for their desire to visit France.

Among the Harvard-related motivations to study abroad, the most prevalent was a desire to take advantage of Harvard's resources. Interview subjects were intrigued by the notion of traveling internationally at low personal cost, or as one subject (4) put it, "on Harvard's dime".

⁴ A way to mitigate this limitation is for the Office of International Education to make the completion of Student Evaluations mandatory.

Outside the Harvard Bubble: Student Study Abroad Motivations, Experiences, and Benefits

Further, interview subjects described Harvard as a place that students may desire a break from (2) and “suffocating” (3). However, simultaneous to this was a sense that Harvard had too many on-campus opportunities, and that one’s time spent at Harvard was so limited that it did not make sense to leave for a whole semester. Of course, ultimately, the desire to step outside of Harvard won out. As one respondent put it, as they retold advice that they themselves had received, “I can’t believe that you can gain more from staying at Harvard than you can from a different country outside in the world” (1).

Regarding the accessibility of study abroad, interview subjects tended to affirm the accessibility of study abroad in the Harvard context, but not necessarily among study abroad students from other home institutions. A common refrain among interview subjects was that, insofar as they knew about studying abroad prior to college, they were unsure of their likelihood of participating due to cost. Most interview subjects explicitly spoke to the fact that Harvard’s uniquely generous financial aid made their study abroad experience possible. However, several also noted that Harvard was a unique case. One interviewee mentioned that weekend traveling became a point of contention, as “the vast majority of study abroad students are upper-middle class” and did not recognize the cost of their expenditures. Further, they commented that they felt more conscious of class while studying abroad than they do at Harvard (4).

Subject Two: “I think that one thing that I’ve noticed is that a lot of study abroad students are upper-middle or upper class, and that manifests of course in the things they wear, but even in how they spend money and the way they’ll talk about that, or traveling to different places on the weekends, and I think sometimes they can be out of touch with different financial concerns that people who are not of that background might have.”

Researcher: “And is that among Harvard students or among the students you met?”

Subject Two: “I think among all students, but I actually think about Harvard there might be a higher occurrence of lower-income or even middle-income students studying abroad because of our extensive financial aid, where at other universities that’s not necessarily the case.”

Academically, interviewee experiences were positive, but varying in rigor. One respondent (2) said that “academically, studying abroad was much easier than Harvard” and that “I maybe in some ways, I B.S.ed a lot of my assignments because I knew my grades would transfer as Pass-Fail”. Another (4) plainly told me that “It’s more rigorous here [at Harvard]” than their program. A third (6) told me about their experiences in a class while abroad in which the professor would fall asleep as they gave presentations. However, this respondent also noted that the point of study

Outside the Harvard Bubble: Student Study Abroad Motivations, Experiences, and Benefits

abroad is to obtain an immersive cultural experience that would be precluded by a highly rigorous workload. Other respondents spoke highly of the rigor of their study abroad program, but even when they did, spoke simultaneously about the lack of rigor in other study abroad programs. For example, one respondent (3) specifically referred to their program as “more rigorous than some of the other study abroad programs” and another respondent (5) mentioned that the rigor of their program contradicted the stereotype of studying abroad as glorified party trips.

Subject Three: “...even discussion courses, you’re forced to regurgitate what the professor’s already said when discussing things, and it’s less of a discussion and more of a ‘I’m showing you that I understand what you just said in a different way’ which is kinda frustrating when you go to a school like this one where in papers you’re allowed to create an argument and fully argue something and discuss your ideas.”

Cultural integration among interview subjects was a mixed bag. For some (1,7), cultural integration came in the form of participation in various vocationally-minded programming. For others, cultural integration occurred primarily in the classroom. For others still, cultural integration occurred through interactions with locals.

Interview subjects with salient identifications with minoritized groups had mixed experiences regarding those identities. For one respondent, the experience of being one of the very few Black people and one of few people of color in their destination-country was at times alienating (2). Interviewee five had similarly alienating experiences in their host country as a function of their identities as a queer and non-binary person. For interviewee six, the experience of returning to their country of birth, but not the country that they spent most of their formative years, was in some ways affirming, but in other ways, underwhelming as a “homecoming” trip. Perhaps most successfully, interviewee three was able to find a group of friends that they connected with immediately because of their shared identity as Black women.

Subject Five: “I think the bad part was because, I’m queer and nonbinary and all my roommates, all my closest friends here are queer and many of them are genderqueer. Um, and while, besides the one person, no one on my trip was outright transphobic or homophobic, it was still jarring because there were two other queer people on my program. Everybody else was cis. It was weird to be in a space where that isn’t the norm, I live with all queer people, I spend probably the majority of my time with queer friends, those are the people I mainly get along with, it was weird to be in a space where that wasn’t the norm. And then like occasionally, like when somebody would say some problematic things or say some othering things and be like, it’s just a whole moment where I don’t have like the safe spaces here that I’m used to having back in my university. And so that was, that was the trickier part of my social interactions.”

Outside the Harvard Bubble: Student Study Abroad Motivations, Experiences, and Benefits

The most prevalent benefit of studying abroad among interview participants was personal growth. Respondent two advised me that “slowing down can be a good thing, I think that I’m happier when I have less on my plate.” This further translated to a greater inclination to preserve friendships and prioritize physical and mental well-being after returning to Harvard’s campus. One respondent (7) said that “even though this semester has definitely been my busiest semester schedule-wise, I don’t think I’ve ever been less stressed.”

Other benefits included academic skills and increased career clarity. One interview respondent (5) cited “hard-skills” in the field of research as one of the greatest benefits of their study abroad experience. Further, three interview respondents cited their study abroad experiences as bringing clarity to their post-college plans (1,5,7). The first discussed the ways in which their time spent in the Middle East gave them perspective on the global health and human rights issues that they hope to tackle after college. The second gained valuable experience in the field of sustainable development. The third gained career perspective insofar as they realized multiple vocational fields that they were uninterested in pursuing after college.

Student Evaluations

Most students (88%) cited that their cultural immersion came from traveling in the country, followed behind by cultural immersion in the classroom (85%). A smaller percentage, 18%, of students said that they experienced cultural immersion came from their extracurricular experiences. Nearly half (41%) of students said that they experienced obvious differences in culture between their host-countries and their country of origin.

Students had generally strong academic experiences abroad, and the extent to which this was true was associated with their level of cultural immersion in the classroom, albeit slightly. On a rating scale from one to four,⁵ the average rating of overall academic experience was 3.28, the average quality of instruction rating was 3.25, and the average rigor rating was 3.09. Students that had reported high levels of cultural immersion in the classroom (professors that were local to the country) had, on average, weaker overall academic experiences (3.23) lower quality of instruction (3.21), and more rigorous experiences (3.13). Conversely, among non-immersed

⁵ With 1 equaling “poor”, 2 equaling “fair”, 3 equaling “good”, and 4 equaling “excellent”

Outside the Harvard Bubble: Student Study Abroad Motivations, Experiences, and Benefits

students (i.e. American professors), the average rating of overall experience was 3.58, the quality of instruction was rated 3.53, and rigor of their experience was rated 2.90.

Table 3. Mean Academic Experience in OIE Data (SD in Parentheses)

	Integrated in Classroom (n=112)	Not Integrated in Classroom (n=19)	Total (n=131)
Overall Academic Experience	3.232 (0.805)	3.579 (0.838)	3.282 (0.816)
Quality of Instruction	3.21 (0.840)	3.526 (0.841)	3.252 (0.844)
Rigor of Instruction	3.134 (0.885)	2.895 (0.875)	3.099 (0.885)

There was diversity among the reasons that students described for studying abroad. 39% of students felt that their study abroad experience benefited them by way of world enlightenment, 21% of students felt as though their study abroad experience facilitated personal growth, 5% of students gained career skills and/or clarity, and 34% of students cited academic growth as a benefit of studying abroad.

Discussion

As it pertains to the motivations that first-generation students had for studying abroad, my findings only tenuously support the framework of reproduction theory. The pure desire to travel for its own sake was far and away the most popular motivation to study abroad, and even when vocational motivations emerged, they were in the interest of job fields with altruistic intentions (i.e. human rights, sustainable development).

Additionally, there was limited evidence that study abroad is selectively accessible at Harvard College, but considerable evidence to suggest its inaccessibility at other institutions. Interview commentaries reiterated the role of Harvard in making the study abroad experience feasible and remarked that the abundance of Harvard's resources was an active motivator for pursuing a study abroad experience, but also commented on the socioeconomic homogeneity of the non-Harvard students that they encountered once abroad.

Outside the Harvard Bubble: Student Study Abroad Motivations, Experiences, and Benefits

Experientially, my findings speak to both hypotheses presented in the literature review. Interview subjects spoke at some length about the ways that their study abroad experience broadened their perceptions of the world that they inhabited, as well as the ways that study abroad led them to reconsider their own identities. Further, the most prevalent benefit of studying abroad among the OIE student evaluations was “world enlightenment.” Both findings suggest the disruption of preconceived notions. However, the interview subjects consistently remarked that their abroad experience was less rigorous than their academic experiences at Harvard, and analysis of the academic experiences from the OIE demonstrated that students in “Americanized” classrooms reported better overall experiences and stronger teaching, which is potentially indicative of the study abroad experience serving as a reaffirmation of the academic superiority of Harvard, if not U.S. approaches to higher education.

Regarding benefits, the *reproduction hypothesis* yields to the *expansive hypothesis*. Among the OIE student evaluations, the most common benefit of study abroad was world enlightenment, and mention of career-oriented benefits was incredibly small. Further, among first-generation students specifically, the most common benefit from study abroad was personal growth, and even those students that mentioned their job prospects were pursuing vocations with altruistic objectives.

Conclusion

In this project, I considered Pierre Bourdieu as a framing device for understanding the purpose of studying abroad at Harvard College. Through content coding of interviews and written evaluations, I aimed to capture the reasons that college students choose to study abroad, the experiences they have while abroad, and the benefits they gain from having studied abroad.

Ultimately, my findings suggest that, *as students see it from their own perspective*, study abroad is not a mechanism for class reproduction, and in the case of first-generation students, class mobility. I found that though elements of social reproduction theory can be found within the Harvard study abroad apparatus, study abroad is not a merely an institution that apports social, cultural, and/or economic capital to its participants, but rather, what students take away from their experiences cannot be understood solely through a lens of capitalistic gain. Which is, in my opinion, a happy finding. Of course, these findings do not eradicate the possibility that class reproduction is a collateral consequence of studying abroad, even if students do not

Outside the Harvard Bubble: Student Study Abroad Motivations, Experiences, and Benefits

articulate explicitly the impact of class reproduction on their study abroad trips. For instance, even though student responses do not indicate that this was a desired outcome of studying abroad, the acquisition of world enlightenment may represent a form of cultural capital that fills out the resume of a “successful” Harvard student.

In consideration of both my findings and their limitations, potential paths of further inquiry include the pursuit of greater specificity in Harvard College and of greater generalizability to the US at large. A future project would include extensive interviews that would be capable of capturing differences in various subpopulations of students, such that we could, for example, compare high-SES students to middle- and low-SES students or compare different racial groups. Another potential project would be the reproduction of this endeavor at other institutions of higher learning to examine how generalizable the findings at Harvard are to the US Higher Educational landscape at large; what I found to be provisionally true at Harvard is not necessarily so at a public university or at a community college, or even at MIT a couple miles down the road. Further, a longitudinal study of the same subjects, with an additional non-study abroad control group, would elucidate the extent to which study abroad results in differing long-term life outcomes. In any case, hopefully, sometime in the future, someone will have the same “spirit of cynicism” as I did.

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