

First-Generation Strength:
Supporting First-Generation College Students in Study Abroad
by

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ABSTRACT

First-generation college students are an underrepresented group in terms of study abroad participation nationally and at Arizona State University (ASU). The ASU and International Studies Abroad (ISA) Planning Scholars Scholarship Program was developed to support first-generation college students in their pursuit of study abroad. This mixed-methods study examined what the specific needs of first-generation college students are as they pursue study abroad experiences and what effect the ASU and ISA Planning Scholars Program had on them. A combination of surveys, semi-structured interviews, and a photovoice project provided data for the study. Key findings included that first-generation college students had concerns about finances, finding a study abroad program that would keep them on track for graduation, making friends while they study abroad, and traveling abroad alone. The study indicated that the Planning Scholars program did increase students' confidence in pursuing study abroad. Additionally, the theory of First-Generation Strength was developed which suggests that first-generation college students possess certain strengths and capital that help them overcome a variety of new obstacles and make them an ideal candidate for study abroad due to their experiences with having to navigate new contexts, such as going to college, independently.

This work is dedicated in loving memory of Carol Curtis Rausch. Your unwavering support and belief in me was a large reason why education became such an important part of who I am. I will carry your memory and passion for life in everything I do.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

It is an exciting time to be an international educator thanks to prominent campaigns that have called for increased student mobility. Of particular note are President Obama's 100,000 Strong Initiatives and the Institute of International Education's Generation Study Abroad Campaign.

In November 2009, President Obama announced the 100,000 Strong in China initiative, "a national effort designed to increase dramatically the number and diversify the composition of American students studying in China" (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). This project, now organized by an independent, bipartisan non-profit organization, established a goal to meet the President's challenge to have 100,000 students studying in China by the end of 2014. This effort aims to counteract the imbalance between the numbers of Chinese students studying in the United States as compared to American students studying in China and recognizes China's importance as an economic and political power in the highly interconnected world that this current generation of students occupies.

Similarly, President Obama's launch of the 100,000 Strong in the Americas initiative in 2011 included rhetoric that greatly bolstered the view of study abroad as an essential educational endeavor,

In today's interconnected, technology-driven world, quality education alone is not enough. We need to be more internationally-aware and cross-culturally adept. We need a generation of leaders who can reach across borders. For this, students need a broad base of skills and experiences, including exposure to other countries and cultures. (U.S. Department of State).

These two Presidential initiatives have been a major catalyst for moving study abroad from the peripheral consciousness at universities to the critical forefront for institutions seeking to internationalize. Arizona State University (ASU) has responded to the President's calls for action, applying for and being awarded a 100,000 Strong in the Americas grant for a proposed project that will increase student exchange between Mexico and Arizona.

Additionally, the Institute of International Education, which has served as the field's "largest and most experienced international education organization" (IIE website, 2015), recently launched a major campaign: Generation Study Abroad. The aim of this campaign, as with the President's 100,000 Strong initiatives, has been to encourage more U.S. student participation in study abroad (see appendix A for definition). Specifically, Generation Study Abroad has called for 600,000 students to study abroad by the 2017-2018 academic year. The 2012-2013 Open Doors report stated 289,408 U.S. students studied abroad for that academic year, so this new goal would represent well over a 100% increase (Institute of International Education). Because fewer than 10% of American college students study abroad, this is a campaign to which many international educators are keenly connected, made evident by the multitude of institutions that have pledged to support it. As of October 2014, 450 partners committed to this endeavor, ranging from U.S. colleges and universities to international universities and organizations representing 31 countries (Generation Study Abroad, 2015). As with the President's 100,000 Strong Initiatives, the scope of this campaign has helped to place study abroad as a more prominent focal point for U.S. institutions of higher education because the pledge requires signatures of senior administrators, such as the university provost or president.

Thus, it seems study abroad is poised to become a key educational agenda item across the country. If study abroad is to become a focal point for institutions of higher education, however, attention must be given to underrepresented populations since the student profile continues to become increasingly diverse.

Personal Context

Herr and Anderson (2015) described the notion of the reflective practitioner as “those practitioners who ‘learn to learn’ about their practice and therefore become better practitioners” (p.43). Because action research involves a high degree of reflection of one’s context, it is important for me to provide some background of my personal context, that is, the more internal framework I bring to my immediate local, situational context in which I am working. I would not be pursuing an innovation in the field of study abroad if it were not for my passion for and belief in the work of international education. I also believe the establishment of my personal context is important for understanding my positionality as an action researcher, therefore I outline a brief background on how I came to be so interested in this field.

I grew up in a military family. My father served in the air force and traveling was something that came to be quite normal for me at a young age. I was born abroad in Germany, lived there until I was three, and then had been to five different schools across three states by the time I made it to high school. With the exception of my mother taking some classes at community college and my father going back to school while I was a teenager, my parents had not been to college in the traditional sense, and certainly had not studied abroad, however, they often talked about their time in Europe when I was first born. My mother had also lived in Europe as a teenager since her father had served in the

air force. Unbeknownst to me at the time, these stories and the exposure to different places at such a young age sparked a curiosity in me and an understanding that there was much more to see and do beyond my immediate environment.

In high school I studied French for my required foreign language for all four years, even though only two years were required. I had an affinity for learning the language, thanks in part to my family heritage and also because of how good I discovered I was at learning it. During my junior year of high school, my French teacher organized a three-week trip to my hometown's sister city in France, Noirmoutier. Noirmoutier is a small island off the west coast of France, and it was here where the ubiquitous life-changing experience one hears about in reference to study abroad occurred for me. For two weeks I lived with a host family after having only two years of high school French, and the experience, while challenging, was the most exciting event that had happened in my life at that point. I loved trying to communicate in the foreign language and found the cultural differences fascinating. The trip culminated in a tour of the Loire Valley and three-day stay in Paris. I remember silently promising myself on the flight back to the States that I would return to Paris.

This experience set me on the path that I have been on ever since. Although at one point I had believed that I would pursue a major in microbiology, I declared a major in French and Russian languages once I entered college and immediately started speaking to advisors about study abroad opportunities. By the summer after my sophomore year, I was studying abroad in Paris, an opportunity I repeated again the summer after my junior year. My desire for international experiences still not quenched, I added international affairs to my majors and applied for and earned an internship placement at the British

Parliament in London for a semester. The study abroad bug had bitten and I was hooked. I knew I wanted to pursue some sort of an international career but was not sure what. Thankfully, during my final year in college I earned a spot on the student recruiter team for my university's study abroad office. This exposed me to the professional field of study abroad. About six months after I graduated, there was a full-time opening in the study abroad office that I applied for and obtained. It was not long before I had worked my way up serving as the Assistant Director for the Paris program on which I had studied. After three years with that office, I eventually moved out of state and took my current role of International Program Manager for Faculty-Directed Programs within the Arizona State University Study Abroad Office.

Over the course of six short years of working in the field of international education, I have been fortunate enough to grow into leadership roles. Working in this field has been a stark contrast to the first job I had out of college. Waking up to go to a job that one does not believe in makes life feel like a Sisyphean task; it is day in and day out of meaningless duties that cause life to come to an excruciating standstill. I no longer feel this way about the work I do as I believe in the educative and transformative power that study abroad can have. However, my time in the field has shown me that positive transformation and personal growth are not guaranteed and there are some great challenges. During my internship program in London I noticed how important it was for study abroad programs to provide a structure for students to develop intercultural awareness (see appendix A for definition) and reflection. Many students seemed to engage with their host city on a superficial level, opting to go out to American-style bars with one another in place of seeking out interaction with host locals. Many programs do

not facilitate a cultural awareness and understanding that goes past a superficial or consumerist level. As Ogden (2007) laments, “Education abroad has not been immune to the pervasive consumerism mentality seen in U.S. higher education. Without hesitation, students (and their parents) are increasingly demanding familiar amenities and modern conveniences while-abroad and seemingly with total disregard to host cultural norms or feasibility” (p.37).

Further, participation in study abroad programs does not match the diverse student profile that exists in our country. When it comes to who is participating in study abroad programs, there are many underrepresented student populations, including racial and ethnic minorities, males, and first-generation college students. If study abroad is positioned as an educational activity critical for students’ future career success, then institutions of higher education may be contributing to social inequities by not ensuring access to study abroad for these underrepresented populations. Having experienced the transformative power that these programs can have, I believe it is imperative that all students have the opportunity to participate on a study abroad program. As the largest public university in terms of enrollment, Arizona State University (ASU) has a diverse student body. If we are going to increase our overall participation on study abroad programs and increase access for underrepresented groups at our institution, then support programs specific to these populations need to be developed. That is why I want to contribute to the growing research in the field of international education, and specifically, why I want to introduce an innovation for my immediate context at ASU.

National Context

On the national level, there is a lack of diversity and funding and an increasingly non-traditional student body make growing the number of U.S. college students studying abroad a monumental task. In terms of the demographics of study abroad participation in the United States, it is predominantly a Caucasian female experience; for the 2012-2013 academic year, 76.3% of study abroad participants were White, and 65.3% were female (Institute of International Education, 2014). The gender gap in study abroad participation has puzzled educators for many years, with different hypotheses posited ranging from academic/career orientation (Goldstein and Kim, 2006), perception of the purpose of higher education or the maturity to have an abroad experience (Redden, 2008), to habitus and the accumulation of social and cultural capital before college and social interactions with peers (Salisbury, Paulsen, and Pascarella, 2010). In terms of participation by ethnicity and race, Hispanic or Latino(a) participation was only at 7.6% for the 2012-2013 academic year, and participation by Black or African-American students was only at 5.3%, showing no growth in both categories from the previous academic year (Institute of International Education, 2014). Another group that faces challenges in studying abroad is first-generation college students (see appendix A for definition). Nationally, first-generation college students represent approximately 24% of the undergraduate student population. These students have unique challenges when it comes to negotiating their college career, including “disproportionately coming from ethnic and racial minority backgrounds with lower levels of academic preparation, being older and less likely to receive financial support from parents, and more likely to have multiple obligations outside of college” (Engle and Tinto, 2008, p.2). Given that these obstacles can have an

impact on first-generation college students' ability to complete college, study abroad is often not even a consideration for this population. One of the leading reasons students from each of these populations give for their inability to participate in study abroad is a lack of funding, and this claim is also supported by the literature (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, and Pascarella, 2009; Lincoln Report, 2005). Fortunately, nationwide projects, such as the Senator Paul Simon Act and the creation of the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program, aim to tackle this issue.

The Senator Paul Simon Act was “inspired by the vision of the late Sen. Paul Simon (D – Ill.) and the recommendations of the congressionally appointed Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, [and] would create a modest program of challenge grants to incentivize colleges and universities to make study abroad an integral part of higher education” (NAFSA). The act has not been passed by Congress yet, but NAFSA: Association of International Educators (the field's leading professional organization) continues to advocate for it. Similarly, the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program was established by the International Academic Opportunity Act of 2000 (Institute of International Education). This scholarship program's goals are to diversify study abroad, both in terms of who studies abroad and in terms of locations in which U.S. students study. Traditionally, Western European countries have dominated, with six out of the top 10 destinations in which U.S. students studied abroad being in Western European countries in 2012-2013 (Institute of International Education, 2014). The Gilman scholarships are earmarked for Pell-grant recipients and students exhibiting multiple aspects of diversity (e.g. race, socio-economic background, disability, veteran status etc.), making it a particularly important award for first-generation college students.

Although the Senator Paul Simon Act and Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program are outstanding examples of a commitment to growing study abroad participation among U.S. college students, these schemes alone will not be enough to achieve the lofty goals set by the Obama administration and the Institute of International Education, as will be evidenced in the discussion of my local context.

Short-term programs are a steadily increasing trend, and over the past decade, have become one way in which obstacles to study abroad are being overcome. According to the 2014 Open Doors Report, 60% of U.S. students studying abroad did so on a short-term program of eight weeks or less or during the summer term (Institute of International Education). If one looks at the Open Doors data from the past decade, one can see a steady increase in the rise of popularity of these programs and can posit reasons, ranging from cost effectiveness to convenience, for keeping jobs and staying on track in one's academic major. These aspects are pertinent to first-generation college students and make short-term programs an attractive program choice for this population.

Nevertheless, providing funding and new models of programs cannot counteract all of the obstacles facing underrepresented student groups, such as first-generation college students. A 2010 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report showed that nearly 50% of the higher education population consisted of students whose parents did not attend college. First-generation college students are a group that must overcome particularly difficult social and cultural challenges if studying abroad is going to be a reality. Impediments facing this population in study abroad include a lack of awareness and understanding of study abroad's possible benefits for academic and career goals, a lack of understanding and support from students' family members, and a perception that

it is not affordable and will delay graduation. This study seeks to address these impediments for this group of students and to support them in their pursuit of engaging globally at ASU.

Local Context: Study Abroad at Arizona State University

The ASU Study Abroad Office (SAO) serves as the main context in which this study was conducted. Because it is my place of work, the study was conducted under the principles of an insider action research project. The SAO serves as the primary office responsible for assisting ASU students who want to study abroad and receive academic credit. The office offers over 250 programs in over 55 countries around the world (ASU Study Abroad Office website, 2014). ASU students can participate in three types of programs: partnership, exchange, and faculty-directed programs. The office is divided into two coordinating units to cover these various types of programs, as well as a business unit. My role in the office is Program Manager of the Faculty-Directed programs unit (see appendix A for definition).

For the 2012-2013 academic year, the ASU SAO sent 1,826 students abroad (Study Abroad Enrollment Report, 2014). This places ASU at #21 nationally in terms of institutions sending students abroad (Open Doors Report, 2014). However, with an overall student enrollment of over 82,000 (ASU, 2014), there is much room to grow, a fact of which the SAO is keenly aware and to which it is committed, as evidenced by their signing on with the Institute of International Education's Generation Study Abroad campaign. By the 2018-2019 academic year, the SAO hopes to send over 2,000 students abroad, a growth of more than 20%.

Challenges in reaching that goal include the fact that ASU has four physical

campuses as well as an online campus, and a diverse student body with high percentages of first-generation college students, ethnic minorities, veterans, online students, and non-traditional students; these are all populations that have been traditionally underrepresented in study abroad. The SAO has a physical presence only on one of ASU's multiple campuses (Tempe Campus). However, it has recently started sending staff on a weekly basis to each of the other campuses in order to promote study abroad opportunities to all ASU students, but with limited staff and resources, the extent to which the SAO is able to reach all students is restricted.

First-generation college students represented 39% of the 2014-2015 freshman class (Hyduke, personal communication, August 27, 2015). This population is an important one on which to focus because of ASU's vision for access to education for all. In order to help this population, there are challenges related to dispelling myths that students and their parents might have about the likelihood they can participate in study abroad. As with the national context, students cite lack of funding as a key reason for why they are not able to study abroad. Nevertheless, the SAO has organized resources for students related to financing study abroad so efforts are underway to provide information about scholarships, grants, and other financial aid opportunities. Similarly, an inability to take time away from ASU or the local area because of family or work obligations is another issue that is frequently cited by first-generation college students. For this reason, short-term programs, such as faculty-directed programs, are among the most popular option for them, providing further comparison to the national trends. ASU faculty-directed programs are typically between two and eight weeks in length and, as recently as spring 2016, are now offered throughout the academic year. These programs can be a

good fit for students whose majors do not allow for a semester or longer period abroad, or for students who have to work while in school or support a family and thus cannot leave for an extended period of time. Of ASU students studying abroad, 63% of them do so on a faculty-directed program (ASU Study Abroad Enrollment Report, 2014).

Leaving my first role in the field at Florida State University, I came to work at my current institution, ASU, in 2012. Since then, I have learned much about how study abroad aligns with the university. From a leadership perspective, President Michael Crow has espoused “Engage Globally” as his eighth design imperative and claimed, “ASU is scaling local solutions for global impact, fostering local and international student experiences, and building diverse partnerships. ASU is forging a new role for higher education in the world” (ASU New American University, n.d.). Although international activity is acknowledged at ASU, until recently, study abroad was not really an active part of this design aspiration and was left to its own devices. First, emphasis seemed to be largely on growing international enrollments; ASU has moved from #15, to #11 and now #8 on the Open Doors Report ranking of top 25 institutions hosting international students in just three years’ time (Institute of International Education, n.d.). Further, it is only since September of 2013 that the SAO has reported to the Provost’s Office. Prior to this, the office went through several iterations and was left largely on its own in terms of direction from senior leadership. The recent reorganization has the office reporting to the Provost’s office and has meant easier access to senior leadership and a more defined vision aligned with the institution. A great example of this was the Generation Study Abroad pledge, signed by the Office of the Provost, which affirmed,

ASU is joining the Generation Study Abroad movement because we are committed to the concept of global engagement and see the value of study abroad for our student population as it relates to advancing this mission. ASU is committed to graduating global citizens and study abroad is one distinct way that encourages intercultural growth and competency development relevant both globally and to our local community. (Study Abroad Office website, n.d.)

Another recent example that illustrated ASU's increased focus on international education was its recent merger with the Thunderbird School of Global Management. *U.S. News and World Report* 2014 ranks Thunderbird as having the #1 full-time International MBA program and now ASU will also be able to leverage Thunderbird's much-touted alumni network. While the newfound interest and excitement surrounding study abroad at ASU will certainly help the SAO as it works towards achieving its goals of increasing participation rates, a marked overall increase in numbers of ASU students studying abroad cannot occur if focus is not given to supporting underrepresented students (see appendix A for definition). Given the high percentage of first-generation college students at ASU and their specialized needs, the innovation proposed in this study sought to establish a scholarship cohort program that will help increase access for this important student population

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The international, national, local, and personal contexts suggest the need for an innovation for first-generation college students in study abroad. The innovation I proposed is the ASU and ISA Planning Scholarships Program. This program provided scholarships to second semester freshmen who are first-generation college students. They had their remaining undergraduate careers to plan and use the scholarship for a study abroad program. As part of the scholarship program, they participated in a cohort

program that addressed their specific needs as identified by a review of related literature and a needs assessment. Therefore, the purpose of the study of this program was to better understand the needs of first-generation college students as they pursue study abroad and to examine the influence of this new scholarship program (the ASU and ISA Planning Scholarships) designed to support first-generation college students in study abroad. The research questions that guided the conduct of the study are:

1. What are the specific needs of first-generation college students as they prepare for a study abroad experience?
2. How did the Planning Scholars program effect first-generation college students in relation to studying abroad?
 - a. After participating in the Planning Scholars program, did students perceive themselves to be more prepared to go abroad than before?
 - b. What elements of the Planning Scholars program did students utilize during their time abroad?
 - c. After returning from abroad, what recommendations do students have for improving the Planning Scholars program?
3. How did first-generation college students make sense of their study abroad experiences?

Chapter 2

RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Given that this problem of practice was focusing on how to help first-generation college students feel supported in their decision to and during study abroad, it was necessary to review what related literature reveals about this topic. This chapter highlights some of the key articles and studies that describe the nature of this problem of practice, what possible solutions there might be, and how best to structure this innovation for success. Specifically, this review focused on literature that documents the unique challenges facing first-generation college students in higher education as well as studies that have been conducted to explore the particular obstacles these students encounter when deciding to study abroad and during their actual study abroad programs. The related literature suggested a theoretical framework in which to ground analysis, that of Pierre Bourdieu's cultural capital theory, which supplemented this review.

For the traditional college-going undergraduate student, the transition to college can be a tumultuous period. For many students, it represents the first time that they are living on their own and dealing with all of the mundane, day-to-day life tasks adults in our society must take on: securing housing, cooking, cleaning, paying bills. Students must begin to learn how to manage these tasks and more while navigating the higher education setting, which at large research universities such as ASU can be intimidating for even the most independent student. However, these challenging aspects of making the transition from life at home with one's family during high school to the more independent environment at college are exacerbated when coming from a family where neither parent has navigated the transition to college. In addition to first-generation

college students having markers that predispose them to retention issues even prior to entering the institution, such as disproportionately coming from ethnic and racial minority backgrounds with lower levels of academic preparation, research has shown that

Low-income and first-generation students are less likely to be engaged in the academic and social experiences that foster success in college, such as studying in groups, interacting with faculty and other students, participating in extracurricular activities, and using support services. (Engle & Tinto, 2008, p.3)

Study abroad represents yet another co-curricular experience with which this population of students is less likely to engage, and a lack of awareness of the opportunity and how it might benefit them is one impediment the literature highlights.

When discussing the challenge of a lack of awareness and understanding of the potential utility of study abroad, Bordieu's concept of cultural capital provides one useful framework. The basic definition of Bordieu's embodied cultural capital concept, as explained by Swartz, is "the ensemble of cultivated dispositions that are internalized by the individual through socialization and that constitute schemes of appreciation and understanding" (1997, p.76). Furthermore, Dumais and Ward (2009) explain that what Bordieu argued is "cultural capital is unequally distributed in society, with middle and upper-class families having more and working and lower-class families having less (or none at all)" (p.247). What this suggests is that first-generation college students, particularly those who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to possessing the cultural and institutionalized capital that would allow them to easily navigate and understand the complex bureaucratic structures that are hallmarks of higher education institutions. Not only do first-generation students predominately come from racial and ethnic minority communities or households that

have a low socioeconomic status, but they lack the capital that students with parents who went to college are likely to inherit. This capital can be immensely helpful when it comes to entering and persisting through college and taking advantage of all it has to offer, as it provides an “ability to navigate within social settings and interact with key gatekeepers” (Dumais and Ward, 2009, p.247).

Findings from a study by Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini aligned with the importance of cultural capital for first-generation students,

Our findings are also quite consistent with the expectation that family cultural capital plays a significant role in informing the choices students make about...the kinds of experiences they have once enrolled. Such family cultural capital and the attendant understandings and expectations of a college education that it engenders, are likely to be relatively more modest for first-generation students. Consequently, they may be less prepared than similar students whose parents are highly educated to make the kinds of informed choices about institutions and involvements during college that potentially maximize educational progress and benefits” (2004, p.277).

Because of a lack of family cultural capital, first-generation college students may not know to seek out certain activities, such as study abroad, that could be beneficial in both their educational and personal development. Further, Pascarella et al. (2004) found that first-generation college students tended to take fewer credit hours per semester and worked more hours per week than their peers whose family members had higher levels of education. Consequently, these students had less time for extracurricular involvement and, thus, placed them at a risk of not participating in the very activities that could help them develop important forms of cultural capital.

Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital helps to understand why first-generation college students might not actively seek out study abroad opportunities like their more

affluent peers who have parents who went to college. The challenges these students face in order to just enter college can overpower their ability to seek out co-curricular activities such as study abroad. As one study abroad director proposes,

Just getting into college and leaving their homes can be a big push. Getting beyond that to think about study abroad doesn't come naturally to them. The chief challenge is to move study abroad into a central position in the world view of a student who has been coached to see it as marginal and exotic and educationally dubious. For such a student, we need to present study abroad as normal, generally beneficial, and certainly worth the extra effort and cost (Dessoiff, 2006, p. 24).

First-generation college students lack the cultural capital that is likely more present with students who come from socio-economically advantaged backgrounds or who have parents who are regarded as 'cultured' in terms of being well educated and travelled. For these students, the benefits to be derived from study abroad, such as the appreciation of diverse perspectives, comfort with ambiguity, and knowledge of other countries and cultures are more obvious in terms of how they might help them with future academic and career goals and, thus, make study abroad normalized. Unfortunately, first-generation college students are less likely to make these connections and therefore may view study abroad as a frivolous, periphery collegiate activity reserved for the elite; another extracurricular activity that they may consider once they feel "they have their academic lives under control" (Terenzini et al., 1994, p.64), if at all.

Apart from not understanding the benefits to be derived from study abroad is the potential lack of support for it from family members. The family unit represents an important support structure for first-generation college students. Many of these students have either relied on and been supported by close-knit relationships with their families in order to get to a point where applying to a college was even possible, or they have

supported the family to a greater degree than their non-first-generation college peers have had to, working part-time jobs to provide supplemental funding, for instance. Either way, it is clear that first-generation college students usually maintain very close ties with their families that can both help and hinder the transition to college. Terenzini et al. explain one viewpoint of first-generation college students in that these students can view the act of going to college as something that separates them from their family and friends (1994). This separation, be it real or perceived, can contribute to the culture shock first-generation college students encounter when they enter the college environment. In their study, Lowery-Hart and Pacheco (2011) found that some first-generation college students actually sought to maintain their status in the “out” group,

“These students struggled to fit “in,” knowing that doing so would help them succeed academically. However, they resisted fully embracing collegiate culture by remaining “out” to maintain their personal and social identity tied to their families and childhood communities” (p.58).

Moreover, many of the families of first-generation college students will lack the cultural capital that might make it easier for them to understand and support their student’s interest in learning about and pursuing a study abroad opportunity. Because of the importance of the family dynamic, pressure to not participate in any activity that might be perceived as superfluous or that is not fully understood by their greater support network is likely to dissuade first-generation college students.

Furthermore, the lack of understanding and support from their family networks is bolstered by prevalent myths about study abroad. The two most prevalent include study abroad being unaffordable and that if students study abroad then it will take longer for them to complete their degrees, thereby putting them at a disadvantage.

First, as noted by Engle and Tinto, first-generation college students “tend to be...less likely to receive financial support from parents, and more likely to have multiple obligations outside college, like family and work” (2008, p.20), qualities that make this demographic keenly aware of finances. Unfortunately for study abroad, the myth that it is unaffordable to all but the rich is perpetuated, meaning that first-generation college students are that much more likely to pass it over. While some study abroad programs can certainly cost more than a typical semester at a student’s home institution, there are many different types of programs that might be similarly priced, or even cheaper, than the true cost of attending one’s home institution for a semester. Furthermore, there are scholarship programs aimed at diversifying the type of student who studies abroad, and many favor first-generation college students. One such program is the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship program. The Gilman scholarship is a national award aimed at increasing diversity in study abroad. One of the main ways this award accomplishes that goal is by limiting eligibility to Pell Grant recipients. This is good news for first-generation college students as 41.1% of Pell Grant recipients had parents whose highest level of education was high school or less, with an additional 22.9% only having some postsecondary education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Unfortunately, this news often does not reach the ears of first-generation college students and their families, meaning that study abroad is written off before they realize what resources exist to help them afford the opportunity.

Another myth that intervenes when students are considering the cost/risk factors associated with study abroad is that it will delay them from completing their degrees. This is a myth that international educators are constantly having to debunk for all

students. Its perpetuation is due in some part to study abroad's traditions in gap year programs and the humanities. For the multitude of current business and STEM majors, this is largely seen as a deviation that will put them behind in their highly-structured major maps. However, this myth is even more sharply felt by first-generation college students who see the college experience as a means to an end. As one student in Lowery-Hart and Pacheco's study so bluntly put it, "I came here for a degree. I didn't come here to go to college" (2011, p.63). Anything that might detract from that end goal is seen as a distraction and is ultimately considered a cost that is not central to the mission of making it through with a degree. However, curriculum integration has become a top priority for many institutions, whereby study abroad is more closely aligned with the major maps of institutions' degree programs. A good example at ASU is the partnership that has developed between the SAO and the College of Nursing and Health Innovation (CONHI). Through strategic meetings with leadership from the two units, programming is being developed that will allow nursing majors, a population that has been severely underrepresented in study abroad at ASU, to satisfy core program requirements abroad, effectively allowing them to remain on track for graduation. Although there are several examples like this and many programs for students to choose from, there is much work to be done in dispelling this commonly-held belief of first-generation students.

Even though nationally there are numerous calls to action for increasing overall participation in study abroad, the reality is that few studies focused specifically on supporting first-generation college students in study abroad. The Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) conducted one of the few studies related to first-generation college students' participation in study abroad. The Council examined

perceptions of barriers to study abroad for TRIO students. Federal TRIO Programs (see appendix A for definition) help students to overcome class, social, academic and cultural barriers to higher education with an aim to support first generation and other disadvantaged college students to stay in college until they earn their baccalaureate degrees (Norfles, 2003). The COE launched their research after the TRIO 2000 study abroad programs only attracted .01% of students. These study abroad programs were launched by the COE “based on the conviction that low-income students should have access to the same kinds of international experiences as their more affluent counterparts” (p.6) yet the lack of participation in the programs by TRIO students demonstrated a need to examine what was keeping them from pursuing study abroad.

The findings from COE echo concerns related to first-generation college students and study abroad: lack of funding, information, and family support. The study also introduced another important consideration: barriers presented by those who work with these students. TRIO program directors and staff often felt that their students were already faced with several obstacles related to completing their degree and that pursuit of a study abroad opportunity only served to distract them from their goals. In some cases, TRIO directors and staff actually limited the information provided to students or discounted the importance of study abroad for their students (Norfles, 2003). One respondent provided an example for this lack of support in saying, “I don’t think that the Council should be spending time on this issue – it is simply not a priority concern!” (p.17). As can be the case with parents of first-generation college students, this suggests a lack of understanding on the part of some TRIO professionals of the importance of a

study abroad opportunity to these students' future competitiveness in the graduate school and job markets.

Another critical component for first-generation college students is the importance of advising and mentoring. Martinez, Ranjeet, and Marx (2010) suggest that providing students with a supportive mentor who can help them navigate the bureaucratic and institutional processes while answering their questions and providing encouragement is crucial. For example, one participant in their study explained,

Most of my inhibitions were taken away from simply talking to SSS (Student Support Services) counselors and receiving enough information before I made the decision [to study abroad]. They assured me that any reason that kept me from not wanting to go (for example paying for the trip and getting a passport) would be completely resolvable. The encouragement from them also stimulated my interest and desire to study abroad (Martinez et. al., 2010, p.531).

Just as applying to and attending college entails many complicated processes and systems, so too does applying to and actually studying abroad, ranging from finding the perfect program, assembling the necessary application materials, constructing a budget for living expenses while-abroad, determining how to obtain financial aid and scholarships, applying for a passport and visa, purchasing a plane ticket, and so forth. In describing the role that faculty advisors (SSS staff) played, Martinez et al. (2010) explained that their role was paramount in communicating with and supporting students during the pre-departure phase. This helped to create a bond of trust between the group and the faculty advisor well before departure. This bond not only helps students become more comfortable with the idea of studying abroad, but can also assist with bringing family members on board, since trust is established with an adult and other peers in the group who are going through the experience together. The findings of the COE and

Martinez et al. make clear the importance of establishing a culture of support for study abroad at institutions and advocates for the idea of creating a peer group led by a supportive mentor from the institution.

The brief review of related literature and Bordieu's cultural capital theory provided a sound rationale for the current study. If the problem of practice is determining how to support first-generation college students in pursuing study abroad so that more of this population actually do, then the innovation had to address gaps in cultural capital and concerns specific to this population, ranging from finances, family support and understanding of study abroad, and development of an understanding of the benefits and value of the experience. Furthermore, while addressing these issues, a supportive environment that promotes peer-to-peer collaboration and that is led by an encouraging mentor had to be established. Therefore, the innovation I proposed was the Planning Scholars cohort program for first-generation college students. This program awards second-semester freshmen, first-generation college students with a scholarship they can use to study abroad at any point in their college career. Recipients then participate in a cohort program with fellow first-generation college student peers led by two ASU Study Abroad Office staff to serve as mentors and advisors. The cohort program serves as a social support group for the students allowing important relationships to be developed between the students and the mentors while also working to address the aforementioned key concerns that otherwise prevent these students from studying abroad. The basic idea of the program came from speaking with colleagues at two other institutions, the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Colorado Boulder, who organized similar scholarship programs for first-generation college students. However, the program

was tailored based on the specific needs of students at ASU and this study represents the first of its kind on such a support program for first-generation students pursuing study abroad.

Chapter 3

METHOD

This study examined the needs of first-generation college students as they relate to study abroad and how the Planning Scholars scholarship and cohort program addressed these specific needs. In this chapter the timeline of the study is outlined, a review of the data instruments that will be used is provided, and the intervention, data collection, and data analysis procedures are described.

Timeline

The Planning Scholars program was launched during the spring semester of 2015. Second semester freshmen who were first-generation college students as identified by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) were invited to apply to the program. Over the summer, cohort 1 of the Planning Scholars program was selected, resulting in 53 students being awarded a scholarship. Ten students were selected to receive the ASU Planning Scholarship which was \$4,000 to be used on any of ASU's approved study abroad programs. Forty-three students were selected to receive the ISA Planning Scholarship which allotted \$2,000 for a semester program or \$1,000 for a summer program to be used on any of the ASU-approved ISA programs. At the start of the 2015-2016 academic year, the cohort program formally launched with a reception to award the students with the scholarships and begin the cohort meetings that serve as the basis for the intervention.

In order to help shape the intervention, a needs assessment was developed in the form of a questionnaire, described in the data instruments section. This needs assessment

was given to the Planning Scholars after the first cohort meeting in October of 2015. To compliment the questionnaire, interviews were conducted with randomly selected students in January of 2016. At the end of year one (spring semester 2016), students were asked to take a similar questionnaire to the one they previously took in order to see how their experiences in the cohort program may have shaped their responses. With the needs assessment complete, the remainder of the study was divided into two additional phases: the while-abroad phase and the post-abroad phase.

The while-abroad phase occurred during summer and fall semesters of 2016. One of the unique features of the intervention is that the Planning Scholars may choose when to use their scholarship to go abroad during their career at ASU, therefore not everyone will be going abroad at the same time. For the purposes of this research, scholars that chose to go abroad during the summer and fall 2016 semesters were invited to participate in interviews and a photovoice project while they were actually abroad. The final phase of data collection occurred once these students returned from their time abroad when the researcher conducted a final set of interviews.

Participants

The participants in this study came from the 53 students selected to be a part of cohort one of the Planning Scholars program. All 53 students were given the opportunity to participate in the needs assessment, of which 35 students completed the questionnaire. From these 35 students, three were randomly selected, using an online list randomizer and ensuring that at least one student from each gender was selected, to participate in interviews to expand on the information solicited in the needs assessment questionnaire. At the end of this first year of the Planning Scholars program, all scholars were invited to

participate in an end-of-the-year assessment of their experiences with the program via a questionnaire that was similar to the initial one they received.

Summer semester 2016 commenced the while-abroad phase of the research continuing with fall semester 2016. Students who indicated that they were studying abroad in either of these semesters were invited to participate in the photovoice project (see appendix A for definition) and additional interviews occurred while they are actually abroad. All who wished to participate in the interviews and photovoice project were accepted in order to gain perspectives across a variety of programs and regions.

At the conclusion of the summer and fall semesters, returning students were invited to meetings to discuss their photovoice projects. Finally, interviews were conducted to assess participants' thoughts about studying abroad and the cohort program.

Co-mentors

In addition to the study participants, there were two co-mentors of the scholars in cohort one. The researcher served as a mentor, along with one of his colleagues from the Study Abroad Office. Together, the co-mentors planned and facilitated the workshops throughout the academic year and met with students for one-on-one advising. Student participants did not serve as formal mentors in this iteration of the program, although as the data from the study will reveal, informal peer mentorship did occur.

Instruments

Data Collection Inventory. Table 1 indicates the various instruments that were used in the research, the phase and time of year during which the instrument was used, and the type of data the instrument was designed to collect.

Table 1.

Data Collection Inventory

Instrument	Phase	Time of Year	Data Type
Needs Assessment	Pre-abroad	October 2015	Quantitative and Qualitative
Needs Assessment Interviews	Pre-abroad	January 2016	Qualitative
End of Year 1 Assessment	Pre-abroad	March 2016	Quantitative and Qualitative
Photovoice Project	While-abroad/Post Abroad	May 2016 – February 2017	Qualitative
While-abroad Interviews	While-abroad	May – December 2016	Qualitative
Post Abroad Interviews	Post Abroad	August 2016 – February 2017	Qualitative

See appendix A for definitions of the different phases

Description of Data Collection Instruments

Needs assessment questionnaire. The Planning Scholars needs assessment questionnaire was developed in order to assess possible needs across various constructs informed by a preliminary literature review concerning first-generation college students. The questionnaire consists of 68 items, including both quantitative and qualitative items: 38 Likert scale items, 14 multiple choice items, one slider scale item, and 15 open-ended responses. The questionnaire, found in Appendix B, examines six different constructs:

- * Background information
- * Awareness of study abroad benefits, opportunities, and resources
- * Concerns about study abroad
- * Support for study abroad

* Confidence pursuing study abroad

* Goals for study abroad

First, background information collected demographic information about each participant, such as gender, race, and age, as well as information about students' upbringings to gain an understanding about their prior exposure to issues related to other cultures and travel.

The second construct of awareness looked at the extent to which students are aware of the possible benefits of study abroad while also examining whether or not they are knowledgeable about opportunities and resources for study abroad at their university.

The third construct, concerns, comprised the majority of the needs assessment and asked students to identify what they were most concerned about with regards to studying abroad. Next is the construct of support, which looked at what support structures the students identified and how they felt about leaving those support structures behind while they study abroad. The construct of confidence attempted to ascertain to what degree students felt confident in pursuing study abroad. Finally, the last construct asked students to share the specific goals they had for their study abroad experiences.

Needs assessment interviews. In order to capture more in-depth data and to help triangulate findings from the needs assessment questionnaire, three semi-structured interviews were conducted with randomly selected participants. The interview protocol was developed based on the aforementioned six constructs measured by the questionnaire. The complete protocol can be found in Appendix C.

End-of-year 1 assessment. The Planning Scholars cohort program consisted of four cohort meetings per academic year that the scholars were required to attend. At the end of the first year and prior to any student going abroad, a questionnaire was

administered to participants in order to assess their overall experience in the cohort program and to determine if there had been movement on any of the constructs previously examined in the needs assessment. Accordingly, the end-of-year 1 assessment was developed from the original needs assessment questionnaire and included a few additional items in order to ascertain the participants' feedback about the program. The assessment appears in Appendix D.

Photovoice project. In order to capture important data while the scholars were actually abroad, a photovoice project was organized whereby the scholars used photography to document certain aspects of what it meant to be a first-generation college student abroad. Photovoice is a qualitative research method that uses photography to empower communities that are typically marginalized in order to produce knowledge and engender change. Since this project was conducted under the principles of action research, and study abroad is typically full of visually-captivating experiences, photovoice was an appropriate method to employ in the project, thereby allowing students a direct voice in the findings. As the pioneer of photovoice, Wang explains that

as a practice based in the production of knowledge, photovoice has three main goals: (1) to enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussion of photographs, and (3) to reach policymakers" (1997, p.369).

The photovoice project was completed upon the scholars' return to ASU where they then participated in small group discussions about their photos with cohort 1. In the small groups, participants shared the images they took while-abroad and the group analyzed via discussion the photos that best represented the themes the group decided upon prior to going abroad. Meaning related to each of the prompts was derived from the group's

discussion and recorded by the researcher. In the future, the group will determine how they might like to share their work with the greater ASU community.

While-abroad interviews. The scholars' experiences abroad were further analyzed through semi-structured interviews that occurred via recorded Skype sessions about halfway through participants' study abroad programs. These interviews allowed the researcher to capture the successes and struggles scholars were facing in real-time and allowed for comparisons to be made between what scholars thought prior to going abroad and what actually occurred while they were abroad. Semi-structured interviews were selected in order to expand upon data captured via quantitative methods and to highlight individual stories that allow for a more nuanced understanding of the challenges facing first-generation college students as they pursue study abroad. In describing the nature of responsive interviewing, Flick states,

the focus is typically on what the interviewee has experienced and sees as important in relation to the issue of the study. The aim is to develop a fuller picture from interviewees' points of view, rather than just simple, short, general, or abstract answers to the interviewer's questions (2014, p.208).

The interview protocol for this part of the research can be found in Appendix E.

Post-abroad interviews. A final round of interviews was conducted with scholars once they returned from their programs abroad. This set of interviews was intended to provide reflection for the students as they had some time to process their participation in the cohort program and their time abroad, thereby possibly revealing gaps in the program and areas for further research. The interview protocol for this phase is included in Appendix F.

Procedure

Pre-abroad phase: Needs assessment and cohort meetings. Beginning with the fall 2015 semester, the 53 students selected to participate in the inaugural Planning Scholars program were invited to attend a reception in their honor. The scholars were encouraged to invite their families given that literature had indicated the importance of the support of family members for first-generation college students. A brief overview of the program and scholarships was given and students were awarded certificates.

Soon after, in October, the cohort had their first required meeting. General information about studying abroad was given and the research project was introduced. Students were informed that they would be receiving an invitation to take an online questionnaire related to the research project and that their responses would ultimately drive the coordination of the remaining meetings for the academic year. All 53 students received the questionnaire, which was created in Qualtrics, via e-mail. Students had three weeks to respond to the questionnaire. 35 students responded yielding a 66% response rate.

The end of the questionnaire mentioned that the next phase of the research would require interviews and asked students to indicate whether or not they would be open to being interviewed. The researcher engaged in purposeful random selection of three individuals from the list of ten students who indicated that they were open to being interviewed, ensuring that there was representation of at least one male and one female. The randomization was completed using an online random list generator. The interview protocol was developed from the six constructs that the needs assessment measured in

order to allow for a deeper exploration and triangulation of themes raised by the questionnaire.

An initial review of the needs assessment data revealed that the scholars were most concerned with financing their study abroad experiences and determining what program would be best for them to choose. Therefore, the remaining three cohort meetings for the year were developed around these themes. Meeting two, which occurred in November 2015, focused on goal setting and exploring different programs. Meeting three, which occurred in January of 2016, focused on funding study abroad. Because several scholars indicated that they planned to study abroad in summer or fall of 2016, meeting four focused on addressing pressing questions the scholars still had, peer-to-peer sharing so students who had yet to select a program could find out how others arrived at their decisions, and a video recording from two peers who were abroad to give students a sense of what it would be like to study abroad.

After meeting four, the scholars were invited to take a questionnaire that was similar to the initial needs assessment they took in October. This questionnaire examined whether or not students had moved at all on each of the constructs previously measured while also providing an opportunity for scholars to give feedback about their overall experience in the program thus far. This information was then used to refine the cohort program for cohort 2 scholars, who were selected during summer 2016.

While-abroad phase: The realities of being abroad as a first-generation student. Scholars who studied abroad in either the summer or fall 2016 semesters were invited to participate in the photovoice project. In order to maximize the data that was collected and to attempt for as much diversity as possible, any scholar who desired to

participate in the photovoice project was accepted. This also helped during the post-abroad phase of the research when discussion and analysis of the photovoice projects occurred. Wang, (1999) outlines the methods for photovoice; relevant methods for the current project are shared below:

- Recruit a group of photovoice participants
- Introduce the photovoice methodology to participants and facilitate a group discussion
- Obtain informed consent
- Pose an initial theme for taking pictures
- Provide time for participants to take pictures
- Meet to discuss photographs

Prior to going abroad, a workshop on the photovoice method and ethical considerations of photography was given to help scholars feel prepared to carry out the project. An outline of this training may be found in Appendix G. During the workshop, the group also brainstormed themes related to first-generation college students abroad for the pictures they took while-abroad. While the scholars were abroad, the researcher periodically e-mailed the students reminding them of the themes of which they were to be capturing images. Students then submitted their photos via a shared Google drive folder.

Additionally, all students going abroad were invited to participate in Skype interviews while they were abroad. The interviews occurred roughly halfway through each participant's time abroad in order to capture an "in-the-moment" perspective about the students' experiences abroad.

Finally, all students were invited to join a private Facebook group in case they had questions while they are abroad. This space was designed to encourage peer-to-peer sharing of photos, videos, and discussion from those abroad with those who had yet to go abroad.

Post-abroad phase: 360-degree analysis of first-generation students' experiences studying abroad. After the summer and fall semesters, the students who participated in the photovoice project were invited to a meeting to process their photos through small group discussion. Additionally, participants will be given the opportunity to determine whether or not they want to publically display their photos in a gallery viewing, or perhaps share them with cohorts 1 and 2 of the Planning Scholars program or some other format.

Furthermore, all students were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews designed to help them reflect on their time abroad and participation in the Planning Scholars program. The hope is that by interviewing scholars prior to going abroad, while they are abroad, and after they return, a 360-degree analysis of their experiences studying abroad as first-generation college students might have been obtained.

Data Analysis

This study was conducted under the principles of action research.

Action research is inquiry that is done *by* or *with* insiders to an organization or community, but never *to* or *on* them. Action research is oriented to some action or cycle of actions that organizational or community members have taken, are taking, or wish to take to address a particular problematic situation (Herr and Anderson, 2015, p.4).

By including the scholars in parts of the data collection (the photovoice project) and the meaning-making process, this study trends towards participatory action research, which aims to give voice to those who are often underrepresented.

The study relied heavily on qualitative methods, with some quantitative data collection included for purposes of informing the design of the study and triangulation. In particular, a mixed methods research design was chosen in order “to obtain statistical trends and patterns in the data and get individual perspectives that help explain these trends” (Ivankova, 2015, p.4). Because of the desire to perform an initial needs assessment that influenced the design of the intervention, a sequential quantitative → qualitative mixed methods action research (MMAR) design was selected. “The purpose of a sequential Quan → Qual MMAR study design is to use follow-up qualitative data to elaborate, explain, or confirm initial quantitative results” (Ivankova, p.158). Initial themes raised by the quantitatively-focused needs assessment questionnaire served as the backbone for the subsequent qualitative methods, including the needs assessment interview protocol, and photovoice project.

Needs assessment and end-of-year 1 assessment. Quantitative data from the needs assessment questionnaire and the end-of-year 1 assessment were organized for input into SPSS. Means from Likert scale responses from each assessment were compared for each construct. This allowed the researcher to determine if the cohort program had possibly helped scholars move on any of the constructs being measured. The mean scores from the initial needs assessment were paired with the open-ended questions, and were used to indicate what topics the cohort meetings should focus on and what areas to explore in subsequent qualitative methods.

Needs assessment interviews, while-abroad interviews, and post-abroad interviews. By incorporating interviews during each phase of the scholars' study abroad experiences, a more complete understanding of how first-generation college students approach and actually experience studying abroad was obtained. All interviews were transcribed and then re-read and coded using an inductive approach via HyperResearch. Afterwards, codes were organized into larger themes and any patterns or outliers were identified in order to try to make meaning of the data.

Photovoice Projects. Prior to going abroad, the scholars were given information about the photovoice project and invited to participate during their time abroad. Those that participated were asked to attend a workshop to review details of the project and technique, to discuss issues related to ethics in photography, and to develop the themes that directed their photo-taking abroad. Then, while abroad, the researcher regularly contacted the scholars to remind them of the themes related to being a first-generation college student abroad and to ask students to capture images that responded to the various themes. Scholars then uploaded the images to a shared Google drive folder. Upon return to campus, small groups were organized in order for participants to discuss their photos and to analyze and make their own meaning. The researcher recorded these meetings and looked for patterns or particularly strong statements and images that resonated with the group in order to form conclusions about what the study abroad experience was like for first-generation college students. This was compared with the meanings the students themselves derived from the images they collectively chose to represent the group's analysis, since the group came up with themes based on everyone's photos. Wang (1997) describes a three-stage process that provided the foundation for analysis: selecting,

contextualizing, and codifying (p.380). During the selecting stage, the students chose the image(s) that best represented the community's needs or ideas related to the themes they previously identified about being a first-generation college student abroad. Next, during the contextualizing stage, the group engaged in discussion of the images, which Wang asserts can be likened to the process of storytelling, using the VOICE acronym as a guide: voicing our individual and collective experience (1997, p.381). Finally, this leads to the third stage of analysis, whereby the participants codified three types of dimensions from the discussion. Wang explains the three dimensions are issues, themes, or theories, "They may codify issues when the concerns targeted for action are pragmatic, immediate, and tangible...they may also codify themes and patterns or develop theories that are grounded in the data that have been systematically gathered and analyzed in collective discussion" (1997, p.381). The researcher will now work with the group to determine how the students would like to share their findings with the larger ASU community.

Summary

In closing, table 2 makes evident how the data collected in each phase of the research project was organized into findings that addressed each of the research questions. The needs assessment designed around the six constructs highlighted the specific needs of this cohort of first-generation college students and gave direction for the resulting Planning Scholars cohort program and subsequent interview protocols. The interviews and photovoice project allowed the exploration of individual experiences as they related to the six identified constructs and enabled a subtler understanding of the needs of first-generation college students. Interviewing the students in each phase of the study abroad process (pre, during, and post) provided data to track shifts in perspectives

of their needs and actual experiences with the cohort program and being abroad over the course of their study abroad journeys. Additionally, the photovoice project provided an opportunity for the students to make their own meaning of what it means to be a first-generation college student studying abroad, thereby adding important context to the researcher's own interpretations from the needs assessment and interview data.

Table 2.

Data and Corresponding Research Questions

Instrument	Data Type	Corresponding Research Question
Needs Assessment	Quantitative and Qualitative	RQ 1
Needs Assessment Interviews	Qualitative	RQ 1
End of Year 1 Assessment	Quantitative and Qualitative	RQ 2a
Photovoice Project	Qualitative	RQ 3
While-abroad Interviews	Qualitative	RQ 2b
Post Abroad Interviews	Qualitative	RQ 2b and 3

Mixed-methods analysis and triangulation. Given that the design of this study is a mixed methods sequential quantitative → qualitative design, the multiple datasets were analyzed in such a way that the data from one part of the study informed the process for the next part of the study. Ivankova explains,

To implement connected mixed methods data analysis, practitioner-researchers should first analyze the quantitative data and then decide how these results may inform the direction of the next, qualitative strand, so the

qualitative results can help explain or elaborate the initial quantitative findings (2015, p.249).

The data collected in the quantitatively-focused needs assessment and end of year 1 assessment were analyzed by looking at what means were strongest or were interesting outliers in order to direct the line of questioning in the subsequent qualitative data collection via interviews. Furthermore, triangulation was possible due to the multiple sources of data that were collected. Trends present in the quantitative data were compared with those in the interviews as well as those in the photovoice project to help determine if any particular themes were more prevalent with regards to first-generation college students or if there were some outliers that warranted further study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

There were three main phases of the study: a pre abroad phase, a while-abroad phase, and a post abroad phase. Each phase consisted of multiple data collection methods aimed at answering the three research questions, outlined in table 2. A discussion about the data analysis for each phase of the study follows, starting with analysis of the quantitative data, followed by the qualitative data.

Pre-abroad phase: Quantitative data analysis, needs assessment questionnaire. As outlined in chapter three, during the pre-abroad phase, a needs assessment questionnaire was created to collect data that would inform the development of the cohort program and subsequent iterations of the research. The questionnaire was constructed in Qualtrics and sent via e-mail to the 53 Planning Scholars after the first required cohort meeting where the study was introduced by the researcher. Thirty-five students responded yielding a 66% response rate. Table 3 shows basic demographic information of the 35 respondents.

Table 3.

*Demographic information for respondents to needs assessment questionnaire
n=35*

Average Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity
19	Females=28 Males=7	African American=1 Asian=3 Hispanic=12 Mixed Race=4 Pacific Islander=1 White/Caucasian= 14

Construct one: background information. This construct provided basic demographic information as well as information related to the students' prior exposure to international travel, their family members' and friends' previous exposure to international travel, and the extent to which current events, international news, and other cultures were topics of conversation in their household growing up. Table 4 displays information related to the students' past exposure to international travel as well as counts for those with family members and friends who had travelled abroad before.

Table 4.

Prior international travel for students, their family members, and their friends
n=35

Students Who Traveled Abroad Before	Number of Times Students' Parents Traveled Abroad	Number of Students' Family Members Who Have Traveled Abroad	Number of Students' Friends Who Have Traveled Abroad
9	1-3 Times: 7	1-3 Family Members: 12	1-3 Friends: 14
	4-6 Times: 3	4-6 Family Members: 8	4-6 Friends: 9
	7-9 Times: 2	7-9 Family Members: 1	7-9 Friends: 1
	10+ Times: 3	10+ Family Members: 2	10+ Friends: 7

Although only nine of the students indicated that they had traveled abroad before, many students had either parents, other family members, or friends that they knew who had traveled abroad. Of the nine students who traveled abroad, the most common reasons given for the international travel were vacation or to visit family living abroad. Three students had traveled to Mexico, two students had traveled to Central America, one student had traveled to China, and four students had traveled to Europe.

Table 5 reports the means for the Likert scale items that asked students about whether or not news, international current events, and other cultures were frequent topics of conversation in their household growing up.

Table 5.

Reported means for students' background information

Item	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
13a. Growing up, my family regularly watched the news.	35	1.86	.733
13b. Growing up, my family regularly read the newspaper.	34	2.47	.788
13c. Growing up, current events were regularly discussed at home.	34	2.29	.719
13d. Growing up, international news was regularly discussed at home.	35	2.71	.710
13e. Growing up, other cultures were frequent topics of conversation at home.	35	2.74	.780

Note: Items were measured on a 1-4 Likert scale where 1=strongly agree and 4=strongly disagree

On average, most students' families did watch the news; however, fewer students stated that their families discussed international news and other cultures at home. In terms of the context for working with the scholars, then, it was helpful to know that so few of the students had previously traveled abroad themselves and that, for the majority of the respondents, international news and other cultures were not necessarily frequent topics of conversation at home.

Construct two: awareness of benefits, opportunities, and resources. In addition to understanding if the students were aware of study abroad and planned to pursue it, this construct measured the extent of their awareness of study abroad's potential in academic and professional pursuits, and resources to plan for the experience. The first question asked, "I knew in high school that I wanted to study abroad during college." Twenty-seven students responded with "yes," five responded with "no," and three responded with "I did not know about the opportunity to study abroad during

college. In addition to understanding if the students were aware of and planned to pursue it, this section looked at whether or not the students knew that study abroad had the potential to help them in their academic and professional pursuits and about resources to plan for the experience. Table 6 summarizes the findings related to the students' beliefs about these possible benefits.

Table 6.

Reported means for students' awareness of possible study abroad benefits and resources

Item	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
20a. Studying abroad will make me a more competitive applicant for grad school.	35	1.31	.471
20b. Studying abroad is important for me to be a competitive job applicant in the future.	35	1.49	.658
20c. Studying abroad will be important for my future career success.	35	1.51	.742
24. I am aware of financial aid and scholarship resources for study abroad.	35	1.69	.718
25. I know where to go at ASU for any question I have related to study abroad.	35	1.60	.553

Note: Items were measured on a 1-4 Likert scale where 1=strongly agree and 4=strongly disagree

Going into the Planning Scholars cohort program, the students strongly agreed that studying abroad would make them a more competitive applicant for graduate school and that it would be helpful and important in their future careers. Therefore, the cohort program did not focus at length on expounding the benefits to be derived from completing a study abroad experience. Additionally, students thought that they knew about funding resources and where to go on campus for study abroad-related questions,

however, this result proved interesting when compared to findings related to funding in the following constructs.

Construct three: concerns. The bulk of the questionnaire focused on the construct of concerns since this would help to answer research question one and provide specific information about what topics the subsequent cohort meetings should focus. Students were asked to indicate to what degree they agreed with whether or not they had 17 concerns about studying abroad. These concerns came from the literature review and were also based on the researcher's experience advising students in study abroad. Table 7 gives the mean scores for each item asking about a concern.

Table 7.

Reported means for students' concerns about studying abroad

Item	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
27a. Determining how to pay for study abroad.	35	1.51	.658
27b. Finding courses abroad that will keep me on track for my major.	35	1.89	.796
27c. Understanding how to talk about my decision to study abroad with my family.	34	2.56	.991
27d. Feeling safe while studying abroad.	35	2.09	.919
27e. Determining how to obtain a passport.	35	2.77	.877
27f. Determining how to obtain a visa.	35	2.31	.900
27g. Deciding on a study abroad program.	35	1.97	.822
27h. Developing a plan for responsibilities I have here at home while I am away.	35	2.29	.825
27i. Developing a plan to stay in touch with friends and family back home.	34	2.26	.828
27j. Developing a budget for my living expenses while-abroad.	35	1.60	.651
27k. Traveling abroad on my own.	35	1.80	.797
27l. Dealing with homesickness.	34	2.53	.929
27m. Speaking/taking courses in a foreign language.	34	2.18	.936
27n. Coping with personal needs (medical/dietary).	34	2.47	.861
27o. Navigating issues regarding my sexual orientation.	34	3.24	.890
27p. Navigating issues regarding my religious affiliation.	34	3.15	.958
27q. Understanding cultural differences of those I meet.	34	2.38	.888

Note: Items were measured on a 1-4 Likert scale where 1=strongly agree and 4=strongly disagree

The results of this part of the questionnaire showed that in spite of receiving a scholarship to study abroad, the students still had concerns about funding the experience. Another major concern for the group was finding courses and a program that would allow them to stay on track for their major. Issues related to their own identities were not of major concern to them and many of the logistical matters (obtaining a passport/visa, developing plans) and talking to their families about their decision to study abroad were less of a concern. Therefore, the researcher worked with his colleague and co-mentor of the program to develop content for the remaining three cohort workshops around finding the right program and additional funding opportunities.

Construct four: support. The next construct examined students’ perceptions of support they had for study abroad across their networks. Table 8 shows the mean scores for the Likert scale items within this construct.

Table 8.

Reported means for students’ support in pursuing study abroad

Item	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
30a. My family members tell me that it is important for me to have international experiences.	35	2.31	.832
30b. I feel supported by my family in my decision to study abroad.	35	1.80	.797
30c. I know how to communicate the reasons for my decision to study abroad to my family.	35	1.74	.701
30d. I feel supported by my friends in my decision to study abroad.	35	1.46	.561
30e. I feel supported by ASU faculty and staff (such as my academic advisor) in my decision to study abroad.	35	1.49	.562

Note: Items were measured on a 1-4 Likert scale where 1=strongly agree and 4=strongly disagree

While students did not strongly agree that their family members told them it was important to study abroad, on the whole, they felt supported by their family in deciding to study abroad. This was an interesting and heartening finding given that the literature had indicated that families of first-generation college students might not understand the decision to study abroad and, therefore, not support the endeavor. Additionally, the students indicated feeling supported by their friends and ASU faculty and staff.

Construct five: confidence. Questions in this construct focused on whether or not students felt confident in writing effective scholarship essays and studying abroad away from their support networks. Table 9 gives the means for the Likert scale items related to this construct.

Table 9.

Reported means for students' confidence in pursuing study abroad

Item	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
35a. I can write an effective essay to earn a scholarship for study abroad.	35	1.83	.664
35b. I am confident that study abroad will not delay my graduation.	35	1.91	.818
35c. I feel confident in my ability to study abroad away from my parent(s)/legal guardian(s).	35	1.46	.611
35d. I feel confident in my ability to study abroad away from family members.	35	1.49	.658
35e. I feel confident in my ability to study abroad away from my friends.	35	1.54	.611

38. I feel confident in being away from my normal support network for a given period of time.	35	1.71	.622
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Note: Items were measured on a 1-4 Likert scale where 1=strongly agree and 4=strongly disagree

Overall, students indicated that they strongly agreed with being confident in pursuing a study abroad experience. The lowest score was related to being confident that study abroad would not delay their graduation, which corresponds to the previous reported concern about finding courses that would keep them on track for their major.

Construct six: goals. The final construct concerned the students’ goals for studying abroad and consisted of open-ended responses. Student’s responses to the question, “The number one reason I want to study abroad is” were coded into six main themes: personal growth, academic goals, exposure to other cultures, exposure to new places, to have new experiences, and career goals. The number one reason given was to have new experiences, followed by gaining exposure to other cultures. Answers to the subsequent question, “My main goal for my study abroad experience is” echoed the aforementioned themes with comments such as “To find myself and learn more than I ever could within my country’s borders,” “To have a unique experience that has a positive effect on my life,” and “[To] personally grow and become more culturally competent.”

The needs assessment questionnaire was very helpful in direction in the development of the cohort workshops for the remainder of the academic year. It provided useful context for the students’ backgrounds regarding exposure to international travel, other cultures, and their awareness about study abroad. Given that students’ main

concerns were related to funding and finding a program that would allow them to stay on track, the researcher and his colleague created workshops to address these concerns. Workshop two focused on having students reflect on their goals for a study abroad experience and then introduced them to the Study Abroad Office website's search tools. The hope was that by having students take time to think about the kind of experience they wanted, by reviewing the different types of programs, and by showing them how to search programs, students would feel encouraged to find a program that was a good fit personally and academically. Workshop three centered on financing study abroad and covered federal financial aid options, additional scholarships and grants, and community-based funding strategies, such as crowd-source funding. The last workshop was organized to give students an opportunity to ask lingering questions and to see where the group was at in terms of finding a program. Additionally, two students from the group were already studying abroad by the spring semester, so the researcher contacted them to ask if they would record a video answering some questions about what it was really like studying abroad. This video was shared with the group in the final meeting since the literature indicated peer-to-peer support is effective and to keep the students feeling inspired and motivated to continue their pursuit of study abroad. The next section examines the results of the end-of-year one questionnaire that was given to students upon completion of the cohort workshops in this first year.

Pre-abroad phase: Quantitative data analysis, end-of-year one questionnaire. After the last of the four workshops ended in the spring semester, a modified version of the needs assessment questionnaire was created and given to the students. The main changes to the questionnaire involved removing questions that were no longer applicable and

adding a few questions to ascertain what the students thought of the program. The majority of the items were kept the same so that pre and post scores could be examined, the results of which are discussed in the next section. The questionnaire was sent to 48 students. 33 students started the questionnaire with 27 students completing it in its entirety, yielding a 56% response rate.

Construct one: background information. Once more, the first construct of background information collected basic demographic information about the students. The questions about prior experience with travel and students’ home lives growing up were removed since that information had already been collected in the needs assessment questionnaire. Table 10 gives the basic demographic information of the respondents of this questionnaire.

Table 10.

*Demographic information for respondents to end-of-year one questionnaire
n=33*

Average Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity
19.5	Females=27 Males=5 Other=1	African American=2 Asian=3 Hispanic=12 Mixed Race=2 Other=1 White/Caucasian= 13

Construct two: awareness of benefits, opportunities, and resources. Next, the construct of awareness looked at the students’ awareness of study abroad benefits. Table 11 summarizes the findings related to the students’ beliefs about these possible benefits.

Table 11.

Reported means for students' awareness of possible study abroad benefits and resources

Item	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
20a. Studying abroad will make me a more competitive applicant for grad school.	27	1.37	.492
20b. Studying abroad is important for me to be a competitive job applicant in the future.	27	1.44	.577
20c. Studying abroad will be important for my future career success.	27	1.37	.565

Note: Items were measured on a 1-4 Likert scale where 1=strongly agree and 4=strongly disagree

Although none of the cohort workshops in year one of the program focused specifically on the academic and career benefits of study abroad, it certainly was a theme that was woven throughout the meetings. Students felt rather strongly that studying abroad would, indeed, be helpful to them in their pursuit of graduate school and in their future careers.

Construct three: concerns. The next construct, concerns, had been the main construct driving the design of the cohort program's workshops. The needs assessment questionnaire had indicated that the top concerns students had were related to funding a study abroad experience and in selecting courses abroad that would help them to stay on track for their major. Table 12 displays the mean values for the 17 items related to concerns students had about going abroad after completing year one of the program.

Table 12.

Reported means for students' concerns about studying abroad

Item	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
27a. Determining how to pay for study abroad.	27	1.81	.736
27b. Finding courses abroad that will keep me on track for my major.	27	1.89	.847
27c. Understanding how to talk about my decision to study abroad with my family.	27	2.85	.907
27d. Feeling safe while studying abroad.	27	2.33	.832
27e. Determining how to obtain a passport.	27	2.93	.917
27f. Determining how to obtain a visa.	27	2.37	1.043
27g. Deciding on a study abroad program.	26	2.35	.846
27h. Developing a plan for responsibilities I have here at home while I am away.	27	2.26	.903
27i. Developing a plan to stay in touch with friends and family back home.	27	2.26	.903
27j. Developing a budget for my living expenses while-abroad.	27	1.93	.781
27k. Traveling abroad on my own.	27	2.04	.898
27l. Dealing with homesickness.	27	2.41	.971
27m. Speaking/taking courses in a foreign language.	27	2.41	.797
27n. Coping with personal needs (medical/dietary).	27	2.41	.931
27o. Navigating issues regarding my sexual orientation.	27	3.19	.834
27p. Navigating issues regarding my religious affiliation.	27	2.93	.874
27q. Understanding cultural differences of those I meet.	27	2.48	.935

Note: Items were measured on a 1-4 Likert scale where 1=strongly agree and 4=strongly disagree

Students still agreed that they had concerns related to paying for study abroad and finding courses that would keep them on track for their major. They were less concerned with understanding how to talk about their decision to study abroad with their families and with dealing with personal issues abroad, such as their sexual orientation or religious affiliation. In the next section, analysis of the pre to the post test will reveal whether or not there was any significant movement across the items to better understand if the cohort program had an effect in these areas.

Construct four: support. The construct of support examined whether or not students felt supported by any of their networks in their decision to study abroad; table 13 displays the means for these items.

Table 13.

Reported means for students' support in pursuing study abroad

Item	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
30a. My family members tell me that it is important for me to have international experiences.	27	2.15	.818
30b. I feel supported by my family in my decision to study abroad.	27	1.56	.698
30c. I know how to communicate the reasons for my decision to study abroad to my family.	27	1.41	.694
30d. I feel supported by my friends in my decision to study abroad.	26	1.38	.496
30e. I feel supported by ASU faculty and staff (such as my academic advisor) in my decision to study abroad.	27	1.44	.577

Note: Items were measured on a 1-4 Likert scale where 1=strongly agree and 4=strongly disagree

Again, overall, students agreed with feeling supported in their decision to study abroad by their families, friends, and ASU faculty and staff.

Construct five: confidence. Next, because it was hoped that the cohort program would increase students' confidence in studying abroad, this was included as a construct.

Table 14 gives the means for these items.

Table 14.

Reported means for students' confidence in pursuing study abroad

Item	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
35a. I can write an effective essay to earn a scholarship for study abroad.	26	1.81	.567
35b. I am confident that study abroad will not delay my graduation.	26	1.85	.732
35c. I feel confident in my ability to study abroad away from my parent(s)/legal guardian(s).	26	1.46	.582
35d. I feel confident in my ability to study abroad away from family members.	26	1.38	.496
35e. I feel confident in my ability to study abroad away from my friends.	26	1.38	.496
38. I feel confident in being away from my normal support network for a given period of time.	26	1.81	.567

Note: Items were measured on a 1-4 Likert scale where 1=strongly agree and 4=strongly disagree

Students indicated that they strongly agreed with feeling confident in studying abroad away from their support networks. While they also appeared to agree with being confident in writing an effective essay to earn a scholarship for study abroad, that study abroad would not delay their graduation, and that they could be away from their normal

support network for a given period of time, it was at slightly lower levels. Nevertheless, students did in fact seem confident in pursuing study abroad.

Construct six: goals. In the goals construct, open-ended responses to the question “The number one reason I want to study abroad is” were once again coded into six themes: personal growth, academic goals, exposure to other cultures, exposure to new places, to have new experiences, and career goals. What was interesting to see in this assessment was that so many students cited a desire to experience another culture, followed by the desire to have new experiences. While these two themes remained at the forefront of the students’ goals for their experiences, it seems that more students reported a desire to experience another culture as their number one reason for studying abroad after going through the cohort program. When asked about what their main goal for their study abroad experience was, many students gave statements related to personal growth such as “To gain independence and better myself,” “Become more independent,” and “Develop my personal identity as I observe those of others.” These personal growth statements proved interesting once the researcher conducted interviews with the students upon their return since, as will be discussed in the qualitative analysis section, students frequently cited the amount of personal growth they experienced studying abroad.

Construct seven: reflections on planning scholars program. The final construct measured in the end of year one questionnaire centered upon students’ reflections of the cohort program. Specifically, students were asked to what extent they agreed that the cohort workshops helped them in each of the previously mentioned constructs. Table 15 gives the mean scores for these items.

Table 15.

Reported means for students' reflections on the cohort workshops

Item	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
55a. I found the workshops to be helpful.	25	1.44	.583
55b. The cohort workshops helped improve my awareness of study abroad opportunities, resources, and benefits.	25	1.40	.500
55c. The cohort workshops helped address my specific concerns for study abroad.	25	1.40	.500
55d. The cohort workshops helped increase my feeling of being supported in study abroad.	25	1.40	.645
55e. The cohort workshops helped increase my confidence in pursuing study abroad.	25	1.32	.476
55f. The cohort workshops helped me think of my goals for study abroad.	25	1.44	.507

Note: Items were measured on a 1-4 Likert scale where 1=strongly agree and 4=strongly disagree

Overall, it appears that students found the cohort workshops to be helpful across each of the constructs examined by the questionnaire. Of particular note is that the cohort workshops seemed most helpful in increasing students' levels of confidence in pursuing study abroad. These quantitative results were echoed in the pre, while, and post abroad interviews, which will be discussed in following sections. First, though, the results of a paired samples *t* test of the pre and post assessments will be examined.

Pre-abroad phase: Quantitative data analysis, paired samples *t* test of needs

assessment and end-of-year one questionnaire. A paired samples *t* test was conducted on pre-test and post-test questions that were retained for both assessments. The goal of this test was to discern to what degree, if any, year one of the program resulted in movement across each of the items measured by both questionnaires. Seventeen of the

then remaining 48 students in the program completed both a pre and a post assessment, yielding a 35% response rate. Table 16 (appearing in appendix h) displays these results for the five main constructs. The results showed little statistical significance concerning the movement of these 17 individuals across each of the constructs after the intervention. Therefore, we failed to reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference in pre and post test scores after this intervention across most items. Items where there were significant differences, however, are noteworthy. First, the researcher looked for significance at the $p < .05$ level. At this level, there were only two items of significance: 27o and 27q, both coming from the “concerns” construct.

Item 27o stated, “I am concerned about navigating issues regarding my sexual orientation.” The pre mean of 2.88 meant that most students only slightly agreed that they had this concern. The post mean of 3.31, resulting in a mean difference of .438, meant that students moved to an even lesser degree of having this concern. However, Cohen’s effect size value ($d = .469$) suggested only a small to moderate practical significance. Similarly, item 27q stated, “I am concerned with understanding cultural differences of those I meet.” The pre mean of 2.06 meant that, on average, most students agreed with having this concern. The post mean of 2.69, resulting in a mean difference of .625, meant that students moved slightly away from having this concern. It is worth noting that this is the item that saw the largest difference from pre to post test. In this case, Cohen’s effect size value ($d = .805$) suggested a large practical significance.

It is necessary to explain that the cohort program workshops did not explicitly address either of these concerns since the initial needs assessment did not rate either of these items among the highest concerns students had. One hypothesis the researcher has

concerning the sexual orientation item is that the researcher himself identifies as gay and, although he did not explicitly address this in the workshops, this may have indirectly helped students feel that one's sexual orientation does not necessarily need to be a major concern. Regarding the concern related to understanding cultural differences of those one meets while studying abroad, although this was not the topic of any one workshop, due to the nature of discussing study abroad, issues related to engaging with the other (ex: pushing oneself out of their comfort zone and interacting with locals) did come up from time to time in discussions of what the study abroad experience could be like.

In an effort to see if there might be any more statistically significant movement across constructs, the researcher also looked for significance at the $p < .1$ level. At this level, there were four additional items that were significant. Again, each of these items appears within the construct of "concerns."

Item 27c stated, "I am concerned with understanding how to talk about my decision to study abroad with my family." The pre mean of 2.53 meant that there was some agreement among students with having this concern. The post mean of 2.94, resulting in a mean difference of .412, meant that students became less concerned with talking about their decision to study abroad with their family. The cohort program did endeavor to educate students on the multiple benefits that study abroad could bring them academically, professionally, and personally, so some of the movement may be attributed to students being able to articulate the importance of their decision to pursue study abroad. Nevertheless, Cohen's effect size value ($d = .430$) suggested only a small to moderate practical significance.

Item 27d stated, “I am concerned with feeling safe while studying abroad.” The pre mean of 1.94 meant that most students were quite concerned with this aspect of studying abroad. The post mean of 2.47, resulting in a mean difference of .529, meant that this concern was reduced. Cohen’s effect size value ($d = .685$) suggested a moderate to high practical significance. Again, while a specific workshop did not focus solely on issues regarding safety abroad, the researcher and his colleague frequently referenced the support structures that were in place across programs to help students while they would be abroad, so students may have become more confident in the university and program partners’ abilities to help them be safe while-abroad. This is especially interesting to note given that the November 2015 attacks in Paris and March 2016 attacks in Brussels occurred during this phase of the study.

Item 27e stated, “I am concerned with determining how to obtain a passport.” The pre mean of 2.76 meant that most students did not strongly agree that they had this concern. The post mean of 3.12, resulting in a mean difference of .353, meant that most students disagreed with having this concern after the cohort program. Cohen’s effect size value ($d = .446$) suggested a small to moderate practical significance. Indeed, students were told where to apply for a passport on the ASU campus during the first year of the cohort program, potentially resulting in some movement towards becoming less concerned about this item.

Finally, item 27k stated, “I am concerned with traveling abroad on my own.” The pre mean of 1.65 meant that, on average, students strongly agreed that they had this concern. The post mean of 1.94, resulting in a mean difference of .294, meant that this concern slightly decreased, yet remained a concern. Cohen’s effect size value ($d = .458$)

suggested a small to moderate practical significance. It is difficult, especially for those who have not traveled abroad on their own before, to imagine what that experience will be like, so the researcher posits that including more peer to peer sharing of first-generation students' experiences abroad may help to further decrease this concern for future cohorts.

In sum, there was not much statistical significance when examining the movement of students across the various items from the needs assessment to the end of year one questionnaire. While students did appear to become less concerned across a handful of these items, the majority of them were not the sole focus of any one workshop, but were rather addressed peripherally through workshops which had intended to focus on the larger concerns of funding and finding courses and a program that would keep students on track. Of course, with such a small sample to look at from pre to posttest ($n=17$), it is difficult to approach statistically significant results. Therefore, it is important to consider what the qualitative data from the study reveal.

Pre-Abroad Interviews

In order to help answer research question one, "What are the specific needs of first-generation college students as they prepare for a study abroad experience?", three semi-structured interviews with students were conducted after the first semester of the planning scholars cohort workshops and before they went abroad. The students were selected randomly out of a pool of scholars who indicated they would be open to being interviewed. One male and two females were selected. An inductive, approach to coding yielded four main themes related to the needs of first-generation college students. These themes are presented in table 17 and discussed further below.

Table 17.

Pre-Abroad Interviews: Themes Chart

Themes	Explanations	Examples
Finances	Students' perceptions and beliefs about how past and current financial constraints may prevent them from having a study abroad experience are a chief concern.	"So you got here initially and [study abroad] felt like out of reach?" "Yeah, like it wasn't even like in my plans type of thing because, I, I thought it was going to be like it was most of it financial..."
Leadership and independence	Students' previous engagement with opportunities that foster leadership and independence may be helpful in them pursuing a study abroad experience.	"...so I felt like "Oh if I could do that maybe I could do study abroad" so I feel kind of ok but then I know; this is months so I don't know. "
Family support	Students' family members play a key role in how students approach opportunities such as study abroad, with their support being important in feeling positive about the opportunity.	"I think you just come into [study abroad] with a whole bunch of pressure and like high expectations and things. Like I know, for example, me, since I'm the oldest child and grandchild, it's like everyone's eyes are on me so I think it's not only they're expecting you to do good, like, "Oh, you're going to be the first one to graduate with a degree," but it's also like they want you to do so many things so if you're trying to study abroad, too, that's just another kind of like load, I guess."
Peer support	Students' peers can be an important factor in having them consider a study abroad opportunity.	"I have a friend that just graduated from GCU and I kind of told her my plans and I kind of really trying to go for the fall she's like do it, you know, you're going to regret it if you don't do it, you know, you have the opportunity, do it!"

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the first theme was finances, which correlates to the results of the quantitative needs assessment that was conducted. There were 27 instances of codes related to finances throughout the interviews, including the codes financial barriers, scholarships, foreign currency, and family business, among others. This theme relates to students' perceptions and beliefs about how past and current financial constraints may prevent them from having a study abroad experience. Its multiple references in the data, both quantitatively and qualitatively, testify to the fact that it is a chief concern among the first-generation college students who participated in this study.

Financial concerns ranged from elements of the students' upbringing to current challenges in being at the university. For instance, one student recounted her family's move to Phoenix as having financial underpinnings,

So, um it was I think right when everything economically was going like downhill. And so that was when everything in California just went like super expensive. So one day since it got bad [my grandpa] just decided that he was going to sell [the house] and so we had to move over here with my mom's family, which is my grandma and um, since we didn't have like enough money to buy a house that's why we moved in with them.

In this student's interview, her family's financial background while she was growing up, coupled with the recession, are the backdrop to her eventual pursuit of higher education and its related opportunities. She stated, "...I didn't think I was going to be able to study abroad so it was kind of like a long lost dream type of thing...like it wasn't even like in my plans type of thing because I thought it was going to be like...most of it was financial." It is interesting to note that this student, along with the others, was aware of study abroad as an opportunity, but had written it off as one in which she could not

participate due to financial circumstances. This sentiment was echoed in another student's interview,

I mean the funds have always been like the issue for me like I wasn't sure if I was going to community college or university because of funds um and so I was fortunate enough to get enough scholarships to do that and I'm fortunate enough to get recurring scholarships every year that can help fund my study abroad and so it had always kinda been in the back of my mind but funds have always been the biggest issue for me and so getting this scholarship was like alright, I've got like \$3,000 secured already, and on top of this \$1,000 so I might as well really try for it.

As is evidenced by this student's statement, the Planning Scholarship actually served as the determining factor in his pursuit of a study abroad experience. Without the removal of the financial barrier, then, these students may very well have not considered a study abroad experience, in spite of them having stated that they were indeed interested.

The second theme of leadership and independence was pulled from 74 instances of codes such as leadership, independence, student leader, drive, and others. A very important aspect of this theme appears to be prior involvement in student or co-curricular organizations that afford leadership opportunities. One student in particular made frequent reference to his role in student organizations and occupying various leadership roles resulting in his desire to pursue as many co-curricular opportunities, including study abroad, as possible,

I definitely recognize that it's actually pretty important if you study abroad to use the skills and use the knowledge that you learned and to make it applicable to your everyday life and um to better market yourself cause that's what I'm really geared at right now. Like, that's why I'm involved in organizations, I'm trying to be a young professional like growing up an emerging leader, you know?

Even prior to studying abroad, this student viewed the opportunity as one of many at the university that would help him towards his goal of becoming a young professional leader.

In his interview it was this involvement in student organizations that first exposed him to international topics and study abroad, citing his enrollment in an AP Government debate competition as being the motivating factor for him and his family to begin discussing global events. Involvement in co-curricular activities both prior to and during college, then, may be a helpful precursor in the development of first-generation college students feeling confident enough to pursue a study abroad opportunity.

Related to this are other prior experiences that help students achieve a greater self-confidence and sense of independence. When asked whether or not she was confident to pursue study abroad, another student explained,

I think on a scale of one to ten I'm like at a maybe six, six-and-a-half-ish just because in my sophomore year I did get to go, I was chosen to be a part of a forum so I got to go to D.C. for I think ten days and so it was just that was the first time I ever like rode a plane all by myself and I was like on the other side of the country all by myself and it was for ten days, too so it was kind of like I had to find a person that was supposed to drive me to the place I was going so I had a little bit of experience being all by myself so I felt like "Oh if I could do that maybe I could do study abroad," so I feel kind of ok but then I know this is months so I don't know.

All three students referenced opportunities in their past that gave them experiences of being independent or a leader. As this particular student stated, these experiences helped her to believe that she might, in fact, be able to pursue a study abroad opportunity, whereas some professionals might initially expect first-generation college students to be lacking in the sort of cultural capital that would otherwise typically breed this sort of confidence.

Next, the third theme of family support was in line with considerations from the literature review. This theme was developed across 49 instances of codes such as family concerns, parental support, close family, family experience traveling abroad and others.

Similar to what was learned from the literature review, this theme relates to how first-generation college students' family members play a key role in how the students approach opportunities such as study abroad, with family support being important in their feeling positive about the opportunity.

One student linked the close-knit nature of her family to her Hispanic heritage,

I think [another concern] is me coming from like a Hispanic household. I think it's your parents and like in general, your family is like really protective and so it's that we're very like a family, like in the Hispanic culture it's very attached. Like everyone is kinda close and stuff, so I think the thing was or might be is both for my parents and sibling and me being like so many miles away and then like being we need anything, kind of like, we know we can count on them.

Here, the closeness of the family unit, an element which has been demonstrated to be important for first-generation college students, is shown to be both what has helped the student succeed thus far (we can count on them) and also a potential challenge, and thus concern, for studying abroad. Her family has been a very important part of her support network and so there definitely is a concern about how the removal of that support network may affect her ability to be successful abroad.

Although all students mentioned how important the support of their family was, some students also discussed how the pressure of being the first in their family to have experiences like going to college or pursuing study abroad weighed on them. When asked to comment on how being a first-generation college student considering going abroad might bring unique challenges with it, one student explained,

"I think you just come into [study abroad] with a whole bunch of pressure and like high expectations and things. Like I know, for example, me, since I'm the oldest child and grandchild, it's like everyone's eyes are on me so I think it's not only they're expecting you to do good, like, "Oh, you're going to be the first one to graduate with a degree," but it's also like

they want you to do so many things so if you're trying to study abroad, too, that's just another kind of like load, I guess.

The student reveals a very important aspect of the close-knit relationships many first-generation college students have with their families. Because these students are truly the first in their families to do something like this, often times other family members are looking to them to carry out dreams and desires that they themselves might have had. So, when a student might want to consider an opportunity such as study abroad, if the family sees that as a distraction from whatever it is the family is hoping or expecting the student to accomplish, tensions and pressure may come about. Nevertheless, the theme of family support emphasized how the family unit can actually be a source of drive for first-generation college students, and perhaps, contributes to their cultural capital in this regard. For instance, one student discussed how influential her mom had been in the student's educational endeavors,

So it's always been my mom, I think...she always like pushed us like to go for your education. "That's something that no one can ever take away from you guys. Like anything else materialistic and stuff can be taken away from you guys, but not your education." And she always tells us like, "If I were to die tomorrow, I would want you guys to finish your education, at least finish that for me."

This student explained how it is her mom who is her main support person involving anything to do with education and that it is because of her mom's own unrealized dreams of becoming a registered nurse that she wants better for her own children. While instances such as this no doubt create an important support system for students, the idea of having to help live out your parents' unfulfilled dreams must certainly come with a degree of pressure. Therefore, a central need of first-generation college students involves including their family members in the process throughout the entire experience since they

can at once be important sources of support or pressure.

The final theme raised in these pre-abroad interviews was peer support. This theme was derived from 28 instances of codes such as peer influence, peer training, friends, and more. This theme acknowledges how students' peers can be an important factor in having them consider study abroad. Two of the three students referenced how it was actually because of stories from their peers that they even became introduced to the concept of studying abroad, with one student citing this specific instance,

And um they would always have like students that are seniors or that were like freshmen in college come back that were in the program and they'd talk to us about like how their first year is going like things they didn't know about that now they know about and stuff. So a whole bunch of them started talking about how they wanted to study abroad and we were kind of like what is that? So that's when they started telling us you can like go study like in another country type of thing.

The program referenced by this student was AVID, a college preparatory program that brought in recent high school graduates to speak with high school freshmen and sophomores. It proved to be an integral moment for this student since it was her response to the question "when did you first learn about the opportunity to study abroad?" Moreover, the importance of peers goes beyond just introducing the idea of study abroad, but actually extends to encouraging students to have the experience. Another student explained,

I have a friend that just graduated from GCU and I kind of told her my plans and I'm kind of really trying to go [abroad] for the fall she's like "do it, you know, you're going to regret it if you don't do it, you know, you have the opportunity, do it!"

In this instance, the peer is seen as a confidant from whom the student sought feedback about pursuing this opportunity. First-generation college students cannot necessarily turn

to their parents for advice on which educational opportunities might be worth pursuing since the parents did not have these opportunities themselves. The peer could have just as easily dissuaded the student from participating in the experience. Therefore, the peers of first-generation college students definitely have a role to play in their decision making at college.

While-abroad Interviews

Interviews were conducted while Planning Scholars were abroad in order to capture data to help answer research questions 2a, 2b, and 3:

RQ 2a: After participating in the Planning Scholars program, did students perceive themselves to be more prepared to go abroad than before?

RQ 2b: What elements of the Planning Scholars program did students utilize during their time abroad?

RQ 3: How did first-generation college students make sense of their study abroad experiences?

Students studying abroad in the summer 2016 and fall 2016 semesters were invited to participate in the interviews. Of the 15 students who studied abroad during these terms, four summer students and six fall students participated in the interviews. Eight students studied on programs in European countries, while one student studied on a program in China and one student studied on a program in Costa Rica. Nine students were female and one student was male. Students were e-mailed while they were abroad in order to schedule a time that worked with their schedules and that fell roughly halfway through their program duration. Interviews were conducted via Skype and recorded using a free

application that recorded Skype calls. The following sections detail the themes that the inductive coding process revealed for each of the three research questions.

While-abroad interviews: Themes for research question 2a. An analysis of the while-abroad interviews yielded five themes, outlined in table 18, relating to research question 2a: After participating in the Planning Scholars program, did students perceive themselves to be more prepared to go abroad than before?

Table 18.

While-abroad Interviews: Themes Chart for Research Question 2a

Themes	Explanations	Examples
Planning Scholars program increased confidence	The Planning Scholars program helped students to feel more comfortable pursuing study abroad.	“I think it helped it tremendously in many different levels. Um one it's kind of like you know even with like the group meetings we discussed so many things that it's kind of like always stayed in the back of my mind you know how to do it and when to go abroad this is kind of what you have to do
Planning Scholars program helped with financial concerns	The Planning Scholars program helped students overcome real and perceived financial barriers.	“Like if we didn't have those meetings and stuff I would not have been prepared at all. Even though like my program had pre-departure meetings like our cohort meetings really helped me with budgeting...”
Concerns about making friends	After one year in the Planning Scholars program, students were concerned about making friends while-abroad.	“I was absolutely terrified that I would not find anyone on the program to be friends with.”

Concerns about independence	After one year in the Planning Scholars program, students were concerned about issues pertaining to being abroad on their own.	“...like how is it going to go? I've never been out for this long period of a time. I mean I've done you know, trips here and there periodically, but the longest ones have been with my family so kind of being away that was one of the things I was like wow, will I be able to make it?”
Concerns about foreign language	After one year in the Planning Scholars program, students were concerned about issues pertaining to foreign languages.	“Um, I feel like as I'm not as confident as I could be just because my Spanish is horrible and I get intimidated by the people.”

The first theme raised asserted that the Planning Scholars program helped to increase students' confidence in studying abroad. One question from the while-abroad interview protocol specifically asked, “Can you talk about how the Planning Scholars program did or did not affect your confidence in study abroad?” There were six instances where students responded with statements that were coded under this theme.

Specifically, one student responded,

I think it helped it tremendously in many different levels...I know for me and my family it was going to be like such a big issue even like debating if study abroad is actually a thing for me, especially being the first in my family, um so I think the confidence of being able to know that you know you have that background and you have that um with you guys kind of like walked us through it, through the process and kind of like you know gave us the answers that we were one day going to ask before we asked them so I feel that it was a great backbone.

This student referenced the importance of the Planning Scholars program giving her the “backbone” from which she could address the concerns she expected her family to have about her desire to study abroad. Not only was the potential barrier of lack of understanding by her family addressed, but she felt as though the program provided the

basics of the process of studying abroad and anticipated the questions she did not even know she would have. Another student echoed the preparation that the program gave her,

I think the program um, I think the program made me more confident, um in getting ready to go. Just because we were able to go through all of the resources, and the different meetings that we had where we went over finances and kind of like navigating the website so you could see like where everything was really helpful.

In this instance, the student specifically mentions how the ubiquitous concern of finances was addressed and how the program was helpful in introducing the various resources and navigation of the study abroad website. Across the interviews, all students except for one responded positively that the Planning Scholars program did in fact help them to feel more prepared to study abroad. The single student who responded negatively had this to say, “The program um I don't think it did really (help improve my confidence to study abroad). I mean the scholarship helped.” In this case, although the student did not give any credit to the program for helping her to feel confident in studying abroad, she did address the fact that the scholarship was helpful in her pursuit of the opportunity.

Accordingly, the second theme from the while-abroad interviews that related to research question 2a was that the program helped with financial concerns. Across the responses to the question “Can you talk about how the Planning Scholars program did or did not affect your confidence in study abroad?”, four instances of how the program helped with financial concerns were discussed, suggesting that some of the increase in confidence correlated to the erosion of financial concerns. One student recounted how she felt more prepared than her fellow program peers who were worrying about their finances on the trip,

I feel like it really helped me a lot. Um every little single thing like packing, super...like simple things like that kind of doing like the money, like the currency, how to manage like finances and you did do a budgeting I believe, like workshop type of thing and I feel that has really, really um been helpful just because I like know people that are stressing already and I'm just like, I'm pretty good, you know?

The while-abroad interviews also asked students to comment about whether or not there was anything from the workshops that really stuck with them while they were abroad and several students referenced the financing and budgeting workshop specifically.

However, although the Planning Scholars program did have some positive effects, there were still concerns students had immediately prior to going and during their first weeks abroad. The first theme was a concern about making friends while-abroad. There were seven instances of this theme coded from the interviews. One student expressed his concern by stating, "I was absolutely terrified that I would not find anyone on the program to be friends with." Another student explained,

I think I was most concerned about um I didn't know anyone in the program there are 34 [honors] students that um are on this program and I didn't know anyone so I thought it would be difficult to make friends...

The desire to make friends, be them international or domestic, was a common goal referenced throughout the while-abroad and post abroad interviews, which makes this theme especially poignant, seeing as it was not a cited concern raised by the initial needs assessment, and therefore had not been focused on during the cohort workshops.

The second theme of concerns from the while-abroad interviews related to students' concerns about being independent while-abroad. Six instances of this theme were coded in the interviews and explained how students were nervous about being away

from their typical support networks and negotiating their new environments alone. One student explained,

I think before arriving I was concerned about everything, I was, I think most concerned about probably just being away from like my support system and my friends and my family...I just kind of like envisioned myself like being like alone and scared in another country...

This student made the connection between being away from her typical support networks (friends and family) and the additional concern of not making any friends and being alone in the new environment, suggesting a compounding effect of these main concerns.

Loneliness and independence proved to be two major themes throughout the while-abroad and post abroad interviews, so it is worth noting another student's comment, "I feel like my concern, like the biggest concern like I wasn't even scared to come here, it was just kind of like getting lost or like being lonely." In several of the interviews, students discussed loneliness as a sort of discomfort that one is to avoid in the United States, yet, as will be seen in the post-abroad interviews, students were able to embrace a newfound sense of independence in spite of this initial concern. Nevertheless, immediately prior to going abroad and during the beginning of their programs, several students did not have the self-confidence to be abroad alone.

The final theme relating to research question 2a was the concern about foreign languages. Discussion on foreign languages came up quite a bit in the interviews, and specifically pertaining to concerns or difficulties with foreign languages, there were 11 instances coded. Students studying in locations where English was not the primary language discussed how it affected their initial confidence in navigating the new culture, with one student explaining, "I hadn't um really practiced my foreign language that well

so it was a little bit difficult to find my baggage and everything so it was a little bit scary, it was a little bit intimidating.” Although several students expressed a desire to immerse themselves culturally, grappling with foreign languages proved to be challenging to them because of the intimidation factor. One student cited it as a source of frustration during her program,

I feel like if I pronounce something wrong they act like they have no idea what I'm talking about. It could be like one syllable off and they'll have no idea what I'm saying and I'm like oh gosh...it's really frustrating.

While-Abroad Interviews: Themes for research question 2b. An analysis of the while-abroad interviews yielded three themes relating to research question 2b: What elements of the Planning Scholars program did students utilize during their time abroad? These themes are outlined in table 19.

Table 19.

While-abroad Interviews: Themes Chart for Research Question 2b

Themes	Explanations	Examples
Peer support and interaction	Students found the peer support from the Planning Scholars program to be helpful.	“I think I remember there was one of the specific um workshops where it's like the workshop where you guys were showing us about the experiences abroad with individual students. That's the one that's like stuck the most to me cause it's like, it was like overall studying abroad is scary and getting to it and how to actually prepare it is, it's kind of terrifying, but um I remember that it was like, their experiences was like overall it's amazing, it's like I wanted to be there and now I look back and it's like oh yeah, I'm there, too!”

Financial advice and resources	Students appreciated the financial advice and resources offered by the Planning Scholars program.	“I definitely some of the financial advice that you guys gave us because there was a time when you told us um when we were studying abroad um to like always have cash with us and that was definitely very helpful.”
Mentorship	The mentorship offered by the Planning Scholars program was helpful.	“I think the confidence of being able to know that you have that background and you have that um with you guys kind of like walked us through it, through the process and kind of like you know gave us the answers that we were one day going to ask before we asked them”

Concerning the first theme of peer support and interaction, one student was specifically asked, “In thinking about the Planning Scholars meetings we had before you left, was there anything that’s really stuck with you while you’ve been abroad?” to which she explained the bonding with a fellow Planning Scholar that had occurred,

Yeah, actually me and [name removed] have been talking quite a lot. He's going to Beijing pretty soon and so him and I were talking about it like yeah we've never been abroad before and like we've been talking since I've been here, too, and he's like, we've just been sharing our experiences and stuff so like every time I struggle here I'm like well I'm not alone like maybe [name removed] will go through the same thing and we can talk about it and stuff.

She and a few other students highlighted the fact that it was relationships with other scholars that had left a lasting impression on them while they were actually abroad rather than any one particular workshop topic. Another student shared this sentiment,

I also had various resources in the form of my friends on the trip, who ranged anywhere from 17-50 years old (surprisingly we all got along for the most part). These folks altogether made my trip probably the most amazing experience of my life, especially because I knew I could count on them for anything I was dealing with.

Yet another student recalled feeling some anxiety at the prospect of studying abroad but that ultimately, it was the workshop where a video from their peers who were in Australia that helped her to envision herself abroad and actually made her excited to go. The lasting impact of her peers was the most salient component from the program when asked to comment about what she had taken away from it.

Similarly, another important takeaway from the program was the financial advice and resources. This theme was developed across several of the interviews as students referenced the various financial aspects, from sourcing additional scholarships, to budgeting, to managing personal finances while-abroad that had been discussed in the Planning Scholars program. For instance, when asked what aspects of the program she was using during her time abroad, one student commented,

Yeah, so then I always think it's the little, simple things that I'll think of, but it's like oh, I'm glad they told us like the credit card, I did the international banking which really helpful.

In this and other comments, it was clear that students' financial concerns were not just related to affording the overall experience, but also in managing the logistics of finances abroad. Therefore, the financial workshop proved very useful, both in terms of addressing concerns students had prior to going and while actually being abroad.

The final theme raised in the interviews that related to an element from the Planning Scholars program that the students used abroad was mentorship. The cohort program featured two mentors, who were Study Abroad Office staff members, who led each workshop and who endeavored to let the scholars know that they could seek them out for any questions or problems that may arise as they planned to study abroad. In addition to the earlier student referencing the supportive "backbone" that the program

gave her from having the mentors walk her through the process of preparing to study abroad during the workshops, another student had this to share while abroad,

I think just knowing that I can reach out to you or to [name removed] has been really helpful, too. Like I haven't really needed anything but knowing that I'm like oh, this is hard and you both would be like yeah it is [laughs] is helpful.

None of the students ended up reaching out to the mentors while they were abroad for any issues that may have come up, however, it seemed helpful to them knowing that they did have the support system in place back home via this mentorship. Whereas non-first generation college students may feel that they have their parents they can turn to should a problem arise while-abroad, the students in this study did not necessarily have that support from their parents in the same capacity, so mentorship may have been a suitable substitution.

While-abroad interviews: Research question 2c. Research question 2c simply asked in what ways the Planning Scholars program could be improved. In order to answer this question, the post-abroad interview protocol included the question, “What recommendations do you have for improving the Planning Scholars program for future cohorts?” Almost universally, the scholars did not have suggestions for how to improve the program, with the exception of a few individuals offering some generic advice relating to finding a way to provide students with more program-specific pre-departure information and providing more individualized attention. In each instance, the scholars acknowledged the fact that it would be difficult to do given the variety of programs and locations each scholar would be pursuing. They also indicated that they knew the scholars also had to assume a certain level of responsibility for doing their own research

on their particular program location. Still the researcher believes that there could be ways to address these recommendations for future cohorts, which will be outlined in the following section on recommendations for the future of the Planning Scholars program.

While-abroad Interviews: Themes for question 3. Research question three is concerned with how the students made sense of their study abroad experiences, therefore, the researcher was interested in capturing data while the students were actually abroad to begin answering this question. From the interviews, an overall theme of personal growth was identified, which was broken down into three specific subthemes. These themes are outlined in table 20 and then discussed.

Table 20.

While-abroad Interviews: Themes Chart for Research Question 3

Themes	Explanations	Examples
Independence and confidence	The study abroad experience helped students become more confident and comfortable in their ability to be independent.	“I am a lot more confident in my capacity to be a self-fulfilling individual. I reinforced my knowledge of how adaptable I can be, and I am thoroughly confident I can navigate most situations single-handedly and to the best of my ability.”
Increased cultural awareness	The study abroad experience helped students increase their cultural awareness.	“I think it just like strengthened my [ability] to be more open or like open to other cultures, open to more learning more about stuff that I don't know. So like, I didn't really know anything about relationships between the US and Europe and like international human rights and because of my classes, they are more like getting in depth interests in those, in them I guess you could say.”

Expanding
comfort zone

The study abroad
experience helped
students to try new things
and expand their comfort
zone.

“I didn't think I was going to be
involved much here, it's not like I'm
very involved particularly with clubs but
um I try to put myself out there for
events and stuff like that for our college.
I tried out for the basketball team”

The first subtheme related to the personal growth students began to reference as they tried to make sense of the experiences while being abroad related to independence and confidence. There were 67 instances of codes such as independent, increased confidence, and personal growth which demonstrated how students viewed the experience as helping them become more comfortable with and confident in being independent, even only being at the halfway point of their time abroad. A few students made a keen cultural distinction between their lives in the United States and their lives abroad when discussing how they felt the need to constantly be surrounded by others when back home and became at ease with being by themselves in the new culture. One student explained,

I think this whole experience has really taught me that it is ok to be alone. You're not lonely, but it's ok to be alone. And I didn't realize that was a problem until I came here and I was like oh, I can go do this by myself cause I don't need company, cause usually when I'm back home I like to be in the big crowd or like always surrounded by friends and everything and it's like no, I can be by myself, I can do this. There's no need for me to be like freaking out when I'm not with people.

In this instance, it took studying abroad and being removed from one's familiar support networks and comfort zone to help this student find the confidence in and appreciation for being alone. Until they are forced to do it, students might not realize the capacity, or even interest, they may have for certain things such as being independent. The idea about

latent capacity and strength is an important realization that will be returned to in the photovoice discussion.

Apart from an increased contentment with being by themselves, many students discussed the personal travel that they were arranging and taking part in and how these experiences served to increase their independence. Every student referenced personal trips that they had either already taken or were in the process of planning and themes related to an increase of independence were readily apparent, such as in this student's recount,

I actually just like traveled to Scotland by myself for a weekend and kind of, and I hate flying, and airports really stress me out so going through that whole process by myself and realizing that it was so easy when I was done, I was like it was just this huge revelation that like I could do it and I can be ok and nothing was going to like really like I could handle it.

Although the abroad context is not necessary for students to engage in coordinating personal travel, many students mentioned a desire to take advantage of the opportunity of being abroad to explore as many new places as was possible. Therefore, this goal pushed the students to coordinate such trips and helped them to see that, although they might have initial fears and a lack of self-confidence, after they successfully coordinated such trips they were pleasantly surprised in their capabilities. Therefore, the peripheral opportunities that can often accompany study abroad experiences, such as opportunities for personal travel, may be just as important as the actual study abroad programs themselves.

The second theme of personal growth that students noticed when engaging in sense making of their experiences related to increased cultural awareness. This was a commonly cited goal for most students and 51 instances of codes such as increased

cultural awareness, comparisons to home, and cultural observation alluded to the students feeling as though they were on track to meeting the goal.

As can often occur when students return from study abroad experiences, an increased appreciation for the struggles of international people in the United States was discussed. One student, who holds a student worker position on the ASU campus, shared the following,

So when I get home I know I'm going to have so much more respect for like international people at home because when we go talk to people in restaurants and stuff we have to guess "oh do they speak English, do they speak our language?" And if they do, they maybe don't speak it very well so we have like a really hard time communicating with them and so I know like at home there's a lot of people who don't speak English very well on campus and so sometimes I would get pretty frustrated, even like at the Career Services center where I work, like I sometimes get kind of frustrated cause we can't communicate and now like I'm going to try so much harder to make it like easier on them cause I know how stressful it is just being just kind of stranded I guess.

In this student's case, the difficulty she experienced in navigating a culture whose primary language was not English helped her begin to understand the difficulties the students she encounters at ASU likely face. This revelation shows the beginning development of cultural empathy and understanding and is a powerful takeaway with which many international educators hope study abroad alumni will indeed return home.

While most of the students elected to study abroad in European countries, one student studied in Costa Rica. In explaining her rationale for choosing to study in Costa Rica, the student revealed her goal to increase her cultural awareness and the challenging progress she was already making towards meeting that goal,

I chose [Costa Rica] because I wanted to definitely become more cultured ...I feel like at home, like in America we're so used to having certain things available to us like being able to flush stuff in the toilet or like here

I don't constantly have a phone that works with the service here but I mean everything is super terrible. It's not fast or anything like the US so I think just being able to be forced almost to connect with like the people I'm with or do things hands on is really helpful to me just to try and interact with people. And then also learning Spanish...I hate it right now but I know I'm going to appreciate having this opportunity to be like totally immersed with the language and everything, whenever I get home.

This response indicates the presence of personal growth. There are some frustrations the student expresses about not having conveniences similar to what she is used to back home in the States, but she chose the country of Costa Rica specifically out of a desire to increase her exposure to other cultures that were wholly different from her own and is looking ahead to the benefits she believes will be derived from the experience, no matter how difficult it is for her in the moment. Responses such as this one illustrated that the students were well aware that the challenges they encountered abroad would ultimately lead to their overall growth as an individual and as a more culturally-informed world citizen.

The final theme under the personal growth umbrella was expanding one's comfort zone. Codes such as expanding comfort zone, trying new things, and exploration contributed to 38 instances of this theme. As with increased cultural awareness, expanding one's comfort zone was a commonly cited goal for students, as one student pointed out:

Cause I know...at school we're surrounded by all these different cultures but...if I wanted to stay in my comfort zone I totally could but out here...I don't really have that choice so...be comfortable with being uncomfortable I guess is another one of my goals.

For some students, then, the abroad context provided the catalyst for pushing themselves outside of their comfort zones and working towards the idea of “being comfortable with

the uncomfortable.” The disruption to one’s normal routines encouraged the students to try things they otherwise might not have.

Another student remarked about expanding her comfort zone and how her parents felt about the accomplishment,

... I'm not scared to struggle through my Spanish and try to learn and make a fool out of myself with these people, but I think it's all a big growing thing, like my parents are telling me they're so proud of me for stepping so far out of my comfort zone and I think I needed to just gain more experience and understanding of things. I definitely feel like I'll come home a little more mature maybe.

This comment contradicts the notion that the families of first-generation college students do not always appreciate the benefits that may accompany study abroad. Furthermore, this student’s explanation revealed how by pushing herself to do things that were difficult and that she might not otherwise pursue, she was working towards increasing her maturity, demonstrating the overall personal growth that was referenced by all students in the while-abroad interviews.

Post-Abroad Interviews

Interviews were conducted after the students returned from their study abroad programs in order to answer question three: how did the students make sense of their study abroad experiences? Eleven students (1 male and 10 female) participated in post abroad interviews, five who had participated on a summer program and six who participated on a fall semester program. In total, five themes were found, as shown in table 21.

Table 21.

Post Abroad Interviews: Themes Chart for Research Question 3

Themes	Explanations	Examples
Independence and confidence	The study abroad experience helped students become more confident in their ability to be independent.	“for personal growth, like, I don't know, I feel like I could navigate like any situation now, like even if its stepping out of my comfort zone because I can kind of draw on that experience in Europe and be like well why am I intimidated for this?”
Differences from peers	First-generation college students noticed how they differed from their peers in how they dealt with issues that came up while-abroad and how they appreciated the overall opportunity.	“I feel like other people definitely had more ... They weren't so far out of their comfort zone, like a lot of them spoke fluent other languages because their families had traveled and their parents had these great pointers for them and all these things was more like my parents were just like, ‘Have fun!’”
Take advantage of opportunity	First-generation college students felt that they had to do as much as they could in order to maximize the opportunity and showed a great appreciation for the experience.	“That was our first trip. It was our least planned trip 'cause it was literally the week we got there. We realized how many places we wanted to go to and we realized how much time we had and how many weekends we had, so we were like, ‘Okay. We kind of have to take advantage of this.’”
Share with others	First-generation college students had a desire to share their experiences and the importance of study abroad with other first-generation college students and their families.	“I think it reaffirms my study abroad experience to like share that with other people and share the resources, like hey, the ASU Study Abroad Office offers is there like, there are scholarships, like there for you.”

Homesickness	First-generation college students encountered homesickness while-abroad and many times this was surprising to them.	“I didn't think I would have a problem with anything, but then...I'm still surprised by like how homesick I was.”
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Building upon the personal growth students mentioned in the while-abroad interviews, the theme of increased independence and confidence was again referenced in the post abroad interviews. There were 138 instances of codes such as independent, increased confidence, and personal growth. Some students mentioned an increase in their confidence that would allow them to pursue other international opportunities, including the possibility of one day having an international career. One student explained,

I realize that I have so many avenues before me that not only study abroad's helped shed some light on but just realize I could easily work internationally; I could handle that aspect and I think maybe it hasn't shown me exactly what I want to do but it's made me realize that I can pretty much do anything at this point if I can just steal my way through it.

Whereas the idea of independent international travel may originally not have been a feasible thought for several of the students, the fact that they had persevered in their study abroad experience gave them a newfound sense of confidence, which helped to broaden the types of future opportunities they might now pursue.

Additionally, some students indicated how their experiences abroad helped them recognize leadership qualities in themselves and improved their academic confidence. One student in particular recounted the pleasant surprise of being regarded by her peers as the leader of the group who helped organize all matters from navigating around to directing their group project,

I think it definitely increased my confidence because I felt more capable of either traveling alone or being abroad and navigating unfamiliar either situations or people and also having my peers recognize me as someone to turn to for navigation or in terms of our marketing project, asking questions about how something should be presented that also helped for my academic confidence. I know marketing concepts and really like applying them in a more legitimate setting, really makes the educational experience more concrete. For personal growth, I feel like I could navigate any situation now, even if it's stepping out of my comfort zone because I can kind of draw on that experience in Europe and be like well why am I intimidated for this?

Throughout this particular student's interview, she explained how her peers would turn to her for direction although she had not been expressly vying to occupy a leadership position within her peer group. The natural appointment of her as the group's leader, coupled with the application of marketing principles in an abroad context, not only gave her a sense of independence, but also an increased confidence in her academics. As the end of her quote suggests, when she encounters adversity going forward now, she will look back to her time in Europe and draw upon the strengths she obtained. For all of the first-generation college students interviewed, the experience of being alone so far away from their support networks was an empowering opportunity that confirmed they could, in fact, succeed and many students similarly noted that they would draw upon this realization to overcome future obstacles.

The study abroad experience helped first-generation college students realize some key differences between them and their peers on their programs. There were 33 instances coded which revealed two main areas of difference: how the students dealt with issues that arose on their program compared to their peers and how they appreciated the opportunity compared to their peers. This theme lends support to the theory of First-Generation Strength, which is discussed in the photovoice project.

First, several students noticed how when an issue would come up on the program, their peers would be quick to call their parents back home to talk through sorting it out or to have their parents handle the issue altogether, whereas, the first-generation students did not have that luxury. One student shared about when her flight home was cancelled and how she had to figure things out on her own,

And so I was like well what am I going to do? And the other kids were like oh my dad's fixing it back home. And I was like, well, my mom doesn't even know how to call to an airport, like, they've never been on a plane and so I had to, I went up to the front desk and I was like can I use your phone?

The lack of experience the students' families had with study abroad meant that the students had to take on a much more independent nature than many of their program peers. However, for some, their families may have actually worried less about their child being abroad than the parents of the peer students. A few students mentioned noticing how their peers would constantly be communicating with their parents while-abroad and that they, while keeping their parents abreast of what was going on, adopted a much more independent approach. One student explained this as a sense of trust her parents had in her independent nature,

I noticed like a lot of, a lot of, my classmates would kind of like often times like call home or um like be texting their families often um so I felt like they were like a lot more tied to home because of their like uneasiness but I felt like for me like I wouldn't be worried about my parents worrying about me ...like I think my parents trusted me more to like navigate through the different situations so like they would be worried but not to a point where I'd feel like I was held back in any way. Um, but in whatever if I went to the Prague castle that day and whatever experience I had that day I could share that with my family at the end of the day, like hey, this is what I did today. Um and then they're really excited about that versus kind of um like some other students had parents that were like significantly more worried that they'd have to like call either every night or every couple of nights and stuff like that um and I feel like my parents trusted

me more because they knew that I was capable and um I did have a more independent spirit, so they kind of let me go and explore and shape my own experience which is different than I think a lot of the other parents.

The trust that this student's parents had could very well have been developed over a period of time from the student, like other first-generation college students, proving that they are able to navigate situations in which their parents had no previous experience, thereby demonstrating a certain level of independence. This aligns with the aforementioned theory of First-Generation Strength, the idea being that because first-generation college students have had to find ways to pursue opportunities that their family members have not, they have had to develop certain tactics and strengths which help them overcome a variety of new obstacles. This could very well make them an ideal candidate for a study abroad opportunity, an idea that will be returned to in the next section.

The second difference first-generation students noticed was that, compared to their peers, they seemed to be more appreciative of the opportunity they had to study abroad. In describing a sort of thoughtful presence while being abroad, one student described the impact of the opportunity,

I think I was just more there and more in depth with the situation because this is something that my family had never really done or had the opportunity to do and so on behalf of myself and them I had to be fully appreciative of everything I was doing and so I think being a first-generation student um impacted in the way that I was just like more comprehensively aware of everything that was going on and the long-term impact and the significance of every action I made, like every turn I made, every like direction I looked in um I think being a first-gen student really helped it.

As previously noted, students felt an obligation to maximize the opportunity of being abroad for their family members who never had the same opportunity. Not only were

students seeking out things that they wanted to do, but they were attempting to take part in as much as they could so that way they could share it with their family members back home. When asked what piece of advice they might give future first-generation students who are preparing to study abroad, many students mentioned the idea of “taking advantage of every opportunity” and being open to all experiences with no expectations. In sum, first-generation college students perceived themselves as having approached being abroad with a greater sense of excitement and appreciation than did their peers, who some described as being “bored and unappreciative.”

Forty-three instances coded across the interviews related to the theme of taking advantage of the opportunity. Students indicated that they believed they had to do as much as they could while-abroad in order to maximize the opportunity and show their great appreciation for the experience. Some of this belief likely stemmed from the pressure of being the first in their families to be afforded the opportunity. One student commented,

I think it's like ... Well, for me, I am a first generation college student, so I'm like, being in college is already an experience my parents didn't have and then going abroad is this completely different experience. I'm like, "I'm here, I'm going to make the most of it." I think that's why I was doing everything I could.

“Making the most of it” involved saying “yes” to opportunities whenever possible, be it volunteering, joining a student organization while abroad, or doing as much personal travel to other locations as possible. For several students, the desire to maximize the opportunity served as the driving factor in helping them to expand their comfort zones and try things they otherwise would not have. It also served as a way to combat bouts of homesickness, with one student explaining,

Yes, you are in another country and you're already doing it, but that's not as far as you can go. Um, so continue, take advantage of every little bit of it. Yeah. I know, I remember um towards the end I was like ok I'm ready to go home. And I was like but I know if I go home then I'm going to want to be back here and initially that's kind of how it happened and you sit, your times in you know where you're staying like I'm sitting here and I'm in a completely other country like why am I sitting in my bed?

Overall, students seemed especially aware of how rare an opportunity studying abroad was for them and were able to focus on that awareness driving them to maximize their time abroad.

Students made sense of their study abroad experiences by seeing them as experiences which they needed to share with their families and other first-generation college students. This theme was derived from 27 instances of codes like share with others, peer influence, and desire to share with family. Rather than solely viewing study abroad as an opportunity from which they alone would benefit, many students indicated a desire to return to the States to either inspire their family members to travel abroad or to provide support for other first-generation college students. One student commented about the change in relationship with his younger brother that resulted from him having returned from his time abroad,

Yeah, so I want him to like you know grow and become a little bit cultured and stuff and travel the world a little bit and see like from my eyes why it was so important for me to study abroad and so I think that the relationship is changed for him that he's more curious and he's more like wanting to get out of the house and he's more eager to be done with high school and go to college and stuff or whatever he wants to do and kind of explore the world...

In this instance, the younger brother's goals may have been influenced by having witnessed his older brother have an opportunity to study abroad, but this student also mentions his own wishes for his younger brother. This particular student described an

international trip that he was organizing and funding whereby he would be taking his brother to Europe the following summer to further foster this change in goals. Other students similarly mentioned the impact their experiences abroad had on their parents, with one student commenting that her mother seemed to gain some confidence in pursuing her own desires to travel abroad, “And it's funny because my mom has been saying forever that she wants to go to Guadalajara and it's not that far away but she's always waiting for my dad to take her, and she's like, “[Name removed] went all over the world. I can go by myself!”

Moreover, having studied abroad, several of the students indicated a desire to give back and share their stories with other students to help inspire and support them in having the same opportunity. One student explained,

I feel that those small moments that I took to really take everything in as a first-generation student it was something so much that you can't even explain and it's just something that you say you know I want to start this for them you know other generations can follow in my steps within my family and if there's any other person that may need that help like I can tell them. I can have that experience for them.

The students were aware of the continuation of the Planning Scholars program with additional cohorts starting each year and many of them indicated a desire to be involved by sharing their stories showing an inherent recognition of the important of peer support.

A final theme from the post-abroad interviews was homesickness. Across most interviews, students indicated that they experienced homesickness at certain points and many were actually surprised at having this experience. Most instances of homesickness related to being away from their family members for an extended period of time, however, in every case, students mentioned having the ability to overcome it. Students

were able to give suggestions for defeating homesickness, including establishing a routine, relying on peer support, or, as this student explains pushing through to expand one's comfort zone,

Well um, when I got there um it was kind of like so much going on that it really didn't come to mind um during the middle of it where I was just like wow, ok, I've been here kind of awhile it kind of started hitting me where I was just like you know I think it's good enough, I want to go home, but then I think because the program was a little bit longer than other programs it really pushed me outside of my limit it was just like no [name removed], you're not just going to go for a week and then go back to your comfort zone.

The fact that no student returned home from their study abroad program early and all who experienced homesickness were able to overcome it shows a resiliency that these students had and supports the theory of First-Generation Strength, especially since homesickness was not a topic on which much time had been spent during year one of the Planning Scholars workshops.

Photovoice Project

Evoking principles related to participatory action research, the photovoice project gave Planning Scholars studying abroad during the summer 2016 or fall 2016 semesters the opportunity to have a direct voice in the meaning making from the study, and also contributed data to answer research question three. Of the 15 students who studied abroad during one of these terms, 14 students submitted photos, and ten students participated in the debrief meetings. As described in chapter three, two photovoice debrief meetings were held; one after the summer students returned, and one after the fall students returned; five students participated in each meeting. Four main themes were developed from these debrief meetings. Select photos, chosen by the researcher based on

student discussions at the debrief meetings, are included to offer a visual example of each theme. This section concludes with a brief discussion regarding the overarching theory the group came up with regarding first-generation college students and study abroad.

Theme One: Independence.



Figure 1: Independence: Ferris Wheel



Figure 2: Independence: Mozart Concert

Similar to the theme raised in the while-abroad and post-abroad interviews, the theme of independence appeared in the photovoice project. Nearly all participants shared photos which they claimed exemplified a form of independence, be it them traveling on their own for the first time, or a newfound sense of independence brought about from their experiences abroad. The two photos shared here are examples that led to the discussion of this theme. Figure 1 depicts a scholar right after landing in Helsinki. Of the contemplative nature of the photo, the student shared,

Me and two of my friends on the trip ran into this ferris wheel, we went on it and I remember when I was on this ferris wheel on the top looking over the whole city it was my first time going to Finland, first time going to Europe, first time going overseas, and I was just in shock I was just starting at the whole Finnish land, and I was just like, I was really shocked. It was kind of emotional, I don't know, we're all first-gen students, I was just saying to myself, wow, I'm pretty awesome, I got myself here. I'm in Finland right now and like this is all because of the hard work I've put in.

This photo encapsulates that independent spirit many of the first-generation college students discussed and, for this particular student, represented the first moment in which she appreciated that it was her independent nature that helped her accomplish her goal of studying abroad.

Figure 2 provides an example of how several of the scholars pursued opportunities that were important to them, even if it meant doing so alone. In this picture, the student is captured in front of a poster promoting a Mozart concert that she attended in Vienna, Austria. The student had traveled to Vienna on a personal trip with some of her peers. She had played flute in high school, and so when she discovered that there was this Mozart concert, she desperately wanted to attend. When none of her peers

would attend with her, she decided to just pursue the opportunity alone. The student explained,

So this is one of my favorite memories because this is when I veered away from the group and I was able to fulfill my own plan. I really wanted to listen to Mozart's music in this beautiful concert hall...so this was just like a really awesome experience because I could fulfill my own dream and make that a reality and everyone else was just eating dinner. It was cool to be in the city with them but know that I was having this experience.

Some of the most impactful moments students had during their time abroad were those moments in which they pursued opportunities that mattered to them or when they had moments alone in which they were able to check in with their own desires and goals. As this student's picture and story revealed, it can be empowering to take control and accomplish one's own goals, something of which first-generation college students have ample experience.

Theme 2: Facing fears and expanding one's comfort zone.



Figure 3: Facing Fears and Expanding One's Comfort Zone: Cliffs of Moher



Figure 4: Facing Fears and Expanding One's Comfort Zone: Cuban Dancing

Another theme that was well-represented in the interview data that also came from the students' analysis of the photos was facing fears and expanding one's comfort zone. Studying abroad afforded most of the students with considerable opportunity to do things that they normally would not do back home, including things of which they may have typically been afraid. These experiences were an important part of the personal growth and confidence building that many of the students reported having after their time abroad. The two selected photos offer some examples of ways in which scholars accomplished this.

Figure 3 was taken by a scholar who visited the Cliffs of Moher in Ireland as part of a pre-arranged group trip. The photo illustrates how she overcame her fear of heights to take advantage of the opportunity of being at this beautiful landmark, something she might not have otherwise attempted. Coincidentally, there were several photos shared by students relating to overcoming a fear of height. The fear of height, however, is rather

symbolic as many of the scholars faced their fears in order to maximize their experiences abroad. This relates to the earlier theme of taking advantage of opportunities that was raised in the post-abroad interviews.

Figure 4 illustrates another student overcoming her fears. This picture depicts a group outing at a restaurant in Cuba where the staff invited attendees to dance with them and learn traditional Cuban dance moves. This student mentioned being very timid and having no previous dance experience prior to the program. However, after challenging her shyness and having this experience, she actually enrolled in a salsa class in which the instructors did not speak any English. The student said, “It relates to trying new things, it’s like if someone like pulled me out [in the States] to dance in front of people I would like, no, crawl into a hole.” This provided yet another example of how the desire to take advantage of as many opportunities as possible and the abroad environment worked to expand their comfort zones.

Third Theme: Family.

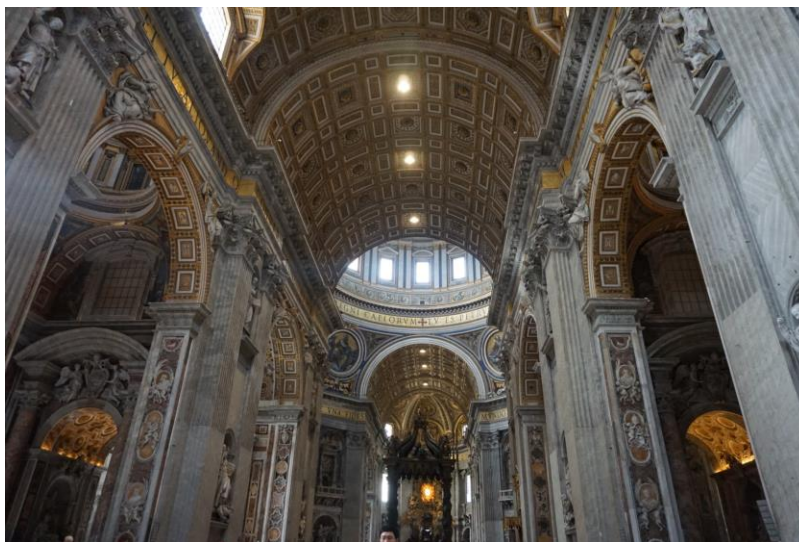


Figure 5: Family: St. Peter's Basilica



Figure 6: Family: Prague

The third theme that came from the students' analysis of the photovoice project was that of family. Mirroring themes raised in the initial literature review, the important connection between first-generation college students and their family was certainly felt while they were abroad. Some students mentioned moments where seeing certain places would make them think about their parents and how special it was that they were accomplishing something as extraordinary as studying abroad. Other students were fortunate enough to have their family visit while they abroad, resulting in a profound shared family experience.

Figure 5 was taken by a scholar whose family came to visit her while she was abroad. She planned a surprise trip to Rome. When the student brought her family into St. Peter's Basilica, she said it was very touching to witness the look on her parents' faces and shared,

Later I found out it was one of my dad's dreams to see the Vatican. I didn't know that, in fact it was the hardest thing ever to get my dad to come visit me. It was the day before the flight he was still telling me he wasn't going to go. Just because he's a stubborn person he's so used to staying where he's at, he doesn't travel much. For him to go all the way across the ocean to see me it was kind of crazy, but that was really meaningful to me, hearing my dad say that because it wasn't just my dreams coming true, it was my parents' and my family's [dreams coming true], too.

Relating to the theme of sharing with others from the while-abroad interviews, this student demonstrates how powerful of a moment it is to be able to share the experience of being abroad for the first time with her family. Other scholars also mentioned how studying abroad was much bigger than just their own dreams and desires and meant a lot to their families as well, so actually being able to have one's family abroad with them surely amplified the positive experience.

Similarly, figure 6 shows a shared family experience where the family of another scholar traveled with her to Europe and dropped her off in Prague for the start of her program. Not only did having some time to travel with her family before her program help her become more prepared for her time abroad, the student echoed comments about this time being a powerful shared family experience,

The last time everyone was together in one place was Tucson. It was a really strengthening moment because we don't get to experience new things together often. My family felt less worried having seen Prague; it helped me start abroad feeling good.

In addition to the experience being a meaningful one to the family, it provided a way to alleviate concerns on the part of the student and her family since they had seen the city in which she would be living and seen her navigate being abroad. While not every first-generation college student will be fortunate enough to have their family visit them, these

photos and the scholars' discussion do speak to the importance of including family members throughout the process of studying abroad.

Fourth theme: Making friends and peer support.



Figure 7: Making Friends and Peer Support: Great Wall of China



Figure 8: Making Friends and Peer Support: Roommate Leading the Way

An often repeated concern and goal scholars mentioned throughout their study abroad experience related to making new friends. Furthermore, peer support while studying abroad was an important way in which first-generation college students navigated difficult situations or created new support networks to replace what they had left behind. Consequently, the appearance of this theme in the photovoice project was not surprising, nevertheless, the photos students shared relating to this theme were quite powerful. The scholars discussed how the friendships they made on their programs were some of the most intense bonds they have yet to foster. They explained that the strength of these friendships was born out of sharing common challenges together and that they became an important source from which they would find strength to persevere.

Figure 7 was shared by a student who studied in Beijing and shows a group of friends camping at the Great Wall of China. The student provided a very powerful caption of the image which conveys the magnitude of the bonds this group established during their program,

A forge built from the common pursuit of greater purpose. A fire ignited by the collective energy of individual passions. The steel of apprehension worn down by the hammer of camaraderie. Bending, twisting, and working the metal--the pressures only annealed their spirit. These were the bonds cast in Beijing.

Although the formation of strong bonds on study abroad programs is not unique to the first-generation college student experience, something that may indeed be a unique quality is the extent to which these students feel an appreciation for the support their peers provide them. This was conveyed in figure 8 as a student realized her roommate was always appearing ahead of her in photos,

I wanted to [include this photo] because that's my roommate, I think that every picture I took everywhere she was right in front of me, I was always in the back, I always wanted to be taking pictures, and everywhere I traveled [she] was always with me. She was never really scared...I guess we both were but together we decided we would do everything.

Whereas first-generation college students did exhibit a great deal of independence on their programs, for most, it was very important to develop meaningful relationships with the fellow participants on their programs. While initially concerned about the prospect of this, most did succeed in this goal and acknowledged the important role their peers had to play in shaping their overall experience abroad as a successful one.

Overarching theory: First-generation strength. Group analysis of the photovoice project revealed the aforementioned four main themes, however, towards the end of each discussion, the students came to an interesting realization that established a theory about first-generation college students and how they might approach a study abroad experience. The theory, dubbed by the researcher as First-Generation Strength, relates to the idea that because first-generation college students have had to overcome many obstacles in their lives just to get to college, they have developed certain skills and a familiarity with independence that might actually make them an ideal candidate for a study abroad experience. Parallels to resiliency theory can be drawn and is certainly an interesting consideration in light of the cultural capital theoretical framework under which this study was designed. Whereas cultural capital theory might suggest that first-generation college students lack certain experiences and resources from their upbringing that would predispose them to one, pursue an opportunity like study abroad, and two, succeed in it, the inverse would suggest that there may be other capital that they bring to the experience which proves to be quite helpful. In effect, the students' discussion of this theory

resulted in a transformation of framing where instead of approaching supporting these students from a deficit point of view, one focuses on the students' resilient nature. Of this First-Generation Strength, one student summarized,

I think with the problem solving, I think a lot of that stems from independence and from independence stems self-reliance. Like you have to take it into your own hands and be like I'm at this by myself, I have resources and stuff, but I have to navigate this by myself for my own self-confidence and self-development. And so like, through all that and through this experience we actually had an advantage going into studying abroad because we're used to self-reliance and being able to adapt to situations that call for like a judgment call and you have to make a decision right now and chances are you are probably by yourself making this decision with other people that don't know what to do and so maybe there might be a trend in first-generation college students that do study abroad where natural leadership is more prevalent because they just kind of naturally know how to handle situations by themselves.

The implications of this theory and the themes derived from the data will be examined in chapter five as implications for the future of the Planning Scholars program and propositions for the furtherance of research surrounding first-generation college students are explored.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Implications for Working with First-Generation College Students in Study Abroad

This study examined the needs of first-generation college students as they relate to study abroad, how to develop a program that might support them in this opportunity, and how they make sense of the experience. Throughout the course of the project, a theory of how first-generation college students approach and ultimately succeed in study abroad was developed, thanks in large part due to the participants' perspectives. Through their discussions of the challenges they faced in preparing to study abroad and while actually being away, the scholars realized that they brought certain strengths to the experience that they believed to be unique to first-generation college students. The scholars thought that because they often had to navigate situations back home independently, such as applying and negotiating through all that is involved with attending a large institution like ASU, that they were uniquely positioned to succeed in getting themselves through a study abroad experience. While they might not always know the questions to ask nor the solutions to problems that occur while abroad, they knew that they could depend on themselves to work through most situations. Upon entering the study abroad experience, these students felt confident that they would manage to work through the unknown. This suggests a unique First-Generation Strength that positions these students as candidates who would likely thrive from a study abroad experience.

The fact that they came up with this theory was an exciting revelation for the researcher, who had initially approached this project from a cultural capital framework

that trended more towards what first-generation college students might lack. Indeed, there is research that looks at resilience theory and how it can contribute to student success for traditionally disadvantaged students. In a study on students from low socio-economic backgrounds, Morales explains,

By applying a resilience paradigm, colleges and universities can attempt to enhance and replicate the attributes and conditions that successful poor students have identified as critical to their success. Another benefit of resilience theory is that, because it looks at success over time, the longer term benefits of particular attributes and conditions can be assessed. Finally, the resilience model allows for a sense of how multiple protective factors can work collectively, supplementing each other as they contribute to the success of the student. (p. 93, 2014)

Through the research, it was learned that first-generation college students are strong, independent students who have the potential to thrive under pressure and who are highly capable of solving things for themselves. While they have an independent nature about them, they carry important bonds with their families forward in their academic and professional pursuits. These relationships can be the source of immense support and pride but also pressure. Whereas the pressure may contribute to a certain level of stress, it also serves as a source of inspiration and drive to help these students stretch themselves past what would otherwise be comfortable.

In the context of study abroad, this has the potential to allow for enormous personal growth that can further enhance the first-generation strength the students already possess. Although in their home country, these students were already exhibiting aspects of independence and confidence by pursuing things that others in their families had not already experienced, while abroad, the students felt even

more compelled to take advantage of most opportunities that crossed their paths. Enticed by the once-in-a-lifetime prospect of study abroad, students felt emboldened to seek out locals, even when concerns about the foreign language or new culture initially scared them. They let go of insecurities related to their timidity in favor of fulfilling their goals of developing new friendships. They took a chance at organizing their own trips to places that they and their families had only ever dreamed they might visit. The study abroad experience took their first-generation strength and amplified it to a degree that will likely enable the students to pursue even larger opportunities that they might have previously believed to be out of their reach.

The implications from the theory of First-Generation Strength are profound for the future of the Planning Scholars program. If principles of resilience theory can be integrated into the program so as to capitalize on the cultural capital and unique strengths first-generation college students do bring to their education, then a sense of empowerment can be fostered even more so than what was accomplished in this iteration of the project, allowing for even more personal growth to occur during the students' time abroad. If the message of First-Generation Strength can be promoted broadly at the university, then perhaps more first-generation college students who do not receive the Planning Scholarship will also feel confident looking into study abroad and other extra-curricular activities.

Implications and the Future of the Planning Scholars Program

The findings of the research will have a direct effect on the continuation of the Planning Scholars program. First, there are a few aspects of the program that fell outside

the scope of this project that warrant being examined. Second, the framework under which the program was designed will be changed given new understandings of the first-generation college students who participated in year one of the program. Finally, improvements to the program will be made given the findings and suggestions from the scholars.

The present study's main goals were to discover the needs of first-generation college students as they seek out a study abroad experience and to determine how the Planning Scholars program might support them. During the process of establishing the program, however, participants' responses and contributions revealed concerns that need to be examined. First, of the 53 scholars who initially received a Planning Scholarship, six female students and one male student forfeited the scholarship by the spring 2017 semester. While these students were invited to participate in a brief questionnaire after forfeiting their scholarship, only three students did. The three students indicated that they were unable to find a program that fit with their schedules, with one additionally stating he or she could not find a program that fit with his or her major and one also indicating that his or her family did not support his or her decision to study abroad. Given that the Planning Scholars program is designed to help students overcome barriers in studying abroad, it will be important to gain a better understanding of why some decide to forfeit the scholarship and how best to intervene before they do.

The next aspect of the program that was not considered in the present study which would be helpful to examine concerns the fact that several students who received the ISA Planning Scholarship decided to go abroad on a program for which this scholarship was not eligible to be applied. As of March 2017, 10 of the original 43 ISA scholarship

recipients had studied abroad or were confirmed to be studying abroad on a non-ISA program, which meant they were not benefitting from the use of the scholarship. While it is exciting that these students felt empowered enough to pursue a study abroad opportunity without the assistance of this particular scholarship, it would be helpful to understand why they made this decision. Furthermore, as of March 2017, three scholars had participated in two programs. Therefore, it would be helpful to learn more from these students about how and why they felt capable enough to pursue additional study abroad opportunities.

Next, a large implication of the results of the research is changing the overall framework from which the design and the implementation of the program was approached. Initially, the researcher used cultural capital theory to understand the deficits first-generation college students may have as they consider studying abroad. This approach stemmed from much of the literature that examines first-generation college students' challenges in attending college and presumes that they experience these challenges in large part due to the fact that they do not possess the same cultural capital that their peers who had college-going parents might have. However, the First-Generation Strength theory that came from the photovoice analysis suggests that the program should be restructured in a way that helps first-generation college students understand the capital and strengths they do possess and how they can leverage these strengths to pursue and ultimately succeed in study abroad. One possible hypothesis is that by incorporating some aspects of resiliency theory and connecting students to their own strengths, the students' confidence in studying abroad will likely increase even more than it did for those students who participated in the present study. Two simple ways in

which the researcher can imagine revamping the program to incorporate this framework are to have the scholars engage in open dialogue with one another about the strengths they believe they have early on in the program and to have them take the StrengthsQuest assessment from Gallup. By having the students discuss their strengths early on in the program, they will work to build a shared support network that bonds them as first-generation college students giving them the peer support that proved so helpful to the students in the present study. The StrengthsQuest assessment would then provide each student with their individual strengths which they could then learn more about and rely on as they work towards achieving their goal of studying abroad.

Finally, what was learned in the implementation of year one of the program could be adjusted for future cohorts. First, as peer support and influence proved to be a key component to the scholars' success while-abroad, and given that most of the students indicated a goal of making new friends, the Planning Scholars program could more thoughtfully create social opportunities for the scholars. Although scholars did have the opportunity to socialize with one another in the workshops and then on their own outside of the workshops, social events could be organized for the group to help increase the number and intensity of these relationships. One idea that has already been discussed among the co-mentors of cohort one includes the possibility of implementing a buddy program within or across each cohort.

Related to the idea of increasing the social network of the program is the recommendation to include a social media component. Although the scholars joined a dedicated Facebook group halfway through year one, the group was largely inactive and was used mainly as a medium in which to communicate reminders. Given that

contemporary students are active on social media, it would be helpful to have each cohort identify a platform which they might wish to use to further help them connect with one another while also serving as another medium in which the co-mentors can provide support no matter if the scholars are stateside or abroad.

Although most students indicated that they did not have recommendations for how the Planning Scholars program might be improved, a few students did indicate that providing more individual attention could be helpful. While some students do well in the larger group setting of the workshops, other students may be more reserved and would benefit from the one-on-one time with one of the mentors. Furthermore, there are many different programs and the students are from several different academic disciplines, so having an individual component to the program would likely bolster the support of the students. The current mentors of cohort one have already implemented a system requiring each scholar who has yet to study abroad to schedule at least one advising appointment with one of the mentors each academic year.

Next, the issue of homesickness was a theme that appeared across most of the interviews. Although homesickness was discussed during the workshops, it was not a central focus of any one workshop. Given that most students did experience homesickness while abroad and were surprised by this, the program should design a workshop around this topic that gives the scholars strategies for overcoming it. The current mentors have created a workshop on this topic and delivered it for those students in cohort one who have not yet studied abroad.

One of the most difficult logistical challenges of the program involved the scheduling of the workshops. The students were told that a condition of their receipt of

the scholarship was that they had to attend the four workshops each academic year until they studied abroad. Scheduling the workshops at a time that worked for a majority of the students proved incredibly difficult, and as the program went on, fewer students would attend the workshops. Furthermore, ASU has four physical campuses in the Phoenix metropolitan area, with an additional campus in Lake Havasu City and a large online presence. One of the scholars in cohort one was a student at the Lake Havasu location and was not able to attend any of the workshops. Therefore, going forward, the mentors of the cohorts should consider what role technology might play in helping students receive the information presented in the workshops while still maintaining the peer-to-peer social element of the program.

Finally, although it was understood that the role of family, and especially parents, was important to first-generation college students, year one of the program was limited in its involvement of the scholars' families. They were invited to the initial reception where the scholars were awarded their scholarships, and the workshops were created in such a way so as to help the students understand how to communicate their decision to study abroad with their families; however, more could be done to actively involve the families. Resources could be developed that the scholars could share with their families.

Additionally, the mentors of future cohorts might find success in organizing a workshop for the parents of the scholars early on in the process to allow the parents to voice their concerns and get their questions answered. It would likely be very powerful to include a returned scholar and parent in such a workshop.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations of the study that should be taken into consideration, both in understanding the results and in terms of those who may seek to replicate a similar program.

First, the results of the study are limited to the context of ASU. Furthermore, the findings are only indicative of themes that were born out of the first-generation college students who participated in cohort one of the Planning Scholars program. These limitations are largely due to the fact that the project was carried out under the principles of action research, which often concerns itself with identifying issues relevant to a specific context. Although this limits the generalizability of the findings to first-generation college students at large, the researcher has endeavored to provide enough details about the context and how the project was carried out in order to help international educators who might wish to start a similar program within their own contexts. Should this be the case, it would be important for those educators to perform a needs assessment of their own students while taking into consideration unique aspects of their own context.

Additionally, another reason why the findings are limited in their generalizability is because the study included a small sample size, particularly for the quantitative data. The two assessments had n counts of 35 and 28. So while the response rates for the study were generally favorable, they made interpreting statistical significance of the data challenging. Furthermore, these low n counts mean it is impossible to extend the findings in the present study to first-generation college students at large.

Finally, the study could have benefitted from having a control group of first-generation college students who did not apply for the Planning Scholarship. In working with the scholars of cohort one, it became fairly obvious to the researcher that most of the

scholars were quite driven, especially in their academic endeavors. The fact that they actually applied for the scholarship might inherently make them different from other first-generation college students who were invited to apply for the scholarship, but who ultimately did not. Given that one of the central findings of this study has been that first-generation college students may have a unique set of strengths that enable them to succeed in studying abroad, it would now be important to look at those first-generation college students who did not apply for the scholarship nor study abroad to learn more about their decision to not pursue this opportunity and what resiliency they might possess.

Concluding Thoughts

In conclusion, the Planning Scholars program has been a very rewarding project on which to work. As of March 2017, 26 of the original 53 students who were awarded a scholarship had studied abroad or were confirmed to study abroad in an upcoming program. These are 26 students whose lives were indelibly changed by the opportunity of traveling the world, interacting with other cultures, and growing in profound ways that will likely continue to shape their own lives as well as the lives of their families.

Although some of these students may very well have studied abroad without the support of the Planning Scholars program, the results from this study indicate that the program was very instrumental in increasing their confidence to do so, and for some, was the catalyst for them pursuing the opportunity at all.

That being said, the Planning Scholars program cannot take all the credit for the work the students did to pursue and fulfill their dream of studying abroad. The theory of First-Generation Strength serves as an important reminder to educators that it can be very

easy to fall victim to the dominant structures that are in place and that are indicative of the majority groups in our society. This study was initially designed under the framework of a cultural capital theory that posited the shortcomings first-generation college students might have with regards to studying abroad. Although it was born out of a desire to help these students, the resultant theory of First-Generation Strength begs the question whose cultural capital is it that we are emphasizing and for what reasons? Already, study abroad is known to be a predominately Caucasian female experience, so why should the focus of a program to support diverse first-generation college students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds be born out of a paradigm that subverts their capital in favor of the majority? While it cannot be denied that first-generation college students may lack certain capital that would make pursuing an experience such as study abroad easier or more intuitive, the full picture is missed if the capital and strengths these students do possess are not factored into the equation. This project has underscored the assumptions and biases that educators can easily fall prey to when working with diverse groups of students, no matter the good intentions that might exist. It serves as a reminder that we must constantly challenge ourselves to question the existing paradigms by asking who are they designed to benefit and for what reasons?

In our present sociopolitical climate, opportunities such as study abroad are vitally important to the overall education of our graduates, but also, in guiding our society down a path that is more tolerant and understanding of the diverse cultures of which we all interact. Therefore, educators must continue to expand the capacity for underrepresented students, such as first-generation college students, to participate in opportunities that will guide them on this path.

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APPENDIX A
TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Terms and Definitions

1. **Study abroad:** an educational activity whereby students travel to a foreign country to undertake a course of study. In this work, the term is used broadly to encompass several different academic possibilities including study, interning, and volunteering abroad for academic credit.
2. **Intercultural awareness:** The ability for an individual to be cognizant of the differences of values, beliefs, and perceptions between cultures which often stems from an initial understanding of one's own culture.
3. **Underrepresented students:** groups of students who are traditionally underrepresented in American study abroad participation figures, including men, racial and ethnic minorities, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, students with disabilities, non-traditional aged students, and first-generation college students.
4. **First-generation college student:** a college or university student whose mother or father did not attend a college or university.
5. **Faculty-directed program:** A type of study abroad program that is led by a college or university faculty member and consists of students from that same college or university.
6. **TRiO:** the Federal TRiO Programs are federal outreach and student services programs in the United States designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds.
7. **Photovoice:** a qualitative research method that uses photography to empower communities that are typically marginalized in order to produce knowledge and engender change.
8. **Pre-abroad phase:** the phase of this research project that occurred prior to any of the participants studying abroad. This phase consisted of a needs assessment, an end-of-year-one questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews.
9. **While-abroad phase:** the phase of this research project that occurred while the participants were studying abroad. This phase consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted via Skype roughly halfway through each participant's program. Students also took photos while abroad as part of the photovoice project.
10. **Post-abroad phase:** the phase of this research project that occurred after the participants completed their study abroad program and returned to campus. This phase consisted of semi-structured interviews and two debrief meetings of the photovoice project.

APPENDIX B
NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Planning Scholars Needs Assessment (Fall 2015)

Adapted from Qualtrics

Please create a unique identifier using the first 3 letters of your mother's first name and the last 4 digits of your phone number. Example: if my mother's first name is Mary and my phone number is 480.965.1234, my unique identifier would be MAR1234.

Background Information:

1. My age is:
2. My gender is:
3. My race/ethnicity is:
4. I am majoring in:
5. Please list any languages other than English that were spoken in your household while growing up:
6. I have traveled before: yes/no
7. If you answered yes to the previous question, to where have you traveled abroad?
8. What was the purpose of all previous trips abroad you took?
9. My parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have traveled abroad before: yes/no
10. If you answered yes to the previous question, please indicate about how many times your parent(s) or legal guardian(s) traveled abroad either independently or together:
 - a. 1-3 times
 - b. 4-6 times
 - c. 7-9 times
 - d. 10+ times
11. How many family members do you have that traveled abroad?
 - a. 0
 - b. 1-3
 - c. 4-6
 - d. 7-9
 - e. 10+
12. How many friends do you know who traveled abroad?
 - a. 0
 - b. 1-3
 - c. 4-6
 - d. 7-9
 - e. 10+
13. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree):
 - a. Growing up, my family regularly watched the news.
 - b. Growing up, my family regularly read the newspaper.
 - c. Growing up, current events were regularly discussed at home.
 - d. Growing up, international news was regularly discussed at home.
 - e. Growing up, other cultures were frequent topics of conversation at home.

Awareness of Study Abroad (Benefits, Opportunities, and Resources):

14. I knew in high school that I wanted to study abroad during college: yes/no/I did not know about the opportunity to study abroad during college.
15. Based on your major and using the slider below, please rate the importance of study abroad to your undergraduate academic success, with 5 being extremely important and 1 being not important at all: (scale from 1-5)
16. Please explain why you gave the rating you did in the previous question:
17. I plan on pursuing graduate school: yes/no//I don't know
18. Please respond to the following statements (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree):
 - a. Studying abroad will make me a more competitive applicant for graduate school.
 - b. Studying abroad is important for me to be a competitive job applicant in the future.
 - c. Studying abroad will be important for my future career success.
19. How many types of programs does the ASU Study Abroad Office have?
20. As a guess, how many study abroad programs does the ASU Study Abroad Office have from which I can choose?
21. I plan on financing my study abroad program by (Check all that apply):
 - a. Financial aid (loans/grants)
 - b. ASU scholarships
 - c. Scholarships from outside ASU
 - d. Personal savings
 - e. Money I will earn from a job that I have
 - f. Family support
 - g. Fundraising
 - h. I don't know how I will fund my study abroad program
 - i. Other (please describe)

Concerns About Study Abroad:

22. Using the scale below, please respond to what degree you agree with whether or not you have the following concerns related to study abroad (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree):
 - a. Determining how to pay for study abroad
 - b. Finding courses abroad that will keep me on track for my major
 - c. Understanding how to talk about my decision to study abroad with my family
 - d. Feeling safe while studying abroad
 - e. Determining how to obtain a passport
 - f. Determining how to obtain a visa
 - g. Deciding on a study abroad program
 - h. Developing a plan for responsibilities I have here at home while I am away
 - i. Developing a plan to stay in touch with friends and family back home

- j. Developing a budget for my living expenses while abroad
- k. Traveling abroad on my own
- l. Dealing with homesickness
- m. Speaking/taking courses in a foreign language
- n. Coping with personal needs (medical/dietary)
- o. Navigating issues regarding my sexual orientation
- p. Navigating issues regarding my religious affiliation
- q. Understanding cultural differences of those I meet
- r. Other concerns I have related to study abroad that were not on the list include:

Support for Study Abroad:

23. Using the scale below, please respond to what degree you agree with each of the following statements related to outside support for study abroad (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree):
- a. My family members tell me that it is important to have international experiences.
 - b. I feel supported by my family in my decision to study abroad.
 - c. I know how to communicate the reasons for my decision to study abroad to my family.
 - d. I feel supported by my friends in my decision to study abroad.
 - e. I feel supported by ASU faculty and staff (such as my academic advisor) in my decision to study abroad.

Confidence in Pursuing Study Abroad:

24. Using the scale below, please respond to what degree you agree with each of the following statements related to your confidence in studying abroad (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree):
- a. I believe I can write an effective essay to earn a scholarship for study abroad.
 - b. I am confident that study abroad will not delay my graduation.
 - c. I feel confident in my ability to study abroad away from my parent(s)/legal guardian(s).
 - d. I feel confident in my ability to study abroad away from family members.
 - e. I feel confident in my ability to study abroad away from my friends.
25. The longest period of time in which I would feel comfortable studying abroad would be:
- a. 1 week
 - b. A short summer program between 2-4 weeks
 - c. A long summer program between 5-7 weeks
 - d. A full fall or spring semester (14 weeks)
 - e. A full academic year (August through May)
 - f. A full calendar year (January through December)
26. I consider my support network to include (check all that apply):
- a. Immediate family (parents, siblings)

- b. Extended family (grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins)
 - c. Close friends
 - d. Religious leaders
 - e. Mentors
 - f. Other (please describe)
27. I feel confident in being away from my normal support network for a given period of time (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree):
28. I know what my communication plan will be to stay in touch with my support network while I am abroad: yes (if yes, please describe)/no

Goals for Study Abroad:

29. I know where I want to study abroad: yes (if yes, where—list country(ies))/no
30. I know what semester/term I want to study abroad: yes (if yes, what semester/term)/no
31. The number one reason I want to study abroad is:
32. My main goal for my study abroad experience is:
33. Please use this space to explain what information and resources you would most like to receive over the next few months as you prepare to study abroad:

Thank you very much for your participation in this survey! Please be assured that your results will be anonymous.

Are you open to being interviewed?

In addition to this and future surveys, I will need to interview some students or ask them to participate in focus groups. Kindly complete this short form if you are open to Kyle contacting you to participate in short interviews/focus groups in the future: (link)

APPENDIX C

NEEDS ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Needs Assessment Interview Protocol

Background

- I'd like to learn a little more about your life growing up.
 - Can you tell me about your home life and your family?
 - Did anyone in your family ever talk about current events, the news, other countries, or other cultures?
 - What was your exposure to other countries or people from other cultures?
 - Did you know any friends or family members who traveled abroad? If so, what did you learn about their experiences and how did that make you feel?
 - What was school like for you growing up?
 - What classes were your favorite? What were the most difficult?
 - Did you take any foreign languages? If so, what and how did you find this class(es)?

Awareness (benefits, opportunities, resources)

- When did you first learn about study abroad opportunities?
 - What are some of your initial thoughts about studying abroad during college?
- Some research indicates that study abroad can benefit students later when they pursue a career. Can you comment on whether or not this had a role to play in your decision to study abroad?
- Prior to receiving the planning scholarship, were you intending to look into study abroad? Why or why not?

Concerns

- What were some of your biggest concerns regarding study abroad?
- Do you think being the first in your family to go to college brings any unique challenges with it when considering study abroad? Why or why not?

Support for Study Abroad

- Tell me a little about your support networks. Who do you go to for advice or when you need help with something related to your academics or career?
- Have you told anyone about your intentions to study abroad? If so who and what was that interaction like? If not, why haven't you told anyone?

Confidence in Pursuing Study Abroad

- How confident are you in pursuing study abroad?
- Think about what studying abroad will actually be like. How do you think the experience will be like for you being abroad on your own?

Goals

- What goals did you have for your study abroad experience? What do you want to accomplish personally and academically?

APPENDIX D

END-OF-YEAR ONE ASSESSMENT

End-of-Year One Questionnaire (Spring 2016)

Adapted from Qualtrics

Please use your unique identifier which is the first 3 letters of your mother's first name and the last 4 digits of your phone number. Example: if my mother's first name is Mary and my phone number is 480.965.1234, my unique identifier would be MAR1234.

Background Information:

1. My age is:
2. My gender is: male/female/other
3. My race/ethnicity is: American Indian/Asian/Black or African American/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander/ Other
4. I am majoring in:

Awareness of Study Abroad (Benefits, Opportunities, and Resources):

5. Please respond to the following statements: (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)
 - a. I am aware of the different study abroad opportunities that exist for me as a student at ASU.
 - b. I am aware of financial aid and scholarship resources for study abroad.
6. Based on your major and using the slider below, please rate the importance of study abroad to your undergraduate academic success, with 5 being extremely important and 1 being not important at all: (scale from 1-5)
7. Please explain why you gave the rating you did in the previous question:
8. I plan on pursuing graduate school: yes/no//I don't know
9. Please respond to the following statements (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree):
 - a. Studying abroad will make me a more competitive applicant for graduate school.
 - b. Studying abroad is important for me to be a competitive job applicant in the future.
 - c. Studying abroad will be important for my future career success.

Concerns About Study Abroad:

10. Using the scale below, please respond to what degree you agree with whether or not you have the following concerns related to study abroad (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree):
 - s. Determining how to pay for study abroad
 - t. Finding courses abroad that will keep me on track for my major
 - u. Understanding how to talk about my decision to study abroad with my family
 - v. Feeling safe while studying abroad
 - w. Determining how to obtain a passport

- x. Determining how to obtain a visa
- y. Deciding on a study abroad program
- z. Developing a plan for responsibilities I have here at home while I am away
 - aa. Developing a plan to stay in touch with friends and family back home
 - bb. Developing a budget for my living expenses while abroad
 - cc. Traveling abroad on my own
 - dd. Dealing with homesickness
 - ee. Speaking/taking courses in a foreign language
 - ff. Coping with personal needs (medical/dietary)
 - gg. Navigating issues regarding my sexual orientation
 - hh. Navigating issues regarding my religious affiliation
 - ii. Understanding cultural differences of those I meet
 - jj. Other concerns I have related to study abroad that were not on the list include:

Support for Study Abroad:

11. Using the scale below, please respond to what degree you agree with each of the following statements related to outside support for study abroad (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree):
- a. My family members tell me that it is important to have international experiences.
 - b. I feel supported by my family in my decision to study abroad.
 - c. I know how to communicate the reasons for my decision to study abroad to my family.
 - d. I feel supported by my friends in my decision to study abroad.
 - e. I feel supported by ASU faculty and staff (such as my academic advisor) in my decision to study abroad.

Confidence in Pursuing Study Abroad:

12. Using the scale below, please respond to what degree you agree with each of the following statements related to your confidence in studying abroad (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree):
- a. I believe I can write an effective essay to earn a scholarship for study abroad.
 - b. I am confident that study abroad will not delay my graduation.
 - c. I feel confident in my ability to study abroad away from my parent(s)/legal guardian(s).
 - d. I feel confident in my ability to study abroad away from family members.
 - e. I feel confident in my ability to study abroad away from my friends.
13. The longest period of time in which I would feel comfortable studying abroad would be:
- a. 1 week
 - b. A short summer program between 2-4 weeks
 - c. A long summer program between 5-7 weeks

- d. A full fall or spring semester (14 weeks)
 - e. A full academic year (August through May)
 - f. A full calendar year (January through December)
14. I consider my support network to include (check all that apply):
- a. Immediate family (parents, siblings)
 - b. Extended family (grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins)
 - c. Close friends
 - d. Religious leaders
 - e. Mentors
 - f. Other (please describe)
15. I feel confident in being away from my normal support network for a given period of time (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree):

Goals for Study Abroad:

16. I know where I want to study abroad: yes (if yes, where—list country(ies))/no
17. I know what semester/term I want to study abroad: yes (if yes, what semester/term)/no
18. The number one reason I want to study abroad is:
19. My main goal for my study abroad experience is:

Experience in the Cohort Program:

20. Please think about the 4 workshops you have participated in as part of the Planning Scholars cohort program this school year and respond to the following questions (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree):
- a. I found the cohort workshops to be helpful.
 - b. The cohort workshops helped improve my awareness of study abroad opportunities, resources, and benefits.
 - c. The cohort workshops helped address my specific concerns for study abroad.
 - d. The cohort workshops helped increase my feeling of being supported in study abroad.
 - e. The cohort workshops helped increase my confidence in pursuing study abroad.
 - f. The cohort workshops helped me think of my goals for study abroad.
21. Do you think the amount of time of each workshop (1 hour) was sufficient?
- a. Yes
 - b. No (if no, how long should they be?)
22. Do you think 4 workshops per school year is a good amount of workshops to have?
- a. Yes
 - b. No (if no, how many should there be?)
23. What was the workshop you found most beneficial?
- a. The introductory workshop to the cohort program and basic study abroad information at ASU.

- b. The workshop detailing the different types of study abroad programs, deadlines, and how to choose a program.
 - c. The financing a study abroad program workshop.
 - d. The last workshop related to remaining questions, getting ready to go abroad, and hearing from students currently abroad.
24. Was there a topic that we did not address in a workshop that you would have found helpful? If so, what?
25. How could the cohort program be improved?

Thank you very much for your participation in this survey! Please be assured that your results will be anonymous.

Do you plan on going abroad during the summer or fall 2016 semester? If so, would you be open to participating in a photo project as part of my research? In addition to future interviews, I would like to organize a photo project where you would send me photos while you are abroad as responses to certain prompts. If you participate in this project, there would likely be a short workshop to attend, either in person or online, to cover the project. Please let me know if you are interested in participating by completing this short form: [\(link\)](#)

APPENDIX E

WHILE-ABROAD INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

While-Abroad Interview Protocol

General Intro Questions:

- How are things going?
- What were your first thoughts about the country?/What has been most surprising to you so far?

Awareness of opportunities, resources, and benefits related to study abroad:

- What sorts of opportunities are you taking part in?
- Can you tell me about any program or academic resources you have there? If so, have you used any to help you solve any issues? (Follow up questions: Why aren't you aware of these resources? You haven't had to use them?)
- Do you see any benefits already from this experience? If so, what?

Concerns :

- What were you most concerned about before arriving and has that concern affected your experience so far? If so, how?
- Now that you are actually abroad, what concerns do you have?

Support:

- How is it being away from your typical support networks?
- What support networks do you have in place there?
- What have you realized about your own strengths and/or your support systems during this experience?

Confidence :

- How would you describe your confidence navigating this new culture?
- Can you talk about how the Planning Scholars program did or did not affect your confidence in study abroad?

Goals :

- What were some of your goals prior to arriving abroad? Have your goals changed at all since arriving?
- What are some new goals you want to accomplish before the end of your program?

Planning Scholars Program-Specific Questions:

- Thinking about the Planning Scholars meetings we had before you left, was there anything that has really stuck with you while you've been abroad?
- Is there anything you've noticed so far during your time abroad that you wish we would have discussed in the program?

APPENDIX F
POST-ABROAD INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Post-Abroad Interview Protocol

General Intro Questions

- Tell me about your time abroad.
- Looking back on the experience, what do you think your biggest takeaways are?

Awareness of opportunities, resources, and benefits related to study abroad

- Has this experience shaped your future academic or career plans? If so, how?
- Are you aware of any returnee resources to help you process your time abroad or plan future opportunities? If so, do you intend to use any? (For example we have.....:)

Concerns

- Thinking about the concerns you had prior to going abroad, did those actually come to fruition and if so, how did they affect your experience while abroad?
- Were there any concerns you ended up having that you weren't expecting?

Support

- Have you noticed any changes in your support networks since you've returned? If so, what?
- How have your support networks reacted to your having been abroad?

Confidence

- How has this experience shaped your confidence?

Goals

- Did you accomplish your goals for studying abroad?
- If you could tell another first-generation college student any piece of advice right before going abroad, what would it be?
- Has this experience shaped your future goals? If so, how?

First-Generation Student-Specific Experience Questions

- Do you think being a first-generation college student shaped your experiences abroad at all? If so, how?
- Was there anything that you felt like you could have used more support with related to being a first-generation college student abroad?
- How has it been like sharing your experiences from your time abroad with your family members? (optional)

What recommendations do you have for improving the Planning Scholars program for future students?

APPENDIX G
PHOTOVOICE WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Photovoice Workshop Outline

- Icebreaker and Norm-setting
 - Participants will participate in a brief activity to get to know one another
 - The group will establish their own rules and norms to guide the project
- Introduction of the concept of photovoice
- Share status and theme of the research project from the researcher's perspective
- Gauge participants' visual literacy and discuss the power of photography in communication
 - Activity: students will bring in photos to discuss, either ones from home or ones from magazines etc.
- Review what technology participants' plan to use and identify any needs
- Review key elements of a good photograph, ideally with guest speaker who has worked with photography, to cover such topics as:
 - Composition
 - Holding the camera still
 - Camera angle/point of view
 - Landscape and portrait orientations
 - Color/black and white
 - Movement
 - The decisive moment
 - Depth of field
 - Understanding light
 - Lines, patterns, and textures
 - Activity: Feelings in Photos: Participants will be given a list of words describing emotions – happy, sad, angry, excited, etc. They will then be given a time limit in which they take pictures that convey or symbolize one, two, or all of the different feelings. The group will then come back together to view the images and guess the feeling conveyed in each photograph.
- Review ethical considerations in photography
 - Photographing strangers and obtaining consent
- Establish the Project Goals/Themes

Workshop outline adapted from:

Blackman, A., & Fairey, T. *The photovoice manual: A guide to designing and running participatory photography projects*. London, England: PhotoVoice.org.

Wang, C. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health, Education, and Behavior*, 24(3), 369-387.

APPENDIX H

TABLE 16: PAIRED SAMPLES T-TEST FOR PLANNING SCHOLARS NEEDS
ASSESSMENT AND END-OF-YEAR ONE QUESTIONNAIRES

Table 16

Paired samples T-test for Planning Scholars needs assessment and end of year one questionnaires
n-17

Construct	Item	Pre Mean	Pre Standard Deviation	Post Mean	Post Standard Deviation	Mean Difference (post to pre)	<i>p</i> value	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Awareness	20a	1.35	.493	1.47	.514	.118	.332	.238
	20b	1.41	.618	1.53	.624	.118	.431	.193
	20c	1.47	.717	1.35	.606	-.118	.431	-.181
Concerns	27a	1.53	.717	1.82	.728	.294	.172	.401
	27b	1.88	.781	1.76	.752	-.118	.608	-.157
	27c	2.53	1.007	2.94	.899	.412	.069**	.430
	27d	1.94	.966	2.47	.514	.529	.058**	.685†
	27e	2.76	.903	3.12	.697	.353	.083**	.446
	27f	2.12	.781	2.29	.985	.176	.484	.191
	27g	2.13	.885	2.38	.619	.250	.333	.327
	27h	2.24	.831	2.18	.636	-.059	.826	-.081
	27i	2.00	.791	2.18	.636	.176	.382	.251

Continued: Paired samples T-test for Planning Scholars needs assessment and end of year one questionnaires
n=17

Construct	Item	Pre Mean	Pre Standard Deviation	Post Mean	Post Standard Deviation	Mean Difference (post to pre)	<i>p</i> value	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Concerns (continued)	27j	1.53	.717	1.82	.529	.294	.136	.460
	27k	1.65	.606	1.94	.659	.294	.056**	.458
	27l	2.44	1.031	2.63	.885	.188	.383	.198
	27m	2.13	.957	2.38	.719	.250	.362	.295
	27n	2.25	.931	2.56	.892	.313	.173	.340
	27o	2.88	1.025	3.31	.793	.438	.048*	.469
	27p	2.69	1.078	3.06	.929	.375	.164	.368
	27q	2.06	.772	2.69	.793	.625	.028*	.805††
Support	30a	2.12	.697	2.06	.827	-.059	.791	-.078
	30b	1.53	.624	1.53	.717	.000	1.000	.000
	30c	1.47	.514	1.35	.493	-.118	.332	-.238
	30d	1.25	.577	1.31	.479	.063	.669	.113

Continued: Paired samples T-test for Planning Scholars needs assessment and end of year one questionnaires
n=17

Construct	Item	Pre Mean	Pre Standard Deviation	Post Mean	Post Standard Deviation	Mean Difference (post to pre)	<i>p</i> value	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Support (continued)	30e	1.47	.514	1.53	.624	.059	.718	.105
Confidence	35a	1.82	.636	1.71	.470	-.118	.332	-.197
	35b	1.76	.831	1.88	.697	.118	.543	.156
	35c	1.41	.618	1.53	.624	.118	.431	.193
	35d	1.47	.717	1.47	.514	.000	1.000	.000
	35e	1.47	.514	1.53	.514	.059	.579	.117
	38	1.65	.702	1.88	.485	.235	.104	.381

Note: Items were measured on a 1-4 Likert scale where 1=strongly agree and 4=strongly disagree

*Mean difference is significant at the $p < .05$ level **Mean difference is significant at the $p < .1$ level

†Effect size is moderate with $d > .5$ ††Effect size is large with $d > .8$