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SUPPORTING LATINX COLLEGE STUDENTS STUDY ABROAD

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PIM78 IELR

A Capstone paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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SUPPORTING LATINX STUDENTS STUDY ABROAD

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SUPPORTING LATINX STUDENTS STUDY ABROAD

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ABSTRACT

Low participation of Latinx students in study abroad is something U.S. educators should be aware of and start to address. As the Latinx student population grows in higher education, growth of this population in study abroad should follow. The purpose of this research is to compile best practices and supports that can be implemented by international education professionals to support Latinx students who study abroad at their institutions. The research will answer the following research questions: how can international educators support Latinx students to study abroad? How can the current supports in place for Latinx students (in higher education) be leveraged to help them study abroad?

Using surveys and interviews with international educators who work in study abroad and Latinx students who have studied abroad this study analyzed their opinions on best practices. Relevant barriers revealed included a lack of finances, lack of parental support and students not fitting in. The supports discovered for Latinx students comprise of financial support, parental support, program and location content, and outreach and marketing. There needs to be a special attention paid to identity of Latinx students as well as how different intensity factors might affect them abroad.

International educators can implement the supports mentioned, however, they must keep in mind that Latinx students can have other varying identities. Professionals will need to understand who their Latinx students are individually so not to assume what supports will be most beneficial. Further studies are needed to understand what specific Latinx identities need specific supports. It could depend on intensity combinations and students' institutions.

Keywords: Latinx, study abroad, supports, best practices, identity, international educators

Introduction

For many years, racially diverse students have studied abroad at a lower percentage than white students. The Institute of International Education reported that 70% of students who studied abroad were white, and 10.6% identified as Hispanic or Latino (2018). Currently, this trend doesn't mirror that of college attendance for these same diverse groups, 56% white and 18.9% (NAFSA, n.d.b). In recent years, Latinx (a gender-inclusive term referring to those of Latin American and Hispanic heritage) students have been entering and graduating from college at higher rates than before, which is predicted to continue. Still, Latinx representation in study abroad has stayed steady and low. According to the Center for Global Education (2019), students who study abroad graduate in higher numbers than those that do not. Latinx students have had lower graduation rates than their peers. Could studying abroad be a way for them to persevere and graduate?

As a program coordinator for international exchange experiences and someone who completed three study abroad programs during college, I do not see many Latinx students traveling. Working for more than a year in Ecuador, I have led more than a hundred participants, and fewer than 10% have been students with a Latinx background. I identify as Puerto Rican American and used study abroad to find out more about my identity. As a Latinx professional, a university graduate, and a three-time study abroad return participant, I wondered where my Latinx peers were in my study abroad experiences. In my current work, I support students in understanding themselves through reflection during their program abroad. As organizations and institutions work to help other diverse students such as African Americans, students with disabilities, first-generation, and others study abroad, I investigated, in this research, how international educators, including myself, can support an increase in Latinx students'

participation. These students have a variety of challenges that may be different from other groups. And in addition to their heritage, students are diverse amongst themselves and might also identify as first-generation, English language learners, immigrants, and U.S. citizens, or with their country of origin, a socio-economic status, race, skin color, and as travelers of the world, among others. Many Latinx students might have been born in the United States and be fluent in English; however, their parents might still need resources in their native language.

This capstone explores barriers Latinx students face as well as different approaches and supports available for Latinx students who study abroad. It recommends strategies international education professionals can implement with students right now. Research questions include: How can international educators support Latinx students to study abroad? How can the current supports in place for Latinx students (in higher education) be leveraged to help them study abroad?

Theoretical Framework

Understanding student development is an essential part of working with students as advisors, faculty, staff, or coordinators in post-secondary education. Student development theory (SDT) was used as the framework in this capstone to understand how students are developing during their undergraduate careers. To succeed in today's diverse and quickly changing society, students and adults need to be prepared for the demands of self-authorship. "Baxter Magolda (2001) defined [self- authorship] as a developmental capacity to internally define one's own beliefs, identities, and relationships," (as cited in Baxter Magolda & Taylor, 2016, p. 154). Furthermore, Baxter Magolda says that on the path to self-authorship, students move through four stages called Following External Formulas (uncritically relying on external authorities), Crossroads (tension between external and inner voices), Becoming the Author of One's Own

Life (begin to trust internal voice to shape reaction to reality), and Internal Formulas (live out internal formulas) (as cited in Torres & Hernandez, 2007; Baxter Magolda & Taylor, 2016).

Using the holistic development framework, which encompasses cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions, one can observe and study how a student moves through the stages of self-authorship. Because Baxter Magolda conducted the original longitudinal study with all white participants, Torres and Hernandez (2007) researched how Latino/a identity would influence students' holistic development and if there were differences between the two studies and participant outcomes. Torres and Hernandez found that Latino/a students had very similar characteristics to other students. The chart below details the stages:

External	Crossroads	Internal or Self-Authorship
Identity defined by family; dichotomous view of family; may believe negative stereotypes	Recognize racism; understand positive and negative cultural choices; manage family influence	Informed Latino/a identity; integrate cultural choices into daily life; Contextual decisions include cultural choices; live interdependent life that maintains cultural values in diverse contexts

(as cited in Baxter Magolda & Taylor, 2016, p. 156)

Table 1: Developmental stages toward self-authorship

However, there were additional developmental tasks identified in Latinx students.

These developmental tasks center on the issue of racism: understanding and managing racism as well as stereotypes that influence individuals' self-image and their choices of who they seek out for support and relationships when dealing with the effects of oppression. (Torres & Hernandez, 2007, p. 571)

The study showed that "at the phase of external formulas [in the cognitive dimension] family and known peers are considered to be the known authorities of knowledge and information" (Torres & Hernandez, 2007, p. 561). Students become skeptical of professionals such as advisors or faculty if they lack trust or an established relationship. As students moved into the Crossroads phase, they are able to recognize racist comments and begin to understand multiple perspectives, positive and negative stereotypes, and about what it means to be Latinx.

Although Latinx students are a diverse population and some students in the university setting, especially adult students, can be at any stage in development, most college students identify as being in the External Formulas and Crossroads phases. According to the theory, Latinx college students will have their parents and peers as their external authorities.

International education professionals (IEPs) need to be aware of how to discuss study abroad participation with students based on who has influence on the students' decision making. While students are studying abroad and in the Crossroads phase, IEPs must support Latinx students in understanding who they are in different cultural contexts of the places where they study. Study abroad is a perfect time for students to discuss and begin to understand the multiple perspectives people hold in different places all over the world.

The second framework that this research is situated within is identity theory. There are a few different theories within this framework that are used to discuss Latinx identity, those

discussed here focus on levels of acculturation and on the influence of developing one's identity. Torres and McGowan (2016) describe Latinos in categories by level of acculturation and pride in their ethnic culture. The four levels are; bicultural (cultural blending), Latino-oriented (Latino identified), American-oriented (Anglo identified), or marginal (not fitting in). The level of acculturation a student self-identifies with could determine or sway a decision about going abroad or having an interest in exploring new places. This can affect how students interact on campus, and in turn, give them the opportunity or lack thereof to interact with other students studying abroad.

Ruiz (1990) looked at the influence of Latinos' experiences with ethnic identity formation and found five stages in relation to conflict, interventions, and resolutions: 1. causal, 2. cognitive, 3. consequence, 4. working through, and 5. successful resolution. "Specifically, Stage 1 focuses on experiences and emotions; Stage 2 stresses thoughts; and Stage 3 centers on the combined and intensified results of the previous stages. Stage 4 emphasizes treatment, whereas Stage 5 deals with problem resolution" (Ruiz, 1990, paragraph 11). These stages are similar to those mentioned in other racial and ethnic theories, such as Black identity theory, Asian American identity theory, and the theory of Black racial identity development (Torres & McGowan 2016). People move from negative images of their identity to more acceptance of self in these theories (Torres & McGowan, 2016, p. 189-194).

Different stages or levels of identities could heighten the intensity factors (discussed later) of experience abroad and can determine a student's assumed comfort with the idea of traveling abroad. When abroad, students will understand and learn about their identity even more than if they were on campus with only their peers. Students will be forced to think about their culture and identity through not just their own eyes, but also those of their classmates and

the host country. By being aware of the stages students go through, IEPs can help students by discussing this before, during, and after the experience.

Literature Review

Using student development theory and identity theory as the conceptual framework, I conducted a literature review to understand the current context of Latinx study abroad participation. In this section, I discuss low participation rates and the support that is required for Latinx students. I analyze college enrollment strategies used to recruit and enroll Latinx students and suggest how these strategies could be adapted to increase recruitment and enrollment of these students in study abroad. I end with a discussion of intensity factors and an overview of reasons to study abroad.

Latinx College Students and Study Abroad Participants

While there has been a rapid rise in attendance of Latinx students in higher education, there has been a slower increase in Latinx students studying abroad. In 2015, 17% of undergraduate students identified as Hispanic as compared to the 7.6% of students identifying as Hispanic enrolled in study abroad programs. According to McFarland et al., “between 2000 and 2015, Hispanic enrollment in higher education more than doubled (a 126 percent increase from 1.4 million to 3.0 million students)” (2017, p. 117). However, from 2006 to 2016, the number of Hispanic students studying abroad grew from 6% to 10.2% of the number of students studying abroad (Institute of International Education, 2018). Similarly, in the 2018-2019 academic year, there were 539 Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in the United States and 352 emerging HSIs. HSIs are "accredited and degree-granting public or private nonprofit institutions of higher education with 25 percent or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment" while an emerging HSI is an institution that has 15-24.9% Latinx enrollment

(Emerging Hispanic-serving, 2020). In the last ten years, there has been a 93% increase in the number of HSIs, and the Latinx student will be an important identity for IE professionals to serve (Hispanic-serving, 2020). While the number of Latinx students in post-secondary education and study abroad is increasing, there is still room to grow to get the percentage of Latinx students studying abroad to match that of enrollment in undergraduate programs.

In a 2017 report, 51% of Hispanic students enrolled in a public two-year college, and 36% in a four-year college as the first higher institution they chose after high school (Santiago & Cuzzo, 2018). Only 17% of students who started at a two-year institution finished the degree within six years (Santiago & Cuzzo, 2018). Eleven percent of students who started at a two-year college graduated from a four-year college within six years of graduating and 21% of the students who started at a four-year institution graduated (Santiago & Cuzzo, 2018). "Study abroad [during community college] is a recognized investment in the future ability of the student to interact in our multicultural world and assists them as they transfer to a four-year institution or as they proceed into the workplace environment" (California Colleges for International Education, n.d). However, students attending two-year institutions are less likely to be aware of study abroad opportunities.

Students tend to study abroad in their junior year (33%), followed by senior year (28.2%) compared to 1.7% of students who study abroad while pursuing their associate degree (Institute of International Education, 2018). If a student is not attending school in their junior year, they do not have the same opportunities to study abroad, and they will be less likely to participate in study abroad programs. More awareness of community college study abroad programs could be a solution to encourage students to study abroad while getting their associate degree.

Interestingly, studies have shown "that students who study abroad, especially underrepresented

or ‘at-risk’ students, are more likely to complete their degrees” (NAFSA, n.d.a). Making sure Latinx students have access and support to study abroad can help raise graduation rates and understanding the barriers could be a start. In general, “commonly reported barriers include financial reasons, worries about delaying studies, discrepancies between academic calendars, poor language skills, and family ties” (Beerkens, 2016).

Practices From College Success for Latinx Students

Although guides to help students study abroad are a recent addition to the diversity abroad literature, Latinx students have been the focus of research to help them enter college and graduate for some time. There are a few factors that international educators should borrow from admissions and take into account when assisting students to go abroad. Parents are still a big support system for Hispanic students to enter college, and it is not related to the parents' socio-economic status (Nora & Crisp, 2009, Clark & Kalionzes, 2008). Reaching out and educating families has shown to be a way to help students. Addressing the lack of resources in Spanish for parents is one way to include parents in education decisions (Santiago, 2018; Loveland, 2018). A student's sense of belonging is also vital in the college setting (Clark & Kalionzes, 2008). “In an environment that encourages tolerance and acceptance and engages students and faculty in academic and social discourse, a Latino student’s sense that they belong in college and are accepted at that institution is established and nourished” (Nora & Crisp, 2009, p. 329). While abroad, a sense of belonging is also important. Depending on where a student is with their level of acculturation at the university level could determine whether a student reaches out to an advisor or feels secure enough to study abroad. Financial assistance is another common way to help students attend college, and there are many scholarships and grants for Latinx students. Financial aid is commonly cited as a helpful support to get students abroad as well.

According to the methods and patterns of the “Examples of Excelencia,” a data gathering organization to support Hispanic higher education, a few common themes related to higher education in general could be helpful in supporting Latinx students who want to study abroad (Santiago, 2018, 2019). Faculty mentoring and modeling, and curricular and pedagogical changes were cited as being important themes in supporting Latinx college students (Santiago, 2018). In 2019, “common themes identified from a wide range of practices used to serve Latinos” were financial support paired with research-based supports, undergraduate research opportunities, pathways through programs, culturally responsive environments, and mentoring (Santiago, 2019, p. 5).

Intensity Factors

Paige (1993) developed intensity factors to help people understand that depending on specific aspects, they could have a more or less intense experience abroad based on how similar or different one is to the host culture. Intensity is not to be equated with being challenging; for example, a more intense experience does not mean that it is more challenging. When discussing Latinx students traveling to different countries, one can look at the intensity factors to see how a student might experience their program. "An intensity analysis, for example, can help international educators design pre-departure, on-site, and re-entry programs that attend to these issues" (Paige, 2010, p. 2). The ten intensity factors include cultural differences, ethnocentrism, language, cultural immersion, cultural isolation, prior intercultural experiences, expectations, visibility and invisibility, status, and power and control.

The following is a discussion of how Latinx students may experience a select few intensity factors.

- **Cultural Differences:** The first factor that might help support Latinx students is understanding the cultural differences of where they are traveling. The more negatively a student perceives the variations of the new place, the more difficult the experience.
- **Language:** Language is another intensity factor that can be particular to Latinx students. If students are traveling to a Spanish-speaking country and they also speak Spanish, the pressure experienced may be reduced. However, in the same Spanish-speaking country, social isolation and frustration can occur when one does not know the target language and is expected to, based on their Latinx identity.
- **Visibility and invisibility:** Students who are “physically different from members of the host (or dominant) culture are highly visible and may become the object of curiosity, unwanted attention, or discrimination” (Paige, n.d.). This visibility can become overwhelming. Depending on where the student travels, they could look similar or different to the host population. At the same time, students experience invisibility when they must hide part of their identity because it is not accepted, such as sexual orientation or religious beliefs.
- **Status:** Status for many Latinx students is a difficult adjustment. Latinx students in the United States can be discriminated against; however, U.S. citizens abroad are treated with higher status because of how their citizenship might be perceived. They may have more status than the student is accustomed to at home because the U.S. passport is seen as more powerful. Ensuring that students are aware of some of the challenges they may face will help them while studying abroad.

Reasons to Study Abroad

Although study abroad may be an intense experience, there are many reasons why Latinx students study abroad, such as,

to learn a new language or improve existing language skills, meet and experience firsthand the people and the culture of the country that is the focus of their study, study in their ancestral home country and learn about their genealogy. (McClellan et al., 2009, p. 128)

The Hispanic Network highlights ten reasons why Hispanic-Americans should study abroad.

The reasons include, “gain a new perspective on your own country, explore your heritage, improve your professional and financial potential, fight stereotypes by educating others, dispel your own stereotypes, become a full-time learner,” become “more independent, self-confident, and knowledgeable of the world” around you, see the world, gain new perspectives through new relationships, and see the influence Hispanic leaders have had (PLATO, n.d.). IES Abroad (Benefits of study, 2020) claims that “nearly three-quarters of IES Abroad alumni secured their first job within two months of graduation and earn an average of \$6,000 more in starting salaries.” One can find many reasons to study abroad.

Research Methodology

In order to answer my research questions, I used a qualitative research methodology and conducted surveys and interviews with two groups of participants. I worked with both international educators and students to compile best practices for helping Latinx students go abroad. The benefit of the interviews and the open-ended questions inherent in qualitative research is the access to narratives of people’s thoughts, opinions, and experiences. To develop

the "how" in supporting Latinx students' travel, one must search for and record the details of the participants' and educators' experiences.

This project was designed and prepared prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. Surveys and interviews were conducted as the pandemic ensued and assumes that global travel will be reinstated.

Data Collection and Analysis

First, I sent structured surveys to listservs on NAFSA Community Network, SECUSS-L, and Facebook in order to recruit international educators. Then, I sent surveys to particular international educators who work with this population and thus, seemed as if they would be appropriate to interview. The surveys included questions about how international educators work with Latinx students and what best practices the educators use and can suggest. Survey participants were able to identify relevant projects they are working on and had the option to be contacted for an interview. Most of the questions were demographic and closed-ended questions to get a general idea about the participants. Six open-ended questions gave them a space to contribute more information about what is happening in international education concerning Latinx students and their work (see Appendix A: Survey - International Educator).

Nineteen participants returned surveys, and once the survey closed, I contacted all 12 international educators who were willing to participate in an interview. Eleven IE professionals agreed to a discussion over Zoom and WhatsApp. Semi-structured interviews based on survey results and the interview guide (see Appendix B: Interview Guide- International Educator) were used to learn more about how each professional supports the Latinx student population with study abroad. Each interview participant was given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym. If they did not choose one or only took the survey, one was assigned at random.

The second population of participants surveyed were returned students from study abroad who identify as Latinx. The survey invitation was posted on a Latinx alumni Facebook group from North Carolina State University and my personal Facebook and Instagram pages. I also emailed colleagues who work with this population to send the survey to their students. One current student and five students who had graduated within the last five years responded to the study. Although it was challenging to locate student participants, the benefits of including different stakeholders are essential. The student perspective is a valuable resource to better identify which supports were most beneficial to them in the process of studying abroad.

The data analysis consisted of organizing all of the interviews and surveys into Dedoose software to look for trends in the data from international education professionals and students. Coding was done using inductive, deductive, and in-vivo codes to organize the information. Themes were developed while synthesizing the short answer responses and transcriptions of the interviews.

Trustworthiness and Positionality of the Researcher

To ensure trustworthiness of the research, triangulation, using more than one method to help make the findings more robust and comprehensive, was used. Surveying students and international educators as well as conducting follow-up interviews with IE professionals contributed to the triangulation.

As the only researcher, I continuously revisited my positionality to the subject and the results. While analyzing the data from surveys and interviews, I was conscious to check my bias. I identify as Latinx and have a personal stake in the results. My advisor and the members of my graduate school cohort supported me throughout the process. After each draft, I received feedback from my peers, my advisor, and my coworkers. I had weekly meetings with a

colleague to discuss findings and my interpretations. Participants were given the option of having a transcript of the interview. I also used member checking when I shared my findings and conclusions with the participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Ethical standards were practiced at all points throughout the study, making sure participants were aware of the minimal risk in participating all the way to excluding all names, institutions, and titles to insure anonymity.

Research Findings

This project examined the barriers and best practices to support Latinx students to study abroad. The findings consider survey and interview data together. First, barriers to study abroad are discussed, followed by supports international educators can provide to support Latinx students to study abroad. Then, advice is compiled from IE professionals' perspectives on steps to move forward. Finally, the implications of this study are explained, and conclusions are drawn.

Participants

As mentioned above, 19 international education professionals participated in the survey, and eleven of those professionals participated in follow-up interviews (see Appendix B: Interview Guide – International Educator). The international educators came from institutions spanning community colleges (3), small (7) and large (1) private education institutions, small (2) and large (2) public universities and colleges, as well as third-party providers (2) and nonprofits (2) with study abroad programs. They were located in Arizona, California, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New York, Virginia, and Puerto Rico. Following the Forum of Education Abroad's (2016) position titles and descriptions, the participants included 4 Coordinators, 3 Directors, 3 Directors of International initiatives,

2 Advisors, 2 Assistant Directors, 1 Advisor Manager, 1 Program Manager, 1 Associate Director, 1 CEO of a nonprofit, third-party provider, and 1 Member of the Diversity department. Overall, seven of 19 work at a Hispanic Serving Institution. Four of 19 said that Latinx students are their primary work focus, and of the remaining fifteen, five said they work with all categories of students equally.

There were six Latinx returned study abroad participants who completed the survey about their experiences (see Appendix C: Survey – Returned Participant). The participants were each from a different institution. One participant was a current student, and five had graduated within the last five years. Five out of six had gone on only one study abroad experience at the time of the survey, and five out of six had traveled to Central or South America where the primary language spoken was Spanish. Four of the students claimed they were native speakers with the other two students saying they were advanced or intermediate. Returned study abroad participants attended school in Arizona, California, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and North Carolina.

Barriers

One way to start looking at why Latinx students are not studying abroad is to look at the barriers this student group faces. In both surveys and interviews with students and educators, I researched what barriers Latinx students face in studying abroad. The main barriers found were lack of finances, lack of parental support, and not fitting in. While many IEPs mentioned barriers for all students, this was especially true for Latinx students in particular. According to the data, a lack of financial resources was mentioned by 15 professionals and four students.

Finances. Financial barriers, while the most mentioned, was not highly explained. The surveys included the questions “What types of barriers (if any) do Latinx students encounter in studying abroad: before, during, or after their program?” and “If you experienced barriers, what were the top three barriers for you to studying abroad?” Most participants, students and educators, just responded “financial” or “finances.” Luke (personal communication, May 15, 2020) said “Our students were challenged by financial constraints,” while Camilo (personal communication, May 22, 2020) noted that there are “cost prohibitive prices, especially from study abroad providers.” Student A answered,

The financial burden of the trips is something I still carry through loans. Many of my friends who studied abroad with me had help paying for [programs] or had to work for years to afford the experience. Even more of them did not have the opportunity to travel.

I regret nothing. (personal communication, May 4, 2020)

Student F said, “If the program was not funded, I would not have been able to afford the costs of travel and lodging” (personal communication, June 4, 2020). The cost of studying abroad is something that all Latinx students will think about, whether they can overcome this barrier or not, and institutions can start to think about how they can help students to get past this barrier.

Students also considered how they will overcome the barrier of finances. Anthony explains a few “students overcame it in a variety and very intricate ways” (Anthony, personal communication, May 29, 2020). He mentioned one student asking to borrow the money and taking out a loan, while another was able to convince a parent to take out a loan for the first time. Other students apply for grants and scholarships. All students will need to figure out how to pay for study abroad, but if there are resources to help them cover some of the fees, then they can overcome the barrier.

Parent support. Parental support or the lack thereof was a concern for the international educators that were surveyed. Nine out of 19 IEPs mentioned parents or guardians being a barrier, whether it was that educators thought parents would not be supportive or that students would have family obligations that would prevent them from studying abroad. Students had no consensus when asked if their parents supported study abroad. The answers ranged from very supportive to somewhat unsupportive. Interestingly, five of six students answered no to the question “Were your parents or guardians involved or part of the study abroad process at any point?” This could mean that parents were less involved and, therefore, do not matter as much in the decision-making process or that students do not need them but still want their support; no conclusion can be made. Parental involvement and opinions need to be considered on a student by student or even institutional basis. “We have parents walk into our office, which is new for me. ... We have literally parents coming into our office and talking with us. A lot more parent interaction in that front” (Veronica, personal communication, June 5, 2020). Other comments included parents not understanding the benefits of participation or the purpose of going abroad. “Families were often times very concerned about travel abroad experiences. I believe this is because they often times don't know other families that have children leaving internationally for long periods of time” (Luke, personal communication, May 15, 2020).

Not fitting in. Latinx students not fitting in with their peers who are also studying abroad can be an important barrier to consider. International educators that are only focused on intercultural competence skills between the students and the members of the new culture and not so much on group dynamics can be an issue.

I think that's a really common phenomenon at this point for minority students, students of color, to go abroad with just any group of American students—you're exposed to level of

microaggressions or open racism that you don't necessarily find when you're at home on your campus with your support groups, your friendship groups, your student associations, where you spend all of your time. (Marcela, personal communication, June 1, 2020)

Student B wanted more social resources, saying,

I didn't have a community that supported me at any phase. I felt like an outsider and like I was on my own. I met a few friends during the program but there was no follow up or workshop afterwards for us to digest/reflect on our experience. This would have made a huge difference in my learning and would have been an opportunity for me to feel less lonely in general at my university. (personal communication, May 5, 2020)

Latinx students face the obstacle of having to interact with students that they never had to on campus, and this becomes more difficult when they are the only Latinx student on the trip. International educators can support them with programming for their peers and the Latinx students themselves.

Supports

To answer the research question "How can international educators support Latinx students to study abroad?" international educators were able to suggest many supports as well as speak from the experience of what worked best for their populations and institutions. Support has been separated into six groups, including financial, parental supports, programming, outreach and marketing, identity, and advice to get started.

Financial. Students and institutions have mentioned many ways that they could overcome financial barriers. Many international educators mentioned that scholarships for diverse students, in this case Latinx students, was essential to supporting students in getting abroad. In higher education in general, there are many scholarships for Latinx students, and it is

a way to get students into college. Camilo (personal communication, May 22, 2020) thinks there are significantly limited financial funds and wonders when the government will provide support directly to HSIs.

A few institutions do have scholarships for diverse students on their campus. Jenny mentioned a new diversity scholarship that would be starting this year, if it were not for the budget cuts due to COVID 19 (personal communication, June 4, 2020). This scholarship would have been specifically for diverse students, and the study abroad office was going to be able to pass out scholarships to different organizations and student groups to have them nominate students they knew well. No one talked about any scholarships specifically for Latinx students, even at Hispanic Serving Institutions. In every interview, the Gilman scholarship was mentioned as a good source of funding that they use on their campus. The Gilman is a scholarship that supports students with financial barriers and who are normally underrepresented on study abroad programs, such as Latinx students. Julio described how he supported students with the writing of the essay (personal communication June 3, 2020). He used to have large workshops but later realized that one on one editing and constant individual revisions is the most successful strategy. Anthony disclosed that at his institution there was grant money for students to use on flights (personal communication, May 29, 2020).

As different institutions and international educators grappled with the idea of how to make study abroad more affordable, there were different ideas. Victor (personal communication, May 26, 2020) discussed making faculty-led programs part of a semester-long course and that students are able to attend a short-term trip abroad with the fees being included in the price of the semester. The travel is considered to be embedded into the course. Veronica (personal communication, June 5, 2020) explained that although her institution offers students the

opportunity to travel with the institution-run trips, third-party providers, and faculty-led short-term trips, she sees many students leaning towards the institution-run semesters because students are able to go abroad using the same tuition they pay on campus and can take their grants, scholarships, and financial aid with them. Tatiana (personal communication, June 2, 2020) mentioned a similar experience at her institution, saying she would not pay the high prices for the short-term programs when she can go abroad paying only tuition. Finally, Jenny (personal communication, June 4, 2020) suggested reaching out to Latinx alumni for help in developing a scholarship to fund trips abroad for Latinx students. Student A reiterated the ways in which they used these different methods:

Financially, the semester program was most obtainable simply because it could be covered under my existing grants and student loans, [*sic*] and required less out of pocket expense. Short-term programs were not an option for me because that money needed to come from another source. My summer program, I applied for and received a scholarship that covered 2/3 of the cost, and for that I'll always be grateful. (personal communication, May 4, 2020)

These ideas can create varying options for Latinx students and institutions to support students who have a financial barrier.

Parental and guardian support. Making parents and guardians part of the study abroad decision can be just as beneficial as having them a part of the decision to attend university. Beerkens (2016) suggests, "Make study abroad the norm, just as it is to go to university." Roxana (personal communication, May 26, 2020) mentioned that now, most students' parents think it is a good idea to go to university. This was also mentioned in the literature review; parents are still a big support system for Hispanic students to enter college (Nora & Crisp, 2009,

p. 323). Could study abroad become the new norm that all parents agree on and understand is a great idea for their student? In the meantime, many parents are their students' support system whether in spirit or in tangible ways. Latinx culture has always emphasized strong family ties, which can contribute to how supportive they are as well as what international educators need to do in order to understand how to reach out to families.

International educators discussed two ways of interacting with Latinx parents: only working with them if necessary; or reaching out to them including, speaking with them on the phone, in Spanish if needed. Julio describes the first way,

There's the helicopter parents, and I'll talk to them. I'd rather talk with the students and have them talk to their parents. ... We do encourage parents to attend our information meetings, and that's very helpful, I think. The students usually do bring their parents.

They come to the meeting. (Julio, personal communication June 3, 2020)

Tatiana says, "I don't seek out the parents, but I have thought about [meeting with them] if they have any questions" (personal communication, June 2, 2020). Some IEPs viewed parents as an extra responsibility and would rather "talk with the students." Depending on the student's relationship with their parents, they might need to be more involved, and the IEP needs to find ways to reach out. Best practice shows that parents should be involved and not looked upon as extra work. Looking back at Torres, Reiser, LePeau, Davis and Ruder,

Latino/a students in External Formulas tended to see their family and known peers as their authority figures, and they were suspect of those in authority. Traditionally viewed authority figures such as advisers and faculty, were included as authorities of knowledge only after students felt a sense of trust. (as cited in Torres & Hernandez, 2007, p. 571)

Anthony understands that students have

an advisor or someone who, usually the person that exposed them to the idea of studying abroad, who encouraged them and provided them with support throughout the process. Many of those were study abroad advisors themselves that the students had met with, talked about scholarships, and eventually it reached the point where they sort of developed a relationship with that person...Someone who they found that they confided in enough to be able to go and take these loans out, for example—to talk to their parents—someone who they dedicated their successful participation in study abroad [*sic*] as a result of the support of that person. (personal communication, May 29, 2020)

Advisors can work alone on this with students and gain trust in order to support them; however, even then, students go and speak with their parents.

The second way is getting parents and guardians involved early on in the decision-making process. Anthony also recommended that advisors should be there for students in order to help take some of the burden of explaining the benefits and convincing their parents.

[Students] had to address [barriers] with their family and I think that study abroad offices, what they can do to mitigate those efforts for the students essentially like kind of absorb some of those efforts that way the students don't have to go through it themselves, is providing information and putting on orientation for the families in Spanish and in English and in any other language. That way you can talk to the parents and explain to them what studying abroad is. That's entirely incumbent on an 18 or 19-year-old kid to first overcome all of those barriers that we just talked about and then articulate that to their families. (Anthony, personal communication, May 29, 2020)

Students will appreciate the support when their parents are able to have an IEP reach out and speak with them or be able to ask questions about the trip and not leave all the information

sharing to the student. “They may need help explaining why study abroad is important to their family or guardians” (Julio, personal communication, May 7, 2020). Marcela thought inviting parents needed to be explicitly mentioned,

[Students] don’t want to be the only one who brings their parents and if you say we invite you to have your parents join us along with you so you can better talk to your parents about it afterwards then there is permission. (personal communication, May 14, 2020)

The student has already been convinced, now the international educator can support the student by getting the parents interested in the idea. Veronica starts working with the parents right away, so a relationship is able to be fostered. She knows that students make decisions with their parents and that talking right away about study abroad is a good way to build a relationship.

[The] first point of interaction with the parents is at our new student orientation. We’re a small school, so we really try to foster that community as soon as they are admitted to the program and start usually in September. All the parents have been invited to a President’s dinner, and that’s when they can meet the different organizations. That would be when we begin to meet with the parents specifically to our Latinx population we’ve been working with. (Veronica, personal communication, June 5, 2020)

Participants also discussed working with parents on the phone, frequently in Spanish. Eight of the 11 international educators interviewed were bilingual or worked directly with a translator.

If I’m talking to a Latinx student I always said to them, ‘Here is my card, tell your mom and dad to call me because I know... sometimes they’re the ones with the most questions’... I normally don’t hear a lot from parents, but I do make myself available to the Latinx parents to call me, and then they feel comfortable talking just Spanish with

me. So again, we are lucky that in my office we can do that. (Victor, personal communication, May 26, 2020)

Anthony added,

I think that you can just tell a student, ‘Hey I know you gotta do this stuff, but don't forget that you can tell your parents just to come here. We have a Spanish speaker who's going to be able to talk to them, and you can also tell them to just call us and we can talk to them about it’ ... I think that lifting up some of that challenge that the students have to go through and putting it on the offices would enable a lot more students to study abroad. (personal communication, May 29, 2020)

Others had similar ideas and said that having options for parents is important to make sure they have all the information. No one disagreed with speaking in Spanish with the parents, but there were mixed thoughts on whether or not the information should be translated. If students are studying in the United States, they will have a level of English that would make translated material unnecessary; however, parents might need this support. The argument made against translating was it is a waste of time to translate materials if language is not a barrier for students or parents. “I'm not saying that they shouldn't be translating things in Spanish, but do you know how many parents speak Spanish?” (Camilo, personal communication, June 10, 2020). It has been noted that translation is a support that students can use in higher education especially with financial aid documents, and it is the same case with study abroad. At Lina’s institution they translate all of the financial aid print outs (personal communication, May 27, 2020). Marcela says they translate everything at her institution (personal communication, June 1, 2020). At Teresa’s institution an “information page for parents on [the] website is in Spanish” (personal communication, May 15, 2020). For international educators that do not speak Spanish, Julio

noted, “We could arrange that, if [parents] wanted to speak with someone” (personal communication June 3, 2020). Although there are other ways that were discussed, each institution needs to figure out what is best for their population of students.

Program locations and content. Programming to assist Latinx students with studying abroad was frequently mentioned by both students and educators. Program types and offerings for students as well as programming before, during, and after the trip were described. Students seemed overall unsatisfied with the program offerings at their institutions. Student A said,

Colombia was my main interest for a semester abroad due to language opportunities and available programs, but my school didn’t allow study abroad in Colombia at that time.

Chile was another idea, but credits were not as favorable. I went through a third-party provider, for my semester abroad in the end. (personal communication, May 4, 2020)

While at the same time Student E (personal communication, May 19, 2020) would have liked “more support in finding an organization abroad.” If the institution is not providing the options the students want, they need to start speaking with Latinx students to figure out where they want to go and what programs students would be interested in. Roxana explained,

It's not necessarily [that] there is not all the options of where you can go, it's how many programs are actually offered. There is one college that offers a semester program to a European location in the fall, semester program to a different European location in the spring, and that's it until about five years ago [when they added a summer program].

(personal communication, May 26, 2020)

Roxana goes on to say that if the program fills up, then there is more demand and room for more programs. With the diversity of ways IEPs can support students with financial options depending on program types, the participants did not agree about what types of programs were

best for Latinx students. Lina (personal communication, May 27, 2020) suggested reaching out to students to get to know what they want to do, where they want to study, and start with those ideas first.

One location that was brought up twice was Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States and institutions there accept the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). It is a great idea for students looking for a Spanish speaking country, and a lower cost of living, a destination that does not require a passport, and has close proximity to the United States. Victor and Marcela discussed how Puerto Rico is especially great for faculty-led groups and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students. It could be a location for students and international educators to consider (Victor, personal communication, May 26, 2020; Marcela, personal communication, June 1, 2020).

Outreach and marketing. The topic of outreach was discussed as a main theme in the findings. International educators are quite frequently in charge of the marketing that goes out for the study abroad office, whether that be on the website, at fairs, or around the institution. International educators and students discussed representation in marketing, alumni students getting involved in outreach, relying on faculty relationships, and Education Abroad office supports.

Representation. It is a common idea that representation is helpful in getting students engaged and more likely to participate. Representation in media matters. Sofia explained how it “can be discouraging [for students] not seeing a version of themselves in marketing materials” (Sofia, personal communication, May 13, 2020). Veronica agreed and gave an example,

I do a lot of the marketing for our office. I will say representation matters whether you think so or not. I've had so many students come in and say, ‘thank you for producing

something that actually has a student that looks like me on it!’ (personal communication, June 5, 2020)

Sofia’s institution reached out to students in order to portray the Latinx identity experience in a Spanish speaking country. They were looking for different ways for students to see themselves abroad. “[The institution] is also being more intentional with marketing materials by using photos with people of color who appear to be having a lovely time (in comparison to utilizing photos that are overwhelmingly whitewashed)” (Sofia, personal communication, May 13, 2020)

Lina and Veronica advised on how to use student images and market to Latinx students:

I think a big thing is just making sure you have consent from students and that they understand how it will be used because that's something that's always challenging—highlighting students but not exploiting students. Often times students are excited to share their stories, but they don't always know how it's going to be shared. (Lina, personal communication, May 27, 2020)

Veronica warned, “Don’t take studies that you may have read and apply that to every student because that's not their exact situation. Meet with your students before putting marketing out there” (personal communication, June 5, 2020). Roxana wanted to leave her interview on a positive note with a reminder that “when communication and outreach work, they work well” (personal communication, May 26, 2020). She knows of some community colleges with amazing outreach to Latinx students where 90 to 100% of the students studying abroad identify as Latinx.

Alumni. One might be wondering where institutions should go to look for the Latinx representation that is needed to get more students abroad. Alumni were mentioned 29 times throughout the research, and Latinx alumni were specifically mentioned an additional 13 times.

Many institutions link scholarships for programs to the return participants' obligation to share their experiences and help market. This can also be seen as a great leadership experience if students become mentors or sit on panels. Victor has noticed the "trickle-down effect" at his institution, "of underrepresented students who study abroad then come back and work in our office, and they become peer advisors" (personal communication, May 26, 2020). Sofia and Julio agreed. Sofia said,

Hearing advice from a Study Abroad Advisor is helpful but hearing from peers who have actually gone abroad is much more powerful and beneficial. Peers ...are seen as more credible since they aren't trying to sell them a program or depend on them to make enrollment numbers for that year. (personal communication, May 13, 2020)

Lina saw the benefits of Latinx students reaching out to their peers, and it did not have to be in an arranged meeting. "Latinx students often come in through word of mouth and a trusted source told them [to study abroad]" (personal communication, May 27, 2020). Looking at student development theory, Latinx students look at peers and family as a trusted source in the External Formula stage and can also be persuaded by them when developing their ethnic identity (Torres & Hernandez, 2007; Ruiz 1990).

I would say that the students often referenced an advisor as a form of support throughout the process that perhaps they wouldn't have gotten to be able to successfully study abroad without the support of them, but the majority of the support and exposure to the idea came from their peers. So, I specifically interviewed men, and almost all of them dedicated hearing about studying abroad and encouragement to study abroad from someone in their cultural organization, or their fraternity, or someone who they met in a class, or at their work, [or] their student job that told them [about studying abroad.] They

kind of walked them through the process. It was definitely more dedicated to the peer influence than the advisor, but without the advisor I think it would have been a lot more difficult and maybe prevented the student from successfully studying abroad. (Anthony, personal communication, May 29, 2020)

Although the advisor would be a student's support, making sure there is a trusted peer available to introduce Latinx students to the idea of study abroad is also necessary.

Faculty. Many international educators have seen that the faculty are frequently in charge of the marketing for their faculty-led programs. Institutions can use relationships faculty have formed with students to promote programs and the idea of going abroad. Kyla mentioned, "one thing we are finding is that students don't know about study abroad or haven't even considered it. We think reaching out to faculty who have good relationships with students to plant a seed may be a good starting point" (personal communication, May 15, 2020). Roxana agreed by offering an idea to have faculty internationalize the curriculum. For example, "teaching a health course and do a week about health conditions in x country. That's going to get the students interested in x country, and then they walk down the hall and see study abroad in x country" (Roxana, personal communication, May 26, 2020). Just make sure to communicate with the study abroad office to coordinate which countries it might be interesting to plan a trip to.

Students also find the faculty they travel with to be important. Three of the six students mentioned that they wished they had had more engaged faculty and they had "been more invested in our learning" (Student B, personal communication, May 5, 2020). To successfully work with Latinx students, especially with a differing identity, Victor advised that international educators should "know yourself, understand yourself better, and then you better understand others. Understanding who your clientele, who your population is" is important when

international educators do not hold the same identity as their students (Victor, personal communication, May 26, 2020). Additionally, reaching out and listening to Latinx faculty and staff at the institution can give insight on how to start working with Latinx students.

Education abroad office support. International educator responsibilities can range based on the institution. The amount of time working directly with students can vary depending on whether the role is more administrative or with students most of the time. International educators can be essential in building relationships with students and marketing programs. Sofia said, it “can be discouraging not being able to speak directly to Latinx alumni or a staff member that is Latinx to give candid advice based on this particular identity” (personal communication, May 13, 2020).

Lina knows this from her own experience when she has had to explain the Latinx experience to her colleagues. “I’ve noticed that other colleagues in the field might find it irritating [or] clingy or helicopter parents [when parents call the office] and for students with family structures like me, that’s just part of your family wants to make sure you are OK” (personal communication, May 27, 2020). She also gets asked questions that her colleagues do not because she can relate to these students more, they do not want to explain their whole story to someone who does not understand. Institutions need to consider the impact it can have when students can relate and identify with the staff.

International educators shared that meeting students in their campus space and working with other offices is something to consider. Targeted outreach must be done to reach the Latinx population. Six IE professionals mentioned meeting students in their space on campus, Veronica said,

our Latinx students primarily hang out in our student-success services office, and that is the office that they feel the most comfortable. There's a kitchen in there, they leave their food in there, it's just where they feel is home on campus... For me finding that has been the biggest strength to our recruitment efforts. So sitting in there once a week for advising, putting up my posters and flyers there, hosting all of our info sessions or programs of interest in that area, finding where that is on your campus [where] the students feel the most connected to, working in there and working with the colleague that runs that center. (personal communication, June 5, 2020)

This will not only put IE professionals in the student space, but it will be more likely that students will be there. Anthony planned a program and realized that having it in a space where students already go would be better attended than an event in a new space at a time he chose (personal communication, May 29, 2020). Finally, if the professional does not know the students, they should reach out to the multi-cultural center, Latinx student group, or other office that knows these students and can be the bridge. Working with these offices can give a lot of insight into Latinx students on campus and how to better reach out to them.

Identity

Aside from barriers and supports for Latinx students, identity was a frequent theme amongst all the interviews and all the supports mentioned. How students and IE professionals understand student identity can impact how they attempt to support them. Latinx student diversity is large and complex, and students can have many intersecting identities. What is good for one Latinx student might not be good for another Latinx student. With the rise of Hispanic Serving Institutions and Latinx students as a growing demographic, it is important to discuss this growing identity at the institution. However, just because there are more Latinx students on

campus, Victor, Camilo and Veronica warned that institutions wanted to be Hispanic Serving Institutions, just to gain some of the financial benefits but did not have the resources and support for Latinx students. In some cases, institutions were not even thinking about this population after receiving the designation of HSI and not listening to the Latinx faculty or students for advice. Students need to know “that they are not just a figure and a number, that they are there and we celebrate that” (Victor, personal communication, May 26, 2020).

Students mentioned in the barriers to studying abroad the feeling of not belonging on campus or with their peers on the trip. At Lina’s institution, there is work being done around identity, “not just about how students themselves identified but how they can be allies to each other and just kind of be aware of each other’s presence” (personal communication, May 27, 2020). Her institution is not unusual in the fact that students are usually in their bubble, with their friends and their community. Building a sense of community is important at home and abroad, and it does not happen by itself. IEPs need to facilitate the reflection and learning about identity. Student C wrote,

Being open about my identity was really helpful when it came to making connections and sharing experiences, even with the members of my own group. A person's identity is a powerful thing and shapes them to be the person that they are and that was something I realized on this trip. (personal communication, May 12, 2020)

Intercultural competence and understanding was mentioned in relation to COVID-19. With the recent restrictions in travel, IE professionals are looking for ways to support intercultural learning on campus. Starting with student groups on campus and working with Latinx students could be a start and then continue when students go abroad.

Drawing on Page's (1993) intensity factors theory, returned students were asked about the impact of intensity factors on their experience in the survey (see Appendix C: Survey – Returned Participant). They were also mentioned in some international educators' responses. Juliet responded she has heard that "Latinx returnees state that their study abroad was the first time they became aware of their privilege" (personal communication, May 29, 2020). Student B responded, "I felt that my identity was more respected there than in the States it at least made more aware of in a positive way" (personal communication, May 5, 2020). Students' status was different than it is in the United States, where a Latinx student can be marginalized, and while in a different country, students have more status as an American.

The second intensity factor mentioned was language. Lina knows from her experience studying abroad and now as an international educator that the level of language influences [the students] experience with the country they are in and also with their teammates. We might have three Latinx students go on the same program, and all three will have drastically different levels of Spanish, and that influences how other people see them, treat them, and often what they get out of the experience. (personal communication, May 27, 2020)

Student C had a similar experience:

Since the country was predominantly Spanish speaking, it was challenging, although not impossible, for all group members to find new ways to communicate and build relationships. I was one of the only students that had a pretty good understanding of Spanish and intermediate speaking abilities, so it shaped my experience greatly.

(personal communication, May 12, 2020)

This student was able to delve into the experience more so than non-Spanish-speaking peers.

Knowing the language before the study abroad experience will open up possibilities on the trip.

In the survey, four of the six students rated cultural difference as having a large impact on their experience abroad. Student D said,

Although there were huge cultural differences, I have been exposed to the some of the practices due to my own cultural background. In my family we practice similar traditions such as having the oldest female sibling take care of the younger siblings. (personal communication, May 16, 2020)

For this student, the cultural differences were similar in a way to their cultural background and they were able to find similarities. Student B expressed feeling “more welcomed and more comfortable in the Middle East than in the U.S. and [they were] able to relate more to the culture since there are some similarities with Mexican culture” (personal communication, May 5, 2020).

This could mean that when preparing students to go abroad, IEPs can prepare students by discussing cultural similarities and differences, keeping in mind student identities and cultures.

Five of six students rated cultural immersion as having a large impact on their experience. Student B wrote, “Three weeks was not enough. The instructor also was focused on site-seeing and having fun [more] than helping us immerse in the culture and pursue a more academic and cultural learning” (personal communication, May 5, 2020). Two students mentioned their host family experience contributed to their immersion while Student C said, “Our group was completely immersed, and it was wonderful. ...every aspect of the trip was a learning experience” (personal communication, May 12, 2020). Intensity factors are an important lens to take when thinking about preparing Latinx students for study abroad.

Advice on Supporting Students

In order to understand how international educators would advise colleagues about working with this population, each interview participant was questioned, “If an IE professional asked you how to increase the participation of Latinx students studying abroad at their institution, what advice would you give them?” This question sought to identify the most important supports that international educators should implement. Although this question is broad, and most IEPs chuckled or wiped their forehead before answering this question, it was meant to explore how one might get started. Many know increasing the number of Latinx students studying abroad will not happen overnight. When responding to the question participants frequently summarized what they had already shared, and some added in new supports to the conversation. Seven out of 11 interviewees expressed that listening to Latinx students and learning about who they are on your campus was the most important place to start. Three participants mentioned reaching out and working with other offices that are in contact with these students, such as the multicultural center (or the equivalent at each institution) and Latinx student groups. Jenny said, “I would advise that first of all you figure out who your target audience is, and you actually speak to them and figure out what their needs are” (personal communication, June 4, 2020). Student C wrote,

I think that the school does not truly understand the dimensions of being Latinx and trying to take advantage of learning opportunities. Thankfully, I have a supportive family that has been supportive of my endeavors and has been able to succeed in America. However, many of my peers have struggled to get support from advisors in regard to learning about scholarship opportunities to study abroad, how they can make it work financially, and how scheduling should work for them. It is unfortunate that there are not

more people in these departments that are actually representative of the student population. (personal communication, May 12, 2020)

This student understands that in order for an international educator to implement the many supports discussed in the findings, the first step is for the IEP is to understand the Latinx identity of the student. More than half of the IE participants agreed.

International education professionals also had ideas about how to go about collecting data on students. Aside from talking directly with individual students, Kyla explained her process in the survey: “We started with a large survey, then plan to do focus groups this coming year. I have a graduate assistant who is helping me with this so that we can better serve our underrepresented student populations” (Kyla, personal communication, May 15, 2020).

Veronica advised not to waste time assuming:

When I first started here, I came in with my impression from my last institution of what these students need and what could benefit them, most particularly that Latinx population, and that hurt me more than it helped me. Just learning what your campus culture is first and your student population.

She then warned,

Always listen to the student first and then advise them from that lens. Meet with your students before starting any programming... Really understand what your students’ needs are whether that's a focus group or just simply getting out on campus and chatting with students. (personal communication, June 5, 2020)

Whether or not someone has worked with Latinx students before, the first step must be to get to know the Latinx student experience and specific identities at your institution. A lot of time and

energy can go into learning about the students to better support them and develop programs that they want to attend.

Conclusions

Implications

As Latinx students enter college at increasingly higher rates, the percentage of Latinx students traveling abroad needs to follow. The percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in higher education was 18.9 percent in comparison to Hispanic students making up only 10.6 percent of study abroad participants (NAFSA, n.d.b; Institute of International Education, 2018). Understanding the multiple identities that Latinx students identify with will aid in the advising and outreach that international educators must do to support these students. Although one can believe the idea that what is good for one student is good for all students, international educators should take special care to get to know their Latinx students individually and hear what they want and need.

In this capstone, barriers discovered were lack of finances, lack of parental support, and students not fitting in with other students on the trip. The main supports that students and international educators discussed were financial support, supports for parents, program location and content options, outreach and marketing suggestions, and what was needed from international education professionals and faculty leaders working with students. Latinx student identity and how students interact on campus and abroad was very important for programming design and for students to feel a sense of belonging.

Based on the research, international educators should adopt the following practices:

- Financial: International educators must help students get creative with how to fund their study abroad experience. Each institution will have different funding options and should communicate all possibilities to students.
- Parental and Guardian support: Because Latinx students still generally rely on their parents when making a decision, international educators should include parents or guardians in information sessions, be available, and prepared to reach out.
- Program Locations and Content: Students want to have choices for their study abroad options. International educators must work with students to find out what they want in relation to location, cost, and classes. Students also want to feel as though they belong on the trip.
- Outreach and Marketing: Faculty and Latinx student alumni can be a huge part of the marketing and outreach for study abroad and the representation of Latinx students in these efforts matter.
- Identity: Latinx students have unique identities. Paying attention to intensity factors when students go aboard will help them feel a sense of belonging in their group, be better prepared, and have a positive experience.
- Advice: The main piece of advice for international educators is to get to know the Latinx students at the institution. Only with this understanding will IEPs be able to support Latinx students.

Limitations

With all studies, there are limitations and room for further research. In this study there were few student participants. It was difficult to reach out to students when the study did not involve one particular institution. Another limitation was the time and scope of the project.

Participants were surveyed and interviewed while international educators all over the world were in the middle of pivoting due the COVID-19 outbreak. At another time, more professionals could have been surveyed.

Further Research

In a study of limited scope, one cannot easily ask students who did not study abroad, why they did not go abroad. This research focused on how to support students but further research could be done with students that were planning to study abroad but did not go.

More research can be done surveying specific sub-groups of Latinx students that identify with one of the many different identities that make up the Latinx student population. Some examples one can focus on include, nationality of students or parents, racial diversity, generational status, immigration status, type of institution, and socio-economic status to name a few. This research recommends and suggests general supports for Latinx students because their experiences, identities, and institution types can vary greatly.

Finally, Latinx students as heritage seekers, students that “pursue study abroad in the country where their families come from,” were brought up 15 times by seven international educators, and that research could be explored in an entirely different study (Tips for heritage seekers, 2019). Where students want to go, what motivations they have, why they are heritage seekers, what difficulties they face, and how international educators can support them are some of the many things one could research. International educators must be aware of making assumptions about Latinx students and because it is a generalization that Latinx students tend to be heritage seekers, this could really add to the literature on supports and program design for Latinx students.

Closing Statement

Latinx students are continuing to grow as a population, and their presence is growing on college campuses. As a result, institutions working with Latinx students must consider how to support Latinx students who want to go abroad. Although addressing barriers can be the main focus of international educators supporting underrepresented, specifically Latinx, students, one must keep in mind that all barriers can be overcome, and that the more that is known about the population, the better. A focus on supports will be beneficial for Latinx students as well as international educators.

Finally, students surveyed expressed how much they enjoyed their experience. Student D said,

I think that going abroad is such a unique experience. It allows for an individual to be exposed to communities outside of their own. It's a learning opportunity like no other and I am really grateful that I had the chance to go to Ecuador. (personal communication, May 16, 2020)

Student F exclaimed,

[Studying abroad] was the best decision I have ever made. By traveling abroad, you are able to understand how our culture is not that different, even when you are thousands of miles away from your own people. We must continue to enhance our mindset so the future Latinx generation can benefit from a new world perspective. (personal communication, June 4, 2020)

If there is ever a question as to why study abroad is important to this population, these students are proof that it is worth the work.

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Appendix A: Survey – International Educator

Part I: Personal Information and Background

1. What type of international education institution/organization do you work for? Select all that apply.
 - Non-profit organization
 - Third-party provider
 - Government
 - Community organization
 - Higher education institution
 - Other _____
2. What type of higher education institution do you work for? Select all that apply.
 - Community college
 - Trade/Vocational school
 - Liberal Arts College
 - University
 - Online College
 - Public
 - Private
 - Other
 - I do not work at a higher education institution.
3. What is your institution's undergraduate enrollment?
 - 1- 1000
 - 1001-3000
 - 3001- 6000
 - 6001- 10000
 - 10001 and up
 - Other
 - N/A
4. What percentage of undergraduate students identify as Latinx?
5. Do you work at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)?
 - Yes
 - No

- N/A
 - Other
6. How many students are enrolled in your study abroad programs per year? If it fluctuates, you can provide an average.
 7. What percentage of the enrollment identify as Latinx?
 8. What is your title?
 9. How long have you been in this position?
 10. Please give a brief description of what you do in your role.
 11. How long have you been working with Latinx students in the field of international education?

Part II: Support for Students

12. Are Latinx students the primary focus in your position?
 - Yes
 - No
13. If Latinx students are NOT the primary focus in your position, which population of students do you work most closely with? If you work with more than one, please choose the population with the highest percentage.
 - African American or Black
 - White
 - Asian American or Pacific Islander
 - Unknown
 - Other _____
14. What types of barriers (if any) do Latinx students encounter in studying abroad: before, during, or after their program?
15. Is your institution/organization specifically targeting any of these barriers mentioned above? If so, which ones are you targeting and how are you or your organization doing it?
16. What types of supports and/or programming do you believe to be most impactful in supporting Latinx students studying abroad?
17. In what ways do you think you or your organization could do better in supporting Latinx students studying abroad?
18. Has your institution received recognition for any of the above-mentioned programming supporting Latinx students? If yes, please specify the program or initiative and award received.
19. Are there any other comments you have when it comes to supporting Latinx students study abroad?

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your time and contributions are greatly appreciated.

Are you interested in participating in an interview with me to elaborate on your answers in this survey? The interview would last around 30-45 minutes, would take place on the phone, Skype or Zoom, and would occur only once. If you are interested, please write your name and email below.

Name: _____ Email: _____

Would you like to receive a copy of the finalized research paper? The expected completion date is December 2020. Yes___ No___

Appendix B: Interview Guide – International Educator

As a reminder, the purpose of this study is to compile best practices for international educators on how they can support students who identify as Latinx, study abroad. Research questions include: How can international educators support Latinx students to study abroad? And how can the current supports in place for Latinx students be leveraged to help them study abroad?

Personal Information and Background

- I understand that you _____ in your position. Would you like to elaborate on your position?
- In what capacity do you work in or with study abroad?
- In what capacity do you work with Latinx students?
- Does your institution have any goals related to the increase in study abroad participation for students who identify as Latinx?

Participant Opinions

- How would you rate your commitment to Latinx students?
(Scale is to clarify if participant would like clarification.)
 - Little commitment
 - Little commitment because of other responsibilities or student populations
 - Neutral
 - Large commitment, but I spend only a small amount of time due to other responsibilities
 - Large commitment and Latinx students take up most of my time
- Do you feel like you have enough time to devote to Latinx students?
(Scale is to clarify if participant would like clarification.)
 - Yes, all of my time.
 - I would like more but I have enough to complete my role.
 - No, I wish I had more time to work with Latinx students.

Supports for Students

- I have been reading that Latinx students study abroad at a lower rate than their white peers when looking at percentage of enrollment. In addition, the percentage of Latinx students in college is not proportionate to the percent of Latinx students studying abroad. Do you have any ideas to why these might be?
- In the survey, you mentioned _____ barriers, would you like to go into more detail about one you previously wrote about?
- Are there other barriers you would like to mention?
- You mentioned in the survey how you are supporting students. Has the program been successful? Do you have any evidence for this?

- In the survey, you mentioned _____ supports for Latinx students would be most impactful. Can you explain why you think that? Do you have any other supports you would like to mention?
- In the survey, you discussed _____. Can you describe it in more detail?
- Additional questions based on survey responses
- If an IE professional asked you how to increase the participation of Latinx students studying abroad at their institution, what advice would you give them? How could they get started?
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix C: Survey – Returned Participant

Informed Consent

I have read the above and I understand its contents and I agree to participate in the study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.

- Yes
- No

Consent to Quote from Survey

Note: Your name or institution will not be used. A pseudonym (fake name) will be used in order to protect your identity. Check one of the following to indicate your choice:

Please check the box next to your answer.

- I agree to have direct quotes from my survey included in the research study.
- I do not agree to have direct quotes from my survey included in the research study.

Background information - eligibility*A note on terminology:*

In this survey, “Latinx” is a gender- inclusive term referring broadly to those of Latin American and Hispanic heritage.

1. Do you identify as Latinx?
 - Yes
 - No. (Thank you for participating in this survey. I am seeking information from students who identify as Latinx. Because you do not identify as Latinx, the survey will now end.)
2. Are/were you a student attending a higher education institution in the United States?
 - Yes
 - No. (Thank you for participating in this survey.)
3. If you have graduated, please choose the year from below?
 - 2015 or sooner (if you graduated before 2015, you will be thanked and closed out of the survey)
 - 2016
 - 2017
 - 2018
 - 2019
 - 2020
 - Current student

4. What level of Spanish do you speak?
 - I am a native speaker.
 - Advanced
 - Intermediate
 - Beginner
 - I don't speak any Spanish.
 - Other
5. What higher education institution did you attend? (please list others in the next question)

6. Did you attend any other institutions? Please include the names of all others.
7. Were any of them Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)?
 - Yes
 - No
 - I'm not sure.
 - They were not an HSI when I attended, but they are now.
8. What year of undergraduate study are you in?
 - First
 - Second
 - Third
 - Fourth
 - Fifth
 - Sixth or more
 - Graduated
 - Other
9. What is/was your major? (Drop down menu with Anthropology, Art and Design, Biology, Business and Management, Chemistry, Communications, Computer science, Criminal Justice, Economics, Education, Engineering, English, Finance and Accounting, Foreign Language, any but Spanish, History, Kinesiology and Physical Therapy, Nursing, Math, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology, Spanish, Other)
10. Do/did you have a minor? What is/was it? (Drop down menu with Anthropology, Art and Design, Biology, Business and Management, Chemistry, Communications, Computer science, Criminal Justice, Economics, Education, Engineering, English, Finance and Accounting, Foreign Language, any but Spanish, History, Kinesiology

and Physical Therapy, Nursing, Math, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology, Spanish, Other)

Study Abroad Experiences

These will be the same questions for up to four experiences.

11. What type of study abroad experience was it? Select all that apply.
- Semester study abroad
 - Medium length (more than 4 weeks and less than a semester)
 - Short-term (2-4 weeks) study abroad
 - Faculty-led study abroad
 - Internship
 - Service-learning programs
 - Research program
 - Yearlong study abroad
 - Third-party provider
 - Other _____
12. Where did you study abroad?
- Africa
 - North America (Mexico, Canada, Caribbean Islands)
 - Central America
 - South America
 - Asia
 - Australia
 - Europe
 - Middle East
13. Was it a Spanish speaking country?
- Yes
 - No
14. Please write 1-4 sentences about what the programs goals were.
15. What classes did you take?
16. Did you have another study abroad experience? (If yes, then the same set of questions will come up)

Impact of factors on your experience

On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being a small impact and 5 being a large impact, how much of an impact did each of these factors have on your study abroad experience(s)?
In the space under the factor, please explain how that factor played a role in your experience.

17. cultural differences (The difference between home and host cultures) ____

18. ethnocentrism/ethno-relativism (the degree to which you evaluate other people and other cultures based on the standards of your culture) ____

19. language ____

20. cultural immersion (the amount of time spent surrounded by the host culture and members of the host culture) ____

21. cultural isolation (reduced access to your home culture) ____

22. prior intercultural experiences ____

23. expectations (expectations of the program or experience) ____

24. visibility and invisibility (being physically different or similar from the host nationals) ____

25. identity (being able to be open about one's identity) ____

26. status (feeling that you are getting an appropriate amount of respect) ____

27. power (the extent to which you have power in intercultural situations, especially over your own circumstances) ____

28. control (the extent to which you have control in intercultural situations, especially over your own circumstances) ____

Supports for Study Abroad

29. Did you experience any barriers related to study abroad?

- Yes, continue to question 26
- No, continue to question 27

30. What were the top three barriers for you to studying abroad? If you have others please write them in the other section.

- I did not experience any barriers.

- Financial
 - personal obligations
 - work obligations
 - didn't fit in academic plan
 - family support
 - application process
 - insufficient language skills
 - lack of interesting programs
 - lack of diversity in program locations
 - Other
31. Please use this space to explain any of the above barriers you mentioned.
32. How were you supported by your school or another organization before your study abroad experience i.e. financial, workshops, advising, etc.?
33. How were you supported by your school or another organization during your study abroad experience i.e. financial, workshops, advising, mentorship, etc.?
34. How were you supported by your school or another organization after your study abroad experience i.e. financial, workshops, advising, carrier services, etc.?
35. Were your parents or guardians involved or part of the study abroad process at any point?
- Yes
 - No
36. If your parents or guardians were involved, what types of resources or programming were specifically targeted towards them? Examples: workshops/ information sessions, literature, or N/A if they were not involved.
37. If your parents or guardians were involved, what types of resources or programming did they use? Examples: workshops/ information sessions, literature, or N/A if they were not involved.
38. How supportive were your parents of your decision to study abroad?
- Very supportive
 - Somewhat supportive
 - Neutral
 - Somewhat unsupportive
 - Unsupportive
39. What might have been helpful to you during each phase of your studying abroad experience (before, during, and after)?
40. What resources do you wish you had had?

41. Are there any other comments you have about being Latinx and studying abroad?

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your time and contributions are greatly appreciated.

Would you like to receive a copy of the finalized research paper? The expected completion date is December 2020.

- Yes
- No

If you would like to receive a copy of the paper, please leave your email address here.