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**Embargoed Exchanges:
A Critical Analysis of Emerging Market Dynamics in U.S.
and Cuban Academic Exchange**

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Abstract: Internationalization continues to remain a central focus within the U.S. university environment. The motives of internationalization are under question as neoliberal policies continue to limit sustained, long-term state funding for universities and undermine the academic mission of universities. Universities are leveraging internationalization practices, like study abroad programming, in response to the pressures of neoliberalism. In this study, qualitative case study methods were used to critically examine study abroad programming between the United States (US) and Cuba before, during, and after the Obama Administration's announcement changing diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba on December 17, 2014. The perspectives of 12 of the main actors in the field, including educational administrators and faculty from U.S. universities, Cuban universities, and study abroad program providers, were captured to provide a more comprehensive

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view of study abroad implementation in Cuba. The findings illustrate the influences of the neoliberal university environment in which study abroad programming is situated. These findings point to the prioritization of a market-based approach to study abroad programming, which amplifies inequities and power dynamics within north-south study abroad programs.

Keywords: Study Abroad; Internationalization; Neoliberalism; U.S. & Cuba Relations; Higher Education

Intercambios embargados: Un análisis crítico de las dinámicas de mercado emergente en el intercambio de académicos entre EE.UU. y Cuba

Resumen: La internacionalización sigue siendo un foco central en el entorno universitario de Estados Unidos. Las razones de los procesos de internacionalización son cuestionadas, ya que políticas neoliberales continúan limitando el financiamiento estatal sostenido a largo plazo para las universidades y socavan la misión académica de las universidades. Las universidades están aprovechando las prácticas de internacionalización, tales como los programas de intercambio en el extranjero, en respuesta a las presiones del neoliberalismo. En este estudio, se utilizaron estudio de casos cualitativos para examinar de manera crítica los programas de intercambio entre los Estados Unidos (EEUU) y Cuba antes, durante y después del anuncio de la Administración Obama de cambiar las relaciones diplomáticas entre estos países el 17 de diciembre de 2014. Las perspectivas de 12 de los principales actores incluidos administradores educativos y profesores de universidades de los EE. UU., universidades cubanas y proveedores de programas de estudios en el extranjero, fueron capturados para brindar una visión más completa de la implementación de estudios en el extranjero en Cuba. Los resultados ilustran las influencias del entorno universitario neoliberal en el que se encuentran los programas de intercambio. Estos hallazgos apuntan a la priorización de un enfoque basado en el mercado para estudiar en el extranjero lo que amplifica inequidades y dinámicas de poder dentro de los programas de estudio Norte-Sur en el exterior.

Palabras clave: Estudiar en el extranjero; Internacionalización; Neoliberalismo; Relaciones en los Estados Unidos y Cuba; Educación superior

Intercâmbio confiscado: Uma análise crítica das dinâmicas dos mercados emergentes, o intercâmbio de acadêmicos dos EUA e Cuba

Resumo: A internacionalização continua sendo um foco central no ambiente universitário dos Estados Unidos. As razões para os processos de internacionalização são questionadas, uma vez que as políticas neoliberais continuam limitando o financiamento estatal sustentado de longo prazo para as universidades e minam a missão acadêmica das universidades. As universidades estão aproveitando as práticas de internacionalização, como os programas de intercâmbio no exterior, em resposta às pressões do neoliberalismo. Neste estudo, estudos de caso qualitativos foram usados para examinar criticamente os programas de intercâmbio entre os Estados Unidos (EUA) e Cuba antes, durante e após o anúncio do governo Obama de mudar as relações diplomáticas entre esses países em 17 de dezembro de 2014. As perspectivas de 12 dos principais atores, incluindo administradores educacionais e professores de universidades dos EUA. Os EUA, universidades cubanas e provedores de programas de estudos no exterior foram capturados para fornecer uma visão mais completa da implementação de estudos no exterior em Cuba. Os resultados ilustram as influências do ambiente universitário neoliberal em que os programas de intercâmbio são encontrados. Estes resultados

apontam para a priorização de uma abordagem baseada no mercado para estudar no exterior, que amplia desigualdades e dinâmicas de poder dentro dos programas de estudo Norte-Sul no exterior.

Palavras-chave: Estudar no exterior; Internacionalização; Neoliberalismo; Relações nos Estados Unidos e em Cuba; Educação superior

Introduction

As neoliberal reforms continue to undermine U.S. public funding for higher education, corporatization and privatization of the universities are carried out (Giroux, 1983). Corporatization and privatization induce a neo-colonial mindset within university practice which limit resistance and expedites conformity to neoliberal thought and practice (Shahjahan, 2012). U.S. universities are thus forced to turn their efforts to entrepreneurship by selling research goods and leveraging resources from students (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). This phenomenon is described by scholars, Slaughter and Rhoades (2004), as academic capitalism. As academic capitalism penetrates U.S. university campuses, university officials promote and articulate these reforms to the university community as “innovation” through specific initiatives.

These initiatives take many forms. One of the most emphasized initiatives in U.S. university’s strategic plans and institutional endeavors is internationalization, the university’s response to globalization (Coryell, Durodoye, Wright, Pate, & Nguyen, 2012). This process, which Childress (2009) defines as the incorporation of an intercultural or international dimension into all teaching, research, and service functions, has gained increasing popularity as the world continues to be more globalized and interconnected (Gacel-Avila, 2005). As a result, higher education institutions have been subject to external and internal pressures that shift university priorities to reinvent their mission and goals. A widespread vehicle for universities looking to internationalize has been the expansion of university experiential and international services frequently called study abroad or international exchange programs.

The increase in the international reach of U.S. universities combined with a changing funding environment call into question the purpose and goals of academic exchanges or otherwise known as study abroad programming. This shift comes at a time when international programs are being outsourced from the faculty to university administrative units and private third party organizations. Using administrative and private organizations reduces faculty oversight to simply increase the number of students studying abroad. This shift at the university level highlights another example of the reduction of public funding at federal and state level for stated university goals. The reduction of public funding and commercialization of the university environment extends beyond the university as it impacts a university’s global partnership. When these international partnerships are outsourced there is a creation of a new model of international programming that diminishes the role of the host/international community to a subservient role and reduces the chances of reciprocity. These efforts between the U.S. institutions and their host moves the university from a practice of intercultural understanding for the *global good* to one focused on exploiting international communities for market gain.

Neoliberalism in U.S. Higher Education

As discussed above, neoliberalism is a dominant and pervasive force within higher education. Neoliberal policymakers see the university as an environment in which they can implement their reforms, as educational environments are conduits for value formation. In the

current neoliberal environment, higher education policy advances the right of the self-interested individual, the creation of a self-regulating free-market and commitment to free trade (Harvey, 2007; Klees, 2008; Olssen & Peters, 2005). In this policy environment, attempts have been made to deregulate higher education and reduce funding in an effort to create a system that is intelligible, practicable and governable by a particular (e.g. neoliberal capitalist) economic rationality (Harvey, 2007; Shahjahan, 2014). This economic rationality prioritizes a system governed by consumer interests that produces alumni focused solely on individual interests (Harvey, 2007; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Shahjahan, 2014, Saunders & Blanco Ramirez, 2016; Saunders & Kolek, 2017). For instance, Hensley, Galilee-Belfer and Lee (2013) examined a situation in Arizona where state funding for higher education had been drastically cut. Legislators changed the narrative of the goal of higher education being a societal benefit to one of individual benefit in order to justify the increasing cost of attendance (Hensley, Galilee-Belfer, & Lee, 2013).

Reduction of state funding of university education creates a dynamic in which universities must search for funds from new revenue sources. New revenue sources are found by increasing financial costs to students such as raising tuition rates and fees (Klees, 2008; Shahjahan, 2014) and by selling research goods (Shahjahan, 2014; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Introducing a market within the university is one way to induce the state to privatize the higher education sector. With this market-like environment, traditional university governance models are transformed into corporate models that ultimately reduce the power of faculty (Giroux, 2002). By operating within a corporate model, universities become susceptible to both internal and external forces that may not be directly connected to the academic mission of the institution. This neoliberal environment extends its reach beyond the campus environment as the internationalization practices of the university orient the scope of their work globally.

Internationalization of the University

The interdependency of the globalized world and efforts to infuse global understanding into the university curriculum have been studied widely. One of the most prolific scholars on the topic is Philip Altbach. Altbach and Teichler (2001) stated that internationalization is inevitable in current times with the development “of a global economy, a growing worldwide labor market for highly skilled personnel, and a knowledge communications system based on the Internet.” Various types of higher education institutions, from small community colleges to large public and private institutions, are adding internationalization initiatives to their university mission statements and are developing strategic plans at increased rates (Stearns, 2009).

Internationalization of the university can be defined as the incorporation of an intercultural or international dimension into all teaching, research, and service functions of a university (Childress, 2009; Knight, 2003). It is important to note that the notion of internationalization is not a new one. Universities in Europe beginning in the thirteenth century developed mechanisms to help higher education institutions recruit international scholars and establish a common language, Latin, for instruction (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). What is new is the extent and intensity at which American institutions are using internationalization rhetoric in their policies and practices. These policies and practices at the university level influence the campus climate surrounding internationalization efforts and the direction in which these directives develop (Altbach & Knight, 2007; De Witt, 2014; Knight, 2015). Furthermore, internationalization efforts influence the curriculum and the student’s college experience. The process by which internationalization occurs varies across a diverse set of university systems throughout the world.

Motivations of Internationalization

Research continues to highlight the motivations and future direction of internationalization strategies within the university environment. Knight studied and documented the shifting motivations of U.S. universities' internationalization strategies. In 2004, Knight's research grouped the motivations of U.S. internationalization strategies into four broad categories: social/cultural, political, economic and academic. While economic motivations existed in 2004, they were tempered with goals of intercultural understanding, peace building and enhancement of the quality of teaching. Just four years later, Knight (2008) conducted an updated study on U.S. internationalization strategies that merged the motivations into two categories: institutional and national. The motivations identified within these two categories were inherently connected to the neoliberal mindset. For example, Knight (2008) documented the central motivations of a variety of actors (i.e. professional and academic associations, nongovernmental organizations, and governmental actors) that influenced U.S. internationalization strategy. These motivations included branding, income generation and strategic alliance creation (Knight, 2008). Knight (2014) recently stated internationalization was going through an "identity crisis" as the traditional motivations around partnership, exchange and mutual benefits were now being replaced by competition and commercialization. These shifting motivations clearly show the presence of neoliberalism within the international realm of the university.

The shifting nature of internationalization strategy on U.S. higher education campuses combined with competing and disjointed implementation has led to a number of scholars and practitioners providing alternative approaches to internationalization. Stein (2017) categorized internationalization ideologies in three categories: idealism, educationalism and instrumentalism. Utilizing these three ideologies, Stein aimed to highlight the contradictions in internationalization ideologies while advocating for university faculty and educational administrators to explicitly express their vision, goals and strategies surrounding internationalization. Knight (2014) furthered a critical approach in her recent study as she described a clear change in what once was a university approach to creating exchange and partnership across borders to one now focused on competition amongst one another for students and prestige.

Some scholars, like Lee (2013), believe it is irresponsible to think of internationalization as an inherent force for social and educational good. Stromquist (2007) reinforced skepticism of the real intentions of internationalization policies as she argued, "Internationalization refers to greater international presence by the dominant economic and political powers, usually guided by principles of marketing and competition." The financial state policies guiding university budgets also shed light on Stromquist's concerns. For example, economic motives behind internationalization initiatives are clearly seen through admissions fairs and drives that take place abroad to recruit full fee paying students. Additionally, the practice of establishing U.S. university branch campuses also highlights the economic motives behind internationalization initiatives. These practices further a consumption and commodity rhetoric that see students as consumers and the university environment as a marketplace (Saunders & Blanco Ramirez, 2016). These initiatives are thinly veiled in a language of exchange but are exploited for economic gain, and thus devalue the benefits of international students to the university campus.

To differentiate and refocus on internationalization for cooperation and mutual benefit, scholars are now using Jones's (1998) term internationalism, which emphasizes a focus primarily on international cooperation and the global good within the international activity of universities. Internationalism is seen as an alternative to the economic focus of current internationalization strategy by refocusing on global solidarity efforts.

Others like Zemach-Bersin further critiqued international educators for blindly accepting the U.S. government's directives (2007). Zemach-Bersin (2007) linked internationalization policies to a process that "reproduces the logic of colonialism, legitimizes American imperialist desires and allows for the interests of U.S. foreign policy to be articulated through the specious rhetoric of global universality." Thus, developing internationalization strategy that is sensitive to university partners in the developing world requires acknowledgement of previous colonial dynamics. Even though the formal process of colonialism has ended, colonial dynamics present in new, subtler forms.

Continued imperialistic desires are highlighted by Stearns (2009) who sees U.S. academic exchange as a force for enhancing America's standing abroad and forging new strategic relationships with foreign institutions. Typically these relationships are one sided, as noted by Queen (2012). Queen (2012) claimed that U.S. academic exchange promotes a false rhetoric of diverse forms of intercultural learning. One sided approaches to internationalization for U.S. higher education gain leads critics to fear resulting indoctrination of dominant American ideals (Stearns, 2009).

As Wright (2009) noted, universities at the forefront of internationalization are highly influential and have the potential to set a precedent that other institutions may follow. Lee (2013) advocated for moving internationalization beyond a checklist of activities to one that should advance social and educational responsibility. If international educators establish a culture of sustainable and thoughtful development of engagement with the university's internationalization strategy, this will lead to higher education institutions incorporating practices that acknowledge and challenge power dynamics in an effort to create mutuality among international partners. In pursuing this line of inquiry, it is my hope that this research highlights the transmission of ideology through the internationalization strategy in an effort to unearth the reproduction of colonial structures emphasized through neoliberal language and strengthens the case for using resistance strategies to promote the global good.

Changing Nature of Study Abroad

A common practice of internationalization for U.S. universities is the development of academic mobility initiatives called academic exchange or study abroad programs. Some scholars attribute the changing direction in study abroad programming to consumerism (Bolen, 2001; Ogden, 2008). Consumerist values are driven by a market that caters to its consumers' (i.e., students') desires (interests or at least choices). Recent trends in study abroad suggest that programming is increasingly catering to students. This is further exacerbated within the university environment with the use of satisfaction surveys, veiled as assessment practices, which reinforces that the university prioritizes student desires over academic learning.

Consumerist pressures have diversified the practice and scope of study abroad to expand beyond traditional exchanges to include programs led by faculty in various disciplines, federal government initiatives helping students gain international experience and even study abroad programs designed by independent organizations for university student participation (Bowman, 1987).

Of particular interest for this study is the rise of independent organizations, or program providers, in the field of study abroad. Program providers existed before the 1980's and 1990's, but the number of providers expanded during those decades (DePaul & Hoffa, 2010). While no studies currently exist that examine the rise of these organizations in relation to neoliberal university reform, the timing of their rise and continued existence today is cause for concern.

Concern arises for two main reasons. First, these providers are non-university organizations that take a variety of forms and operate outside the university purview. While FORUM on

Education Abroad serves as a standards regulating body of study abroad programming, there is no evidence of a study abroad program ever being shutdown based on unethical practice. Second, these organizations continue to replace the roles that faculty and university administrators previously held, even as internationalization becomes central to many universities' mission (Stearns, 2009). The act of contracting with these providers highlights another space in which universities are privatizing their functions.

For many institutions, privatization of their functions is blamed on the costs of hiring professional staff or training faculty in international work. Childress (2009) noted that financing study abroad can be prohibitive, making it difficult to hire sufficient professional staff and fund different initiatives. Some universities turn to peer advising programs to supplement professional advising services (Lo, 2006). However, placing students in roles that faculty and educational administrators previously occupied is another way of reducing resources to adequately implement the university's commitment to international programming. Childress (2009) found that faculty play an integral role in encouraging study abroad among undergraduate students, and it is important to many that they be a part of the evolving internationalization of their respective campuses. Therefore, reducing the role of faculty and staff counters Childress' research on the role of faculty.

Many universities pass the costs of these experiences onto the student in the form of an administrative fee in addition to tuition. The assessment of fees adds a new level of financial burden on students that is often seen as a deterrent for student participation (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2011). Additionally, fees are shown as further prohibiting minority and poor students from accessing study abroad opportunities (Naffziger, Bott, & Mueller, 2008).

In addition to seeing the reduction in funding and staffing, we see that the length of time students are embedded within international host communities on study abroad programs has decreased. Over the last decade, program length declined as short term study abroad, eight weeks or less (versus an entire semester or academic year), became the preferred length of time abroad (Institute of International Education, 2007, 2018). Short term study abroad programs do offer learning benefits for students (Vande Berg, Connor-Linton & Paige, 2009) but a reduction in length is a cause for concern. Further examination is needed to determine how resource allocation impacts the scope and purpose of study abroad programming as well as how the length of the study abroad experience affects learning and other outcomes.

Another noteworthy change in study abroad is the expansion of study abroad programming to the developing world. This expansion is seen as a purposeful decision by many in the field to move students away from traditional locations (e.g. Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand) to build infrastructure and program exchanges with study abroad in less traditional locations (e.g. sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia, etc.). However, there is a lack of empirical evidence identifying the motivations for these exchanges. Woolf (2006) critiqued the expansion of study abroad programs by examining a decrease in area and regional studies courses and the reduction of language courses on the university campus. Increasing the sites of study abroad but reducing students' curricular connections further supports the colonial critiques of scholars. Ogden (2008) added another critique, providing insight into programming practices in these non-traditional areas that he likens to a colonial settler's veranda. Students in this colonial-like setting are provided resources (e.g. luxury housing, 24/7 internet access, etc.) beyond the standard of living of the local population. Students enjoy the comforts of their study abroad programming only to passively engage with the local population or view the community from afar (Ogden, 2008). Failure to create programming in solidarity with the local community creates tensions between study abroad programs and their hosts.

Research Framing and Context

To examine how these pressures shape U.S. university engagement in the international community, the purpose of this research is to examine the recent shift within the academic community around the academic exchanges in Cuba. In December 2014, President Obama announced a new way forward with Cuba. His announcement ushered in a new era of diplomatic relations between the two countries. While a number of U.S. universities have long-standing relations with Cuban universities and research institutes, many other U.S. universities immediately capitalized on this opening. Since 2014, U.S. university presidents, officials, and international organizations have encouraged new ties between academic institutions. This encouragement has led to a shift in U.S. university participation. From academic year 2015-2016 to 2016-2017, U.S. study abroad participation to Cuba increase by over 21% for a total of 4,607 U.S. students (IIE, 2018). This number is an exponential increase from the 251 students who studied in Cuba prior to Obama's presidency (IIE, 2007). To achieve these numbers, a fundamental shift in study abroad programming has occurred. Where U.S. universities used to partner with Cuban institutions for semester based programming there are now provider organizations serving as the "middle men" between these institutions with a prioritization on short term (8 weeks or less) programming. Fundamental shifts are also occurring within the Cuban context as current reforms are introducing a reduction in time to degree, introducing English language requirements for bachelor's degrees, merging higher education institutions, and expanding academic major options.

The U.S. engagement with Cuba in study abroad is peculiar due to the political, historical and economic context of diplomatic, economic, political, and military as well as cultural relations between the two countries. In 1962, the U.S. government instituted a trade and travel embargo. The embargo has continually impeded all types of collaboration and highly regulates U.S. travel to Cuba. The prevention of collaboration impacts not only economic but also academic relations, resulting in an intellectual embargo (Kozol, 1978). The intellectual embargo has led to a dearth of academic research focusing on Cuban educational practice in U.S. academic journals.

On an ideological level, Cuba offers an example of resistance to neoliberal policy in higher education. Cuba's approach to globalization shies away from the market-driven approach of internationalization to internationalism, which focuses on international cooperation and the global good (Jones, 1998; Stromquist, 2007). However, market driven approaches may emerge as Cuban university officials engage with the U.S. academic community. Long standing university relations exist between U.S. and Cuban institutions that are committed to international cooperation solidarity and pursuing the global good. However these relationship continue to expand and shift in the face of new diplomatic relations. In general, Cuba's approach to international programming is intentional and in stark contrast to U.S. institutions, who are in the midst of dealing with the colonization of approach and capitalist policies. These differences offer a unique and fertile research setting to study motives for cooperation within a comparative analysis. This study examined the following overarching research question: How do market dynamics present themselves in study abroad programming between the United States and Cuba?

Methods

In order to explore the market dynamics of study abroad programming a qualitative case study approach that captured the experiences of educational administrators and faculty facilitating these programs were used. Case study method provides an in-depth descriptive account of study

abroad programming between the US and Cuba before, during and after December 17, 2014. This time period was selected as it represents a shift in diplomatic relations between the US and Cuba.

Data Collection

For this study, participants were selected for interviews through a common qualitative practice of snowball sampling (Maxwell, 2013). Snowball sampling identifies “gatekeepers,” or primary research participants, who then refer the researcher to other potential research participants (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Gatekeepers were identified for this study through a review of current U.S. study abroad programming in Cuba. To identify current U.S. study abroad programming, I reviewed common data sources, including IIE’s Open Doors Report, NAFSA’s Cuba Initiative and the International Education National E-Mail Listserv (SECUSS-L), as well as utilized my professional networks. Following the interview with these gatekeepers, research participants were asked to provide additional names of faculty and educational administrations to interview.

Participants in this study represent all three areas of administration of U.S. and Cuban study abroad programming: Cuban university faculty and educational administrators; U.S. university faculty and educational administrators; Program provider affiliated faculty and educational administrators.

To give equal weight to all three of these categories of participants, four interviewees were selected from each category for a total of 12 research participants (See Table 1). It should be noted that the categories are not exclusive of one another, as many faculty and educational administrators working in program provider organizations formerly worked in the university context and vice versa. While interview questions were grounded around the interviewee’s current practice, interviewees occasionally spoke to previous academic exchange work in Cuba with former employers. These

Table 1
Research Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Role	Affiliation
Shelvia	Female	Educational Administrator	Provider
Kyle	Male	Faculty & Educational Administrator	Provider
Gilberto	Male	Faculty & Educational Administrator	Provider
Changha	Female	Educational Administrator	Provider
Viviana	Female	Educational Administrator	Cuban Institution
Nana	Female	Educational Administrator	Cuban Institution
Jazmin	Female	Faculty & Educational Administrator	Cuban Institution
Lidia	Female	Faculty & Educational Administrator	Cuban Institution
Sheryl	Female	Educational Administrator	U.S. University
Maggie	Female	Educational Administrator	U.S. University
Vanessa	Female	Educational Administrator	U.S. University
Laura	Female	Educational Administrator	U.S. University

perspectives were valuable, as some participants were able to compare and contrast pressures from their previous university and current program provider experiences.

Due to the sensitive political nature of U.S. and Cuban relations, combined with the limited number of actors and institutions with a historical presence in U.S and Cuba study abroad programming, I opted to assign a pseudonym to all participants, alter identifying information and provide a collective participant profile. A collective participant profile offers insight into my research participants' experiences and applicability to the study as a whole in an effort to maintain the anonymity of individuals (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

In the Cuban context, participants were limited to Havana. Havana, as the country's capital, has become the hub of study abroad programming with the US. Additionally, U.S. study abroad programming in Cuba is centralized with just a few educational institutions in Havana accounting for hosting over 90% of U.S. study abroad programming. One research participant provided numbers of participants from the last year that indicate the organization she represents hosted over one third of the U.S. study abroad programs in the country last year.

All participants were decision makers who manage, lead, or direct study abroad programming related to U.S. and Cuba. Furthermore, all participants engaged with U.S. and Cuba study abroad programming both before and after the December 17, 2014 Obama administration announcement that changed U.S. and Cuban diplomatic relations. All participants have been engaged in U.S. and Cuba study abroad programming for more than 10 years, with some spending their entire career working on study abroad programming between the U.S. and Cuba. Many research participants also frequently produce presentations and papers on various topics related to U.S. and Cuban exchange. Additionally for this study, academic exchange documents were collected to contextualize the academic exchange environment through current and historical news articles and study abroad marketing materials.

Data Analysis

The majority of the data for this study consisted of interviews and academic exchange related documents from the 12 research participants. Interviews with the participants were gathered in-person in the U.S. and in Cuba or over the phone or WebEx. Interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes with the majority of interviews lasting more than 60 minutes. Following these interviews, a transcription of the interview was provided to research participants to review and add additional context or comments. Following transcription, interview data was organized into a qualitative electronic database, MaxQDA, which included documents, memos and interview transcripts. Seeing the qualitative data analysis process as an iterative process, I found myself utilizing data analysis techniques throughout the data collection phase as there were gaps between recruitment of new participants and interviewing due to the international nature of the research.

Following the organization of the data in MaxQDA, I completed an analysis of each individual interview transcript. During the within-case analysis, I implemented an inductive coding process that utilized an in vivo coding approach (Saldaña, 2013). Utilizing an in vivo coding approach allowed me to begin the process of reducing my data while also maintaining the voice of my participants in the codes. To code my data, I segmented data by the responses to questions. This allowed me to maintain the essence and complexity of my interviewees' words without breaking up their quotes through a line-by-line process (Saldaña, 2013). Following my first round of coding, there were 534 individual codes. After this stage, I followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) guidance of creating a post coding memo to organize my thoughts, identify connections between codes and

begin connecting my data back to my research questions and the theoretical underpinnings of this research.

Moving from the first round of in vivo coding, I identified related codes using axial coding which allowed me to collapse my codes into larger broad categories (e.g. logistical issues; relationship building; financial gain/self-interest; roles and responsibility; and university pressures, etc.) using both inductive and deductive methods (Saldaña, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These broad categories aided in the continued reduction of my data while providing me with refined understanding of my researched phenomenon. At this stage, I continued to review my data in an effort to further understand its broader meaning. I also began to consider other alternatives to my connections and the meaning I was making from this data. I documented this process through another round of memos.

After creating these categories, I conducted a cross-case analysis looking at the history; mission and purpose; motivation; broad curriculum; governance mechanisms; and international collaborative activity within each participant's interview. Creating these profiles assisted me in establishing the relevance of the categories to specific themes across all interviews and the interconnectivity of these participants' narratives (Saldaña, 2013).

In addition to the interview transcripts, observation field notes, researcher's memos and documents shared by interviewees were reviewed, selectively coded and used to verify or challenge the codes, categories and themes which emerged from the data. This process of utilizing additional data to check findings in an effort to support one's conclusions is commonly called triangulation (Fielding & Fielding, 1986).

Following these stages, I collapsed applicable categories into an emergent theme (i.e. market pressures). This theme serves as salient macro level data that speaks directly to my research question and is elaborated on in the findings section below.

Findings

In this section, the emergent theme of market pressures is detailed. This theme is expressed by participants in six distinct ways: Changes in U.S. university students' backgrounds and their desires, shifts in the language used to justify these exchanges, updates to marketing strategies for these programs, the infusion of flexibility into the existing programming models, the elevation of program providers, and the increase in study abroad partnerships between the U.S. and Cuba.

Changing U.S. University Student Backgrounds and Desires

Research participants noted that the type of student interested in Cuba changed after diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba shifted. Simply put, Kyle stated "the students are changing." Kyle described these changes as new forces that pressure the U.S. and Cuban counterparts to adapt their programming in response. Kyle defined academic exchange programming specifically in terms of responding to shifts in the students' prior engagement and knowledge of Cuba. Shelia also spoke in depth about the changing nature of the students participating in U.S. - Cuban exchanges by describing students before and after D-17:

[The diplomatic shifts] certainly affects the kind of students drawn to the program and the kind of inquiries they would like to do academically. I know that in the early days, in the early 2000s, [our program] was really strict about how we interviewed people and who we let into the program, because... you weren't allowed to come into the program if you were coming to be a capitalist crusader, or the opposite, that you were going to raise the communist flag and be very vocal about it. Anybody that

was going to be really vocal or make waves was encouraged to go to a different program.

Shelvia went on to contrast this with the student population of today, stating, “Now... students aren't quite as politically-charged, or the situation is diffused enough that that's just not a concern we have in the way it was in the early 2000s.” Overall, the sentiment is that the students arriving in Cuba are pursuing academic study in Cuba with less historical knowledge of the political nature of these exchanges.

With the current students having less academic, political and cultural knowledge of the host site, there may be a shift in students' expectations, goals and desires for the exchange, which has the potential to impact the programming onsite. Nana spoke from the Cuban perspective noting, “They come with one idea of Cuba.” While Sheryl explained, “We kept hearing stories from students like, ‘I really wanna go to Cuba.’ For kind of lame reasons, like, ‘I wanna go to Cuba, because there's no McDonald's there.’” To Sheryl these reasons showed a superficial understanding of the host country. Maggie attributed student desires to popular culture and media, saying, “The students want to study what's in the news.” Kyle wondered, “How do they [students] form these expectations [about Cuba]?” The research participants noted that student desires affect many aspects of programming, even housing. Sheryl and the Cuban organization with whom she was partnering eventually parted ways due to disagreements of standards in housing. Sheryl describes,

The other issue in housing our [U.S.] students at the [Cuban] residence [instead of with host families] they [Cuban educational administrators] had a calculus, or formula, based on the number of students per room, and number of bathrooms that they would allow our students access to in their residence. And, it was not aligned with our [U.S.] expectations. There were oftentimes six, or seven, or eight students who were sharing one bathroom. Which, Cuba in the summer, kids get sick. And, it was becoming a public health problem.

Educational administrators and faculty struggled to find the balance between catering to student desires and addressing student concerns, while providing students with an immersive experience.

While many interviewees focused on managing student desires, multiple research participants tempered this focus on catering to students by re-emphasizing the academic nature of their programs. Sheryl's institution would “cross reference that [current programming] with our areas of academic coverage and student enrollments” to better align the academic curriculum with program development and admissions procedures. Meanwhile, Vanessa's institution touted her program as different from other U.S. and Cuban programs because of its focus on research:

I think what is very different from our Cuba program is that students really choose a question, a research question that they want to develop and research. It's completely based on their own interests. We work with the student to help create a proposal, and then match them up with a professional in the field that will be able to help work with them one on one on their research question.

Vanessa's institution tried to counter these student consumerist desires by redirecting their students' focus to the academic purpose embedded within study abroad programming. Yet, in Vanessa's case, even though her programming was academics-focused, it still prioritized the desires of the U.S. students over U.S. and Cuban faculty priorities and host community needs. Kyle also noted aspects of customer satisfaction, like the “survey says [the students] are happy” attitude is of utmost importance to her U.S. partners, which speaks to the pressures to meet the consumers' needs.

Gilberto noticed the impact of market pressures particularly within changing student interest in program length, when he discussed the declining enrollment in semester-based programming in Cuba. “I think there's an interest to develop short-term programs because that seems to be the trend and tendency for students not to spend a semester program but a summer program.”

Cuban research participants were aware of and used different tactics to mitigate the changing U.S. higher education environment and the pressures of student desires. Instead of buckling to the pressure, Lidia decided to address the consumerist notions in her welcome week orientation programming. Lidia recounted the speech she would give to students.

When you come to... [my Cuban institution] in the orientation I said to you, ‘You become a student. For us you're not a client. You're not a client that is paying for a service. You are a student like the Cuban students because you are involved in the same classroom with the same professor in Spanish.’

Lidia's attempt at addressing these concerns show Cuban educational administrators and faculty's understanding of the differences between U.S. and Cuban educational models and an attempt to shift U.S. student expectations.

Students' lack of knowledge of Cuba, combined with the increasingly consumer-driven mentality of the U.S. higher education environment, produces a new challenge with which all the research participants grappled. While many tried to refocus on the academic nature of study abroad, interviewees from both the U.S. and Cuba found the pressures to satisfy the customer as central to their continued operation.

Shifting Language Rationalizing Academic Exchanges

In response to these shifting student factors, the language being used to communicate about study abroad and discuss program administration now includes more market-based terminology (e.g. innovation, visibility, competition, etc.).

Vanessa noticed the shifting language in study abroad occurring simultaneously with the tourism boom in Cuba. “When I first went to Cuba in, I think it was 2012, it was so different. I felt the difference by this last time of going by the number of sheer American tourists there and the number of private restaurants.” The increase in tourism explains an element of competition that she did not see before. She noted an example of study abroad programs competing with tourists for homestay families.

Kyle spoke of the rising “visibility” of Cuba within U.S. popular culture. With Cuba's increase in visibility, there has been a noted rise in demand for study abroad programming in Cuba. Kyle identified that the marketing language used for their programs shifted to reflect the increase in demand. Cuba's increased visibility in mainstream American media also caused new influences on the research participants. Changha explained that, in light of the new visibility of Cuba and the resulting increase in U.S. study abroad programming there, she was directed by the CEO of her affiliated organization to “innovate” in order to attract and retain students for her program. Given such top-down mandates and pressure from her superior, Changha has spent two years working on innovations to her program model to increase enrollment.

The research participants described the competition and entrepreneurial pressures that have emerged within Cuban exchange. Laura, who recently experienced shifts in enrollments, spoke frankly about the competitive nature of the programs at her institution. “And that's something faculty find very difficult to understand. They always think there's plenty of students to go around for these programs and they all compete with each other and it's hard to get that message across.” To Laura, the environment of faculty collaboration and alignment around facilitating semester

programming had shifted in response to the rise in short term programs. With the increasing number of short term programs to Cuba, the institution's semester-based programming eventually ended. Yet, Viviana's Cuban institution is likely the best example of a Cuban institution taking on an entrepreneurial spirit. Viviana spoke to the "personalized" and "tailored" nature of the programming that her institution offers and their "attention to detail" when arranging these exchanges.

The language used to describe the financing of exchanges was discussed by each participant as a fundamental difference in how U.S. and Cuban colleagues approach the economics of study abroad. In arguing against a recent change in the Cuban regulations for U.S. academic programs, which had the potential to cancel multiple programs, Changha used the economic ramifications of the decision to justify her organizations' opposition. Instead of simply accepting the new regulations, Changha and her organization wrote a letter that made its way to the current president of Cuba justifying their opposition to the regulations in terms of the financial losses it would cause. Changha's example highlights the power of economics in exchanges. It is clear that the shifting language around study abroad programming and international activity between the U.S. and Cuba has notably impacted the practices of study abroad programming administration.

Updating Marketing Strategy for Study Abroad Programming

As more U.S. and Cuban institutions enter the academic exchange arena, there seems to be different approaches to marketing. Some Cuban institutions are prioritizing market strategies in a way that induces a competitive approach. Viviana, a Cuban research participant, emphasized the competitive nature of exchanges in describing her institution's new strategic marketing initiatives. Viviana's institution shared their entrepreneurial strategy with programming. "We kind of analyzed the market... in a way to see the possibilities of having an exchange with the colleges in the United States. We went to the United States and we visited a lot of different universities." Viviana provided brochures that are used for marketing these programs. These brochures notably boasted about Viviana's organization's "corporate efficiency" in program facilitation. In terms of enrollment data, Viviana's marketing is attracting U.S. students as she stated, "According to surveys, our center is [number] one, considering a survey that was made by our government, the institution that received the highest amount of students from the United States." Thus, it appears as though the marketing efforts of Viviana's institution have proven successful in increasing student enrollment.

Yet other Cuban research participants, such as Jazmin, Lidia and Nana, deemphasized efforts to attract new partners through targeted outreach. Nana indicated that there was no budget for marketing her program. She only recruits based on word of mouth. Jazmin and Lidia also referred to their reliance on word of mouth recruitment via professional and academic conferences. Therefore, in response to the increase in demand for exchanges from U.S. universities, Cuban institutions are taking varied approaches to capturing the interest of their U.S. university counterparts.

Infusing Flexibility into the Existing Programming Models

Study abroad programming is overwhelmingly one sided between the US and Cuba with the majority of students flowing from the US to Cuba. With the increase in U.S. student enrollment, U.S. institutions no longer need to focus on marketing their programs to Cubans and have turned their focus to satisfying U.S. university interests and U.S. students. Rather than refining their marketing tactics, U.S. universities and provider organizations are more concerned with adapting existing programming models to attract students to their programs. The US is responding to perceived inflexibilities in the system through ongoing "innovation" (Changha) in study abroad programming. In my conversation with Changha, she spoke about her desire to create an "a la carte"

system that no longer adheres to the typical Cuban program management model, in which one partner guides all aspects of programming. Shelvía spoke about “work arounds” due to all the unknowns in Cuba. Additionally, Changha, Shelvía, Kyle, and Gilberto (notably all from provider organizations) spoke about their approach of contracting faculty members from Cuban institutions to piece together their programs in order to meet the specific needs of individual U.S. counterparts, instead of working with just one Cuban institution.

Sheryl and Maggie, U.S. university representatives, spoke about moving away from partnering directly with Cuban institutions and utilizing a provider organization to carry out their onsite logistics. Meanwhile, Laura spoke about creating connections with other U.S. universities to develop unique program models that reduce the administrative burden on U.S. institutions. The demands of implementing such programming innovation has led to the rise of program providers in Cuban exchanges.

Elevating Program Providers

As programing in the late 1990s grew sharply, infrastructure and networks supporting exchanges were developed. However, with the Bush era regulations of the early 2000s, many of these networks were curtailed and infrastructure was limited to only certain institutions. Some knowledge of the former academic exchange structures remained, and when the regulations shifted once again under Obama, new actors emerged with no prior experience in Cuban exchange. Shelvía noted this shift:

By the year 2011, the field of study abroad no longer needed a particular person's expertise, because experience in the history had grown enough that Cuba kind of knew how to do study abroad and people in the U.S. kind of knew how to do study abroad in Cuba.

Program providers, new stakeholders in U.S. and Cuban exchange, arose in this work due to various circumstances. Program provider organizations like Shelvía's, which had previously been engaged in study abroad in Cuba but was forced to end its agreements in the early 2000's due to new requirements of the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), re-entered the arena. Meanwhile, U.S. institutions like Changha's decided to create new programs in Cuba, filling the previous void of U.S. operations in Cuba. Cuban institutions began to initiate new partnerships as well. Viviana's Cuban organization, which has strong ties to program providers, went from hosting “10 groups a year and last year we had 104 groups.” Her institution began to distinguish its programming from the formerly centralized programming. “[Other institutions] do have organized programs, but it's more like they have free time. They don't care about transportation or they don't coordinate a visit to the museums. So in our case, as we have this whole package that includes all of that, that optimizes time that the students have here in Cuba.” Viviana's organization continues to leverage its “corporate efficiency” to attract and cater to U.S. counterparts who found navigating the Cuban system challenging.

Similarly to Viviana, Sheryl described her institution's responsiveness to consumer desires. Sheryl's U.S. university began looking for new Cuban partnerships when they faced disagreements with their partners at the time over student housing that would meet the needs of the U.S. students. “I don't know, this [student housing] was just like one point that we couldn't come to terms with. So, we started looking at other [Cuban] partners, and other relationships.” Sheryl's institution found a Cuban university with lesser U.S. academic ties that was interested in partnering to make connections with U.S. universities in this new academic exchange era. Eventually, due to leadership changes and the weak ties to U.S. academics, these two institutions also decided to part ways, and Sheryl's university re-focused their programming where strong academic linkages existed in Cuba.

Alternatively, some U.S. university representatives relied less on program providers on the U.S. side of programming, instead continuing to leverage existing faculty relationships. Maggie spoke about utilizing existing connections in Cuba to facilitate new partnerships with faculty interested in creating programs in Cuba. Sheryl used existing faculty partnerships to continue her university's engagement in Cuba even in the face of low student enrollment. Vanessa and Laura continued their institutions' relationships in Cuba through the research agendas of faculty who helped establish their semester study abroad programs. Overall, the research participants illustrated the tensions around engaging with program providers as they embraced utilizing the services of program providers while continuing to question and at times resist their emergence into the field.

Increasing Study Abroad Partnerships between the US and Cuba

The growing market for Cuban exchanges had differing effects on both existing and emerging partnerships between the U.S. and Cuba, leading to some superficial and transactional partnerships but strengthening others. Kyle noted the transactional nature of partnerships that arose during the programming "explosion" (as termed by another participant), as U.S. institutions just "want to get into the market [of Cuban exchanges]." Meanwhile, in response to the growing market for Cuban exchanges, Sheryl and Maggie secured grants to build institutional capacity for exchanges and other aspects of university practice. Sheryl stated,

Throughout that time, we received a grant to further develop institutional collaborations... [There was] a vested interest on the part of the university to forge more of these connections, both institutionally and faculty to faculty. So, we were taking groups of faculty down to Cuba to meet their counterparts at various institutions.

Such partnerships, like those established by Sheryl and Maggie, continued to focus on building long-term sustained partnerships with strong academic linkages.

From the Cuban perspective, Viviana discussed how her institution is responding to the market growth by maintaining their current university partnerships and also seeking out opportunities to establish relationships with program providers.

We don't only meet up with the faculty members of the different universities, we also meet with the original directors from the different agencies [program providers] that we work with and that we have outstandingly good relationships with. Actually, we also go to conventions.

Viviana illustrates that connecting with faculty is a central way to build the relationships needed to establish successful study abroad programming. Meanwhile, she highlights the increasing power of program providers as she describes her institution's explicit efforts to connect with program providers at their conferences and travel industry events.

Today, it is uncertain how the market will ultimately impact the study abroad environment. The effects of the current U.S. administration's new round of regulations, curbing connections between the US and Cuba and tightening the regulations for sustaining partnerships, on the market for academic exchanges in Cuba is unknown. Thus, it remains to be seen whether the competitive market for Cuban exchanges will give way to collaborative approaches or if market-pressures and new business-like attitudes to academic endeavors will prevail.

Limitations

Limitations of this study are present around issues of cultural and linguistic differences. It is not possible to fully remove the limitations that cultural and linguistic differences present even with

my sustained contact with the Cuban academic community over the last five years. Translation services were made available and member checking techniques were used to minimize these limitations, but these limitations can never fully be removed.

The self-reported information given during the interviews is subject to the limitations of one's memory. I used follow-up interviews, documents, and observations to address inconsistencies. One aim of this research is to spark dialogue within the international education community that empowers local host communities to ensure that their motivations and goals are equally met through study abroad programming. I encourage future research by international higher education officials who understand their own institutional and societal cultures as well as practitioners who understand the historical traditions of their own programs.

The limits of the boundaries of this case study also present limitations in terms of findings as this study is solely focused on a subset of study abroad programming between the U.S. and Cuba. The 12 interviewees represent three distinct areas of administering U.S. and Cuba programming; however, study abroad programming in Cuba continues to shift as diplomatic relations between the US and Cuba evolve. These new developments in study abroad programming have led to many new short term programs. While the Cuban and provider organization representatives speak to short term programming, the interviewees for this study were historically embedded in semester length study abroad programming. Additionally, research participants in this study spoke only about U.S. and Cuban study abroad programming centralized in Havana. In an effort to capture the majority of U.S. and Cuban programming, my research site was limited to Havana. However, there are study abroad programs that operate outside of Havana. Given that they do not make up the majority of study abroad programming and are outside of the research networks of the author of the study, they were not included. Future research efforts could expand upon this study to include voices from programs that operate outside of the capital city.

Discussion & Implications

In the case of study abroad programming between the US and Cuba, market pressures have emerged in new and interesting ways since December 17, 2014. Programming in Cuba has exponentially grown since the Obama administration changed regulations for academic travel. With this growth, there has been a notable shift in the profiles and motivations of the students enrolling in these exchange courses. As noted by the research participants, students today are participating in exchanges with limited knowledge of the historical and political context between the US and Cuba and instead see Cuba in superficial terms as a forbidden, exotic location to explore before it changes. Institutions are pressured to capitalize on these voyeuristic and consumeristic student desires. Academic capitalism theory speaks to this phenomenon as it explains how institutions are pressured to leverage resources from the student. This is evident in this particular case. Educational administrators and faculty find themselves in a precarious situation where they must push back on the student consumer while also appeasing the market-like environment that has emerged in study abroad.

The influences of the market-like environment are seen through the explicit use of marketing strategies and practices. This is most notable in the Cuban context, where Viviana's organization has been able to secure the majority of the market share of U.S. participants through direct marketing initiatives, such as attending conferences, which diverges from previous relationship-driven approaches to establishing exchanges. Historically, Cuban organizations have not had active recruitment strategies; rather they organically networked with like-minded individuals at conferences and slowly built relationships that could sustain long-term programming. Now a newly transactional

model exists that prioritizes market demands, which undermines efforts to build sustainable partnerships. This neoliberal influenced market based approach, which the Cubans vehemently fought in the Cuban Revolution, undercuts the long-term relationships between Americans and Cubans that are needed to end the blockade

U.S. universities and program providers see Cuba as a new site for innovation. Research participants described how, in response to the increased demand for programming, institutions have changed how they manage and administer international education exchanges. While the former political and economic context made study abroad programming in Cuba inherently selective, since the changes in diplomatic relations, Cuban institutions have been openly accepting every offer for exchanges. In response to the increase in demand for study abroad programming in Cuba, Cuban academic institutions are for the first time operating in a competitive environment with their Cuban academic colleagues, who historically have been seen as collaborators and not competitors. With Cubans offering personalized and tailored programming, they begin to operate within a customer-service model that treats the U.S. students as clients, as opposed to engaging in a reciprocal exchange model where U.S. participants are seen as equal partners, and not privileged consumers.

With their new market approach, U.S. program operators are trying to circumvent and ultimately reduce the current regulatory environment of U.S. study abroad programming in Cuba. In a highly-regulated system, exchanges of any type require patience and persistence. Historically a centralized model existed where U.S. educational administrators and faculty worked with one centralized Cuban counterpart. However, with the recent explosion of programming, efforts to reduce regulations and cater to U.S. interests have grown. An a la carte model has recently emerged as a way to more efficiently operate within the regulated environment. Instead of working with one centralized counterpart, U.S. program operators can now pick and choose between Cuban partners in order to better serve their consumer interests. This was shown through programming that now caters to U.S. preferences for housing, language of instruction and access to noteworthy scholars. These noteworthy adaptations to programming fundamentally change Cuba's administrative structures for organizing, regulating and maintaining these exchanges.

Furthermore, programming in Cuba has shifted from primarily semester length programming to short term programs that are eight weeks or less. While short term programming in and of itself does not necessarily have a negative impact on the learning outcomes for students participating in study abroad, the significant number of short term programs is usurping the limited academic resources and creating an environment where universities are outbidding one another for access to scholars, housing and services. This has subsequently led to the elimination of multiple long standing long-term programs.

Implications for Policy

At a minimum, this study shows how the blockade impacts academic freedom and academic operations. The research furthers the cause to end the blockade and continue along the path of renewed diplomatic relations. The blockade was shown to cause harm to both U.S. interests and the people of Cuba through the stories shared by the research participants. The blockade's consequences go beyond the economic environment. The academic community should continue to advocate for changes in policy so that they may build understanding across institutions and share best practices more effectively. Cuban academics desire access to U.S. scholarship and libraries and currently this is limited to just those individuals who have relationships with certain groups of Americans. As short term programs grow, Cubans' networks expand but with looser ties. With looser ties, long term commitment to information sharing becomes more difficult to maintain.

Additionally, U.S. academics have much to learn from Cuban scholarship. The impediments that the blockade puts in place for U.S. academics make it such that only few extremely persistent Americans are able to access Cuban scholarship and advance their study through the alternative ideologies of Cuban counterparts. Nevertheless, despite U.S. government inaction to end the blockade, the international community continues to condemn the blockade as shown by the United Nations General Assembly 189-2 vote in favor of the resolution to end the U.S. blockade (United Nations, 2018). Continued advocacy is needed to end the U.S. blockade against Cuba in order for scholars to have true academic freedom and benefit fully from their academic communities.

This study also addressed the financial environment of internationalization practices at the U.S. university. My research shows the need for adequate public funding for universities to restore their operations with a public good oriented approach. Without dedicated public funding structures, long-term strategies to international partnerships dissipate, reciprocity building is threatened and the academic outcomes embedded with internationalization initiatives are weakened. In the U.S. context, internationalization continues to be a central pillar of higher education in both the U.S. and Cuba. Thus, public funds need to be allocated so that the resources provided for internationalization initiatives reflect their level of prioritization within the university.

Without public funding for study abroad, a market oriented approach emerges as universities trying to fund their programs must focus on capitalizing on enrollments and dollars over fulfilling the intended academic mission of the university. As a result, universities are not able to simply focus on educating; rather they focus on developing programs that cater to superficial desires in order to increase student enrollment and financial gain. Thus, these findings illuminate how internationalization efforts are not inherently neutral. They may have ulterior motives beyond the promotion of education as a global good. Therefore, international education scholars and practitioners must question the intentions of stakeholders and examine the environments in which they carry out study abroad programming and internationalization initiatives. Institutions should not be misled by corporate interests but rise above them in order to truly bridge connections between students and scholars across borders. In an ever-connected world, public funding for the internationalization efforts of universities is needed if universities are going to focus on fulfilling their mission to prepare students for a globalized world instead of focusing on maximizing the financial gains of study abroad programming.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study research examined the experiences of twelve educational administrators and faculty that have been deeply embedded in U.S. and Cuba study abroad programming before, during and after the Obama administration's regulatory changes to the U.S. blockade against Cuba. This case study provides a cautionary narrative for study abroad programming in Cuba and nontraditional locations at large. Internationalization efforts are not neutral and study abroad programming must understand the historical context and the current pressures that impact the scope and future direction of policies.

This research study provides insight to scholars and practitioners who wish to use a critical lens to examine the international dimensions of the university environment. This study offers valuable reflections on current practices while also providing new, critical insights into internationalization. May this research continue to unearth inequitable systems embedded in market-based approaches and elevate alternatives as the university environment continues to foster internationalization efforts.

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