Coming to America: Sixth Form Students Reasons for Considering Undergraduate Study in the United States

A dissertation presented to
the faculty of
the College of Education of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Bethany S. Schweitzer
June 2009

© 2009 Bethany S. Schweitzer. All Rights Reserved.
This dissertation titled
Coming to America: Sixth Form Students Reasons for Considering Undergraduate Study
in the United States

by
BETHANY S. SCHWEITZER

has been approved for
the Department of Counseling and Higher Education
and the College of Education by

____________________________________
Peter Mather
Assistant Professor of Counseling and Higher Education

____________________________________
Renée A. Middleton
Dean, College of Education
ABSTRACT

SCHWEITZER, BETHANY S., Ph.D., June 2009, Higher Education

Coming to America: Sixth Form Students Reasons for Considering Undergraduate Study in the United States (181 pp.)

Director of Dissertation: Peter Mather

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study was to understand the increased number of secondary school age British students considering undergraduate study in the United States. The study included events and experiences that influenced participants’ interest and decisions concerning pursuing undergraduate study in the United States. It further explored the role that the various people in the students’ lives played in the process: parents, friends, careers advisors, media, etc.

The study included a purposeful sample of 12 self-identified British students completing their A-levels education. Additionally, interviews with nine international students completing their A-levels education at a school in the United Kingdom were included. The study also included interviews with three careers advisors and the former head of the U.S./U.K. Fulbright Commission. The interviews took place at three boarding schools in England over a one-week period.

The following conclusions were drawn after an in-depth analysis of the transcripts of the individual interviews and biographical questionnaires. The students in the United Kingdom who are considering undergraduate study in the United States are interested in universities in the United States based upon their perception of the quality of education,
the ability to delay choosing a major, the opportunity for a liberal arts education and their perception of the availability of scholarships and other financial assistance.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Peter Mather
Assistant Professor of Counseling and Higher Education
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................................................... 3

List of Tables .................................................................................................................................................................. 7

List of Figures ............................................................................................................................................................... 8

Chapter 1: Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 9
  Statement of the Problem and Significance .......................................................................................... 11
  Research Questions ........................................................................................................................................... 13
  Research Methodology ............................................................................................................................. 14
  Limitations of the Study .......................................................................................................................... 16
  Definition of Terms .......................................................................................................................................... 16

Chapter 2: Literature Review .................................................................................................................................. 19
  Higher Education in the United Kingdom ........................................................................................... 21
  Policy Changes .................................................................................................................................................. 25
  Effect of Policy Changes .......................................................................................................................... 27
  Why Students are Applying to U.S. Universities .................................................................................. 28
  University Selection ......................................................................................................................................... 29
  University Selection—International Students ..................................................................................... 30
  Recruitment of Foreign Students ............................................................................................................... 31
  Summary ................................................................................................................................................................. 32

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology .................................................................................................... 33
  Introduction ......................................................................................................................................................... 33
  Research Questions ............................................................................................................................................. 34
  Research Design/Research Methodology ................................................................................................. 34
  Data Collection .................................................................................................................................................. 36
  Observation ......................................................................................................................................................... 38
  Establishing Trustworthiness ....................................................................................................................... 40

Chapter 4: Results ..................................................................................................................................................... 46
  Introduction .......................................................................................................................................................... 46
  The Schools ......................................................................................................................................................... 47
    Visiting Eton ....................................................................................................................................................... 48
    Visiting CATS Cambridge .......................................................................................................................... 51
    Visiting Christ’s Hospital .......................................................................................................................... 52
  Demographics ...................................................................................................................................................... 56
  The Interview Participants .......................................................................................................................... 59
  Emerging Themes ............................................................................................................................................. 65
  Presentation of Findings ................................................................................................................................... 66
  Characteristics of Universities in the United States ................................................................................. 68
  Influences ............................................................................................................................................................ 79
  Choosing Universities and Final Decisions ............................................................................................... 84
LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Parents Educational Level (Christ’s Hospital and Eton College) ............... 56
Table 4.2: Parents Educational Level (CATS Cambridge) ...................................... 57
LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.1</td>
<td>University Selection Influences Eton College</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.2</td>
<td>University Selection Influences Christ’s Hospital</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

England is home to Oxford University and Cambridge University, the two oldest universities in the English-speaking world. Arguably two of the best universities in the world, Oxford was founded in the 12th century and Cambridge in the early 13th century. The *Times Higher Education Supplement* ranked both in the top ten universities in the world. Since the founding of these two prestigious institutions, there are now one hundred and sixty-eight colleges and universities in the United Kingdom (Universities U.K., 2007).

In the United Kingdom, with the exception of one private university (Tight, 2006) all other institutions of higher education are funded by the state. Until 1998, British students attended institutions of higher education free of charge. In 1998, the Labour Party in England abolished the student maintenance grant system (the system that provided higher education free of charge), introduced a fee-paying system, and established a loan system similar to the loan system found in the United States. Driven by a need to augment funding to the universities, the government set a fee of £1000 per student each year (Douglass, 2005). After six years of this practice, it became clear that these fees were not providing sufficient revenue. This led to higher fees known as “top up fees,” authorized in the Higher Education Act of 2004. The Higher Education Act allows tuition fees to be set at a maximum of £3,000 per year, payable after graduation (Douglass, 2005). These are graduated fees, based upon families’ income level.
During this time, lecturers started to raise the issue of pay, arguing that since the universities were getting £3.4bn extra from top-up fees and other funding, their pay should be increased. They argued that their average salary was too low. They also pointed out that since higher pay for staff was one of the arguments the government advanced when it was trying to get its highly controversial top-up fees legislation through Parliament in 2004, this promise of higher pay should be honored. Because they failed to come to an agreement, the lecturers subsequently went on strike. The timing of the strike, happening at the end of the year, had a particularly powerful effect on students. Students had to wait extra months for their final grades and some were not awarded a degree until the final grades were submitted. One can speculate that this issue, which for some universities is still ongoing, has tarnished the reputation of the institutions in the eyes of the students and the public.

In England, the news media speculates that more students are applying to study at universities in the United States as a result of top up fees. The BBC (2006) pointed out that there was a 65 percent increase in applications from British nationals to Princeton University from 2005 to 2006. In addition, other Ivy League schools are taking advantage of this newfound interest in American higher education by recruiting in England. For instance, in 2006 Harvard University began recruiting students at British state schools (Frean, 2006). The number of British students applying to Harvard has increased from 197 applicants in 2002 to 290 in 2007. The number of British applicants to Yale University has tripled over the same period (Woolcock & Jagger, 2007).
According to the Fulbright Commission Educational Advisory Service (2007), the number of British students pursuing study in the United States increased by 2% from the 2005-2006 academic year to the 2006-2007 academic year. Even more notably over the same period the number of students inquiring about study in the United States has more than tripled to over 700,000 inquiries in the 2005-2006 academic year (Shepherd, 2006). As a result, the Educational Advisory Service (2007) is projecting that the number of students choosing to study in the United States is going to continue to increase.

Statement of the Problem and Significance

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study was to understand the increased number of secondary age students considering undergraduate study in the United States. For this study, secondary age British students considering undergraduate study in the United States is defined as students nearing completion of their A-levels in preparation for undergraduate study and who had made an inquiry about study in the United States.

According to the Educational Advisory Service, it has received more than 700,000 inquiries about study in the United States (Shepherd, 2006). Open Doors (2007) reports that there was a 2% increase in British students attending undergraduate study in the United States over the previous year. Based on indications from Ivy League institutions (Woolcock & Jagger, 2007), the number of inquiries is even greater.

The quality of undergraduate study in the United Kingdom is comparable to undergraduate study in the United States. The Times Higher Education Supplement
ranks higher education institutions globally, but the top ten institutions on this list are exclusively universities in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Despite the similarities in quality, the cost of higher education is significantly different. Tuition is capped at £3,000 per year in the United Kingdom (Curtis, 2006), whereas tuition in the United States can range as high as $40,000 per year. Another major difference between these two higher education systems is the length of study. Undergraduate study in the United Kingdom is three years in length as opposed to four or five years it typically takes to complete a degree in the United States. Additionally, undergraduate study in the United Kingdom is more specialized than in the United States, which generally includes liberal arts requirements and major area coursework.

The purpose of this research was to explore the underlying reasons why an increasing number of students in the United Kingdom are considering undergraduate study in the United States. More specifically, this research examined what experiences contributed to the participants’ consideration of undergraduate study in the United States. According to articles found in the *London Times* (Shephard, 2006; Woolcock, 2007; Woolcock & Jagger, 2007) students cite many different reasons for studying in the United States. These reasons include the ability to take diverse coursework, prestige of certain institutions in the United States and, more recently, the need blind admissions policies of Ivy League institutions (Woolcock, 2007).

While researchers have studied the reasons for university selection within a student’s own country, there is little research dealing with students who are selecting institutions outside their own country. This study provides better information for
admissions professionals in dealing with British students seeking undergraduate education in the United States. This study also examined specific features of the United States system of higher education that draws the interest of British students. By looking through the different experiences of international students who have the opportunity to study in their own country at a relatively low cost compared to study in the United States at a similar quality, practitioners can see what facets of undergraduate study in the United States contribute to this phenomenon. From a policy perspective, higher education professionals are constantly looking at what is wrong with the higher education system in the United States. Perhaps by looking at higher education through a different, international perspective, higher education professionals can see what is going right. In addition, this study is significant for policymakers in the United Kingdom. If students are leaving the United Kingdom to study internationally for a specific reason they may continue to experience a brain drain effect.

Research Questions

While some research is available about university selection among British students attending university in the United Kingdom, research available about university selection among British students attending universities in the United States or other countries is sparse. The primary guiding research question is to understand why there has been a significant increase in British students inquiring about undergraduate study in the United States. To further the information available to admissions professionals and policymakers, this study explores the following questions:
1. What experiences relate to British students’ interest in undergraduate study in the United States?

2. How do particular students’ characteristics (e.g., socio-economic class, race, sex, etc.) relate to their interest in studying in the United States?

3. Who and what influence students to consider undergraduate study in the United States?

4. How do British students anticipate coming to a decision whether or not to pursue undergraduate study in the United States?

Research Methodology

A qualitative research design was selected as the appropriate method to understanding participants’ perspectives about a phenomenon (Janesick, 2000) and, thus, for exploring their consideration of undergraduate study options in the United States.

This study utilized a basic interpretive qualitative study approach borrowing data analysis techniques from grounded theory. In a basic interpretive qualitative study the researcher is interested in “understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon, this meaning is mediated through the researcher as instrument, the strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive.” (Merriam, 2004, p. 6). Using the strategies of basic interpretive qualitative study and grounded theory, the strategies of this qualitative approach include analysis of data throughout the collection of the data, a two-step coding process that starts the development of the theory, memo writing that aids in linking the analysis with the reality, and writing up the theory (Charmaz, 2000).
For this qualitative investigation, I collected research data from British secondary students attending three different boarding schools in the London vicinity. Additional data were collected in the form of interviews from careers advisors from three different schools in the London vicinity. The students were selected by the careers advisor at each school based upon their expressed interest in undergraduate study in the United States. At each school additional interviews were conducted with the careers advisor to understand their perceptions on this phenomenon. All prospective participants had the option to choose to or not to participate in the study. All prospective participants agreed to participate.

Additional information was collected at College Day. College Day is an event put on by the Educational Advisory Service (EAS) a section of the U.S./U.K. Fulbright Commission. Approximately 90 American institutions of higher education sent representatives to meet with over 3000 interested students. This information was collected in the form of observation.

Within qualitative research, the quantitative criteria of internal and external validity are replaced by trustworthiness, authenticity, and reliability by dependability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The dependability and credibility of the study were enhanced through careful documentation throughout the research process and verifying the accuracy of participant responses through member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking are important methods for establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability was established through a logical audit trail of documents in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Limitations of the Study

A qualitative research method was chosen for this study to answer broad research questions concerning the reasons why British students are considering undergraduate study in the United States. Qualitative methodology allows the in-depth questioning “to understand the meaning of participants’ lives in the participants’ own terms” (Janesick, 2000, p. 382). The limitations of this study include the limited time spent with the individual students allowing me to only see a snapshot of their experience.

This study reflects the reasons of a select group of students who attend boarding school in the London vicinity. This study cannot be generalized to all students reasoning in the United Kingdom.

Definition of Terms

- A-levels: AS (Advanced Subsidiary) and A (Advanced) level qualifications focus on traditional study skills. They normally take two years to complete full-time in school or college. The exams usually taken at age 18 and often required for university entrance.

- Educational Advisory Service: provides objective, accurate information and advice to any student or professional considering study or research in the U.S., including information on the U.S.-U.K. Fulbright Awards Program. EAS has a comprehensive library of reference materials and U.S. university catalogues. It supplies admissions test registration bulletins and numerous introductory handouts to enquirers. EAS is also active in its outreach work, conducting many seminars throughout the year. Its annual U.S. undergraduate fair, College Day,
regularly attracts over 3,000 visitors and approximately 300 U.S. university exhibitors. (EAS, 2007)

- Fulbright Commission: The Fulbright Program promotes peace and understanding through educational exchange. The U.S.-U.K. Fulbright Commission was created by treaty on 22 September 1948 and since its inception has expanded its program to include grants for study in a wide variety of fields. (Fulbright, 2007)

- GCSE: The name of an academic qualification generally taken in a number of subjects by students aged 15-16

- Need Blind Admissions: is a term in the United States denoting a college admission policy in which the admitting institution claims not to consider an applicant's financial situation when deciding admission.

- Open Doors: Open Doors reports include comprehensive data on international students, scholars in the U.S. and American students who study abroad. The Institute of International Education publishes these data annually.

- Sixth Form: The final (optional) two years of secondary schooling when students are sixteen to eighteen years of age and normally prepare for their A-level examinations.

- Top up fees: Under the Higher Education Act of 2004, universities can charge up to £3,000 per year.

- Universities & Colleges Admissions Service UCAS: The organization responsible for managing applications to higher education institutions in the U.K.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

International education is a dynamic concept that involves a journey or movement of people, minds, or ideas across political and cultural frontiers. The development of a “Worldmindedness” can become the goal of any school, and hence, any school can become truly “international” (Hayden & Thompson, 1995, p. 17).

Over the last two decades “international activities of universities dramatically expanded in volume, scope, and complexity” (Altbach, 2007, p. 290). This includes everything from study-abroad programs to providing access to higher education in other countries. With an abundance of internationalization occurring in higher education, it should be no surprise that an increasing number of students from the United Kingdom are considering undergraduate study in the United States. However, based on overall trends from Europe, British students’ interest in study within the United States seems to be an anomaly. According to Open Doors (2007), the number of undergraduate students studying in the United States from Europe, as a whole, has substantially decreased over the past few years whereas the number from the United Kingdom has increased and the number of students considering and inquiring has substantially increased. Additionally, the United States was the first choice for study abroad among international students until 2004. According to Burton (2005), the United States has slipped to second place behind the United Kingdom among study abroad destinations.
Internationalization and Globalization in Higher Education.

Altbach & Knight (2007) define globalization in higher education as “the economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21\textsuperscript{st} century higher education toward greater international involvement” (p.290). According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD):

Over the past three decades, the number of students enrolled outside their country of citizenship has grown dramatically from 0.61 million worldwide in 1975 to 2.73 million in 2005 – a more than four-fold increase. This growth in the internationalisation of tertiary education has accelerated during the past ten years, mirroring the growing globalisation of economies and societies. (p. 302)

According to, *Education at a Glance 2007: OECD Indicators*, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States receive more than 50\% of all foreign students worldwide (p. 299).

An example of the globalization of higher education is the Bologna Conference/Process. The Bologna Process can best be described as “harmonization, not standardization… that permits recognition of credentials across borders and significant international student mobility for [signatory country’s] students” (Adelman, 2008). Labi (2007) explains that the Bologna Conference is “creating a European Higher Education Area in which students and faculty members are able to move about freely from institution to institution across countries” (p. A 36). The Bologna Conference is making European higher education more competitive.
Not only are globalization and internationalization taking place in European higher education, but these forces are also seen in American higher education. Altbach (2007) explains higher education is being viewed as a commodity and as a result commercial forces have a legitimate place in higher education. Currie and Newson (1998) explain that selling education to overseas students is an example of the commodification of knowledge. Another example of the commodification of knowledge is the idea of a user pays system. This user pays system is already in effect in the United States and more recently the United Kingdom has started changing their policies moving towards a user pays system. These changing policies in the United Kingdom will be examined further along in this chapter.

Higher Education in the United Kingdom

In 1945, the Atlee Labour Government took office in the United Kingdom. During this time, the government moved a host of industries and activities from the private to the public sector. In addition to moving the iron and steel industries and bus and train companies into the public sector, a national health system was created and the educational system was placed under state control (2006, Tight).

The system created under the Atlee Labour Government was in place until the late 1970’s and a major shift in government control occurred. Upon the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, there was a trend toward privatization. The author importantly notes that, during this time, “non-university higher education came to be labeled public sector higher education” (Tight, 2006, p. 246). This refers specifically to the polytechnics (applied schools of engineering and science) as opposed to traditional universities.
The Robbins Report (1963) examines the state of higher education in the United Kingdom. The report concludes that higher education should be publicly funded but privately run. In other words, institutions of higher education should be funded by the state but day-to-day operations should be controlled locally.

The Dearing Report, published 34 years after the Robbins Report, comes to different conclusions than the Robbins Report. The Dearing Report (1997) examines British higher education in comparison with other countries and, specifically, investigates how higher education is funded. There is a distinct shift in the ideas on funding higher education. The Dearing Report (1997) says, “…no public service can automatically expect increasing public expenditure to support it. Higher education needs to demonstrate that it represents a good investment for individuals and society” (p. 12). The report further argues, “The cost of higher education should be shared among those who benefit from it” (p. 28-29). This is distinctly different from the conclusions drawn in the Robbins Report. The Robbins Report found that higher education should be funded by the state and trusted to operate effectively without oversight. The Dearing solution is that “Higher education institutions are seen as public bodies subject to public controls; maybe at arm’s length, but still fairly direct” (Tight, 2006, p. 251). Dearing also reported that higher education needs more private funding. As a result of these findings, the change in educational funding marked one of the major policy changes in higher education in the United Kingdom in the postwar period.

During the time of the Robbins Report (1963), universities were viewed as private entities that received public funding. The Dearing Report (1997) showed a major shift in
the viewpoint of universities from private to public entities in that Dearing views higher education as a public entity receiving public funding and therefore subject to public control. Importantly, however, the Dearing Report also maintains that if higher education needs additional funding, they need to start looking for it from private sources.

It is interesting to note that the United Kingdom, like most other European countries, has only a tiny private higher education sector. In the United Kingdom, there is only one private British university, University of Buckingham (Tight, 2006). The other private universities are foreign universities with branch campuses in the United Kingdom. Although there is a shift to more private funding in the United Kingdom, higher education still remains firmly part of the public sector.

Tight (2006) recognizes differences between higher education in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe. Higher education in the United States receives a multitude of private funding whereas higher education in Europe receives mainly public funding. During the time of the Robbins Report (1963), policymakers in the United Kingdom disparaged the system of funding higher education in the United States. By the time of the Dearing Report, however, there had been a shift in this viewpoint. The Dearing Report (1997) recognized the need for alternative funding sources and looked to the United States model for ideas.

Tight (2006) further explored the British government’s perspective of student participation and the funding of their higher education. He explained that the government not only expects students to participate in higher education, but also expects them to pay a portion of the cost of the education. Tight (2006) says, “You, as citizens, are expected
to behave in a particular way, and invest your own funds, for the good of the nation and the economy.” (p. 253).

Over the past fifty years in the United Kingdom, there has been a policy of widening access and opportunity across the social classes. This being said, there is a distinct hierarchy of quality of institutions in the United Kingdom. Although access to higher education has widened, generally, the lower income student attend lower quality institutions. The governmental policies in higher education have also affected the middle and lowest income classes in the United Kingdom (Clancy, 2007).

Secondary education in the United Kingdom has a large impact on where students enroll in higher education. Students who attend private schools, known as “public schools” in the United Kingdom, score higher on A-levels and are therefore more likely to enroll in more selective institutions of higher learning. Root (2007) explains, “About half of all Oxbridge students still come from public (i.e. private, fee-charging) schools, yet such schools educate only about 7 per cent of the school-age population.” This is much like the system in the United States where students who attend either private schools or public schools with a higher tax base are more likely to attend more selective institutions of higher learning than those from less affluent areas. In the United Kingdom, a major example of this is known as the Laura Spence Affair (Curtis, 2004). Laura Spence was a student who attended a state run school and received A’s in five A-levels. These marks are the highest attainable and predict that she would do well at university. She applied to Oxford and was denied admission. She also applied to Harvard, was admitted, and offered a full scholarship. This whole affair ignited political
controversy over whether or not students from state schools had the same chance of
 gaining admission to Oxford or Cambridge as students from public schools (Curtis,
 2004).

Policy Changes

The 1998 Teaching and Higher Education Act established the General Teaching
Council (GTC), abolished student maintenance grants, and required students to contribute
towards tuition fees. Before 1998, students could obtain grants for their living expenses.
These grants were known as student maintenance grants (BBC, 1999). In 1998, the
Labour Party abolished the student maintenance grant system, introduced a fee-paying
system, and introduced a loan system similar to the United States. The act set a £1000
maximum tuition cap per year for all university students (BBC, 1999). The amount of
tuition fees they paid was based on their or their parents' income in the tax year preceding
each academic year. The fees were paid up front during each academic year. These fees
provide funding to universities. Following the setting of fees for university students it
became clear that these fees did not provide enough funding for universities. This led to
the proposal of top up fees.

The Higher Education Act of 2004 introduced top up fees and went into effect in
2006-2007. Top up fees allow universities to charge higher tuition up to £3000 per year
(2005, Douglass, p. 5). They also changed the way fees are paid. Fees are no longer paid
up front and instead are paid by the Student Loan Company (SLC). The SLC is owned
by the government and provides loans to students. The students can obtain additional
loans from the SLC for living expenses. The students will then pay back their tuition fees
and loans once they reach a certain income level. To insure accessibility to universities in the United Kingdom, the universities can charge the greater fees but they must prove that they are providing equal access in assessing admission.

Tuition fees are set at a maximum of £3,000 per year, repayable after graduation. The repayment starts when the borrower attains a certain level of income. The state pays tuition and fees for students below a certain income level. Students can also obtain additional loans to pay for their living expenses while in university. In the past, British students would pay a contribution towards their tuition fees. The parents’ income in the year prior to the students’ entering university determined the amount of tuition they would pay. In addition, the students could obtain loans up to £6,000. This loan is separate from the tuition and was for living expenses. Once the student graduates and is making over £15,000 a year it is repaid at the rate of 9% of gross income (2005, Douglass p. 5). The interest rate on these loans is determined each year.

In February 2006, six months before the introduction of student tuition top up fees, the university admissions service, UCAS, reported a 3.4 percent decline in the number of people applying to university - the first decline for six years (Gillard, 2007). A research team at Southampton University suggested students from middle class families, just above the threshold for financial support, are most affected by the institution of top up fees (Gillard, 2007). Top up fees came under attack again in July 2006 when figures from the Higher Education Statistics Agency showed a small drop in the proportion of young first generation university students from low-income families. The percentage of students coming from state schools and colleges had also fallen
(Gillard, 2007). In October 2006, UCAS revealed that 15,000 fewer students had started university compared with the previous year. Liberal Democrat education spokeswoman Sarah Teather said, “The evidence is now undeniable – top up fees deter people from going to university. Ministers must reconsider this mistaken policy that has such a negative impact” (Gillard, 2007).

During this time, lecturer’s started to raise the issue of their pay. They argued that since the universities were getting £3.4bn extra from top-up fees and other funding their pay should be increased. They argued that their average salary was well below where it should be. They also argued that since higher pay for staff was one of the arguments the government advanced when it was trying to get its highly controversial top-up fees legislation through Parliament in 2004 this promise of higher pay should be honored. Because they failed to meet an agreement, the lecturer’s subsequently decided to strike. Because the strike took place at the end of the year, the students were affected. They had to wait extra months for their final grades and some students were not awarded their degree until the final grades were submitted. It can be speculated that this issue, that for some universities is still ongoing, has tarnished the reputation of the institutions in the eyes of the students.

Effect of Policy Changes

In England, the news media reported that as a result of top up fees more students applied to study at universities in the United States. The BBC (2007) reports that there was a 65 percent increase in applications to Princeton between 2005 and 2006. In addition, other Ivy League schools are taking advantage of this newfound interest in
American higher education by British youth and spending time recruiting in England. The number of students applying to Harvard has increased from 197 five years ago to 290 last year. The numbers at Yale tripled during the same time period (Woolcock & Jagger, 2007).

According to the Educational Advisory Service (2007), a part of the Fulbright Commission, the number of United Kingdom students pursuing study in the U.S. increased in 2006-2007 by 2 percent from 2005-2006. The EAS is projecting that the number of students choosing to study in the United States will continue to increase.

Why Students are Applying to U.S. Universities

The headmistress of a private school in London says that British teenagers “see themselves operating on a worldwide stage” (Woolcock & Jagger, 2007). Another reason students choose to study in the United States includes being able to postpone choosing a major. (Woolcock & Jagger, 2007) The Ivy League’s policy on need blind admissions is also a big lure for British students. In many cases, the lower income students are able to come to the United States and attend an Ivy League institution free of charge.

The Educational Advisory Service (2007) projects reasons why students are choosing to come and study in the United States. These reasons include the quality and diversity of United States universities, the flexibility of degree programs, the liberal arts philosophy, cost, and improved job prospects. In 2005-2006 there were over 700,000 inquiries about studying in the United States (Shepherd, 2006). This is an increase of more than three times that of the year before. The recent policy changes in education in the United Kingdom may have an impact on higher education in the United States. The
Educational Advisory Service (2007) hypothesizes that students are applying for study in the United States because they now have to pay for education in the United Kingdom.

University Selection

There is little empirical literature exploring reasons for university selection among secondary students. The literature found comes from the United States and the United Kingdom. Studies in the United Kingdom found students choose universities for a multitude of reasons. “When collecting information during the university selection process, potential candidates attempt to reduce the uncertainty associated with the decision” (Veloutsou, 2004, p. 2). There are many outside influences and factors shaping students’ decisions about where to apply for undergraduate studies. Important factors affecting student choice include location, academic reputation, program of study and future employment opportunities (Moogan & Baron, 2003). Veloutsou (2004) explains that potential students consider other attributes such as reputation, location, infrastructure, costs, and quality of life. In a study conducted by Briggs (2006) the three top factors for students selecting universities in Scotland are academic reputation, distance from home, and location.

Prior to a decision concerning where to study, students are faced with the decision about whether or not to pursue higher education. Through interviews, Connor (2001) found that there are two main reasons students participate in higher education: (1) interest in a particular subject and (2) desire to acquire a higher qualification for a specific job or career. Briggs (2006) found that students in Scotland have major influences helping them
determine whether to participate in higher education. The biggest influence on these students is the student’s parents followed by friends, guidance counselors, and teachers.

A study in the United States found “College choice depends on students’ characteristics and external influences (Chapman, 1981, p. 499).” These external influences consist of many different factors including significant persons, characteristics of the college and the institution’s reputation (Chapman, 1981).

University Selection—International Students

Patton (2006) conducted an exploratory study examining “What characteristics of degree programmes do overseas students particularly consider when deciding whether or not to enroll?” Specifically, Patton examined Asian students reasons for selecting universities in Australia. He found with regards to Singaporean students they, most frequently cited recognition of the degree in their home country, the courses offered, fees, the duration of course programmes, course flexibility, the availability of part-time course work, and the prestige and reputation of the university (Patton, 2006, p. 347)

The reasons Malaysian selected a university students included “Fees as being of major importance to them in selecting their universities. Second in importance was the major or course offerings, and third, the quality of the lecturers (Patton, 2006, p. 347).” In addition to the three factors, they also cited “The facilities of the university and its distance from their home country, twinning arrangements, and duration of the course programme were also mentioned as criteria (Patton, 2006, p. 347).” For students from
Hong Kong, they “were concerned about government, business, and industry recognition of the course, as well as relevancy, time factors, and reputation (Patton, 2006, p.347).”

Recruitment of Foreign Students

In 2006, the London Times reported that Harvard was to start recruiting at state schools in London (Frean, 2006). Harvard explained that they want the best and brightest regardless of their country of origin or their socioeconomic status. This is just one example of American schools recruiting students from the United Kingdom. Another example comes from the Educational Advisory Service. The EAS hosts a College Day in London every year. On this day, more than 300 schools from the United States attend to recruit students from the United Kingdom.

Overland (2008) explains the college recruiting strategies are being employed to bring more foreign students to the United States. Some of these students are recruited through local recruiters in their home country. These local recruiters in turn are paid a finders fee by the universities in the United States. In recruiting students from other countries, schools have to insure that the students they are recruiting are receiving the requisite information before applying and matriculating. Mortimer (1997) found that international students found the following areas of information to be very important when making their decision: course content, fees, pre-arrival booklet, visa information, and cost of accommodations. In this article, it was found that universities were often slow in their response time with students. Students who received favorable response times to their inquiries were much more likely to recommend international study to their peers.
Summary

The empirical literature in this area deals primarily with student university selection within the United Kingdom and within the United States. The review of the literature indicates that no empirical studies have investigated the reasons why interest in increasing among students from the United Kingdom in studying in the United States. The remaining literature explains the historical perspectives on higher education in the United Kingdom and the current higher education policy issues in the United Kingdom.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research as:

A situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 3).

According to Merriam (1998), “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meanings people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 6). She also explains, “Being open to any possibility can lead to serendipitous discoveries” (p. 121). This study seeks to understand why an increasing number of British students consider undergraduate study in the United States. The processes of understanding British students thought process and reasoning can be best accomplished through utilizing a basic interpretive qualitative methodology as the research framework. Qualitative research offers the researcher the opportunity to gain understanding through interviews and natural interactions with the participants. The following chapter explains in detail the research design, conceptual framework, methodology, data collection and analysis, and limitations.
Research Questions

The primary guiding research question was; Why there has been a significant increase in British students inquiring about undergraduate study in the United States? To further the information available to admissions professionals and policymakers, I explored the following questions:

1. What experiences relate to British students interest in undergraduate study in the United States?
2. How do particular students’ characteristics (e.g., socio-economic class, race, sex, etc) relate to their interest in studying in the United States?
3. Who and what influence students to consider undergraduate study in the United States?
4. How do British students anticipate coming to a decision whether or not to pursue undergraduate study in the United States?

Research Design/Research Methodology

I employed a basic interpretive qualitative study as the guiding methodological framework. According to Merriam (2002), basic interpretive qualitative studies are the most common qualitative research method found in education. In a basic interpretive qualitative study, the researcher is interested in “understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon, this meaning is mediated through the researcher as instrument, the strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive.” (Merriam, 2004, p. 6). Basic interpretive qualitative studies borrow from phenomenology and symbolic interactionism. Phenomenology allows individuals to interpret everyday experiences
from their own perspective and determine the meaning these experiences have for them (Merriam, 2004). Symbolic interaction follows this same idea of interpretation, but includes a broader, societal perspective (Merriam, 2004). By employing a basic interpretive qualitative study, I gained an understanding of why increasing numbers of British students are considering undergraduate study in the United States.

Sampling

Sampling Methods

A purposeful sample includes the selection of participants who are “information rich” (p. 40) and who can offer insight into that which is being studied (Patton, 2001). In a qualitative study, the sampling is purposefully drawn to gain insight about the specific topic. For this study, participants were chosen for their experience of looking into, inquiring about, and considering undergraduate study in the United States. The power of purposeful sampling is selecting information-rich cases that give in-depth insight into the questions being studied (Patton, 2001).

Sample Selection

Students were interviewed at three different boarding schools located outside of London. The first boarding school is located south of London. The second boarding school is located north of London. Students at each school were selected based upon their expressed interest in considering undergraduate study in the United States. The careers advisor at each school helped identify interested students and solicited their participation in this study.
Sample Size

The purpose of the sample size in a qualitative study is to maximize information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). “An appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research question” (Marshall, 1996, p. 523).

Participants

Pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of the participants in the study. Participants signed letters of informed consent. They were free to withdraw from the study at any point.

Data Collection

Obtaining data from a variety of sources is essential in providing the rich data that is important in qualitative research. Data collection took place during the fall of 2008. The sources of data for this study were partially structured face-to-face interviews, biographical questionnaires, researcher journal, and field notes made from observing students during college day. Data from a variety of sources provide more depth and increased richness in the information.

Interviewing

This study employed face-to-face interviews. Interviewing in qualitative research allows the researcher to enter the other person’s perspective and begins with the assumption that the perspective is meaningful and important to the researcher (Patton, 2001). The skill of the interviewer determines the quality of information obtained from the interview. Therefore, the interviewer should have a direction for the interview before beginning in order to obtain rich data (Patton, 2001). I used semi-structured interviews in
order to elicit the most information possible. Merriam (1998) notes that highly structured interviews do not afford a true participant perspective; they simply, “get reactions to the investigator’s preconceived notions of the world” (p. 74). I interviewed participants and the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim as soon as possible after the interview. A partially structured interview approach was utilized to focus the interview, use the interviewee time wisely, and facilitate comparisons during analysis (Patton, 2001).

When using interviews and transcription as a part of the data collection process, Kvale (1996) emphasizes that the method of analysis must be built into the interview process and determined ahead of time in order to ask questions that help confirm and reject the hypotheses during the questioning. I personally transcribed the interview recordings within two weeks after the interviews and analysis of transcripts occurred throughout the data collection process.

Member checking was employed to verify the information I collected and recorded. Member checking is a process in which the participants can review the information to confirm the validity of the information collected. Member checking is generally considered an important method for verifying and validating information observed and/or transcribed by the researcher (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995) and is meant as a check and critique of the data. Member checking also provides triangulation to help insure the trustworthiness of the interview. “They [the participants] also help triangulate the researcher’s observations and interpretations...The actor [participant] is asked to review the material for accuracy and palatability” (Stake, 1995, p. 115).
Each participant completed a written biographical questionnaire immediately prior to the face-to-face interviews. The questionnaire provided the researcher with demographic information about the participants.

Observation

In addition to employing interviewing as a method of data collection, the researcher also used observation as an additional method of data collection. “Observation entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors and artifacts in the social setting chosen for the study” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.98). Throughout this study, I took detailed field notes of the events and behaviors that I observed. “The observational record is frequently referred to as field notes—detailed, nonjudgmental, concrete descriptions of what has been observed” (Marshall & Rossman p.98). Observation took place at College Day in London where I spent time observing student’s interaction with admissions representatives.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a huge undertaking in qualitative research methods. However, it is important to remember that data collection and analysis are a simultaneous process (Merriam, 1998). Stake (1994) emphasizes that data are continuously interpreted since qualitative research is inherently reflective, “In being ever reflective, the researcher is committed to pondering the impressions, deliberating recollections and records....data [are] sometimes precoded but continuously interpreted, on first sighting and again and again” (p. 242).
The large amounts of data collected can present problems for the researcher if there is not a plan in place for analysis of the data before the onset of the research. The development of a plan before the research begins helps the researcher use both her time and the participants’ time wisely. Simplifying the collected data involves the use of content analysis and the development of a manageable coding or classification scheme (Patton, 2001). The process of coding the data allows the researcher to analyze information and find the emergent themes and patterns in the data. Identification of the themes occurs before, during, and after data collection (Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

As is standard in qualitative research, all interviews in this study were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim (Silverman, 2000). The data were then analyzed and coded for emergent themes and patterns. The codes were categorized and recorded in the codebook. A good codebook includes detailed descriptions of the codes, criteria for inclusion and exclusion, and exemplars of real text for each theme included (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). I am trained in qualitative interviewing and I conducted all of the interviews. All interviews were transcribed verbatim.

I used a journal to record field notes and observations during College Day. I then spent time analyzing the field notes. Then they were be coded by emergent themes in the field notes.

The information from the biographical questionnaires were coded and compiled. The field notes, biographical questionnaire, and transcriptions provide multiple sources necessary for triangulation of the data.
Grounded theory analytic techniques were used in the analytic process (Charmaz, 2000). According to Charmaz, grounded theory analytic process can be useful for researchers, even when a “grounded theory” is not the goal of the research. The grounded theory approach of open and axial coding provides a proven and rigorous approach to ensure rigor. After I had collected all of the data and it had been transcribed, I conducted the initial coding. According to Charmaz (2006), when conducting initial coding “we remain open to exploring whatever possibilities we can discern in the data” (p. 47). We ask the following questions when conducting this initial step:

- What are the data a study of?
- What do the data suggest? Pronounce?
- From whose point of view?
- What theoretical category do these specific data indicate? (Charmaz, 2006)

After conducting the initial coding, I moved into axial coding. According to Creswell (1998), the purposes of axial coding are to sort, synthesize, and organize large amounts of data and reassemble them in new ways after open coding. “Axial coding provides a frame for researchers to apply. The frame may extend or limit your vision depending on your subject matter and ability to tolerate ambiguity “(Charmaz, 2006, p. 61).

Establishing Trustworthiness

The extent to which the findings of the study are worth paying attention to is considered its trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In quantitative research, statistical methods establish validity, reliability, and objectivity. In qualitative research,
establishing trustworthiness involves establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which are the equivalent for internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity in quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

Triangulation and prolonged engagement enhance the credibility of a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Prolonged engagement is the investment of a sufficient amount of time to understand the culture; to be able to detect distortions that might occur in the data; and to discern personal biases that may occur. I spent four years working in college admissions in the United States. In addition, I spent time studying as a graduate student in London, England.

Triangulation

Triangulation is the use of multiple sources and methods in the gathering and analysis of data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). As explained by Patton (2002), “A rich variety of methodological combinations can be employed to illuminate an inquiry questions (p. 248).” To this end he explains, “Some studies intermix interviewing, observation and document analysis (p. 248).” In this study, I employed three types of triangulation. These included data triangulation, investigator triangulation, and methodological triangulation. (Janesick, 2000).

1. Data Triangulation: In investigated the following sources for information:

   A. Male students interested in study in the United States.

   B. Female students interested in study in the United States.
C. Students from different schools and areas across the United Kingdom.

2. *Investigator Triangulation.* The research employed the following techniques to insure investigator triangulation.

   A. A *research team* included one member knowledgeable in qualitative research to assist in the data analysis (Appendix D).

   B. *Peer debriefing* will provide the opportunity for a disinterested peer to question the researcher thereby providing an opportunity for the researcher to clarify thoughts and probe personal biases that might be involved.

   C. *Member checking* is the process of checking with the participants in the study to ensure that the researcher accurately portrays the thoughts and comments of the participants. I did this immediately after my interviews by summarizing my understanding of interview data with several of the participants, and they responded by clarifying and correcting my interpretation.

3. *Methodological Triangulation.* I used the following multiple methods to gain information for the study:

   A. Face-to-face interviews

   B. Biographical questionnaires

   C. Researcher journal

   D. Observations
E. Field Notes

The use of triangulation is used to test for consistency and also to understand the inconsistencies. Patton (2002) explains, “Finding such inconsistencies ought not be viewed as weakening the credibility of results, but rather as offering opportunities for deeper insight into the approach and the phenomenon under the study (p. 248)”.

**Dependability**

To establish that a qualitative study is dependable, a logical documented audit trail must be established (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Included in the audit trail for this study were:

1. Raw data (i.e. audio recordings, written field notes, biographical questionnaire results)
2. Data reduction and analysis (i.e. write up of field notes, summaries, working hypotheses)
3. Data reconstruction and synthesis (i.e. themes, definitions, relationships, interpretations and inferences, connections to the literature and integration of concepts, relationships, and interpretations)
4. Process notes (i.e. methodological notes including procedures, strategies, decisions and rationale, documentation regarding trustworthiness including peer debriefing, member checking, etc.)
5. Intentions and disposition (i.e. proposal, personal notes and reflections, expectations and predictions)
6. Instrument development (i.e. protocols and biographical questionnaires)
Reflexive journaling was utilized to increase the dependability of the study.

**Researcher Subjectivity**

“All researchers have great privilege and obligation: the privilege to pay attention and the obligation to make conclusions drawn from those choices meaningful to colleagues and clients” (Stake, 1995, p. 49). Since the researcher is the instrument in qualitative inquiry, it is essential that the researcher understand personal biases and theoretical dispositions. The researcher must understand that the research is ideologically driven and identifies personal biases and tracks her perspective on the study through the use of the reflexive journal (Janesick, 2000).

I was an admission counselor for various institutions over a period of four years. During those four years, I spent time doing undergraduate and graduate admissions work. In addition, for the past two years, I worked as an independent educational consultant helping high school students through the college selection and admission process. I work closely with these students in the college selection and application process, test-taking preparation for ACT/SAT, and financial aid information. In addition to the aforementioned information, I spent time as a graduate student studying in London, England. As a result, I entered this study with some familiarity with the educational system in the United Kingdom. Additionally, my love for England, its culture and its people grew while I was studying in the United Kingdom.

The ethics of research must always be at the forefront when conducting research. Informed consent, whereby participants agree voluntarily to participate and can withdraw at any time, was explained. I presented information in a straightforward manner without
deception. I maintained privacy and confidentiality of all participants and records were stored in accordance with Ohio University’s Institutional Review Board policies.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings based on an analysis of individual interviews, biographical questionnaires, researcher’s journal, observations and documents collected during the study. The purpose of the study was to understand the increased number of secondary age students attending sixth form schools in England considering undergraduate study in the United States. More specifically, the population of students examined was secondary age British students who were nearing completion of their A-levels, who were considering undergraduate study in the United States and who have made an inquiry about study in the United States.

In the study I explored the events and experiences that influenced participants’ interests and decisions concerning pursuing undergraduate study in the United States. I further explored the role that the various people in the students’ lives played in the process: parents, friends, careers advisors, media, etc. In order to achieve this, I explored the following research questions:

1. What experiences relate to British students’ interest in undergraduate study in the United States?

2. How do particular students’ characteristics (e.g., socio-economic class, race, sex, etc) relate to their interest in studying in the United States?

3. Who and what influence students to consider undergraduate study in the United States?
4. How do British students anticipate coming to a decision whether or not to pursue undergraduate study in the United States?

The Schools

Interviews took place at three schools in England over the course of one week. The three schools include Eton College, Christ’s Hospital and CATS Cambridge. Although interviews took place at three schools, the students at CATS Cambridge did not fit the specific parameters for this study and as such are treated separately. They did not fit the parameters because they were all international students living in the United Kingdom specifically to complete their A-levels. Interviews took place with students and the careers advisors at each of the schools. The interview with the CATS Cambridge careers advisor gave a good overview of the higher education system in the United Kingdom and as a result helps inform the research questions. Therefore, the interview with the CATS Cambridge careers advisor is included in the results. In addition to the interviews, a day of observation took place at College Day-USA in central London.

Eton College

The first interviews were conducted at Eton College. Eton is one of England’s largest and most well known independent secondary schools. Henry VI founded the school in 1440. During this time, Henry VI also founded King’s College, Cambridge. At the time of the school’s founding, once students completed their education at Eton, they continued their education at King’s College. Today there is no longer such an agreement. Each year, the school selects 14 King’s Scholars. The King’s Scholars are selected based
upon the results of a competitive examination. Selected scholars receive a scholarship providing from 10 to 100 percent of their annual fees at King’s College.

*Visiting Eton*

It was a crisp autumn afternoon and I was on a busy commuter train headed out of central London. The destination was Eton College by way of the Slough train station. When I planned my trip to Eton College, there were two different ways to reach my final destination. I could take the train to Slough, then change trains and go one stop to Windsor. I would then have short walk around Windsor Castle, across the River Thames into the town of Eton. The other was to go to the Slough station and walk the mile to Eton College. Since it was such a nice day I decided on the latter. About half way through the trip, the train stopped and was delayed at one of the train stations. I was happy that I had left more than sufficient time to make my way to Eton College. When I arrived at the Slough station, I started walking along the busy roads in downtown Slough. Eventually, the landscape changed from busy high street (the downtown shopping district found in each town in England) to suburban row homes and then finally to historic small town. I knew the minute I was close to the college. I felt like I had stepped back in time. It seemed that the town had not changed much in its centuries of existence, with the exception of the busy traffic that was a constant reminder that it was the twenty-first century. As I was making my way to find the careers office on the Eton College campus, the boys were in the middle of a class change. I was surrounded by young men dressed immaculately in their uniforms; black tails and a tie is the attire these boys don everyday.
Upon arriving in Eton, I found the careers office. The careers advisor greeted me as I arrived. I was surprised to be greeted by an American. She was kind enough to give me an informal tour of the campus and to take me to lunch in the faculty dining facility. While dining, she shared some of her opinions and thoughts on why her students were interested in looking at schools in the United States. She explained that many of her students were unsure of what they wanted to do for a living. Thus, they feel pressured by the specialization required in the United Kingdom. While a student is working on their A-levels, they are narrowing the focus of their studies. When they apply to university, they narrow even further, applying for a specific major. If they decide they do not like their major, they have to start completely over. Oftentimes they have to transfer to a different school. Depending on their major change, they may even have to go back and retake specific A-levels. The careers advisor shared that her students see themselves as being on a global stage. They believe that a degree from a university in the United States makes them more marketable when it comes to finding a job. However, she did stress that in her students’ minds, it has to be a degree from a prestigious university in the United States. More specifically, it has to be an Ivy League education. She explained that she has been trying to get the young men to look at other universities outside of the Ivy League but this has been met with resistance.

When the interviews began, the students arrived in the same uniforms I observed on my way to the college from the train station. I observed many of the boys to be reserved. They were very polite and many were very quiet. It seemed to be a reflection of how they were expected to act. After my first two interviews, I decided to try to talk
more with the students, joke around and generally build rapport before starting the interview process. This went a long way in helping my interviews. The careers advisor had left a plate of brownies for the participants. When a participant arrived, I had him sit down and offered him a brownie, and I spent time getting to know a bit about him, joking with him and building rapport. Humor seemed to be a good common ground allowing him to relax and feel more comfortable with the interview.

*CATS Cambridge*

Upon arrival at CATS Cambridge, I spent time talking with the careers advisor. He gave me background information on the school as follows. Cambridge Arts & Sciences, (CATS Cambridge) was founded in 1985 as an independent co-educational sixth-form college located in the heart of Cambridge. In 1994, a formal Art School was established as the College’s sister school, offering an Art Foundation program. The Art School quickly expanded to offer programs related to the performing arts and became the Cambridge School of Visual and Performing Arts (CSVPA). To date, the Colleges currently have 438 students, representing over 10 countries around the world; making them truly international.

As independent ‘for profit’ Colleges, CATS and CSVPA charge relatively high fees (approximately £25,000 per year) for tuition and services and are non selective in their admissions policy. In February 2007, Palamon Capital Partners acquired a controlling stake in them and invested heavily in order to improve products and services. Scholarships are offered to make education more affordable and accessible. However, there are a limited number of scholarships available.
Visiting CATS Cambridge

On my second full day in London, I took the express train from Paddington Station north out of London to Cambridge. Upon arrival, I opted to walk from the train station to CATS Cambridge. The walk took approximately 30 minutes and took me through some of the old colleges on the Cambridge University campus. The beauty of the surrounding city was amazing and I kept feeling that the students attending CATS Cambridge must have a unique educational experience—a world-class university located outside their classroom door. Upon arrival, I met with the careers advisor to CATS Cambridge. We sat, had tea and discussed the students I would be interviewing. During this time he explained that the students interested in undergraduate study in the United States were all international students. As a result, these students’ interviews are addressed separately in the findings. Throughout my day at CATS, when I had a free moment, the careers advisor and I had time to sit down and talk. He had an interesting perspective on the educational system in the United Kingdom. He lived in the United States attending middle school in California before moving to the United Kingdom for sixth form and university. The content of our discussions are interspersed throughout the results.

The students at CATS are from a variety of different backgrounds. They represent countries in Europe, North America, Africa and China. The experience was completely different from my experience at the two other schools. These students were attending CATS Cambridge for several different reasons. Some are at CATS to improve their English language skills in order to prepare them for an English speaking university.
Others came to CATS in hopes of gaining entrance to Cambridge University upon completion of their A-levels examinations. For some, the hopes and dreams of attending Cambridge expand to include the possibility of attaining entrance into an Ivy League institution in the United States.

*Christ’s Hospital*

The third interviews were conducted at Christ’s Hospital Boarding School. Christ's Hospital Boarding School, founded during the 1500’s, is an independent school located in Horsham about 30 miles south of London. It is a unique boarding school in that it educates a large proportion of its students for free or at a reduced rate. This stems from its founding charter as a charitable school. As a result, high achieving students from all walks of life are able to achieve a high quality education. Without financial aid provided by the school, the students interviewed would not have otherwise been able to obtain a private school education.

*Visiting Christ’s Hospital*

On my last day in London, I was set to conduct interviews at Christ’s Hospital Boarding School. The journey was long and confusing. I arrived at the London Victoria train station in plenty of time to catch my train to Christ’s Hospital. I waited under the digital board indicating the platform for the train departure. When I found my train, I had to insure that I was in the correct part of the train. Halfway through my journey the train split sending part of the train one direction and the other part another direction. I found a conductor and asked him which compartment was heading for Christ’s Hospital. The train journey lasted a little over an hour. As we made our way south out of London, the
landscape changed from busy metropolitan, to congested suburban, finally to rural farmland. When I arrived at the Christ’s Hospital Boarding School I was surprised to find myself at a tiny train station containing nothing more than an automated ticket booth and platforms for each train direction. The careers advisor for Christ’s Hospital was kind enough to meet my train and drive me the mile to the school entrance. The school is in a pastoral setting. From the train station, I could see the school off in the distance and a few large homes. Beyond that, I could only see farmland.

After the careers advisor picked me up from the train station, we headed straight for the school. We sat in the faculty dining hall and ate lunch together. Before arriving at the school, I had been warned not to laugh at the school uniforms. The uniforms were designed in the 1500’s and have not changed since. The students wore heavy long jackets. Under their jackets, the students wore white shirts and black ties. Additionally, all of the students wore yellow tights under their uniforms.

After lunch, I watched as the careers advisor helped his students line up to go in for lunch. They had a marching band play while the students marched into formation with their house members. Each house advisor checked to make sure all of their students were present. At this point the students were free to go have lunch. It was amazing to witness all of this pomp and circumstance just to eat lunch. The careers advisor explained that this occurred every single day at lunch and has done so since the schools founding in the 1500’s. I was amazed and impressed by the rich tradition that surrounded this boarding school.
While the students were eating lunch, I accompanied the careers advisor to his office for tea. During this time, we discussed why he thinks students are considering undergraduate study in the United States. He explained that students from his school have been successful in earning a specific scholarship to the University of North Carolina in previous years. As a result, each year more and more students develop an interest in and apply to universities in the United States. Additionally, many of his students apply to Ivy Leagues schools that have needs blind admission policies. His students need financial assistance whether they go to universities in the United States or in the United Kingdom. He explained that the financial aid packages offered to low income students are much more generous in the United States than those found in the United Kingdom. Subsequently, his students viewed applying to schools in the United States as a more affordable option.

When the interviews started, I felt it was much easier to build rapport with this group of students than it was with the students at Eton. The students at Eton were reserved. They treated me with great amounts of respect and were extremely polite. The students at Christ’s Hospital were respectful, but were much more outgoing. I believe it was a reflection of the expectations of student behavior with adults at each school. It also may be attributed to the social backgrounds of the students at each school. The students at Eton were from upper class homes while those at Christ’s Hospital were scholarship from low-income homes.

At Christ’s Hospital each student was excited to participate and they were excited to sit and ask questions about studying in the United States when the interviews were
over. Forty-five minutes was allotted for each interview slot. The interviews only lasted approximately twenty minutes. However, once the recorder was shut off, these students came alive. With more than one student, I had to offer the opportunity to come back after my interviews were over to further discuss their questions. A few of the students took me up on my offer. After the interviews were complete, we went to an empty classroom with the careers advisor and discussed the finer points of writing a college admission essay for admission to a university in the United States. The essay required for admission to universities in the United Kingdom is in a format far more formal than the creative essays for universities in the United States. They had many questions about writing essays for U.S. universities.

**College Day**

During my stay in London, I also attended College Day. College Day is sponsored by the U.S./U.K. Fulbright Commission and is a college fair in central London featuring universities from the United States and American universities with campuses in Europe. More than 90 higher education institutions were in attendance and more than 3,000 visitors came to speak with the universities. During this time, I walked around observing students and journaling about the experience. Afterwards, I interviewed the former head of the U.S./U.K. Fulbright Commission. He is now the owner of an educational consulting firm in the United Kingdom and is co-author of a book about studying at universities in the United States.

College Day was held at a hotel in central London. It was a short tube ride from my hotel. When I arrived, the sheer number of individuals and number of universities
attending this college fair struck me. Granted, not as many colleges were represented at College Day as would be at a college fair in the United States, but the attendance by prospective students appeared to be as high as would be the case at a college fair in the U.S. It was extraordinarily crowded and difficult to walk around. It was a fascinating experience to observe. In addition to British students, there were also students from an array of other nationalities. The number of different accents was astounding. I even spoke with a number of U.S. citizens who have been living in the United Kingdom due to their parent’s jobs.

While walking around I observed that some of the top universities in the United States were in attendance. The representatives from these top universities were the busiest and the tables were crowded and the hardest to walk by. The swarm of people surrounding their tables was incredible and never subsided for the entire day. The less well-known universities were left with more free time. I observed that many of the students spending time at the tables of the schools less well-known outside of the United States had American accents.

Demographics

The demographic characteristics of the participants in this study are outlined in this section. All students in the study that attend Christ’s Hospital and Eton College self identified as British citizens. This is important because out of the twelve students interviewed, only five were born in the United Kingdom. One student was born in Thailand, one in Belgium, one in India, one in Uganda, two in the United States and one in Russia. The parents of the two students born in the United States are British and were
in the United States finishing their graduate education. Three of the students in the study were Black, one of whom was born in Uganda. One of the students was Thai and one Indian. Six of the students in this study were Caucasian. Of the twelve participants, three were female and nine were male. The students at CATS Cambridge identified as international students and will be discussed separately.

Table 4.1 indicates the educational level of the parents of the participants at Christ’s Hospital and Eton College. All of the parents have at least a sixth form education. The majority of the parents in the study have a graduate or professional degree. It should be noted that one participant was unsure of his mother’s educational level and did not respond. Another participant lives only with his mother and did not respond to the question about his father’s educational level.

![Bar Chart]

Table 4.1: Parents Educational Level (Christ’s Hospital and Eton College)
As stated previously the students at CATS Cambridge are from all over the world, are not British citizens, and as a result are reported separately. The participants in this study who attend CATS Cambridge include two students from China, two students from Zimbabwe, one student from Germany, one student from Albania, one student from Kazakhstan, one student from Lithuania and one student from Mexico. Four of the students were male and four female. The student from Kazakhstan refused to allow the interview to be recorded and had very poor English. As a result, her interview is not included in the results. Table 4.2 represents the educational level of the CATS Cambridge participants’ parents.

![Bar chart](image)

Table 4.2: Parent’s Educational Level (CATS Cambridge)
Additional interviews were conducted with the careers advisors at the three schools and with the former head of the U.S./U.K. Fulbright Commission.

The Interview Participants

*The Students at Eton*

While visiting Eton College, I had the opportunity to interview eight students interested in undergraduate study in the United States. It should be noted that pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the participants. It should also be noted that the activity, The Duke of Edinburgh, in the following paragraphs is an award students can earn through community service and various physical fitness activities.

The first student interviewed was Peter. He was born in Bangkok, Thailand. He spent the vast majority of his life in the United Kingdom and considers himself British. His interest in studying in the United States stems in part from his parents. They both received graduate degrees in the United States before moving to England. He is active in community service, house sports and music.

Rob was born in New Delhi, India. He explained that his family came to the United Kingdom when he was very young. He is an extraordinarily smart young man gaining one of the few scholarships offered at Eton College. Both of his parents attained graduate degrees. He explained that all of his mother’s salary goes toward paying the rest of the fees at Eton not covered by scholarship. His parents plan to continue with this arrangement while he goes to university. While attending Eton, Rob has been extraordinarily involved in school activities. He participates in Duke of Edinburgh, flute
group, orchestra, band, badminton and gymnastics. When talking about activities available in the United States, he was upset that badminton is not more popular.

Simon was born in London, England. Both of his parents attained graduate degrees. He has two siblings, one older and the other younger. The older sibling is currently attending St. Andrews University in Edinburgh, Scotland. St. Andrews is considered to be one of the top 25 universities in the world (Times University Rankings, 2007). He participates in football, kickboxing, wakeboarding and music.

Paul was born in Bronxville, New York. His parents are British and they were living in the United States because his father was completing his graduate degree and moved back to England while Paul was still very young. He explained that he has little recollection of living in the United States. Active in extra-curricular opportunities, Paul participates in rowing, music and has been working towards his helicopter/airplane license. Additionally he spends time building and maintaining motorbikes and cars.

When I met Allen, he was exactly how I imagined an Eton College student. His mannerisms and air indicated that he had been raised with a certain level of class and style. He was born in Chertsey, England. However, much of the time, his father works abroad and his mother travels with his father. He developed an interest in studying in the United States because his family owns a home in California. While staying at their home in California, he visited many of the universities close by. It was this experience that piqued his interest. He has one older sibling who is currently attending Oxford. Both of his parents have attained graduate degrees. His activities at Eton include engineering, house sports and social services.
Meeting Oliver, I was immediately struck by his outgoing friendly personality. He was excited and enthusiastic about the prospect of studying in the United States. His was born in Brussels, Belgium, but spent most of his life in the United Kingdom. He explained that his interest in studying in the United States stems from his father. His father encouraged his older sister to explore studying in the United States and, as a result, Oliver started looking into this as well. When he considered the possibilities, he realized that studying in the United States was exactly what he was looking for. His father completed a bachelor’s degree, but Oliver was unsure about the educational background of his mother. His activities include football, karate, field games, tennis, charity and teaching.

Scott was a shy, soft-spoken, polite young man. He was born in Santa Barbara, California. They moved to the United Kingdom while he was in elementary school. He remembers life in the United States and, since moving to the United Kingdom, his ultimate goal has been to return to the United States. Although his goal is to return to the United States, he is still considering Oxford and Cambridge. His mother completed a bachelor’s degree and his father a graduate degree. He is involved in the Eton debate team, varsity basketball and piano.

Matt was the last interview I conducted at Eton College. When he arrived, he had a bit of a bad boy, rough around the edges attitude. He explained that he was born in Moscow, Russia. His whole family moved to England while he was in elementary school. He has one older sibling attending Gronfield University in the United Kingdom.
He is applying to schools in the United Kingdom and in the United States. His activities at Eton include rugby, hockey, tennis and Duke of Edinburgh.

*The Students at Christ’s Hospital*

While interviewing at Christ’s Hospital Boarding School, I interviewed four students. All are from single parent homes and, as explained previously, all students at this school are scholarship students.

The first student interviewed at Christ’s Hospital was Megan. She is a beautiful girl of African descent. She was born in England and lived with her mother in London. Her mother completed the equivalent of high school. She has an older sibling currently attending university at Manchester University in Manchester, England. While attending Christ’s Hospital, she has participated in rugby, jazz singing, young enterprise, drama and student government.

When James arrived, I was immediately put at ease by his mild manner and sense of calm. He was born in Mulago, Uganda and moved to the United Kingdom as a young child. There was no trace of an African accent when he spoke. Before coming to boarding school, he lived with his mother. His mother and father both completed bachelor’s degrees. While attending Christ’s Hospital, he participated in Duke of Edinburgh, swimming, rugby, chapel choir and gospel choir.

When Tori arrived, I was immediately taken in by her bubbly, outgoing personality. She was excited by the prospect of speaking with an American about going to university in the United States. She was full of questions about studying in the U.S. She is from London, England. Before attending Christ’s Hospital Boarding School she
lived with her mother. Her mother has bachelor’s degree. She is an active participant in chapel choir and community service.

Abigail was a very kind, talkative young woman. Surprisingly, she was the only Caucasian student interviewed at this boarding school. Like the other three students, before attending Christ’s Hospital, she lived with only her mother. Her mother completed the equivalent of high school. While attending Christ’s hospital, Abigail participated in community action, schools service teams, orchestra, chapel choir and classics book club.

*The Students at CATS Cambridge*

The students at CATS Cambridge come from diverse backgrounds and from countries all over the world. Barbara is from Albania. Her mother has a bachelor’s degree and her father completed the equivalent of high school. She has one older sibling who attended university in Albania. While attending CATS Cambridge, her activities included school newspaper editor, membership on the school committee and volleyball. She is applying to schools in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Eric is from China. He was so excited to discuss university life in the United States. Both of his parents have bachelor’s degrees and still live in China. He stated that he has always known that he wants to go to university in the United States. His activities include badminton and piano.

Carrie is from Augsburg, Germany. She is the only scholarship student from CATS Cambridge in this study. According to the careers advisor, it is rare to obtain a scholarship at CATS Cambridge. Her parents both have graduate degrees. During her
interview, it became apparent that education is extremely important to her parents. She is considering universities in the United Kingdom and in the United States. While at CATS Cambridge, she was involved with the student newspaper, the philosophy and debating society and volunteering.

Charles is from Zimbabwe. His parents sent him to school in the United Kingdom because there are few educational opportunities in Zimbabwe. They believe that he will have better chances for higher education and in life by attending high school in the United Kingdom. Both of his parents have undergraduate degrees. While at CATS, he played basketball and football (i.e., soccer in the United States).

Alicia is from Mexico City, Mexico. Both of her parents have graduate degrees. Interestingly, Alicia is twenty years old while most of the students at CATS Cambridge are seventeen and eighteen years old. However, some students attend CATS Cambridge to develop their English language skills to prepare them for undergraduate study at an English speaking institution. She was active in the band and the drama club.

Adam is from Shanghai, China. When Adam entered the room for the interview, I noticed our cultural differences immediately. He was extremely shy and very polite. He showed quite a bit of deference for my position and treated me with an extreme amount of respect. Both of his parents have bachelor’s degrees. While at CATS Cambridge, he was involved with Karate Club, school band and volunteer work. In karate he attained a black belt. Like Alicia, Adam is twenty years old and is at CATS Cambridge to improve his English language skills.
When Thomas walked in for the interview, I was immediately drawn in by his light-hearted jocular personality. Thomas is from Zimbabwe. His mother has a bachelor’s degree and his father has a graduate degree. His has two older siblings, one sibling is attending Buckingham University in the United Kingdom and the other attending Edinboro University in Pennsylvania. He was involved in football, basketball, volunteer work and youth group.

Ginny is from Lithuania. Her parents both have the equivalent of high school degrees. While at CATS she participated in college band, ballet, horse back riding and drama club.

**Emerging Themes**

Throughout the data collection process, transcripts of the interviews and the biographical questionnaires were reviewed. I recorded and personally transcribed all of the recordings. The review took the form of transcribing, listening to the recordings and reading the transcripts. Extensive analysis of all data followed. I used grounded theory analytic process—in particular, using a two-step coding process that starts the development of the theory, memo writing that aids in linking the analysis with the reality, and writing up the theory (Charmaz, 2000). After reading thoroughly and becoming intimately familiar with the transcripts, I went through the transcripts line-by-line and assigned codes. After coding the data, I organized the data into a codebook. Within the codebook were descriptions of each code and examples (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). During the coding process, common themes started to emerge and were noted. According to Patton (2002), the first step of analysis is creating some manageable coding scheme.
Once the common themes were identified, they were then grouped under larger themes. After analyzing the transcripts, I spent time analyzing my field notes. The field notes were coded just as the transcripts were coded. Common themes were indentified and then grouped under larger themes.

Transcripts were shared with the other member of the research team who coded the transcripts independently. We met and shared our opinions and discussed and debated the various codes assigned to the transcripts. A 100% agreement was reached on the assignment of codes to the text (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was followed by a discussion of the coded data until we reached a 100% consensus regarding the themes and assertions that would form the theoretical model for the study.

The research team consisted of myself and one other individual. The other member of the research team graduated with her PhD in counselor education from The Ohio State University in 2007. She took multiple graduate level courses dealing with research methodologies. Further she conducted a qualitative study for her dissertation. Her knowledge of qualitative research methodologies was sufficient to understand the idiosyncrasies when dealing with qualitative research (Appendix D).

Presentation of Findings

In the remainder of Chapter Four, I present the findings of the research with careful attention to maintaining the perspective of the students. The data were organized into three major themes: Characteristics of U.S. schools, Influences and Final Decision. As often as possible, the information is presented in the words of the participants to fully capture their individual experiences and perspectives. The participants in the study
openly shared about the people and programs that influenced them. They described the experiences that have shaped their decision to consider undergraduate study in the United States.

The four research questions posed explored: (1) what experiences relate to British students interest in undergraduate study in the United States, (2) when they decided to consider undergraduate study in the United States, (3) who influenced their decision and (4) whether or not their socio-economic background played a role. Under each of these questions common themes started to emerge. In addition to specific experiences cited, students also identified perceived aspects of undergraduate study in the United States. These aspects included the freedom to study multiple things, the reputation of institutions in the United States and the influence a degree from an American university will have on their employment opportunities. The students’ answers fell into three broad categories. The three categories are characteristics of U.S. schools, influences and ultimate decision. Under each of these categories, subcategories formed.

The research literature explained that when selecting a university important factors affecting student choice include location, academic reputation, program of study and future employment opportunities (Moogan & Baron, 2003). Veloutsou (2004) explains that potential students consider other attributes such as reputation, location, infrastructure, costs, and quality of life in selecting a university. In this study, many students cited quality of life in the United States as a factor in their considerations and how the student life offered at universities in the United States differed from that offered in the United Kingdom. Although the research literature in this area did not refer directly
to students from the U.K. wanting to study in the U.S. the results follow the little research available. This study adds to the existing research. It shows that students in England go through the decision making process as listed above and additionally consider the characteristics of U.S. institutions and the ability to study in a different culture when considering undergraduate study in the United States. For international students the opportunity to study in a different culture was a major contributing factor.

Characteristics of Universities in the United States

The students in this study cited many different reasons for considering undergraduate study in the United States. Characteristics of universities in the United States that influenced their decisions included quality of education, student life and academic freedoms—more specifically the opportunity to take more liberal coursework.

*Liberal Arts—Not having to choose a major immediately*

In the United Kingdom, students complete compulsory education at the end of their General Certificate of Secondary Examinations. This exam marks the end of compulsory education and generally is taken when the students are sixteen. If students wish to continue and pursue a university education, they begin two years of advanced levels (A-levels) education. During this period, the students start to specialize in an area where they think they would most like to study while in university. The careers advisor at CATS Cambridge explained that, “Once the students choose a major, it is very difficult to change.” I further questioned him about this process. He explained that, should a student wish to change their major, they have to start over. In some cases, students have
to go back and take additional A-level courses to change to a different major. As a result, very few students change their major once they start at university.

Many of the students interviewed described their feelings about this educational process. Most of the students felt that they were being pushed into a box and that they had to give up all of their other interests. Their experience with the British educational system was a major influence on their interest in considering undergraduate study in the United States. One of the major reasons cited by students interviewed was the possibility of not choosing a major right away or being able to major in more than one subject area. The idea of obtaining a liberal arts degree was very appealing to these students.

Allen, a sixth form student at Eton College, described one of the most important reasons he is considering undergraduate study in the United States as “I think the freedoms. You don’t have to exactly do what is set; you can take other classes, do other things that interest you instead of, just say, engineering or design.” He further explained why these freedoms are so important to him. “From what I’ve seen and heard, you have…. you can do a broad range of subjects your first year. I think that’s a good idea. You can get more knowledge straight away instead of focusing on just one area.”

Indecision about their particular professional and life goals was also a major reason cited for considering the U.S. higher education system over the U.K. higher education system. Oliver, a sixth form student at Eton College, described his reasons for considering undergraduate study in the United States as follows:

Well, first of all, I haven’t really decided what I want to do in terms of subject and if I were to go to an English university I would have to choose what I’m doing
and I’m not entirely sure what I want to do. So I want to go to an American
university so I can do a broad range of subjects. That’s probably my main reason.

Students liked the ability to defer choosing their major and to take more time to explore
subjects.

Scott, another student at Eton College explained his reasons as follows:

America is a lot broader. The credit system allows for a lot more flexibility. You
can major/minor where here you pick one thing and you stick with it for three or
four years which I don’t really want to do which is why I picked PPE. I like the
broader academic spectrum.

PPE stands for Politics, Philosophy and Economics. By choosing this major, Scott is able
to study three different subjects at a university in the United Kingdom. In his explanation
above, he is trying to create an educational experience closer to that of what is found in
the United States.

Simon explains that his reasons for looking at schools in the United States in the
following statements.

Well, I quite like the idea of applying to the school and not the subject. I’m not
entirely sure that I want to study economics, but I quite like the idea of being able
to study other things as well. In the U.K. you have to stick with one subject for
four years and I don’t know if I can quite cope with that.

Abigail, a sixth form student at Christ’s Hospital Boarding School explains her
reasons for considering studying In the United States as,
I think it would be the flexibility in your courses because I do want a wide breadth of subjects and over here they really try to shuffle you into one little specific area of study and although I do know what areas I am interested in, it’s nothing so specific to want to study it completely and utterly for four years. Whereas with your course where they would potentially allow me to take French and Italian as a minor with International Relations and Political Science as majors and then they asked me what additional activities I want to pursue. I got to list like four. My music, my drama, my community action. I want to carry it all on. Whereas over here, I spoke with loads of my friends. Loads of my friends went to university over here and I say are you doing all that music. They go well we don’t really have a chance. I wonder how do you brush it off like that? I don’t want to be just like I don’t want to carry it on because there isn’t enough time. I want in an atmosphere where it is a big possibility and they want you to carry it on. I would need to be in that kind of atmosphere. I wouldn’t be able to carry on without my music and my drama.

James, another student at Christ’s Hospital Boarding School, specifically states that if he goes to the United States he “would do the liberal arts degree.” He further says that he wants a liberal arts degree because “it’s so free”. He complained, “Here it is sort of thrust upon you what you are to do at university.” He explained, “I appreciate the fact that in America for the first one or two years, I’m doing a variety of subjects as opposed to just one discipline.” He liked the idea of this because “I think I would benefit a lot from that because I am sort of an all rounder”.

Megan, a sixth form student from Christ’s Hospital, explains that she is interested in “the broadness of subjects”. She compares study in the United States to study in England in the following statement, “In England, at 16 you are supposed to know what you are going to do because the subjects you take influence what you are going to do in the future…whereas in America you have the opportunity to study lots of stuff.” She is dissatisfied with the English system because “I don’t like being so restricted…I have other interests outside of studying business and French.”

Matt, a sixth form student at Eton College, explains his dissatisfaction with the U.K. system. “I’m sort of tired of the system in England where you are sort of told what to do. And you pick what you want and you get pushed through university.” He explains that he likes the American system because “In America you have a bit more room to breathe where you pick your boundaries and have a bit more freedom to move around.”

Rob, another student from Eton College, says he doesn’t like the British system because, “In the British system I just have to choose something and I don’t want to do that.” He explains one of his major reasons for looking at schools in the U.S. “because it’s open course and the liberal arts degree sort of thing.” His only major concern about the U.S. system is “through my reading it sound like the first year sounds like it will be a bit below A-level standard that I have already done.”

While attending College Day, I observed the students interactions with the various schools. In my journal, I noted that the vast majority of the schools with the most traffic were Ivy League universities. During this time, I was able to reflect upon my discussions
with the students at Eton and I wondered if their idea of higher quality only equated with schools that belong to the Ivy League.

When speaking with the careers advisor at Eton College, I asked her to speculate why she thinks her students are considering undergraduate study in the United States. She explained that many of the students are unsure of what they want to do for a living and as a result see the educational system in the United States to be more accommodating. She explained that since these students were not ready to pick a major, they see going to school in the United States as an option to delay making this decision.

**Student Life**

Many of the students in this interview cited the difference in student life as a reason for their interest in considering undergraduate study in the United States. When the interviews were complete, I offered to answer individual questions about undergraduate study in the United States. These questions were answered both one on one and in group settings. More than once, a student looked at me, eyes shining bright with excitement and asked, “What’s it really like? Is studying in the U.S. really great and a lot of fun? Are there fraternities? Is it like what we see on T.V?” During this question and answer time, I realized that many of these student have a MTV or American movie impression of what undergraduate study in the United States is like.

During the interviews, the excitement about student life manifested itself. Specifically, some students were interested in the social aspect of student life found at American universities. Simon, a student at Eton, explained that student life in the U.S. appealed to him because, “I’ve heard there are fraternities. Here you just hang out with
your friends.” Chris, a student at Eton, explained, “Student life in America is a lot better, a lot more fun.” Scott, a student at Eton says, “(American) Universities are a lot more fun instead of pure academics all the time.” Rob, a student from Eton, explains his perceptions of student life in the U.S. as, “I mean it will be a totally different experience. I don’t know American culture that well apart from American Pie films. And if it’s anything like that….as happy as I would be…."

Some students were interested in quality of life in the United States. Specifically they were interested in the cost of living. Chris, a student from Eton, says “Everything appears to be more cheap”. This appealed to him because when you are a student in the United Kingdom “you are living on the bare minimum”.

The schools attended by the students in this study have extraordinary educational facilities. Many of their facilities are better than those found at universities in the United Kingdom. Scott, a student at Eton, explains that he is considering schools in the U.S. because they have “much better educational facilities in America really other than anywhere else in the world.” Rob, another student from Eton, explains that, “It seems that places like Harvard, Yale and Princeton do keep up that and they have a huge amount of funding and a huge amount of wealth and they still have all the extra-curricular activities and everything.” This is appealing to him because “it will be very similar to my life now, which I really like.”

Some students want to carry on their current extra-curricular activities, a practice not encouraged in the U.K. system. Abigail, a student from Christ’s Hospital, says, “My music, my drama, my community action. I want to carry it all on.” She explained, “I
spoke with loads of my friends at university over here and I say, ‘Are you doing all that music?’ They go, ‘Well we don’t really have a chance.’’ She had a hard time understanding how to give up these activities. “I wonder how do you brush it off like that? I don’t want to be just like I don’t want to carry it on because there isn’t enough time.” She is interested in university in the U.S. because “I want to be in an atmosphere where it is a big possibility and they want you to carry it on.”

I questioned the CATS Cambridge careers advisor about student life in the United Kingdom. He explained that there are some activities on university campuses in the United Kingdom, but not to the extent found on university campuses in the United States. For example, there are many clubs offered on university campuses in the United Kingdom. However, the prominence of athletics is not the same. He compared university athletics in the United Kingdom to the little leagues found in the United States. Further, there is not the push to create living and learning communities on their university campuses. In the United Kingdom, many students commute from home and those in on-campus housing have more freedom. There are no resident assistants or resident directors offering education and guidance in the residence halls like those found in the U.S. All rooms found on U.K. university campuses are single occupancy. Each room has a hand basin, and the bathrooms are shared. Each floor has a kitchen to be shared by the residents. The students have complete freedom with no major rules as found on university campuses in the United States.

*Quality of Education*
The prestige of the universities United States is another major reason cited for considering undergraduate study in the U.S. Many of the students believe that the quality offered by schools in the United States is greater than that found in the United Kingdom. The students interviewed in this study attend boarding schools that have a multitude of resources. As a result, these students have come to expect a certain level of resources. In some cases, the students in this study believe that the universities in the United Kingdom cannot give them the level of education they have come to expect. Additionally, many times students believe that the quality of education for their specific major is better in the United States. Allen, a student from Eton says, “I’ve always been told by people I know that some of the best engineering colleges in the world are in America.” Another student from Eton is looking at U.S. schools because he heard that they are better for his major. Matt explained, “From what I’ve heard, America is generally seen as better for architecture studies than in England.”

To other students the prestige, the money and the facilities are reasons for considering U.S. universities. Paul, an Eton student, explained his viewpoint as, “Generally, so far my view is you either go to Cambridge over here or you go to America.” His reasoning behind this generalization is that “the resources and facilities in America is much better and more money and resources are put into the schools over in America so I reckon that I would get a better academic study.” He further explained, “I suppose it must go back to resources. Look at MIT and Stanford. The resources there seem to be a lot more updated.” When he started researching schools in the U.S. he found that “they seem to spend a lot of money on broadening the size of mechanics and
getting some very interesting pieces of machinery which I am fascinated by.” Not only is he interested in the money spent and the resources, but also how these resources will enhance his educational experience. Another student from Eton also commented on the educational facilities in the United States. Scott, also from Eton, explained that he was considering U.S. universities over U.K. universities because they have “much better educational facilities in America really other than anywhere else in the world.”

Rob was interested for multiple different reasons including the reputation of U.S. universities, the funding, and the facilities. He explained, “There’s always the reputation of the big universities in the U.S.” He continued, “I was surprised that many of my friends weren’t even considering taking SAT classes and even thinking about American universities when it’s being boasted as so great by all my family.” I asked him to expand on what he thinks is better about the universities in the U.S. and he explained, “The reputation, it might be I’ve heard of the funding and all that. I don’t want to be skeptical but I’m pretty sure that the universities in Great Britain might be degrading in a way as the funding is going down.” He felt that only a few universities were worth considering in the United Kingdom. He said that, “Trinity Cambridge is still up there and a few others, but apart from that the other colleges are losing. As a result, I won’t have the level of teaching that I’ve come to expect at Eton.” He felt that the universities in the U.S. are maintaining their educational value because the funding is still prevalent. “It seems that places like Harvard, Yale and Princeton do keep up that and they have a huge amount of funding and a huge amount of wealth and they still have all the
extracurriculars and everything, and it will be very similar to my life now which I really like.”

When discussing this with the careers advisor at Eton College she explained that her students have a very narrow view of what schools in the United States would be acceptable. She explained that her students were only interested in Ivy League institutions. She said that she has been trying to get her students to realize that they can receive an excellent education at institutions like Duke University and University of Chicago. She explained that with regards to schools in the United Kingdom, her students view the quality of higher education as Cambridge and Oxford and then there is everyone else.

While interviewing the former director of the Fulbright Commission in the United Kingdom, he speculated on reasons why there is an increase in students considering undergraduate study in the United States. He explained that the students attending public schools in the United Kingdom have come to expect a certain level of education, facilities and student life. As result, many of the universities in the United Kingdom are unable to offer what these students have become accustomed to. Many of the students are willing to look outside of the United Kingdom to have their expectations met.

Areas of Country

The participants were asked if they were only considering certain areas of the country when considering U.S. universities. The participants cited a multitude of different reasons for their choice of where to attend school in the U.S. The reason cited most frequently was the prevalence of family or friends near that specific institution.
Megan, a student at Christ’s Hospital, explained, “I’m pretty open but probably best to be on East Coast because I have family there.” Simon, a student at Eton, gave a different reason than any of the other students. He explained that he was only looking “on the coasts.” He reasoned that, “I thought in such a big country, if I went in the middle I might feel a bit claustrophobic.” He also explained that, “Especially because I’m always going to have to fly, so I don’t want to have to take a bus.” It started to become clear that many of the students did not realize how big the United States really is and had little understanding of the transportation system in the United States. Another Eton student, Matt, explained, “I want to stay on the West Coast, but I’m also considering Harvard and Yale.” He explained that he is looking on the West Coast because “I like the West Coast lifestyle. I like the sun and beaches and being only five hours to the mountains.” He was looking at his move as a bit more long term because of the length of time necessary to pursue his major. He explained that, “If I’m going to be somewhere for seven years (architecture), I’m going to be comfortable.”

Influences

In addition to the characteristics of universities in the U.S. cited as a reason that the participants are considering undergraduate study in the United States, there were also a number of additional influences. Many of the students in this study had an adventurous spirit that was observed throughout the interviews. Additionally, family and friends often times played a role in their interest. Finally, many of the students had visited the United States and during their visits started envisioning themselves attending university in the United States.
Adventurous Spirit

When speaking with the students before, after and during the interviews, I perceived an adventurous spirit in each individual. Often times, I would turn off the tape recorder, offer to answer questions, and they would look at me, wide eyed, and ask, “What’s it really like? Is it everything we hope it will be?” This spirit came through during some of the interviews. Tori, a student at Christ’s Hospital, explained, “For me it’s just to experience a new country and just to experience it and I like that fact that I don’t have to make my mind up right away (about a major) and I can learn and experience things in a different country.” Other students were interested in meeting new people. Simon, a student at Eton explained that he was looking at universities in the U.S. because “I want to meet new people”. The chance to see the world is another reason cited. Rob, a student at Eton, said, “I want to experience more of the world. Moving to America is moving abroad and it will be exciting and in a way I’ve sort of seen Oxford and I’ve seen Cambridge. In America it will be a wonderful and new experience.”

I observed that this adventurous spirit might be attributed to their experience as boarding school students. These students exhibit a high level of maturity. This maturity level possibly comes from their experience living away from home at a young age.

Family and Friends

A major influence cited by some of the students was their families. Many of the students have extended family living in the United States. Some of the students’ families want then to experience a different culture. Oliver, a student at Eton, explained that his dad wants his sister to consider schools in the United States. In turn, this has influenced
his decision. He said that, “My dad wants her (his sister) to go to a different culture and get out of a public school attitude.” Apart from his father’s encouragement to consider U.S. schools, he also has family in the United States. He explained that, “My grandma lives in New York. She has a flat in New York. So obviously I go and visit her two or three times a year.” He also explained that, “My godparents, they are sort of American. They always tell us about these different universities.”

Matt, a student from Eton, also cited family as a reason for considering undergraduate study in the U.S. He said, “I have a lot of family and friends that live in the U.S. and a lot of them studied in the U.S. and they told me that Berkley is really good for architecture.” Outside of his family he was also influenced through an internship. “At my internship I asked a lot of people and quite a few of them studied in the U.S.” Rob, an Eton student, explained that his family speaks highly of American universities and does not understand why more of his classmates are not considering study in the U.S.

Paul, a student from Eton, explained that his reasons stemmed from his father’s experience as a graduate student in the United States. He explained, “Well my father went to Harvard Business School and he said it was a great place to move over to.”

Finally, Abigail from Christ’s Hospital Boarding School had a most interesting influence on her decision. She had the opportunity to participate in Gene Simmons Rock School. As a result, he became a bit of a mentor. Abigail explained, “I did Rock School, so I do still e-mail Gene Simmons (a former member of the popular rock band, KISS). He’s invited me to the U.S.”
The students at Christ’s Hospital also identified their careers advisor as an influence. Every year he sends out information about undergraduate study in the United States to the families and the students. Each of the students at Christ’s Hospital identified this as one of the reasons they are considering undergraduate study in the United States.

**Careers Advisors**

The students at Christ’s Hospital Boarding School noted that their careers advisor was the person who first got them thinking about studying in the United States. Abigail explained,

> I received a letter from Mr. S about studying in the United States. At first I brushed it off, but when I started to speak with him about it, then I started to consider it. Also, he sent a letter to my mother, and when she questioned me about it, then I thought, “Why not?”

When speaking with the careers advisors at the three schools, they all explained that they like to offer studying in the United States as an alternative. As a result, they all send out information to their students to gauge interest. At Eton College, the careers advisor spends time setting up visits from schools in the United States on their campus.

**Culture**

The chance to experience a different culture was a draw for some students. Many of the students felt that going to a school in a different culture would enhance their educational experience. James, a student from Christ’s Hospital, explained, “I’ve always wanted to learn about their culture and their different way of living. I believe I would
become a bigger and better person if I was to go over there than if I were to just stay here.”

Abigail, a student from Christ’s Hospital, cited culture as being an important reason because she is interested in studying politics. She believes that experiencing the political culture in the United States would help her future. She explained:

Well clearly there is the getting to grips with another country. But the way I want to spend my career in politics… in America it’s such a major influence on what goes on. I’d love to get the general consensus on things like Obama. I mean we get a lot of it over here, but what do we really know. I quite like to be having a first hand insight into that.

Simon, a student at Eton, explained that he perceives that “in the U.S. everything is generally better. The weather and Americans just generally fascinate me.”

Oliver, explained that, “I really like to see some different types of people.” He felt that in Britain, “I find sometimes here people can be a bit in your face. Not really in your face, but I want to see what other people can be like instead of just being around English people all the time.” Because of these sentiments Oliver believes that “by going to an American university, I’d be broadening my range of different people and also a change of scenery.”

Media

For some students the media has been an influence on their decision to look at universities in the United States. One student specifically pointed to the media as being a contributing factor. Megan explained that, “Initially it was the television…seeing the
sororities and stuff”. Many of the students did not specifically point to the media; however when the interview was no longer being recorded, they asked question that specifically alluded to things they had seen on the television or in the movies.

*Visiting the United States*

Many of the students pointed to their experience of visiting the United States as influencing their interest in studying in the United States. Oliver, a student from Eton, shared that he visits his grandmother who lives in New York City several times a year. He explained, “By already going to America, I think about what it would be like to go to school there. Which is probably is one of the main (reasons), after having found out about the American university (system) and I can sort of choose lots of subjects instead of one really had got me thinking.” During these visits Oliver visited various universities in the United States. He explained, “I looked around some of the universities when I was in the U.S. and it looked really cool.” Matt, a student from Eton, reflected on his visit to the United States. He explained, “I’ve been to California. I liked it because it was a bit more laid back.”

*Choosing Universities and Final Decisions*

*Choosing a University*

Many of the students at Christ’s Hospital Boarding School are encouraged to apply for the Moorehead Cain Scholarship program offered through the University of North Carolina. Three out of the last ten years a Moorehead Cain Scholar has been chosen from this school. This scholars program targets students from the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. The scholars accepted into this program are offered
four years of full tuition and room and board. Additionally the students are offered a summer enrichment program and additional funds for research and discovery. While speaking with the students at Christ’s Hospital, many explained that they were looking at University of North Carolina because one of the students the year before is a Moorehead Cain Scholar. When this Christ’s Hospital alumnus was visiting his alma mater, he encouraged many of the students to consider applying to University of North Carolina and to the Moorehead Cain Scholar’s program. The students at Christ’s Hospital explained that they can only attend university in the United States if they receive a scholarship. As a result, they were interested in the University of North Carolina because of the Moorehead Cain Scholars program. Additionally, since the scholars program pays for everything is less expensive for them to attend a school in the University of North Carolina than a school in the United Kingdom.

Students at Eton College explained that visits to the school by university admissions’ professionals influenced their decision to apply to schools in the United States. Additionally, the visits from particular universities influenced their decision of where to apply. During the fall, admissions professionals from University of Pennsylvania, Harvard, Princeton and Stanford held information sessions at Eton College. One student explained that he was interested in schools on the West Coast however was considering University of Pennsylvania because he liked what the admissions’ professional had to say about undergraduate study at the University of Pennsylvania.
I questioned the students about what kind of information they had received thus far in the process. The question was posed broadly to see where they were receiving information and whether or not this information had any influence on their interest in studying in the United States. Some received information from friends who are currently studying at universities in the United States. Peter, a student at Eton College said, “I’ve talked to a student who has been studying at Columbia for the moment and he said it was fun, really fun, and he is getting a good education there as well.” Paul, another student at Eton, explained, “I talked with some friends who are going through the SAT’s and ACT’s and getting their view.”

Other students spoke with representatives from different universities. Rob, a student from Eton, mentioned that he spoke with a representative from Princeton when the representative visited Eton. Simon, another student from Eton, said, “I talked with recruiters from Stanford, Duke and Georgetown. They were here generally touting about university itself, life there and the application process.” Allen from Eton said, “We had a talk the other night…last Thursday, from Stanford and University of Pennsylvania. I’ve looked around Stanford, and received some basic stuff.” When asked about what kind of information he received he said “The information outlined the campus and what you needed to get into the college or courses you can take.”

The students that attend Christ’s Hospital found information in a different way. Megan from Christ’s Hospital explained that she hasn’t “directly spoken with anyone, but I’ve been going to websites.” Abigail had contact with admissions people in the United States, but had to contact them herself. She explained, “I’ve talked to some admissions
people at Yale, Harvard and Princeton. I received application forms. They were actually really nice. I spoke to them about my test results. They were really helpful about that “

*The Ultimate Decision*

Students were questioned about how they would make their ultimate decision when faced with whether or not to go to university in the United States. For some students, especially those from lower income families, the ultimate decision came down to finances. Tori, a student from Christ’s Hospital, explained, “It depends where I get into and working out financial and everything.” Megan, another student from Christ’s Hospital, stated, “Via scholarship is the only way it would be possible.”

For others it came down to the “right fit,” and whether or not they were going to fit into the school. Allen, a student from Eton explained, “Although the education is very important, it has to be in a situation that you really like”.

Some already knew that they were going to attend a university in the United States. Oliver from Eton said, “I think really that I just want to get out there so I will end up in America. Also, I have family there. I won’t be alone in the middle of America. I will have some people looking after me.” Matt, also from Eton, explained, “I will go where I get a place. I am only applying to U.S. schools. It would be great if I get offered a place at Berkley.”

Some students will only go to schools in the United States if they receive admission to specific schools. Oliver, a student at Eton, explains:

My high end, Harvard and Yale. My middle is NYU. It’s a quite a risk. If I don’t get into Harvard, NYU’s not quite as good. If I go there I might be
dropping my whole academic career. NYU’s my safe bet. If I can’t get into Ivy’s or NYU I will stick in England because it is so expensive (in the United States) and you can get the same sort of thing here.

Answers to Research Questions

Through an in-depth analysis of the transcripts of the individual interviews and biographical questionnaires, three overarching themes emerged from the data. These included: (a) characteristics about U.S. schools; (b) people who have influenced their decisions; and (c) things that will influence their ultimate decision. Under these three themes, subthemes began to emerge. The following section discusses how these themes answer the research questions set forth in this study.

Research Question 1

1. What experiences relate to British students interest in undergraduate study in the United States?

Many of the themes identified in the previous section help answer the first research question. To start, the overarching theme or characteristics of education in the United States inform the answer to the first research question.

Liberal Arts

In the findings from the interviews, the students identified experiences with the educational system in the United Kingdom and how these experiences relate to their interest in applying to school in the United States. Their experiences with the educational system in the United Kingdom make the liberal arts system found in the United States appealing to many of the students. Most of the students felt that the educational system
in the United Kingdom made them believe that they were being pushed into a box and that they had to give up all of their other interests. Some of the students felt that the system in the United States offered more freedoms than the system in the United Kingdom. One student described the freedoms accordingly as follows: “From what I’ve seen and heard you have you can do a broad range of subjects your first year. I think that’s a good idea. You can get more knowledge straight away instead of focusing on just one area.”

Since the education system in the United Kingdom requires students to choose a major at entry to the university, indecision about their particular professional and life goals was also a major reason cited for considering the U.S. higher education system over the U.K. higher education system. Again this goes back to their experience with the educational system in the United Kingdom. One of the students explained,

Well, first of all, I haven’t really decided what I want to do in terms of subject and if I were to go to an English university, I would have to choose what I’m doing and I’m not entirely sure what I want to do so I want to go to an American university so I can do a broad range of subjects. That’s probably my main reason. Many of the students did not realize it, but they were trying to describe the liberal arts programs found at universities in the United States. The liberal arts education found in the United States imparts general knowledge to students before students specialize in a specific degree area. Because the liberal arts degree programs in the United States offers the flexibility they want as opposed to the more narrowly focused degree programs in the United Kingdom, it is the most cited reason for preferring the United States system to the
United Kingdom system. Students in the United Kingdom are only required to take courses in their specific degree area. One student understood the liberal arts program offered at schools in the United States and explained that he “would do the liberal arts degree” because “it’s so free”. He complained, “Here it is sort of thrust upon you what you are to do at university.” He explained that “I appreciate the fact that in America for the first one or two years, I’m doing a variety of subjects as opposed to just one discipline.” He liked the idea of this because “I think I would benefit a lot from that because I am sort of an all rounder”.

One student explained the educational experience in England: “In England, at 16 you are supposed to know what you are going to do because the subjects you take influence what you are going to do in the future… Whereas in America you have the opportunity to study lots of stuff.” Many of the students were dissatisfied with their experience with the educational system in the United Kingdom because they “don’t like being so restricted.” Again, it goes back to wanting an experience that would permit them to explore themselves and different disciplines offered at universities in the United States.

Student Life

The students in this study have impressions about what student life will be like in the United Kingdom and vice versa, what student life will be like in the United States. Their experience with learning about student life in both countries influenced their decision. During the interviews, the excitement about student life manifested itself. Specifically, some students were interested in the social aspect of student life found at
American universities. One student said that universities in the United States “are a lot more fun instead of pure academics all the time.”

Another student thought that because life in the United States is less expensive than in England, his quality of living would be much better. He explained that he felt students live on the bare minimum and that living in the United States on the bare minimum is much better than living in the United Kingdom on the bare minimum.

Some students want to carry on their extra-curricular activities into the post-secondary educational setting. This is not encouraged in the U.K. system. In the U.K. system, once you start university, you are encouraged to focus on your studies and nothing else. Abigail’s love for her music, drama and community action involvement enhanced her life as a student and sparked her interest in study in the U.S. because “I want to be in an atmosphere where it where it is a big possibility and they want you to carry it on.”

Quality of Education

The next theme found to help answer the first research question deals with the perception of the quality of education at U.S. universities versus U.K. universities. Many students believed that the education at the universities in the U.K. was a lower quality education than the education found at a U.S. university. In the news media in the U.K. there have been problems with lecturers threatening to strike in the U.K. This has raised doubt with some of the students about the quality of a university education in the U.K. They are constantly inundated in the media with the idea that they are not willing to properly fund the universities in the United Kingdom. As a result, they are experiencing
negativity towards the U.K. system, causing them to look elsewhere for what they believe will be a high quality education. One student explained, “I don’t want to be skeptical but I’m pretty sure that the universities in Great Britain might be degrading in a way as the funding is going down.” He felt that only a few universities in the United Kingdom will offer him the level of teaching he experienced at Eton. He believes that universities in the U.S., especially at schools like Harvard, Yale and Princeton have the funding necessary to maintain a high standard of education.

The experience of going to a “public” school in the United Kingdom also influenced their feelings about the quality of undergraduate study in the United Kingdom and influenced many of their decisions to consider undergraduate study in the United States. The schools attended by the students in this study have extraordinary educational facilities. The students expressed their dissatisfaction with the prospect of going to a university that does not match the educational quality they have had in boarding school. As one student expressed, going to university in the U.S. is appealing because “it will be very similar to my life now, which I really like.”

Adventurous Spirit

Some of the students looked to future experiences as a reason that relates to their interest in undergraduate study in the United States. When speaking with the students before, after and during the interviews, I perceived an adventurous spirit in each individual. The students are interested in experiencing a brand new way of life. They enjoyed trying new things and looked beyond what their current world entailed. One student explained, “I want to experience more of the world. Moving to America is
moving abroad and it will be exciting and in a way I’ve sort of seen Oxford and I’ve seen Cambridge. In America it will be a wonderful and new experience.” This adventurous spirit led these students to an interest in undergraduate study in the United States. They are interested in new experiences and are willing to travel far away from home to gain these experiences.

The chance to experience a different culture was a draw for some of the students. Many of the students felt that going to a school in a different culture would enhance their educational experience. On student explained, “I’ve always wanted to learn about their culture and their different way of living. I believe I would become a bigger and better person if I was to go over there than if I were to just stay here.”

Media

Media depictions also played into some students’ interests. One student specifically pointed to the media as being a contributing factor to her interest in American higher education. She explained that, “Initially it was the television…seeing the sororities and stuff.” Although this was not a driving factor in her decision, it was prevalent many times following the interview in informal conversation. Many students made references to specific things they have seen on television. Specifically, one student asked about “Posh” and “Becks” (referring to a pop star and soccer star) moving to the United States. Another student asked if the university experience was anything like the American Pie movies. The media did not seem to be the major reason students were considering undergraduate study in the United States; however it does appear that it has
some influence and, at the very least, it influences what these students envision undergraduate study in the United States to be like.

*Visiting the United States*

Many of the students pointed to their previous visits to the United States as a major influence in exploring study opportunities in the U.S. Visiting the United States has allowed the students to visualize what life would be like should they choose to go to university there. One student explained, “By already going to America, I think about what it would be like to go to school there.” Although not every participant has been fortunate enough to visit the United States, for the participants who have visited, their time spent in the U.S. seems to be important to their consideration of undergraduate study in the United States. Specifically, the students who have already visited universities in the United States seem even more enthusiastic about studying there than the students who have not yet visited. One student in particular is only applying to universities in the United States. After experiencing a visit on a college campus in the United States, he decided that he did not want to apply to university in the United Kingdom.

*Summary*

There were clear themes evident in students’ discussions of the experiences prompting their interest in American higher education. The students’ prior experiences with the educational system in the United Kingdom are a major contributing factor in their interest in undergraduate study in the United States. Additionally, many students possess clear expectations regarding their future university experience. Envisioning what they want out of their university experience has shaped their reasons for considering
undergraduate study in the United States. The media is a small influence helping shape the students’ expectations. Finally, the students who visited the United States were most enthusiastic and most determined to attain their goal of studying at university in the United States.

Research Question 2

2. How do particular students’ characteristics (e.g., socio-economic class, race, sex, etc) relate to their interest in studying in the United States?

The characteristic of students’ socio-economic class was particularly prominent regarding students’ interest in studying in the United States. Their socio-economic class determined where they were applying to colleges and the specific criteria they considered in selecting among a tremendous number of potential universities.

The students at Eton College come from mainly upper class backgrounds. For the most part, they apply to universities based on their interests. How they will finance their education is a secondary thought. They seemed more interested in the prestige that a university education at an Ivy League institution could offer. The name recognition of the school is of utmost importance to the students at Eton College. One student explained, “I’ve visited Rice and it’s a really nice campus, and seems like a good school, but I’m not applying because nobody has heard of Rice over here.”

The students at Christ’s Hospital plan to choose their higher education institution based upon affordability. For example, when the interviews concluded, one student explained that she was only applying to colleges with needs blind admission policies. The only school she was applying to that did not have a needs blind admission policy was
the University of North Carolina. She was applying to University of North Carolina in hopes of becoming a Moorehead Cain Scholar and having all of her education subsidized by the university. Three out of the four students interviewed at Christ’s Hospital were applying to University of North Carolina to the Moorehead Cain Scholar’s program.

In essence, students’ socio-economic background relates to their interest in undergraduate study in respect to how they are going to make their final decision. Further, it also relates in their selection of schools. The theme that emerged to answer this question is the theme of schools selection and final decision. The student’s socio-economic status played a major role in determining the universities they are willing to consider and how they are going to go about making their final decision.

The students at Eton College had the benefit of having recruiters from universities in the United States come to their school on recruitment trips. Specifically, many of the top universities in the United States make special trips to Eton for the purpose of recruiting their students.

When students from Eton were asked about how they would ultimately fund their education in the United States, all but one student explained that his parents would be willing to pay. The one exception explained that a scholarship would be the only way. This student is a scholarship student at Eton.

One student at Eton explained his school choices as follows:

My high end, Harvard and Yale. My middle is NYU. It’s a quite a risk. If I don’t get into Harvard, NYU’s not quite as good. If I go there I might be dropping my whole academic career. NYU’s my safe bet. If I can’t get into Ivy’s
or NYU I will stick in England because it is so expensive and you can get the same sort of thing here.

This viewpoint is interesting because here in the United States, very few would consider New York University to be a safety school. However, it illustrates the viewpoint most students at Eton College have about selecting higher education options in the United States. The majority of Eton students are only willing to consider the most prestigious institutions.

When the students at Christ’s Hospital were asked where they were considering applying, many of them cited Ivy League schools. However, when asked how they would afford an Ivy League education, they explained that they had heard that these universities had need blind admissions and would support them financially if they could not afford the tuition and fees. Additionally, students at Christ’s Hospital were willing to look at universities outside of the Ivy League. For example, many of the students at Christ’s Hospital were willing to consider the University of North Carolina because of the Moorehead Cane Scholarship competition. With the history of the Moorehead Cane Scholars at Christ’s Hospital, they see it as a viable option and have had the opportunity to talk with students attending University of North Carolina. Their school has had Moorehead Cane scholars three out of the last ten years.

I asked students how they would make their ultimate decision when faced with whether or not to go to university in the United States. The ultimate decision came down to finances. Tori, a student from Christ’s Hospital, explained, “It depends where I get into
and working out financial and everything.” Megan, another student from Christ’s Hospital, stated, “Via scholarship is the only way it would be possible.”

**Research Question 3**

3. *Who and what influence students to consider undergraduate study in the United States?*

Students were influenced to consider undergraduate study in the U.S. by their perceptions of the quality of education, their internal adventurous spirits, and by their friends and family. All of the students felt that they always knew they were going to university; however the idea of going to university in the United States was a fairly recent notion.

**Quality of Education**

Many of the students started to consider undergraduate study in the United States after learning and hearing about the prestige that follows an education from a university in the United States. Additionally, for some, they started to consider undergraduate study in the United States because they believe that their major will be better taught at an American university.

A student from Eton explained, “I’ve always been told by people I know that some of the best engineering colleges in the world are in America.” Another student from Eton is looking at U.S. universities because he heard that they are better for his major. He explained, “From what I’ve heard, America is generally seen as better for architecture studies than in England.”
Particularly students attending Eton College have come to expect a certain level of prestige to be attached to their schooling. As a result, they are primarily interested in an Ivy League education. One Eton student explained his viewpoint as, “Generally, so far my view is you either go to Cambridge over here or you go to America.” His reasoning behind this generalization is that “the resources and facilities in America is much better and more money and resources are put into the schools over in America so I reckon that I would get a better academic study.” For some students it came down to the reputation and prestige. One Eton student said, “There’s always the reputation of the big universities in the U.S.” When asked to expand he explained, “The reputation . . . I’ve heard of the funding and all that. I don’t want to be skeptical but I’m pretty sure that the universities in Great Britain might be degrading in a way as the funding is going down.” Like other students at his school he said that, “Trinity Cambridge is still up there and a few others, but apart from that the other colleges are losing. As a result, I won’t have the level of teaching that I’ve come to expect at Eton.” He felt that the universities in the U.S. were not diminishing because the funding is still prevalent. “It seems that places like Harvard, Yale and Princeton do keep up that and they have a huge amount of funding and a huge amount of wealth and they sill have all the extracurriculars and everything and it will be very similar to my life now, which I really like.” The students at Eton have received a certain level of education by going to such a prestigious boarding school that they are unwilling to sacrifice when it comes to educational quality. Because they believe that the schools in the United Kingdom are diminishing in quality, they are willing to look elsewhere to get the educational experience they have come to expect.
Adventurous Spirit

Another theme that informs this research question is the inner quality of an adventurous spirit prevalent among the participants. One student from Christ’s Hospital explained, “For me it’s just to experience a new country and just to experience it and I like that fact that I don’t have to make my mind up right away and I can learn and experience things in a different country.” A student from Eton explained, “I want to experience more of the world. Moving to America is moving abroad and it will be exciting and in a way I’ve sort of seen Oxford and I’ve seen Cambridge. In America it will be a wonderful and new experience.” Without this spirit of wanting to see more and willingness to leave their home country to see and learn, they would never consider going outside of England for undergraduate study.

Friends and Family

Many of the students have extended family living in the United States. Some of the students’ families have encouraged them to experience a different culture. A student from Eton explained, “My grandma lives in New York. She has a flat in New York. So obviously I go and visit her two or three times a year.” He also explained that, “My godparents, they are sort of American. They always tell us about these different universities.” Another student from Eton explained, “I have a lot of family and friends that live in the U.S. and a lot of them studied in the U.S. and they told me that Berkley is really good for architecture.”
Sources of Information

Sources of specific information about U.S. higher education and specific colleges and universities were important to shaping students’ interests. The particular sources of information differed noticeably between the two schools. The students were questioned about what kind of information they have received thus far in the process. The question was posed broadly to see where they were receiving information and whether or not this information had any influence on their interest in studying in the United States. The information varied between the two schools. Students at Eton College had the benefit of admissions professionals visiting their school. Additionally, the students at Eton had many fellow classmates who have already matriculated in universities in the United States. One student at Eton explained, “I’ve talked to a student who has been studying at Columbia for the moment and he said it was fun, really fun and he is getting a good education there as well.” Paul, another student at Eton explained, “I talked with some friends who are going through the SAT’s and ACT’s and getting their view”.

For other students at Eton, they spoke with different universities when they came to Eton. One student from Eton explained, “I talked with Princeton when they came to Eton.” These visits seem to be influential on the interested students. One student only wanted to consider schools in California. However, after University of Pennsylvania visited Eton, his interests broadened beyond schools in California.

The students that attend Christ’s Hospital went about looking for information in a different way. Because they did not have the benefit of admissions officers coming to their campus, they had to go about the process in a different way. One student from
Christ’s Hospital explained that she has not “directly spoken with anyone, but I’ve been going to websites.” Another student has had contact with admissions people in the United States, but had to contact them herself. She explained that, “I’ve talked to some admissions people at Yale, Harvard and Princeton. I received application forms. They were actually really nice. I spoke to them about my test results. They were really helpful about that.“

Research Question 4

4. How do British students anticipate coming to a decision whether or not to pursue undergraduate study in the United States?

The students at the two different colleges where the interviews took place come from very different and diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The students at Eton College mainly come from high-income backgrounds while the students at Christ’s Hospital come from lower income backgrounds. All of the students interviewed at Christ’s Hospital were on scholarship and extremely thankful for the opportunity they were given to attend “public” school versus “state” school.

Final Decision

Students were questioned about how they would make their ultimate decision when faced with whether or not to go to university in the United States. The students attending Christ’s Hospital explained the ultimate decision will come down to affordability. One student from Christ’s Hospital explained, “It depends where I get into and working out financial and everything.” Another student from Christ’s Hospital, stated, “Via scholarship is the only way it would be possible.” When the interviews were
over, one student explained that she was applying to schools that had needs blind admissions policies and to University of North Carolina in hopes of obtaining the Moorehead-Cain Scholarship.

   For others it came down to the “right fit,” and whether or not they were going to feel comfortable with the particular institution. Allen a student from Eton explained, “Although the education is very important, it has to be in a situation that you really like”.

   Some already knew that they were going to go regardless. Oliver from Eton said, “I think really that I just want to get out there so I will end up in America. Also, I have family there. I won’t be alone in the middle of America. I will have some people looking after me.” Matt, also from Eton, explained, “I will go where I get a place. I am only applying to U.S. schools. It would be great if I get offered a place at Berkley.”

   Although some of the students at Eton were only applying to universities in the United States, the sentiment seemed to be universal. If they were unable to gain admission into a top university in the United States, then they were willing to stay in the United Kingdom for university.

   The Cambridge Interviews

   On my second day in England, I traveled north to Cambridge. When setting up the interviews, the careers advisor informed me that many of his students are not British students; however he was willing to set up interviews with his students who were interested in undergraduate study in the United States. When I arrived, I expected to interview both British students and international students. It turned out that all of the students I interviewed were not British. Although this sixth form school is located in
England, the vast majority of the students are from outside of the United Kingdom. Because of this, the results from these interviews are treated separately from the other interviews. Interestingly, when interviewing many of the students, they revealed that their parents sent them to this school in Cambridge because of its close proximity to the Cambridge University campus. They hoped that by sending their children to school next to Cambridge, it would help their chances of gaining admission to Cambridge University would improve.

The students in this study come from all over the world. Their parents spend more than £30,000 per year to educate their students at CATS Cambridge. The students participating in the study are from Zimbabwe, Lithuania, Germany, Albania, China, Kazakhstan and Mexico City. Two of the students are from China and two from Zimbabwe. The educational level of the parents varied.

Some of the themes emerging from these interviews are similar to those of the British students, although, the cultural differences create a different perspective in some cases. The cultural differences created issues in interviewing as well. The interviewee from Kazakhstan, a very shy young lady, declined to allow me to record the interview; this interview was quite short because of her apparent discomfort. Some of the interviews at CATS Cambridge were a bit shorter than at the other two schools. In some cases, there was a language barrier because English is their second language. Coupling that with the fact that I speak American English versus British English, the interviews took longer with less data resulting.
The following section represents the findings of the interviews conducted at CATS Cambridge with careful attention to maintaining the perspective of the students. The data are organized into the same three major themes as explored with the interviews at Eton College and Christ’s Hospital: (1) Characteristics of universities in the U.S., (2) Influences and (3) Final Decision. As often as possible, the information is presented in the words of the participants to fully capture their individual experiences and perspectives. The participants in the study openly described the people and programs that influenced them. They shared the experiences that have shaped their decision to consider undergraduate study in the United States.

The four research questions have to be slightly altered to fit this population of students. Again the four research questions posed explored: (1) what experiences relate to students interest in undergraduate study in the United States, (2) when they decided to consider undergraduate study in the United States, (3) who and what influenced their decision and (4) whether or not their socio-economic background played a role. Under each of these questions common themes emerged. In addition to specific experiences cited, students also identified perceived aspects of undergraduate study in the United States. These aspects included the freedom to study multiple subjects, the reputation of institutions in the United States and the influence a degree from an American university will have on their employment opportunities. The students' answers fell into three broad categories. The three categories are characteristics of U.S. universities, influences and ultimate decision. Under each of these categories, subcategories formed.
As stated earlier, the research literature described location, academic reputation, program of study and future employment opportunities as factors affecting student selection of university (Moogan & Baron, 2003). Veloutsou (2004) further states that potential students consider other attributes such as reputation, location, infrastructure, costs, and quality of life in selecting a university. Patton (2000) conducted an exploratory study examining the question, “What characteristics of degree programmes do overseas students particularly consider when deciding whether or not to enroll?” Specifically, Patton examined Asian students’ reasons for selecting universities in Australia. He found students were interested in recognition of the degree in their home country, the courses offered, fees, the duration of course programmes, course flexibility, the availability of part-time course work, and the prestige and reputation of the university (Patton, 2006, p. 347). In addition, some students “were concerned about government, business, and industry recognition of the course, as well as relevancy, time factors, and reputation (Patton, 2006, p.347).”

In support of the literature, many students cited quality of life in the United States as a factor in their considerations and how the student life offered at universities in the United States differed from that offered in the United Kingdom or their home country. Additionally, some students expressed their wish to study in a developed country and democratic country. Although the research literature in this area does not specifically address foreign students attending British sixth form schools decision making process when considering undergraduate study in the United States, the findings of this study are largely consistent with the published research, with a slight addition: For international
students the opportunity to study in a different culture was a major contributing factor not explored in the study conducted by Patton.

When I started the process of coding the data from the interviews that took place in Cambridge, I was surprised to find that much of the data fit into the same categories as the data from the other two schools. The three overarching categories of characteristics of universities in the U.S., influences and final decision still apply. However, there were some nuanced differences from my findings with the students at Eton College and Christ’s Hospital Boarding School.

Characteristics of U.S. Schools

The students in this study cited many different reasons for considering undergraduate study in the United States. Characteristics of U.S. schools that influenced their decisions included quality of education, student life and academic freedoms—more specifically the opportunity to take more liberal coursework.

*Liberal Arts—Not having to choose a major immediately*

Since CATS Cambridge is a sixth form school, the students start to specialize immediately in an area where they think they would most like to study while in university. Barbara, a student at CATS, explained that, “You have to know by AS (first year of A-levels) time of what you are doing as far as a major goes.” As explained in an earlier section, should a student wish to change their major, they have to start over. In some cases, students have to go back and take additional A-level courses to change into a different major. Charles explained the process: “In the U.K. they are more strict. It is
more focused. You can’t change your mind.” As a result of this he explained that, “I
don’t like how England does things with education.”

The students interviewed described their feelings about this educational process.
Most of the students felt that they were being forced into a box and that they had to give
up all of their other interests. Their experience with the British educational system was a
major influence on their interest in considering undergraduate study in the United States.
One of the major reasons cited by students interviewed was the possibility of not
choosing a major right away or being able to major in more than one subject area. The
idea of obtaining a liberal arts degree was very appealing to these students. Barbara
explained, “U.S. is a bit more liberal and they give you more freedom of choice.”

Although many of the students interviewed at CATS Cambridge are applying to
institutions in both England and the United States, their primary reason for desiring an
education in the United States over England is their ability to take a diversity of
coursework. Ginny, a student at CATS Cambridge explained that she was considering
universities in the United States because, “You can also take more subjects and you
change if you don’t like something.” Many of the students liked the variety of courses.
Adam explained that he liked the idea of a liberal arts education because “academically, I
am quite good at mathematics and chemistry.” Carrie wants the opportunity to take
Maths and Literature. She explained why she is considering undergraduate study in the
United States: “I think it’s because I don’t have to decide what I want to do. I like to do
Maths. Here you can’t continue Maths if you do literature. I’d like to postpone the final
decision.”
The students at CATS Cambridge really seemed to be impressed with the idea that universities in the United States are looking for well-rounded individuals. Adam explained:

I think the U.S. universities require different kinds of activities. I like history and politics and I do karate. I have black belt. I like music. My interests are quite wide. I think American universities like these kinds of people.

Barbara was impressed with universities in the United States right away in the application process. She explained, “I like the style that you have. Even with the personal statement you can be more free, more creative. The personal statement in the U.K. is very academic and the wording is limited.” Charles explained:

When you apply in this country they only look at grades. It’s more individual in the United States. When I was growing up there were only a few things to do. People do all different kinds of things in America.

When interviewing the students, I often heard, “Well if I go to school in the United States, I am going to major in one thing and minor in another.” The students who are interested in studying in the United States seem to have a wide cross-section of interests. When interviewing Charles, I saw this breadth of interests. He explained:

I am thinking about studying international business. Minor in film production. The business part of it I’ve always enjoyed. Last year, I tried to get together my own entertainment thing. If the film doesn’t work out, I can do other things. I don’t want to specialize right away.
Quality

The prestige of the universities in the United States is another major reason cited for considering undergraduate study in the U.S. Many of the students believe that the quality offered by United States higher education is greater than that found in the United Kingdom or their home country. In some cases, the students in this study believe that the universities in the United Kingdom and their home country cannot give them the level of education they have come to expect. Additionally, many times students believe that the quality of education for their specific major is better in the United States.

Adam explained his reasons for considering undergraduate study in the United States:

The policy of U.S. universities. You attract good students from every part of the world and give scholarships. I’m not interested in scholarships or money, but it shows that you really want to attract good students from all over the world and not want to make money from them. You really want to attract the excellent students. And academically the U.S. is the highest in the world.

Some students are considering United States higher education because they believe universities in the U.S. better serve their major. Ginny explained:

Because I was searching for the university that would better fit me. The universities in England aren’t the best. George Lucas is my favorite film director and he graduated from USC. I thought that’s quite great, so they support the program I want.
Charles has similar reasons. He believes that “What I want to do isn’t taken as seriously here and so America is the best choice.” Some students like the way teaching is approached for their major. Ginny explains that she is looking at colleges in the United States “Probably because they have the programs I like more. It’s not just theory, but also practice.”

Other students believe that the universities in the United States are the best choice. Barbara explains her reasons as, “The universities are top universities. Especially Princeton. They are really high standard universities.” For some students, it is the quality of schools in relationship to the schools in their home country. Carrie a student from Germany explains:

The first thing is because I don’t like the universities in Germany. Everyone goes there and they aren’t really selective and they are all the same kind of level. Organization is not real good. I’m applying here (England) and in the U.S.

**Culture**

The chance to experience a different culture was a draw for some of the students. Many of the students felt that attending college in a different culture would enhance their educational experience. Some of the students want to experience American culture specifically.

Eric explained that, “I like the atmosphere there better.” For Ginny, it was about her perception of university culture. She explained “In America it’s about what kind of person you are at university.” She further explained the comment to mean that when they are considering your applications, they look at the prospective student more holistically.
Other students felt that there would be more diversity in the United States. Barbara explained, “There are so many people from different countries. In the U.K. they are all British.” Adam had the same kind of thinking. He explained:

I think I am quite suited for an American university. And America is a free country; it is a good place to study. I want to learn something outside of Chinese thinking. It’s good for me to learn from something from an American.

Alicia is interested in the culture in the United States because she thinks it will help her in her future career. Her native language is Spanish. In university she wants to learn Spanish language and English language in hopes of teaching English. She explained that by going to university in the United States “It will improve my knowledge of English and the English speaking world.” She explains that she wants “to know more of the culture of other English speaking countries.” She explains that this is important because “If I want to be a teacher later, I can tell the students about my experience.”

Thomas’ experience in England has encouraged him to look at schools in the United States. He explained, “I was educated in Zimbabwe and then I came here. I’ve got a taste of different culture.” His major was also a motivating factor. He explained that, “Because I want to do things that are politically motivated and that bit I thought let me go to the biggest democracy in the world and see what that is like.” He further explained:

I want to feel the culture. I want to feel democracy. I want to be in a really developed nation and see how they live their lives day to day. I want to be able to implement what I learn back home.
Influences

Many of the students cited a number of influences in helping them to decide to consider undergraduate study in the United States. These influences include friends, family and the cost of study.

Eric cited his friends as an influence. He explained, “My friends . . . are planning to go to the United States.” Barbara was influenced by the cost of university in the United States. She explained that “The universities seem cheaper and afterwards you get more scholarship in the U.S. than here.” Barbara also explained that her father was another influence. She said, “My father thought I needed another option than just schools in England.” Charles was another who cited family as a major influence. When asked about influences he said, “My mom really. She talks about it for so long. No one else where I live understands because they have only seen it on TV.” Charles explained that his mother had lived in the United States for a while. Since moving away, she has dreamed of going back. He also explained that he had visited the United States when he was twelve. He explained that, “I haven’t been back since I was twelve and the last time I was there I went to Disney World. I keep thinking I have to go back.” Thomas explained that family was a major influence. His brother is currently going to Edinboro University in Pennsylvania. He explained that, “I’ve spoken with my brother and his friend. He likes it. He doesn’t necessarily say I love it, but the fact that he doesn’t want to come home.”
Ultimate Decision

I asked the participants how they were going to make the ultimate decision. For some reason this question seemed to pose some sort of language barrier. I attempted to rephrase the question, however, when the students began to appear impatient, I moved on. In retrospect, I should have moved on and have come back to this question. However, I moved to other questions without coming back to this question. Four of the participants were able to answer this question.

Adam explained that he would make his final decision by comparing the different universities: “Academically and the course. The average academic level of the university are all important.” Barbara will make the ultimate decision based upon where she gains admission. She explained, “I think that depends on where I get in. If I get into Cambridge, I’d probably consider staying here.” Again, for many of the international students, it is not necessarily that they are applying to universities in the United States over universities in England; it is that they are applying to schools in the United States in addition to the schools in England. When interviewing Carrie she explained that she is a scholarship student and is unable to pay for university. Her ultimate decision is “Financially where I can go.” Thomas was not concerned about the cost, but figured it would come down to where he received an offer. He explained, “I’ll have to look at who will be able to offer me a place. After I talk to them and what they can offer me to help my career path.”

How to Pay
I asked the participants how they would pay for university should they gain admission in the United States. When interviewing Adam, his culture and background shone through on many of the questions. However, when answering this question, his Chinese culture was apparent. He explained “My parents will pay for it. I may pay back if I’m good enough.” He sheepishly answered this question and seemed constantly nervous and wanting to please. I could tell that he was trying so hard to do his best at everything. It is interesting to note that Adam is twenty years old. After the formal interview, I spoke with him to find out more. He explained that he already completed compulsory education in China and had the qualifications to move on to university. However, he opted to attend CATS Cambridge to raise his scores in hopes of gaining a spot at a top university. Specifically, his parents sent him to CATS Cambridge because of its proximity to Cambridge University. I questioned the careers advisor at CATS Cambridge about this. He explained that many students attend CATS because they believe that it will enhance their chances of gaining admission to Cambridge University. He explained that with every student that applies, he tells the students and their families that going to CATS will not increase their chances of admission at Cambridge.

Many of the parents are willing and able to pay for tuition and fees in the United States. Ginny explained, “My parents would pay and if I get a job there I will pay for some of my own expenses.” For the two boys from Zimbabwe, both answered that their fathers would pay. Charles explained “My dad will pay.” When asked who would pay for university in the United States, Thomas, in his accent said “The father.”
Only two students cited finances as a major contributing factor. When asked about how she would finance her education in the United States, Barbara explained, “My parents and I will look for scholarships.” Carrie, a scholarship student, explained, “I get the impression that it’s easier to get financial aid in the U.S. I don’t have much money. I’m here on scholarship.” Unfortunately, there seems to be a misconception that it is easier to receive scholarship money in the United States. Carrie also explained, “I think places in Britain don’t give you anything. U.S. institutions give you money.” When I spoke to her later, she explained that she had heard about the needs blind admissions policies at some of the Ivy League institutions. Because of this, her perception is that many colleges in the United States are freely handing money out to qualified students.

Answers to Research Questions

Through an in-depth analysis of the transcripts of the individual interviews and biographical questionnaires, three overarching themes emerged from the data. These included: (a) characteristics about U.S. schools; (b) people who have influenced their decisions; and (c) things that will influence their ultimate decision. The following section discusses how these themes answer the research questions set forth in this study.

Research Question 1

1. What processes and experiences relate to foreign nationals studying in the United Kingdom interest in undergraduate study in the United States?

The students drew from their experiences with the educational system in the United Kingdom and their experience in their home country, describing how these experiences relate to their interest in applying to school in the United States. These
experiences with the educational systems in their home country and in the United Kingdom make the liberal arts system found in the United States appealing to many of the students. Most of the students felt that the education system in the United Kingdom made them feel that they were being pushed into a box and that they had to give up all of their other interests. However, for most of these students they are simply applying to schools in the United States in addition to schools in the United Kingdom. This differentiates these students somewhat from the British students. That is, these students have already left their home country, and find the prospect of going to university in the U.S. to be more seamless than is true for some of the British students. Interestingly, these students’ reasons for considering schools in the United States were very similar to the students from Eton College and Christ’s Hospital.

*Liberal Arts*

Since the education system in the United Kingdom requires students to choose a major early on, indecision about their particular professional and life goals was also a major reason cited for considering the U.S. higher education system in addition to the U.K. higher education system. Students were concerned with how early one has to decide on a major. Barbara explained that you have to know during your first year of A-levels. Other students were more concerned with what would happen should you decide to change your major. Charles explained the process: “In the U.K. they are more strict. It is more focused. You can’t change your mind.” When several of the students were asked what they are planning to major in, they gave one answer if they were to decide to go to school in the United Kingdom and a different answer if they were to study in the
United States. The answer for studying in the United Kingdom was to pursue very specific area of study. The answer for studying in the United States was a number of areas including a major and a minor. The students who are interested in studying in the United States seem to have a wide cross-section of interests.

Although many of the students interviewed at CATS Cambridge are applying to universities in both England and the United States, their experience with the educational system in the United Kingdom is an influential factor in considering undergraduate study in the United States. Carrie, the student at CATS Cambridge who wants the opportunity to take Maths and Literature sees study in the U.S. as a way to do both as opposed to the decision of one over the other in the U.K.

*Culture*

The students at CATS Cambridge are from a completely different culture than the one in which they are currently residing. The chance to experience another different culture was a draw for some of the students. Many of the students felt that going to a university in a different culture would enhance their educational experience. Some students were particularly drawn to experience American culture. Their experience in England has influenced them to explore yet another culture. Additionally, for some of the students, their experience in their home country has pushed them to want to come to the United States.

Barbara was interested in studying somewhere with more diversity. She perceives that the United States has people from a wider array of countries than there are in the U.K. Many of the students cited the chance to live in a democracy as a reason for
looking at universities in the United States. Thomas explained, “Because I want to do things that are politically motivated and that bit I thought let me go to the biggest democracy in the world and see what that is like.” He further explained:

I want to feel the culture. I want to feel democracy. I want to be in a really developed nation and see how they live their lives day to day. I want to be able to implement what I learn back home.

**Influences**

The students in this study have been influenced by a number of different people in their lives. These experiences influenced their decision to consider undergraduate study in the United States. In addition to the influences of family and friends, there are also external forces influencing their decisions. The external forces include finances and prior visits to the United States.

Some students were influenced by their friends’ decisions to go to universities in the United States. When questioned if anyone encouraged him to look at universities in the United States, Eric explained, “My friends. They are planning to go to the United States.” Barbara was influenced by her perception that universities in the United States are less expensive because they give out more scholarship money than institutions in the United Kingdom. She explained that “The universities seem cheaper and afterwards you get more scholarship in the U.S. than here.” Barbara also explained that her father influenced her considerations. She said, “My father thought I needed another option than just schools in England.”
Charles explained that the experience of going to visit the United States played a role in considering universities in the United States. He reminisced about his experience and explained, “I haven’t been back since I was twelve and the last time I was there I went to Disney World. I keep thinking I have to go back.”

Research Question 2

2. How do particular students’ characteristics (e.g., socio-economic class, race, sex, etc) relate to their interest in studying in the United States?

As explained previously, the students in this portion of the study come from privileged backgrounds with the exception of one student. Their parents are willing and able to pay huge amounts of money for their education. However, the students in this study come from a multitude of different cultures. These cultural backgrounds play a role in their interest in studying in the United States. More specifically, these cultural backgrounds influenced when they started to look at schools and the types of schools they are considering.

As stated earlier, the students at CATS Cambridge come from around the world to study in the United Kingdom. Their cultural differences shine through in their answers when asked about when they started to consider going to university and where they are considering undergraduate study.

The two Chinese students identified only schools in the Ivy League in their choices. Adam explained that his parents sent him to CATS Cambridge because of its proximity to Cambridge University. They felt that a school this close to Cambridge must have close ties to the university thus helping his chances for admission to Cambridge
University upon completion of his A-levels. In speaking with Adam, it became apparent that the prestige an institution held was much more meaningful than the actual university itself. He wants a great education; however he also wants the prestige of an education from a top university. He explained that finding a top job in China is extraordinarily difficult. As a result, he believes that he needs an education from a school with an international reputation.

When interviewing Eric, the second Chinese student, I felt a bit of déjà vu. I felt I was having the same conversation I had with Adam. Eric is considering universities only in the United States. However, like Adam, the university has to be a prestigious university with an international reputation.

The students from Europe were less flexible about location. They explained that they were primarily considering Ivy League institutions located in the United States. All of the students from Europe want to return home after they finish undergraduate study. As such, they believe that an education at any U.S. university outside of the Ivy League will not help them find employment at home. After the interviews were complete, I spent time speaking with Carrie from Germany. She had major concerns about financing her education in the United States. I started to speak with her about different universities that have lower tuition. She explained to me that the job market back in Germany was extremely competitive. She was concerned that the universities I suggested would not help her find employment upon graduation.

The two students from Africa were much more open to looking at a variety of institutions. When I spoke with the both of them, they were more interested in studying
in the United States for the experience of being in the United States. They were less concerned about the prestige of the school and more concerned about gaining the experience of living in a democracy and a developed nation. They both explained that going home for a university education was not really an option. They both were adamantly apposed to studying in England for their undergraduate degree. Charles was originally set to finish high school in the United States at a boarding school. He explained that he was unable to secure his student visa in time to attend the school. He ended up at CATS because he was able to obtain a student visa to study in the United Kingdom.

Research Question 3

3. Who and what influence students to consider undergraduate study in the United States?

Outside influences play an important part in students’ decisions to consider undergraduate study in the United States. The influences cited in this study include friends, family and overall cost of study. For some friends are major influences in encouraging students’ interest in undergraduate study in the United States. For Eric his friends were an influence. He explained, “My friends . . . are planning to go to the United States.” He did not start thinking about undergraduate study in the United States until his friends encouraged him to look at undergraduate study in the United States.

If the students in this portion of the study stay in the United Kingdom for university, they will have to pay international student fees. The students in this study are under the impression that universities in the United States offer more scholarships and
financial aid than do their British counterparts. Barbara and Carrie were both influenced by the possibility of obtaining scholarships at schools in the United States. Carrie is a scholarship student at CATS Cambridge. As a result, she was considering schools in the United States because she had heard about needs blind admissions policies. She explained that “The universities seem cheaper and afterwards you get more scholarship in the U.S. than here.”

Another influence cited is the influence of family. Barbara explained that she was applying to schools in the United States because, “My father thought I needed another option than just schools in England.”

Research Question 4

4. How do British students anticipate coming to a decision whether or not to pursue undergraduate study in the United States?

Participants were directly questioned about how they were going to make their ultimate decision. For some reason this question seemed to pose some sort of language barrier. As a result, four of the participants were able to answer this question.

The first step is looking at their acceptances. Barbara explained, “I think that depends on where I get in. If I get into Cambridge, I’d probably consider staying here.” Adam explained that he would make his final decision by comparing the different universities based upon their academic level. Affordability of the schools was important for Carrie. She explained that she would make her decision based on “Financially where I can go.”
CATS Cambridge Students vs. Eton and Christ’s Hospital Students

The students at the three different schools all come from many different backgrounds: wealthy upper class students at Eton; bright scholarship students from low-income homes at Christ’s Hospital; and international students for whom money for education is not a problem at CATS Cambridge. In spite of these background differences, many of the reasons for considering undergraduate study in the United States are the same for all of the students. The major common reasons include the liberal arts education offered by universities in the United States, the quality of education and the influence of friends and family.

The issue of class plays a role in the students experience and decision making process. As a result, in many situations, the Eton College student’s experience is much closer to the experience of the CATS Cambridge student’s experience. The students attending CATS and Eton come from wealthy families and there is no issue of paying for a university education. Their final choice does not hinge on affordability. The students attending Christ’s Hospital come from a low socio-economic class and as a result their final decision is based upon affordability.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview of the Study

In this study I explored the events and experiences that influenced participants’ interest and decisions concerning pursuing undergraduate study in the United States. I further explored the role that the various people in the students’ lives played in the process: parents, friends, careers advisors, media etc. In order to achieve this, the following research questions were explored:

1. What experiences relate to British students interest in undergraduate study in the United States?
2. How do particular students’ characteristics (e.g., socio-economic class, race, sex, etc) relate to their interest in studying in the United States?
3. Who and what influence students to consider undergraduate study in the United States?
4. How do British students anticipate coming to a decision whether or not to pursue undergraduate study in the United States?

The study included a purposeful sample of 12 self-identified British students and nine international students completing their A-levels education at schools in England. The study also included interviews with three careers advisors and the former head of the U.S./U.K. Fulbright Commission. Of the self-identified British students, three participants were female and nine were male among the international students five participants were female and four were male. The interviews took place at three boarding
schools in England over a one-week period. In addition, the interviews with the nine international students were included separately.

Through an in-depth analysis of the transcripts of the individual interviews at Christ’s Hospital, Eton College and CATS Cambridge and biographical questionnaires, three overarching themes emerged from the data. These included: (a) characteristics about universities in the U.S.; (b) people and experiences that have influenced their decisions; and (c) considerations that will influence their ultimate decision. Under these three themes, subthemes emerged. I the following section I discuss how these themes answer the research questions set forth in this study. Because the students from CATS Cambridge are international, the results were different in some areas and similar in others. Information about all three schools will be discussed below.

Research Question 1

1. What processes and experiences relate to British students interest in undergraduate study in the United States?

As explored in depth in Chapter 4, various themes emerged when exploring this research question. The overarching themes of the characteristics of education in the United States and people and experiences that have influenced their decisions informed this question while many of the subthemes under these two major themes began to emerge.

“You can get more knowledge straight away instead of focusing on just one area”

Under the first theme of characteristics of education the students consistently looked to their experience with the educational system in the United Kingdom. This
experience oftentimes pointed to some dissatisfaction with higher education policies and practices in the United Kingdom. Students were specifically dissatisfied with having to declare their major immediately, taking only courses within their major. They also expressed dissatisfaction with the overall student life experience and the lack of opportunities to participate in activities outside of their major.

This led students to identify characteristics about the higher education system in the United States that influenced their interest in considering undergraduate study in the United States. Specifically, students identified the flexibility in the degree programs in the United States. They liked the idea of liberal arts electives. The idea that they could take a diverse array of courses, and not just courses in their major area appealed to them.

In addition to the desire for a liberal arts degree program, students also identified student life as being a reason that they are considering undergraduate study in the United States. In the United Kingdom, student life is much different. The students’ perceive that in the United Kingdom they generally focus only on their courses and possibly a few clubs. The wide array of options found in the United States are not available to students in the United Kingdom. These options include sororities and fraternities, varsity athletics and living learning communities in campus housing.

Students in this study also identified the quality of education as being a reason that they are considering undergraduate study in the United States. The students in this study believe that their education in their A-levels has been first rate. They believe that many of the universities in the United Kingdom do not offer the same high-class educational experience. They perceive that universities in the United States can offer
them a similar level of education to what they currently have. There is a perception that the higher education system in the United Kingdom is inferior to the higher education system in the United States. The media and their perceptions about the quality of education in the United Kingdom have informed this experience.

The next major theme that informed the answer to this research question is the experiences and influences that motivated these students to consider undergraduate study in the United States. Some of these influences include specific common characteristics observed in each student. The students in this study have an adventurous spirit. The students that participated in this study were observed to be extraordinarily outgoing. Many have traveled. They are open to new experiences and are drawn to travel far away from home to gain these experiences. Many of the students felt that going to a school in a different culture would enhance their educational experience.

Media also played into some student’s experiences. Although this was not a major contributing factor, it was prevalent many times in the conversation when I was no longer recording. Students referred to movies, televisions shows and celebrities to illustrate their vision of undergraduate study in the United States. The media did not seem to be the major reason students are considering undergraduate study in the United States, however it does appear that it has some influence. That is, the media helps shape what these students envision undergraduate study in the United States to be like.

Many of the students pointed to their experience of visiting the United States as being a major influence. Specifically, the students who have already visited school in the
United States seem even more enthusiastic about studying in the United States than the students who have not yet visited.

CATS Cambridge

In the findings from the interview transcripts, the CATS Cambridge students identified experiences with the educational system in the United Kingdom and their experience in their home country and how these experiences relate to their interest in applying to school in the United States. These experiences with the educational systems at home and in the United Kingdom make the liberal arts system found in the United States appealing to many of the students. Most of the students felt that the educational system in the United Kingdom made them feel that they were being pushed into a box and that they had to give up all of their other interests. However, for most of these CATS Cambridge students, it is not a matter of them applying to U.S. schools over schools in the United Kingdom. They are simply applying to schools in the United States in addition to schools in the United Kingdom.

Since the education system in the United Kingdom requires students to choose a major early on, indecision about their particular professional and life goals was also a major reason cited for considering the U.S. higher education system in addition to the U.K. higher education system. The students who are interested in studying in the United States have a wide cross-section of interests. They are not yet ready to commit to a specific major. As such, many of the students in this study are considering undergraduate study in the United States so they can further explore their options. They are interested in more than one area and are not ready to come to a final decision.
The students at CATS Cambridge are from completely different cultures than the one in which they are currently residing. The chance to experience another culture was important for some of the students. Many of the students felt that going to a school in a different culture would enhance their educational experience. For some students there were specifically to experience American culture. Their experience in England has influenced them to explore yet another culture. Additionally, for some of the students, their experience in their home country has pushed them to want to come to the United States. For some the reason was to experience the “wealth” of the United States while for others it was to experience the political climate of a democracy.

The students at CATS Cambridge have been influenced by a number of different people in their lives. They stated that various friends and family played roles in their decision to consider undergraduate study in the United States. There are also a number of external forces influencing their decisions such as finances, affordability of schools, scholarship opportunities and prior travel in the United States. If these students stay in the United Kingdom for undergraduate study, they will have to pay a higher tuition rate because they are deemed international. As a result, many of these students view undergraduate study in the United States as a more affordable option. There is a perception that schools in the United States give more scholarships than schools in the United Kingdom. Some were influenced by their visits to the United States and their desire to return.

*Research Question 2*
2. How do particular students’ characteristics (e.g., socio-economic class, race, gender, etc) relate to their interest in studying in the United States?

Socio-economic class determined where the students were applying to schools and how they viewed where they were applying. The students at Eton College come from mainly upper class backgrounds. For the most part, they apply to universities based on their interests and how they will finance their education is a secondary thought. They seemed more interested in the prestige that a university education at an Ivy League school could offer than in exploring the wide variety of upper tier universities available. In fact, if a university does not have an internationally recognized name by the general population in the U.K., they did not believe it would be of value to attend there.

The students at Christ’s Hospital chose target universities based upon affordability. Specifically, when the interviews concluded, one student explained that she was only applying to schools with needs blind admission policies. The only school she was applying to that did not have a needs blind admission policy was the University of North Carolina. She was applying to UNC in hopes of receiving a full-ride scholarship (Moorehead Cain) and having all of her education subsidized by the university. Three out of the four students interviewed at Christ’s Hospital were applying to UNC to the Moorehead Cain Scholar’s program.

In essence, participants’ socio-economic background related primarily to how they would make their final decision. Further, it also relates to their consideration of possible colleges and universities. The student’s socio-economic status played a major influence on colleges and universities they are willing to consider and how they are going
to go about making their final decision. Those students from upper class homes were interested in Ivy League schools without concern for cost. Those from lower income families considered schools based on the ability to received financial aid and scholarships.

**CATS Cambridge**

The students at CATS Cambridge come from privileged backgrounds with the exception of one student. Their parents are willing to pay large amounts of money for their education. However, the students in this study come from a variety of different cultures. These cultural backgrounds play a role in their interest in studying in the United States and the types of schools they are considering.

Two of the students in this study are from China. When asked where they are considering undergraduate study, they both identified only schools in the Ivy League. Adam explained that his parents sent him to CATS Cambridge because of its proximity to Cambridge University. In spite of being told by the personnel at CATS Cambridge that attending there does not have an impact on being accepted at Cambridge, his parents felt that a school this close to Cambridge must have close ties to the university thus helping his chances for admission to Cambridge University upon completion of his A-levels. The status that the university can add to his resume is important to his family.

The students from Europe were less flexible about location. They explained that they were primarily considering Ivy League institutions located in the United States. All of the students from Europe want to go back home after they finish undergraduate study.
As such, they believe that an education at any school outside of the Ivy League will not help them find employment at home.

The two students from Africa were much more open to looking at a variety of institutions. When I spoke with the each of them, they were more interested in studying in the United States for the experience of being in the United States.

They were less concerned about the prestige of the school and more concerned about gaining the experience of living in a democracy and a developed nation. They both explained that going home for university was not really an option. They both were adamantly apposed to studying in England for their undergraduate degree.

*Research Question 3*

1. *Who and what influence students to consider undergraduate study in the United States?*

All of the students stated that they always knew they were going to university; however the idea of going to university in the United States was a fairly recent notion. Many of the students identified the information being presented at their school as being a reason they were considering undergraduate study in the United States. The presentation of information occurred in the form of university representatives visiting and presenting information on their university.

“I don’t want to be skeptical but I’m pretty sure that the universities in Great Britain might be degrading”

Students in this study identified many different characteristics of undergraduate education in the United States that influenced their decision to consider looking at
universities in the United States. Many of the students started to consider undergraduate study in the United States after learning and hearing about the prestige that follows an education from a university in the United States. Additionally, some participants started to consider undergraduate study in the United States because they felt that their major would be better taught at an American university.

The prestige of schools in the United States seems particularly important for the students attending Eton College. Attending a prestigious boarding school, they have come to expect a certain level of prestige to be attached to their schooling. As a result, they are primarily interested in an Ivy League education. The students at Eton perceive their education as elite and prestigious and they are unwilling to exchange that prestige for matters such as economical issues in choosing a post-secondary institution. Because they perceive that the universities in the United Kingdom are not as good as they once were, they are interested in looking elsewhere to get the educational experience they have come to expect.

“"I want to experience more of the world"”

The adventurous spirit described in question one can also be applied here. The students cited a desire to see more of the world. Without this spirit of wanting to see more and willingness to leave their home country to see and learn, they would never consider going outside of England for undergraduate study.

Friends and family oftentimes influenced students. Many of the students have extended family living in the United States. Some of the students’ families want for them to experience a different culture. As result, some family members are encouraging them
to look at schools outside of the United Kingdom and more specifically in the United States.

The students were questioned about what kind of information they have received thus far in the process. The information varied between the two schools. The students at Eton College had the benefit of admissions professionals visiting their school. Additionally, the students at Eton had many fellow classmates who have already matriculated to universities in the United States.

The students that attend Christ’s Hospital went about looking for information in a different way because they did not have the benefit of foreign admissions officers coming to their campus. Their careers advisor was the first point of contact in obtaining information about studying in the United States. Additionally, students looked at websites and then would make contact with the schools in which they were interested. Essentially, the students at Christ’s Hospital required a more active search for information than their Eton counterparts.

Many of the themes found in the interviews helped to inform the answer to this question. Simply put, family members, careers advisors and other outside influences helped manifest students’ interest in considering undergraduate study in the United States. From there, the information received and the schools they consider vary based upon their educational background and the resources available.

CATS Cambridge

Outside influences play an important part in student’s decision to consider undergraduate study in the United States. The influences cited in this study include
friends, family and overall cost of study. For some, friends are a major influence in encouraging student’s interest in undergraduate study in the United States. Some of the students started to consider undergraduate study in the United States when a friend suggested it.

International students in this study have to pay international student fees at the universities in the United Kingdom. If they come to the United States, they have to pay tuition and fees. The students in this study are under the impression that schools in the United States offer more scholarships and financial aid than is offered in the United Kingdom. As a result, when they started thinking about paying for university, they started to consider all of their options, including undergraduate study in the United States.

Another influence cited is the influence of family. For many of the students, they have been encouraged by family members to consider different universities in the United States. Some have extended family living in the United States and one student has a sibling attending university in America.

**Research Question 4**

4. *How do British students anticipate coming to a decision whether or not to pursue undergraduate study in the United States?*

The students at the two different colleges where the interviews took place come from different and diverse backgrounds. The students at Eton College mainly come from privileged backgrounds while the students at Christ’s Hospital come from lower income backgrounds. All of the students interviewed at Christ’s Hospital were on scholarship and extremely thankful for the opportunity they were given.
The major theme that emerged to answer this question was how the students will go about making their final decision. Students were questioned about how they would make their ultimate decision when faced with whether or not to go to university in the United States. For the students attending Christ’s Hospital the ultimate decision came down to finances.

For the students at Eton, the final decision comes down to prestige and where they are accepted. Although some of the students at Eton were only applying to universities in the United States, the sentiment seemed to be universal. If they were unable to gain admission into a top school in the United States, then they were willing to stay in the United Kingdom for university. For the most part, they plan to attend Cambridge or Oxford if they stay in England.

CATS Cambridge

The participants were directly questioned about how they were going to make the ultimate decision. The students said they would first examine where they have been accepted and then weigh the options. The factors they will consider include quality of education, cost and feasibility.

Conclusions

Throughout the research literature, as discussed in Chapter 2, there was a consistent pattern. The literature in this area explained that when selecting a university important factors affecting student choice include location, academic reputation, program of study, and future employment opportunities (Moogan & Baron, 2003). Veloutsou (2004) explains that potential students consider other attributes such as reputation,
location, infrastructure, costs, and quality of life. The research literature found is not directly on point. This study examines British students reasons for considering undergraduate study in the United States and their decision making process. The research literature found explores students’ decision-making process behind university selection in their own country.

For international students Patton (2000) conducted an exploratory study examining “What characteristics of degree programmes do overseas students particularly consider when deciding whether or not to enroll?” Most frequently cited “recognition of the degree in their home country, the courses offered, fees, the duration of course programmes, course flexibility, the availability of part-time course work, and the prestige and reputation of the university” (Patton, 2000, p. 347). Additional factors included, “concerns about government, business, and industry recognition of the course, as well as relevancy, time factors, and reputation” (Patton, 2000, p.347).

The findings of this study supports the existing research literature as follows:

1. The students in the United Kingdom who are considering undergraduate study in the United States are interested in universities in the United States based upon their perceived prestige and quality.

2. For some students, the final decision will come down to scholarships and affordability. Some of the students are basing their university selection on the prevalence of need blind admissions policies.

3. Students believe that the quality of life in United States higher education is superior to that offered in the U.K.
4. Students are looking at schools in the United States because they believe the schools infrastructure is better than the schools found in the United Kingdom. Specifically, they believe that more money is invested in schools in the United States allowing the schools to offer more opportunities and provide better facilities.

5. Students are primarily looking at schools with international reputations because they believe schools that do not have an international reputation will hinder their future employment opportunities.

6. International students are interested in studying in a developed nation with a democratic government.

In addition to supporting the existing research literature, additional themes emerged specific to these specific research questions. The major reason students are considering undergraduate study in the United States revolves around specific characteristics dealing with universities in the United States. It is the differences between the higher education systems that have encouraged these students to consider undergraduate study in the United States.

1. All of the students in the study identified the ability to delay choosing their major as being a contributing factor in their decision to consider undergraduate study in the United States. The students felt like the educational system in the United Kingdom was “pushing them into a box”. As a result, the idea of liberal arts degree programs offered in the United States is very appealing to these students.
2. Another difference is in the area of student life. The students in this study were intrigued and persuaded to consider undergraduate study in the United States based upon the university life culture found in the United States. University life in the United Kingdom is much less prevalent and is completely different than university life found in the United States. Generally speaking, students attend classes and continue on with their own lives. There are some clubs and housing found on campus. However, university housing is run much more like apartments. As a result, many of the students in this study identified their perceived differences in student life as being a reason for considering undergraduate study in the United States.

3. International students are interested in studying in a different culture.

Discussion and Implications

The students in this study described all of the different influences and experiences that have encouraged and moved them to consider undergraduate study in the United States. Surprisingly the major reason cited relates to the participants experience with the educational system in the United Kingdom. The students were dissatisfied with the requirement to choose their major and career path at such a young age. The wish to delay this major life decision led them to consider universities in the United States. They cited this reason under the guise of wanting a liberal arts education. It is interesting that they cited the idea of a liberal education, because, their reason behind wanting a liberal arts education is to be well rounded and not about buying into a sophisticated understanding of what being well educated means.
It was also surprising that students felt they could obtain a higher quality education attending a university in the United States. Many of the students felt that they could go to Oxford or Cambridge in the United Kingdom and receive a high quality education. Beyond those two universities, one would be unable to receive the quality of education at a U.K. University that will equal the quality of their current educational experience. The media has influenced many of these perceptions cited by the students. As discussed in Chapter 2, there has been much speculation about why students are considering undergraduate study in the United States in the media. Additionally, there has been negative publicity surrounding universities in the United Kingdom. More specifically, there has been negative publicity surrounding the amount of funding allotted to universities. Additionally, there has been media coverage surrounding the university lecturers threatening to strike if they do not receive additional compensation. All of the media influenced the student’s decisions to consider undergraduate study in the United States. One student explained, “I don’t want to be skeptical but I’m pretty sure that the universities in Great Britain might be degrading in a way as the funding is going down.” He felt that only a few universities were worth considering in the United Kingdom. He said that, “Trinity Cambridge is still up there and a few others, but apart from that the other colleges are losing. As a result, I won’t have the level of teaching that I’ve come to expect at Eton.” The students frequently cited the idea that the quality of education is declining at the majority of U.K. universities.

In addition to experiences influencing student’s decisions to consider undergraduate study in the United States, the influences of friends, family and careers
advisors also played a role in student’s decisions to consider undergraduate study in the United States. Some student’s parents encouraged them to consider going to the United States for undergraduate study. For others, the interest started when their careers advisor shared information on undergraduate study in the United States. These people have played a large role in students’ consideration of undergraduate study in the United States. Without these influences, many of the students would probably stay in the United Kingdom possibly dissatisfied with their educational experience. Once they received encouragement from their friends, family members or careers advisor, they were more willing to consider undergraduate study in the United States. The idea of leaving their home country seems less foreign and scary and more like a real possibility.

The historical class differences became apparent when interviewing students at the different schools. As discussed earlier, students attending Christ’s Hospital are primarily scholarship students from low-income families whereas students attending Eton College and CATS Cambridge come from wealthy upper class families. Although the government has worked hard to eliminate the class differentiation in the United Kingdom, the perception of social class is still prevalent. The Guardian conducted a study in 2007 to determine the perception of social class and social mobility and whether the perception of class differences still exist. The Guardian study found that 89% of people in the United Kingdom believe that their social standing determines how they are judged. Almost half of those feel that it still counts for “a lot” (Glover, 2007). This study shows that social standing still influences people in the United Kingdom.

This social class system is apparent in multiple areas of their lives and can
specifically be seen in educational opportunity. Amanda Root (*Times Higher Education Supplement*, 2007) explains, “About half of all Oxbridge students still come from public (ie private, fee-charging) schools, yet such schools educate only about 7 per cent of the school-age population.” The Sutton Trust (2008) conducted a study to determine university admissions by individual schools. The study determined that 100 elite schools accounted for a third of admissions to Oxbridge during the prior five years. These 100 schools make up less than 3% of 3,700 schools offering sixth form education in the United Kingdom. Of these 100 schools both Eton College and Christ’s Hospital make the list. It should be noted that Eton is in the top ten while Christ’s Hospital is in the bottom ten. The schools with the highest admissions rates to Oxbridge are highly socially selective. The Sutton Trust study also found that the top 200 schools and colleges make up 48% of admissions to Oxbridge. The other 3,500 schools and colleges account for the remaining 52% of admissions, with one per cent of their university entrants going to Oxbridge (Sutton Trust, 2008).

When conducting the interviews at Christ’s Hospital and the interviews at Eton College, I observed a difference in the ways the students viewed their chances at gaining admission to highly selective institutions. The Eton College students expected to gain admission to highly selective institution whether at Oxbridge or an Ivy League school. The students at Christ’s Hospital were thankful for the opportunity to attend a good sixth form college. They explained that they worked extremely hard to gain admission to Christ’s Hospital and did not want to let their parents or themselves down by not gaining admission to a highly selective university.
The social class difference also became apparent with the students’ adventurous spirit. The students at Christ’s Hospital had not visited the United States. They had not had the travel opportunities the Eton College students had been afforded. As a result, the adventurous spirit of the Christ’s Hospital students is a driving influence in their decision to consider undergraduate study in the United States. Because the Eton College students have had the opportunity to travel and visit the United States, their desire to study in the United States is driven more by the perceived opportunity for success. This is illustrated in the figure below. While the Christ’s Hospital students desire success and are considering undergraduate study in the United States because of this desire, this desire is influenced primarily by their adventurous spirit. The Eton College students are partially influenced by their adventurous spirit, but primary influence is the perceived success a degree from a highly selective university in the United States will afford them.

Figure 5.1 University Selection Influences Eton College
Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are suggestions for the various stakeholders that participate in the higher education process. There are also recommendations for policymakers who affect higher education.

*Recommendations for Admissions Professionals*

Admissions professionals are in charge of the recruitment and advising of prospective students. As a result, they are the first people many prospective students meet at the universities. Admissions professionals are in charge of the strategies when setting target enrollments and enrollment demographics. As a result of this study, admissions professionals should realize that there is a realistic pool of potential students enrolled in British schools who are interested in undergraduate study in the United States.
As such, they should spend time recruiting not only at prestigious boarding schools such as Eton College, but also at other schools across the United Kingdom. This study also informs admissions professionals about the areas of interest among British students. As a result, this study helps with the marketing of schools in the United States. The schools should understand that students are interested in a liberal arts education and are further interested in learning about student life found on the various campuses. Understanding what most interests the students about universities in the United States can be very helpful when employing marketing and recruitment strategies.

Admissions professionals should also consider attending events such as College Day in London presented by the U.S./U.K. Fulbright commission. Students from schools across the United Kingdom attend such events allowing universities to disseminate information and help out with the name recognition of their university. This is especially important for schools that are not a part of the Ivy League.

Recommendations for Careers Advisors

The powerful influence of the careers advisors at the schools is evident with each participant in this study. Participants identified their careers advisor as being influential in their decision to consider undergraduate study in the United States. Therefore, the development of positive relationships with their students is important in the role of the careers advisor. The relationship allows the careers advisor to best guide the student to a university that fits the student’s interest whether or not it is a school in the United States.

The participants in the study identified the careers advisor as an important connection in providing them with information about universities in the United States and
the university application process. It is important that the careers advisor is knowledgeable in the process and have a system in place to disseminate the information to interested parties including students and parents. This can be accomplished through classroom guidance lessons, small group presentations, presentations at parent meetings, presentations to the faculty, newsletters, websites and bulletin boards.

With this newfound interest in undergraduate study in the United States among British teenagers, it is important for the careers advisors to be abreast of the latest in university admissions policies and procedures at U.S. universities. Further it is important for the advisors to be aware of the many high quality universities available to students in the United States. Once they are in possession of this information, frequent communication with the students is necessary to insure that they understand the admissions processes and procedures in the United States.

In addition to understanding the admissions policies and procedures, it is important for the careers advisors to understand the testing procedures necessary for university admissions. Specifically, it is important for them to understand when it is appropriate for students to take the SAT or the ACT. Further, it is important for them to understand the difference between the SAT and ACT. Again, once they understand and are in possession of this information it is important that this information be disseminated to the students.

The careers advisors should give information to their students about undergraduate study in the United States at the beginning of their A-levels giving the students enough time to take the SAT and/or ACT examinations. It also gives the
students enough time to explore the various schools available. It is also advisable that they have their students attend College Day administered by the U.S./U.K. Fulbright Commission.

The careers advisors should start working with universities in the United States encouraging them to come and visit their schools. Since it is evident that the schools in the United States are willing to visit some schools in the United Kingdom, the careers advisors should push to have the same universities visit their own schools. By using all the resources available, they will be prepared to best help their students through the application process.

**Recommendations for Policymakers in the United States**

Currently in the United States, policymakers face smaller budgets for higher education systems. As a result, they feel the push to consolidate programs at universities. When consolidation occurs, students will no longer be able to take as wide a variety of courses at a university. For example, in the state of Ohio, the current administration is moving to the public universities to a university system. The system allows the government to consolidate programs and to eliminate redundancy in academic programs (Ohio Board of Regents). This allows for less selection among coursework offered at the state universities. Further, it makes it more difficult for students to change their major. Should they decide to change their major, and their new prospective major is not offered at their current university, they will be forced to transfer or to opt to pursue a less desirable major in order to remain at a place where they have developed important relationships and connections.
Because of the findings in this research, the policymakers should examine what our universities are doing right in the eyes of the participants of this study and to exercise caution in sacrificing a feature of higher education in the United States that is sacrosanct to many. Many students take a year of longer to settle on a desirable major. As a result, moving to a system where students do not have flexibility in their degree program could run counter to the developmental realities of student life. One potential consequence of moving in the direction of public university efficiency might be a decrease in attendance at state universities and an increase at private institutions.

Recommendations for Policymakers in the United Kingdom

A striking comment made by one of the students in this study was “I don’t want to be skeptical but I’m pretty sure that the universities in Great Britain might be degrading in a way as the funding is going down.” He felt that only a few universities were worth considering in the United Kingdom. He went on to say, “Trinity Cambridge is still up there and a few others, but apart from that the other colleges are losing.” Policymakers in the United Kingdom should closely examine this statement. There is a perception among the student interviewed in this study that the quality of higher education in the United Kingdom has declined. They perceive this through the media reports about the lack of funding offered to the university system in the United Kingdom. They are also inundated with news reports about lecturers threatening to strike because they are dissatisfied with their pay.

The results from this study should serve as a wake up call for the policymakers in the United Kingdom. Students are dissatisfied with the system in the United Kingdom
and believe that they are unable to receive a high quality education. As a result, the students are willing to look elsewhere to obtain the quality of education that they desire. Policymakers in the United Kingdom should consider additional ways to fund the higher education system. If they do not, they may continue to lose students to universities in other countries.

**Recommendations for Universities in the United Kingdom**

This study presents information to policy makers in the United Kingdom by presenting A-level students’ perceptions about higher education in the United Kingdom. While this is a qualitative study, using a small sample of students, the results portend potential concerns for the status and future of U.K. universities. At the very least, the data presented in this study suggest that large-scale, generalizable studies of student needs and satisfaction pertaining to higher education experiences in the U.K. are vitally important. A number of potential concerns related to higher education in the United Kingdom are discussed below.

The results of this study show that some students in the United Kingdom perceive the quality of education in the United Kingdom to be lower than that of universities in the United States. The perception comes as a result of media reports about the lack of funding at United Kingdom universities and lecturer strikes as a resulting from low pay. Although the quality of education may be equivalent to that the United States, this perception could have material consequences, such as hurting enrollment.

Another area of difference that students perceived between U.S. and U.K. higher education was in the area of student life. Participants like the idea of the student life
offered at university campuses in the United States. As a result, they are willing to look at schools in the United States, in part, due to a general quality of life, not simply due to academic program quality. Universities in the United Kingdom should look at universities in the United States and compare and contrast the differences in student life. They should consider implementing some of the university life practices found at schools in the United States.

Recommendations for Family Members

Parents play a major role in helping their children attain postsecondary education. When feasible, they should provide encouragement to their children if their desire is to attend university in the United States. All of the students in this study indicated that their parents were supportive of their interest in undergraduate study in the United States. Without this support, the students probably would not move forward in their interest in studying in the United States. Further, parents should maintain a close relationship with the school. It is important for the family to have a relationship with the careers advisor to be able to learn about university information. Parents should ask the school for important deadlines in the university application process and further learn about the tests required by universities in the United States for undergraduate admission. By working closely with the school, parents can ensure that they and their student understand the process for applying to university in the United States.

Limitations of the Study

There are limitations within any research method. For this study, a qualitative research method was chosen to answer the aforementioned research questions concerning
the experiences influencing British students interest in undergraduate study in the United States. The qualitative research methodology allowed the in-depth questioning “to understand the meaning of participants’ lives in the participants’ own terms” (Janesick, 2000, p. 382). Further, this study reflects the experiences of a select group of students attending sixth schools in England.

A major limitation of qualitative research is that it cannot be generalized to another population. This study focused on the experiences of students at three different schools in England and examines their reasons for considering undergraduate study in the United States. While the results cannot be generalized to another population, there is information that can be learned from the experiences of the participants in this study.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are several areas in which future research would be of interest. The first area that could be of interest is interviewing students from different nationalities who are interested in undergraduate study in the United States. This research could take place at schools in the United Kingdom as well as in other countries. Through my experience in this study, many of the sixth form schools in the United Kingdom have a large international student population. The research from this could provide opportunities to compare and contrast the reasons of the different students from different backgrounds and different cultures. It would allow for us to determine whether the features of U. S. higher education students in the United Kingdom perceive are universal or whether these reasons are specific to students in the United Kingdom.
Another area of future research is to conduct a longitudinal study. Specifically, one could start as this study has started and follow students through the application, acceptance and selection process. The research could go even further and follow the students through their time at university. Specifically, it could follow students who choose to pursue higher education in the United States. It would allow the researcher to examine whether or not they felt they made the right decision. Further it would allow for insight into whether or not the students believe their preconceived notions about studying in the United States were accurate. A longitudinal study can also follow the students to see if they decide to stay in the United States once they have completed their degree or whether they decide to return to the United Kingdom or their country of origin.

Another possibility is to examine the reverse of this phenomenon. In other words, find students in the United States interested in undergraduate study in the United Kingdom. It would be interesting to see why students in the United States are interested in going to the United Kingdom for undergraduate study. These reasons could be compared and contrasted and may highlight some of the best features of higher education in the United Kingdom as well as areas for concern, or at least consideration, in the United States.

While attending College Day, I was impressed by the number of American universities in attendance. Interviewing the admissions professionals who attend such fairs could be a fruitful study. The study could be done from the perspective of understanding the motivations behind why colleges and universities spend time recruiting in the United Kingdom and the types of universities that do so. Further, the experiences
of the admissions professionals in speaking with prospective students could be explored, as could perceptions and even data from the admissions representatives concerning the yield from such activities.

This study focused upon the experiences of the students at three different schools and how these experienced influenced their decision to consider undergraduate study in the United States. Further research could be conducted taking into consideration the psychological development of the students and how this development influences their decision making process.

Finally, another area for future research is to use results from this study and create a quantitative questionnaire. This questionnaire could then be administered to a much larger population at a greater number and variety of schools. This questionnaire could be administered at a wider variety of schools. This would help narrow the results found in this study based upon socio-economic class and other factors.

Giving Back

Fine, Weis, Weseen, and Wong (2000) emphasize the importance of the qualitative researcher “giving back” (p. 124) to the community upon the conclusion of the research. The careers advisors provided the connections necessary to contact the students who participated in this study. The time the students and the careers advisor gave to the study was of their own free will and without any compensation. Qualitative research by its very nature is intrusive with the interviewing and questioning of the participants. It is, therefore, important that the knowledge gained by the researcher in this study be offered back to the community. To this end, the information will be presented to the careers
advisors in the form of an executive summary. It is my hope that the information and insights gained from this research can assist the careers advisors as they assist students through the university selection process.

Final Thoughts

This was an amazing experience to travel to England and interview students. The chance to sit down with these students and hear about their experiences, hopes and dreams provided a special experience. It was especially interesting to hear what the student perceived about undergraduate study in the United States. The students had so many positive things to say about universities in the United States. It was refreshing after hearing all of the negativity that has surrounded education here in the United States. The openness of the students in this study in sharing their experiences has provided a new perspective into the reasons why these students are willing to leave their home country and pursue an undergraduate degree at a university in the United States.

From this experience, my viewpoint of the United Kingdom has broadened. I had the wonderful experience to study in London, England while in law school and that experience was gave me small snapshot of life in the United Kingdom. This research experience further broadened my view. I was immersed further into the culture spending time not only with the students but the careers advisors at the three different schools. I cannot wait to go back and experience even more and see even more of this beautiful country.
REFERENCES


Curtis, P. (2006, January 4) Fees mean fewer will try for university place, careers


Gill, J. Cash flows when academic passion is shared, says philanthropy tsar. *Times Higher Education Supplement,*


Universities UK, Retrieved on August 2, 2008 from, http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/UKHESector/FAQs/Pages/About-HE-Sector-and-Universities.aspx#Q


APPENDIX A: LETTER TO PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS
Dear XXXXX,

I received your name from XXXXXXXX. He believes that you might be able to help me. I am a PhD student at Ohio University in the U.S. I am currently working on my dissertation. For my dissertation, I want to examine why increasing numbers of British students are interested in undergraduate study in the United States. My study is qualitative thus requiring interviews as my means for data collection.

I understand that you are the careers advisor at a school in Cambridge and have several students interested in undergraduate study in the United States. I am contacting you because I was wondering if your students would be willing to participate in a 1 hour interview regarding their reasons for considering undergraduate study in the United States. I will be in London and surrounding vicinity during the last week in September. I am happy to come to your school to conduct the interviews. I appreciate your help and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Bethany Schweitzer, JD
APPENDIX B: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Individual Interview Protocol

1. Where are you attending school and what year are you?  Public or State Run?

2. When did you first decide to attend college and what or who helped you make that decision?

3. What is your anticipated major?

3. What do you plan to do with your degree?

5. Who in your high school, if anyone, helped you with your decision to look at schools in U.S.?
   Probes: Teachers? School Counselor? Principal? Other?

6. Who outside of school, if anyone, helped influenced you to look at schools in U.S.?
   Probes: Family? Friend(s)? Others? EAS? Recruiters?

7. What are the three most important reasons you are considering study in the U.S.?

8. How do you think UG study in U.S. differs from UG study in U.K.? Do you think there is a difference? Why or How?

9. Have you talked with someone from U.S. schools?
   Probes: Recruiters, American students, U.K. students studying in U.S., alumni from your school, anyone else

10. What kind of information did you receive?

11. What schools are you considering? Why?

12. Any specific regions of the U.S.? Why?

13. How will you finance study in the U.S.?
   Probes: Parents? Work?

14. Do you have any family or friends in the U.S.?

15. How long have you been considering study in the U.S.?
APPENDIX C: BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE
BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Please answer the following questions. Feel free to skip any questions that you may feel uncomfortable answering.

Place of Birth _________________________________________
Gender ____________ Sixth Form Graduation Year ___________

Where do you currently attend school? ________________________________

Parents’ educational background (Check the highest level completed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than Secondary School</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School plus sixth form</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education past Secondary</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some University</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some graduate or professional school</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or professional degree</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which one best describes your family living arrangement while in secondary school?

_______ Lived with both parents
_______ Lived with mother only
_______ Lived with father only
_______ Parents were not together, but shared custody
_______ Lived with a relative
_______ Lived in foster care
_______ Lived on own
_______ Other (please describe)_______________________________________

How many brothers and sisters do you have older than you? _______ Younger? _______

How many are attending or attended university? ______________

Where are they attending university? _________________________________

During sixth form, what activities did you participate in?

Ex. Duke of Edinburgh, Sports Teams, School Council, Sixth Form Committee, Youth Group, Music groups, Reading scheme for younger pupils
APPENDIX D: DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH TEAM
Description of Research Team Members

**Researcher: Bethany Schweitzer**

I am a Caucasian female. I am in the process of finishing my doctoral degree in higher education administration at Ohio University. I hold my Juris Doctorate from Capital University Law School. I have worked in university admissions, recruitment and academic advising. I have completed graduate courses in both qualitative and quantitative research.

**Research Team Member:**

The research team member in the current study is a Caucasian female. She holds her Ph.D. from The Ohio State University (OSU) and a full time Licensed Professional School Counselor in Columbus Public Schools, Columbus, Ohio. She has completed courses in both the qualitative and quantitative research series. Her major area is Counselor Education and her cognate area is Educational Leadership.
APPENDIX E: RESEARCH TEAM PLEDGE OF CONFIDENTIALITY
RESEARCH TEAM MEMBER’S
PLEDGE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

As a member of this research team, I understand that I will be provided access to transcriptions of confidential interviews and biographical questionnaires. The information in these documents has been revealed by the research participants in this project who agreed in good faith that their interviews would remain confidential. I understand that as a member of this research team that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentiality agreement and hereby agree not to share the information in the aforementioned documents with anyone except M. Jeanne Reid, the primary researcher of this project, and other members of the research team. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a breach of ethical standards and I pledge not to do so.

Research Team Member Signature_______________________________

Date __________________________
APPENDIX F: CODEBOOK
Characteristics of U.S. Schools
Student’s perceptions on the characteristics of U.S. schools and how these characteristics differed from schools in the United Kingdom.

- Liberal Arts
  - Responses related to the ability to take courses outside of their major area.
- Student Life
  - Responses related to student life found on campuses in the United States.
- Quality of Education
  - Responses related to the perceived quality of education in the United States.
- Areas of Country
  - Responses related to where students are willing to look at universities.

Influences

- Adventurous Spirit
  - Observations and responses illustrating a quality found in the students in this study.
- Family and Friends
  - Responses relating to students friends and family and how they influence their decision to consider undergraduate study in the United States.
- Careers Advisor
  - Responses identifying their careers advisor as having an influence on their decision to consider undergraduate study in the United States.
- Culture
  - Responses identifying culture in the United States as being influential in their decision to consider undergraduate study in the United States.
- Media
  - Responses identifying movies, television and pop culture as influencing their view of life in the United States.
- Visiting United States
  - Responses related to students experience in visiting the United States.

Choosing Schools & Final Decision

- Choosing Schools
  - Responses related to how students go about choosing colleges and universities in the United States.
- Ultimate Decision
  - Responses related to how students will make their ultimate decision on where to attend university.
APPENDIX G: CODE WORKSHEET
## Category Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Category/Subcode</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX H: IRB CONSENT FORM
Title of Research:

Researchers:

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the increased number of secondary age students considering undergraduate study in the United States.

Risks and Discomforts

No risks or discomforts are anticipated.

Benefits

This study seeks to provide better information for admissions professional in dealing with British students seeking undergraduate education in the United States.

Confidentiality and Records

All interviews that are recorded will be stored on the researcher’s laptop and will be password protected. All identifiable information will be removed and participants will be identified via their self chosen pseudonym.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;
  
  [Insert sponsors of the research, if any, who will have access to identifiable data]
Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Bethany Schweitzer, bs346306@ohio.edu, 740-548-4937

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:
  • you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions
  • known risks to you have been explained to your satisfaction.
  • you understand Ohio University has no policy or plan to pay for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this research protocol
  • your participation in this research is given voluntarily
  • you may change your mind and stop participation at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled.

Signature_________________________________________ Date__________

Printed Name______________________________________

Version Date: [insert mm/dd/yy]
APPENDIX I: IRB APPROVAL FORM
The following research study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Ohio University for the period listed below. This review was conducted through an expedited review procedure as defined in the federal regulations as Category(ies): 7

**Project Title:** Coming to America: British Students Reasons for Considering Undergraduate Study in the United States

**Researcher(s):** Bethany Schweitzer

**Faculty Advisor (if applicable):** Peter Mather

**Department:** Counseling and Higher Education

Rebecca Cale

Institutional Review Board

**Approval Date:** 8/18/08

**Expiration Date:** 8/19/09

This approval is valid until expiration date listed above. If you wish to continue beyond expiration date you must submit a periodic review application and obtain approval prior to continuation.

Adverse events must be reported to the IRB promptly, within 5 working days of the occurrence.

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved by the IRB (as an amendment) prior to implementation.