Educational Highlights: During the spring of my sophomore year, I had the opportunity to study for one semester in Havana, Cuba, where I conducted an independent study on Cuba’s festive food traditions. The following year, I studied in Florianopolis, Brazil, where I started the preliminary research for my bachelor’s essay. These study abroad opportunities allowed me to develop proficiency in Spanish and Portuguese and opened my eyes to ways in which I could apply anthropology to make a positive difference in the world.

Research Focus or Project: I compared conceptions of the transition to adulthood of Brazilians and Americans between the ages of 18 and 34 in an attempt to analyze whether there are more differences within cultures or between cultures, and what sorts of factors may explain these differences. Middle class Brazilians typically live with their parents longer than most middle class Americans and don’t usually work until they have finished school; both groups’ conceptions of what is necessary for adulthood accommodate for the economic and cultural factors that account for these different experiences.

Future Plans: After graduation I will work as a bilingual assistant in the Portuguese program at the Middlebury Language School in Vermont for the summer. When that ends in August, I’ll be taking a gap year to study for the GRE, apply to graduate programs, reapply for a Fulbright award to study the Anthropology of Development at the University of Sussex, and find internships or part-time work in development-related NGOs. After a few years of experience of on-the-ground work with development and/or policy making, I’d like to get a PhD in anthropology to be able to research development issues from an anthropological perspective, either for a think tank or a university.