In June of 2015, I spent one month in Havana, Cuba doing ethnographic and archival research for my Master’s thesis in Latin American Studies. During my month in Cuba, I conducted seventeen interviews with various Cuban scholars, authors, artists, film critics, and playwrights who use United States queer theory in their own work. Beyond queer theory, I also discussed the history of Cuban feminism and the impact of new technologies, such as Cuba’s underground file sharing system *el paquete*, on gender norms in Cuba with my informants. In order to access my informants, I utilized past contacts I had made while doing research during my years as an undergraduate at Lewis and Clark College. I also was sponsored by the Instituto Juan Marinello, a cultural research institute in Cuba, and by the Fundación Nicolás Guillén, an arts and humanities foundation located in Cuba’s Artists and Writer’s Union building. Through the Instituto Juan Marinello and the Fundación Nicolás Guillén I was able to meet intellectuals I had not met before. People at these institutions also referred me to their contacts at The University of Havana where I was able to interview a number of gender and cultural studies professors who work with theories of gender and sexuality.

Beyond ethnographic interviews, I also did a great deal of archival research. I began my archival research at the National Library where I did a survey study of the listings at the library to see what kind of foreign queer and feminist texts were available. I found that authors such as Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir were available at the National Library but few Anglophone theorists or authors were
featured who published after 1959. There were a few United States second wave feminist texts in the archive. In the collections of the Casa de Las Americas Library, on the other hand, there were more contemporary holdings by authors such as Judith Butler and bell hooks. Another place I looked was the archives of the La Gaceta de Cuba, which is a literary and cultural magazine similar to The New Yorker, and another social issues magazine called Temas. I found a number of recent issues of these magazines with themes that relate to my research.

I also looked in the libraries of the Instituto Juan Marinello and Fundación Nicolás Guillén for content about gender and sexuality. One thing I learned while doing research is that Cuban scholarship does not group gender and sexuality together in the way that many United States institutions do. Gender seemed to be constructed more as “women’s Studies” and “sexuality studies” was seen as a field that was unrelated to women’s studies. For this reason, many of my informants either had expertise in “gender” or in “sexuality” but usually not the intersection of the two. Another source where I confirmed this division was in Cuban textbooks. I studied a small number of textbooks and syllabi for classes at the University of Havana in order to understand how the fields themselves are organized.

When I was not conducting interviews or rifling through archival material, I was lucky enough to attend a few cultural events in Havana that related to my research. I attended a magazine premiere for Havana’s first queer studies themed magazine Extramuros. The event was held at a bookstore near the University of Havana called Alma Mater that had an upstairs database of foreign theory texts and articles that students could download when they needed source material for their
projects. I contributed new items to the database and documented what was in it for my research. Besides the *Extramuros* premiere, I was quite fortunate to be in Havana for the Biennial, which is a city wide art event that connects New York City artists and Havana artists and hosts a number of special exhibitions. Though my research centers more on tracing an epistemological network of scholars who use a certain kind of ideas, observing a different flow of ideas between New York and Havana provided new insights about the current cultural connections that currently exist between the U.S. and Cuba.

In summary, I now have much more data than I could have possibly imagined about queer theory and gender and sexuality studies in Cuba. I also learned new information about Cuba’s underground internet and how scholars share information in Cuba. The Tinker Foundation grant has provided me with ample resources to conduct research and I am looking forward to fully transcribing, coding, and analyzing the data I collected.