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STUDY ABROAD AND IDENTITY: THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE
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Dr. William Hoffa

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ABSTRACT

Not all students are alike, nor should they be treated as 'one size fits all' in study abroad. Students have different backgrounds, goals, and expectations of what they will gain from an international academic experience. Minority students face different types of challenges in study abroad than their non-minority counterparts.

This paper seeks to answer the question "does study abroad change the identity of African American students?" and examines the challenges of identity and racism and how those two factors may decrease participation rates of African Americans in study abroad. Students from Marygrove College in Detroit, Michigan were surveyed before and after their short-term study abroad programs to determine their motivations for studying abroad, and also if their identity had changed in any way afterward. Students were later interviewed in order to gain deeper knowledge of their experiences and to help understand the African American study abroad experience.

Although their identities had not significantly changed, students were nonetheless forced to confront stereotypes and racial tension inside the United States, and gained a deeper understanding of the world. While their identities remained firmly intact, their self-concept and methods of identity negotiated were challenged, resulting in increased self-awareness.

The need for study abroad in American higher education cannot be understated; in order to ensure the continued success, prosperity, and longevity of the United States, it is imperative that students adopt an international worldview. Study abroad professionals must understand the student holistically in order to better design, implement, and sustain worthwhile study abroad programs so that students receive the most benefit from their sojourns.

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a. Introduction

In this research project and resultant paper, I will share with the international education community what I have learned during my professional internship and research at Marygrove College in Detroit, Michigan. I have had the opportunity to work at a predominantly minority institution and attain a better understanding of issues facing minority students in the context of study abroad. Through research, discussion, interactions and experience I have come to realize that the challenges faced by minority students in study abroad are much different than the challenges faced by their White counterparts.

This research seeks to answer the question "does study abroad change the identities of African American students?" and this was the guiding, main question for the paper. However, during the research process other questions emerged which I wanted to answer and this led to broadening my research narrative. In addition to identity questions, I also asked students various questions on the subjects of: race, culture, racism in the U.S. and abroad, and tolerance. In addition to the question of study abroad and identity, some of the sub-questions that I wanted to answer are:

- Does race play a factor in the decision to study abroad?
- Do the identities of minority students change after their study abroad program?
- Why did these students choose to study abroad?
- How do students construct meaning from their experiences?
- Is a ten-day study abroad program long enough to change attitudes and perceptions?
- Will students' identities be challenged because media and corporate influences typically portray Americans as White?

Minority students face different challenges when attempting to study abroad which professionals may not be aware of, especially if they do not work with minority students on a

regular basis. While my theories had originally focused on identity in motivation for study abroad, I soon realized that other factors were involved and I should examine them as well, because motivation varies greatly among students in different racial and ethnic categories.

Much of the research on study abroad which I have read is typically devoted to student outcomes such as GPA, graduation rates, retention, etc., but it is important to examine motivation as well as outcomes, so that we can effectively counsel students and find a program which would be the most rewarding and beneficial.

When we look at the student holistically, we can help the student to make better decisions regarding which study abroad option is best, prepare for the program, and also help the student reintegrate after reentry to the U.S. On a higher level, once we understand the student as a whole, colleges and universities can develop pre and post-study abroad programs so that the student not only choose a good program, but also makes meaning from his or her study abroad experiences. The reintegration portion of students post-travel is vital to their success; according to Bennett,

> "Recent research suggests that simply sending students on study abroad is not enough, but that providing students with the skills and strategies to get the most out of experiences abroad may be a more effective path towards the desired outcome of greater intercultural competence" (Bennett, n.d., p. 37).

The world is becoming more interconnected, and the future of the United States depends on a motivated, creative, and educated workforce to ensure its survival; the role of study abroad and its impact on the future of the U.S. cannot be understated:

> "Americans must be educated about the realities of the global economy and the commitments of global leadership. Our education policies should emphasize foreign languages, culture, and history, and create more incentives and programs for study abroad. We must also prepare students and workers for those industries and services that will provide the United States a comparative advantage in the global economy in the first part of the twenty-first century" (Hagel, 2004, p. 66).

It is vitally important that college graduates are thinking on a global scale, in order to ensure the future prosperity, security, and existence of the United States. There is much at stake and future generations must rise to the challenge and be willing to adapt and overcome; one way to teach them how to do this is through a well-executed study abroad program.

As international educators, the well-being and success of our students should be at the top of our list of priorities. It is not enough to merely send students on study abroad programs, we must also help them process and analyze their experiences while overseas and upon their return. In order to do this, we must get some idea of how they are impacted beyond the academic framework and delve into the idea of the student as a person and emotional being.

Institutional Background

Marygrove College is a Catholic, private, four-year liberal arts institution located in Detroit, Michigan. It was founded in 1905 by the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) Sisters for the sole purpose of educating women. It first offered two-year degrees, and then eventually bachelors degrees in 1910. Marygrove was an all-female institution until 1970. While the majority of the student body is African American, Marygrove is *not* considered a historically black college or university (HBCU). The College did not accept its first black student until 1938. Today, Marygrove College prides itself as "an Ivy league education…Detroit style," and is committed to issues of social justice and equality, in alignment with the principles of its founding Sisters.

b. literature Review

To help explain the disparity in study abroad motivations of Black and White students, I decided to examine the role of identity in the process of study abroad selection, and outcomes. I

had hypothesized that African American students did not want to study abroad because it would be a negative shock to their identities due to potential marginalization: they feared discrimination overseas and difficulty negotiating their African American identity, resulting in low participation numbers.

For some African Americans, perceived racism is sometimes a deterrent in study abroad. According to Fels (1993, as cited in Brux, 2010), "many African Americans, based on experiences with racism in the United States, harbor apprehensions about racism they will encounter traveling abroad." Whether racism overseas is real or not toward these African American students, their experiences with racism have already hindered their potential for academic progress.

Identity is a construct which is decided and defined by our own selves, but it is constructed by various interactions, circumstances and events, which are all outside of us. We see ourselves through feedback from other people, through their words and behaviors (or lack thereof). Burke and Stets define this by saying "the self is reflexive in that it looks back on itself as an object and categorizes, classifies or names itself in particular ways that contrasts itself with other social categories or classifications; this is the process of *self-categorization*" (n.d., p. 9).

As is often the case, people play many roles in life and belong to different groups and sub-groups; the many layers of self-categorization combined is called "self concept" (Burke & Stets, n.d. p. 10). Since the majority of students surveyed self-categorized as African American, are they strong enough in their identities to face challenges to their own classification of self-concept?

Although they are quite similar, social identity theory and identity theory do differ. According to Burke and Stets, identity theory emphasizes *doing*, while social identity theory

emphasizes *being*" (n.d., p. 3). Identity is somewhat hard to define and is constantly changing throughout our lives. Both theories explain and agree that a person's identity is multi-layered, complex, and is often changing in different social settings. Social Identity Theory states that:

> "The basic idea is that a social category (e.g. nationality, political affiliation, sports team) into which one falls and to which one feels one belongs, provides a definition of who one is in terms of the defining characteristics of the category—a self definition that is part of the self-concept" (Hogg et al, 1995, p. 259).

It is apparent that African Americans define themselves in many ways, but the biggest portion of their identity is linked to their racial identity category. While in the United States this identity concept is accepted and is relatively common (in some regions more than others), this is still a confusing and somewhat new idea to citizens who live outside of the U.S. If students cannot relay their identity to the people who they meet, how will they be impacted? Will the students understand that the rest of the world does not comprehend their self-categorization?

It is important to examine both being and doing in relation to identity and culture. Each of us has not only a group to which we belong, but also a role to play within that group.

> "Social identity theory would emphasize one's *identification* or *association* within a particular racial group, while identity theory would examine the *roles* or *behaviors* persons enact as members of a racial group" (Burke & Stets, n.d. p. 3).

Identity is fluid and changes throughout our whole lives, based upon on our roles and situations. Sénécal sums up nicely how we sort through our changing identities and self-concept, combining both social identity theory and identity theory:

> "The modern world lends us complex identities. The many groups to which we belong have their own gravitational pull and they can become significant forces affecting our orbit…Some of us are pulled more by our sexual orientation than our gender or by our social status than our instinct to behave in a certain way" (2003, p. 62).

Negotiating Identity

In various social settings such as school, the home, work, etc, humans must learn not only who they are, but also who they are in relation to other people; learning our roles is called "identity negotiation," but it is not fully understood *how* humans negotiate their complex identities. "Although previous research on other areas touches on managing social identities in terms of importance, salience, or hierarchy, researchers know very little about that negotiation process" (Ashforth, 2001, as cited in Kreiner, 2006). However that process works, it is quite natural and this negotiation often occurs with little conscious thought; "people comfortably interact with one another, revealing what is appropriate while assessing what information is being given" (Boyd, n.d.).

Identity negotiation is intricate and ongoing. Even within our families or social groups, identities are constantly being maintained and adjusted based on the circumstances at hand:

> "During social interaction, people regularly present themselves while simultaneously reading the presentations of others…fundamentally, social interaction is a negotiation between individuals performing within a particular social context to convey aspects of their identity" (Boyd, n.d.).

Although we choose and define our own identities, we cannot do this without the feedback from others. Society, friends, family, and the media—all of these things define the norms against which we must rate ourselves and others. Even the most individualistic types of people are playing their roles based on positive or negative feedback from those around them. According to Boyd,

> "Self-perception cannot be purely manifested internally. Without society and experience as a basis for reflexivity, there can be no internalized evaluation (Giddens 1991: 52-53, as cited in Boyd, n.d.).

American Cultural Identity

As international educators, we promote and encourage study abroad because it stretches students' personal, academic, social and professional frameworks and causes them to question the world around them. It opens their minds and is typically "life changing;" today, more data and research is coming out to support the academic and personal benefits of study abroad. While these findings are significant, according to Dolby, "more theoretical work on the relationship between study abroad and identity is underdeveloped" (2007, p. 144).

Culture is defined on many different levels, i.e. personal, regional, racial, and of course, national. According to Dolby, "while the 'United States,' as a political entity, controls its borders and domestic and foreign state policy, 'America' as a concept is much more variable and dispersed" (2004). What exactly does it mean to be American or African-American abroad? How does this identity change once a student has experienced a study abroad program?

During their sojourns, students often find that American corporate culture has already permeated their host destination. While traveling into any developed, industrialized country, signs of American economic dominance surround students: McDonald's restaurants, American pop music, slang, pop culture, and clothing stores. The type of student who studies abroad typically does so in order to experience and live in a new culture, yet instead seems to find more of what was left back home.

Because of the popularity of American movies and TV shows, which typically portray Americans as White, how do African American students deal with this assumption? Could this pre-conceived notion of what America is change how students view their own identities? Part of Dolby's research on study abroad and identity discusses this:

"Early in their stays, the American students began to realize that although they had given little thought to their national identities, others have. For many of them, this was a frustrating experience, as they confronted the way that the image of 'America' was constructed and circulated outside of its borders" (Dolby, 2004).

Once again, I would like to know how students feel about the concept that their identity has been 'constructed' by others outside of the United States. Do they feel they have something to live up to, or do they have to defend their identity to people who they meet?

Heritage-Seeking Students in the African-American context

Although Marygrove College does not offer any programs specifically for "heritage-seeking" students, it is important to briefly discuss them, as this type of behavior could be a reason for minority students to choose or decline study abroad. If the student is heritage-seeking, the advisor must counsel the student so he understands his expectations even before leaving the U.S.

Beatrice Szeleky (1998) defines heritage-seeking in study abroad as "selecting a study abroad venue because of family background—national, religious, cultural, or ethnic" (as cited in Comp 2008, p. 30). According to Comp, "Many minority students, either consciously or subconsciously, choose overseas study destinations based on their own identity, nationality, and/ or ethnicity" (Comp, 2008, p. 29).

In her study of Irish-American students who studied abroad in Ireland, Jewett notes that: "[students] expressed diasporic stances most closely associated with a 'homeland orientation' in which a 'real or imagined 'homeland'" serves as an "authoritative source of value, identity and loyalty...yet they had to negotiate resistance to their ethnic claims *within* 'the homeland' in different ways" (Brubaker, 2005, p. 5, as cited in Jewett, 2010, p. 650). It is also important to

note the possibility that African American students who travel to Africa for a study abroad sojourn may expect to be welcomed by locals, when in fact they are not:

> "Although minority students may share the same skin color and other features with the citizens of the host country, they are often viewed as simply Americans and are not accepted as readily as some of their other peers (Doan, 2002; Ganz and Sideli, 2002; Morgan, Mwegelo, & Turner, 2002; Rubin, 2004; Van Der Meid, 2003, as cited in Comp, 2008, p. 31).

Jewett also reports the same results when she researched Irish American heritage-seeking students in Ireland. One student recollects her encounter with a local who told her: "you're not Irish...cause you're not from here...you're American. It [Irish heritage] doesn't count" (Jewett, 2010, p. 649).

Thus, if an African American student is expecting to be welcomed back to the "homeland," it is good practice to advise the student of potential letdown when he or she is trying to assimilate into the new country. While Szeleky states that "heritage-seeking behavior is most common among Korean American students" (Comp, 2008, p. 30), Alex Neff (2001) also reports that "approximately 23% of participants studying abroad in Africa are African Americans despite the fact that only 3.4% of the total study abroad population in 2003/2004 were African American" (Neff, as cited in Comp, 2008, p. 31).

Minorities and the Need for Study Abroad

My research was also motivated by statistics which I had discovered while conducting the literature review. I was amazed at the effect which study abroad had on academic outcomes of African American students, which made me question the lack of minority participation: nationally, nonwhite students remain underrepresented in study abroad. According to the latest data, from the Institute of International Education's Open Doors survey, "81.8% of Americans

studying abroad in 2007-8 were White" (Redden, 2010). If the United States is to remain competitive in the world, students of all colors and races must be encouraged to study abroad.

Although I do not want to focus on academic outcomes, one recent research project in particular has been useful in assessing the impacts of study abroad across fields of both gender and race. The GLOSSARI (Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative) Project involving over 30,000 students over five years from the University of Georgia System has particular insight into minorities and study abroad. Among the findings, of the recent GLOSSARI Project (as explained in Global Ed Research):

- Four-year graduation rate was 49.6% for study abroad students, compared to 42.1% for students in the control group (and 24% for students in the University System of Georgia as a whole). Six-year rates were 88.7% for study abroad participants and 83.4% for students in the control group (and 49.3% system-wide).

- The effect held across various subgroups of students divided by gender, race and SAT score, but was particularly pronounced for certain groups — most dramatically, four-year graduation rates for African-Americans who'd studied abroad were 31% higher than for African-American students in the control group.

- Four-year graduation rates for other nonwhite students who'd studied abroad were 18% higher than for their peers in the control group.

Diversifying study abroad by including more minority students benefits all who participate. According to Cressy (2005, p.1, as cited in Brux, 2010), "through interactions between and among diverse groups of U.S. Americans, students can help one another progress in their various stages of identity development" and this experience "fosters learning how to work more effectively with and in with diverse groups and that students separated from their usual environment will ask new and/ or deeper questions about themselves and their societies" (Cressy, 2001, as cited in Brux, 2010).

White Privilege and the Invisible Advantage

The existence of White privilege is difficult to recognize among those who have been most blessed by and benefited from it—Whites. White racial identity is an area largely ignored by Whites themselves (even in academic research) as they have almost no consciousness of it due to the fact that it is a part of their daily lives. When questioned about White privilege, "White students tend to shut down when issues of race and privilege are introduced to classroom and cocurricular contexts" (Ortiz and Rhoads, 2000, p. 84).

While many scholars agree that race is "largely a social construction—meaning that little biological basis exists for grouping people by racial categories" (Frankenberg, 1993, 1994, 1997; Giroux, 1997, Hooks, 1992, as cited in Ortiz and Rhoads, 2000 p. 86), this deconstruction of race by scholars does not change its importance nor the significant role which it plays in American society. Ortiz and Rhoads readily admit that "as a social construction, race has significant effects in terms of defining privilege and nonprivilege" (2000). As Leonardo explains, "racial privilege is the notion that white subjects accrue advantages by virtue of being constructed as Whites" (2004).

White privilege is extremely difficult to understand by those who benefit most from it; when trying to comprehend White privilege, it is best to think about it from the perspective of those who do not have it:

> "Each oppressed group in the United States is positioned in a particular and distinct relationship to white men, and each form of subordination is shaped by this relational position" (Hurtado, 1989, p. 833).

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When the majority of a group (Whites) compares all others to itself, the others are bound to fall short. Referring back to Social Identity Theory, Tajfel and Turner (1986) argue that:

> "Social groups are an important basis of self-definition and the ingroup's position in the social structure can have important affective consequences (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002, as cited in Branscombe et al, 2006, p. 203).

While race itself may be a completely social construct and have no genetic basis, its existence and prevalence in American society cannot be denied; thus "race is thus both unreal and a seeming reality" (Roediger, 1994, p. 6, as cited in Ortiz and Rhoads, p. 81). It is imperative that the study abroad advisor, if he or she is White, understands the power afforded to him through white privilege, and how it will play a role when counseling minority students on study abroad options. It is also important to understand White privilege in the context of study abroad motivation; if the student has faced discrimination in the U.S., then he may fear racism overseas as well.

c. Research/ Practitioner Inquiry Design

When I counseled students on study abroad options during my time at Marygrove College in Detroit, Michigan, I noticed that the African American students seemed much less interested in study abroad, often saying "that's not for me" or "I can't do that," while these negative comments were seldom heard among the White students. Since I had not thought of race and study abroad before, I decided to do more research and see what was really happening.

Based on some discussions I had with African American students in the Fall of 2012, I had theorized that minority students would have a difficult time negotiating their African American identities, because that particular racial concept can be difficult for foreigners to understand (according to students who had traveled to China the previous year on a short-term

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Travel Seminar), and that was the reason which they were choosing to not study abroad. Additionally, I had theorized that their identities would change after a study abroad experience.

After thinking about this topic and doing some initial research, I decided to pursue this further as a research project. As an international education professional, it is important to know how to effectively counsel students who are interested in study abroad, and to recognize potential issues before they arise. Prior to working at Marygrove, I had never thought much about racism in study abroad, nor the different motives minority students have in choosing or declining an overseas experience.

My original theory was that African American students would face adverse identity challenges when traveling on study abroad programs to France, Jamaica, or Brazil, and that they had probably heard from their peers or through gossip about a student or two who had a bad experience overseas. I had also hypothesized that students traveling to France in particular would feel discriminated against in Paris (because it is still very much a White city) and students would find themselves playing the role of minority once again.

Marygrove College provided me an opportunity to find out if my theories were true or not; in the Spring of 2013, 31 students traveled to various locations (France, Brazil, Jamaica), for ten days. I was given the chance to survey them before and after their trips, and to interview several of them individually and ask questions pertaining to race, identity, and discrimination. I surveyed all 31 of the students before their travels using a pre-departure survey, and of those students I surveyed 17 using a post-travel survey when they returned. Out of those 17 students, I personally interviewed seven.

Travel Seminars (Short-term, Faculty-led study abroad programs)

For Spring Break 2013, Marygrove College offered three short-term, faculty-led study

abroad programs to France, Brazil, and Jamaica, aptly named "Travel Seminars." These

programs are intensive, academic, fast-paced, and include class time before and after the travel

portions of the course; this year, 31 students participated. Each year, Marygrove College hosts 3-

5 Travel Seminars in various locations, all different from the previous year. Students traveled

this year to: Jamaica (Kingston and Montego Bay), Brazil (Rio and Salvador), and France (Paris

metropolitan region). While each program had a different focus each one of them was worth

three credit hours and was academic in nature. The class time before and after the travel portions

include cultural topics specific to that country, and students read literature, wrote papers, and

gave presentations on varying topics pertaining to each location. Each one is described below:

- **France- (February 28- March 9):** Students spent all of their time in the metropolitan Paris region, only traveling outside the city to places like Versailles and Giverny, which are easily accessible by the regional train. For this Travel Seminar, the theme was "ideas that changed the world," based on a book of the same name, written by Felipe Fernandez-Armesto. During the weekly classes which met before the trip, students talked about arts, history, literature and language; this course was listed as a humanities credit. While in Paris students visited monuments, wrote in their journals, and had walking tours of various parts of the city. Upon their return to the U.S., students had a final presentation to do about a famous French person or another approved topic.

- **Jamaica- (February 28- March 8):** This program was touted as a service-learning trip, aimed mostly at education majors but open to anyone. Students split their time between Kingston and Montego Bay, volunteering in a primary school reading program, and also learning about the higher education system of Jamaica by visiting the University of the West Indies. Students had class before the trip, where they learned about educational leadership, and advocacy in education throughout the world. After the trip, students had a final paper on a pre-approved research topic.

- **Brazil- (February 28-March 9):** The Travel Seminar was listed as a political economics course, led and designed by Marygrove history faculty members. Students split their time between Rio and Salvador, two very different cities. Students examined Brazil as an emerging economy, along with its history of slavery and as a former Portuguese Colony.

Upon returning to the U.S., students had both an exam and a presentation to give to the rest of the class, based on a pre-approved topic.

It is worth mentioning that the overwhelming majority of students who traveled to Brazil, France, and Jamaica considered themselves Black or African American (94% overall, 88% of those who completed both surveys). I had wondered if students were seeking "people who look like them" subconsciously, and chose to go to warmer climates where the natives had darker skin. Incidentally, Marygrove College is also offered a Travel Seminar to New Zealand (a nation with mostly White citizens) in May of 2013, and all of the students who attended are White.

I chose to use both the survey and personal interview as research instruments for this project. Before the Marygrove students traveled abroad, they filled out a survey of 13 questions (see Appendix A). Once the students returned I surveyed 17 of them with an eight-question post-travel survey (see Appendix B), and in addition to that I interviewed seven of them in a one-on-one interview. After I received completed surveys, I asked for volunteers who would like to meet with me to discuss the topics further at a later date.

The survey provided me not only raw data, but also insight as to what students were thinking, so I could establish a base for the interviews. I chose to do the interviews because they were a chance for the students to do the talking; the interviews were a plethora of information and insight. I tried to never interrupt the student, instead I opted to gently guide the conversation when it got off track. All students who were surveyed and interviewed signed informed consent forms, letting them know that they would not be penalized if they chose not to participate in the study and that their information was kept confidential and private.

The type of research which was carried out for this project is deemed "qualitative," described by Denzin and Lincoln as:

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"The word *qualitative* implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. . . They seek answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning" (2003, as cited in Jewett, 2008, p. 639).

My goal was to learn how students processed their experiences and how they assigned meaning to these new experiences when compared to their old ones. By using various identity theories and research methods, I wanted to know how the study abroad experience would play out for African American students in particular.

On the pre-departure surveys, students were asked the following questions:

1. Are you a full-time Marygrove student? (please circle one) **Yes   No**

2. How do you define your own racial identity within America? (ie, Asian-American, White, Latino, Hispanic, etc)?

3. Do you consider yourself culturally aware/sensitive to other cultures? (Please circle one):
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

4. Have you ever traveled outside of the U.S. before this trip? **YES NO** If so, Where?

5. Why did you pick this particular destination of study (besides cost)?

6. Have you ever felt alienated/ discriminated against inside the U.S. due to your skin color or cultural habits?

7. Do you think racism can exist in other countries? (Please circle one):
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

8. What types of obstacles did you face in attempting to study abroad? Please circle all which apply:
   Finances, family disapproval, peer disapproval, Fear
   Other (please define):_____

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, (with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest), Do you feel confident in your identity?
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

10. On a scale of 1 to 5, (with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest), Do you see yourself as a generally confident person?
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

11. What type of family did you grow up in? (ie, single mother, dual parent, raised by grandparents)

12. Did you attend Detroit Public schools for all or most of your kindergarten through high school years? Please circle one: **Yes   No**

13. Have you ever had to defend your identity or culture to another person who seemed very critical of your own identity? **Yes   No**

For the post-travel survey, students were asked the following questions:

1. Do you feel that your identity or your view of yourself has changed in any way?
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

2. Do you see culture in a different way now that you have studied overseas?
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

3. Based on your race or skin color, did you ever feel ostracized or excluded during your study abroad program?
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

4. Did you find any instances of racism during your study abroad program?
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

5. Did you feel that other people from other countries were more accepting of you than people in the United States?
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

6. Do you feel more open to different types of cultures now that you have traveled overseas?
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

7. Did you observe any type of racism toward other people than yourself while you were overseas?
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

8. Are there any memorable (negative or positive) experiences which you had overseas which pertain to race or identity which you could briefly describe?

Limitations

There are obvious limits in this type of research, as students assessed themselves on issues such as cultural sensitivity and open-mindedness. Since students are self-reporting, it is very easy for them to assume they are open-minded when in truth, they are not. I am also aware that if I do not know the students on a personal level, they may not have felt comfortable talking to me during the interviews.

While I would have preferred a larger sample size, it was just not possible, and because there were some non-traditional students on these journeys, their ages and life experiences may have resulted in skewed data. The age gap for this group was very wide; for the programs as a whole, the youngest student was 18 and the oldest was 71. Of those who returned surveys, the youngest was 18 and the oldest was 56.

Ten days is a short period of time, and to accurately assess changes in identity associated with study abroad, it would be necessary to study students on a longer program. If students had spent a semester or year in a foreign country, they would have made connections with locals on a much deeper level and would have had more challenges to their identities, self-concept, and identity negotiation.

There were many variables in this study, and no two students were the same. While can just label them as "minority students," each had different upbringings, experiences with racism, and the age gap was very wide. I am hypothesizing that the older students had an easier time overseas because they were more comfortable negotiating their identities, due to the fact that they had more life experience.

Tracking down students was sometimes difficult. They were busy, did not reply to emails, etc. While the interviews were wonderful, it was difficult to work around their schedules.

Although I had distributed post-travel surveys to 30 students, I only received 17 in return, which is a relatively small sample; I believe that a larger sample would have given better data.

Another drawback to the interviews and which is important to note, is that students were still processing their experiences and were sometimes using me as a sounding board in order to decompress. Marygrove does not have any type of re-entry program for students and it would be useful for the students to have some help processing and verbalizing what they learned and experienced while overseas, even if they had gone over for only ten days. I noticed that the older students (30 or older) had an easier time explaining their feelings during the interviews than the younger ones.

Another limitation which must be recognized is White privilege in the interview process. As a White woman, I do not think about racism and White privilege much as the African Americans who I interviewed. I tried very hard to not bring my own viewpoints into the interview and be respectful of the interviewees.

I recognize completely that there may have been a power differential between the people I interviewed and myself. I chose to portray myself as a neutral party and show them that I am truly interested in the motivations and experiences in the minorities of study abroad. During all of the interviews, there was only one moment when I did feel that my race was a minor issue, but I quickly clarified to the student that I was aware of my White privilege and the power afforded to it, but that I am doing this research because it is important to the field of International Education.

While I told the students that they could refuse to answer any questions which made them feel uncomfortable, students were overall very open with me and tried to answer my questions as best as they could. I tried to be respectful and let them do the majority of the talking. There was

only one instance with a student, an African American male, who chose not to share his personal experiences of racism in the U.S. with me.

d. Presentation and Analysis of Data

Pre-Departure Surveys

The pre-departure surveys revealed very interesting statistics. The purpose of this survey was to get an idea into students' upbringings, experiences with racial discrimination in the U.S., their racial category, and also to get a sense of who they were and how confident they felt in their identities. For each question, students quantified their responses on a 1-5 scale with one being low and five being high, for a total of 13 questions (for complete survey, please see Appendix A).

Over half of the students (13/17) had already traveled outside of the U.S. prior to this journey; these travels could have already prepared the students for the challenges of being in a new place, because it was not their first time in a foreign culture. Obviously, this will vary greatly, because even if the students had traveled previously, they may not have interacted much at all with the locals. In the words of Bennett, "the mere experience of being in another culture, even of being immersed in another culture, does not necessarily translate into either specific knowledge about that culture or transferable principles about intercultural relations" (Bennett, n.d., p.2).

On the pre-departure surveys I asked the students to identify their ethnic heritage, instead of me labeling them as one race or another. I chose to do this because their racial makeup is their own knowledge, something which I should not be labeling and also because racially categorizing people is complex. All but two students (15/17) self-identified as African American. Of the other

two students, one self-identified as White, while the other declined to give one label to her race, as she described herself as a mix of several races.

Before departing on their sojourns, none of the students cited fear of racial discrimination as a reason for not studying abroad. The top concerns for them which would have limited their participation were family concerns (12/17) and financial constraints (4/17). Students had space to fill in another reason to not study abroad, but none of the respondents cited racism as a potential limiting factor; this is interesting because it did later emerge as a limitation later on in the interviews.

I also asked students about their confidence and how strong they were in their identities. Not surprising, the younger (under 30) students tended to feel less confident in their identities, as they circled 'neutral' or 'disagree' on the surveys when asked if they had a strong sense of identity. The older (over 30) students were much more confident in their identities and almost always circled "agree" or "strongly agree" when asked if they were confident in their identities. I originally thought that confidence may play a role in how students negotiate their identities, but this did not impact the results.

I had also wanted to know if students felt any threats to their identities during their lives inside the U.S. Over half of the students (9/17) stated that they *did* have to defend their culture and/or identity to someone who did not understand it at least once in their lifetimes. This was interesting to me, because I myself have never had to do this and I was surprised that the number was so high, even among the younger students.

Since Detroit Public Schools (DPS) has been labeled "arguably the worst urban school district in the country" by Education Secretary Arne Duncan (Oosting, 2010), I had thought that a poor public education would have made students more closed-minded and shaky in their

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identity. Regardless of their status as a DPS graduate, or their upbringing (6/17 students grew up in a single parent household), this did not impact the results either.

When asked if they were sensitive to other cultures, nine students circled "agree," six students circled "strongly agree," one circled "strongly disagree," and another circled "neutral." This self-assessment of sensitivity to other cultures did not seem to follow a racial or age pattern, and students could have possibly overstated their true threshold for cultural sensitivity.

Post-travel Surveys

After students had returned from their respective trips, I gave them almost two weeks to settle back into American life and take some time on their own to process their experiences. For the post-travel surveys, I wanted to know specifically if their identities had changed in any way, and if they had experienced any type of racism while overseas. I sent the post-travel survey to all students via email and I also handed out hard copies on campus, when I could locate the students in person. Since classes did not meet regularly or had been canceled, it was sometimes difficult to the students and distribute the post arrival surveys (although I did email the post-travel survey to all of the students). Of the 31 students, I received 17 completed surveys, for a completion total of 55%.

The survey contained eight questions about students' experiences overseas, as they pertained to race, identity and culture. For this part of the research I wanted to see how they had been treated overseas and to get them thinking comparatively about their experiences overseas and in the United States (for a complete survey, please see Appendix B).

The post-travel surveys also yielded interesting results. The overwhelming majority said that they see culture in a different way after their sojourns (15/17 reporting strongly agree or

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agree). Only two students said that they did not see culture in a new way, circling disagree or neutral (one each).

As for seeing themselves differently, a Travel Seminar has made students view themselves in a different way now (11/17 circled strongly agree or agree), but there are still students who felt neutral (4/17), and a few who disagreed and do *not* see themselves in a different way (2/17). The reason for the neutrality or unchanging views of themselves could be due to the fact that the program was less than two weeks, or because of the fact that the students never really had to assimilate in the host culture. While they were given many chances to interact with locals, much of the interaction was with service industry personnel, such as waiters, cab drivers, etc; the students never formed relationships or made any friends with the local nationals. If they had time to really sit down and discuss serious issues with the people who they met, their image of themselves could have been changed.

The post-travel survey also revealed that students felt absolutely no racial discrimination overseas. For 100% of completed post-travel surveys, none of the students felt that they were judged on their racial or ethnic makeup. This was the most surprising to me, because it essentially negated my theories about potential racial discrimination overseas. In fact, several of the students wrote on their post-travel surveys that they felt "welcomed" and "not judged on my race."

Interview Responses of Students

While the surveys are a useful method to gather quantitative data and raw numbers, the interviews are the more personal and a better way to gain deeper insight into what the students are thinking and feeling. The raw data I gathered on the surveys helped me initially draw some

conclusions and gave me an idea of what I wanted to ask students during the interview process. I interviewed a total of seven students (three female, four male) at various locations on campus and in my office. Interviews lasted from 20 to 60 minutes.

During the interviews, I thanked each student for coming to talk to me. I had looked over each of their surveys and asked them basically to go more in-depth. My questions for the interviews were:

- Did you experience any type of racism while you were overseas?
- Have you experienced racial discrimination while living in the U.S.?
- Where have you lived in the U.S.?
- Did study abroad change your identity in any way?
- Did you feel sad or frustrated at having to come back to the U.S. and experience this racism all over again?
- What is the largest component of your identity?
- Do you believe that racial relations inside the U.S. can ever change?
- Is there anything else which you would like to add?

The students were very interesting to talk to, and race and racial discrimination became big factors as to why they chose not to study abroad, which aligns itself to previous work in this area: "In previous studies on African Americans, one of the biggest worries reported by students wanting to study abroad was the fear of discrimination in the foreign country" (Vandermied, n.d., p.97). While at first students did not cite racism as one of their limitations of studying abroad on the pre-departure survey, during the interviews, it emerged as a limiting factor for 4 out of 7 students. This could be because racism overseas was a subconscious thought, or because they had not thought in-depth about limiting reasons.

The interviews were compelling; all of the students had very heartbreaking and cruel stories of their experiences in the U.S. Racial discrimination against African Americans has greatly shaped their lives; the interviews allowed me to learn their views on racism, identity, and life as a minority. Regardless of age or levels of confidence, all students said that being African

American was a large component of their identity, and three of the students even stated that it was the largest component of their identity.

Among the stories of racism encountered in the U.S., several of them struck me as particularly heinous and I have shared them here. One of the stories shared with me was by Darius, a junior who traveled to Brazil. While visiting his family in Georgia as a child, he and his family went to a public pool to find relief from the summer heat. When they arrived at the pool, it was immediately apparent they were the only African Americans there; once he and his family members actually got into the water, all of the Whites got out of the pool. He explained to me that he struggled for years to understand why this had happened to him and what it meant.

A non-traditional student shared with me the story of her time growing up in the Southern United States (a place where several students felt was "more racist" than the Northern United States), while playing at a friend's house as a young girl. The mother of the (White) friend said to her "you have to leave…you cannot play here, you are Black."

One recurring theme from students is when they are near Whites, walking down the street, at the airport, or in any other of public spaces where there are Whites and African Americans. Several students claimed that white women "hold tightly to their purses" and even avoid walking near the African Americans, in fear of being robbed. This story was heard from the majority of students I interviewed. One of the students, Rose, laughed at this crude behavior, confidently stating "what do they [Whites] have that I would want?"

Students' responses to both the surveys and interview questions about their experiences were interesting and enlightening. "I Feel like the kids took to us well, because I looked like them" stated Gloria, a student who studied in Jamaica and volunteered at a local school.

Anzelaise, a junior, stated that her time in Paris was a positive experience because "they just wanted to know what country I was from, because there are so many different cultures and races in Paris…they treated me the same." Unable to completely articulate her thoughts, an African American senior stated quite simply that "America's racism is different from others."

Darius stated that "they [the Brazilians] weren't all so accepting of Americans, but they embraced us as Africans." Eric, an African American Junior, stated bluntly during his interview that in Brazil, people are not judged on their race, that everyone is the same: "there is no Black and White [race]."

The students are remarkable in the fact that they are extremely resilient to the way they are treated in American society. Many of the students claimed that they are "used to it" and that they "pity people who think like that." I had actually thought that they would be more resentful to mainstream society which ostracizes them, but during the interviews they did not harbor resentment toward any particular group of people, nor American society as a whole. Many of them "missed home [the U.S.]" although they faced many hardships here. The majority of the students interviewed volunteered the information that they felt more American and or/ more patriotic after their sojourns.

Two students also remarked during the interviews that they think Whites have a harder time traveling and studying abroad. When questioned about this, they stated that because of America's two unpopular wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, because the rest of the world sees the U.S. as predominantly White; thus it is the Whites who are responsible for bad U.S. foreign policy.

Chasity, a non-traditional student, explains that "as a nation…we're ok with being in denial about racism." She explained to me that during her trip to Paris there was not even one

moment of racial discrimination and that she longs to go back to Paris because it is there where she could "be treated like a human being."

Interestingly, several of the students admitted during the interviews that they were not previously open to other cultures in the U.S. before their study abroad programs. While this is a typical reaction to study abroad, they had essentially admitted to me that they do not interact with other races in Detroit, although Detroit does have a large population of Mexicans, Jews, Whites, Middle Easterners, and various ethnic immigrants. This was interesting to me on a personal level, because I grew up in a small farming town which was all White and I had not interacted with a Black person until I was in college. Their admissions of lack of interaction with Whites were the reverse of my experiences, yet very similar; this helped me to understand their thinking a little bit more. Chasity, a non-traditional student said that because of study abroad (and with which I agree), "I want to be around other races."

It is also important to note that for all of the students interviewed, the study abroad experience was enlightening and liberating for them. For several students, it was the first time they were in a society where they were *not* judged on the color of their skin. Although the Irish American heritage-seeking students which Jewett (2010) studied were dismayed at being called "American" while in Ireland, the Marygrove students felt that the word American was equalizing and freeing. They embraced the term American because it was not related to race or skin color.

Once again, it is vitally important that we learn about the student as a whole and consider his or her experiences in the United States before recommending a program. Students will react differently to study abroad based on their backgrounds, and their motivations and fears must be taken into account.

e. Discussion

Conclusions

As far as study abroad negating the identity of African Americans, well, it just did not happen. The natives with whom students interacted did not pay much attention to the students' particular race, and in several interviews, students revealed that they "just felt American" while they were overseas. I do believe that if the programs were longer, students would have to negotiate this part of their self-concept/identity, but for these ten-day programs it was a non-issue.

To answer my own question, "does study abroad change the identities of African American students" the answer is firmly no. While it does not change their identities and they are still firmly rooted in their racial self-categorization (African American), they must instead learn how to negotiate their identity in ways that their white peers do not have to, but it is quite possible that their self-concept has been altered on a much deeper level. After a study abroad experience, they have become better versions of themselves, so layers of their self-concept has been impacted, but not their identity as a whole.

During the interviews, 100% of respondents reported that they were more accepted overseas than they were in the United States; that is to say, they felt no discrimination based on race or ethnicity. This also means that my earlier assumptions were false, especially concerning the Travel Seminar to Paris, because 100% of completed surveys reported Parisians as being very open to students (not judged on their race). None of the students I surveyed and interviewed claimed any type of racial tension while they were in Paris, Brazil, or Jamaica.

Regardless of confidence levels, prior travel experience, upbringing, age, racial discrimination, etc, students' identities were not challenged during the ten-day study abroad period. Although the majority of students reported seeing themselves differently after study abroad, they still reported little change in identity overall. Once again this suggests that their *self-concept* has been altered, but not their *identity*.

None of the students who I interviewed had their identities challenged to a point where they had become a new person. Although the majority of the students had faced racial discrimination during their lives in the U.S. (per the surveys), none of them reported that they felt like a "new person" but instead "a better version of myself," according to one student. All of the responses during the interviews reinforced the notion that my theory was wrong and that their identities were not negatively impacted.

Remarkably, even for the younger students, their identities remained intact. Although they had experienced terrible hardship in the U.S. due to the color of their skin, they claimed that they were not bitter, but instead better. Ryan, an African American junior who went to Brazil said that: "I am essentially the same person, I just have a different outlook. Racism comes from having a closed mind…there was no challenge to the aspect of my African American identity." Rose, a non-traditional student who studied previously in China and this year in Brazil, said that she is now a "more well-versed Rose….my identity has not changed."

Although all students had stories of racial discrimination in the U.S., all of those interviewed said that they felt "more American" because of their study abroad experience, which confirms the research of Jewett and Comp. This was interesting, because they were essentially becoming part of the group which had oppressed them. During the interviews, I asked students if they felt sad to be leaving the countries which they visited and returning to a nation which was

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not always so friendly to them. Amazingly, only two students of the seven interviewed reported any sadness returning home and facing racism; the other five students were actually glad to return home to their families, friends and lives in the United States.

Although the sample size was small, based on survey results and interviews, I am theorizing now that African American students felt very comfortable overseas and did not have to negotiate their identity in the same manner as they did in the United States. The Travel Seminars *did not change their identities, only the way they negotiated their identities; their self-concept was also positively impacted*. Because the students felt welcomed and embraced, the racial component of their identity became a non-issue for them. Since none of the students reported racial discrimination during the travel seminars, students did not have to react by building their identity. Chasity, a student who traveled to Paris stated beautifully and perfectly that she "felt more American…my race wasn't connected to it [identity]."

During the interview process, I discovered that none of the students had to claim that they were African American when interacting with foreign nationals. Instead, they normally said "I am from the United States" when asked about their cultural background, or they simply stated "I am American." In their own words, the people with whom they spoke did not really seem to care about their racial makeup; because the racial component of their self-concept was not challenged, they felt no need to defend themselves by stating that they were African American.

Because students reported that they felt no racial discrimination, their identities were not challenged and they felt no need to acknowledge their differences. The openness of the people whom they met could have been due to the fact that their interactions were somewhat superficial; students participating in Travel Seminars never really had time to make friends or become fully immersed in the culture for an extended period of time. If students actually lived in the host

country and got to know some of the locals on a deeper level, they may have found that not all of them would have been so welcoming.

I also had wondered if American corporate culture would have dismayed the students, as they were going abroad to get away from their American identity and immerse themselves in a new culture, but during the interviews, students claimed that they did not feel any impact by American corporate culture. Regardless of their status as a Detroit Public Schools (DPS) graduate, or their upbringing (single or dual-parent household), students still reported no change in identity.

I do believe that ten days was enough time to open up the minds of the students; it was a nice stepping stone which forced them to think about identity, race, and culture. For the majority of the students, this was their first time outside of the U.S., and it really opened their eyes to a world previously unknown to them.

Due to racial discrimination in the U.S. (and lack thereof overseas), African American students felt very liberated and welcomed during the Travel Seminars, and they did not have to defend their identity. White students who have never experienced racial discrimination do not have the same fears as minority students do, and while they are in a particular country, do not have another identity (African American) to contend with.

Although a longer program probably would have given students more experiences and time to reflect, ten days was, for many of them, a nice introduction to the world outside of the U.S. Referring back to social identity theory, Boyd writes that the social component of identity

> "Is constantly being adjusted depending on the context of a particular environment.
> People present themselves differently in particular situations, not because they are hiding
> aspects of themselves, but because some behaviors are more appropriate in one context

than another. Based on contextual cues, an individual determines what acceptable behavior is and what aspects of their identity they should perform" (Boyd, n.d.).

Based on their acceptance by Brazilians, Jamaicans, and Parisians, the students felt no need to play the role of African American, as that identity was put on the back burner and not needed in these new circumstances due to their assimilation among the locals. From the social feedback they received from locals while on their programs, they felt the need only to negotiate the American part of their identity, and the African American identity rarely, if ever, showed up.

Practical Applicability

In the United States, African Americans are still considered a minority population. When faced with discrimination, white privilege and exclusion from the majority White population, Black Americans have come to self-categorize as themselves as African American, a concept which may be misunderstood while they travel overseas. My initial theory about study abroad changing the identity of African American students was wrong and focused on the post-study abroad experience, but I have discovered that the time before the study abroad is just as important. The selection of the study abroad geographic region and racial make-up of that region can impact the student's experience, and should be discussed before the program begins.

Understanding the complexities of identity formation, negotiation, and maintenance are difficult enough, but for undergraduates, it may be even more difficult to do so, due to the fact that their young identities are still being negotiated and formed. It is highly recommended that study abroad advisors and institutions consider some type of re-entry program in order to facilitate the understanding of the study abroad experience in undergraduate students. Dolby (2007) suggests that "students' experiences would be stronger if "structured, academic reentry

programs engaged with the complicated issues of nation, power, and identity that arise for American undergraduates abroad" (p. 153, as cited in Jewett, 2008, p. 652).

This research support previous studies done on minority students and their motives for studying abroad (see Vand Der Meid, Jewett, Comp, Redden, & Salisbury et al). When counseling potential study abroad candidates, it is important to note that often minority students have experienced significant racial issues in the United States, and the topic of perceived racism overseas should be discussed by the advisor and the student; it is too important to ignore.

Students are all different and they will have remarkably different experiences overseas. It is also important to recognize that students may or may not face racial discrimination while participating in a program, depending on where the student chooses to study. Racial discrimination can alter both the experience overseas as well as the reintegration process of the student.

Recommendation for Further Research

Identity is a tangled web of memories, experiences, and interactions. In recent years, more research has been published on study abroad and identity, but still more work needs to be done in this area. Although it may never be fully understood, the impact of study abroad on student identity is important and can help advisors place students in programs which will be the most beneficial and will prepare the student for success. This understanding of identity will also help professionals to better advise students on possible issues which may arise during the program.

Further research is also needed based on study abroad location; African American students who travel to China will have a much different experience than those who travel to

Africa or Brazil. Whether or not they are heritage-seeking, African American students could experience negative shocks to their identity depending on where they choose to study, based on the openness of the particular society in which students are immersed.

Additionally, more research is needed on African American students who have lived abroad for longer than two weeks. This analysis was from a small sample of students from a predominantly minority college, and a larger study would be more beneficial, preferably for long-term study abroad sessions, with some type of post-travel intervention with the students. For a longer program, the impact on student identity will be much greater, as a lengthier program would have yielded different results.

What I Learned During this Research and Paper

Through this research and subsequent paper I learned about topics which are not discussed often enough. This experience has made me a better study abroad advisor and a more open-minded individual, and I hope it will do the same for others who read this paper.

At the start of this project, I had thought that students were afraid of negative identity shocks due to the way they are treated in the US. Since they are minorities (and often treated unfavorably), I had assumed that the rest of the world would harbor such opinions toward them, when the reality was that it did not; in fact, the students in this study were treated better overseas and their self-concept changed, not their identity. I also thought that the decision of African Americans to choose study abroad would be based more on income, and the thought of perceived racism in a foreign land never crossed my mind. More importantly, I learned that the post-study abroad reintegration experience is crucial for students; sending them to some other country does

not guarantee any type of multicultural experience or benefit unless they have help processing what they have just gone through.

I have gained invaluable insight into the issues faced by minorities when they are considering study abroad. Due to the color of my skin, I had never even thought that someone would discriminate against me based on my ethnic heritage; I have traveled freely throughout the world and never encountered what these students have faced in their own homeland. I had also noted that when the students and I had lengthy discussions, the subject would inevitably change to race or racially-themed subjects, something which I did not experience with my white peers and colleagues; in fact, we rarely discussed the topic of race.

Through the literature review and subsequent reflection, I was able to learn a great deal more about identity, what it is, and how we negotiate it with those around us. I have learned that identity is never really concrete, and we all play different roles in life depending on the circumstances and events in our current lives. I have also come to the conclusion that it takes a lifetime to really know yourself, as forming a strong, confident identity requires experience and time.

I also realize now, after the project is done, that I was expecting students to have a certain type of experience overseas based on my observations of them here in the U.S. I expected them to be treated poorly outside of the U.S. because of the way they are treated here at home, and this negating of my theories has shown me that each of us has our own life experiences and we cannot always completely understand the experiences of others.

On a personal level, I have learned to be more open-minded when it comes to meeting new people. The most surprising thing that I learned during this project is that I had much more in common with the students who I counseled than I do my own typical peers (mid-30's, middle-

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class college graduates). In fact, I loved talking to the students and getting to know them; they were humble, observant, astute and thoughtful. Over and over I was impressed by the discussions I had with them on various topics such as the gentrification of Detroit to economic development in Africa. This was surprising to me because at the start of my internship I was afraid that the students and I would have no common ground and I would not be able to have meaningful conversations with them. My daily interaction with the students is something that I enjoyed very much, and which now I have come to miss greatly.

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Pre-Departure Survey

Student pre-departure survey   **Survey number**_____

Country:_____

Age:_____

Name (optional): _____

Year in school: (Freshman, sophomore,

etc)_____

Can I contact you for a brief interview after your return? If so, please leave your

email:_____

For this survey, the scale is as follows:

1: Strongly disagree

2: Disagree

3: Neutral

4: Agree

5: Strongly agree

1. Are you a full-time Marygrove student? (please circle one) **Yes   No**

2. How do you define your own racial identity within America? (ie, Asian-American, White, Latino, Hispanic, etc)?

3. Do you consider yourself culturally aware/sensitive to other cultures? (Please circle one):
1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

4. Have you ever traveled outside of the US before this trip? **YES NO** If so, Where?

5. Why did you pick this particular destination of study (besides cost)?

6. Have you ever felt alienated/ discriminated against inside the US due to your skin color or cultural habits?

7. Do you think racism can exist in other countries? (Please circle one):
1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

8. What types of obstacles did you face in attempting to study abroad? Please circle all which apply:
Finances,   family disapproval,   peer disapproval,   Fear

Other (please define):_____

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, (with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest), Do you feel confident in your identity?
1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

10. On a scale of 1 to 5, (with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest), Do you see yourself as a generally confident person?
    1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

11. What type of family did you grow up in? (ie, single mother, dual parent, raised by grandparents)

12. Did you attend Detroit Public schools for all or most of your kindergarten through high school years? Please circle one: **Yes   No**

13. Have you ever had to defend your identity or culture to another person who seemed very critical of your own identity? **Yes   No**

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING.

Post-travel survey
Name:_____
Date:_____ **Country to which you traveled:**_____

1. Do you feel that your identity or your view of yourself has changed in any way?
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

2. Do you see culture in a different way now that you have studied overseas?
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

3. Based on your race or skin color, did you ever feel ostracized or excluded during your study abroad program?
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

4. Did you find any instances of racism during your study abroad program?
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

5. Did you feel that other people from other countries were more accepting of you than people in the United States?
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

6. Do you feel more open to different types of cultures now that you have traveled overseas?
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

7. Did you observe any type of racism toward other people than yourself while you were overseas?
   1: Strongly disagree   2: Disagree   3: Neutral   4: Agree   5: Strongly agree

8. Are there any memorable (negative or positive) experiences which you had overseas which pertain to race or identity which you could briefly describe?

STUDY ABROAD AND IDENTITY: THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

"Americans must be educated about the realities of the global economy and the commitments of global leadership. Our education policies should emphasize foreign languages, culture, and history, and create more incentives and programs for study abroad. We must also prepare students and workers for those industries and services that will provide the United States a comparative advantage in the global economy in the first part of the twenty-first century" (Hagel, 2004, p. 66).

Self-Categorization:
- "The self…classifies or names itself in particular…this is the process of *self-categorization*" (Burke & Stets, n.d., p. 9).

Self- Concept:

- "The many layers of self-categorization combined is called *"self-concept"* (Burke & Stets, n.d. p. 10).

Identity:

- Layers of self-concept make up *identity*

Heritage-Seeking student: "A student who selects a study abroad venue because of family background—national, religious, cultural, or ethnic" (Szeleky, as cited in Comp 2008, p. 30).
Gentrification: "The process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle-class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces poorer residents."
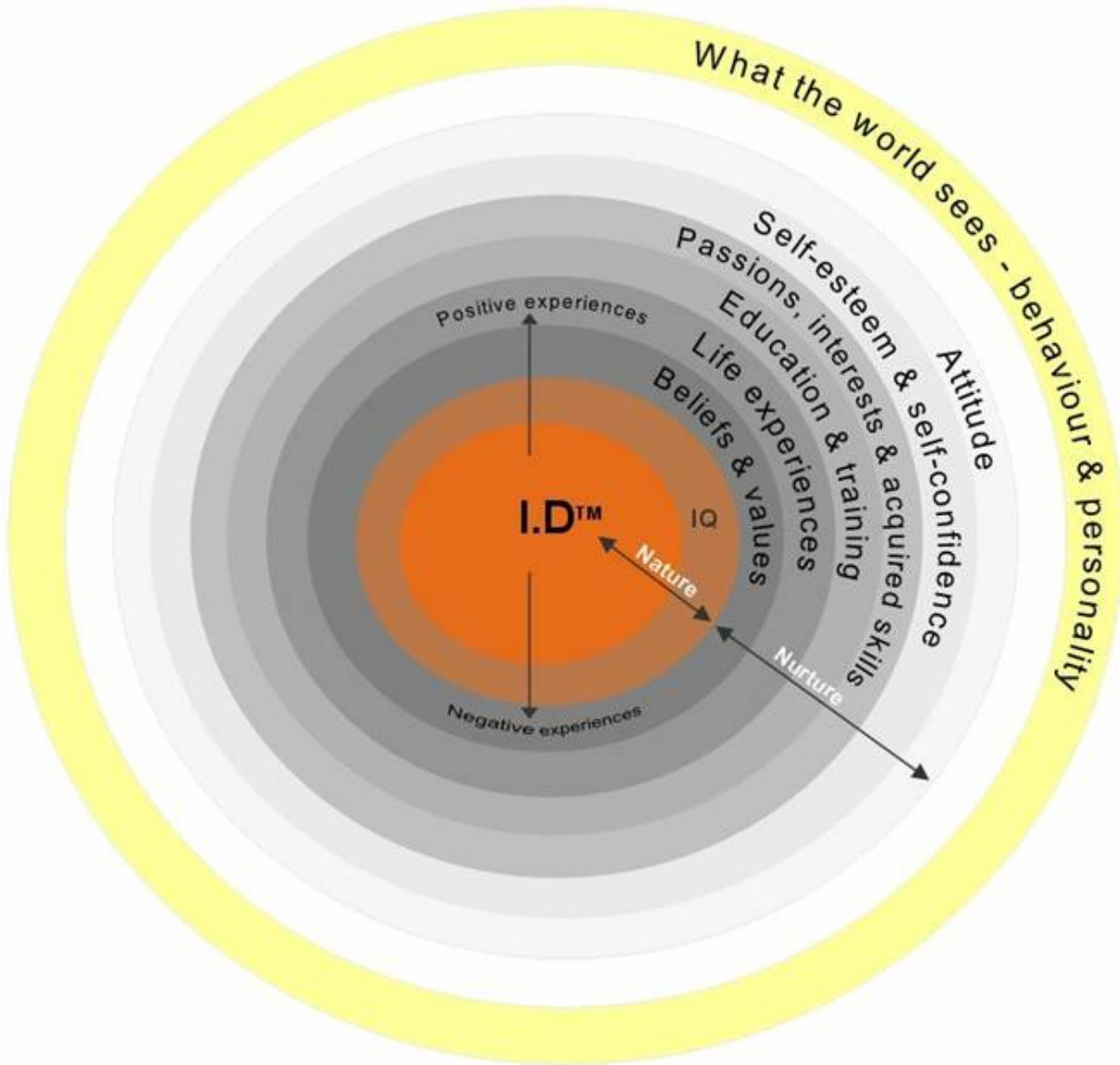
Statistics

- "Four-year graduation rates for African-Americans who'd studied abroad were 31% higher than for African-American students in the control group." (GLOSSARI Project)
- "81.8% of Americans studying abroad in 2007-8 were White" (Redden, 2010).

It is important to make students aware of possible racial tension during their program (depending on where they are studying) before the program takes place, and also to help them reintegrate after the program has finished:

"Many African Americans, based on experiences with racism in the United States, harbor apprehensions about racism they will encounter traveling abroad" (Fels, 1993, as cited in Brux, 2010).

The Onion Skin Model
The essential blend of nature *and* nurture

What the world sees - behaviour & personality

Self-esteem & self-confidence

Attitude

Passions, interests & acquired skills

Education & training

Life experiences

Beliefs & values

Positive experiences

Negative experiences

I.D™   IQ

Nature

Nurture

Your *I.D.* is:
Your driving force
Constant
YOURS (not your parents' or anyone else's)
The instinct at your core on which all the other layers rely