

May 2018

# The African American Experience on Study Abroad: A Closer Look at the Student Perspective

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**The African American Experience on Study Abroad:  
A Closer Look at the Student Perspective**

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**PIM 76**

**A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of  
International Education at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.**

**May 7, 2018**

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Chair, International Education Degree**

## AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE ON STUDY ABROAD

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**ABSTRACT**

While the number of students participating in education abroad is on the rise, historically African American students are absent from study abroad research. African American students recount their personal experiences through interviews and surveys. Students live in the following locations: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, India, Nicaragua, Samoa, and Switzerland.

The guiding research questions were: What are the experiences of African American students in study abroad? What are the basic practices of a program that will successfully support African American students while studying abroad? What advice do alumni have on how programming can be improved? Four open ended interviews and 19 surveys were utilized to focus in on issues that were important to students. Three main areas of racism directed at students studying abroad were: treatment by the locals, treatment by the local staff and treatment by the U.S. American peers on the program.

The focus is on the experience of African American college students and the findings show issues of gender, race, and nationality. Discussed is the relationship between students of different races on the programs and how that plays a role in the study abroad experience. Recommendations for host country staff and program planners are discussed as well as areas for future research.

### **Introduction and Statement of Research Question**

Study abroad is an enriching experience that can change a person's life. Students are able to leave their home and experience the world around them. Study abroad gives students the space to take a deeper look at who they are and who they can become. Students "discover that in the process of learning about other countries and culture they end up learning more about themselves in ways that simply cannot be replicated in the comforting and familiar confines of an American campus" (NAFSA, 2018). Students learn how to navigate new customs of interacting and social norms. They become more culturally competent and able to navigate a culturally diverse world.

Study abroad can be a transforming experience for students who have never gone outside of their own culture or reflected on how their culture has influenced their personality. Seeing a new country through their own cultural lens helps them to reflect on their own identity. Some countries have a high context culture and others have a low context (Hall, 1989). A country like China will rely heavily on non-verbal communication while the United States will use mainly verbal language to convey meaning. Stepping into an opposing cultural context can be disorienting due to the extreme change in pace and priorities. This time abroad can be an intense experience of full immersion in a new culture.

Study abroad has historically been an opportunity taken advantage of by white students. Of those studying abroad in 2015-2016, 71.6 percent were white students (*Open Doors Report*, 2017). Because of this fact, organizations have tailored their programs to this demographic. The percentage of African American/Black students who studied abroad went from 3.5 percent in 2005-2006 to 5.9 percent in 2015-2016 (*Open Doors Report*, 2017). The percent of multiracial students increased from 1.2 percent in 2005-2006 to 3.9 percent in 2015-2016 (*Open Doors*

*Report*, 2017). As more U.S. American students are taking advantage of the opportunity to study abroad, it is apparent that the programming will need to be adjusted to meet the needs of all students. “African American students who studied abroad had a graduation rate 31 percent higher than African American students who did not study abroad” (Rhodes, Biscarra, Loberg & Roller, 2012, p. 6). The benefits of studying abroad are so valuable for the participants that support needs to be provided so students can feel safe going abroad. Programs need to move beyond the assumption that their programs meet the needs of all students and realize that students with different backgrounds may need different kinds of support.

If study abroad programs want more diverse students, program designers need to think about who these students are and the race dynamics that take place in that particular country. The experience of an African American student is different than that of a white student and this needs to be acknowledged. There is racial bias all over the world and in study abroad as well. This paper reviews three main areas of racism directed at students studying abroad: treatment by the locals, treatment by the local staff and treatment by the U.S. American peers on the program.

Each country has its own history of immigration, and racial biases and injustices due to race, religion, and socioeconomic background. Host nationals have stereotypes and assumptions about Black people that get applied to tourists as well. Tourists are assumed to be from a certain country based on the color of their skin. Many countries think that U.S. Americans can only be white and a Black person cannot be American. Locals can be unaware of racism and even think it does exist in their town.

Study abroad program staff are often from the communities where they work so they can be local people as well. Staff on study abroad programs often do not know how to navigate racism and discussions about race and group dynamics. The effect of this insecurity is that they

dismiss complaints about racism from African American students on their program. They tell students that this is their culture and a cultural norm that must be accepted and adapted to.

A group of students going abroad will have a variety of personalities and identities. In order to have a cohesive group, there will need to be some time spent on group bonding and group dynamics discussions. Imbalances in the group can arise when there is a disproportionate number of people who feel like they cannot relate to the rest of the group. Having 20 white students and one African American student on a program will create a different group dynamic than 21 white students or 21 African American students. Students feel isolated when they do not have a community of peers they can relate to. Students are called on to be the one voice for all African American students.

This topic became relevant to me when working in the field of study abroad for the last four years and reading reviews of students who had studied abroad. The students I work with are college students from all over the United States. When reading student reviews, I noticed a few African American students stated that they did not feel supported on the program specifically because of their race. They felt that the host staff did not understand their perspective and they felt that microaggressions were being carried out by other students on the program. The curricula were Euro-centric and did not acknowledge their histories or perspectives. Students had a lot of suggestions for how we could change our policies to better support them. They felt they needed more information when selecting a country and during orientation in order to be prepared for what was to come. These stories inspired my research and led me to start conversations with colleagues to see what we could do to bring about change.

This capstone will focus on ways to create a successful study abroad experience for African American students. The main research questions guiding the study are: What are the

experiences of African American students in study abroad? What are the basic practices of a program that will successfully support African American students while studying abroad? What advice do alumni have on how programming can be improved?

### **Literature Review**

African American students' study abroad experience is a topic that is gaining momentum in research. The experience of Heritage seekers traveling to African countries has already been covered extensively (Gasman, & Commodore, 2014; Bolton Tsantir, & Titus, 2006; Morgan, Mwegelo, & Turner, 2002). This issue is important and should continue to be researched but will not be discussed in this paper due to the fact that it has been extensively studied elsewhere. An area that has not been studied is African American students who travel to other parts of the world and are not heritage seekers. These students also need to be heard in order to see where programming falls short.

The main themes that will be analyzed here are how universities support African American students on their home campuses, African American identity development, and African American students' challenges and experiences of racism while studying abroad. These themes will be reviewed in order to frame the research presented.

The statistics show a typical student is white and upper class. The majority of research looks at the experience of white students and ways to support them pre- and post-study abroad. The majority of research done regarding African Americans and study abroad is looking at barriers to study abroad (Brux & Fry, 2010; Dessoff 2006; Gaines, 2012, Walker, 2015), but the research needs to move beyond barriers and find out how to create an experience for students that will help them to succeed on study abroad.

### **African American Identity**

African American identity, like many social identities, is a complex and individual experience that is unique to each person. A full exploration of this topic is beyond the scope of this study but a few development theories will be discussed in order to provide context.

In looking at African American identity, the Nigrescence Theory is a model cited in International Education (Schuh & Jones 2017). “A key precept of the Nigrescence Theory is that personality plays a minor role in the definition of Black identity because Blackness is viewed as a social identity or reference group variable, and not a personality variable” (Cross & Vandiver, 2001, p. 373). Cross and Vandiver (2001) explain the Nigrescence model can serve as eight “racial-cultural reference group orientations” or eight “stages” depending on the context (p. 377). The Model breaks down to three stages with three sub-stages. The Pre-Encounter stages start with Encounter where a person does not have respect for Black culture and does not identify with being Black. The second part of this stage is Miseducation where a person believes wrong information about Black people and does not want to be part of the Black community. The Self-Hatred phase relates to a sense of negativity towards the self due to the color of one’s skin. The Pre-Encounter groups are not engaged with Black culture and community and do not have respect for this group (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). The Immersion-Emersion groups are obsessed with either anti-white or pro-Black sentiment. The Internalization categories describe a positive view of the Black community and are engaged with Black justice issues. These stages can give a current context of the African American identity when looking at where students are coming from when going abroad.

One part of African American identity is the impact of marginalization. Martin Luther King Jr. (1968) shared that, “...there is another America. This other America has a daily ugliness

about it that transforms the buoyancy of hope into the fatigue of despair” (para 8). King (1968) discusses the constant marginalization and the impact it can have on identity development.

When a person goes through life with racism and unrelenting microaggressions, it can shape who a person will become. This can impact the stage a student is at in their development and what they bring to their study abroad experience. Their mind set can have an impact on the group and the dynamic created.

Where students are in their identity development can affect their experience abroad. In looking at study abroad, further research is needed on African American identity and how it relates to students’ experiences while abroad. Some questions to ponder include: Do students who are at a particular stage fare better in study abroad than others? Does study abroad cause students to move up or down a stage depending on the type of experience they have?

African Americans often have to go between cultures within the United States. The term “code-switching, which refers to adopting the language and culture of the dominate group to navigate predominately white spaces and social institutions” (Babwah, 2018, p. 16). African Americans who are well versed in this skill will have an easier time adjusting to the new culture when studying abroad.

### **University Support of African American Students on the Home Campus**

In order to support African American students on their home campuses, a college needs to have diverse staff for students to feel that their college values people of all races and all ethnicities (Matthews, 2016). Students look to mentors who share their feelings and experience in order to feel part of the community. By only having white staff, a college is leaving out many of the narratives and perspectives needed to have a comprehensive learning environment where relevant discussions can take place (Matthews, 2016). Universities need to provide diverse

faculty so that students have people in a position of authority who they can relate to. This issue has been raised in the mainstream media and more and more students are speaking out and demanding diverse faculty.

All staff need to have diversity and inclusivity training so they are able to effectively facilitate discussions about race. Students need to be able to look to professors for models of how to have a constructive discussion about race and identity (Kelsky, 2017). Racism also needs to be discussed so that students are aware of the language they are using and how it can be unintentionally harmful and derogatory. Professors need to ensure discussions among students are respectful and not verbally abusive to minority students (Kelsky, 2017). The classroom discussions need to be guided so that all students are given a chance to speak and certain people are not dominating the discussion. This is done best when there are diverse faculty who can bring multiple perspectives to the discussion.

Inclusive colleges start with the practices and policies of the administration. College leadership must support and defend all students on their campus and the message needs to be clear that there is zero tolerance for racism and bigotry (King, 2016). Students will only feel at ease if they know their college has a strong commitment to keeping them safe. They will know how the administration truly feels when the time comes to defend the rights of students on campus (King, 2016). The policies need to be in place and be part of the framework of the college so that they "...go beyond language of inclusion to more inclusive behaviors, policies, practices and curriculum. Adding more inclusive language is important but does not automatically make the institution inclusive" (Anderson & Foster, 2016, p. 9).

As well as having diverse professors and staff, the curricula need to be reviewed to ensure they provide a variety of perspectives and points of view. Materials will need to be

analyzed to ensure they are not perpetuating negative stereotypes or a history as told by people in the majority (Anderson & Foster, 2016). When reading about marginalized peoples, positive views will need to be included such as past accomplishments and strong leaders (Kelsky, 2017). Anderson and Foster (2016) argue, “Diversity education should be infused into all aspects of university life, so that the histories of marginalized populations are part of the mainstream curriculum” (p.14).

### **African American Student Experiences on Study Abroad**

Students who already felt marginalized in their home countries often struggle with even greater feelings of isolation when traveling in a foreign country (Robinson, 2007). Robinson emphasized that students from disadvantaged populations may require additional support from program staff while abroad, as this often means they are away from their familiar support systems at home.

The number of African American students studying abroad continues to grow and research on this topic needs to continue to include more student voices. The lack of research focusing on the voices of African American students is frightening given the focus on increasing diversity in study abroad as a whole (Talbert & Stewart, 1999). In order to make sure that students are being supported, African American students will need to be interviewed and their feedback will need to be written about in current literature.

Students on study abroad programs need support from their peers in order to process and combat racism or microaggressions experienced in the host country. A lack of understanding on the part of the staff or cohort will isolate the student and prevent them from gaining all the benefits of studying abroad. Talbert and Stewart (1999) conducted a study that mentions the experience of the only African American student on the program. The student’s concerns were

dismissed by the professor as “normal” in the host culture. Being the only African American student on the program, she felt completely isolated. This study has been cited in several other studies as a reason for further investigation in order to understand the experience of African American students studying abroad, even though learning about the African American student’s experience was an unintentional outcome of the study (Brux & Fry, 2010; Jackson, 2006; Willis, 2015).

Thrush and Victorino (2016) warn that study abroad programs that do not engage students with the host culture can have negative impacts if the program staff are not careful in their organization of the program and management of the students. Shannon-Baker and Talbot (2016) agree that “without conscious attempts to critically engage with race, study abroad programs have the strong potential to feed into American students’ stereotypes about the foreign other” (p. 406). Some students are not fully present in the study abroad experience due to the fact that they are holding onto past notions of bias or prejudice about the host culture (Mezirow, 1997).

Engaging host nationals can be a positive learning experience for students, however, if there are racist remarks or threatening language, the program staff need to make a space for the student to process their experience. The student will need to have space to express their concerns and feelings in order to make sure they have a healthy support system to process any incidents that arise. Making sure the students engage with the host culture is important in student learning about a new society while reflecting on their U.S. American identity.

Microaggressions committed by peers on a study abroad program is another area in which African American students are facing adversity (Willis, 2015). Willis’ study focused on the experiences of African American women from community colleges who studied abroad in the British

Isles, the Mediterranean, and West Africa. Students share that the microaggressions drained their energy and made it difficult to study, while they faced additional stressors of navigating a new culture, language, and customs. They discuss not wanting to leave the house at times because they would have to face a barrage of racism on the street and in the classroom (Willis, 2015).

The need for community and a desire to be surrounded by people who shared common experiences and points of view were recurrent themes among underrepresented students studying abroad. African American women felt left out and isolated by white peers on the program who chose not to include them in social activities (Willis, 2015). African American students wanted to live in an African American dorm in order to feel more comfortable (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). The students wanted to be able to talk with others who understood how they felt and not have to be emotionally guarded against racism. The study abroad experience was improved when there was at least one other African American student on the program. Students who were the only people of color on their program discuss having no one to talk to and feeling emotionally vulnerable and isolated (Willis, 2015). One student commented that the loneliness she felt while abroad made her realize what a strong support system her home community provided (Patterson, 2007).

When looking at programs where all of the students are African American, we find their experiences vastly different. Lee and Green (2016) conducted a case study in which they interviewed four African American students who studied abroad on a 25-day program in South Africa. All of the students on the program self-identified as Black or African American and the program was led by Black faculty and housed in the Africana Studies department. The students were able to focus on their racial identity and develop a better understanding of who they were. They were able to reflect on the U.S. American education system and see how it had shaped their learning thus far. This type of deep reflection and learning seemed to come from being in an environment that was safe and

supportive. Students did not have to prove that racism occurred and explain why it was not happening to their white peers (Willis, 2015; Talburt & Stewart, 1999). The students had a community who understood their feelings and were able to process their reflection with them.

Orientation must cover realistic experiences of racism or discrimination in the host country (Abraham, Casey, Newell, & Wick, 2011). African American students can sit in small groups to discuss what they might do in these situations. Another suggestion is to teach students about “local histories and diversity issues” in the host country (Abraham, Casey, Newell, & Wick, 2011, p. 38). This will help students to see the diversity within their host country and ground their learning. Staring is an example of something that may be normal in the host country but U.S. Americans can find rude. Having “open discussions about possible ranges of responses is extremely valuable and helps in attaining inter-cultural competency” (Abraham, Casey, Newell, & Wick, 2011, p. 38). Shannon-Baker and Talbot (2016) agree that the “programs should make it a point to discuss local race relations and the complex intersections between race and other forms of identity” (p. 412). Knowing the current climate could aid students in framing their identity within that context and knowing what to expect from the host culture. Understanding the race relations of the new culture will help when reflecting on race relations in their home country.

Being aware of one’s own identity is essential when working with students. As educators we:

...must be willing to search for the truth – and admit the truth – about ourselves, our own biases, stereotypes, and misconceptions, and ways in which we might actually be part of the problem. If we muster the courage to face the truth about ourselves, our history and

our present, we have reason to hope for a radically better future.” (Veterans of Hope Project, 2013, p. 3).

Working with students on issues of race requires the mediator to be comfortable talking about his or her own identity in order for students to be comfortable exploring and sharing their sense of self. Many times there is implicit bias in the material being covered in the curriculum and the way it is presented to students.

Teachers may have a hard time with race talk since they are accustomed to the “learning environment characterized by objectivity, rationality, and intellectual thought and inquiry. Race talk, however, is highly subjective, is intense, relies on storytelling, and is emotive in nature” (Sue, 2015, p. 65). This is a hurdle that will need to be overcome in order to create an environment where everyone can feel comfortable learning.

In 2011, Abraham, Casey, Newell, and Wick created an advisor manual for study abroad staff so that they would have instruction on how to support diverse students on their programs. This manual needs to be made into a training program for study abroad program staff so that students will get the support they need. Abraham et al. (2011) suggest that staff know their audience and learn about the experience of African American students and all of the students that go on their trips in order to better understand them. Another suggestion is to collect feedback from African American students after their program, so they can share this information with future students. Further suggestions include helping students create a support system on their program (Abraham, Casey, Newell, & Wick, 2011). This can include other students who are not on the same program but can serve as a support network.

Black identity needs to be brought to the research about African American students studying abroad. Where students are in their development and in their state of identity will affect

their experience and how they interact with staff, peers and locals. When looking at heritage seekers, identity is studied and discussed but no one is bridging the gap between the study abroad experience and black identity development.

## **Design and Methodology**

### **Participant Sampling**

Students were selected for this study based on the fact that they selected African American/Black as their race on their initial application to study abroad. Students who selected more than one racial identity were also included in the study. Students self-identified on the survey as African American; Black; Black, African, and American; Nigerian American, Black; Black African; Mixed Race as Black and Indian; Afro-Latina; African; Black American; Black, White, Native American; Afro-Caribbean American. The term Afro will be used in these findings to refer to the local community members of African descent.

All of the students were undergraduate college students in the United States who attended a one semester study abroad program with the same third-party provider. The students studied abroad from 2015 to 2017 either in the fall or spring semester. Five students studied abroad in India, five in Brazil, three in Argentina, two in Chile, two in Nicaragua, one in Bolivia, one in Switzerland, and one in Samoa. One student was currently on a second study abroad program with another company in the Middle East and talked about race in that country as well. All of the students were required to live with a homestay family and attend academic classes with their U.S. American cohort.

A questionnaire was created in Survey Monkey with ten short-answer questions. (Appendix B). Convenience sampling was used to email 51 students who had studied abroad in Spanish speaking countries with the same third-party provider. The email was sent out again a week later and

a total of nine students responded to the request. Nine students completed the survey and three of them were interviewed. The study was then expanded to include students who had studied abroad in non-Spanish speaking countries with the same third-party provider. Students who had studied abroad in an African country were not contacted due to the fact that this study is not looking at the experience of heritage seekers. An email request was sent to 114 students inviting them to participate in the study and the email was resent a week later. Ten students completed the survey and one student agreed to an interview. The student who was interviewed elected not to complete the survey. Ten of the students completed the survey. Two students agreed to be interviewed but did not respond to schedule a meeting time.

Interviews were conducted over the phone using a semi-structured format (Appendix D). The interviews were formatted as a conversation and were an open format so that the student was able to talk about issues that were personally relevant. Some students had a difficult experience and were able to share what was comfortable as a result of the interview being modified in order to be sensitive to the needs of the student. The interview questions asked about the specifics of the study abroad experience and if the student felt supported by staff and peers. Participants were also asked to share any difficult situations that they wanted to discuss.

Additional perspectives were added by interviewing two staff members who work in the field of study. The Director and Founder of Diversity Abroad, Andrew Gordon and the former Director of Study Abroad and International Exchange at Spelman College, Dr. Margery A. Ganz. The directors were asked about the feedback they have received over the years from students and what advice they had for programs to better support African American students (Appendix F).

### **Data Management and Analysis**

Interviews were recorded using recording software and transcribed using transcription software. All of the interviews were reviewed several times to ensure accuracy of transcription. The data from interviews and surveys were analyzed in order to see what patterns emerged. Twenty-five codes were created to organize the data.

### **Ethics of Research and Researcher's Positionality**

A challenge in this study was the relationship between the researcher and the students. The students were aware that I work in study abroad and this could have been a deterrent from speaking honestly. Students may not have trusted that I would keep their quotes confidential and might have self-edited what they said. Some students might not have wanted to speak badly of their program and tried to focus on the positive in order to show their appreciation for the organization. As a white interviewer, students might not have felt comfortable sharing some of their experiences.

#### **Self as researcher**

Looking at my own identity within my role as a researcher is an important factor. I work for a study abroad organization. I am a white, U.S. American, non-religious Jewish woman. My position as a researcher and as a staff member certainly had an impact on the participants in this study. Coming from a background of growing up in a white, Jewish, upper class neighborhood impacts how I view the study and interact with the subjects. My race has an impact on the study since that is the framework I am bringing to the study. I know that students may not have felt comfortable telling me certain parts of their experience since they knew that I could not relate to what they were saying. I know that as a researcher, my perspective impacts my reasons for conducting this study. Having seen racism, prejudice, microaggressions, and violence while

studying abroad, I know these events exist and I want the voices of students to be the focus of the study. I want all of the staff who work with U.S. American students studying abroad to be aware of their powerful impact on the lives of students, even if for a short time.

### **Prior relationship**

The first set of students that were contacted studied in Spanish speaking countries and I worked with them before they attended their study abroad program. The students may or may not have engaged with me during their application and pre-departure process. This could have had an impact on whether or not students decided to complete the survey and the interview. The second group did not work with me previously and made up the majority of students in the study.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this study were such that time was limited and would need to be extended in order to do an in-depth look at the background of each student to see what factors affected their experiences abroad. Students were not able to be continually interviewed before, during and after they studied abroad in order to get a deep look at the students' feelings during the entire experience. There were originally sixteen survey questions and they had to be cut down to ten due to the limitations of the free software. Some of the questions were combined, consolidated or removed. Many of the students did not respond to the initial email. The number of students who participated was small due to the number of students who responded to the outreach. The perspectives may also be limited since all students studied abroad with the same provider. The organization students went with attracts certain types of students and many come from the same universities. Students attending a community college or non-traditional students participate less frequently in this organization's programs.

It is important to note that only a small portion of students responded to the survey and of those who responded, some might have been interested in participating as a result of a negative experience. Many of the students who had a positive experience might have felt they did not have as much to contribute to the data and therefore did not respond.

### **Presentation and Analysis of Data**

When reviewing the surveys and interviews there were 25 different areas into which findings were classified. The categories were pared down to three main categories: treatment by locals, which covers how the students were treated by all locals in that country; program treatment, which covers how they were treated by staff and peers; and support, which covers how they were supported by the staff, peers and themselves.

#### **Treatment by Locals**

Students talked about how they were received by the locals in their host country. Their responses ranged from locals being very welcoming and hospitable to verbally harassing them in the street. Students in Brazil mentioned their experience changed depending on the city they were in. Fortaleza was a city cited by several students as very white and thus very uncomfortable. A student mentioned she “felt very othered as though my presence there was completely shocking.” When the student traveled to a city with a large Afro Brazilian population, she described feeling very comfortable and appreciated that she could “blend in.”

Students who studied abroad in India experienced a variety of responses from the locals depending on the city. One student mentioned that he was mistaken for a native and thus was treated very well by the locals. Another student felt that people “looked at me as though they found me on the bottom of their shoes” and “I often felt unwelcome in the spaces I inhabited but there were just as many kind strangers.” Another student observed that Indians were incredibly

warm and welcoming but he did not appreciate “the white worship I witnessed bestowed on my white cohort members” or the “doubts of my nationality.” Throughout all of the countries visited, the positive comments included hospitality that was more than students had expected. Students felt incredibly welcomed and locals assisted them with any questions or requests they had. Students did feel many people stared but sometimes locals were just curious and some students did not feel there was malice in these interactions.

Hair was a topic that was raised by nearly all participants. Students recounted how strangers touched their hair in public, asked questions or took pictures. Hair seemed to fascinate strangers and they did not seem shy touching a student’s hair without permission. This elicited a variety of responses from students. Some students felt that people were just curious, other students were infuriated that their body was being touched without permission. One student mentioned slapping strangers’ hands away. Another student commented that when she travels she cuts her hair in a particular style to be perceived as African since she does not want to be recognized as U.S. American. This student was interested to see how people would interact with her if she was able to change her perceived nationality.

### **Mistaken identity**

Not having control over how strangers perceived them on the street was a big issue for many students. A student described his experience in Chile as “my foreignness was constantly on display and it was something I had no control over.” Students were often misidentified as someone from a distinct country. A student in Chile said strangers would call to him in French thinking he was Haitian. African American women in Buenos Aires were mistaken for Brazilian. A student advised, “be prepared to explain your racial background.” Many students struggled with convincing natives that they were in fact U.S. Americans. Local people often

were convinced that U.S. Americans must be white. One student reported, “They thought I was from anywhere but the US which troubled me a little bit because there’s this idea that Americans are just white people.” One student felt it was important for African Americans to travel to areas that are predominately white because

by being in these spaces where you are not typically represented, you are forcing those around you to think about what diversity means and looks like. It is only through this direct, and at times uncomfortable, confrontation that things will begin to change for the better.

### **Sexual comments**

Host nationals assumed a lot about the students based on their appearances. In Buenos Aires, the people around the city seemed convinced that African American women were prostitutes from Brazil or the Dominican Republic. This led to a lot of unwelcome racial and sexual comments. Students mentioned that this was uncomfortable and oppressive and led to feelings of not wanting to engage with the local culture. One student made sure to walk to school with the other African American student on her program to avoid feeling vulnerable to comments on the street. A woman felt a “fetishing gaze” from men when in the capital of Nicaragua but not when she was on the coast where Afro Latinos live. Women in many of the countries mentioned racialized sexual harassment from men catcalling or whistling at them. One student mentioned she was called “‘Negra Linda’ which is a phrase that means you’re so beautiful it’s almost like you’re not Black.”

One student was shocked and upset when she first arrived in Buenos Aires and heard all of the catcalls on the street. She took some time to create a plan for how she wanted to live in this new culture. She decided to “ignore it because it wasn’t going to stop” and to “not feed into

it and pay it any attention.” She felt that Argentines were intrigued by Black skin and thought it was very beautiful. She felt they were not commenting out of malice but out of curiosity. In order to make sure she took care of herself, she had coping strategies. She spent a lot of time with the other African American student on the program. “We endured it together, the other students didn’t have to endure that because they just didn’t receive that response. I just had to figure out that way of not feeling ostracized all the time and tried to be part of the culture as much as I could.” Her strategy included spending time with the homestay family, attending their family events and going on excursions with them.

### **Perceptions by locals of the local Afro community**

The perceptions of the local Afro community by local non-Afro community varied among the countries visited. Students in this study heard negative perceptions of local Afro communities from locals. A student who studied in Switzerland spoke about how the locals did not believe there was racism in Western Europe. The Swiss told her that Africa should be more civilized and European languages were the dominant languages of the world. The student disagreed with the locals and was told that “Americans love to talk about race.” The student mentioned the comments overall in Switzerland were subtle and covert.

A student in Nicaragua recounted how her host family said racism does not exist, I couldn’t help but notice that all of the African descendants born in Nicaragua lived on the edge of the country, hours away from the capital making it more difficult to reach resources...[the family] would comment that the people there were not really part of Nicaraguan culture or real Nicaraguans. This resonated deeply as it is the same rhetoric that is used for people of color in the US.

Another student in Nicaragua was offended by warnings given by the program staff regarding the men in the predominately Afro Latino area of the Atlantic Coast. The staff and locals said that the men in this area would be more aggressive in their street harassment. The student discovered it was not true and felt the warnings were racially based.

Students in Brazil also mentioned “seeing the blatant racism towards Afro-Brazilians” by locals. A student pointed out that the “lack of accessible healthcare facilities in Black and Brown communities was astonishing to see with my own eyes.”

## **Program Treatment**

### **Treatment by staff**

Students had different experiences with staff support depending on the country they were in and the individual staff who led the program. One student appreciated the staff wanting to help her navigate the racism she experienced but she understood that they were ill-equipped and could not help her. Another student appreciated the open and honest manner in which her director told her that the country was racist and wanted to give her a warning even if she could not prevent it from happening. Students were surprised at the level of support staff gave and said they had expected the staff to be professors and not to be a support system for students. Some students felt they developed a bond and level of trust with certain staff members and not others. One student called the director “a mother duck who loves and challenges and supports us all completely.”

There were also negative comments about the staff as well. One student stated that he unsuccessfully tried to confide in the staff but “it was just chalked up to me being out of the ordinary and people being curious about me because I was so different.” Another student said that the “majority of micro-aggressions that bothered me I received from staff members. For

example, when traveling to portions of the country that were majority black, we were warned that the men in these areas were more misogynistic and dangerous.” One student explained about the staff, “they weren’t equipped to deal with or support the type of experience I was having and the other Black Women were having and it was obvious.”

### **Suggestions for staff**

Students had a lot of suggestions for how staff could improve in the future. One student said, “we had a lot of group check-ins after excursions, but that didn’t always feel like the best place to air grievances or frustrations because sometimes the frustrations were the other people in the room.” One student suggested having a conversation in orientation where students could discuss how a white person could support a person of color and how a person of color supports a white person. This was not something the student thought the director should know the answer to, but a dialogue between students in a judgement-free space. Several students mentioned hiring a counselor to create a time for checking in to see how all students are doing mentally and spiritually so that they were able to process incidents that had occurred. A suggestion was to have more one-on-one conversions between students and staff to have open communication.

Students suggested that staff bring in more diverse lecturers so that students could learn from them and connect to other communities in the area. One student suggested that the staff needed to read a Black Feminist framework in order to better understand the student experience. Students mentioned the “centering on whiteness throughout the program” as an issue that needed to be addressed. A student mentioned staff being more racially sensitive when bringing students to stay overnight in an old plantation and never mentioning slavery or race.

### **Treatment by peers**

Overall the treatment by the peer group depended on the individuals in that group. Groups that were diverse were mentioned as close and cohesive. The diverse groups had things in common and others could understand the student's feelings. Some groups were mainly white and the African American students mentioned they felt supported and had great people in their group that they remain close with. Other students were not so positive about the majority white groups.

One student felt that the students on the program were open to getting to know him but he could not be friends with them since "they were vastly unaware of their white privilege and made casually racist remarks throughout the program." The student acknowledged their white peers were friendly but it is understandable that no matter how nice a person is, racist comments are incredibly offensive and no one should have to tolerate them for any period of time. Another student mentioned that the white peers were fine and his relationship was "pretty cordial, the [same] way that I interact with white peers back home." A student in Bolivia was surprised by the "lack of awareness of systemic injustice both in Bolivia and back in the US among my fellow program participants was really disheartening and frustrating."

Other students mentioned the racism during the program came from the white, U.S. American students. A student recounts, "I think I was expecting some level of racism being in an East Asian country but it was mainly from other peers on my program I was surprised by."

### **Support**

#### **African American peer support**

Most students mentioned their experiences were greatly improved by having an African American peer in the group. A student explained that "we endured it together" when discussing

her African American peer. Another student was happy to have “someone to really just understand.” Students could debrief at the end of the day and felt heard by their peers. One student said that “if it wasn’t for the other Black woman, I would have asked to leave the program.” A student shared, “the Black women in my cohort were really a staple to my survival in Brazil.” Students need to be told upfront about the reality of their experience. A student may be the only African American on a program and the study abroad advisor needs to be upfront about this and

not in a way that scares students away but in a way to say, this is going to be part of the experience and part of the growth...this might be unique to you because you are the only one of X,Y,Z but let’s unpack how that is going to be.” (A. Gordon, personal communication, March 13, 2018).

One student mentioned that her cohort was diverse and she “felt understood in my cohort because the vast majority of us had experience in some sense of discrimination.” She felt comfortable with this group because she “never had to be concerned about racial discrimination.”

### **Coping mechanisms**

Students had different ways to cope with difficult situations and feelings during their time abroad. One student mentioned he relied on his two African American peers. Another student found immersing herself in the culture by spending time with her host family helped to combat feeling ostracized. Students found journaling helped process their feelings by giving them time to reflect. One student in India felt that the program staff supported her and “they kept me sane and made me feel safe.”

### **Students' reflections**

Students had a lot to say when asked what advice they would have given themselves during the program. Many students told themselves not to focus so much on race and not to let it hold them back from going out and being adventurous. Students advised to engage more with the local community and less with the U.S. American peers. Some specifically said to engage more with the local Afro community. There were a lot of inspirational words such as “there is nothing you can’t handle,” “let go of fear,” take risks, and engage. Students prescribed self-care practices for difficult times. One student asked herself, “is this something you can heal from?” And advised herself to reconsider.

A student was grateful for the lessons she learned having to combat racism in a new environment. Students felt personally challenged and this was a rewarding experience. One student realized “that being uncomfortable is where I grow the most.” Another student when describing her study abroad experience said, “it made me get comfortable with things that aren’t normally comfortable for me.” Students felt empowered by studying abroad and told realized there was nothing they could not handle in the future. A student who went to a setting that was diverse was excited to “walk around in spaces where people fit to beauty standards and cultural expectations that more closely reference my own.” A student mentioned how “I was able to learn how to advocate for myself, especially in situations where I felt uncertain.” One student reflected that “learning about marginalized groups in Brazil is an eye-opening experience and will definably shape your experience as a young Black person.”

### **Conclusions**

There were clear areas of support for African American students on their study abroad programs and there were also gaps. Having key foundations of support for African American

students on a program led to overall positive experiences. Students' mental preparation before the program helped them to navigate difficult interactions abroad. How well white students understood racial and identity issues impacted the experience of individual African American students. As presented by the data, these factors showed a strong impact on the experiences.

### **Positive aspects**

Overall the majority of students in the study recommended studying abroad. Students mentioned learning incredible amounts and growing as a person. The exposure to new cultures gave student a break from the U.S. paradigms and new views of how the world can function. All of the staff involved have been extensively trained and are doing an amazing job working to improve the supportive community of their study abroad program. An entire team coordinates to ensure quality programming: study abroad advisors at a university, advisors at the program centers, deans, directors and support staff. Students said they created friendships that will extend years beyond their study abroad. This study is meant to accentuate the areas for improvement and not to criticize individuals.

### **Program Recommendations**

Working towards "diversity, equity and inclusion" in study abroad involves a holistic approach. Making sure to look at "how we are interacting and supporting students and their families from the decision making process, pre-departure, in-country, and re-entry" (A. Gordon, personal communication, March 13, 2018). Given the findings presented above, the following analysis of data shows how we can create a comprehensive program for all students.

### **Preparation**

Program planners can provide most materials that students need to be educated about the country they are going to. Some tools that can address race issues are: pre-departure handbooks,

articles, blogs, videos, and interviews with diverse alumni. Students would like to talk with African American alumni of the program to be able to talk discuss how to navigate race in the host culture. Hearing from someone who has gone before is a great way to bypass or maneuver around obstacles students will encounter. Students would like straightforward and honest information about what type of experiences they might encounter. Students mentioned that they felt completely unprepared for the racism, catcalls, and racial bias they found when arriving in host countries. Preparation for each program needs to address the reality of the African American experience in that country.

Students suggested that pre-departure orientations cover racial dynamics of the country so that students know what to expect. Students had different suggestions for how to cover racial dynamics. One student suggested having two separate orientations - one for non-minority students and one for minority students - in order to address issues specific to the audience. Another suggested that orientations should include all students together so everyone can learn about issues that affect their peers and learn how to support their needs. Part of creating a cohesive community is understanding each of the members of that group.

### **Student support**

The findings show that some programs are still falling short of the support needed to create a successful program for African American students. Students universally benefited from having an African American peer to provide support and to fully comprehend their experience. Students mentioned needing a local community in order to feel safe immersing in the culture. There were usually local Afro communities in each country but students had to search for them on their own. In-country directors can connect students with Afro communities at the beginning of each semester so students have the option to engage. In addition to having a community,

students need the program staff to acknowledge racial issues as they arise and listen to students express their feelings. The people in positions of authority on a program need to acknowledge the feelings of each student in order to provide adequate emotional and mental support. These key strategies can immensely improve study abroad programming for students.

Diversity should be added to all aspects of a study abroad program. Program planners need to include diverse perspectives in the curriculum and have diverse professors. Students mentioned the lack of staff and professors of African heritage. Students would feel acknowledged by program staff if the curriculum and staff reflected diverse perspectives and represented diverse populations. Taking a deep look at the core values of a program can help to improve the learning environment.

### **Racism education**

There seemed to be a gap in education about racial identity and racism within programs. According to the participants in this study, the white students on the programs were not always aware of their own sense of identity and privilege in regards to race. Some students made racist remarks and committed microaggressions towards their African American peers. Making sure students are educated about race is a task that may not be possible for a study abroad program. This issue needs to be addressed in all U.S. American colleges in order to change the culture. Staff on all programs will need to be aware of their racial identities and how the dynamic of race plays out in their countries. Being aware of the issue is a large part of what African American students need from staff to be able to acknowledge their experience. Listening to students is a big part of where staff can learn the most about race in their country.

Students on all programs mentioned having to be the spokesperson for all African Americans. This role is one that students do not enjoy because it puts the pressure of

representing a group of people on their shoulders. One student cannot speak for everyone with the same skin color and it is unreasonable for anyone to assume this is the case. Students also mentioned it was not their job to educate peers about race and racial equality. Students want to be treated with respect and should not have to explain to peers why that is important. A person should not have to fight on a daily basis for equality and respect. Providers need to understand that each student is an individual and cannot be expected to educate the other students.

Some students even appreciated the difficulties they faced and the lack of support because they felt powerful to have lived through this difficult situation having only relied on themselves. They were impressed with this new muscle they developed. They mentioned that it was incredibly difficult to go through this process and they did not feel strong during the program when they felt depressed and too scared to leave the house. One student felt scarred by the trauma of living through a horrendous situation and regretted going on that program. Even if students feel stronger from having survived their experience in an unsupported structure, this should not let program planners think this is an acceptable approach to study abroad. These students are making the best of a terrible situation and should not be put in this position. The treatment by locals cannot be controlled by staff but the structure of the program and the systems in place need to be prepared for every aspect of racism and provide extensive support through the entire semester.

### **Summary of suggestions**

The following is a summary of suggestions mentioned above.

- Research local Afro communities to be used as a resource for students. Give students this information during orientation.

- Be aware of African American students who are a minority in their group so staff can reach out and make sure to provide support to students.
- Set up regular one-on-one check-ins with all students to create open communication. Be sure to ask African American students if they are having issue that relate to their racial identity.
- Hire diverse staff and professors so that students have mentors who may have similar experiences.
- Revamp pre-departure materials to address race and issues that may arise for students based on feedback from past students.
- Request past African American students serve as mentors to maximize them as a resource and help future students prepare.
- Make sure staff is trained or does reading about current race issues in US culture. This will ensure staff are up-to-date with issues affecting incoming students.
- Be sure to not rely on African American students to serve as spokesperson for all African Americans. Each student is an individual and can only speak for him or herself.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There is so much more that needs to be explored in order to improve study abroad programing for African American students. One aspect that further research could address is sexualized racism which is a branch of racism that focuses on a person being targeted based on one's gender in addition to one's race. How does a person combat harassment based on preconceived notions about gender and race at the societal level? How does one's gender affect how a person experience's racism in that country? Sexual comments were incredibly poignant and came up repeatedly in the study. There will need to be time spent creating strategies for

combatting racialized sexual harassment on study abroad. Another area for further research is looking at the intersectionality of different parts of a student's identity. Looking at the intersectionality of race, gender and sexual orientation is a topic that is appropriate to the current climate in the United States. A final topic to explore is mixed race students who feel pressured to identify with one race only and are not encouraged to hold both identities as their own. A question to explore is: Does the way people interpret their race affect how they feel about their nationality as part of their identity? These are a few ideas that would help to address many challenges faced by African American students on study abroad.

Study abroad is a wonderful experience for all students and each individual grows in their own way from the sojourn. So many students have benefited from study abroad that the market continues to expand. In part of the growth of this industry, modifications need to be made in order for all students to reap the benefits available from study abroad. More diverse students are starting to go abroad and programs need to grow along with their clientele. By adjusting the programming to support the needs of African American students, all programs will benefit and continue to prosper. All study abroad students, not just the African American students, will benefit from the awareness and sense of identity that needs to be acknowledged and discussed.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Participant Informed Consent**

Hi Student Name,

I am a student at the SIT Graduate program.

I would like to invite you to participate in a study I am conducting for partial fulfillment of my Master's in International Education. Your participation is voluntary. Please read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and you will be given a copy of this form. This is completely separate from your enrollment in the program and I am making this request as a student and not as staff in study abroad.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

This study is designed to find out what program structures work well to support African American (Black/African/Afro-Latino, etc.) students who study abroad and what is lacking in a program that could be improved for future students.

#### **Study Procedures**

Your participation will consist of answering questions in an online survey. It will take approximately 20-30 minutes of your time.

An additional part of the survey you may elect to participate in is an interview. The one-on-one interview with me over Skype or on the telephone. Each interview will last approximately 40 minutes to 1 hour. Each interview will be recorded with digital audio equipment and transcribed after the interview. You have the option to not be recorded. If you decide not to be recorded, the

researcher will take handwritten notes during the interview. All of the recordings will be saved on the researcher's computer and deleted after the research project is completed in May.

### **Potential Risks and Discomforts**

The potential risks to you as a participant are minimal. You might have memories that are uncomfortable and you do not want to share. That is fine and you only need to share what you are comfortable sharing.

Your name and your program name will not be revealed in the final paper or to any program staff. You will also be able to indicate if there is any other aspect of your experience that you would like kept private.

### **Potential Benefits to Participants**

The benefit is that you may enjoy sharing memories from your study abroad experience. The study abroad community may benefit from hearing about experiences from students.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality will be maintained for all participants and responses during data collection and after the study is finished and in the presentation and publication of my research. I am the only one who will have access to this data. All data is anonymous since I am using Survey Monkey to collect data online. If you select to be interviewed over the phone after the survey, your name will be changed for the data collection to ensure anonymity. All recordings will be stored on password protected files in an encrypted computer. After the project is complete, the files will be deleted.

### **Participation and Withdrawal**

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

**Signature of Research Participant**

“I have read the above and I understand its contents and I agree to participate in the study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.”

Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Participant’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Consent to Quote from Survey**

I may wish to quote from the survey in the presentation or articles resulting from this work. A pseudonym will be used in order to protect your identity.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

\_\_\_\_\_(initial) I agree to be quoted and a pseudonym (fake name) will be used to protect your identity.

\_\_\_\_\_(initial) I do not agree to be quoted

If you have any questions or want to get more information about this study, please contact me at my student email [Vanessa.Doyle@mail.sit.edu](mailto:Vanessa.Doyle@mail.sit.edu) or 413-977-2888 or my advisor at

[Sora.Friedman@sit.edu](mailto:Sora.Friedman@sit.edu)

## Appendix B

**Survey Questions**

1. How would you identify your racial identity?
2. In 3-4 sentences, how did you feel about your study abroad experience overall?
3. What were some positive aspects? What were some negative or challenge aspects?
4. How did the local people make you feel? Explain.
5. If you could go back in time and give 3 pieces of advice to yourself before leaving for the program, what would you say?
6. How emotionally supported by the staff did you feel on your program? Explain.
7. What suggestions do you have to your program staff about how they can better support students?
8. How were you related by peers on the trip? Did you feel supported or a sense of community?
9. Did you feel racism while abroad? Do you have any specific examples you would like to share?
10. What advice would you give an African American student who wants to do the same program in the same country?

## Appendix C

### **Student Interview: Participant Informed Consent**

My name is Vanessa Doyle and I am a student with the SIT International Education Graduate program.

I would like to invite you to participate in a study I am conducting for partial fulfillment of my Master's in International Education. Your participation is voluntary. Please read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and you will be given a copy of this form.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

This study is designed to find out what program structures work well to support African American (Black/African/Afro-Latino, etc.) students who study abroad and what is lacking in a program that could be improved for future students.

#### **Study Procedures**

Your participation will consist of a one-on-one interview with Vanessa Doyle over Skype or on the telephone. The interview will last approximately 40 minutes to 1 hour. The interview will be recorded with digital audio equipment and transcribed after the interview. You have the option to not be recorded. If you decide not to be recorded, the researcher will take handwritten notes during the interview. All of the recordings will be saved on the researcher's computer and deleted after the research project is completed in May.

#### **Potential Risks and Discomforts**

The potential risks to you as a participant are minimal. You might have memories that are uncomfortable and you do not want to share. That is fine and you only need to share what you are comfortable sharing.

Your name and your program name will not be revealed. You will also be able to indicate if there is any other aspect of your experience that you would like kept private.

### **Potential Benefits to Participants**

The benefit is that you may enjoy sharing memories from your study abroad experience. The study abroad community may benefit from hearing about experiences from students.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality will be maintained for all participants and responses during data collection and after the study is finished and in the presentation and publication of my research. I am the only one who will have access to this data. Your name will be changed for the data collection to ensure anonymity. All recordings will be stored on password protected files in an encrypted computer. After the project is complete, the files will be deleted.

### **Participation and Withdrawal**

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

### **Signature of Research Participant**

“I have read the above and I understand its contents and I agree to participate in the study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.”

Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Consent to Quote from Interview**

I may wish to quote from the interview with you in the presentation or articles resulting from this work. A pseudonym will be used in order to protect your identity.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

\_\_\_\_\_(initial) I agree to be quoted and a pseudonym (fake name) will be used to protect your identity.

\_\_\_\_\_(initial) I do not agree to be quoted

**Consent to Audio Record Interview**

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice

\_\_\_\_\_(initial) I agree to be recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_(initial) I do not agree to be recorded.

If you have any questions or want to get more information about this study, please contact me at

[Vanessa.Doyle@mail.sit.edu](mailto:Vanessa.Doyle@mail.sit.edu) or 413-977-2888 or my advisor at [Sora.Friedman@sit.edu](mailto:Sora.Friedman@sit.edu)

## Appendix D

**Interview Questions**

1. How would you identify your racial identity?
2. What country did you study abroad in? (Question Deleted)
3. How long ago did you study abroad? (Question Deleted)
4. Tell me about your experience abroad.
5. Why were you interested in study abroad? What were you hoping to get out of it?
6. Why did you pick this country? Why did you select this program?
7. When you first arrived how did the locals interact with you? How did you feel?
8. How did you feel living in a foreign culture? Explain.
9. Were there any specific interactions you want to share?
10. What was it like to be a person of your race in that location?
11. Has your experience impacted your future travel plans to date?
12. What kind of support from staff did you receive on your trip?
13. Did you have any difficult interactions you want to share? How did you handle it?
14. How did you process it? Did you reach out for support?
15. What did you learn about yourself overall?
16. Is there anything else you would like me to know?

## Appendix E

**Study Abroad Staff: Participant Informed Consent**

My name is Vanessa Doyle and I am a student with the SIT International Education Graduate program.

I would like to invite you to participate in a study I am conducting for partial fulfillment of my Master's in International Education. Your participation is voluntary. Please read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and you will be given a copy of this form.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study is designed to find out what program structures work well to support African American (Black/African/Afro-Latino, etc.) students who study abroad and what is lacking on programs that could be improved for future students.

**Study Procedures**

Your participation will consist of answering interview questions. It will take approximately 40-60 minutes of your time. The one-on-one interview will be with Vanessa Doyle over the telephone. Each interview will be recorded with digital audio equipment and transcribed after the interview. You have the option to not be recorded. If you decide not to be recorded, the researcher will take handwritten notes during the interview. All of the recordings will be saved on the researcher's computer and deleted after the research project is completed in May.

**Potential Risks and Discomforts**

The potential risks to you as a participant are minimal. You might find it difficult to discuss stories you have heard from students. You only need to discuss what you are comfortable sharing. Your name and the organization you work for will not be revealed.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality will be maintained for all participants and responses during data collection and after the study is finished and in the presentation and publication of my research. I am the only one who will have access to this data. Your name will be changed for the data collection to ensure anonymity. All recordings will be stored on password protected files in an encrypted computer. After the project is complete, the files will be deleted.

### **Participation and Withdrawal**

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

### **Signature of Research Participant**

“I have read the above and I understand its contents and I agree to participate in the study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.”

Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Consent to Quote from Interview**

I may wish to quote from the interview with you in the presentation or articles resulting from this work. A pseudonym will be used in order to protect your identity.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

\_\_\_\_(initial) I agree to be quoted and a pseudonym (fake name) will be used to protect your identity.

\_\_\_\_(initial) I do not agree to be quoted

**Consent to Audio Record Interview**

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice

\_\_\_\_(initial) I agree to be recorded.

\_\_\_\_(initial) I do not agree to be recorded.

If you have any questions or want to get more information about this study, please contact me at

[Vanessa.Doyle@mail.sit.edu](mailto:Vanessa.Doyle@mail.sit.edu) or 413-977-2888 or my advisor at [Sora.Friedman@sit.edu](mailto:Sora.Friedman@sit.edu)

## Appendix F

**Interview Questions for Study Abroad Staff Members**

For staff who work at a HBCU (Historically Black College or University)

1. How many years have you worked with study abroad students or in the field of study abroad?
2. What feedback have you received from your African American students who study abroad?
3. What constructive feedback have you heard? What negative feedback have you heard?
4. Have students mention feeling supported by the programs? Did they mention a lack of support?  
  
Please explain in detail.
5. Did students feel supported by the program? Please explain.
6. What do you think study abroad programs can do to better support African American students?
7. What does your organization offer to programs to improve their support?
8. Where should support come from on programs abroad?
9. What else would you like to share about this topic?