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Social Identity and Intercultural Service: Knowing Yourself & Leading Others

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SOCIAL IDENTITY AND INTERCULTURAL SERVICE:

Knowing Yourself & Leading Others

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To God, the creator of all, you know I appreciate you, and you are so very forgiving. You are the almighty, and most potent. Please continue to show me, my purpose so that I can be faithful to you.

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Also, I would like to acknowledge that Black Panther hit theaters in February 2018, Wakanda FOREVER! Don't touch my hair, don't touch my crown.
Black Girl Magic is a real, it exists, as do I. We Gon' Be Alright!

<u>DEDICATION</u>

To the most ambitious, and supportive people, I am blessed to have known, and share a bloodline with, or as extended family members.

Great Grandpa Rev. Levert Braxton Sr. (November 27, 1924 - July 15, 1999)
Paw Paw Bruce Elliott Douglas, (May 8, 1947- March 27, 2007)
Great Grandma Louise (Davis) Braxton (March 8, 1922- March 16, 2014),
Great Grandma Evangelist Coriner "Madea" Jordan (February 17, 1923- February 28, 2015)
Great Grandpa Jordan (November 27, 1923- September 13, 2016)
Paw Paw Howard Sawyer, (June 14, 1933- March 29, 2017)

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ABSTRACT

Social Identity matters when providing intercultural service to youth, because our identity is a construct, and idea of who we are as individuals. We further use our social identities to influence our human behaviors, of ***self-concept***, and ***social identity.*** Furthermore, working with youth, and not being aware of the rooted history can be disturbing, specifically, because it reveals your own values, goals, preferences, and personalities. Research pertaining to social identity is still current. There is no surprise that what we learn about ourselves is important, and necessary, prior to leading others. Especially, when working with youth committing to social groups, and determining self worth.

This research will illustrate how social identity and Intercultural Service, influences youth, and will incorporate many types of learning experiences from myself, and interviewed participants, to help identify overlooked advantages, or disadvantages of social identities in various communities. The research was conducted over a two year span, of observation, and hands on experience, and two weeks of interviews. Participants were completed their participants via interview questionnaire response, in order to get insights to their experience of social identity, and working within communities that they do, or do not identify with.

Abbreviations

College Now Greater Cleveland …………………………………………….(CNGC)

Key Words

Racial identity   Social Identity   Cultural identity   Intercultural service

Words used interchangable, and meaning in this research paper

Black/African American - ancestors derived from the TransAtlantic Slave Trade, not first generation Africans, Caribbeans, South Americans, and/or Pan Africans

American - Persons temporarily residing, permanently residing, or born in America

White people - people of European descent, both American born, and non-American born, but live in America

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1 Capstone Background and Learning Objectives

Growing up in Anderson, Indiana as the daughter of two Black American young parents, shaped my reality, and social identity at a very young age. Over the years I heard many people say, "Slavery ended so long ago, get over it!" or "Black people are just pulling the race card." However, "Racial and ethnic inequalities loom large in American society. People of color face structural barriers when it comes to securing quality housing, healthcare, employment, and education." (Urban Institute, 2018).

American slavery was one of the greatest tragedies in humanity. Black people in America are still struggling with their *racial identity,* and *cultural identity* today due to the history of systemic racism. From the TransAtlantic Slave Trade to Black people in America today, systemic racism is so deeply rooted that it has created implicit stereotypes amongst social identity groups. For many Black people they still experience the damage and trauma in their schools and communities, which has affected Black youth in marginalized communities.

In the past when I talked to white friends about racism they believed that all Black people had the same equalities as white people, and that segregation did not exist in America in the 21st century. Unfortunately, Black youth in marginalized communities routinely receive dramatically different educational curriculum than that of a white students in a suburban neighborhoods due to redling that occured in the 1960's, because of this U.S. Education System is one of the most unequal in the industrialized world. Segregation is still prevalent in American classrooms, and Black marginalized communities still suffer. Often, I would hear from members of the community, "You can't teach these kids anything!" According to research from the National

Education Association (NEA), "The Black community faces educational issues similar to other minority groups, including the need for adequate funding for schools serving minority and disadvantaged students, as well as other issues with a special impact on the community." (NEA, 2017).

I decided to conduct my research on Social Identity and Intercultural Service: Knowing Yourself & Leading Others upon my experience of not being accepted into my dream Peace Corps program, and volunteering abroad, which lead me to staying in Cleveland, Ohio where I completed two years of community service as an AmeriCorps Ohio College Guide for College Now Greater Cleveland (CNGC), a non-profit organization that provides middle and high school students in schools and community-based settings across four Northeast Ohio counties and our advisors create a "college-going" culture in the schools by engaging students and their families individually and in group sessions.(CNGC, 2018). CNGC was the first organization of its kind in the nation. Since then, it has become the largest in Ohio and remains one of the largest in the nation. College Now is a national leader and has served as a model and best practice for other organizations around the country. (CNGC, 2018). In my experiential learning experience as an AmeriCorps member I realized that there was a lot that I did not know about myself, and I knew that it would affect my experiences working with others, especially being in a position where I essentially guided youth from my community to make decisions about their future.

Professional Learning Objectives

- Identified trends of intercultural service amongst people who understand their social identities, specifically their racial identity and cultural identity

- Gained an understanding of the interdisciplinary processes and applied it to my Capstone Project

Personal Learning Objectives

- I have improved my knowledge of social identity by learning how to understand consciousness of my own social identities and implicit biases of others social identities

- I have more proficient of the research process, and will apply skills learned for future, or more in-depth research

1.2 Statement of Research

After reflecting on my personal experiences as a Black person in America and my experiential learning experience as an AmeriCorps Ohio College Guide , I looked around the room and could not help, but to notice that there was not enough representation of Black Educators in the room. Although, I did not always believe that I was a good fit to be in an educator role, I began to realize that my presence as Black person working with underserved, low-income Black youth from my neighborhood matters, which I will explain more better detail throughout this research paper. First, I will explore the history of Black people in America and culture. Second, I will focus on social identity in-groups, and out-groups. Thirdly, I will provide personal exploration of intercultural service with Black youth in the education sector and why Black Educators representation matters. Lastly, I will provide a social change method that I think will work best to help engage youth engage in more leadership roles.

Personally, it was my experiential learning experiences that lead me to my research question: *How important is Intercultural Service, and Social Identity when choosing one's career path in neighborhoods that you identify with?*

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world (Brainy Quotes, 2018). With a closer examination on Social identity and intercultural service, knowing yourself and leading others, there are many angles which motivates my capstone research; however, I was able to narrow my focus. I have identified four themes that I will discuss in detail. The themes for this literature review are as follows: History, Social Identity, Intercultural Service, and Education, with all themes connecting to Black people in America.

To improve a better perspective of why social identity and intercultural service matters , we must first consider the gruesome history of racial discrimination of Black people in America. Although, Black people are not the only people in America that experience discrimination, for the purpose of this research I will solely focus on Black people in America. As harsh as it may seem for many people that believe racism no longer exists in America. There is a saying that, "America was built on the backs on slaves".

TransAtlantic Slave Trade and Middle Passage

The TransAtlantic Slave Trade took place between the 16th and 19th century, and is one of the greatest tragedies of all humanity. Sometimes I wonder if I would still question my racial identity and cultural identity, if there never was a TransAtlantic Slave Trade; however, I think it dismisses all of my elders that came before me and their experiences. "Millions of Africans were

torn from their homes, deported to the American continent and sold as slaves. Weapons and gunpowder were the most important commodities but textiles, pearls and other manufactured goods, as well as rum, were also in high demand" (United Nations, 2017).

The Middle Passage could take four to six weeks, but the average lasted between two and three months. Chained and crowded with no room to move, Africans were forced to make the journey under terrible conditions, naked and lying in filth" (Gates, 2003). Though Europeans tended to describe them simply as "Africans" (a term which no African would have recognized), African individuals viewed themselves according to kinship groups, lineage, and ethnicity, defined by distinct traditions and languages." (African Diaspora Culture, 2018).

Thirteenth

The thirteenth amendment to the Constitution declared that "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." (The Library of Congress, 2018).

Formally abolishing slavery in the United States, the 13th Amendment was passed by the Congress on January 31, 1865, and ratified by the states on December 6, 1865. (The Library of Congress, 2018). However, oppression of Black people continued after the 13th amendment. There were Lynchings, which forced the Jim Crow Era, to the 1960's Civil Rights Movements. Yet, in America is still one of the few countries that will not accept the fact that its powerful systematic racial system is still present today. Instead America places blame on Black people, stereotyping them as lazy, welfare thefts, unintelligent, and Black people are treated as second

class citizens. "Black identity is not simply seen as an imposed racial category, but one that is positively internally defined and transmitted across generations." (Bambrick, 2015).

The promise of freedom held out the hope of self-determination, educational opportunities, and full rights of citizenship. (Smithson National American History Museum, 2018).

Black People in America Today

" In December 1988, leaders of seventy-five Black groups met to discuss a new national agenda, of their race and preferred to be called, "African American." (Martin, pg 83, 1991). Over the years, I heard sayings, "divide and conquer," which is what happened to Africans culture once they were brought to America by white people. Now, as Black people in America, constantly ridiculed for not having "enough" culture. "As political and legislative decisions still are controlled by white males, these negative biases are often expressed through policy formation. There is an obvious trend in this society to discriminate against and deny access to social institutions to African-Americans." (Jewell, 1993).

Today Black people in America are still have to prove their racial identity, and cultural identity, to non-Black people, and Black people. Consistently trying justify how their social identity as Black people in America should be viewed. Implicit stereotypes affect how both Black people, and non-black people perceive the intercultural service of black people. According to Laura Green, in an article called, Negative Racial Stereotypes and Their Effect on Attitudes Toward African-Americans, she mentions that, " the racial stereotypes of early American history had a significant role in shaping attitudes toward African-Americans." (Green, 2018). Being Black in America has many implicit stereotypes, because of America's gruesome history towards Black people, is interesting, because I would think that people would see Black people

in America as the victims to slavery; however, the implicit stereotypes which were placed by the colonizers has continued into current American history. The horrors endured by enslaved African Americans, whether physical or mental, were numerous. (Colonial Williamsburg, 2018). Today Black people in America social identity is still being shaped.

2.2 Social Identity

Social identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s). Tajfel (1979) proposed that the groups (e.g. social class, family, football team etc.), which people belonged to were an important source of pride and self-esteem. (Tajfel, 1979). The importance of my social identity dates back to years before I was born, when my ancestors, who were African people, were brought to America, and enslaved by white people. There are many social identities that I have to think about often; however, social identity theory, includes three stages of how we categorize social identity groups. The first is categorization. We categorize objects in order to understand them and identify them. In a very similar way we categorize people (including ourselves) in order to understand the social environment. (Saul McLeod, 2008).

In the second stage, social identification, we adopt the identity of the group we have categorized ourselves as belonging to. If for example you have categorized yourself as a student, the chances are you will adopt the identity of a student and begin to act in the ways you believe students act (and conform to the norms of the group). Providing intercultural service to people with the same social identities from yours matters, because demonstrates support, and understanding. However, for many people in America, they go abroad, or into communities whose social identities, providing service, and not understand their in-group, or out-group privileges. (Saul McLeod, 2008). The final stage is social comparison. Once we have

categorized ourselves as part of a group and have identified with that group we then tend to compare that group with other groups. (Saul McLeod, 2008).

Also, when thinking of our social identities we must remember in-groups are groups you identify with, and out-groups are ones that we don't identify with, and may implement our implicit biases against. "Structurally, being Black in America society means occupying a racially defined status; associated with this status are roles in family, community, and society." (Demo and Hughes, 1990). According to Henri Tajfel and John Turner, Social Identity article, "We adopt the identity of the group that we belong to, and we act in ways that we perceive members of that group act." (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

Additionally, the concept is of particular interest as it may shed light on how objects, contribute to shaping and sustaining people's identities.In particular, in youth, family, peers, and school represent main social contexts in which communication processes are likely to affect young people's identities." (Elisabetta Crocetti and Monica Rubini, 2017).

<u>List of Social Identities examples (not a full list of ALL social identities)</u>

Race	Black, white, Latinx, Native American, Asian Pacific Islander, Bi/Multiracial
Gender	Woman, Man, Transgender, Post Gender
Ethnicity	Native American, Asian Pacific Islander, Jewish, European American, Lebanese, and etc.
Sexual Orientation/ Attactionality	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pan-Attractional, Heterosexual, Queer Questioning
Religion/ Spirituality/ Faith/ Meaning	Christian, Pagan, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Atheist, Secular Humanist, Scientologist, Agnostic, Jewish
Social Class	Poor, Working Class, Lower-Middle Class, Upper-Middle Class, Owning Class, and Ruling Class
Age	Child, Young Adult, Middle-Age Adult, Elderly
Disability	People with disabilities (cognitive, physical, emotional, etc.), Temporarily able-bodied, Temporarily disabled

These are some common "isms" associated with social identity, and their meanings:

Racism: prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior.

*Sexism:*prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex.

*Colorism:*prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a dark skin tone, typically among people of the same ethnic or racial group.

*Ableism:*discrimination in favor of able-bodied people.

Heterosexism: discrimination or prejudice against homosexuals on the assumption that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation.

Classism: prejudice against or in favor of people belonging to a particular social class.

Ageism: prejudice or discrimination on the basis of a person's age.

2.3 Intercultural Service

According to the Developing Cultural Mindedness organization, A Guidebook For Generating Stronger Intercultural Service, "is understanding that service learning intentionally crosses a cultural boundary (not necessarily an international boundary), and integrates cultural learning of self and others." (Intercultural Service, 2018). This matters particularly for people working with youth, and within diverse populations. "The way we see, interact with, and understand the world depends on the culture and values we grew up with. As we become increasingly interconnected, it is important to understand who you are in order to best communicate with others." (Georgetown CCPE, 2016). "For an example intercultural service is broader than intercultural service learning and includes experiences that are not necessarily

connected to an academic course. Mission trips and voluntourism are common forms of

Intercultural service." (Intercultural Service, 2018).

When attending SIT Graduate Institute, it was extremely fascinating to me how many

white students had studied abroad within communities that they did not closely identify with, but

that they found need to "fix" what they found to be an issue in another country versus their

experiences in their native countries. However, when my peer expressed that they should try to

help within communities, from their home states in the United States, then fear was present.

Then as an AmeriCorps member for CNGC, most people viewed their college degree, as an

exception to why they thought they were best fit to work with youth in community that they

identified with. Also, I can recall in my first orientation, how members picked apart the

marginalized Black schools, while celebrated the predominately white suburban white schools,

and parochial schools.

2.4 Education

Students who are born in any particular social class will most likely develop the same

educational values as those around them. "A focus on objective social class entails a direct

determination of a person's social class based on socioeconomic variables -- mainly income,

wealth, education and occupation." (Robert Bird and Frank Newport, 2017).

Historically, America has a stigma of segregating students of color in schools, "racial

isolation of African American children in separate schools, located in separate neighborhoods

has become a permanent feature of our landscape." (Rothstein, 2013).

Research shows; however, that one study found correlation between same-race teachers

and reduced rates of exclusionary discipline and willful defiance among black students at all

grade levels. Another found that schools with more black teachers and leadership also had more black students in gifted programs. (Tuten, 2018).

Our Social Identity matters when providing intercultural service to our youth, especially in out-group communities. In my findings I will cover what my interview participants, learned about themselves, when they first learned about their social identities, and if that shaped their current career path working with youth.

To recognize the historical events that took place in America, and investigate the history of the Black people in America, from slavery to now. Especially, the negative behaviors associated with their social identities, in the reflection of youth. It is important to create a space where youth can be proud of their in-group, or out-group identities, and see these as *all* advantages. In the research, Celebrating the Strengths of Black Youth: Increasing Self-esteem and Implications for Prevention, Hernandez, and Napierala mention that, "it is particularly critical to understand the protective function of self-esteem and positive racial identity among these youth." (Hernandez, and Napierala , 2014).

In addition, Johnson mentions in a Multidimensional Approach to Racial Identity, "A growing body of research on racial socialization dimensions and practices shows that the racial socialization of African American children is an important part of preventing the negative effects of living in a society where racist experiences and discrimination may occur." (Johnson, 2001).

We as advocates of education can impact our youth by, "being the change, we wish the world see," these are powerful words that I learned from the late South African leader, Nelson Mandela. In many cases, youth are shielded from social change issues, like having conversations about their social identity groups, because some people believe that conversations involving

social change, are not meant for children. Primarily, because I think it was open the connection

with truth of brutality in American history. In programs like CNGC, that offers these extended

educational experiences to underrerpressed, low-income communities, they also provide a space,

which members of their organization, can lead Social Justice workshops surrounding social

identity conversations. Our work together helps develop their perception of our social identities,

and their own.

2.5 Change

CNGC noticed a trend with youth, in the Greater Cleveland area, want wanted to offer

better educational opportunities. In the book, Listening Before Telling, Quarry & Ramirez state

that, "advocacy gives voice to marginalized populations, promoting an active participation in

issues that affect their lives Communication for another development: Listening before telling,

and provides a platform where individuals and groups contest interpretations of problems and

proposed solutions." (Quarry, and Ramirez, 2009).

While working for CNGC, A model that I used with the youth during a social justice talk

workshop, was the the Social Change Model of Leadership Development, " is to enhance student

learning and development; more specifically, to develop in each student participant greater:

Self-knowledge, Leadership Competence , and to facilitate positive social change at the

institution or in the community. That is, to undertake actions which will help the

institution/community to function more effectively and humanely." (The Social Change Model

of Leadership Development, 2012).

With this model, leadership is viewed as process, rather than a position.

Individual: means being aware of beliefs, values, attitudes, and emotions that motivate one to take action.

Group: Collaboration, Common Purpose, and Controversy Civility, recognizing the common effort needed to include different viewpoints of social identity

Community & Society: Citizenship, and Change, when an individual and group become responsible to connect the community

So, overall the research, social identity and intercultural service Intercultural Service, Knowing Yourself, and Leading Others, serves its importance for this research, because, for the Black person in America, specifically those in educator positions, working in the education sector not understanding your self-identity, can potentially affect relationships with your social

identity groups with youth, because youth are searching for a connection with people that identify within similar social identity groups as themselves. When providing intercultural services within communities that you do not majority of your social identity groups do not align with with youth, explore your own social identities and meanings. History, connects to social identity, and how we perceive ourselves, and others within our same social identity groups. This then impacts our intercultural service work, or volunteer opportunities working with youth. Rather working within communities whose social identities we either do, or do not identify with this is can affect youths learning opportunities. Thus, we must express the importance of change (social change), that can help us better identify our own self-identities, and social identities.

At this stage, my literature review remains rudimentary.

CHAPTER 3: Practitioner Inquiry & Design

3.1 Framework

For my capstone research I selected four participants to complete interview questions on perspectives structured around the social identity theory, and experiences with intercultural service. I chose to discuss the Social Identity Theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979, because I thought it was the best fit model to discuss my research topic, Social Identity and Intercultural Service: Knowing Yourself & Leading Others.

In regards to the Social Identity Model, Tajfel, and Turner state that , "In order to increase our self-image we enhance the status of the group to which we belong." (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Their approach also displayed, that the in-group person, would seek negativity out of the out-group person, in order to improve their social social identities for their groups. What Tajfel and Turner breakdown three categorizations in the Social Identity Theory. The first is

Categorization, which we categorize objects in order to understand them and identify them. (Turner, 1979). It is not unusual for us to do this to others, because we believe by placing them into categorizes it tells us a lot about that particular person, or group of individuals.

The second stage is *Social Identification*, we adopt the identity of the group we have categorized ourselves as belonging to. (Turner, 1979). Their theory for this categorization is that for an example is if we categorize ourselves as a teacher, the changes we will adopt the identity as a teacher in act in ways as such to conform to the norms of that group.

The final stage is *Social Comparison*, once we have categorized ourselves as part of a group and have identified with that group we then tend to compare that group with other groups. In each of these stages the acknowledge make it aware that there is a such thing as an *in-group*, and *out-group,* which we don't identify with, and may discriminate against. (Turner, 1979).

3.2 Definitions

To understand the importance of why this topic is prevalent today, we need to always start with the depth history, as it is important to understand the root cause of this research. I am discussing social identity, how the history of the black person in America, and why it is important to be active in communities, that you identify with, including communities that we do not closely identify with. There there several factors to why social identity and intercultural service intercultural service matters, specifically the main systemic root of race in America. For many even in communities that we identify with, we are facing issues with still being stereotyped based off historic **sayings** of the Black person in America. My research began with me trying to understand the connection of why my research question was even a topic. That is when I realized, it is a topic, because with years of systemic racial unsettling, the image of be as Black

person in America, has affected my thought of how I view myself, but also how I am marginalized by others into these social identity categories.

3.3 Methods

The purpose of this research was to obtain perspectives of friend's experiences with how their Social Identity has influenced their career paths throughout life, and I seek to discover and describe these personal perspectives. I conducted a qualitative research study. Due to time constraints, and interviewing each interviewee in person, or over the phone, they completed the questions on their own time, and emailed me their responses to each question. I interview four people that are either current, or former employees of educational organizations, who were selected at random. None of the participants will be referred to by their names, nor will I include any personal information that I know about them, that they did not share in their interview responses.

I spent a two years volunteering, and understanding College Now Greater Cleveland (CNGC): what impact I have as a Black woman is in the high school, what its goals are and how it has remained successful over the years providing services to underserved, low-income students in the Greater Cleveland area. With a strong connection in Cleveland, Ohio, have since expanded to surrounding Northeast Ohio cities, CNGC provides middle school, and high school students with in-school college, and career advising. They host College Application Month, that originally kicked off by first lady Michelle Obama. In addition, to FAFSA nights, parent information sessions, providing in-state, and out-of-state college visits, scholarship opportunities, and a mentoring program to help graduating seniors with their transition throughout each year in college.

My method of research was ***Community- Based Participatory,*** this way community members may have the opportunity to decision making and ownership of what happens in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD), and ***Place-Based Approach,*** members from the community will have an opportunity to address issues that exist in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, and third-party/ non profit parties that are placed within the schools to assist the students on their educational journeys. In which, community leaders, and school professionals will be able to apply knowledge learned to bond together, because of their common identity with the community.

This community –based participatory research project will explore the perspectives of friends who work in educational fields, including AmeriCorps members, whom will share their individual perspectives on Leadership Development and Social Identity, including being placed in underserved, low-income communities, and learning how to their own knowledge of leadership development, and social identity may affect their roles, professionally, and personally. Social Identity has been a lot of the talk in the media, in workplaces, and around holiday kitchen table. It occupies social justice facilitations within organizations, including the arising question, "How do we learn how apply our social identity and intercultural service to our roles, without allowing it to affect our Leadership Development when working with youth. To collect data on others perspectives surrounding Intercultural Service and Social Identity.

3.4 Limitations

Health

Although, this research was carefully thought out. There were several limitations in my research. When I had planned to originally capstone in 2016, and then again in 2017, I had went

through so many ups and downs in life where I had forgotten my purpose, and lost my passion. I was uncertain how I was going to successfully collect data for my research, because as gained new experiences, my ideas changed. There were many days, and nights when I could not focus, and did not notice how much time had passed.

Essentially, I had many days were I could not focus, or did not feel hungry. As a result sometimes I would have to reflect on memories from my elders, and regaining my focus back to what purpose I served as a Black woman in America.

So, I would say that if there were many depressions that I experienced, and failed to communicate that with a counselor, or your former AmeriCorps (capstone) Supervisor. It is important to communicate what is going on, because even if you think that they might not understand, it helped me not feel like I was constantly hiding my pain. They will know what you need, when you don't. I had to take breaks, and do things that I loved to relax my mental like writing a poem, or painting a picture. The only deadline that I almost accomplished, was not my paper.

Sample size

Originally, I was going to present at least three course designs to be implemented as course electives in high schools to express the power of language. This changed, not because I am no longer passionate, but I have decided to this at another, given that it is a much longer process to get curriculum approved. In addition, I was overwhelmed with working three jobs at the time. It's not never, just now now.

Mainly, because I continued to change my research, I lost opportunities to interview potential participants, and got turned down by some, because they were "too busy" to interview.

However, it was my original plan to submit a SIT/ World Learning survey monkey to have the perspectives of current, and past professionals who enjoy intercultural service, in-state, and out of the country.

I had four participants for this research paper, which were really great candidates, and very expressive. I am grateful that they trusted me with their honest opinions, on topics that they make not usually communicate openly.

Time

The research that I originally wanted to do, was broad, because my potential participants, would either back out of the agreement due to having a full schedule, to changing my topic slightly each semester based on personal feelings.

I wanted to survey my students, and organization on their response to my research questions; however, due to not having a solid foundation of my research most people did not want to participate in something that could change, in regards to what they had originally signed up for. Therefore, I had to continue to do research, and find other topics that equally mattered, or tied into my original topic, this way I can still have the experiential learning experience, and get my points across.

Although, I am happy that I decided to attend graduate school, two weeks after graduating with my undergraduate degree. I learned a lot in the process, but I realistically, think I should have given myself a six month break based on my academic experiences.

CHAPTER 4: Presentation & Data Analysis

The definitions of the findings as they appeared within the context of the interviews provided. A calculation of the frequency of each theme and overlap was collected. They are as follows:

4.1 History

This includes family history, identity in America, and abroad countries. For some part of the *African Diaspora*, this an identity that they always questioned, and for others Black is only their identity, depending on location. This was coded with:

- Africanness when not being born in Africa, or first generation born in America

- "Blackness" in America

- African-American by birth, not choice

- Connection of Black People in America, and across the diaspora

- Black History ties to freedom, social identity, and education

- Black History is often excluded as a separate connection to America; however, it is American history.

4.2 Social Identity

Anything related to their in-group, or out-group social identities. For many this included the ability to be prideful openly, or to hinder curiosities of other non-identifiable identities.

- Disadvantaged/ Advantaged social identities

- Believing all identities are advantages

- Ability to explore countries that they do not identify

4.3 Intercultural Service

This covers how we connect our self-identity, and social identity, not only within our own communities, but understand, or being willing to learn of others social identity experiences. This was was revealed from the participants understandings.

- Understand the meaning of social identity
- To provide directly to your people
- The ability to understand different people with different needs

4.4 Youth

Anyone under the age of 20 years old, considering that some students have to repeat a year, or two due to test scores, and attendance. Understanding of social identity, and intercultural service, from an experience as a child to adulthood. Youth were portrayed as:

- Vulnerable population
- Being self-awareness, within program

4.5 Change

Meaning being conscious of your own self-identities, and understanding social identity. Not intentionally, being ignorant, and wanting to see progress within communities.

- Being consciously aware of own social identities
- The not understanding as child, and the understanding as an adult
- The understand as a child, but being more aware as an adult
- Always wanting to create change

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

My findings of social identity and intercultural service: Knowing Yourself and Leading Others, was supported by the perspectives of four friends, who worked in the education field, and provided their experiential learning experiences while working with youth that they share social identities with. Even as professionals, sometimes we don't stop and listen to what youth are asking from us. Service that transcends just your own culture, or one set of cultural norms, but focuses on utilizing all available aspects of different cultures and seeing the similarities.

It mattered to me what my self-identity, and social identity, as a Black woman in America mattered even within communities where the youth, and I shared similar identities. Although, my experience with the high school, remained successful over the years providing services to underserved, low-income students in the Greater Cleveland area. I had my doubts, but realized that at least three out of the four participants had similar experiences while working within our community, with youth.

Evidence, from Tajfel Henri, (1979), Social Identity Theory, individual identity is not just derived from the individuals sense of their own selves. For an example, he believed that one's group membership plays a major role. Such as membership range from race, ethnicity, country, culture, education, field of work, and etc. In addition, the Social Change and Leadership Model, was important in navigating how we can the individual (yourself), the group, and the community. Just like the Social Identity Theory model when working within groups we recognise the efforts, it may take based on our self-identity, and social identity. Below is each theme focusing the interviews, and summarizing what the interview participants said, in overall all categories.

<u>History</u>

This is very similar, to a couple of my participants whose parents migrated from Africa, to America, to have the opportunity to have a better education, and employment. However, even those whose parents were born in Africa, and know their family history, still question their social identities in America. Participant 2, mentions, ***Blackness***, and ***Africaness***, when referring to their identity in the interview questions. This refers to people in America putting people into social identity groups, that they think best fits a Black person, based on their knowledge of their African history prior to slavery. In schools, I have seen this divide with youth that grew up in the same community, but maybe one youth, understands more about their African heritage, than another student.

In America, the issue of self-identity, and social identity is, defined not only by the institutional racism construct in America, but it's power in other countries. Often people believe that Black people are less educated, or entitled. Participant 2, also mentioned that they had difficulties trying to sort through their social identity groups, because they were still being marginalized, for other aspects of what was consider Black, while attending school in their youth, such as a hairstyle, and food that Black people in America considered to be different. In addition, there were a couple of the participants, that mentioned they believed that their education as a privilege, while others were raised that they had to go attend college, to be a better Black person in America. Based on the communities that they the participants were born in, they all lived in communities that they shared at least two identities with members of their community. One being race, two gender, and three socio-economic status.

In the College Now Greater Cleveland (CNGC), culture, they are aware of the systemic constructs within the Cleveland, Ohio communities. Thus, often in meetings they referred to their organization, of having a culture. Meaning that all workers, and volunteers, participating within the organization should have a common goal, and understand of the social identities when working with youth in underserved, low-income communities. Including, in the interview process, they talked about understanding of privilege. This is similar, to the communities, and programs that my participants participated in. Out of the four participants, one is a current AmeriCorps member, the second participant, an coordinator for an after-school program, the third is teacher, and the four participant was an study abroad advisor.

 In each of their experiences they express the importance of their self-identity, and social identity when entering into these roles, when advising youth. Participant 3, has a similar experience as participant 2, regarding what it means for them to be Black in America, because they are technically black, but also share the closeness of their African heritage. They are aware of what groups they may be placed in based on exterior appearances, and that working with youth, that may not fit that criteria, can vary in experience. All participants learned about Black history in American. Participant 4 said, " Although, I learned about Black history at a young age, I did not start thinking about my social identity until I go much older."

<u>Social Identity</u>

Everyday when driving to to my capstone site, it would take me about a thirty minute drive, so I played my music, and enjoyed the ride. Often, I reflected family history. Similar to that of my interview participants. I then began to question my identity, working intenitions working with youth, and what I hoped to gain out of the experience, and what the students could

learn from me. Participant 1 said, " I always knew about my social identities, I was aware when I was 3 years old, and never saw my any part of my social identities as disadvantages. However, this was not the case for all of the participants. Participant 3, mentioned that there were times when they wished they were white, instead of black, because then their educational experience would have been easier. Although, participant 3, did not elaborate on what was meant by saying that, it goes to working in the school, in my first day in a classroom, a white student yelled, "Speak American." There were times when students were marginalized based on how they spoke, "proper", or "ghetto", is how it was always categorized.

Prior, to moving to Cleveland, Ohio, I was born in Anderson, Indiana, and raised by two young parents. We only moved to Cleveland, Ohio, to have better opportunities, than what was available for us in the small city of Anderson, Indiana. Living in Anderson, I do not recall there being any programs similar to CNGC. Also, being a first generation college student, and not knowing what questions to ask until being exposed to that program, I wanted to give back to a community, that I believed helped shape to the person that I am today. However, particant 2, "wished they had the opportunity to live abroad, to find if others viewed their social identity as negative behaviors, outside of America."

Participant 1 said, "I believed that my social identity was important, because with our individual identities, it can potentially create a space to learn about the diversity, within our communities.Essentially, that there is always going to be assumptions about communities based on what others hear, or the news, but we as people have to be more open minded. As a former educator once, told me, "In order to lead, I must be willing to listen, and learn."

Many people believe that youth do not experience harsh discriminations, but in the real world, hate has no age. Participant 2 said that, "working with youth there were discriminations amongst temperament ("well-mannered vs. "difficult" children), or loud and quiet children amongst professionals. I also experienced this when working in the classroom with students, and presenting workshops." I also witnessed this in my capstone experience while working with youth. As a third party organization in their school, sometimes they would behave in a more talkative manner; however, instead of judging the students, and understanding the culture, I would say something relatable to better engage the students to the topic of each workshop. Majority of the time, it was sharing my student experience.

<div align="center">Intercultural Service</div>

When I asked the participants about the importance of intercultural service, they mentioned that it is important, because if you don't understand the community, it is easy to step wrong and offend, potentially losing out on the opportunity to engage in intercultural service. Participant 1 said, " It is important to always support our communities, we have to continue to uplift each other, and be examples for the youth, because we do not know how they are already starting to view themselves based on the stereotypes of the Black people in America."

While participant 4 said, being a part of a community, specifically, an underserved racially, and low- income community, there was a lot barriers, when it came to scholarship opportunities, and some leadership roles when I attended a school that majority of a social identity group that I did not identify with. Also, that lack of cohesiveness within their classroom setting, in the respect they sought from their students that seemed so elusive.

Even as professionals, sometimes we don't stop and listen to what youth are asking from us. Service that transcends just your own culture, or one set of cultural norms, but focuses on utilizing all available aspects of different cultures and seeing the similarities. What I noticed about about CNGC, is that they offered several trainings about, culture, and identity, or social justice presentation opportunities. So, for professionals, that might have believed that it was not good fit for them, because more aware of the cultures, instead of pity. Participant 1, started social identity workshops a race, to boost the self-esteem of youth in their AmeriCorps school.

Participant 4 mentioned how they did not stop to listen and learn before making requests (in class, in research), and that was wrong. Not because in the end they didn't get what they needed, but because it's just the wrong way to build a relationship with people you say you want to help. This created barriers between them, and the youth that they identified with.

Considering, that I grew up in the same city, where I completed my service, I was able to connect easily with the the students in the high school. Participant 3 said, I went to another state, and worked with international students. I just wanted to see if I would be treated differently, in an new environment." Therefore, they almost got a global perspective of what it meant to be a Black person and in an educator position. In the position they realized that they had the power to try to change their social identities in to a positive light.

<u>Youth</u>

Volunteering for College Now Greater Cleveland (CNGC), as an AmeriCorps member was meaningful to me, because I was familiar with them as an organization in my high school. However, my participants, did not have that connection of working with educations that they had history with growing up, instead some choose to work abroad with youth that shared, a different

racial/ ethnic background, native language, minority gender from their own, and different socio-economic class. Participant 1 said, I choose to work with youth, because I wanted there to be more role models like me in school for students that look like me. Participant 2 said, that they always had a passion working with youth, but never really thought they would. However, for my experience, I never wanted to work with youth, because I did not think that I was a good enough role from them. Mainly, because I of my neighborhood that I grew up in, my race, and socioeconomic status. This was all views that were so deeply ingrained into my mind a Black person in American; although, I had great Black personal role models at my school.

Participant 3 said, "I think that a person's experiences with the group, or lack thereof, can definitely impact the youth they work with. From my personal experience, because of how my household upbringing and grade school experience were, I was still set apart from my students."

Especially in underserved students, I believe that youth aware of their self-identity, and social identity, will value the *space* that they are in when interacting with educators.   I still had trouble understanding things and approached situations from a viewpoint of me needing to control some unruly children and correct their bad behavior. I did not take time to understand how and why the behavior manifested in the first place. Participant 3, also said, that because of their identity there were moments when they did not think they said be in their current position working with youth.

Certain stereotypes of Black people in America are very related to our social identities, and affects youth at a young age. I can recall learning a few hateful chants, when I was growing up; however, at the time when I did not fully understand why it was wrong, I knew it was wrong based on the expression of the classmates who reacted negatively to chants. That brings me to

something that my mother used to say, "If you do not have anything nice to say, then don't say anything at all.

Instead of inciting hate of things that we do not know, we should move forward to create social change.

Change

It's all mindset. Until individuals themselves want to change, the change won't occur. Enough people, as well, have to want to change in the same way, and work together. So the mindset of changing paradigms as well as the mindset of working collaboratively. That is what it comes down to. Mindset. It's a lot. People don't really want to do that kind of work.

We need to try and learn about and understand each other. I believe that having exposure to people from different cultural backgrounds, is necessary to create this understanding. People who grow up in New York City, and certain parts of DC are at a great advantage in this regard. Especially since we are now in a different time where we are more connected to each other then ever. Participant 2 said, "I am getting my masters in some sort of higher education degree," this participant at first not knowing if they wanted to make their career working with youth, is now making their purpose to work with youth. They are seeing the changes it has impacted in their student for the better just by being a mentor.

More compassionate people, who are lifelong students of life. Focusing on love instead of hate, and focusing on treating mental health, and trauma that people have experienced.

It's all mindset. Until individuals themselves want to change, the change won't occur. Enough people, as well, have to want to change in the same way, and work together. So the

mindset of changing paradigms as well as the mindset of working collaboratively. That is what it comes down to. Mindset. It's a lot. People don't really want to do that kind of work.

Participant 2 realized that they wanted to create change at a young age, there were always aware of their personal identity, and social identity to others. Constantly, being marginalized for their physical features, and sometimes not appreciated, motivated that person to want to become a leader, and advocate of social change.

Social identity and intercultural service has been mentioned throughout my capstone research paper.

6.3 Conclusion

This capstone research experience has reminded of the importance of remembering my ancestral roots. The most important aspect from this research is to understand is that our social identities will always matter in this society, no matter how many social justice marches, or workshops we attend, because the construct of social identity is built internationally. Also, if someone has not questioned their own social identities first, and tried to learn them, why would they want to help out in other communities, that they potentially do not fully understand.

In the Black community, I have witnessed many non-Black people, and Black people that have not questioned their own social identities, but continue to provide intercultural service within populations that they do not most identify with, and sometimes it has been damaging to populations. Since I am specially, speaking of Black people in America, this experiences has opened my eyes to my own implicit biases about others social identity.

I believe that College Now Greater Cleveland's (CNGC), college access opportunities to unserved, low-income students is a great opportunity for students to flourish their learning

opportunities about self-identity, and can potentially open the doors for other professional opportunities. Although, CNGC does not specifically target Black youth in the Greater Cleveland area, who make up a lot of the population, but I do not always believe receive the recognition that they deserve.

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<u>APPENDIX A: LETTER OF CONSENT</u>

Racara Sawyer
SIT Graduate Institute
Capstone Research
Instructor: John Ungerleider

14 March 2018

Dear fellow Educator:

I am a graduate student at the School of International Training in Brattleboro; I am very interested in perspectives surrounding Intercultural Service and Social Identity. My capstone research requires that I conduct a small, well-defined research project, which will be supervised by our instructor. To help me complete this assignment, I am inviting you to participate in the research.

I am interested in the perspectives friend's experiences with how their Social Identity has influenced their career paths throughout life, and I seek to discover and describe these personal perspectives. No particular participant will be the subject of my research, and yet by agreeing to participate all will contribute to deeper understanding of how the world views you, but most importantly, how you view yourself. We will be conducting this research with via an online Google Forms Survey.

If you choose to participate in on the Google Form: your participation will last approximately 30 minutes and then to be submitted to me via email. During the Google Form, if you any questions are unclear, then I include your top to perspectives of which you thought the question was insinuating.

The central question of my Capstone Research that I will be asking is: "How important is Intercultural Service, and Social Identity when choosing one's career path in neighborhoods that you identify with?" I will also be asking other sub-questions to help map your perspectives and understandings of this important conflict. Should you become uncomfortable during the Google Form, you may choose to end your participation.

Your participation is completely voluntary and confidential. I will protect your identity and that of all other participants through the use of pseudonyms in my essay or any future essay or presentation. Participants should understand that they may be quoted directly but that their names will appear nowhere in the research.

Participants will have the opportunity to review their interview statements for accuracy, and if requested I will share my overall findings and analysis with the participants. All data will be securely stored on my computer. Then it will be destroyed. Please understand that you may withdraw from this study at any time, without prejudice. Finally, this project is for academic research purposes only and will not be published or used for the researchers' financial gain.

I appreciate your willingness for taking the time to help us learn more about the your professional and personal perspective. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me (via Racara Sawyer (216) 577-3778, or racara. sawyer@mail.sit.edu).

This comes with thanks,

Racara Sawyer

I have read the above and discussed it with the researcher. I understand the study and agree to participate.

Signature: ; Date:

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Racara Sawyer
SIT Graduate Institute
Capstone Research
Instructor: John Ungerleider

14 March 2018

Dear fellow Educator:

1. What does social identity mean to you?

2. When did you first learn about your own social identities?

3. How do you perceive your current workspace, and the primary obstacles that you face, or do not face?

4. What does intercultural service mean to you?

5. When working with youth what discriminations have you witnessed either from other youth, or professionals in the building?

6. Why do you think it is important to understand communities that you do identify with when working in them?

7. Do you believe that if you identify with particular social identity groups that you are entitled to work within those communities even if you do not have the educational background? (Please explain why, or why not)

8. Do you think this will affect the youth you are working with? (Why or why not?)

9. What do you believe to be your current work space when it comes to intercultural service amongst your peers? (Boss, co-worker, students, family)

10. Which of your social identities do you believe are advantages? (Work, home..)

11. Which of your social identities do you believe to be disadvantages? (Work, home)

To gather further insight into their into their perspectives, our burning interview questions will be:

1. What comes to mind when you think of a perfect leader in education?

2. What have been your past experiences with either choosing to identify, or not identifying with your social identities?

3. How have you been directly impacted in the workplace?

4. Do you wish that you could choose new social identities, and if so what, and why?

5. What do you think will help the world change?

6. Have you ever been discriminated against before?

7. If you could change one thing about your program, or AmeriCorps what would it be?

APPENDIX C: FIGURES & TABLES

Figure 1.1: Social Identity Theory Model