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Virginia R. Downing

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, downingvirginia08@gmail.com

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Navigating Spaces: Exploring the Impact of Study Abroad for U.S. Students of Color

by

Virginia R Downing

A THESIS

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Navigating Spaces: Exploring the Impact of Study Abroad for U.S. Students of Color

Virginia Downing, M.A.

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Adviser: Debra Mullen

Opportunities for international travel are becoming a necessity for undergraduate students in the United States. Students are taking advantage of study abroad experiences that will impact their future and provide benefits that students may not be able to receive in the U.S. The increase in scholarships and variety of cost-effective study abroad programs are allowing students from a variety of different backgrounds the opportunity to travel, which before was only seen as an opportunity for the wealthy. As study abroad continues to grow as a high impact practice, so should the way administrators approach the impact this experience has for their students.

The purpose of this study is to explore the overall impact of study abroad for students of color that attend a predominantly White institution (PWI). Through a semi-structured interview protocol, qualitative interviews were conducted with five students of color who spent more than eight weeks abroad. The findings indicated that students of color have a significantly different experience abroad compared to their White peers. Participants were able to articulate their study abroad experience while reflecting on the impact it made on their remaining time on campus. Discussion of identities abroad and connections to international communities are discussed, as well as implications for Student Affairs practice. Recommendations for future research are presented.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“Imagine for a moment that you are one of a few minority students at a majority white university. You’ve likely taken a major step outside of your comfort zone simply by enrolling at this institution. Then imagine that every piece of promotional material and every study abroad administrator says that, in order for you to develop cross-cultural skills, you need to travel halfway around the world. Meanwhile, for you, every day is a cross-cultural swim in the deep end of the pool” (Salisbury, 2012 p.2).

She never noticed the difference. Being the only black girl in the room was a personal identifier for her ever since she moved away from the rough neighborhoods of the city, into suburbia. Enrolling in a college was no different. She enrolled in a place near to her family’s heart, the place they wanted to see their child be the first to graduate from, not thinking about the experiences she may have while she was there.

Orientation was different. No one wanted to talk to her, unless they were recruiting her for the Black Student Union or the first-generation support services group. She was hurt and confused. Did she make the right choice coming here? She knew she wanted something more, to be able to see the world outside of her home state. She wanted to see that she could be accepted and make friends from different parts of the world.

She boarded the plane for Spain the summer after her first year in college. Once she met the group that she would spend eight-weeks with, it started happening again. “Why won’t they talk to me?” She wondered. She saw cliques form and watched chatter turn into friendships, friendships that she wanted. Instead of relying on the students from

her school, she branched out to the streets of Barcelona. Speaking openly with street vendors and students from the campus she was on, she felt welcomed. In France, where she would recall the history of African-Americans in Paris during the 1920s, she felt the vibrant and diverse lifestyle throughout the rooms of jazz clubs or the diverse people she met on the metro. An African woman approached and assumed she spoke French. She smiled and apologized for not being able to share a conversation with someone she wished she could have spoken with.

Returning home felt different. She wanted more of what she experienced that summer, and felt the only way to do so was to go abroad again. She boarded the plane for Ireland the summer after her third year. By then, she felt more confident to make friends on her own terms, regardless of how they approached her. Through the scenic views of the Irish countryside and learning the 'Irish Jig,' to the historic sounds of Dublin, she felt as if she could live like this forever; making friends with people from all over the world that wanted to get to know her, which was lacking back home.

This time, as she returned home, she felt even more different. As graduation approached and she reflected on her four years in college, she began to notice a trend. She was always the only one. She was the only person of color in her social groups and student organizations. She was the only person of color on her study abroad programs. She started to think about why people did not immediately speak to her, and refused to believe that it was due to the color of her skin. She buried the thought and continued to start her plans for the future. It wasn't until after graduation that she began to reflect on her time in college, and how she racially identifies, that a flood of thoughts came rushing to her head. Maybe those people she went to college with did not normally have friends

of a different race, as she realized all of those groups she so desperately wanted to be a part of, were not diverse in social backgrounds. How did this reflection impact how she acted during her time in college? If she had had these thoughts throughout her time in college, would she have done anything differently? How did study abroad influence this reflection?

Problem Statement

The study abroad experience allows students to immerse themselves in different cultures and lifestyles they are not normally accustomed to. Study abroad is an opportunity for students to see a different side of the world and personally grow from the experience. Researchers contend the impact study abroad programs provide lasts beyond the time of the experience, (Cubillos & Ilvento, 2013; Doyle, 2008; Haines, 2013; Rexeisen, 2013) but the discussion of how those experiences influence the environment a student returns to is rare. Research shows that studying abroad is beneficial for a student's development. Students return from study abroad feeling more confident, independent, and are able to see the world in a new way. Study abroad offices and returning student participants promote the benefits of study abroad programs by sharing stories of adventure and how the experience can open doors to future career paths. When promoting the impact study abroad programs have on students, a major focus is directed toward students growing in cultural awareness and developing cross-cultural skills, but are these the same skills students of color gain while abroad? When a student of color hears about the experiences of going abroad and what to expect, the information is often generalized and focused on a specific type of student that studies abroad the most: the White female. In the 2013 report from NAFSA-Association of International Educators,

Caucasian women were the highest percentage of students currently studying abroad (Institute of International Education, 2014). Of the 65 percent of women who studied abroad, 76 percent identified as White (Institute of International Education, 2014). Due to the generalized expectations and benefits of study abroad, students who identify as a student of color may not have the same expectations or experiences abroad. In addition, students may return with more of a need to reflect on their experiences abroad in a space where they feel comfortable. Students of color who attend an institution that has a predominantly White student population may see their experiences on campus differently than others once returning from a study abroad program. What experiences abroad impact how these students of color interact on their college campus?

Current research surrounding study abroad and students of color focuses on the lack of participation in this high-impact practice. 289,408 students studied abroad in the 2012-2013 year (2014 NAFSA), but only 15.7 percent of the participants were students of color (Institute of International Education, 2014). Research on how to encourage students of color to study abroad is the most prevalent, while little is focused on the percentage of students of color who do study abroad. Research on the study abroad experience for students of color focuses on the idea of these students exploring new definitions of their ‘American Identity’ and race in other countries through interactions with people outside of the United States, where they may no longer be seen as a minority (Norton, 2008).

Research on the minority experience on a predominantly White campus often focuses on the negative experiences of students of color and the lack of cultural integrity from their White peers (Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000). Research has shown that the

experience of students of color on these campuses is significantly different than the experience of their White counterparts (Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000). Often times, these students experience microaggressions, isolation, and forms of discrimination during their time in a predominantly White institution (McCabe, 2009), which makes the experience a negative one.

Understanding the impact of study abroad must begin with the environment the student is a part of prior to the overseas experience. This research study will focus on the study abroad experience and how it impacts student academic success or involvement on campus upon return. While both study abroad and attending a predominantly white institution (PWI) significantly impact students of color, there is little discussion on whether or not one could impact the other. My research aims to explore both experiences and allow for the voices of the participants to bring forth new areas for research for this particular student population.

Significance of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the overall impact of study abroad for students of color that attend a predominantly White institution. Current studies related to the study abroad experience for students of color do not look in to the context of the institution these students are returning to. This study will explore the experiences of these participants during their time at their institution, their study abroad experience, and upon returning back to their home institution. This study aims to share the experiences of students who navigate spaces on campus and abroad.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of study abroad for students of color attending a PWI. The participants were selected from two mid-sized PWIs located in the Midwest. The institutions will be referred to as Midwestern University and Central University. Through semi-structured interviews, I explored how study abroad opportunities might impact a student's experience within a PWI and developed a narrative to show common themes in each participant's' study abroad experience.

To better share the stories of these individuals, interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview protocol of open-ended questions, and the use of artifacts selected by the participants to further describe their experiences. Some of these artifacts included scrapbooks, sketchbooks, ticket stubs, newspaper clippings, and journals. These artifacts helped me as a researcher to describe the memories and emotions these participants felt during their time abroad. The primary research question was what impact does study abroad have for students of color within predominantly white institutions? To further explore this research question, the following sub-questions were included:

- How does the experience of being abroad impact students of color?
- What awareness of a student's identity occurs upon returning from study abroad?
- What benefits do students of color gain while abroad?

Definition of Terms

The circumstances that define participant experience and context of this research are situated within the phenomenon of study abroad and predominantly White institutions. Because this phenomenon is unique, an extensive collection of terms was used in the presentation of this research. They are defined below:

Study abroad: defined as students receiving college credit from a U.S. accredited institution after returning from studying in a foreign country (cited from Institute of International Education (IIE), 2004a)

Student of color: An American student that identifies with the minority groups present within the country (i.e. African-American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, Multiracial, Pacific Islander).

Predominantly White Institutions (PWI): An institution that has students that identify as Caucasian/Euro-American as the majority population on campus.

Culture shock: An experience where one reacts to differences of a new culture and or environment. Culture shock leads to the process of adapting to the new environment.

Re-entry: The process of returning home from a study abroad program.

High impact practice (HIPs): Intentional programs or strategies that have proven to be beneficial for student engagement and learning.

Microaggression: A comment or action that is discriminatory in context.

Cross-cultural skills: a set of skills for an individual to be culturally aware and communicate with others from diverse backgrounds.

Faculty-led: A study abroad program that is developed and led by a faculty member of the institution.

Third party provider: A study abroad program that is provided by an organization outside of the institution.

Host family: a family or person(s) who volunteer their home for students taking part in an international study abroad program.

Cultural Integrity: An understanding of diverse cultures and backgrounds. One with cultural integrity embraces different perspectives, beliefs and values.

Delimitations

This study was conducted within two mid-sized institutions in the Midwest. Participants were recruited through the study abroad offices located on both campuses. The offices served as gatekeepers and allowed me to not directly receive student contact information, and allowed the offices to see who fit my research criteria. Participants were required to identify as a student of color and have completed a study abroad program that was eight weeks or longer. The length of time abroad was established based on feedback from study abroad administrators regarding the impact and experiences a student can have on longer programs. Students who studied abroad under the eight-week time frame were not initially considered, unless there was lack of respondents from the original criteria. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all interviews were completed within six months of the recruitment process. Of the 14 students that responded to the recruitment email sent by the study abroad offices, five who met the criteria agreed to participate in the study.

Limitations

This study was conducted on a specific population of students at two Midwestern institutions. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, it is not intended to be generalizable to the experiences of other students of color who fit similar criteria or who experienced similar events.

Interviews were conducted in locations to best fit the comfort of the participants sharing their stories. Environments for the interviews varied, which may reflect the

challenges of availability and scheduling. Due to external factors not predicted by the researcher, some interviews were conducted via Skype. This may have allowed for the participants to not feel as comfortable as they may have wanted to be in a face-to face interview, and limited the amount of sharing of artifacts and additional experiences.

My experiences and their resulting bias could have impacted the findings of this study. Although steps were taken to minimize the amount of bias I imposed or its impact on interpretation, it is still possible that my personal experience and bias can be seen in this study.

Research Experience/Bias

As the primary researcher in this study, it should be noted that the story mentioned in the beginning of this chapter is my own. I chose to study this particular area of research because it is an area that has impacted me significantly throughout my experience after leaving college. I recognize that my bias could impact how I interpret my participants' views on their personal experiences abroad and on their campus.

As stated in my story, I recently began to recognize and reflect on the environment I experienced on my college campus and the impact study abroad had as it relates to the color of my skin. This new frame of reflection may not be the same for my participants, and I also have to recognize that my participants might be in the same mindset as I was at this time. How I reflect on this experience now is significantly different than how I reflected on it at the time. My participants may re-interpret their experiences as time passes.

As an African-American heterosexual female, I acknowledge that I cannot fully understand the lived experiences of these participants because they may identify with

other intersecting identities I don't share. This could be especially true as it relates to their experiences abroad. This research study is focused solely on the experiences of students of color and does not reflect the other identities that could impact one's experience in a new environment.

Exploring the impact of study abroad for students of color starts with the home campus context and the experience these students have within their institution. To fully understand the impact study abroad may have on these students, I have decided to explore literature about the campus experience for students of color, the study abroad experience, re-entry experiences and their impact, as well as theories that are relevant to the identity development of students of color.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The research surrounding students of color studying abroad allowed me to see common trends that also connected to research surrounding students of color on the college campus. The literature presented in this chapter represents the current dialogue surrounding study abroad and students of color, as well as the exploration of theoretical frameworks relevant to this topic area. While the research discussed will demonstrate areas related to the research study, gaps were present that provided the framework for this study.

The Minority Experience in College

Minority students often experience college differently than their majority counterparts, which influences their decisions regarding how they interact with the institution or their peers (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2010). Research has shown that there are several factors that influence the climate for students of color: (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999)

- Structural diversity (i.e. the proportion of specific groups on campus)
- The historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion of racial groups
- The psychological climate, including perceptions of racial/ethnic tension and discrimination
- Social interaction among groups on campus

All students come to college expecting change since college is often the first time students are engaging with people different from them in various ways (Lewis, Chesler,

& Forman, 2000). All of the research reviewed in this section discusses the significant difference of the college experience for minority students. Overall this research has shown that the experiences of these students are not reflected positively within predominantly White campuses.

Students of color that have decided to attend a predominantly White institution have shared experiences of isolation, voicelessness, frustration of their White peers and lack of support (Morrison, 2010; Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000; Pewewardy & Frey, 2002). These experiences could affect their ability to be successful academically, and also the development of their personal identities (Morrison, 2010). Higher education administrators often measure success of their students of color by determining their GPA or graduation rates, but very seldom do researchers and administrators explore their actual experiences and how that accounts for student success. A study by Lewis, Chesler, and Forman (2000), interviewed 75 students of color that identified as African-American, Asian American, Hispanic, or Native American and discussed their experiences within a PWI. The students not only expressed their feelings of being isolated, but also recognized the lack of networks for support, views from their White peers of being less competent or “affirmative action attendees”, and pressures to assimilate while still being a representative of their racial/ethnic identity (Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000).

The difficult component of these lived experiences is not the experiences themselves, but the lack of awareness from their White peers, faculty and staff. Throughout studies, students of color reflected on how their experiences were not validated, and they believe it to be due to cultural ignorance amongst the majority group on campus. Pewewardy and Frey (2002) argue the negative experiences of students of

color within PWIs are not intentional, but rather people must understand that the higher education system and curriculum was not originally designed with minorities in mind. Educational environments are historically a space where minorities may experience ultra visibility, lowered expectations from faculty and staff, stereotyping, hostility and abuse (Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999 as cited in Vontress, 1996). Students of color often experience what is known as “stereotype threat” in the classroom. Stereotype threat is defined as the potential for an individual’s actions to be interpreted by others through the lens of an existing negative stereotype (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2010). This idea of stereotype threat can negatively affect behavior and actions of an individual, and is widely seen with students of color on a college campus (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2010) as well as when looking into studying abroad (Kasravi, 2009). With this being said, students of color have had shared experiences of navigating a new environment and often times experiencing “culture shock” when attending a PWI (Morrison, 2010). This culture shock experience can lead to students renegotiating their identities and what it means to be a student of color on campus (Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000).

Morrison’s (2010) study found that students felt like they lived in “two separate worlds”, but saw an opportunity for growth even in negative experiences. The participants of the study agreed that the experience shared as a student of color was not positive, but the negative experiences could be seen as a “broadening of horizons” and viewed in a positive light (Morrison, 2010). This idea of learning from negative experiences was not a constant theme in literature surrounding students of color on predominantly White campuses, but it allowed me to consider how these reactions to

negative experiences could connect in other areas in my research goals, especially as it relates to study abroad.

Study Abroad Minority Gap

Study abroad is no longer for just the elite population of our country. Now more than ever, students from all backgrounds are receiving the opportunity to study abroad, but, the percentages of students still resonates with past trends that show that the majority of students studying abroad are white females (Salisbury, 2012). One of the major hypotheses given to the reason for low numbers is the time frame in which students generally participate in study abroad. Students typically study abroad during their junior or senior year of college, which is a point in which institutions start to see minority students leaving college due to dropping out (Penn & Tanner, 2009).

Opportunities such as the Gilman International Scholarship Program, who award more than 2,500 study abroad scholarships for Pell Grant recipients, first generation, or minority students, also wish to see the number of students of color increase even more than it already has to make it more visible in comparison to the white students who participate in study abroad. The Gilman Scholarship organization prides itself on awarding scholarships that allows students of color to study abroad. In the 2013-2014 academic year, the Institute of International Education said the Gilman scholarship awards provided eight times more diversity abroad than the national study abroad participation (Institute of International Education).

Studies have been conducted that initially hypothesize that students of color do not wish to study abroad, but what may be an underlying factor is researchers are not recognizing that there is a possibility that students of color have different intentions in

studying abroad than their White counterparts (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2010). Penn and Tanner (2009) surveyed African American students to see why these students were not interested in studying abroad. They found that these students were fully aware of the benefits of studying abroad or wished to attend, but there were other barriers that stood in the way of their attendance in study abroad programs (Penn & Tanner, 2009). A major benefit that is highlighted in all research surrounding study abroad is the belief that students will gain cross-cultural competencies that will allow them to succeed in their careers. Researchers have noticed that students of color do not connect to this major benefit because in the environment of a college campus, especially a PWI, they are already dealing with cross-cultural development every day (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2010).

Barriers to Study Abroad for Students of Color

Many researchers have focused their studies on the reasons why students of color do not choose to study abroad. Brux and Fry (2010) conducted surveys and focus groups to understand some of the major barriers students of color have when deciding to study abroad, and a majority of them were based on perceptions. Lack of awareness for study abroad programs was not an issue the participants noticed; rather, the perception of race and discrimination in other countries was a major concern when making a decision to study abroad (Brux & Fry, 2010). The participants opened up about the possibility of being the only minority in their study abroad group and having to deal with two forms of isolation; one with the students they are studying with that do not look like them, and also the feeling of isolation of being different than the people of the host country (Brux & Fry, 2010). These findings allowed me to think about what approach I wanted to take when

discussing study abroad and students of color. I wanted to explore not what barriers are keeping students of color from studying abroad, but what would motivate them to study abroad. Understanding the barriers to study abroad is a practical beginning to what the research hopes to explore but does not address my question.

Family and family responsibilities within the household is also considered a barrier for students of color to study abroad. Research has shown that family influences, especially when focusing on the fear of race and discrimination abroad, comes in to play with a student's decision to go abroad (Brux & Fry, 2010). Family responsibilities are often viewed as the main purpose of a minority student's education, along with receiving a degree to obtain a career to provide for the family. Students of color find it difficult to go abroad not only because of the cost, but because no earned income is occurring while they are away (Brux & Fry, 2010). Few minority students come from well-traveled families so when a student arrives at college, they are focused on moving through quickly in order to graduate and enter the job market (Norton, 2008).

An additional point made by Brux and Fry (2010) in relation to why students of color are not participating in study abroad programs is simply because the image of a student of color studying abroad is nonexistent in the media. "It's not just that there isn't the interest or the money, they aren't even hearing it's a possibility" (Blumenthal, as cited in Norton, 2008, p. B13). The lack of presence of students of color studying abroad is a focus I would like to emphasize in my research. Hearing the voices of the study abroad experience for students of color is important for student affairs professionals working in international education as well as for any student of color considering the opportunity to study abroad.

Study Abroad Experience for Students of Color

While researchers have discussed how institutions are striving to increase diversity in study abroad attendance, very few discuss the experience of the 23.7 percent of students of color that do study abroad (NAFSA).

African American	5.3%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	7.3%
Caucasian	76.3%
Hispanic/Latino/a	7.6%
Multiracial	3.0%
American Indian/Alaska Native	.5%

PERCENT OF U.S. STUDY ABROAD STUDENTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY 2012-2013 (NAFSA)

Views on Race Abroad

Racial and ethnic issues exist around the world, but each country deals with race in a different context. Students of color who study abroad quickly recognize the views on race in another country compared to how they feel in the United States. Carew (1993) observed two study abroad programs within two community colleges that had more students of color in participation than most. Carew found that the students, over time, were able to remove the social and political context of the United States, were able to

change the way they viewed themselves and could reach beyond others' perceptions of their abilities (Carew, 1993) while abroad. Carew's study shows that studying abroad could have the potential to open up new discussions about race and allow participants to reflection about their own background (Norton, 2008).

An American Identity Abroad

During most study abroad orientations, students hear advice on how to avoid looking like the "American tourists", and based on the examples and descriptions presented, the presentation mainly refers to the White American population. Students of color who identify as American have a unique experience while studying abroad that their white counterparts may not experience. Many students of color either consciously or subconsciously choose overseas study destinations based on their own identity, nationality, and/or ethnicity (Comp, 2008), which is also known as heritage seeking. Heritage seeking is defined as selecting a study abroad location because of family background whether it is national, religious, cultural or ethnic (Szekely, 1998). While there is little research on heritage seeking and study abroad, researchers still find a way to incorporate this subject in their studies. Existing research suggests that students who often heritage seek find themselves leaving with slight disappointment when they enter the country and are only seen as American (Norton, 2008). Conversely, students of color who travel to countries that may have a large population of their ethnic group living there, may actually encounter unexpected connections to those particular groups. Comp (2008) used demographic data from Western Europe to show the large population of minority communities that live there, and concluded the research by encouraging study abroad staff to recognize the growth of minority populations in other countries and advise

students who are interested in heritage locations to consider these options as well (Comp, 2008).

Sense of Belonging

The study abroad experience brings forth connections in unexpected places. Often American students of color who study abroad find an overwhelming sense of hospitality in other countries comparing to how they feel in the United States (Brux & Fry, 2010), which makes connecting to a host country easier than what may be expected.

Connections could also occur with the group of students in the program, even after returning home to the United States. Carew (1993) found that the students who returned from their program not only connected beyond race or ethnicity with the group they studied abroad with, but they also found ways to connect with others who studied abroad in other locations. These students were able to feel like they belonged to a dominant group, which lead to a greater connection on campus (Carew, 1993).

Students of color who participate in study abroad are said to experience improvements of confidence and academics in and out of the classroom and feel more confident in sharing in discussion about certain topics (Martinez, 2011). As more research continues to grow about increasing participation of study abroad for students of color, researchers are suggesting making sure the experiences of the students who do study abroad are heard. Sweeney (2013) said in her research:

“It is crucial for institutions to examine the experiences of their own students of color, both on the home campus and abroad to better understand students’ challenges and opportunities and the type of support needed.” (Sweeney, 2013, p. 7).

This statement by Sweeney allowed me to further consider what it means for students of color from a PWI who are interested in studying abroad, to take advantage of study abroad opportunities. It raised questions not only of experiences on the home campus but also experiences, and their impact when in a foreign country.

Study Abroad Impact & Re-Entry

The study abroad experience is enlightening and can affect an individual's identity or views on life immensely. Researchers note that students between 18-24 years old are constantly reflecting on who they are and how they relate to others (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009). Meaning making is defined as an individual's process in trying to make sense of their journey in life, which includes reflection on their personal feelings and relationships with others (Kegan, 1994). Most research on the return from a studying abroad experience discusses the impact of the experience and the re-entry process that a student encounters that could cause negative or positive growth for the student.

Self-efficacy is seen as a recurring impact for study abroad participants. Self-efficacy is defined as people's judgment of their capabilities to complete a task successfully (Bandura, 1989). Cubillos and Ilvento (2013) found that participation in a study abroad program, regardless of length or location of program, had a significant impact on an individual's self-efficacy. Self-efficacy was ranked at its highest for students who communicated with members of the host country or studied abroad for a semester, but overall there is a positive impact connected to study abroad regardless of the length of stay. Although the researchers focus for this study was on foreign language learners, the above results could apply to any study abroad program that has designed

learning outcomes. McLeod and Wainwright (2009) conducted a study to evaluate the success of two study abroad programs in Scotland and France. The authors found that the students who participated in these programs felt an increase in self-confidence, self-perception, and perception of the world (McLeod & Wainwright, 2009). Through the feedback received through focus groups, McLeod and Wainwright (2009) concluded that more needed to be done to evaluate the true experience of study abroad.

Assessment tools to measure study abroad programs and their assistance with student development is a growing area of research since most study abroad programs are measured by what students learn, and not how they think (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009). Measuring a student's growth in intercultural awareness and development is seen as very difficult considering the construct definition of impact or intercultural development (Doyle, 2008), therefore making what research that is available, more vaguely descriptive. Inventories such as the Global Perspective Inventory are widely used to measure what key development opportunities occur during study abroad. The Global Perspective Inventory (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2007) measures three dimensions of student growth: cognitive dimension (knowing and knowledge), intrapersonal dimension and interpersonal dimension. The cognitive dimension involves a component of knowing and knowledge. When one knows, they are reflecting on their views and about the importance of cultural context (Doyle, 2008). The knowledge component of the cognitive dimension explores the level of understanding and awareness of various cultures and their impact on our global society (Doyle, 2008). The intrapersonal dimension focuses on the opportunities for internal reflection that one encounters when abroad and how the experiences they are having connect to how they

see themselves and their core beliefs (Doyle, 2008). The final dimension, interpersonal, represents when an individual feels comfortable and confident in cross-cultural interactions (Doyle, 2008). The Global Perspective Inventory was useful in Doyle's research study but lacked demographic reflection for the participants interviewed, which could have been an area to evaluate. For example, Doyle mentions that race was not looked at in this study, when as previously mentioned research suggests, the experiences of students of color prior to study abroad, may have a significant impact on their growth and development during their study abroad experience.

Re-Entry

Once students return from study abroad, one of the immediate thoughts that occur is the conflicting idea of revealing themselves as the new people they have become or being viewed as the people they used to be before they left (Haines, 2013). Re-entry adjustment is usually a process that is handled alone by an individual, especially when resources to reach out are limited (Doyle, 2008). Re-entry is seen as more difficult to adjust to than adjusting to a new culture (Young, 2014). Reentry connects closely to reverse culture shock, which is defined as the shock one experiences upon return to one's own culture (Young, 2014). Researchers have seen both regression and expansion of identity in studies surrounding re-entry, and agree that re-entry is a process that could continue for longer than research suggests.

Lysgaard's "U" Pattern Model (1955) brought the idea of the *stability - instability - stability* pattern that relates to the moment when a person begins to experience a new culture or environment. The individual will initially be excited by the new surroundings (stability), but then become stressed when trying to adapt to a new culture (instability),

but once feeling comfortable in the adjustments, will feel at ease with the new environment (stability). The “W” Pattern Model (Gullahorn, & Gullahorn, 1962) agrees with Lysgaard but argues that another wave occurs once a person tries to readjust back in to their home life. Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s (1962) “W” Pattern model states that the re-entry process must be included in the overall experience, as researchers are seeing the importance of the readjustment process and how it connects to the international experience (Young, 2014).

Rexeisen’s (2013) post-study abroad experience research found that with a particular semester abroad program in London, the cross-cultural development started to decrease for students after four months (Rexeisen, 2013). Although the study was focused on a culture that is very similar to the United States, it is still important to note that development that could occur during a study abroad program could diminish if students do not reflect or act on the growth they gained during that time.

Haines (2013) performed a study that reflected on the returning experience of people who have either studied abroad, performed military duties, or have grown up overseas with an American identity. Haines found that the participants had no place to share their experiences once they returned to the United States, but the lack of sharing space lent to their sense of independence (Haines, 2013). Haines concluded that going abroad allows one to be out of their comfort zone, which may cause difficulties, but they are seen as valued difficulties (Haines, 2013).

One of the issues of re-entry approaches is the lack of implementation on college campuses. Wielkiewicz and Turkowski (2010) suggest offering opportunities for students to discuss issues that could occur once students’ return to campus. The issues the authors

focused on were issues of feeling motivated academically upon return from a program, and students who may experience unpleasant post-study abroad effects (Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010). Young (2014) recommended that reentry programming begins prior to a student's departure on a study abroad program, and encourages offices to treat re-entry and culture shock in general as a positive learning experience (Young, 2014).

Theoretical and Methodological Approaches

Researchers have noted that study abroad may have a positive impact on a student of color's racial and/or ethnic identity development (Barker, & Exum, 1998; Doan, 2002; Jackson, 2006; Landau & Moor, 2001; Ng, 2003). Many theories apply to the study abroad experience, but in order to fully understand the experience of students of color, looking in to racial and ethnic identity theories as well as learning theories was beneficial for this study.

Intercultural Identity Theory

The process of developing identity is a continual one, and this includes what could occur during experiences abroad. Kim's (2008) concept of intercultural identity focuses on this process of development in a context that includes cultural development and intercultural communication. Kim approaches intercultural identity in the form of a cycle: *stress - adaptation - growth* (Tian & Lowe, 2014). This cycle describes how an individual will initially feel stress when dealing with challenges in a new environment, and as an individual attempts to adapt to the environment, they will experience what is known as acculturation and deculturation (Tian & Lowe, 2014). Acculturation occurs when one is learning and possibly accepting new ideas, values or practices of the environment while deculturation occurs when one is rejecting or questioning past ideas,

values or practices (Tian & Lowe, 2014). The relationship between acculturation and deculturation is when the intercultural identity begins to develop and emerge into intercultural awareness and where one begins to blur the view of individuals as “us-others” and “we-others” (Kim, 2008).

In a study conducted by Tian and Lowe (2014), eight Americans were interviewed after their study abroad experience in China to explore what intercultural identity development occurred throughout their time in another country. The authors found intercultural identity growth for the eight students and also recognized that the students claimed their American identity strongly, but now felt they had the ability to critically examine themselves and their traditions, and it no longer threatened who they were (Tian & Lowe, 2014). The authors also recognized that their participants came from different backgrounds, which could influence the degree of intercultural identity development (Tian & Lowe, 2014).

Racial/Ethnic Identity

The study abroad experience for students of color is not the same for all who identify with a minority group. Students of color come from all different backgrounds and experiences, which means their level of racial/ethnic identity awareness could vary based on the environment in which these experiences take place. To understand contextual environments and how they intersect with racial and ethnic identity, I focused on Helms’ People of Color Racial Identity (1994) as well as Atkinson, Morten, and Sue’s Minority Identity Development Model (1998).

Helms People of Color Racial Identity

Although Helms understood that racial theory pertaining to all people of color is difficult to accurately claim because each race alone differs in theory, Helms still approached racial identity on a surface level for all people of color (Helms, 1994). The People of Color Racial Identity focuses on the socio-political and cultural construct that race is traditionally defined under, and explains one's experiences in statuses: conformity, dissonance (encounter), immersion/emersion status, internalization status, and integrative awareness (Helms, 1994). According to Helms, people of color go through statuses of awareness, which could lead to one gaining value in one's own collective identities and empathizing with other oppressed groups (Helms, 1994). The original theory listed stages of racial identity development, but was updated by Helms to be statuses, as the term stage assumes each status is sequential. The first status, conformity, refers to one's devaluing of their own group and allegiance to White standards. The dissonance status, also known as encounter, occurs when one is confused on their socio-racial group commitment and self-definition. When one reaches the immersion/emersion status, they have recognized the idealization of their socio-racial group and may establish those idealized roles in order to self-define. The internalization status occurs when one has a positive commitment to one's own socio-racial group and begins to reflect and assess their identity as it compares to the dominant group. The final status, integrative awareness, occurs when one values their own collective identities as well as supports and empathizes with members of other oppressed groups. The integrative awareness status also notes that one will make decisions with a "globally humanistic self-expression" (Helms, 1994).

Helms's theory on racial and ethnic identity is widely represented in research and journal articles surrounding the topic. Chavez and Guido-DiBrito (1999) referred to Helms in their article regarding the learning environment for students of color and the importance of multicultural styles of educating. The authors believed that the current U.S. learning environment has been constructed throughout history, and may not include minority students in strategies for educating diverse populations, thus leaving minority students to learn despite their learning environment rather than because of it. The authors also discussed how relationships with educators and peers are affected due to racial and ethnic manifestations in the learning process being unconsciously applied in the learning process (Chavez, Guido-DiBrito, 1999), which makes it difficult to identify or make changes to the pedagogy.

Minority Identity Development Model

Similar to Helms, the Minority Identity Development Model describes how minority students develop their racial and or ethnic identity through stages. Created by Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1998), the Minority Identity Development model focuses on the attitudes individuals have about themselves, their minority group, other minority groups, and the dominant group. Unlike Helms's change to statuses, Atkinson, Morten, and Sue continued to use stages to define where an individual is in their identity development. The first stage, conformity, refers to an individual's self-deprecating attitude and appreciation of the dominant group above all others. During stage two, dissonance, an individual recognizes shared experiences with minority groups and begins to feel conflict within self and toward the dominant group. In the next stage titled resistance and immersion, an individual becomes self-appreciating of their minority

identity and the group in which they identify with. This stage also includes the conflict of an individual being able to feel empathy for other minority groups and feelings of culturocentrism, and more of a depreciating attitude toward the dominant group. The next stage, introspection, involves an individual reflecting on the basis in which they are more self-appreciative and why they are showing depreciative attitudes toward the dominant group. Stage five is known as the synergetic articulation and awareness stage as it is the final stage and allows the individual to be self-appreciative, group appreciative toward all minority groups, and selective appreciative toward the dominant group (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1998). Atkinson, Morten, and Sue's approach to minority identity development focuses on the attitudes an individual applies to other groups, which allows more opportunity to explore one's experience based on their environment.

Learning Theories

Development and growth is a major benefit that is promoted heavily when discussing study abroad. The following research will discuss learning theories that are relevant to study abroad.

Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow's (1997) definition of the transformative learning theory is used throughout this research study to better understand a possible learning method for students who study abroad. Transformative learning theory originated and is focused on the lens of adult learners. Due to the authors' limited definition of adult learners, I chose to define my participants as adult learners based on the general definition of adult meaning above the age of 18. Transformative learning is the process of affecting change in a frame of reference, when a frame of reference is defined by the way one sees their

lived world (Mezirow, 1997). Mezirow explains transformative learning as a way of learning that assists in building autonomous thinking and learning, and connecting to four ways of learning. According to Mezirow (1997), the four ways of learning are:

elaborating an existing point of view, establishing new points of view, transforming our points of view, and transforming our ethnocentric habit of mind (Mezirow, 1997).

Mezirow said that transforming our points of view and our ethnocentric habit of mind are the least common and most difficult way for individuals to learn. The definition of each focuses on having an experience in another culture that causes an individual to reflect on misconceptions regarding certain groups and being more aware of current biases.

Individuals who have achieved these methods of learning are more accepting of groups different from their own, leading to habits of the mind constantly evolving and changing (Mezirow, 1997). Edward Taylor's (2008) article on Transformative Learning Theory is parallel to Mezirow's with the idea that an individual must be open to change in order to fully experience transformational learning (Taylor, 2008). I agree that these methods of learning are the most reflective and critical, but I also argue that students who study abroad encounter these ways of learning in some capacity, especially upon return from their experience abroad. Taylor said that an experience an individual has to explore new perspectives is the most effective way one can truly transform through learning (Taylor, 2008).

In a research study developed by Smith, McAuliffe, and Rippard (2014), the authors wanted to know what impact study abroad had for counseling students and their ways of learning. The authors collected data from the last day of the participants' study abroad program, two weeks after, six months after, and nine months after returning. The

authors found that there was significant transformative learning that occurred for their participants, especially in experiences where participants were engaging with others (Smith, McAuilffe, & Rippard, 2014). The authors also saw that their participants were more self-aware and continued to experience shifts in their understanding of who they were and the systems they lived in well beyond their return from their study abroad program (Smith, McAuilffe, & Rippard, 2014). Although this study focused solely on counseling students and did not incorporate multicultural minority competencies throughout, it illuminates the argument that students can gain transformative learning through experiences abroad.

Another study conducted by Lyon (2002) explored how similar transformational theory and cross-cultural adaptation are when discussing the study abroad experience. Cross-cultural adaptation is the process in which an individual adjusts to the culture they are a part of, which includes adjusting lifestyle and communication styles (Kim, 2010). Using eight studies to guide her research, Lyon found that all of the studies indicated that cross-cultural learning involved some aspect of transformation (Lyon, 2002).

Experiential Learning Theory

Much like the Transformative Learning Theory, Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), deals with the process in which an individual gains holistic understanding of who they are and how they view the world based on experiences (Kolb & Kolb, 2008). Although transformative learning is often approached with study abroad, experiential learning is a close relative that is often defined with service abroad or cultural immersion programs. Experiential Learning Theory is defined according to a learning cycle that encompasses moments of experiencing, reflecting and acting through four modes of

experience (Kolb & Kolb, 2008). Two modes of grasping experience are called Concrete Experience and Abstract Conceptualization, and the two modes of transforming experience are Reflective Observation and Active Experimentation (Kolb & Kolb, 2008). Like the founding scholars of experiential learning, such as John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, William James, Carl Jung, Paulo Freire and Carl Rogers, Kolb and Kolb believe that experience plays a central role in theories of human learning and development (Kolb & Kolb, 2008). Having claimed Experiential Learning Theory as cross-culturally applicable (Kolb & Kolb, 2008), researchers in international education are beginning to compare this theory to the study abroad experience. In-depth comparison linking both theory and experiences have been limited in current research, as most studies focus on the impact of the experiences overall.

Research has shown that there is a drive among all individuals to make meaning of their daily lives (Taylor, 2008). Both Transformative Learning and Experiential Learning theories discuss meaning making and the development occurs for individuals following certain experiences or engaging with others.

Gaps in Literature

Throughout the research regarding study abroad, the overall experience and impact, no emphasis was given on the demographics of the students studied. If any demographic was mentioned, it was confined to gender within the group as the only differential that could determine someone's study abroad experience. Based on the prior literature, it is apparent that race and ethnicity could be a major determination on how students view their experience abroad, and needs to be noted in future research.

Students of color are minimally participate in study abroad compared to their White peers, and the research reviewed significantly focused on this issue. As stated before, students of color are not seeing themselves abroad, which is also reflected in both past and current literature. Current research is not as focused on the study abroad experience for students of color who do study abroad, rather, research is focused on increasing the number of participants. This research study will provide a voice for the study abroad experience for students of color as well as allow other minority students to see that students of color are participating in study abroad programs. This may influence whether or not they also prepare for studying abroad and returning to the states. Based on the research presented in this chapter, I continue to argue that students of color begin to develop an intercultural identity once they attend a PWI. They have to deal with the environmental or contextual change of moving from home to the institution which is in some ways similar to being immersed in another culture. This research study will ask the question that surrounds the impact study abroad could have to assist with this particular aspect of identity development and growth for students of color.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of study abroad for students of color within predominantly white institutions.

Research Questions

The primary research question in this research study was what impact does study abroad have for students of color within predominantly white institutions? The sub-questions were:

- How does the experience abroad impact students of color?
- What awareness of a student's identity occurs once returning from study abroad?
- What benefits do students of color gain while abroad?

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

In order to address the research questions and understand the lived experiences of the participants, a qualitative research design was selected. Qualitative research helps us to understand individual meaning and how these meanings are connected to situations within a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). After reviewing the literature and reviewing the research question and sub-questions, I determined a qualitative design would be the best approach to allow these students of color to have a voice in an environment where their voices are not particularly heard; especially when discussing study abroad programs.

Through interviews and field text, I sought to explore the experiences of students of color and the impact study abroad had on their remaining time on campus, not to develop a generalization of the experiences, but to interpret and explain the experiences for future directions in research and in practice (Maxwell, 2013).

Rationale for Narrative Research

The experience for students of color on a predominantly white campus is not just a few moments of recognition of their minority status, but a series of lived experiences that shape a story of one's personal development. Similarly, the experience a student has while studying abroad could not be told in brief moments of reminiscences, but must be told as a full reflection. Narrative design is defined as the study of lives of individuals through storytelling and can often be seen as collaboration with the participant's life and the researcher's life (Creswell, 2014). The purpose of this study is not focused on finding solutions to assist these students, but first allowing voices to be heard and their experiences to be understood.

Narrative inquiry is a growing method in research today, especially when discussing the student experience (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). When I realized that the stories I would be hearing would be thick with memories, description, and reflection, I knew that a narrative inquiry would be best. It also allowed me to compare my prior experience with the participants and learn from these individuals. In order to collaborate with my participants in the telling of their stories, I decided to conduct a three-dimensional space approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The basis for this approach is to conceptualize experiences through both a personal and social lens and develop a more holistic exploration of the lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). By doing so, I

was able to find the significance within each story and to renegotiate the meaning and information with my participants, which is an important component with this type of narrative analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through “restorying”, which is the process of transcribing field text and then retelling the story (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002), I was able to develop stories that reflected the experiences and brought overall themes and shared meaning that may not be known in practice today.

Researcher Position

As an alumnus from a predominantly white institution and a two-time participant of study abroad programs during my undergraduate experience, I understood how my personal views on my experience may affect how I interpreted my students’ experiences on campus and abroad. As a researcher, I knew I would enter this study with preconceived bias, as rediscovering my ethnic and racial identity is a recent and current process I am going through. I hoped that the students of color I interviewed did not have experiences similar to mine, growing up in a predominantly white neighborhood and then attending a predominantly white institution without even thinking of the context of my surroundings. I originally felt I was among the few who experienced college not thinking about racial context, and never feeling uncomfortable in a setting outside of my comfort zone because predominantly White environments were my comfort zone.

Since my research focuses on all students of color, I realized that my appearance and identifying as African-American may impact the level of comfort for my participants. Originally, I felt that the identity of being a minority on campus would allow a level of comfort and open conversation with my participants, and did not reflect on the possibility of the level of comfort being measured. Students that I interviewed who identify as

African-American may have felt more comfortable discussing their experiences based on the assumptions of relatability. As a self-identifying heterosexual female interviewing all students of color regardless of other salient identities, I understand how my focus did not include any additional intersecting identities my participants may have had, and that could have influenced their experience both on campus and abroad. Further, my positionality may have impacted the participants' willingness to share certain aspects of their experiences.

Epistemological Approach

Understanding that according to Mertens (2010), epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge I approached this research under a transformative worldview. A transformative worldview means that a research study needs to combine the study and its relevance to social oppression and political issues to bring forth further discussion to enact change (Creswell, 2014). Although my research does not aim to create an immediate action plan, it does aim to develop dialogue on how these experiences of students of color within a PWI can influence a variety of experiences in involvement and academics, including study abroad. In addition it is aimed at helping faculty, staff and administrators understand how students of color experience a PWI.

Through a transformative paradigm, I sought to tell the stories of these students' experiences accurately, along with recognizing my biases, and develop themes that reflect the experiences of minority groups in predominantly White environments, both abroad and on their own campus.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

Before beginning the research study, I received my Consortium for IRB Training Initiative in Human Subjects Protections (CITI) certification and IRB consent (Appendix A) from Northwestern University. Since research was conducted within two selected institutions, I also received research approval from Central University, once Northwestern IRB consent was approved. Each participant received a recruitment email (Appendix B), and a confirmation of interview email (Appendix C), as well as a follow up interview email (Appendix D). Each point of contact with the participant included the research consent form (Appendix E) and information to reach the IRB or research advisor, if they felt apprehension before, during or after their participation.

Participants

Participants were selected based on a criterion sample approach (Mertens, 2010) that allowed me to create a set of criteria based on the needs of the research study. The qualifications for the sample of participants included students being a current undergraduate student, identifying as a student of color, and having studied abroad for eight weeks or longer. The eight week abroad requirement was based on feedback and recommendations from study abroad administrators. If initial sample qualifications did not yield the number of participants needed, changes to the length of study abroad time criteria would occur. The sample represented a mix of student experiences that included level of involvement, academic standing, and social backgrounds, while all shared the common experience of studying abroad.

The study abroad offices at both Northwestern University and Central University served as a gatekeeper to reach out to students who met the sample requirements. Each institution's study abroad office sent the recruitment email I developed, which allowed

possible participants to reach out to me first without me receiving their information without their permission. The recruitment email was sent to more than 200 students and in total I received 14 completed responses. From those 14 responses five students were ultimately interviewed.

Table 1

Interview	Pseudonym	Academic Standing	Length of Study Abroad	Gender Identity	Racial/Ethnic Identity	Institution
1	Adam	Senior	10 weeks France Italy	Male	Indian American	Central University
2	Mya	Junior	16 weeks Germany	Female	Hispanic	Midwestern University
3	Virgil	Senior	43 weeks U.K.	Male	African American	Central University
4	Jeremy	Senior	52 weeks Japan	Male	African American	Central University
5	Alias	Senior	16 weeks Malaysia	Female	African American	Midwestern University

The participants of the research presented surprising demographic characteristics related to the typical study abroad profile. In previous research, the majority of participants are female, but in my research the majority were male. The academic standings were representative of the time frame of when students normally study abroad. Only one participant was an out-of-state student, while the others enrolled at their institution because it was in state.

Research Site

The sites for this research study were two separate institutions; both classified as predominantly white institutions. Midwestern University is a mid sized land-grant research institution located in the mid-western region of the United States. Midwestern University serves more than 25,000 students with 81 percent that identify as White and or Caucasian. Central University is also a mid-sized, land-grant research institution located in the mid-western region of the United States. Central University serves more than 27,000 with 75 percent that identify as White and or Caucasian (Forbes). Both institutions were selected based on their closely related institutional demographics and similar study abroad offices.

Study abroad services are growing within both institutions. Midwestern University sends 750 undergraduate students abroad each year and Central University sends 25 percent of their student population.

Data collection was conducted in various locations based on the participants' preference. Participants chose to meet in private corners of local coffee shops, reserved conference rooms, and through Skype. Participants also determined the time and date of

their interviews. They were asked to provide an artifact that best symbolized their experience studying abroad.

Data Collection

Data were gathered through interviews and reflection upon artifacts. I chose to include artifacts as an optional component to the interview, to allow the participants to share more emotion about their experiences abroad. I felt the artifacts would be representative of an affective dimension of their time abroad. When restorying each participant's study abroad experience, the artifacts became a support piece to allow the stories to become richer in content and description of their time abroad. I asked the participants a series of "open-ended" questions and recorded their answers (Mertens, 2010). I choose to use only opened ended questions to allow the participants to explore the question and interpret their experiences in a freer environment.

In order to fully interpret the lived experiences of my participants, I chose to follow Rubin and Rubin's (2005) approach with the interview protocol by allowing the interviews to be semi-structured. The authors believed that by using a semi-structured interview protocol, a researcher could respond "to and then asking further questions about what he or she hears from the interviewees rather than relying on predetermined questions" (Rubin, & Rubin, 2005, p. vii). A semi-structured interview also allowed me to begin my collaboration and renegotiating of information from my participants in the initial interview (Ollerenshaw, & Creswell, 2002).

The recruitment process yielded responses from approximately 14 individuals, only 12 of which were qualified to participate in the study. Each qualified participant was

reached out to on a first come, first serve basis until five interviews were complete. Due to time limitations, only five participants could be selected for interviews.

Each participant completed the entire interview process between November 2014 and January 2015, which included an initial interview one follow-up interview. This allowed the participants to have deeper reflection after the initial interview. Each participant had a different timeline in which each had returned from study abroad. Four of the five participants studied abroad in the previous year or semester before being interviewed, while one participant was interviewed three weeks after returning to their institution. The range of time from the study abroad experience to interviews may have impacted how in-depth each participant reflected on their experience.

The initial interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes, which allowed students time to go in depth on their experiences without worrying about a limited amount of time. During the interview, participants had the opportunity to bring artifacts that represented their experience abroad, which allowed some participants to reflect on why the chosen artifacts resonated with their experiences. As the interviews were in process, I observed and recorded notes about each participant's non-verbal cues and facial expressions. These notes allowed me to develop a stronger narrative that made sure to reflect the participants' voice accurately. The research notes also assisted with helping me remember the type of emotion that was felt during the interview, which was not recorded through the recording device and would not be recognized while transcribing. I transcribed all transcriptions from audiotape.

Interview Protocol

The following questions represent the semi-structured interview protocol from my interviews with the participants of the research study:

- Why did you choose to attend your chosen university?
- Tell me about your experience at your university before studying abroad?
- Why did you choose to study abroad?
- What were you hoping to gain from studying abroad?
- Tell me about your study abroad experience
- Tell me about how it felt to return back to your university?
- How do you feel that your study abroad experience has affected your academic life at your university?
- How do you feel that study abroad has affected your involvement on university?
- How do you feel that your study abroad experience has affected your perceptions of your university?
- Based on your experiences, how do you view yourself now compared to how you viewed yourself when you initially arrived to your university?

Follow up interview protocol:

- Now that you have had the time to reflect on our initial interview, is there anything additional you would like to add?

Data Analysis

My data analysis began with preparing the data by transcribing the interviews, including research notes and abstract descriptions, and adding the follow up interview notes to the transcriptions. I then read through the transcriptions and highlighted quotes that resonated with the participants' experiences, while making notes in the side margins.

In the side margins I started coding theme keywords and listing them all on a separate sheet of paper to begin developing categories for the data. Once reviewing the transcriptions was complete, I cut and paste the transcriptions in a chronological order in order to begin the 'restorying' process (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). The transcriptions were cut into three categories: before studying abroad, during study abroad, and after study abroad. Once the stories were restructured in the proper categories, I wrote each participant's story, including quotes and descriptions that were shared in the original interview. After the stories were complete, I revisited the themes originally presented in the transcriptions and listed them with the new themes from the stories.

Last, I compiled the codes into categorical themes by using post-it notes, and from there determined the major themes highlighted in this study.

Trustworthiness Strategies

Methods were taken to validate and strengthen the accuracy of the data presented. Once finding results were drafted, I utilized the method of member checking, and sent the draft of the results to the research participants to make sure I was interpreting their story correctly, and allowed them to provide feedback on the drafted report.

The stories that were created are an example of creating a deep description from the findings. This was possible by including full descriptions from the interviews as well as direct quotes that highlighted impactful experiences.

Finally, utilizing peer reviewers was helpful to assist with making sure the stories and findings were clear and connected. The peer reviewers were colleagues of mine who are not involved in higher education, but have superior editing skills. I selected these peer reviewers because they did not know about the research surrounding what students of

color experience abroad, and I felt it would be good to receive feedback from others outside of the research area. The peer reviewers did have shared experiences of study abroad, which allowed for the research to be clear in articulating the data presented.

Ethical Considerations

My research had no known risks associated with it. Participants were of the age of majority and were granted an opportunity to review and sign an informed consent document that was approved by Midwestern University's IRB.

The informed consent information was reviewed at the beginning of each interview to ensure the participant recognized their ability to discontinue participation at any time. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary, though participation was incentivized with compensation totaling a value of twenty-five dollars. If as a result of their participation in this study any participant were to decide they needed psychological, personal, or professional support, they were directed to the on-campus resource providing counseling and psychological service on the Midwestern University campus as well as Central University's counseling services.

Each participant selected their own pseudonym to protect their anonymity when I reported the findings. In addition, a pseudonym was given to the university site where data were collected to further protect the anonymity of these participants.

All research documents associated with this research, including audiotapes, transcripts, coding memos and drafts of the final research report were kept on the researcher's personal computer in password-protected files. The researcher was the only person with access to all participant and initial research related information, and audio recordings were delivered through password protected files and private access. In addition, all

written transcriptions excluded the use of real personal names and organizational names that might be destructive to the anonymity of the participants. Peer and auditor examinations of coding only used pseudonyms to guard participant anonymity.

Chapter 4 Findings

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of study abroad for students of color within predominantly White institutions (PWIs).

Stories Abroad

Five students from two Midwestern Universities participated in this study. Participants were students who identified as a person of color and had studied abroad for more than eight weeks. Each participant was aware of the lack of diversity on their campus and all chose their institution based on their academic majors. They were recruited through the assistance of the study abroad office located on their campus. Participants selected pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

The following stories are written to bring a voice to minority students who chose to study abroad. These stories reflect the personal and academic experiences these students faced, and how those experiences helped them to come back to campus with more insight into the environment they call home. In this chapter, the researcher discusses how the experiences, told through these stories, impacted the students' remaining time on campus.

Adam

Adam knew from the very beginning that art was his passion. When deciding on which schools to attend, he initially struggled with the idea of attending Central University, knowing that he would see many people from his high school there and meeting the same people he had known in the past.

“I didn’t want to go there [Central University] for the longest time, because everyone from my high school was going there. I assumed I would just meet the same people.”

Adam’s Indian American identity was noticed in high school since he grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood. He felt that Central University might turn out to be the same type of place, filled with people who would ask about his family’s origin and where he is from. Despite, his concerns about running into the same people from his high school, Adam still decided on Central University because he thought he could still meet new people and experience a variety of opportunities.

Adam saw his Indian American identity as a conversation starter for students on campus. It was never anything that bothered him, but it was something that he predicted would happen upon arriving at a predominantly white campus. He made friends and found a close-knit group of people he would see often, which wasn’t an experience he had growing up.

Adam came to college to pursue art, and all the opportunities art would bring. Getting involved in organizations never interested him, but he still participated in campus events. A friend of Adam’s approached him about joining the South Asian Student Organization, and although Adam did sign up to join, he never attended meetings. Adam knew he wanted to find a connection to art on campus; he just needed to find out where he would get the opportunity to create his stories through sketches.

As Adam became a junior in college, he knew he needed a change of space. He wanted to escape the Midwest state he called home and to find a new experience. One day as Adam was walking to his next class, he ran in to the head professor of his art

program, and began to chat. As Adam talked about what he wanted to do with art and how he wanted new experiences, his professor recommended he take a look at a specific study abroad program that would allow him to travel through Italy and France and see true masters of art in real life. Adam immediately became interested and applied for the program.

Accepted! Adam was ready to see a part of the world he had not yet explored and couldn't wait for the opportunity to see a long history of art in real life through his own eyes. This was not the first time he had been abroad, he had visited India with his family to see other relatives for special occasions. Adam did know, however, that this would be the first time he was travelling without his parents. He knew going in to the program he wouldn't be completely alone, he would have other Central University students with him, but he knew this would be a different travel experience than he was used to. He was ready for the challenge.

The adventure was on its way. Adam boarded the plane along with his black leather sketchbook, ready to see history in real life and to create stories of his own. Not knowing either French or Italian, or much about the culture of these countries, he felt like he came to Europe ignorant of the cultural practices there.

“I came to their country ignorant. I didn't speak their language and I didn't know a lot about their culture, I just knew like, from movies and stuff like that. I'm more interested in their history than the present.”

He didn't want to be that typical American who arrives to a country not knowing anything about where they are, but fortunately for Adam, he never had to feel this way. During a trip to Rome, Adam got lost trying to find his way back to the hostel he was

staying in, and did not know who to approach since he did not speak Italian. He turned to notice a group of street vendors who looked Bengalese, and immediately approached them for help, speaking Bengali to get directions. Adam felt thankful that he could recognize their nationality and that he could speak Bengali. His language fluency was from his home country, India, which is Bengali's neighbor. The street vendors were friendly and continued to have a conversation with him before he left for his hostel.

“I was able to communicate with a totally different language. They pointed me in the right direction. France was the same way, there were a lot of Bengalese there, so I talked to them whenever I was lost, and they were really nice to me. I don't know why.”

These polite encounters seemed to be the case for Adam more often than his American friends who identified as Caucasian. He felt that foreigners could see through their American identity as soon as they walked in, but for him it was different. Adam's skin tone allowed him to be “neutral” to any conversation or group he approached. While abroad he began to consider that the people around him did not initially recognize him as American.

“I feel like I did get lucky because I'm brown, um, because I'm Indian. When I was in Europe I never got any terrible, racist remarks. It was very neutral. I could approach a group of people and be very neutral and make friends a lot easier. But, my other friends who were, you know, American, and everyone was White on the trip. They did get met with some anti, some aggressive behavior, which is kind of weird.”

Adam felt lucky to be brown while visiting Europe. He could explore each country without having to initially deal with the aggressive tone that was targeted at his White American friends.

Arriving in Paris, Adam did notice the large population of Indians in the city and felt a harsh vibe toward him by some of the Parisians based on his skin tone.

“They don’t know I’m American. People would think, like, I was kind of a miscreant just because they think I am a part of the Indian population here”.

Adam felt slightly uncomfortable about this, but not so uncomfortable that his experience abroad would be anything other than amazing.

As time passed, Adam began to miss his friends and family back home. Frequent Skype sessions with his parents, and a couple of cigarettes a day to remind him of his friends back home, became a part of his routine. As he smoked, the smell of the cigarette reminded him of a being back home, where he does not smoke, but his close friends do. He tried to hold on to the nostalgic European cigarettes to save some for his friends back home, but decided feeling the nostalgia would feel better than hanging on to them for a long time.

Travel excursions were the best part about studying abroad for Adam. Each location he visited or people he met became a story in his head that would come to life in the pages of his sketchbook, which he presented to me as his artifact. Major sites and cities became the setting for characters out of history or present day. Each new place was a new story to create. He constantly felt inspired by his surroundings. He made comic strips based on old towns in Italy, thinking of ‘what if’ scenarios in his head. He sketched Normandy beach, re-imagining the time before it became a symbol of World War II. The lights of Paris inspired him to sketch stories in his book that included the quirky encounters of people he met there. He loved that Paris felt weird, and used that weirdness to have fun with his artwork.

“The culture itself is just really inspiring. And how they value artwork and history.”

Throughout his time abroad, Adam visited many art galleries to see how far art has come. From the historical pieces located in the Louvre, to modern art galleries dedicated to African ceramics, he wanted to see it all. Adam really saw his future coming to life while he was abroad. He could see himself showing his art in galleries all over the world, and meeting more people who would inspire him. Adam met a Native American artist abroad who was an alumnus of Central University and talked with him about the benefits of travelling. The artist told him, “While most people can look at an image and view it, you as an artist have to see all aspects of it. Not just the two dimensional image, but everything from the colors, the smell, so that you can incorporate that into your artwork.” This conversation only fueled Adam’s passion for art and his need to travel to see beyond the two-dimensional.

Adam’s trip came to an end after 10 weeks, and he was not ready to return back to the lethargic lifestyle he felt he lived back home. As he returned to campus, he felt as if his experience abroad was an adventure, but not the way he imagined it to be. He pictured the romanticism of Europe itself in his head, but never imagined he would meet the people he did or feel the way he felt when he saw famous landmarks or art. He felt proud that he had taken on such an incredible experience without his family, and could not wait until he could graduate and do it all over again.

Adam was happy to be home with his friends again. He realized that during his time abroad that he did not make many friends outside of the people in his program, and

felt maybe it was the length of the time that he was there that made it difficult to make those strong connections with people from other countries.

“To make lifelong friends, you have to be there for a while. If they know you are going to leave, they’re not going to put any effort.”

Even the connections he made with the people in his program were difficult to manage upon returning back to campus, because he did enjoy being with his friends again. Reunion parties have come and gone, but Adam has been staying focused on his last year at Central University and hasn’t had the time to attend. He has, however thought about trying new things and being open to other opportunities. This semester, he enrolled in a variety of classes that offered a little more challenging than what he would normally do. He knew he could have taken easier courses and still met his graduation requirements, but decided in the end he wanted to learn more about different things.

“It [study abroad] really got me to want to learn more, read more. I’m kind of lazy by nature so like, it did help me with discipline a little bit.”

Adam is very focused on what happens after graduation. Involvement on campus is not of interest to him because his main goal is to graduate, pursue his career as an artist and be able to travel again. Studying abroad made him realize how much more he has to do to become the artist he wants to be. Whether that is the artist that puts art in galleries, or a comic book illustrator, there is much to be done. He is hoping that his next travel adventures will give him a boost of creativity for his art. He now plans to backpack through Europe and see places that study abroad programs do not often allow program participants to see. Backpacking would be a new adventure for Adam, but now, he is ready for it.

Jeremy

Jeremy lived in a town near Central University, and always loved hearing about how lively the campus was. He knew he had to be there. His choice to attend Central University was also strengthened by his newfound interest in Japanese culture, which was highly recognized at the institution. When he finally got to campus, he could see that there were many opportunities to be lively and have an adventure. Living in the residence halls, he was exposed to the parties hosted by social groups on campus, but never felt a part of that culture.

“I am not a big fan of it. Because it’s too much, it really is too much and it kind of sets an unseen hierarchy that I’m not a big fan of.”

He could sense there was an unspoken social order that existed with specific groups, and they did not provide the inclusive atmosphere he was hoping to find. Jeremy put all of his involvement and time into his coursework and the Japanese student organization on campus. He loved attending cultural events on campus, meeting with Japanese students and hearing about their views on the world and their experiences. He hoped that one day that he would be able to visit their country and explore a new part of the world. As he continued to study the Japanese language, he knew he could not just take classes and be fluent when he graduated. He needed to do something more, something that would allow him to commit to what he wanted to do with his language skills in the future.

“I wanted to see if it was really something that I wanted to, you know, dedicate my life to, because I’m dedicating four years to it.”

Study abroad was that something. Jeremy happened to find a program that did a full year exchange in Japan and was enthusiastic to jump on the opportunity. He knew he wanted to gain a better sense of who he was and get himself out there, and being abroad for a year could influence that.

The first thing Jeremy noticed when he landed in Japan was the lack of diversity in the country.

“The first thing from when I stepped off the plane, I realized that like, I’m the only black person. And instead of it being a sea of White people it was a sea of Asians.”

Jeremy was ready to spend the first couple of months before classes started exploring major cities in Japan. He was not prepared, however, for the personal awareness that he would have to rebuild while being in the country. His first encounter with a Japanese child was being approached about being a basketball player. Getting lost in the city did not present an opportunity for police officers to assist him, but instead to question why he was there. He did not want his remaining experience to be like these instances, so instead he made it his purpose to embrace the new environment of this island country, and show them what it means to be an African American.

“I had to be constantly aware of like, my appearance and who I am...As an African American you don’t just represent America, and you represent African Americans. Whoever you talk to, whatever you do, whatever little action you make represents, you know, it represents not just you but you know, that culture.”

He knew his culture was not represented well at home and he did not want that to be the case in Japan. He could sense that Japan, since being an island country, did not

know very much about him or his culture, so with this reflection, he continued to explore the different world he was now a part of.

Being at the university in Japan excited Jeremy more than anything. He became involved in a variety of organizations and found volunteer work and employment that would keep him practicing his Japanese. From double-dutch, to Kendo club, Jeremy was living out his goals abroad, which were to immerse himself in the culture as much as possible. He did not interact with students who came from the United States because he wanted to interact with people from other places and discuss new views on the world. He met one of his closest friends in Japan, someone he had noticed as the first Asian he had ever seen with dreadlocks. Jeremy knew he had to meet him, and from that point on, they were brothers.

“He introduced me to a whole different side of Japan.”

Underground hip hop and Reggae clubs were not what Jeremy was expecting to find abroad, but was thankful that he had someone who could connect with him. His friend worked at a bar that he would frequent toward the closing hours, so he could talk to everyone who was there and hear more about Japanese society.

“My goal while I was in Japan was to be able to express myself in Japanese, to not have to rely on pulling out a pocket dictionary each time I wanted to say something. Talking with him and the people I met, it made me really happy. It made me feel like I, you know, I had not wasted my money.”

Jeremy’s Japanese language proficiency was increasing every day that he spent in his clubs and organizations, and interacting with his friends on campus. He received a variety of opportunities to host speech debates, work at a language cafe, and be a tour

guide for visiting travelers. He couldn't believe he was getting an all-expenses paid opportunity to visit the historic sites of World War II and not only get to illustrate its impact to other foreigners, but also reflect on the impact it made on him. He couldn't wait to share his experience abroad once he got home.

“Language allowed me to do a lot of things that I never would have thought.”

Returning home was difficult for Jeremy. With only a week before classes began in the States, he had to settle in from his jet lag and begin the enrollment process again. Studying for classes proved difficult as he reflected on how much easier it was to go to class in Japan.

“The beauty of studying abroad was you just study what you are passionate about and so it doesn't take a lot of extra effort like, and you're surrounded with motivation because you're like, 'I'm in my dream right now, this is what I wanted and I'm just going to keep going after this and I'm not going to stop.'”

Now, finding the motivation to wake up for an 8am class became a struggle. Jeremy saw the world differently too. He could see now what influence he has on the people around him, both on a large and small scale. This allowed him to be more open-minded in conversations and understand that lived experiences are different for everyone.

During his time working at the language cafe in Japan, Jeremy became annoyed by how the cafe was approaching intercultural interactions. He felt the purpose of the café was to be a place where people from all different backgrounds could coexist and talk about the world together, but in reality it was a place for Japanese students to practice their English. When he came back to Central University, he couldn't help but wonder if this is what the Japanese student organization on campus does for American students. As

he tried to process through this reflection, he decided to leave the organization, unsure of the direction it was taking. After a semester hiatus, he decided to return to the organization and do his part to make it better. Now, as president, he is able to share his vision for intercultural communication to his fellow members and still celebrate the Japanese culture he loves so much.

Jeremy's involvement with international and multicultural clubs and offices has blinded him to the greater population of Caucasians on the Central University campus.

"After I got back from studying abroad, I kind of found my own like clique and my own part of Central University which I like to associate with. It kind of makes me blind to all the other stuff, which is not necessarily a great thing, but yeah."

Jeremy knew his experience abroad was worthwhile and couldn't wait to share it with others who may be interested, but he was never reached out to do so. When he would talk to his friends about his experience, they all agreed that they wished they would have participated in something like his program, but yet his voice did not feel heard on campus, even though he saw images of White students on fliers promoting study abroad.

"That really hurt when I came back and they didn't ask me to do anything, because like, I got so much praise from my university [in Japan]."

Jeremy continued pushing away from the majority population on campus, in the hopes that his dreams to be back in Japan, his home away from home, would come again soon.

Alias

Alias is always ready for the next challenge. When her parents decided to move to the Midwest 10 years ago, she knew it would be different and was open to accepting that. The East Coast was so diverse, and having to leave that for a more homogenous environment was difficult. She started to feel that she was different from the people in her new town, but she was not going to let it stop her from pursuing her next challenge.

Alias did not plan on going to an institution in the Midwest, her back up plan was Midwestern University, but as she began to reevaluate the benefits of attending Midwestern University, specifically the psychology program, and being close to her family, she made the choice of attending. She had already known what to expect out of Midwestern University since it was very close to her home, and that its lack of diversity would be prevalent.

“I’m already used to it so it wasn’t really an issue coming in to college.”

Alias knew she wanted to be involved and engaged with communities where she could make positive connections. She joined numerous multicultural and international organizations that brought her great opportunities and friendship. She made friends who were from Malaysia and even helped out with culture nights that they hosted. She was amazed by the richness of the culture their country had, and continued to want to know more. As a couple of years passed, she began to reflect on how completely happy she was with her life and her involvement on campus, but felt too comfortable.

“I just felt like, this is too easy, and I just wanted to kind of challenge myself, and I thought what better way than going to a whole other country across the world.”

Alias knew what her next challenge would be. No one was participating in the study abroad program to Malaysia, which excited her. She wanted something different, something that was going to allow her to live in a different culture where people did not look like her, and be able to grow as a person. As soon as the acceptance letter for her semester exchange program to Malaysia arrived, she felt a sigh of relief: she knew change was coming soon.

When Alias first arrived in Malaysia, she was excited to see some of her close friends again and talk about the university she would be attending. Her friends, unfortunately, had no idea where her university was, nor the town that it was a part of. Alias got nervous as she began to ask other people in Kuala Lumpur if they had heard of her small town that was only an hour away. Everyone she asked gave her a confused look.

“I mean, my friends didn’t even know where it was, and I was like, ‘oh no, what have I gotten myself into!’”

Thankfully, she wasn’t alone in an unknown town right away. Her friends from Malaysia promised her they would take her to her university. The university was small, as she expected, and resided within a Muslim community. As she began to take a look at her new surroundings, she noticed the dress of the people living there, as well as how much people were looking at her.

When she arrived to campus, she was immediately connected with her program’s seven students that represented a variety of countries in the world. She instantly felt that her connection with them would be a close one, because in reality, they were all in this

experience together. She knew they would be travelling together, living together, dealing with being away from home together.

“I couldn’t have done it without my other friends. Since we all took that step of leaving home, um, we all had that commonality of being so far away from home and realizing we needed each other.”

After international orientation, the group of students was told that they would have the opportunity to attend the first year ceremony, which brought both international students and domestic students together in one event. Alias was beyond thrilled. This was what she was waiting for, and could not wait to meet students from Malaysia. Before she even arrived to Malaysia, she knew she had to prepare to speak about herself because she had a feeling that people would be curious about her. This was proven true as the students arrived to the major event hall, and she noticed how quickly the Malaysian students began to stare, take pictures, and approach with excited faces.

“Some of us would be like, ‘gosh we feel like celebrities’ because everyone wanted our pictures, we felt so special. And you know, as time progressed people were still doing that, and at times it would get very annoying, um, sometimes they would take pictures of us without our permission. We would just be sitting in class and people would take pictures of us or like record us while we were doing a presentation.”

She couldn’t believe these students were so excited to see them, but then thought about how small the town was, and began to make sense of it all. She posed for many pictures for students, reminding herself not to touch the males because she did not want to offend anyone due to their religion. Alias tried to go back to the level of understanding she came in with, and remain positive, because she knew their curiosity was genuine.

“I kind of already knew I would have to speak up for myself and speak a lot about myself and talk to people a lot because I was different and they were curious. That just came with the territory so I was willing to accept that.”

On a trip to a neighboring historic city, Alias and her friends met locals who were from Africa, and talked to them about what to really expect living in Malaysia. She was glad that the Africans told the truth, that there could be places where racism is experienced. She didn't want to go through any experience blind-sided.

The university Dean approached her one day to get to know the students on campus. She was curious to know what Alias' racial background was as she felt her initial thought was not correct. “Are you mixed with something, Alias?”

“No, I don't think so, I'm just black or African American.”

“Where are your parents from?” The Dean began to ask.

“From the United States, we are African American” Alias responded. The Dean could not comprehend what Alias was trying to say, so the conversation began to end as quickly as it started. Alias could tell that people from all over the world may not know much about African Americans or any other American that did not subscribe to the typical White American. She found herself defending her culture from others who would ask her why she did not know more about where she was really from. In her mind, she was really from America, because the connection to Africa was so far detached from the culture she recognizes. Through all the questions and curiosity, she still remained positive that the approaches to get to know her were genuine and she enjoyed that.

Alias always enjoyed escaping the small town community that she lived in. She loved travelling to the neighboring countries like Thailand and Singapore, which she was

able to visit twice. Due to a friend not being able to go with her on a trip to Singapore, she decided to go alone and embrace a new challenge of being a solo traveler. She felt proud as she explored the country on her own, and decided to rid herself of thoughts of ‘what ifs’ and dangerous encounters, and instead enjoyed the moment of navigating a country independently.

“You feel proud of yourself, and doing things like that it really puts things in perspective.”

Fear always found a way to come into her thoughts as she travelled through the streets of Singapore, but they were always triumphed by the one thought that shined above all others: she knew she could do it.

“It really isn’t that hard as it seems.”

Returning home from a semester in the warm, humid environment of Malaysia, she was welcomed back to the Midwest with below freezing temperatures. She instantly felt that her eyes were refocused or were more open as she recognized all of the differences between Malaysia and the Midwest. She found a greater appreciation of the place she called home, but also knew that her future that her future included new challenges she may want to be a part of.

Virgil

Virgil always knew he would be attending Central University. He heard great things about the atmosphere and the people on campus, so without personally visiting the campus before applying, he moved in. He instantly did not feel like he belonged with the crowd that surrounded him.

“I come from a really poor background. Like, the only way I was able to go to Central University was because I got a really good scholarship. I lived in the really expensive dorms, and like the people there, I really had nothing in common with them. Like, I really couldn’t relate to.”

He did not feel connected to the wealthy students that lived there and could not relate to the activities and their lack of basic life skills (based on his assumptions) that he had gained growing up on the poverty line.

Virgil decided to connect to organizations on campus, and decided to become involved in political science clubs, which would align with what he wants to do after graduation, but he always knew he also wanted to continue to explore different things.

“You learn a lot about yourself when you know absolutely nobody on the entire side of the world and you’re just like on your own. I wanted to branch out; I’ve always wanted to travel.”

The study abroad program he found was ideal because it was a year-long exchange program in one of his favorite places in the world, the United Kingdom. Virgil was fortunate enough to complete a spring break study abroad program to London prior to applying for the exchange program, and he knew he felt comfortable taking that next step abroad and living in the United Kingdom for longer than a week. He wanted this adventure to be an opportunity to branch out and feel what it was like to grow as a person without knowing anyone in that area of the world. He did not have many expectations, but he hoped this experience would be different and something that he wouldn’t expect.

As soon as Virgil arrived to the United Kingdom, he learned the hard way that this experience would involve the unexpected. While staying in a hostel for the first time

with people from all over the world, he was able to make close-knit friends that would last the entire program, as well as deal with interesting circumstances in a room full of travelers. He couldn't believe that one traveler performed obscene behavior while in conversation with his newfound friends, and at first did not know what he gotten himself into. All of these doubts were eased when he arrived at his college town and was able to explore the city.

The first thing Virgil noticed was that the black people in this city had integrated into society in the United Kingdom, and were not as discriminated against as people who identified as Muslim. This was weird to him, he was not used to this much racial discrimination toward this population of people. He realized it did not make him stick out so much, since he was accustomed to sticking out on the Central University campus. He and his close friend and roommate would often explore the sites together, but even then, he noticed the difference in the approaches people made toward him and his White friend. He noticed how some would approach him first, before recognizing his roommate, which he assumed was because she looked more "American" than he did at first sight. Virgil however did feel like he stuck out during his excursions to France and Amsterdam. He noticed that Amsterdam lacked in diversity and often dealt with people who based their interactions with him on his skin tone. This felt similar to responding to stereotypes in the United States. But being able to have conversations regarding race was new.

"I never felt like threatened or disrespectful toward me. It's way more open to discuss [race] because people are willing to have conversations about race than they are here. People will be more willing to be okay with their ignorance compared to like in

American, it's kind of like, we have a lot more tension between races here. And I feel like there are a lot of barriers to having positive racial discussions.”

This reflection made Virgil feel more at ease with having these conversations; conversations he knew could not have back home. He remembered a story his parents told him about their childhood growing up in Compton, California and how they never saw a White person in real life until they moved to Kansas. This made him feel that in America racial groups are more isolated than was he discovered abroad.

Virgil connected well to people from all over the world and built lasting friendships that he never thought could happen. One day, while watching the World Cup, the group of friends took a photo and posted it to Facebook. Looking at the photo his friends wondered why it was so easy for them to all be friends, despite their cultural differences, while the rest of the world could not. He enjoyed those conversations, and was thankful that he could share his experience with others.

As Virgil tried to connect with local students of the college, he noticed a reoccurring trend that had also happened back at Central University. The students who attended the college were very wealthy, which he could not connect to.

“I honestly didn't make many friends at the university. The area I lived in there were lots of students from the city university, which I made a lot more friends that went there than the actual university that I went to.”

Virgil loved the travel experiences that study abroad could bring. Even getting lost in the city felt like a sense of accomplishment, because he knew he had to figure it out on his own. Through traveling to small beach towns in France, Paris and Belgium to celebrating the New Year in Amsterdam, and living in his favorite city, London, he took

every opportunity he could to live through each moment of his experience. He even got to reminisce with his previous study abroad program leader as they recounted the amazement of his first time abroad.

Saying goodbye was the hardest part for Virgil. As much as his international friends told him they would see him soon, and that he was always welcome to return, he didn't see this as an immediate next step for travel.

“I remember the last day I cried. They were like, ‘oh you can come back’ and I’m like, ‘no, I can’t come back whenever’. I’m not the typical American that could be able to do this. I’m around the poverty line. The other Americans I met there – they were like from prep schools and there were two from Ivy Leagues, and I was like yeah, that is more of the typical American that you would see overseas. Not the poor, black kid from the Midwest.”

Returning back to Central University was easier than expected. Virgil knew that at this point in his life, he was going to put more effort into what he did so that he would be able to go back to Europe some day and visit his friends. Spain and Portugal are on his mind as he continues to work hard and stay involved with international education on campus. He reflected on his experiences abroad and realized how much they helped him have a better sense of direction regarding where his life is taking him after graduation. For now, he will wait for graduation and the next unexpected experience to come his way.

Mya

Mya's English high school class project was a scrapbook that was dedicated to her future goals and dreams. She said she wrote in this scrapbook something that makes

her smile even today: “In August 2012, I plan on attending Midwestern University and after that, I plan on studying abroad in Germany my second semester of my sophomore year”.

Following dreams and encouraging others to follow their dreams has always been on Mya’s agenda. Mya’s dream was to go to college and make her family proud, because she knew how hard they had worked to grant her this opportunity. When she began to look at schools to attend, Midwestern University was her top choice due to its programs in international business and the study abroad programs they had to offer. When she visited campus for the first time, she saw how friendly everyone was, which made her like Midwestern University even more. She could already envision her list of goals being completed at this institution.

As Mya went through her first year at Midwestern University, she noticed how a lot of people on her campus do not know much about what is going on in the world. Either the students did not feel it was important to them or just did not care to listen. This made her uncomfortable. She knew then that it was time to check off another item on her goal sheet. Since her parents were from Mexico, Mya was already proficient in Spanish but knew she didn’t want to take the easy way out in college. She enrolled in German and fell in love with Germany’s culture and language. After a referral from a friend about a semester program in Germany, Mya was ready to pounce on the opportunity. She wanted to see the world and explore other places. She also wanted to represent her Hispanic community as a person of color who can achieve their dreams and study abroad.

“I want to set a future for the future generation especially. Especially in the Hispanic community because I think a lot of Hispanics think they can’t go study abroad.”

Mya was ready for the new experience Germany would bring, both personally and academically. She knew being immersed in the country would help her language proficiency get better, and that by doing so she would be able to achieve her dream of working for a professional football team there. Her parents had different opinions about her travel destination, but in the end supported their daughter's decision to experience something new that would benefit her future goals.

Mya did not think leaving her family for a semester would be so hard, until she was driving to the airport with them.

“I don't like looking at my plane ticket. I'm not a crier, but when I went [to the airport] I was in the backseat by myself and I was bawling in tears. To this day they [parents] don't know I cried.”

As she said her goodbyes and waved from the terminal, she turned to let the real tears set in. The tears were eased by the thoughts of having a once in a lifetime experience that her parents worked hard to provide. She boarded the plane with a smile, waiting for Germany to finally become a reality.

Mya landed in Germany and met her host family who would take her to her future home for the semester. As she got in the car, her host dad began to speak to her in German, and a minor panic began to set in. “What did I get myself into?” she thought to herself. Through broken German and a long drive to the home, Mya realized how far away her host family lived from where she would be taking classes and exploring Berlin. After a couple weeks, she decided to move to a different host family, saving her from the hour commute to the city. She was matched with a single mother, and instantly felt a connection. Like Mya, the single mother had a father who was ill and was also not from

Germany, and they were able to bond. Her host mother's daughter, Lily, considered Mya to be a sister, and made sure to let her friends at school know. Mya really enjoyed her little family away from home, and was thankful that she was matched with such a caring and loving host mom.

As Mya began to see all of the amazing sites Germany and surrounding countries offered, she would journal. She wrote about her travels and how she felt about everything she saw. Visiting concentration camps was a very impactful experience for her, as she saw how history made an impact on the country today. During a tour, the guide mentioned that the camps were torn down for the most part because they did not want history to repeat itself. This really stuck with her.

Mya's identity as Mexican American influenced her interactions with people in her classes. She was not the only student from Midwestern University, but no one initially considered she was a part of that group.

“Obviously there were mostly Caucasian [students] and I'm just this Hispanic girl, the only colored I guess there, and so my class, um, some didn't know I was from the Midwest. Like they identified who were the Americans, and so when they saw me they just looked at my name and they were just like, ‘oh, where are you from?’”

Other students would ask Mya about where she was from, and wanted to know more about Mexico. She tried to incorporate that she identified as American, but when questions about Spanish people or the Mexican flag were directed to her, she would politely answer. She could begin to see that the international students visiting Germany did not care to know about American culture enough to ask, but she continued to try to defend the country she called home.

Mya found ways to connect back to home during her time in Germany. On a trip to Madrid with friends who were studying abroad in three different countries, the group found a place that was named after their Midwest state, and stopped to pose for a photo. She decided this would be a great opportunity to tweet to Midwestern University, letting them know that no matter where Midwestern University students go, they will always find ways of connecting to home. She also connected with the churches in every country she visited.

“Every church I went to Mass in a different language. When I was in Paris, I went to the Notre Dame cathedral. Oh my gosh, so beautiful! Every church I went to I lit a candle.” Even though she couldn’t speak the language in some places, she enjoyed that she could still connect to her Mass back home.

Mya could only smile as she thought about how her bucket list of places to see and things to do were being checked off. She could close her eyes and remember how excited and emotional she felt being a part of the chants from the Real Madrid and FC Barcelona El Clasico match. Ears ringing and heart full, she knew that travelling abroad was an experience she would never forget.

Arriving back to Midwestern University, Mya could definitely see how her perspective had changed. She began to reflect on how Europe felt aligned with who she was, because there was no judgment and people were open to difference. But back home, she was still seeing the same responses to diversity.

“I just opened my eyes more because in Europe, they are more acceptable of who you are, everyone is like, is acceptable.”

Mya felt the conversations she had abroad with other students, and her host family, were completely different than the conversations she was having with friends back home.

“I don’t really talk to them [friends] about that kind of stuff, ‘cause they don’t seem interested. I share my story with people I studied abroad with or other people who studied abroad because they have that understanding of what we all went through.”

Mya continued to strive for her future goals of encouraging students to study abroad, but while she did so, she still encountered issues regarding the color of her skin. From experiences of being constantly asked if she or her family could speak English, she could see that perceptions of race were not looking to change on campus right away. What she could do, however, is focus on encouraging other students like her to take opportunities such as study abroad and let them know that it is possible to achieve their dreams.

Overview of Themes

From the participant stories, five themes were developed. These themes were drawn from interviews, research notes, and optional artifacts for each of the five participants in the study. The focus of these interviews was to hear about the participants’ experiences abroad and how certain situations or events impacted how they continued their experience on a predominantly white campus. The themes reflect the different experiences students of color face have while abroad and the different variations of the impact study abroad has on the students. The themes are briefly stated below:

Theme I: The Hidden American

Theme II: Connections Abroad

Theme III: PWI Environment After Abroad

Theme IV: Motivated for the Future

Theme I: The Hidden American

The study abroad experience brought multiple reflections of identity to light for the participants. The participants shared that they knew they would be different compared to others in their host country, but they also considered themselves as not the typical American, especially as it relates to being abroad. The identity of being an American was something they personally believed was salient, but also recognized that people would not see this salient identity at first glance.

For example, Virgil did not see himself as similar to the majority population of students who study abroad. Virgil identified as a poor African American from the Midwest, and still acknowledged this identity abroad even though he was following his dream and debunking stereotypes. An impactful comment he made regarding the socio-economic differences highlight his point of view:

“...I’m not the typical American that could be able to do this. I’m around the poverty line. The other Americans I met there – they were like from prep schools and there were two from Ivy Leagues, and I was like yeah, that is more of the typical American that you would see overseas. Not the poor, black kid from the Midwest.”

Mya wanted to allow her American identity to shine, but instead other students saw her identity on the basis of her skin tone and that it placed her in the Mexican culture:

“Obviously there were mostly Caucasian [students] and I’m just this Hispanic girl, the only colored I guess there, and so my class, some didn’t know I was from the Midwest. Like they identified who were the Americans, and so when they saw me they just looked at my name and they were just like, ‘oh, where are you from?’

Alias experienced debate on the basis of her identity. She fully acknowledges her American identity because her African heritage is difficult to connect with and this was confusing to those around her. She realized that the African American culture is not something that is well known in other countries, which lead to constant curiosity and questions about how she identifies:

“I kind of already knew I would have to speak up for myself and speak a lot about myself and talk to people a lot because I was different and they were curious. That just came with the territory so I was willing to accept that.”

Jeremy saw this lack of knowledge regarding the diverse populations in the United States as an opportunity to be the model African-American for people from other countries to see, thus allowing them to build their own perceptions of his culture:

“As an African American you don’t just represent America, you represent African Americans. Whoever you talk to, whatever you do, whatever little action you make represents, you know, it represents not just you but you know, that culture.”

The fear of racism was a primary theme in the literature of the study abroad experience, and while each participant never felt strong discrimination based on their race, they did experience certain interactions abroad as a sign of indifference. Jeremy talked about being approached by a police officer on the streets of a major city in Japan,

and was not prepared for the encounter, as he envisioned it being different than it was back home:

“...First thing they asked me was not, ‘Are you okay? Is there a problem?’ the first thing they asked me is, ‘where are you from?’ ‘Why are you here in Japan?’ ‘Do you have your residence card?’ ‘Do you, why are you here?’ like you know, they grilled me some more about why I’m here and I told them I was studying abroad and - so they took my card and stuff like that, and that really made me realize that like, okay, I guess I need to watch out what I do. Like it was my first real wake up call.”

Adam reflected on how he was viewed in Paris, being an Indian American and knowing that his culture was seen in that city as a culture of labor workers and street vendors:

“...In some places in uh, in Paris, I did feel like some people would think that I was kind of a miscreant because I was Indian. Because a lot of those uh, a lot of those South Asians are street vendors and like labor workers you know? So uh, I did get a bad vibe a little bit, but there was just only, just really fleeting emotions from people. But I did notice a lot of that sort of like, indifference in equality from each culture.”

Some of the participants also saw it as an advantage to keep their American identity hidden because some countries may not see Americans in the most positive light. Each of the participants saw how the host country treated or interacted with the Americans that identified as Caucasian, and felt fortunate that people could approach them without knowing exactly where they were from. Virgil noticed how his roommate, a White female, was never the first to be approached when it came to them being together.

Adam experienced multiple encounters with people in Rome and in France who did not initially identify him as American, and because of this Adam felt he could enter conversations with both U.S. students and the people from other countries:

“I feel like I did get lucky because I’m brown, um, because I’m Indian. When I was in Europe I never got any terrible, racist remarks. It was very neutral. I could approach a group of people and be very neutral and make friends a lot easier. But, my other friends who were, you know, American, and everyone was White on the trip. They did get met with some anti, some aggressive behavior, which is kind of weird.”

Theme II: Connections Abroad

One key theme was the ease of interactions with persons from other countries while they were abroad. The participants found it more enjoyable to connect with other international students or people from their host country than interacting with the other Americans in the group. Jeremy chose to not interact with other Americans at his institution in Japan because he truly wanted to feel like he was away from what he knew. Because of his approach, he was able to build strong friendships as well as increase his goal of expressing himself in another language:

“My goal while I was in Japan was to be able to express myself in Japanese, to not have to rely on pulling out a pocket dictionary each time I wanted to say something. Talking with him and the people I met, it made me really happy. It made me feel like I, you know, I had not wasted my money.”

Virgil met his best friends on the program during his experience in a hostel, and because they shared that connection of being travelers from different worlds, he was able to connect strongly to them. Alias instantly felt attached to her study abroad group because they were all experiencing a new culture together, and would need each other when missing home would take its toll:

“I couldn’t have done it without my other friends. Since we all took that step of leaving home, um, we all had that commonality of being so far away from and realizing we need each other.”

Adam considered his most memorable experiences and interactions were with people from Paris that he met in passing, or street vendors that spoke a language he was familiar with. Mya shared commonalities with her host mother and was able to build a relationship that became long lasting and impactful beyond the surface level interactions generally made while travelling:

“...I still talk to her [host mother], I email her, we keep in touch, she lets me know how everything is going with her daughter, you know, herself and her parents, or her mom. And I let her know what’s going on over here.”

Participants also felt that the conversations about race, political issues, and other cultural dialogue were easier to have with people from cultures besides American culture. Some participants returned from study abroad not being able to have those conversations with friends back home, but felt comfortable in doing so with people from other countries. Virgil reflected on his friend group abroad and how they all came from different parts of the world. He admitted that even through barriers of language, they

were still able to explore what diversity means on a large scale for each of them. Virgil recalled a story that made him reflect on the dialogue of race:

“I actually got a picture on Facebook. It’s uh, probably about 10 or 15 of my friends and everybody is from a different country. It was the night of the World Cup match, and we were all just sitting around, having a few beers, and we were just like, “if we can all be friends, why can’t more countries do that” started a really deep philosophical question around it, and it was like a really good night.”

Each participant took a different way of finding connections abroad and making their time away from home feel like home. Whether it was through keeping their religious routine abroad or establishing nostalgic memories by smoking cigarettes, each participant found a way to make strong connections.

Theme III: PWI Environment after abroad

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, each participant was aware of the lack of diversity on their college campus, but felt their major choice was more important than the environment surrounding them. Once returning from their abroad experience, participants found themselves still being aware of their environment, but choosing to find social circles that connected to more of their identity and their interest. Mya came back wanting to interact with future study abroad participants by working with the Office of Admissions to continue encouraging students like her to do what they think is impossible:

“I think one of my main things, probably in life, is to help with the Hispanic community because a lot of Hispanics have been like, I’m not smart enough to go to college.”

Jeremy, Virgil and Alias were similar in their approach to making new friends and meeting new people by only surrounding themselves with international students or students from a multicultural background. Jeremy admitted that he has made himself blind to the true atmosphere of the campus, which has allowed him to be more comfortable and able to focus on his future of graduating and travelling more. Virgil enjoyed the relationships he had abroad and wanted to continue them back home due to knowing he may not be able to go abroad for a while. Alias always connected with the international students on campus since they were the ones who made her final decision on where she wanted to travel abroad, so continuing those relationships on her campus was important to her.

Theme V: Motivated for the Future

One thing is clear about each participant; they are all highly passionate about their future and setting goals for what they want. Each participant chose involvement upon return from study abroad that was targeted to what they really wanted to do and what they were passionate about. Jeremy had a moment of deep reflection once he returned from being abroad when it came to reevaluating his involvement with the Japanese student organization. Because he cared so much about what the organization did, he decided to quit the Japanese student organization to make sure he could think about what the club could be in the future:

“I try to like make the atmosphere of you know, if you want to come to our events, we are going to introduce you and help you build friendships and you know, like build your language skills and not just be like, hey your Japanese, let’s do some Japanese type stuff.”

Each participant also wanted to embrace new challenges and had an inner motivation to try new things and be open minded. Adam had choices of courses to take his senior year and he could have taken easier art courses or enroll in more challenging and interesting courses:

“I took a bunch of weird classes, they meet my credits but there like - I could have taken like really straight and easy classes, but I do regret that decision a little bit, because I’m kind of falling behind in a few of them but, no uh, yeah it’s just like, it really got me to want to learn more, read more, um. I’m kind of lazy by nature so like, it did help me with discipline a little bit.”

Participants talked about their next challenge being another travel adventure.

Whether they planned on revisiting the countries where they found their wanderlust or other far off places, they were once again ready for something different. The participants all had strong visions for their future careers and aspirations and were all very clear in what they wanted to do. Travel had an influence in everything that they hope to do in the future, and they still continue to make both their travel and career dreams a reality.

Chapter 5 Discussion

Purpose Statement and Analysis

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of study abroad for students of color within predominantly white institutions. Each participant faced a variety of experiences, but all shared themes that provided areas of thought in regard to study abroad, race, and how a specific environment can impact students of color. These are not themes that should be generalized to other students or contexts. The themes not only describe the study abroad experiences of each participant, they also inform how those experiences impacted their remaining time at their predominantly White institution.

Each participant knew their institution of choice lacked diversity, but wanted to attend because of the alignment between the majors and their career goals. However, they arrived in a state of “informed choice.” Morrison’s (2010) findings that students of color feel culture shock when they arrive on a PWI were inaccurate for my participants. Each of them knew that their campus lacked students of color. Some of the participants grew up in predominantly White neighborhoods. So arriving at a campus that was predominantly White did not make a difference to them. All of the participants saw study abroad as an opportunity to escape from the comfortable environment they were living in and as a new challenge to overcome. Each of them was ready for the adventure that study abroad could bring; each had experiences they were hoping to gain. Academic major choice was a dominant reason for the goals participants made before studying abroad. The participants wanted to gain more knowledge in a foreign language or study the history behind their major. Once abroad, these participants gained experiences that would exceed their expectations.

All of the participants had brief moments of “what did I get myself into” when they first arrived in their host country, but based on their experiences throughout their time abroad, that reflection quickly faded. Over time, each participant began to feel comfortable with interactions they had with people from other countries. Each participant discussed significant connections they made while abroad with other international students. These relationships often happened spontaneously and were significant in their experience and memory. Making these connections with people other than Americans seemed to be a highlight for each participant because they were anxious to hear about the world from peers outside of America. Discussing race and diversity in other countries seemed to be easier than similar conversations in the United States. This allowed for some participants to be more open with others while abroad. However, once they returned home this openness faded.

Each participant recognized that the color of their skin played a role in their interactions abroad. The participants all felt that their American identity was initially hidden from others until conversations took place that made their identification known. People would initially see these participants and classify them based on their skin tone, but each participant did not always strongly identify with that analysis. Each participant knew that some people outside of the United States did not know much about the diverse populations found within America, and felt because of this, they did not see themselves as the typical American that studies abroad. The participants’ reactions and reflections on being a student of color abroad reflected the research literature regarding adapting to negative experiences matched participants’ idea of racism abroad. The participants raised points similar to Brux and Fry’s (2010) research on the feelings of being the only person

of color within the study abroad group and the country they were visiting. Morrison (2010) talked about the framework in which students of color take negative experiences and broaden their horizons to the world they live in. This was seen in the participants' reflection of experiences, because while most of them were positive, the negative experiences were viewed as learning opportunities and times of reflection. Jeremy said:

“I had to be constantly aware of like, my appearance and who I am...

Whatever you do, whatever little action you make represents, you know, not just you, but you know, that culture.”

Once the participants returned from study abroad, they found themselves focusing on achieving their goals to graduate and pursue their dream careers that would allow them to continue to travel. Each participant found new ways to challenge themselves on campus, whether that was taking more difficult coursework or taking leadership roles in clubs they cared about. Each participant reflected on study abroad as the first challenge they faced, and seemed prepared for the next challenge that would hopefully involve more time on foreign shores. Transformative Learning (Mezirow, 1997) was prevalent in the findings as each participant talked about taking what they learned abroad and applying it to other areas of their life. Jeremy is an example of how transformative learning and study abroad connected once he returned to Central University. He saw that his participation in the Japanese organization may not be the way he wanted it to be originally, so he made changes.

The study did not align with the researcher's experience, as the researcher's assumptions of how students of color would return to campus were inaccurate based on the experiences shared with the participants. The researcher experienced more

intercultural involvement upon returning from abroad. This intercultural involvement included the White students on campus whereas the participants discussed being involved but focusing on the diverse populations on campus. They focused on groups such as the multicultural organizations or international students that were there and worked to build strong connections with them. I initially thought that returning from study abroad would allow for students to see the importance of intercultural communication, which included the majority population, but some of the participants felt satisfied with the dialogue that was occurring within their particular circles.

Each participant's reflection regarding race showed a variety of levels of racial consciousness, but no reflection was focused specifically on their racial awareness abroad or within a PWI. Each participant saw that the color of their skin had an impact, but the participants did not provide insight into how they saw themselves and others in regards to their race identification.

Implications for Student Affairs

The participants agreed that studying abroad was an experience worth sharing. Some of the participants enjoyed talking about their time abroad, but lacked the space to do so on campus. Offices of study abroad and international education should consider facilitating discussions about students' experiences abroad. Participants felt students want to talk to people who understand the experiences they went through while abroad. For students who have returned from study abroad sharing their stories matters. If students are participating in programs affiliated with their home institution, they should have the opportunity to share their experiences and accomplishments through the office from which the opportunity was provided. The story of Jeremy and his hurt in seeing other

students' experiences featured, but not his own, demonstrates that once an office loses a student that doesn't feel a part of the community, they have lost them for good. Students like Jeremy have no desire to return to a space that rejected their experiences, and for students of color, this could be a large determining factor when encouraging other students of color to consider going abroad. Students of color clearly state that they do not see themselves in the marketing materials or the media for study abroad. If offices lose that touch point with a student of color that did study abroad, they may lose connections with other students of color thus impacting their decision to take this opportunity.

Along with not feeling like the 'typical American' who goes abroad, some of the participants, especially Virgil, seemed to stop seeing the opportunity to travel as a frequent possibility once they graduate, but instead hope to see travel experiences connected to their career choice. Offices must be knowledgeable of the resources available for alumni to travel abroad after graduation. Some students may see college as the only time they will be able to see the world because of the financial strain travel brings. Education abroad offices should continue advising sessions for alumni to connect them to resources on teaching, volunteering or work opportunities abroad after graduation.

Future Research

The results of this study provided insight in an understudied area of study abroad. The experience of students of color abroad is a very broad area. Future research could focus on a specific population of students or their unique backgrounds. Each participant

in this study grew up in a unique background that included different socio-economic statuses and environments. These differences could factor into how study abroad impacts their experience on campus. For example, the researcher's experience of growing up in a predominantly White neighborhood could provide a different impact than that of a student of color who grew up in a different environment.

Additionally, research on the orientation programming of study abroad, and how it relates to students of color, may be an area of research that is not widely discussed in publications. Some of the participants referred back to their orientation and how some of the topics covered were not directed toward them as a student of color studying abroad.

Each participant highlighted negative experiences while they were abroad, but little research exists on what those negative experiences abroad could mean. Studying those negative experiences and their impact on the whole study abroad experience could be an area of research that allows offices of study abroad to see what resources they could provide for students in similar situations.

Conclusion

Study abroad is an opportunity that allows students to experience new environments and interact with people of different backgrounds from all over the world. The impact of study abroad on students depends on the environment they came from and the experiences faced before boarding the plane to a new adventure. Like study abroad, attending college is seen to be an opportunity for all students to tackle a new environment and interact with people from different backgrounds.

The study abroad experiences of students of color within a predominantly White campus have significant impact how the institution and the experiences within it are

viewed once returning home. These experiences are shared not to find solutions and further programming, but to shed light on the experiences lived on campus, how they connect into different areas of the world and reconnect upon returning home.

The participants in this study reflected on their life abroad and their continued passion to see more of the world and experience new challenges returning home. Their motivation to do more and see more shows us that study abroad does more than provide adventure for students, it changes their view of the institution and opens the door to new opportunities in the future.

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Appendix A



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES Office of the Dean

Title: Navigating Spaces: Exploring the Impact of Education Abroad for U.S. Students of Color **Purpose:** This research project will aim to explore how studying abroad, a high-impact practice in higher education for

student success can produce further growth and development of a student in different realms upon return.

Procedures:

You will be asked to answer questions about your university experience and your study abroad experience. Interviews will last for 60 to 90 minutes and will be conducted starting October 2014 at a pre-arranged time and location. Upon completing the initial interview, opportunities for follow up interviews will take place one month from initial interview. Meeting places might include a classroom, office, lounge area, study area, etc. Your answers will be documented in the format of an audio recording. At a later time, this interview will be transcribed in order to summarize responses.

You will also have the opportunity to bring artifacts or items that represent your time abroad. Examples of what you could bring include: Journals, photos, souvenirs, etc. This is an optional opportunity and is not required to participate.

Benefits:

As a research participant, you will be able to express your voice and share your story for a population that is underrepresented. The chosen participants will have a say in how their story is reflected in the research and be a part of the research process from initiation to completion. As a result of my research, I hope to bring more student development opportunities to students who have studied abroad.

Risks and or/Discomforts:

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. In the event of unknown risks, the services below will be available to you at your institution. Services may include cost that will not be covered by researcher.

Education Abroad Office Counseling and Psychological Services

Confidentiality:

Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored within a storage location by the investigator during the study and for 2 years after the study is complete. The information obtained in this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as aggregated data. Your name will not be associated with any of the interview answers.

Compensation:

Participants will receive a \$20 Gift Card for the completion of the initial and follow up interview.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may contact the investigator(s) at the phone numbers below. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 to voice concerns about the research or if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant.

Freedom to Withdraw:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, your institution, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Research Participant I agree to be audio recorded **Name and phone number of investigator(s)**

Virginia Downing, Principal Investigator Debra Mullen, Ph.D., Secondary Investigator

Date

Phone: (913) 240-7824 Phone: (402) 472-5426

233 Mabel Lee Hall / P.O. Box 830234 / Lincoln, NE 68588-0234 / (402) 472-2913 / FAX (402) 472-2895

Appendix B

Hello,

Don't miss an opportunity to share your story.

My name is Virginia Downing and I am a current graduate student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I am an African-American female that studied abroad during my undergraduate experience, and I would like to speak to more students who have done the same.

If you have participated in a study abroad program for more than eight weeks, I would love to hear your story by participating in my research. I aim to explore the study abroad experiences of students of color.

If you would like to participate, please feel free to contact me at vdowning2@unl.edu or (913) 240-7824.

Participants will be interviewed for 60 to 90 minutes in a location of your choice. If agreeing to participate, you will receive a \$20 Visa Gift Card.

Thank you,

Virginia Downing
Educational Administration –Student Affairs Specialization May '15
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
vdowning2@unl.edu

Debra Mullen, Ph.D.,
Secondary Investigator
Phone: (402) 472-5426

Appendix C

Hello <insert participant's name>,

Thank you again for volunteering your time to meet with me and assist in my research goals.

This email is to confirm our interview time of <insert interview time, date > at the <insert location>. Please let me know if this time still works for you or if you need to make any changes.

Attached you will find the questions I would like to ask during our time together. If you would like to take a look at these and write down any thoughts before we meet, please feel free to do so.

Also, if you would be willing to bring any journals, photos, objects, etc. that reflect your experience abroad, please feel free to do so.

Please note that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to remove yourself from the study at any time.

Please let me know if you have any additional questions.

I look forward to meeting you.

Best,

Virginia Downing
Educational Administration –Student Affairs Specialization May '15
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
vdowning2@unl.edu

Debra Mullen, Ph.D.,
Secondary Investigator
Phone: (402) 472-5426

Appendix D

Hello <insert participant's name>,

I hope all is well. This email is to confirm our follow-up interview time of <insert interview time, date > at the <insert location>. Please let me know if this time still works for you or if you need to make any changes.

This interview will be more to answer any questions you may have for me as well as add any additional comments you would like to make.

As a reminder, your participation is voluntary and you have the right to remove yourself from the study at any time.

Please let me know if you have any additional questions.

Best,

Virginia Downing
Educational Administration –Student Affairs Specialization May '15
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
vdowning2@unl.edu

Debra Mullen, Ph.D.,
Secondary Investigator
Phone: (402) 472-5426

Appendix E

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Office of the Director



Title: Navigating Spaces: Exploring the Impact of Education Abroad for U.S. Students of Color

Purpose: This research project will aim to explore how studying abroad, a high-impact practice in higher education for student success can produce further growth and development of a student in different realms upon return.

Procedures:

You will be asked to answer questions about your university experience and your study abroad experience. Interviews will last for 60 to 90 minutes and will be conducted starting October 2014 at a pre-arranged time and location. Upon completing the initial interview, opportunities for follow up interviews will take place one month from initial interview. Meeting places might include a classroom, office, lounge area, study area, etc. Your answers will be documented in the format of an audio recording. At a later time, this interview will be transcribed in order to summarize responses.

You will also have the opportunity to bring artifacts or items that represent your time abroad. Examples of what you could bring include: Journals, photos, souvenirs, etc. This is an optional opportunity and is not required to participate.

Benefits:

As a research participant, you will be able to express your voice and share your story for a population that is underrepresented. The chosen participants will have a say in how their story is reflected in the research and be a part of the research process from initiation to completion. As a result of my research, I hope to bring more student development opportunities to students who have studied abroad.

Risks and or/Discomforts:

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. In the event of unknown risks, the services below will be available to you at your institution. Services may include cost that will not be covered by researcher.

Education Abroad Office
Counseling and Psychological Services

Confidentiality:

Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored within a storage location by the investigator during the study and for 2 years after the study is complete. The information obtained in this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as aggregated data. Your name will not be associated with any of the interview answers.

Compensation:

Participants will receive a \$20 Gift Card for the completion of the initial and follow up interview.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may contact the investigator(s) at the phone numbers below. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 to voice concerns about the research or if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant.

Freedom to Withdraw:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, your institution, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

I agree to be audio recorded

Name and phone number of investigator(s)

Virginia Downing, Principal Investigator Phone: (913) 240-7824
Debra Mullen, Ph.D., Secondary Investigator Phone: (402) 472-5426

Thesis Interview Protocol

INITIAL INTERVIEW

- 1.) Why did you choose to attend your chosen university?
- 2.) Tell me about your experience at your university before studying abroad?
- 3.) Why did you choose to study abroad?
- 4.) What were you hoping to gain from studying abroad?
- 5.) Tell me about your study abroad experience
- 6.) Tell me about how it felt to return back to your university?
- 7.) How do you feel that your study abroad experience has affected your academic life at your university?
- 8.) How do you feel that study abroad has affected your involvement on university?
- 9.) How do you feel that your study abroad experience has affected your perceptions of your university?
- 10.) Based on your experiences, how do you view yourself now compared to how you viewed yourself when you initially arrived to your university?

FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW

- 1.) Now that you have had the time to reflect on our initial interview, is there anything additional you would like to add?