THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS OF COLOR WHO STUDIED ABROAD AS PART OF THE RACIAL OR ETHNIC MAJORITY

By

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ABSTRACT

For over 30 years, international educators have recognized that Students of Color participate in study abroad opportunities at considerably lower rates than their white peers. Despite concerted efforts to address this disparity, the proportion of Students of Color studying abroad has largely remained unchanged over the last three decades. To better support Students of Color studying abroad and increase their participation in this high impact practice, international educators need to better understand students' lived experiences. In this qualitative study, I used focus groups and narrative interviews to investigate how Students of Color experienced studying abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. I used critical race theory (CRT) and its extensions as theoretical lenses for this research. Findings from this study point to the importance of not essentializing the experiences of Students of Color who studied abroad given the variation in what they experienced. However, many participants had positive experiences on this type of study abroad program, which suggests studying abroad in a location where Students of Color are in the racial or ethnic majority may be a good fit for some Students of Color. Findings from this study also support the careful use of CRT and its extensions for conducting study abroad research focused on Students of Color.

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Mia and Miguel.

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CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Each fall, as campus buzzes with the excitement of a new academic year, I reconnect with students for debrief meetings about their recent time abroad. Over the past 13 years, I have met with numerous students for these one-on-one conversations and listened to them process and reflect on their international experiences. These debrief meetings have included moments of laughter and levity, accounts of embarrassing moments, and tearful descriptions of challenging experiences. Some of the most memorable, insightful, and complex conversations occurred while Students of Color reflected on traveling to a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. Many Students of Color have shared deeply personal moments with me as they unpacked these experiences. Some students reflected they felt relieved because they visibly fit in and did not experience continual microaggressions; others recounted feeling a deep connection to the place and people, and still other students discussed painful instances of discrimination from locals and study abroad peers.

Listening to Students of Color share and reflect on studying abroad in a location where they were a part of the racial or ethnic majority piqued my interest in this topic. I was curious to learn what is known about this type of study abroad and its impact on Students of Color. I wondered if these students should be prepared and supported in specific ways. Over the years, several Students of Color shared it was important to them to study abroad in a comfortable place where they could avoid microaggressions and discrimination. As I began my doctoral studies, I wanted to understand if international educators should recommend that some Students of Color consider studying abroad in a place where they are a part of the racial or ethnic majority. Although the research on Students of Color studying abroad is growing, I did not find directly relevant studies. Therefore, I decided to explore if this gap in the literature was limiting

international educators in better understanding and consequently supporting Students of Color studying abroad. Informed by my professional experience and influenced by a dearth of relevant literature, I decided to focus my dissertation on this topic.

Study Background

For over 2 decades, the field of international education has recognized that not all students participate in study abroad at the same rates (Stallman et al., 2010). Underrepresented individuals include Students of Color, low-income students, first-generation students, students with disabilities, male students, students in specific majors (e.g., science and engineering), community college students, students enrolled in minority-serving institutions, LGBTQ+ students, and others (Lopez-McGee et al., 2018; Thomas, 2013). In response to these disparities, international educators, institutions, professional associations, and the U.S. government have all voiced their commitment to expanding access and promoting the inclusion of students traditionally underrepresented in study abroad (Diversity Abroad, n.d.; Lincoln Commission, 2005; NAFSA, n.d.; The Forum on Education Abroad, n.d.). These commitments have led to numerous activities and initiatives focused on expanding study abroad access. Some examples include (a) the creation of the Gilman Scholarship for students with financial need, (b) the establishment of the Diversity Abroad professional organization, (c) the creation of study abroad programs for students with particular identities, and (d) the publication of books including *Promoting Inclusion in Education Abroad* (Barclay Hamir & Gozik, 2018). Although these initiatives focused on various student populations, Students of Color comprised the most targeted and discussed underrepresented group of students (McClure et al., 2010; Wick, 2011).

The reason many study abroad diversification efforts have focused on Students of Color is likely due in part to the availability of data on study abroad participants' race and ethnicity.

The Institute of International Education (IIE) provides these data in its annual *Open Doors* Report *on International Educational Exchange*. In 1993, IIE began collecting data on study abroad participants' race and ethnicity. These data elucidated a notable lack of racial and ethnic diversity among participants, which only confirmed what many international educators already knew (Stallman et al., 2010). In addition to readily available data, issues related to race and ethnicity have consistently been subjects of U.S. higher education scholarship due to the salience of race in U.S. society and educational settings (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). As succinctly explained by Lopez-McGee et al. (2018):

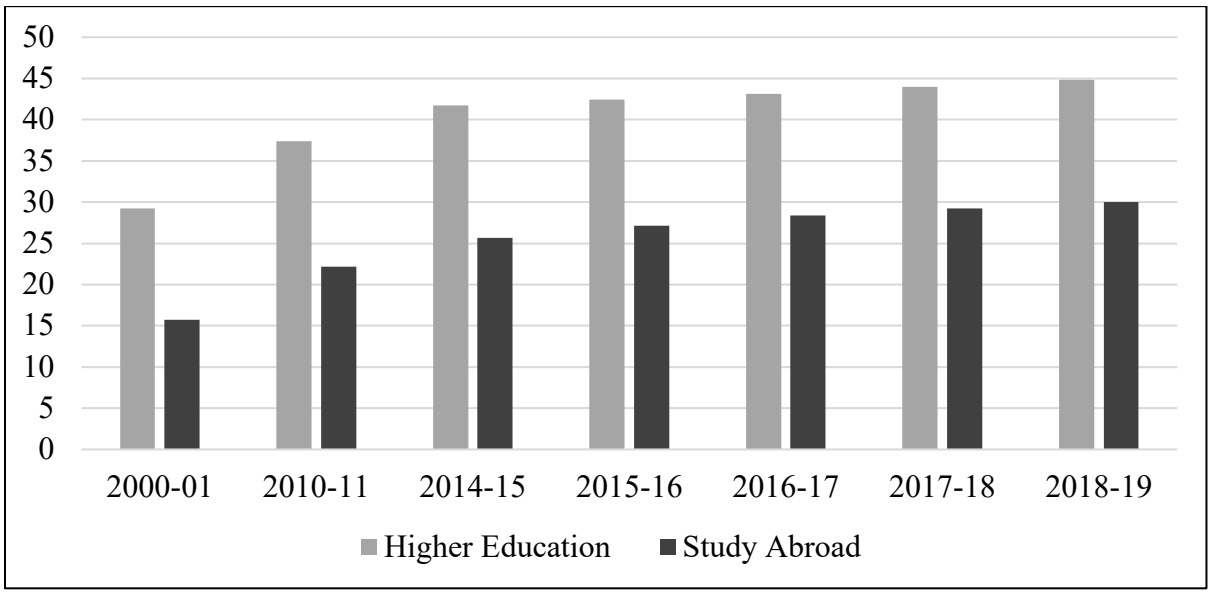
> The U.S.'s contentious and significant history of systematic discrimination and marginalization of racial and ethnic minority groups, which persists today and is the subject of many scholars' writings, continues to influence the importance of addressing gaps in education access and opportunity. (p. 21)

Yet, despite the considerable attention and intentions of international educators, the study abroad participation disparity for Students of Color has persisted and shown little sign of decreasing.

Simultaneously considering study abroad participation data and higher education enrollment data has revealed the extent of the issue. First, it is important to examine historical higher education enrollment trends for Students of Color over time. Using National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data, Figure 1 illustrates over the past 2 decades, there has been a notable increase in the percentage of Students of Color enrolled in higher education (represented by the gray bar). However, despite this increase, Students of Color have not made notable gains in terms of being proportionally represented in IIE's study abroad participation data (represented by the black bar). Proportional representation would result in the gray and black bars being even, which is clearly not the case.

Figure 1

Percentage of All Students in Higher Education and Study Abroad Who Are Students of Color



Note. U.S. enrollment in post-secondary institution data are from the NCES (2020) and include the following categories: Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and two or more races; study abroad data are from the IIE *Open Doors* Report *on International Educational Exchange* (2020) and include the following categories: Hispanic or Latino(a), Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Multiracial.

In the 2000–2001 academic year, Students of Color made up 29.2% of all students enrolled in higher education (NCES, 2021). However, that same year, Students of Color only made up 15.7% of all students who studied abroad. This difference illustrates the underrepresentation of Students of Color in study abroad as they did not participate in study abroad at the same proportion (29.2%) as would be expected given their enrollment in higher education. Looking at the data almost 2 decades later for the 2018–19 academic year, the percentage of Students of Color in higher education rose to 44.8%; yet, they were only 30% of

all students who studied abroad. As Figure 1 demonstrates, the disparity between Students of Color and white students participating in study abroad remained largely unchanged between 2000–2019.

Thus, despite the considerable attention and commitment to diversifying study abroad participation, the data make clear that international educators' efforts have not adequately, nor even notably, addressed this disparity. If those who work in international education truly want to address this issue, we must innovate and approach this work with new strategies. To be successful, I strongly believe these efforts must be informed by and center the knowledge and experience of the Students of Color whom international educators aim to better serve.

Studying abroad has been identified as a high impact practice that fosters active learning and student engagement (Kuh, 2008; Kuh et al., 2010). Some of the documented positive outcomes associated with studying abroad include gains in intercultural understanding (e.g., Stebleton et al., 2013; Wolff & Borzikowsky, 2018), language learning (e.g., Kinginger, 2011), knowledge about global interdependence (e.g., Sutton & Rubin, 2004), improvement in students' grade point averages (GPA; e.g., Bhatt et al., 2022), retention (e.g., Metzger, 2006), and higher 4- and 6-year graduation rates (e.g., Barclay Hamir, 2011; Bhatt et al., 2022; Malmgren & Galvin, 2008). Furthermore, research has indicated underrepresented students, including Students of Color, may benefit more from some of the academic related outcomes of studying abroad compared to their white peers (A. Bell et al., 2023; Bhatt et al., 2022). For example, A. Bell et al. (2023) recently found that racial-ethnic minority students who studied abroad were more likely to graduate on time and have higher GPAs at graduation. Most notably, "The magnitudes of those benefits exceeded those increments experienced by White students" (A. Bell et al., 2023, p. 226). Thus, results from this dissertation have the potential to inform practices

that could lead to higher study abroad participant rates for Students of Color, and their study abroad participation could positively impact the academic outcomes for Students of Color.

Problem Statement

Notable disparities persist between the study abroad participation of Students of Color and white students. Despite the varied diversification efforts led by international educators over the past 2 decades, the field has yet to identify effective strategies to address this inequity. Thus, international educators must "examine our assumptions and practices based on Whiteness as the norm" (Sweeney, 2014, p. 13). To address this disparity, international educators should avoid colorblind ideology or the idea that race no longer matters and, thus, does not need to be considered. Colorblind approaches to study abroad advising can lead to the assumption that what is desirable for white students is desirable for all students. As Blake et al. (2020) stated:

> Traditionally, study abroad opportunities for U.S. students have been designed for White audiences, and past research has indicated that a perceived disconnect between Students of Color's identities and the available programs has served as one of the barriers to their participation. (p. 158)

A disconnect in terms of the available programs may relate to the program location. Just because many white students are interested in studying abroad in Western Europe and these students have a positive experience there does not mean most Students of Color have the same interest or will have the same positive experience.

As I explore in depth in the literature review, some Students of Color have concerns about their comfort, safety, and encountering racism or discrimination while abroad. Luo and Jamieson-Drake (2015) suggested students who have experienced discrimination previously might not be interested in studying abroad for fear of encountering additional discrimination

abroad. Numerous scholars have also noted various fears, including those of racism and discrimination, might be a barrier to study abroad participation for Students of Color (Council on International Educational Exchange, 1990; Hembroff & Rusz, 1993; Kasravi, 2009; Van Der Meid, 2003). Thus, it is likely some Students of Color might choose to study abroad in a location where they will be part of the racial/ethnic majority to avoid racism or discrimination abroad.

Currently, one frequently mentioned strategy to increase the number of Students of Color who study abroad is to develop study abroad programs for heritage-seeking students (Cade, 2018; Comp, 2008; McClure et al., 2010; R. M. Morgan et al., 2002; Murray Brux & Fry, 2010; Neff, 2001; Picard et al., 2010; Sutton & Rubin, 2004). Heritage seeking is defined as selecting a study abroad location based on family heritage with the goal of gaining knowledge about one's cultural background (Szekely, 1998). However, assuming all Students of Color are interested in heritage related locations leaves out Students of Color who might instead select a location where they would be a part of the racial or ethnic majority for reasons other than their family heritage—such as avoiding discrimination. Thus, international educators may benefit from widening their focus beyond heritage-seeking programs for Students of Color.

In this qualitative study, I used narrative inquiry to examine the lived experiences of Students of Color who studied abroad in a location where they were a part of the racial or ethnic majority. Examples of possible participants include a Hispanic/Latino[1] student who studied abroad in Costa Rica, a Black student who studied abroad in Ghana, and a biracial White and Asian student who studied abroad in South Korea. This study included participants who traveled to locations connected to their heritage and those who did not. Throughout this study, I used critical race theory (CRT) and its extensions as lenses to investigate how issues related to race

[1] Participants of this study most frequently used the terms Hispanic and Latino to describe their ethnicity. Thus, throughout this study I use the term Hispanic/Latino to honor their preferences.

and ethnicity impacted students' study abroad experiences. I believe systematic inquiry into the experiences of these students will assist international educators in better supporting Students of Color studying abroad by expanding relevant knowledge and informing more inclusive study abroad practices.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this research was to add to the study abroad scholarship by illuminating the experiences of Students of Color who studied abroad in a location where they were a part of the racial or ethnic majority. Much of the current study abroad literature on Students of Color has focused on students' intent and decision to go abroad and the barriers they encounter. As explained by Lopez-McGee et al. (2018), "This work has given the field a foundational understanding of what prevents and encourages students from going abroad; now attention should be paid to the unique experience students have while abroad" (pp. 32–33). My primary aim was to provide insights that inform and expand the strategies used to address the low study abroad participation rates of Students of Color. This work must be informed by the experiences of Students of Color, or else it risks being ineffective. Too often study abroad programming decisions are based on anecdotal experiences and assumptions about the intentions, interests, and experiences of Students of Color (Wick, 2011). Empirical research focused on the lived experiences of Students of Color studying abroad will help identify best practices for supporting Students of Color before, during, and after their time abroad. In this study, I also aimed to challenge colorblind approaches used by international educators who may fail to recognize previous experiences with racism and discrimination may impact the study abroad experience of Students of Color.

Given the outlined purpose, my aim in this study was to answer the following research question and subquestions:

How do Students of Color experience studying abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority?

(a) How do Students of Color make meaning of this experience?

(b) How do Students of Color understand race and ethnicity through their study abroad experience?

Ultimately, through this research, I aimed to produce a rich description of the experiences of Students of Color who study abroad in a location where they were a part of the racial or ethnic majority that centers their voices and will ultimately lead to more inclusive study abroad practices and support for these students.

Theoretical Framework

I used CRT as a lens to examine the study abroad experiences of Students of Color. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) stated, "The critical race theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (p. 3). CRT emerged in the 1970s in response to the recognition that the advances of the civil rights era had stalled (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Lawrence III et al., 1993) and was built on the work of critical legal studies and the radical feminism movement (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Since Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (1995) published their seminal article "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," scholars have widely used CRT in the field of education to foreground race and racism in research, challenge traditional paradigms and methods (Solórzano et al., 2000), examine racial inequities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), and identify solutions to challenges faced by Students of Color (Zamudio et al.,

2010). More recently, scholars have used CRT as a lens for research focused on Students of Color studying abroad (Gambrell, 2016; Gathogo & Horton, 2018; Goldoni, 2017; Sweeney, 2014; Wick, 2011). The current study adds to this literature.

Although challenging to succinctly define due to its wide applications (Tate, 1997), CRT is characterized by various central tenets or themes. The tenets most relevant to this study include (a) racism is ordinary and pervasive in U.S. societal structures and institutions, (b) the recognition and centering of the experiential knowledge of People of Color, (c) challenging the dominant liberal ideology, and (d) the commitment to social justice and social change. In the following section, I further describe these tenets and their connection to this study.

Racism Is Ordinary and Pervasive in U.S. Societal Structures and Institutions

CRT asserts racism is endemic and a permanent aspect of U.S. society rather than an exception or aberration (D. Bell, 1992). Additionally, because racism is ordinary and often unacknowledged, CRT maintains it is challenging to address (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Because racism is a fundamental characteristic of U.S. society, many structures and institutions are race-based, and CRT scholars use a racial lens to examine and understand these structures. CRT holds racism is implicated in all aspects of education (Leonardo, 2013). As applied to this study, this means acknowledging the role of racism in higher education and study abroad.

CRT scholars have also asserted race is a social construct that is a product of social thought and relations that are not inherent or fixed (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Omi & Winant, 2014). Despite recognizing that race is a social construct without a biological basis, CRT scholars acknowledge and examine the real effects of racism on individuals and groups (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Relatedly, CRT draws attention to racialization and differential racialization. According to The Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre (n.d.), racialization is "the very

complex and contradictory process through which groups come to be designated as being part of a particular 'race' and on that basis subjected to differential and/or unequal treatment" (para. 2).

Differential racialization is the way those in power racialize minoritized communities differently over time based on convenience, circumstance, and power maintenance. For example, Mexican laborers were generally welcomed in the United States between 1942 and 1964 and seen as a valuable addition to the labor force under the Bracero Program, which was an agreement between the Mexican and the U.S. governments that allowed Mexican citizens to work temporary U.S. agricultural jobs (Chavez & Partida, 2020). However, more recently, Mexican and Central American migrants and immigrants have become unwelcome in the United States as exemplified in Donald Trump's infamous presidential campaign speech where he stated: "They're sending people that have a lot of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us [*sic*]. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists" (Trump, 2015). Thus, in addition to racism being ordinary and pervasive in U.S. society, CRT asserts the construct of race itself is continually modified and manipulated based on the changing needs of those in power. In this study, I examined how Students of Color understood race and ethnicity through a specific type of study abroad experience.

Recognition and Centering of the Experiential Knowledge of People of Color

CRT theorists have recognized that the lived experience or experiential knowledge of People of Color has historically been excluded from higher education contexts (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). In response, critical race scholars have used storytelling and counternarratives to provide an alternative reference point to the majoritarian white narrative (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). This technique has its roots in the legal storytelling movement and is also used by feminist and queer theorists to raise up the lived experience of the individuals most impacted by

inequities. Leonardo (2013) noted critical race theorists "are committed to narrating the dominant racial frame that writes people of color into the story through consistently negative images at best and pathological histories at worst" (p. 20). This tenet directly informed my methodological decision to use narrative inquiry for this study. By conducting focus groups and interviews with Students of Color about how they experienced studying abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority given their identities, I aimed to present an alternative to much of the research in the field that centers on white narratives and voices.

Challenging the Dominant Liberal Ideology

CRT scholars have questioned and critiqued the liberal order including the concepts of colorblindness, meritocracy, objectivity, equality theory, incremental change, claims of race neutrality, and the existence of a postracial society (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Lawrence III et al., 1993; Leonardo, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Sweeney, 2014; Yosso et al., 2009). Through this study I examine and challenge the colorblind assumptions pervasive in study abroad, including the belief that what is beneficial for white students is beneficial for all students (Sweeney, 2014). I also call on international educators not to settle for incremental change or the idea that "gains for marginalized groups must come at a slow pace that is palatable to those in power" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 29). Further, CRT challenges international educators to examine systems and processes to determine what structural barriers prevent Students of Color from participating in study abroad programs. Rather than defaulting to a deficit perspective that places the blame on Students of Color for their lack of participation, I aim to challenge attitudes of colorblindness and meritocracy that result in international educators ignoring the ways students' racial/ethnic identities impact their study abroad decision making and experiences.

The Commitment to Social Justice and Social Change

CRT is more than an intellectual or theoretical exercise of identifying the impacts of race and racism in education. Critical race scholars measure progress by looking for fundamental social transformation (Lawrence III et al., 1993). Scholars using CRT take an action orientation by proposing radical solutions to racial inequities in education (Ladson-Billings, 1998). According to Delgado and Stefancic (2017), "Critical race theorists agree that it is not enough to simply produce knowledge, but to dedicate this work to the struggle for social justice" (p. 6). Social change is implicit in CRT (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004), and, as an international education practitioner, this tenet aligns with my orientation and commitment to translating research into practice and social change.

There have been numerous examples of racial injustices and policies that further white supremacy in higher education (Gillborn, 2005). Ladson-Billings (1998) noted this includes restricted access to the enriched curriculum for Students of Color. Sweeney (2014) posited the enriched curriculum includes study abroad, which has been identified as a high impact educational practice (Kuh, 2008). The proportionately lower study abroad participation rate of Students of Color (IIE, 2020) is one example of an educational inequity that requires direct, strategic action. Further, as succinctly noted by Sweeney (2014), "The lack of participation by African Americans as well as other Students of Color in study abroad reinforces the idea that a U.S. American is a White person; this also perpetuates White supremacy" (p. 14). This connects to larger issues of white supremacy and anti-Blackness worldwide. These issues of social justice demand more than passive theorization. They demand action. CRT offers those passionate about educational inequity the basis for critical action aimed at transforming education to better serve all students (Zamudio et al., 2010).

As Yosso et al. (2009) noted:

> Taken together these tenets [of critical race theory] present a unique approach to existing modes of scholarship in higher education because they explicitly focus on how the social construct of race shapes university structures, practices, and discourses from the perspectives of those injured by and fighting against institutional racism. (p. 663)

In this dissertation, I explored how race and ethnicity impact the experiences of Students of Color who study abroad in a location where they are a part of the racial or ethnic majority. Additionally, this research works to challenge incremental change and colorblind approaches, which shape study abroad practices and programming. Through this research, I am committed to identifying solutions to address the educational inequity illustrated by disproportionately low study abroad rates for Students of Color.

In addition to CRT, this study was informed by branches of CRT that emerged to address the specific experiences of Hispanic/Latino, Asian American, and Native American individuals. These extensions are referred to as LatCrit, AsianCrit, and TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2005). Initially, I only planned to use CRT for this study. However, as I listened to focus group conversations and participants' narratives, I discovered multiple direct connections to tenets from CRT extensions and thus incorporated these into my coding and analysis. I discuss LatCrit, AsianCrit, and TribalCrit concepts and connections in more detail in the final three chapters.

Finally, it is important to define the terms race and ethnicity and explain how I used them in this study. Race is how people are categorized into groups primarily based on phenotypic traits such as skin color, hair texture, and eye formation (Wade et al., 2023). Race is a social construct with no biological or genetic basis (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Ethnicity refers to how a group of people are identified based on perceived cultural traits that could include but are not limited to

language, customs, values, and beliefs (Varenne, 2023; Wade et al., 2023). Although race and ethnicity are conceptually distinct, they are related. Further, they are often confused and used interchangeably, especially among Hispanics/Latinos. For example, the Pew Research Center found, "Across age groups, educational levels and language preference, most U.S. Hispanics consider their Hispanic background a part of their racial makeup" (K. Parker et al., 2015, p. 100). Although Hispanic/Latino people may be of any race, including white, according to the 2020 U.S. Census, they are the second-largest racial or ethnic group[2] in the United States (Jensen et al., 2021 para. 35). Thus, although I recognize the distinctions between these terms, in this study I generally use the terms together (i.e., race/ethnicity) because individuals who identify as a Person of Color, my target population, are a part of the U.S. racial or ethnic minority.

Significance of the Study

I am committed to conducting research that goes beyond advancing scholarship by also positively impacting the lives of Students of Color. For this reason, I used a CRT informed methodology, which scholars have noted can assist researchers in solving problems and working toward social justice (Chapman & DeCuir-Gunby, 2019; DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2019; Dixson et al., 2019). As noted previously, not all students participate in study abroad equally. According to Salisbury et al. (2011), "Despite substantial efforts across postsecondary education to increase minority participation in study abroad, the homogeneity of study abroad participants remains largely unchanged" (p. 123). Historically, most study abroad students are white, upper- to middle-class women (Holmes, 2008; Picard et al., 2010; Sweeney, 2013). Similarly, the study abroad literature has focused primarily on white students, which erases the experiences of minoritized students (Q. Green, 2017). Despite concerted efforts to address this disparity,

[2] The fact that the U.S. Census Bureau refers to Hispanics/Latinos as a "racial or ethnic group" provides an example of the way these terms are commonly grouped together and underscores the common confusion.

participation statistics for Students of Color have been slow to increase (Bolen, 2001; Stallman et al., 2010). This persistent problem indicates international educators need additional knowledge and approaches to adequately address this disparity and move beyond incremental change.

Through this research, I examined and centered the lived experiences of Students of Color with the aim of uncovering useful insights for international educators on how to better support Students of Color before, during, and after studying abroad. This study broadens the current literature to be more inclusive of diverse students while producing concrete recommendations for improved practice. Without knowledge of students' lived experiences abroad and the meaning they ascribe to these experiences, international educators are limited in their ability to successfully recruit, prepare, and support Students of Color to study abroad (Sweeney, 2014). Additionally, if international educators truly want to serve all students, it is imperative that we avoid creating deficit or pain narratives (Tuck & Yang, 2014) about Students of Color. Turning the focus away from study abroad barriers to focus on the lived experiences of Students of Color helps counter the common deficit narratives pervasive in much of the current literature (Kasravi, 2009; Sweeney, 2014; Wick, 2011). Finally, I aimed to contribute to successful efforts to reduce the study abroad participation disparity for Students of Color.

Chapter Summary

In this qualitative study, I used narrative inquiry with CRT and its extensions to examine how Students of Color experience studying abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. Specifically, I explored how these students make meaning of studying abroad and how they understand race and ethnicity due to this experience. The goals of this study were to (a) center the voices of Students of Color, (b) expand the study abroad literature, (c)

inform study abroad practice, and (d) contribute to efforts to reduce the study abroad participation disparity for Students of Color.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the study abroad literature on Students of Color as it relates to the following research question and subquestions:

How do Students of Color experience studying abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority?

(a) How do Students of Color make meaning of this experience?

(b) How do Students of Color understand race and ethnicity through their study abroad experience?

First, I present a historical overview of the development of study abroad in U.S. higher education followed by an overview of the diversification of study abroad. Second, I discuss three major themes that emerged from the study abroad literature on Students of Color as they relate to the current study. These themes include (a) students' study abroad intent and decision-making; (b) barriers to studying abroad, including fear of discrimination and racism; and (c) the experiences of heritage-seeking students. Additionally, I examine studies focused on Students of Color studying abroad that used a critical race theory (CRT) lens or framework. Finally, I conclude this chapter with an explanation of the conceptual model I developed when designing this study. The literature included in this chapter provides important context for how current research situates and explains the experiences of Students of Color[3] who study abroad.

Overview of the Development and Diversification of Study Abroad

In a profoundly interconnected and globalized world, higher education has increasingly focused on internationalization (Knight, 2004; Maringe et al., 2013) with the goal of producing

[3] Throughout this chapter when I refer to a specific study, I use the same wording and capitalization that the author(s) used when describing race and ethnicity.

graduates who are global citizens (Picard et al., 2010). Scholars have traced higher education internationalization efforts back to the 1980s, although these efforts arguably started considerably earlier (Hill, 2017). The focus on internationalization has been identified as one of the most significant changes to modern higher education (Maringe et al., 2013).

Hudzik (2011) defined comprehensive internationalization as "an organizing paradigm to think holistically about higher education internationalization and how internationalization is evolving in the early twenty-first century in the United States to involve widening sets of objectives and people on and off campus" (p. 5). Internationalization strategies generally fall into two categories—those that occur at home and those that occur abroad (Knight, 2004). Cross-border learning opportunities such as study abroad have emerged as one of the most popular and frequently studied components of internationalization strategies (Cheppel, 2012; Larsen & Dutschke, 2010). However, as previously discussed, not all students participate in study abroad opportunities equally. There have been and continue to be considerable disparities between the proportion of Students of Color and white students who study abroad. The following section provides a brief history of the development of U.S. study abroad followed by a summary of recent initiatives to diversify study abroad participants. This overview focuses specifically on efforts that aim to address the racial and ethnic disparities in study abroad participation rates.

Historical Overview of the Development of U.S. Study Abroad

Scholars have traced the origins of U.S. study abroad programs to the Grand Tour of the 19th century (Hoffa, 2007). The American Grand Tour was a rite of passage for wealthy and highly educated individuals who traveled throughout Europe. In addition to diplomatic goals, those embarking on the Grand Tour often saw an opportunity to increase social ties by connecting themselves with the European elite through marriage (Hoffa, 2007). This history

helps to explain why studying abroad has typically been seen as an activity for female students (Dietrich, 2018). Given these origins, international educators commonly assume Students of Color studying abroad is a newer phenomenon. Although their increased participation has been a more recent trend, scholars have chronicled African American individuals who studied abroad (e.g., W. E. B. Du Bois who studied in Germany) decades before the popularization of study abroad (Beck, 1996; Holmes, 2008; Sweeney, 2014). These accounts provide an important counternarrative to the commonly accepted narrative that travel and study abroad are predominantly of interest to white individuals.

Following World War I and World War II, people in the United States began to develop a notable interest in international travel and study. The Institute of International Education (IIE) was founded in 1919 on the belief that international educational exchange could result in better understanding between nations and help promote greater peace (IIE, n.d.). Since 1948, IIE has conducted an annual survey collecting statistics on U.S. students studying abroad and international students and scholars in the United States. In 1954, IIE began to publish the results in the annual *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*, which is known as the most reliable and comprehensive source of U.S. study abroad participation data. After World War II, initiatives—including the 1946 Fulbright Act—helped to advance study abroad initiatives. Additionally, the nonprofit Council on Student Travel (known today as the Council on International Educational Exchange or CIEE) was founded in 1947, and a year later, the nonprofit professional organization National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (known now as NAFSA: Association of International Educators) was founded (Dietrich, 2018). CIEE and NAFSA are well-known and respected nonprofit organizations that facilitate and promote U.S. study abroad.

The 1960s brought additional U.S. government initiatives that supported internationalization, including the passing of the Mutual Education and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (more commonly known as the Fulbright-Hays Act) and the establishment of the Peace Corps by President John Kennedy. The U.S. government also promoted educational and cultural exchange through the Boren Act of 1991, which supports U.S. students traveling to areas deemed critical to U.S. foreign policy to learn the language and culture of these countries. For the next decade through the early 2000s, there was a considerable rise in the number of U.S. students studying abroad (Dietrich, 2018).

Since the new millennium, U.S. governmental support for study abroad included the International Academic Opportunity Act in 2000, which established the Gilman International Scholarship program. This competitive scholarship funds study abroad for undergraduate students who have demonstrated financial need. The U.S. Senate declared 2006 the Year of Study Abroad to encourage U.S. educational institutions to promote and expand study abroad opportunities (Dietrich, 2018). This brief historical overview traced the origin of study abroad through the decades. In the next section, I examine the diversification of students in higher education and the much slower diversification of study abroad participants.

The Diversification of U.S. Study Abroad

Although, historically, studying abroad was an activity for the white elite, this has changed, albeit slowly, over the past few decades. According to Stallman et al. (2010):

> The study of U.S. undergraduate student participation in education abroad in the latter part of the 20th century centers on broadening access for students who previously did not have or did not take advantage of opportunities for education abroad, or higher education. (p. 115)

Stallman et al. (2010) provided a comprehensive overview of the democratization of higher education students between 1960–2005 and how these demographic shifts translated into changes in study abroad participation demographics. Although Stallman et al. examined the diversification of the study abroad participants in regard to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, field of study, class standing, gender, age, and disability, in the next section, I highlight the changes in demographics related to race and ethnicity because this is most relevant to this study.

As has been well-documented, U.S. higher education almost exclusively served white, upper-class men initially (Wilder, 2013). However, one of the most notable changes in higher education occurred post World War II with democratization and thus a rapidly changing student profile. Numerous events spurred demographic changes in enrollment including the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (commonly known as the GI Bill), the Civil Rights Movement between 1954–1968, and both the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) and The Higher Education Act (HEA), which both occurred in 1965 (Stallman et al., 2010). Students of Color capitalized on the advancements of the Civil Rights Movement and began to account for a larger proportion of higher education enrollment (Stallman et al., 2010). In 1965, the INA abolished the National Origin Formula, which set quotas that had limited immigrants from Asia and parts of Europe since the 1920s. As a result, the diversification of college enrollment in the 1980s was largely due to the children of Asian immigrants and an increase in Latino students while, simultaneously, African American student enrollment leveled off (Stallman et al., 2010).

Although the profile of U.S. higher education students diversified substantially during the latter half of the 20th century, IIE did not begin collecting study abroad data on students' race and ethnicity until 1993 (Stallman et al., 2010). Once available, the data confirmed what many in the field already knew, which was the considerable lack of racial/ethnic diversity among study

abroad participants (Stallman et al., 2010). Thus, during the early 1990s, international educators began concerted efforts to diversify the study abroad student profile with a particular focus on increasing the participation of Students of Color (Stallman et al., 2010). One notable phenomenon during this time was more Students of Color participated in heritage-seeking study abroad programs, which have been suggested as a strategy for increasing the number of Students of Color studying abroad (Cade, 2018; Comp, 2008; McClure et al., 2010; R. M. Morgan et al., 2002; Murray Brux & Fry, 2010; Neff, 2001; Picard et al., 2010; Rubin, 2004).

Despite modest positive increases in the latter part of the 20th century, there were minimal changes in the study abroad participation rates for racially and ethnically diverse participants during the first decade of the new millennium (Stallman et al., 2010). Diversification trends in higher education take time to reach study abroad, as Stallman et al. (2010) noted, "The major trend shows that increasing access to and opportunity for study abroad takes time. Except for gender, an underrepresented group seems to establish itself first within U.S. higher education and then goes about pursuing study abroad" (p. 150). Bolen (2001) suggested there is about a 20-year lag between demographic changes in higher education translating to changes in study abroad demographics. Despite this lag, numerous individuals, institutions, and organizations have worked to address this disparity through varied initiatives.

As noted previously, since 2000, the Gilman International Scholarship has provided undergraduate students who qualify for Pell Grant funding to study abroad. Statistically, a higher percentage of Students of Color receive Pell Grants (NCES, 2021), so the Gilman Scholarship represents one U.S. government strategy to address the disparity for Students of Color studying abroad. Additionally, in 2005, Congress appointed the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln

Study Abroad Fellowship Program. The Lincoln Commission's (2005) report made four main recommendations, with the second specifically addressing study abroad diversification:

> The Commission considers it essential to the success of study abroad that (a) the demographics of the U.S. undergraduate students abroad be similar to those of the U.S. undergraduate student population; (b) efforts be made to expand the number of American students studying in nontraditional countries; and (c) the proportion of study abroad students who are enrolled in community colleges, minority-serving institutions, and institutions serving large numbers of low-income and first-generation students be similar to their share of the undergraduate population. (p. ix)

The commission's recommendations inspired the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act, which proposed dramatically increasing the number of students studying abroad. A few years later, in 2010, a new professional organization called the Diversity Abroad Network (n.d.) was established to address the lack of diversity in study abroad laid out in the report:

> Diversity Abroad is the leading membership organization that inspires and supports educators, policymakers, industry professionals, and other stakeholders in leveraging global educational programs to support the academic success, interpersonal development, and career readiness of students from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds. (para. 1)

Although the Simon Act had yet to pass at the time of this study, it was reintroduced in July 2023 and demonstrated the continued awareness and attention to the lack of diversity in study abroad.

Students of Color and Study Abroad

In this section, I review three themes relevant to the current study that emerge from the study abroad literature focused on Students of Color. The first theme includes study abroad

intent and decision-making processes for Students of Color. The second theme focuses on the barriers encountered by Students of Color either considering or taking part in study abroad. In this theme, I specifically explore the fear of discrimination and racism abroad because these issues relate directly to the research questions of this study. In the third theme, I take an in-depth look at the experiences of Students of Color who participate in heritage-seeking programs. Finally, I conclude this section with a discussion of the overall state of the reviewed literature with an emphasis on how it informs the current study.

Study Abroad Intent and Decision-Making

A growing number of scholars have investigated the study abroad intent and decision-making process for Students of Color. These studies have helped international educators better understand the reasons for the lower study abroad participation rates of Students of Color. Some studies looked at the general student population at one or more institutions and included observations about particular subsets of students by race and ethnicity (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015; Salisbury et al., 2009; Stroud, 2010), while other studies specifically selected Students of Color as their sample (McHan, 2019; Perkins, 2020; Salisbury et al., 2011). Additional studies, primarily dissertations and master theses, have further narrowed to specific racial or ethnic groups such as African American students (Cheppel, 2012; Hembroff & Rusz, 1993; Key, 2018; Lu et al., 2015) or Asian American students (Đoàn, 2002; Van Der Meid, 2003). Although the findings related to the study abroad intent and decision-making for Students of Color are varied, the information in this section focuses specifically on findings relevant to race/ethnicity.

One of the first major studies conducted in this area focused on African American respondents from Michigan State University. Hembroff and Rusz (1993) conducted surveys to identify factors leading to lower study abroad participation and higher attrition rates of African

Americans students and concluded African American students were more likely than non-African American students to indicate their decision not to study abroad was influenced by (a) financial issues, (b) anxiety about language skills, (c) lack of support from faculty and advisors, (d) fear of discrimination, and (e) discomfort with travel to unknown locations. Fear of discrimination and discomfort traveling to an unknown location were particularly relevant to the current study as both items suggest traveling to a location where the student is part of the racial majority might help address the lower participation rates of African American students. As noted by Đoàn (2002), Hembroff and Rusz (1993) grouped all non-African American and white students together making it difficult to determine if there were notable differences between the intent of distinct non-African American Students of Color.

More recently, Salisbury et al. (2009) applied an integrated model of college choice to identify factors that influenced students' predisposition to study abroad. This study also used a quantitative approach to surveying students of varied racial and ethnic identities. Specific to Students of Color, Salisbury et al. (2009) found Asian Pacific Islander students were 15% less likely to plan to study abroad compared to white students, which was a notable difference. However, the same study found African American and Latino/a students reported no difference in terms of their intention to study abroad compared to white students. Thus, although African American and Latino/a students participated in study abroad experiences at much lower rates compared to white students, their intent to study abroad was no different than that of their white peers. These findings suggest barriers to studying abroad prevent African American and Latino/a students from studying abroad in contrast to a lack of interest or desire to study abroad. These findings point to the need to examine and address the barriers to studying abroad for African American and Latino/a students, which I examine in greater detail.

One strength of Salisbury et al.'s (2009) study was it included students from 19 institutions. Although this means the results are more generalizable, Salisbury et al. focused on liberal arts institutions, which may mean the findings are not as generalizable to nonliberal arts students. Subsequently, Salisbury et al. (2011) built on the 2009 study to identify factors that specifically influence African American, Asian American, and Hispanic students' intent to study abroad. The findings showed the factors that influenced study abroad intent varied considerably by racial/ethnic identity. Findings showed as the ACT scores for African American students increased, their intent to study abroad decreased. However, African American students interested in graduate degrees were more likely to intend to study abroad. Asian American students who received institutional grants had a higher study abroad intent. However, Asian American students who had parents with higher educational levels had a lower study abroad intent. Finally, Hispanic students who received a federal grant were more likely to intend to study abroad than those who did not.

Although some of the specific intent and decision-making factors in previous research are less directly related to this current study, the findings revealed notable differences in what influences the study abroad intent of students from specific racial/ethnic groups. Importantly, Salisbury et al. (2011) concluded understanding the situational context of diverse students is critical for increasing their study abroad intentions. I would argue a qualitative approach is better suited to illuminate the differences in situational context for Students of Color because qualitative methods aid researchers in understanding the details and nuances of a phenomenon. As I discuss in Chapter 3, this current study used a qualitative approach to provide a rich description of the experiences of Students of Color, whose situational context changes from

being in the racial/ethnic minority in the United States to being in the racial/ethnic majority abroad.

Building from earlier research, Luo and Jamieson-Drake (2015) conducted a study of U.S. undergraduate students and their intent to study abroad. However, they expanded the study scope by following the students to see if they eventually studied abroad. Luo and Jamieson-Drake found, that compared to white students, Asian-American students were less likely to intend to study abroad, which supports findings from Salisbury et al. (2009). Similarly, Luo and Jamieson-Drake (2015) found other groups of Students of Color had similar study abroad intent compared to their white peers; yet, Students of Color had notably lower participation rates despite their intent. Theorizing the potential reasons for this, Luo and Jamieson-Drake suggested Students of Color who have experienced discrimination may be less likely to study abroad given their fear of discrimination abroad. This is another instance where issues of discrimination and racialization are theorized to be relevant to the study abroad decision making of Students of Color. The fear of discrimination abroad is particularly relevant to the current study. In the next section, I examine barriers to studying abroad for Students of Color with a specific focus on the fear of discrimination and racism.

Fear of Discrimination and Racism as Barriers to Study Abroad

There has been a substantial and growing body of research on the barriers to study abroad for Students of Color. Kasravi (2009) noted research in this area is one of the strengths of the existing study abroad scholarship on students of color. During her opening address at the International Conference Educational Exchange, Dr. Johnnetta Cole (1990), then president of the historically Black Spelman College, identified four barriers to studying abroad for African American students and termed these barriers the "Four Fs:" (a) faculty and staff, (b) finances, (c)

family and community, and (d) fears. Scholars and practitioners have frequently cited these barriers along with a general lack of knowledge about studying abroad, language concerns, and the unavailability of programs in a destination of interest as deterrents for Students of Color to study abroad (Hembroff & Rusz, 1993; Picard et al., 2010). Although the scholarship on general barriers is especially robust, this section focuses on the fear of discrimination and racism abroad.

A frequently discussed study abroad barrier for Students of Color is fear. As discussed in the literature, fears range from those related to general safety to specific fears of racism and discrimination. Similar to much of the general scholarship on study abroad barriers for Students of Color, much of the scholarship on the fear of discrimination and racism has focused specifically on African American students. Perkins (2020) noted researchers have even theorized the underrepresentation of minoritized students in study abroad may be directly related to issues of fear. However, limited literature has examined the issue of fear for Asian Americans and Hispanic/Latino students.

In her frequently cited presentation, Cole (1990) asserted African American students know and understand how U.S. racism operates and suggested these students might be hesitant to travel to a new location where racism is different. Similarly, Luo and Jamieson-Drake (2015) theorized students who have experienced discrimination previously might be uninterested in studying abroad for fear of encountering discrimination abroad. Early research on African American students has suggested these claims might be true.

Hembroff and Rusz (1993) found African American students feared discrimination abroad and traveling to unknown places. Specifically, 14.3% of African American students indicated fear of discrimination abroad had an impact on their decision to study abroad, but only 2.3% of white students shared this fear. Similarly, a few years later, Carroll (1996) surveyed

students with varied racial/ethnic identities about their study abroad interest and the perceived barriers. Findings showed African American students indicated a fear of racism abroad at higher rates compared to students in other racial/ethnic groups. Thus, there appears to be agreement among scholars that fear of racism is a barrier for African American students studying abroad.

However, findings from the two studies were contradicted by a mixed methods dissertation on African Americans' study abroad perceptions and attitudes. Washington (1998) found a fear of racism did not emerge as a focus group theme. Additionally, the fear scale she used in her dissertation was not statistically significant. Relatedly, another mixed methods dissertation on Students of Color—including African American, Asian or Pacific Islander, Latino/a, Arab American, and international students—found, that although race was salient for many participants while abroad, no participants described a fear of racism as a major concern before deciding to study abroad (Wick, 2011). Taking into consideration the results of these mixed-methods studies, the role of fear for African American students is inconclusive.

More recently, Murray Brux and Fry (2010) found mixed results regarding the issue of fear for Students of Color. Murray Brux and Fry conducted separate focus groups with students in the Asian American Student Association, Latino Student Organization, and Black Student Union. Findings showed Latino students were not concerned with safety, and some participants indicated they felt more welcomed abroad than in the United States. Similarly, safety did not surface as a major concern for Asian American students, although one student mentioned it as a consideration. Finally, African American students and their families had concerns about the possibility of racism abroad. Participants also discussed not wanting to be the only Black student in a group of white students. This fear of being "the only one" was noted elsewhere (Jackson, 2006). The African American students in Murray Brux and Fry's (2010) study discussed their

concern with being different from their peers and individuals from the host country. Although fear of safety and discrimination did come up in the focus group conversation with African American students, it is important to note, overall, finances were determined to be the largest barrier to studying abroad for all participants (Murray Brux & Fry, 2010). These findings indicate fear of safety and racism may not be barriers for Asian American and Latino(a) students, but they may be for African American students, although not the most important barrier.

Focusing on Asian American students, Van Der Meid (2003) found they were not profoundly impacted by a fear of discrimination or racism. These findings were similar to those from Murray Brux and Fry's (2010) focus group with Asian American students. Van Der Meid (2003) found that Asian American students who did study abroad reported racism and other challenges while they were abroad. However, Van Der Meid (2003) also reported, that for Asian American students who did not study abroad, fear of discrimination and fear of a new culture was near the bottom of concerns influencing their decision. So, although racism was an acknowledged challenge during their time abroad, it does not appear that Asian Americans perceive it as a major barrier. These findings complicate the common claim that fear of racism and/or discrimination is a barrier for all Students of Color.

Although this dissertation focused on the study abroad experiences of Students of Color, as opposed to their intent or the barriers to studying abroad, the literature reviewed thus far provides important context and suggests some Students of Color consider how their racial/ethnic identity could impact their time abroad. However, it is important to note much of the literature on fear has focused on African American students. Although there is some limited literature on Asian American and Hispanic/Latino students, it is important to recognize the lack of studies

focused on these students, especially Hispanic/Latino students, is a weakness of the current scholarship.

Given the projection that half of the U.S. population will be people of Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino origin by 2060 (Colby & Ortman, 2015), the lack of attention to Hispanic/Latino students is a critical gap in the literature that negatively impacts practitioners' ability to understand and support students in one of the fastest growing U.S. demographics. Participants in this dissertation included anyone who self-identified as a Person of Color with the goal of expanding the currently limited research on non-African American study abroad students.

Study Abroad Experiences of Heritage-Seeking Students

A growing number of scholars have investigated the study abroad experiences of Students of Color who are heritage seekers. Heritage seekers, sometimes referred to as heritage learners, are defined as students who choose a study abroad location with the goal of increasing their knowledge and connection to their cultural heritage (Szekely, 1998). As previously noted, the study abroad literature has frequently discussed developing heritage programs as a strategy to increase the study abroad participation of Students of Color (Cade, 2018; Comp, 2008; McClure et al., 2010; R. M. Morgan et al., 2002; Murray Brux & Fry, 2010; Neff, 2001; Picard et al., 2010; Rubin, 2004). This strategy to increase the study abroad participation of Students of Color attempts to address the disconnect between the interests of Students of Color and available programs abroad (Blake et al., 2020). Although much of the advice to increase heritage-seeking programs comes from nonempirical, practice-centered articles (Neff, 2001; Norton, 2008; Rubin, 2004), an increasing number of studies have examined heritage seeking.

Kasravi (2009) found heritage seeking was one of the top three decision-making factors for second-generation Students of Color. More specifically, in a thesis focused on the study abroad intent of Students of Color, Carroll (1996) found heritage-seeking interests differed considerably by race and ethnicity. Survey findings revealed 52.6% of African American/Black students and 51.9% of Mexican American/Hispanic students were interested in studying in countries with connections to their ethnic heritage. However, only 15.4% of Asian/Pacific Islander American students indicated this same interest. Interestingly, Murray Brux and Fry (2010) found that Asian American and African American students were particularly interested in studying in regions with connections to their heritage. Thus, the findings related to Asian American students' interest in heritage programs are contradictory. Finally, Penn and Tanner (2009) found Black high school students indicated they were most interested in studying abroad in Africa. Cultural affiliation and history were overwhelmingly noted as the reason students ranked African countries as their highest preferences. Thus, from these three studies, there is consensus that African American students are interested in heritage seeking, but the findings are mixed related to Asian American students' interest in heritage seeking.

McClure et al. (2010) conducted a narrative study of nine Latino/a students that revealed the availability of study abroad destinations in Latin America and Spain was important to Latina/o undergrad students. McClure et al. (2010) suggested developing more programs in locations predominantly populated by People of Color might lead to increased study abroad participation as they stated:

> For many participants, academics during study abroad would be second to viewing the world through a different lens, learning language as a means of gaining new insight into identity, touring environments rich in personal relevance, and learning about their

> cultural heritage. Coursework, research opportunities, and internships—the pillars of study abroad—may be less appealing than first-hand travel through landscapes of origin. (p. 380)

However, McClure et al. (2010) noted studying abroad was also about career and resume building, not solely about heritage connections for Latino/a students. Although their study adds to the heritage-seeking research, it is important to note McClure et al. specifically recruited students who had not previously studied abroad and did not intend to do so. Studies by McClure et al. (2010), Penn and Tanner (2009), and Carroll (1996) were limited to students' interest in heritage-based study abroad but did not examine the actual experience of heritage seekers.

A qualitative dissertation by Guerrero (2006) looked at Latino students' decision-making and time abroad. Unlike the findings from McClure et al. (2010), the 15 Latino students in this study began college with an intention to study abroad. Through interviews, Guerrero (2006) found six students chose their study abroad location for heritage-seeking reasons. Heritage seeking was tied with three other factors as the most frequent reason for selecting a specific country. Additionally, students who adjusted more easily to studying abroad cited familiarity with the host culture and language as the reasons for the smooth adjustment. Some participants felt a strong connection with the country noting it felt like home. Students who had a harder time adjusting noted the culture and attitudes of the country, along with being considered American or white, negatively impacted their adjustment (Guerrero, 2006). In the next section, I examine the literature on the study abroad experiences of heritage-seeking Students of Color.

One of the earliest studies on the experiences of heritage seekers focused on 18 African American undergraduates who traveled to Ghana for 2 weeks (Day-Vines et al., 1998). In their qualitative study, Day-Vines et al. (1998) found, for African American students, diasporic travel

(a) helped dispel myths about Africa, (b) heightened students' motivation and achievement, and (c) promoted ethnic and racial identity development and intercultural sensitivity. In a related study, Cade (2018) conducted a qualitative dissertation on the experience of 13 African Americans who studied abroad in Ghana. Cade (2018) also concluded heritage-seeking study abroad experiences resulted in positive racial identity and "these opportunities further support the belief that heritage experiences matter and that people want to know who they are, where they are from, and what stories to tell from their own cultural imprints" (p. vi). Overall, both Day-Vines et al. (1998) and Cade (2018) characterized heritage-seeking programs positively and advocated for their continuation and expansion.

However, a third study that also focused on African American students in Ghana revealed heritage-seeking experiences are not always positive. Landau and Moore (2001) interviewed African American and white students about their study abroad in Ghana and found white Americans generally were satisfied with their cultural experience while African American students had more unmet expectations. The authors suggested this was likely because African American students expected to find kinship with local Ghanaians, which did not ultimately occur. Additionally, some of the African American students felt their white peers were treated better than they were, which they found extremely frustrating. Overall, Landau and Moore (2001) concluded heritage-seeking study abroad experiences were valuable despite the challenges and unmet expectations for some. The unmet expectations of the African American students in Landau and Moore's (2001) study complicate the mainly positive view of heritage-seeking experiences described by Day-Vines et al. (1998) and Cade (2018). Other studies also present a complex picture of heritage-seeking experiences for African American students.

R. M. Morgan et al. (2002) added to the literature with written narratives of African diasporic women seeking their cultural heritage through studying abroad. The narrative of an African American administrator who accompanied African American students on a study abroad program to the Gambia is most pertinent to the heritage-seeking literature. Both the administrator and students were surprised not to feel a strong connection with African women. This was attributed in part to the local women viewing them primarily as Americans. Ultimately, the authors recommended institutions offer programs in more countries with a connection to the African Diaspora to attract more African American women and minorities to study abroad (R. M. Morgan et al., 2002). Although the narratives in this study were insightful, the small sample size is notable. Additionally, the narrative focused on heritage seeking in the Gambia was written by an administrator reflecting on the experiences of the African American students studying abroad. Thus, the account of the students' experiences abroad was second-hand.

Although many studies on heritage seekers focus on African American students, there are studies, primarily dissertations and theses, that also have focused on Asian American students. In an ambitious mixed methods dissertation, Beausoleil (2008) studied Korean American students studying in South Korea with the goal of understanding why students selected heritage-seeking programs and how they were affected by ethnic identity issues. According to Beausoleil, the major reason for selecting South Korea as a destination was the students' ethnic heritage and a desire to search for their cultural roots. Through surveys, Beausoleil found students indicated their language skills were most influential in how they were perceived in terms of their ethnic identity. The salience of language skills is a theme that also emerged in Guerrero's (2006) dissertation on Latinos. However, this theme did not surface in the literature on African American heritage seekers and thus points to a difference among heritage-seeking Students of

Color depending on their race and ethnicity. It is also important to note most participants in Beausoleil's (2008) study had previously studied Korean and a large percentage had even grown up in bilingual households. This information suggests the students in Beausoleil's (2008) study likely had stronger connections to the country and culture where they studied abroad compared to the African American students studying in Ghana and the Gambia.

Gandhi's (2010) unpublished dissertation included a broader range of Asian American heritage learners who studied abroad in China, Japan, Vietnam, and Hong Kong. Ghandi found similarities in the experiences of Asian American students regardless of location, including participants' complicated feelings regarding their racial and ethnic identities. According to Gandhi (2010), "Heritage students who have preconceptions that they are going home, often find that going back does not equate to going home and, in fact, feel quite American abroad" (p. 137). Ghandi's study also made comparisons between heritage-learner students and the three nonheritage learner students and concluded, overall, nonheritage learners seemed to have a more positive experience than heritage learners. Other themes in Ghandi's study included how language skills, phenotype, cultural expectations, and American identity impacted the experience of heritage learners. Language skills emerged as an important factor for Asian American heritage students in both Gandhi's (2010) and Beausoleil's (2008) studies. Similar to Landau and Moore's (2001) study on African American students, Gandhi (2010) concluded nonheritage learner students had more positive experiences and heritage learners had unmet expectations.

Despite the recognition of some challenges faced by heritage seekers, most reviewed studies support the further development of heritage-seeking programs. However, not all scholars supported this recommendation. In a dissertation focused on the study abroad experiences of Students of Color, Wick (2011) challenged the common recommendation that increasing

heritage-related study abroad programs will increase the participation of Students of Color, noting this narrative falsely suggests that Students of Color do not already have international networks or interests in other locations. According to Wick, Students of Color may have language skills and cultural knowledge that are relevant beyond locations that are connected to their heritage. Wick found only 12 of 47 participants selected their study abroad destination for heritage-seeking reasons, suggesting efforts focused on developing more heritage-seeking programs leave out Students of Color who select a study abroad destination for reasons other than their heritage. Relatedly, Thomas (2013) argued relying on heritage programs will not necessarily lead to increased study abroad participation by African American students because not all these students feel connected to the African continent.

Finally, various scholars have noted heritage-seeking experiences can be challenging because they can result in unmet expectations (Bolton Tsantir & Titus, 2006; Gandhi, 2010; Landau & Moore, 2001; R. M. Morgan et al., 2002; Wick, 2011). To this point, Wick (2011) noted, "The limited research on heritage study abroad and identity development suggests that the outcomes for underrepresented students can be challenging in heritage locations due to the fact that their reception is rarely simple" (p. 68). Practice-based articles based on anecdotal evidence also noted (a) heritage-seeking experiences can ultimately be disappointing for Students of Color because students are seen primarily as American, (b) students may not develop a strong bond with people in the country based on their shared ethnicity, and (c) students may not fit in like they expected (Neff, 2001; Norton, 2008; Rubin, 2004). Rubin (2004) noted, "In fact, heritage students can face a learning curve just as steep if not steeper than that of nonheritage classmates, because of the doubts that emerge about their cultural identity" (p. 30). Landau and Moore (2001) also noted many of the African American students interviewed for their study expected to

be welcomed home. Overall, the literature on heritage seekers is complicated as some studies reported largely positive outcomes and others noted heritage seekers experience challenges and unmet expectations.

Study Abroad Research Using Critical Race Theory

Next, I examine studies that used CRT to explore the experience of Students of Color studying abroad (Gambrell, 2016; Gathogo & Horton, 2018; Goldoni, 2017; Sweeney, 2014; Wick, 2011). Of the reviewed studies, two were dissertations, and the others were published articles. Chronologically, the first study was a qualitative dissertation that used CRT along with three other theories to examine how studying abroad shapes the identity and goals of students of color (Wick, 2011). Studying abroad is a process that results in what Wick (2011) termed a "third space" where these students negotiate their identities and build capital and agency. This "third space" results in many participants feeling freed from the constraints of U.S. racism. Wick pushed back against deficit framing by discussing the positive aspects of studying abroad for Students of Color.

In a second qualitative dissertation using CRT, Sweeney (2014) interviewed six African American students to understand how they experienced and ascribed meaning to studying abroad. Identified outcomes included (a) personal growth, (b) additional perspective on their racial identities, (c) increased social networks, and (d) an enhanced appreciation for family and community. Similar to Wick's (2011) work, Sweeney pushed back against deficit framing commonly used to focus on the barriers and challenges for Students of Color studying abroad. Sweeney (2014) also found five of the six participants in her study felt freedom from not having to think about race while abroad, which corroborates Wick's (2011) findings. Both dissertations

add to the literature by providing counter-narratives that go beyond discussing barriers and center the voices of Students of Color who studied abroad.

Gambrell (2016) used transformational learning theory and a CRT framework to explore how students experienced transformational learning while studying abroad in Spain. Notably, the sample was small and did not focus on Students of Color. However, two of the six participants identified as Latina. Gambrell (2016) found race and class impacted transformative learning outcomes. Specifically for white, upper-middle-class participants, the transformation occurred on a more personal level that led to changes in how they viewed themselves. Yet, for participants from backgrounds of fewer sociocultural privileges, including one of the Latina students, the experience resulted in both critical personal reflection and changes in beliefs and actions toward others. Interestingly, experiencing marginalization abroad did not result in white participants developing a better understanding of U.S. racism.

Goldoni (2017) employed CRT to explore how the race, ethnicity, and class of a Black male student impacted his experience in learning the Spanish language and culture, his identity negotiation process, and his interactions with locals. The student described experiences of racial microaggressions and discrimination that resulted in dissatisfaction with his language gains and disengagement with the host community. Goldoni included practical recommendations for how study abroad programs can address discrimination, microaggressions, and racial battle fatigue. Although the use of CRT helped elucidate important factors impacting the full immersion and language learning outcomes for the participant, a shortcoming of this study is that it focuses on only one student and, thus, is less generalizable to other Students of Color.

Finally, Gathogo and Horton's (2018) qualitative study was unique in that it focused on electronic study abroad advertising and how it potentially constrains the participation of Students

of Color. Employing content and thematic analysis with a CRT lens, Gathogo and Horton found digital advertising (a) resulted in the homogenization of study abroad participants, (b) deemphasized academic learning, and (c) portrayed study abroad as both tourism and recreation. Gathogo and Horton concluded an absence of Students of Color in digital advertising results in the message that the target audience for study abroad is middle- to upper-class white students.

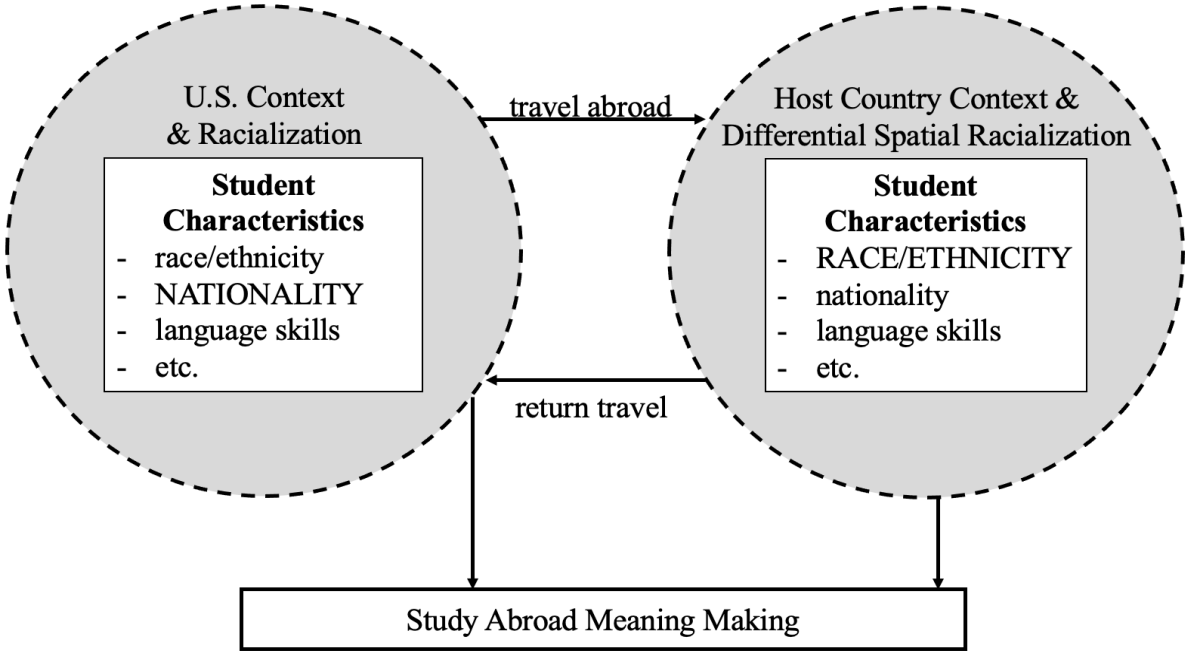
These studies demonstrate how CRT provides a useful framework for understanding the study abroad experiences of Students of Color. This is further evidenced by program leaders incorporating CRT concepts into reflection frameworks for students studying abroad (e.g., Nguyen Voges & Kim, 2022). Nevertheless, this area of research remains underdeveloped. The current study will add to this growing body of literature by focusing on how students' race and ethnicity impact their study abroad experiences and meaning making. Finally, like the work of Gambrell (2016), Sweeney (2014), and Wick (2011), this study employs an antideficit approach and centers the lived experience of Students of Color.

Conceptual Model

As described in Chapter 1, this study used CRT and its extensions as theoretical lenses to examine the experiences of Students of Color who transition from being a racial or ethnic minority in the United States to being part of the racial or ethnic majority abroad. The CRT tenets most relevant to this study include (a) racism as ordinary and pervasive in U.S. societal structures and institutions, (b) the recognition and centering of the experiential knowledge of People of Color, (c) challenging the dominant liberal ideology, and (d) the commitment to social justice and social change. When designing this study, I developed a conceptual model (see f) to represent the process that study participants navigated when studying abroad.

Figure 2

Conceptual Model



Study participants left the U.S. context to study abroad in an international location with a different context. As represented by the gray circles, the context of a geographic location includes the way participants experience racialization, which in turn informs how they understand race and ethnicity. Within U.S. society, CRT asserts racism is endemic and a permanent aspect of society (D. Bell, 1992). However, study participants left the United States and its context to study abroad in a new location. In their host country, participants encountered a new context and likely experienced racialization differently. I use the term differential spatial racialization put forward by Peters (2021) to represent this change in context. According to Peters (2021), "Differential spatial racialization builds from the Critical Race Theory (CRT) concept of differential racialization to explicate how race and racial meanings change across spatial contexts" (p. 201). I explore this concept further in later chapters. Finally, the gray circles

that represent the United States and the host country are outlined with dashes because a country's environment is not a closed system and is influenced by external factors.

The conceptual model indicates participants' meaning making happens both while they are still abroad and after they return to the U.S. context. In addition to their meaning making being influenced by a specific geographic context, it is also impacted by a student's identity. The white box in each circle represents a student's characteristics. I listed a few of the identity characteristics that participants discussed most frequently in this study. However, other characteristics such as gender, sexuality, religion/spirituality, and so forth can also impact participants' experiences and meaning making. Specifically, "race/ethnicity" is written in lowercase letters when the participant was a racial/ethnic minority in the United States. Then, "RACE/ETHNICITY" is written in all capital letters when a participant was in a study abroad location where they became a part of the racial or ethnic majority. Additionally, most participants who met the eligibility criteria were U.S. citizens; thus, "NATIONALITY" is capitalized when students are in the United States, but "nationality" is written in lowercase when students are in a new location. This conceptual model represents the process participants navigated when studying abroad and how it connects to the research question and subquestions.

Chapter Summary

The literature included in this chapter provides important context for how research situates and explains the experiences of Students of Color who study abroad. Numerous studies have focused on the intent and study abroad decision-making process of Students of Color. Findings demonstrate notable differences in the specific factors that influence the study abroad intent of students from specific racial and ethnic groups. However, scholars have found some groups of Students of Color had similar levels of study abroad intent compared to their white

peers (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015; Salisbury et al., 2009). This suggests the study abroad participation disparity for Students of Color is not a result of a lack of desire to study abroad. This points to the importance of more studies that examine the actual experience of Students of Color studying abroad, which the current study undertakes.

One of the most robust areas of the literature has focused on study abroad barriers encountered by Students of Color. However, results are mixed regarding whether fear of discrimination and racism are major barriers for all Students of Color. Although the research on Asian American and Latino/a students is limited, it appears that fear of safety and racism may not be major barriers for these students (Murray Brux & Fry, 2010; Van Der Meid, 2003). For African American students, results were mixed regarding fear of racism and discrimination. Some studies indicated these issues are barriers (Carroll, 1996; Hembroff & Rusz, 1993; Murray Brux & Fry, 2010) and others indicated they are not (Washington, 1998; Wick, 2011). Relatedly, scholars have recently noted many studies focused on study abroad intent and barriers for Students of Color were deficit oriented. These studies focused on why individual Students of Color do not study abroad as opposed to examining the structural barriers that negatively impact their participation (Kasravi, 2009; Sweeney, 2014; Wick, 2011).

An emerging area of the literature on Students of Color studying abroad has focused on the experiences of heritage-seeking students. Here, too, results were mixed with some studies indicating heritage-seeking students largely had positive experiences, but others outlined challenges including unmet expectations for heritage seekers. As is true with much of the study abroad literature on Students of Color, many studies on heritage-seeking students focused specifically on African American students compared to other racial or ethnic groups of students.

The current study adds to the study abroad literature by using an antideficit approach to examine and center the study abroad experiences of a wide variety of Students of Color. This research will add to the handful of studies that have used a CRT lens to further guide the understanding of the experiences of Students of Color studying abroad. Much of the current work on the experiences of Students of Color who study abroad in a location where they are part of the racial or ethnic majority focuses exclusively on heritage-seeking students. However, this narrow focus leaves out Students of Color who may choose to study in a country where they are part of the racial or ethnic majority for reasons besides heritage seeking. My study illuminates the lived experiences of these students in ways that will ultimately be helpful to international educators who aim to better serve Students of Color studying abroad.

CHAPTER 3: EPISTEMOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY

One summer, my partner and I traveled to San Pedro Sula, Honduras, to visit the homestay family he lived with for a summer during his undergraduate study. While walking down a dusty road after shopping at a local market, Masbely, one of the family members, pulled two pieces of fruit from her colorful mesh grocery bag, handed one to me, and took a bite of the other. As she ate, I immediately recognized the bright green flesh surrounding a creamy white center speckled with black seeds. Masbely was eating a kiwi whole, skin and all.

That stiflingly hot afternoon, Masbely surprised me by not peeling away the delicate brown skin of the kiwi. However, I quickly realized this was no different than how I eat fuzzy peaches. While initially watching her eat the unpeeled kiwi seemed "wrong," I realized my idea of how a kiwi "should" be eaten was based on my experiences growing up. As I had just witnessed, my context and experience were anything but universal (or even arguably logical). During the walk home, I mimicked Masbely eating my own tangy kiwi whole. Later in the kitchen as we put away the remaining produce, I admitted I had never eaten a kiwi like this before. After I explained how my family meticulously peels this fruit before eating it, we shared a laugh over the considerable—and unnecessary—effort.

Although brief, this experience has stayed with me for more than 15 years. I have repeatedly recalled the realization I had that afternoon during other instances when my assumptions were unexpectedly exposed. On that swelteringly hot day, my understanding of something I had never previously considered was challenged. While initially disoriented, I was also intrigued to realize my cultural and contextual upbringing resulted in numerous unexamined assumptions and beliefs that could be questioned based on the context. Although I greatly value

the opportunity to learn about others while studying or traveling abroad, I also find these opportunities invaluable in terms of better understanding myself and my own culture.

I share this story because this experience, and other cross-cultural interactions, have informed my belief that truth and knowledge are not universal, but rather contextual and influenced by one's experiences and culture. My beliefs align with the constructivism paradigm, which holds that "multiple realities exist, differing in context, and that knowledge is co-constructed between researchers and researched" (Abes, 2009, p. 144). My beliefs also align with cultural paradigms that hold truth is socially constructed and focuses on "norms, values, assumptions, beliefs, and meanings undergirding an artifact, population, policy or organization" (L. D. Patton et al., 2016, p. 25). Finally, informed by my social work education and socialization, I am committed to working for social justice and examining issues of power, oppression, and inequity, which aligns with critical race theory's (CRT) commitment to work for social justice and change.

As outlined by L. D. Patton et al. (2016), a researcher's ontology and epistemology should inform and align with the methodology they use. I believe qualitative methods are best suited to provide insight into how racially/ethnically minoritized individuals experience becoming part of the racial or ethnic majority while studying abroad. Additionally, interpretive paradigms, including critical constructivism, privilege subjectivity and strive to understand the points of view of those experiencing a situation (Sipe & Constable, 1996). Thus, my critical constructivist beliefs align well with qualitative methods.

Research Design and Rationale

For this study, I used a qualitative design with the goal of answering the following research questions:

How do Students of Color experience studying abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority?

(a) How do Students of Color make meaning of this experience?

(b) How do Students of Color understand race and ethnicity through their study abroad experience?

I decided a qualitative approach was most appropriate for this study as it allows researchers to develop a comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena (Conklin, 2007). Qualitative studies are also used to explore and examine patterns of meaning based on the participants' own words and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2017), which closely aligns with the CRT tenet that recognizes and centers the experiential knowledge of People of Color.

Narrative Inquiry

Specifically, I determined narrative inquiry was well-suited to answer my research questions. As a method, narrative research examines "the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals" (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 67). At the core, narrative inquiry is about understanding experiences. This approach aligns well with the main research question about how Students of Color experience studying abroad in a location where they are part of the racial or ethnic majority. Beyond detailing a specific event, narrative inquiry also helps researchers understand a person's emotions and interpretations as they relate to an event (Chase, 2005). The types of insights that come from narrative inquiry are well-suited to answer the first research subquestion related to how participants make meaning of studying abroad. Further, "narrative stories tell of individual experiences, and they may shed light on the identities of individuals and how they see themselves" (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 69). This exploration of identity aligns

well with the second research subquestion related to how participants understand their race and ethnicity through a specific type of study abroad experience.

Storytelling as a technique has often been used by CRT scholars with a strong tradition in the social sciences, humanities, and law (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). According to McCoy and Rodricks (2015), "Storytelling is fundamental to critical race theory and in using a critical race methodology in educational research" (p. 8). Stories can be particularly powerful tools for minoritized individuals who are often silenced. As stated by Delgado and Stefancic (2017), "Stories can give them a voice and reveal that other people have similar experiences" (p. 51). Storytelling also has a rich history for many People of Color, including those in African American, Chicano/Chicana, and Native American communities (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). More specifically, one of the tenets of TribalCrit holds stories make up theory and they are "real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430). Ultimately, my decision to use a narrative approach was strongly influenced by my decision to use CRT and its extensions as theoretical lenses for this study.

Although narrative inquiry has been used widely in numerous fields, it has been a specifically influential and impactful methodology for educational research (Kim, 2016), and educational researchers have long used narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Despite its widespread use, no single "right way" has been agreed upon to conduct narrative research (Caine et al., 2019). Despite being a fluid process, (Creswell & Poth, 2017) contended there are common elements present in many narrative projects. These features include (a) collecting stories from individuals, (b) finding narratives that take place in a specific place or context, (c) including various forms of data, (d) using different data analysis strategies, (e) organizing stories chronologically, and (f) including turning points or tensions. Finally, narrative inquiry is a

collaborative process between the researcher and participants (Caine et al., 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2017).

A narrative approach was appropriate for this study because it aligns with the research questions, and this methodology has been used widely by educational and CRT scholars. Narrative inquiry also directly connected to the study's purpose, which was to produce a rich description of the experiences of Students of Color who studied abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority that centered their voices to ultimately lead to improved study abroad programming and support for these students. To improve study abroad practices for Students of Color, research must be impactful and accessible to international educators. As Delgado and Stefancic (2017) noted:

> The hope is that well-told stories describing the reality of black and brown lives can help readers to bridge the gap between their worlds and those of others. Engaging stories can help us understand what life is like for others and invite the reader into a new and unfamiliar world. (p. 49)

In this study, I aimed to use narratives to illuminate the experiences of Students of Color studying abroad in ways that would lead to the development of evidence-based practices to better support these students. Finally, principles of narrative inquiry directly align with my critical constructivist epistemology. Narrative inquiry aims to understand the points of view of those experiencing a phenomenon and acknowledges people's experiences are impacted by social, cultural, institutional, linguistic, and familial contexts (Clandinin & Caine, 2012). Similarly, constructivism holds different realities exist depending on the context, and knowledge is cocreated (Abes, 2009). Therefore, I carefully considered narrative inquiry's collaborative orientation during the study design.

Protocol Development and Feedback

As previously noted, researchers using narrative inquiry typically gather stories through varied forms of data (Creswell & Poth, 2017). For this study, I decided to use focus groups followed by individual interviews to collect participants' study abroad stories. I chose to use focus groups for a few reasons. First, I thought participants would likely find it easier to share in a group setting. I also anticipated they would be more comfortable sharing with other People of Color as opposed to starting with an interview with a researcher who did not share their racial/ethnic identity. Second, scholarship on study abroad research methods has confirmed focus groups are helpful for understanding the social, cultural, linguistic, and programmatic complexities of studying abroad (Winke, 2017). Further, focus groups produce qualitative data through group interaction (D. L. Morgan & Hoffman, 2018, p. 251). I hoped the study participants would find the focus group a low-pressure opportunity to share similarities and differences about their experiences. I also anticipated listening to peers reflect on their experiences would help participants recall various aspects of their own time abroad. As illustrated in the results chapters, study participants had rich, engaging, and complex conversations. The focus groups also allowed me to build rapport and trust with the participants (D. L. Morgan & Hoffman, 2018) before the individual interviews. Finally, allowing participant-driven discussion helped decenter my role as a white researcher by allowing the conversations to develop organically.

After the focus groups, I identified a subset of individuals to invite to one-on-one narrative interviews. Inspired by Shea's (2019) dissertation, I based my in-depth, unstructured interview protocol on the narrative interview structure suggested by Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000). These scholars described the development of narrative interviews as a response and

critique to interviews that use a question-response schema where the researcher imposes the structure by selecting the interview theme and topics and ordering and wording the questions in a specific way. Conversely, Jovchelovitch and Bauer argued the less-structured narrative interview helps reduce the interviewer's influence. For this study, I felt reducing my influence was important given I am not a Person of Color.

Jovchelovitch and Bauer's (2000) elicitation technique includes four phases. The first phase is initiation where the interviewer explains the context of the research and introduces the central topic. The second phase is the main narration where the interviewer refrains from commenting or asking questions and listens as the participant shares their story from beginning to end. The third phase is the questioning phase where the interviewer follows up with limited immanent questions. The fourth phase is the concluding talk where the interview wraps up with less formal conversation. In the data collection section, I discuss the focus group and the interview protocols in further detail.

The final and crucial step of designing my study was gathering and incorporating feedback from experts. Specifically, I sought feedback from People of Color who had studied abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. Seeking feedback from people who had a similar life experience aligned well with the collaborative nature of narrative inquiry. During my proposal defense, one of my dissertation committee members suggested I consider having a panel of experts review my focus group and interview protocols in place of my originally planned pilot study. As Creswell and Mill (2000) described, the peer review process consists of having someone familiar with the researched phenomenon review the data and research process to provide feedback and insight. As someone who was not a Person of Color and lacked personal experience studying abroad in this type of context, I felt it was important to

identify and address any of my assumptions, misunderstandings, and biases that might negatively influence the data collection and analysis process.

I identified four individuals who generally fit the study criteria, and I asked them if they would provide feedback on my study design and protocols. All four peer reviewers accepted and included an Asian American woman, two Black women, and a Latino man. As outlined in my email request (see Appendix A), I sent each reviewer documents with information about the study background and design and the draft focus group and interview protocols. Next, I scheduled Zoom calls with the peer reviewers in which I invited them to ask questions and provide feedback on my study design and protocols. With permission, I recorded these calls, which lasted between 25–55 minutes. The peer reviewers provided invaluable insight and challenged me to consider various aspects of the project more closely. For example, one reviewer pointed out it would be important to ask about the context participants grew up in, as those who grew up in a racially or ethnically homogenous environment would likely have a different reference point and experience than those who grew up as one of only a few People of Color in their community. I used the peer reviewers' feedback to adjust and finalize my focus group and interview protocols. Lastly, I provided each peer reviewer with a $50 gift card in recognition of their time and expertise. I did not mention I would provide them a gift card until after our meeting because I did not want the honorarium to influence their decision to provide feedback. After finalizing my focus group and interview protocols, I was ready to recruit participants.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

After receiving institutional review board approval, I recruited current students and alums from two large, public, research universities. Both institutions are part of the Big Ten Academic Alliance and predominantly white institutions (PWI). According to Fall 2021 enrollment data,

white students made up 55% and 68% of the undergraduate enrollment at the two selected institutions (NCES, n.d.). I decided to sample from PWIs because I wanted to identify Students of Color who experienced being a part of the racial or ethnic minority in the United States before they experienced becoming a part of the racial or ethnic majority while studying abroad. Rather than recruiting exclusively from one institution, I recruited from two similar universities to increase the number of eligible participants because I was looking to identify underrepresented students who had a very particular type of study abroad experience. I selected the two universities for convenience and accessibility. Having worked as an international educator at one of the institutions for over 12 years, I had strong professional connections with numerous international educators at both universities, which assisted me in identifying enough participants who met the narrow eligibility criteria.

I used purposeful and snowball sampling to recruit. Purposeful sampling is the intentional selection of participants who will provide information-rich cases based on desired characteristics (M. Q. Patton, 2014). I sent a recruitment email (see Appendix B) to colleagues at both universities asking them to forward it to current students, alums, and individuals they knew who met the study criteria. The email encouraged recipients to forward the email to anyone they knew who met the study criteria. This sampling technique is called snowball sampling, which is a method of expanding the sample by asking participants to identify additional contacts who meet the study criteria (Noy, 2008; M. Q. Patton, 2014). Snowball sampling can be a helpful technique when it is difficult to identify participants with the desired characteristics (Naderifar et al., 2017). Finally, I did not recruit or select anyone to participate whom I knew in advance to minimize potential bias and conflicts of interest.

Eligibility criteria for participation included (a) self-identifying as a Person of Color, (b) attending one of two U.S. postsecondary universities, and (c) studying abroad as an undergraduate in a location[4] where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority (e.g., a Hispanic/Latino student studying in Costa Rica, a Black student studying in Ghana, a biracial Asian and white student studying in South Korea). I did not use more specific or rigid criteria to determine who was a Person of Color beyond self-identification to avoid the exclusion of certain individuals (e.g., people with Middle Eastern or North African heritage). Additionally, self-identification allowed for the inclusion of biracial/ethnic and multiracial/ethnic individuals who were partially white. Kasravi (2018) noted the importance of including biracial and multiracial students in study abroad research as this population has been increasing rapidly.

Additional study criteria included a requirement that participants must have primarily grown up in the United States and attended U.S. schools for their K–12 education. Students who attended school outside of the United States for more than 1 year cumulatively between kindergarten and 12th grade were ineligible. I made this decision because the research questions focused on the experiences of Students of Color who left a country where they were part of the racial or ethnic minority to study abroad in a location where they were a part of the racial or ethnic majority. Limiting study participation to People of Color who mainly attended primary and secondary school in the United States was one way to approximate this experience. Limiting participants to U.S. citizens would not necessarily accomplish this as it would allow for the inclusion of individuals who grew up abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority.

[4] I intentionally chose the word location, as opposed to the word country, to avoid unnecessarily limiting who could participant. For example, a Black student who studied abroad in the Brazilian city of Salvador da Bahia would be eligible for this study even though the country of Brazil is not a country made up of primarily Black individuals.

Participants must have studied abroad as an undergraduate for 3 or more weeks during calendar years 2018 and/or 2019. I sought students who spent 3 or more weeks abroad, so they had lived in a context where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority for what I deemed a substantial period. I limited participation to those who studied abroad during calendar years 2018 and 2019 because their study abroad was not disrupted by the COVID-19 global pandemic. I also selected these years so participants would not need to recall experiences that occurred more than 4 years ago. There was no restriction in terms of participants' fields of study, majors, or other academic distinctions because the research questions did not necessitate these restrictions.

Interested individuals completed a survey (see Appendix C) linked in the recruitment email. The survey contained questions about the respondents' demographics, study abroad experience, and availability for a focus group discussion. I reviewed the responses to confirm individuals met the eligibility requirements. In total, 53 individuals responded to the survey. Of the 53, three people did not fully complete the survey and 17 did not meet one or more of the eligibility criteria. For example, some respondents studied abroad for less than 3 weeks, others did not study abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority, and two individuals did not self-identify as a Person of Color. From the remaining 33 eligible respondents, I invited 20 individuals to join a focus group, and 18 ultimately participated.

When creating the focus groups, I worked to form diverse groups in terms of various factors including race/ethnicity, gender, country of birth, university attended, study abroad location, and time abroad. The open-ended survey question that asked participants to describe their race/ethnicity helped me create diverse groups in terms of racial/ethnic identities. I intentionally did not create focus groups exclusive to particular racial/ethnic identities as this would not account for biracial and multiracial students (e.g., the Afro-Latina participant).

Additionally, for many years I taught a course for students who had returned from abroad. During the course, Students of Color from different racial/ethnic backgrounds made connections and shared commonalities about their experiences. Thus, I felt there was no advantage to dividing students by race/ethnicity. Finally, because much of the existing study abroad scholarship on Students of Color has focused on Black students, I felt my study could contribute to the literature by using nonhomogeneous groups in terms of participants' racial/ethnic identity.

After creating five focus groups with four individuals each, I sent participants invitation emails with additional information about the study and its purpose. Once a participant confirmed, I emailed them the electronic consent form (see Appendix D). Participants were invited to ask questions about the form via email before signing it. They were also given the opportunity to ask questions at the start of the focus group. The consent form noted the minimal risk of participation and stated participation was voluntary, participants could take a break, decline to answer a question, or end the interview at any time. Finally, the consent form included an opportunity for participants to self-select a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality. Allowing participants to select a pseudonym can be an extremely meaningful exercise that also assists the researcher in building rapport with the participants while protecting confidentiality (Allen & Wiles, 2016). Of the 18 focus group participants, six chose their pseudonyms, and I selected the rest.

Data Collection

I collected and analyzed two types of data. First, I conducted five focus groups with 18 participants. Following the focus groups, I completed individual narrative interviews with nine participants. I determined the number of participants to interview using the concept of saturation. Saturation is when a depth and breadth of information has been revealed (Kim, 2016) and no new information emerges (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, Kim (2016) also noted, that with

qualitative phenomena that are as organic and unique as their human subjects, complete saturation in which no new information is revealed by additional interviews may be unrealistic. After interviewing nine participants, I felt not much new information or topics were revealed.

To begin, I conducted five semistructured focus groups with 18 participants. Four focus groups had four participants and one focus group had two. The focus group conversations ranged from 52–75 minutes. I used the video conference tool Zoom to accommodate participants who lived across the country. The focus group protocol asked participants to introduce themselves and share how they identified in terms of their race/ethnicity (see Appendix E). As an icebreaker, I also asked them to share the most memorable food they ate abroad. Finally, I had participants share the pertinent details about their study abroad experience with the group. In the next chapter, I summarize the information participants shared in brief focus group profiles. After everyone had answered the opening questions, I asked participants three questions to prompt them to share stories and reflections about how their race/ethnicity impacted their study abroad experience. I encouraged participants to engage in conversation with each other as opposed to formally taking turns to respond to every question in order.

At the conclusion of the focus groups, I identified a subset of participants whom I invited to an individual interview. Only one participant did not respond to the three emails I sent inviting her to interview. The nine individual interviews ranged from 45–86 minutes. I intentionally selected the interviewees based on who I thought would provide information-rich cases given what they had shared in the focus groups. I also considered demographic information to ensure I interviewed a diverse group of participants in terms of racial/ethnic identities and other characteristics. After a participant accepted the interview invitation, I sent them an email with a short explanation of the narrative interview format along with the main prompt so they could

prepare their story ahead of time. Feedback from a peer reviewer helped me recognize the importance of sending the prompt ahead of time.

I started the interview by asking a few questions about the participant's identity and details about their study abroad program (see Appendix F). Their responses provided me with important context for understanding their study abroad experience. As noted by Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000), "The particular voice in a narrative can only be understood in relation to a larger context; no narrative can be formulated without such a system of referents" (p. 67). From there, I transitioned to the main prompt in which I asked the participant to share the full story of their experience as a Student of Color who studied abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority.

Inspired by Shea's (2019) interview protocol, I asked participants to share their experience as a story, with a beginning, a middle, and an end, with the beginning as their decision and preparation to study abroad, the middle as their time abroad, and the end (or ongoing story) as how studying abroad impacted (or continues to impact) them. I told the participants this was their opportunity to tell their story with minimal interruption as I would listen and occasionally take some quick notes. This study design allowed participants to share their lived experiences and decide what was most important to share with minimal influence by the researcher (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). I decided to use a story format for the main narration prompt so that the participants had a general structure to help them think about and organize what they would share. I discussed the proposed prompt with the four peer reviewers who felt it provided a helpful structure without being overly restrictive. After participants finished telling their study abroad story, I asked them follow-up questions based on what they shared before ending the interview with concluding talk.

Focus groups and individual interviews are complementary methods. According to D. L. Morgan and Hoffman (2018), "Individual interviews can be a useful follow-up to focus groups, giving more opportunities to hear from participants whose thoughts and experiences are worth pursuing further" (p. 251). This two-part data collection process with focus groups followed by individual interviews allowed participants to reflect on their study abroad experience on two separate occasions. The interviews allowed the participants to elaborate on their lived experiences abroad and allowed me to further understand themes that emerged during the focus group conversations. The two points of contact also aligned with narrative inquiry's focus on a collaborative process between the researcher and participants. I recorded all focus groups and interviews using both Zoom cloud recording and a backup audio recording application.

Data Analysis

After concluding the five focus groups and nine interviews, I had the recordings transcribed by either a professional independent transcriptionist or by the transcription service Rev.com. Next, I listened to the recordings and edited each transcript for accuracy before sending a clean transcript to each participant for their review and approval. Only one participant requested edits, noting Colombia was misspelled. Two participants responded by saying everything was accurate, while most did not respond. This member-checking process is further described in the section on quality and trustworthiness.

I used two strategies to analyze the focus group and interview data. I started with thematic coding and then used a CRT-specific data analysis technique. Although I conducted the focus groups chronologically before the interviews, I began by coding the interviews. I made this decision because the interviews produced in-depth narratives. Although the focus group data

added to these narratives, the information gathered through these discussions was only a snapshot of a participant's experience abroad given the focus group format and time constraints.

To start the interview coding, I conducted what Saldaña (2021) referred to as precoding, which included highlighting or otherwise noting striking passages. While listening to and correcting the interview transcripts, I took handwritten notes of words, phrases, and quotes that stood out because of their connection to the research questions and CRT. Next, I photocopied my interview notes for each participant. I then reviewed the 20 pages of notes using multicolored pens to write possible codes in the margins. From these notes, I compiled a list of possible codes (see Appendix G, Figure 3) and began to preliminarily organize them into possible parent and child codes. This initial mapping helped me identify possible codes I then entered into Dedoose, the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software I used to code and analyze my data.

In the first round of interview coding, I applied the codes from the preliminary list I generated through the precoding and mapping process. I also used a "quotes" code for excerpts that stood out as ones that might be useful to illustrate a code and a "descriptions" code for excerpts that provided information and context about the participants that would be useful for creating narrative profiles. As I coded each interview, I added new codes as needed and began to rearrange and refine the parent and child codes. After I had initially coded all nine interviews, I set up meetings with two of my committee members to discuss what I had found thus far and discuss the next steps. These meetings helped me organize and articulate my initial thoughts. The feedback from committee members helped me make additional connections and start to identify emerging themes. Next, I conducted a quicker second round of coding to review my initial coding and apply codes that emerged later in the first round to all the interviews.

After conducting two rounds of coding, I performed a final round employing a CRT data analysis technique. In the third round of coding, I specifically focused on identifying codes related to CRT and its extensions including AsianCrit, LatCrit, and TribalCrit. One criticism of studies using CRT has been they often have not specified if or how they used CRT to analyze the data, which results in a lack of racial analysis (L. Parker & Lynn, 2002; Winkle-Wagner et al., 2018). To address this criticism, Winkle-Wagner et al. (2018) developed a 4-step CRT analytic technique for analyzing policy. The four steps include (a) identifying low-level codes emergent from the data, (b) selecting data for further analysis related to racial issues, (c) applying CRT question coding to the selected data by posing questions specific to the CRT tenets, and (d) writing a CRT narrative analysis of the relevant text or excerpts. I adapted this technique for my study, and, as with previous rounds of coding, I added new codes related to the tenets of CRT and its extensions as they emerged. Winkle-Wagner et al. (2018) noted not all tenets will necessarily be accessible in the data, which was the case for this study. Throughout the results chapters, I include the CRT narrative analysis, which is the fourth step of the process.

After I finished coding each interview three times, I created a list of parent and child codes that included excerpts or examples from the data (see Appendix H). Next, I coded the focus group transcripts using the established codes. This was a quicker and less iterative process as I was not creating new codes but, rather, determining if the focus group data included further instances of the codes that emerged from the interviews. During the coding process, I identified emergent patterns and themes across the focus group and interview data by looking for similarities and differences in participants' study abroad experiences. I also used data analysis charts and functionalities available through Dedoose. These tools helped me zoom out and see larger trends such as code cooccurrences, especially for the CRT tenets.

Throughout the coding and data analysis processes, I also wrote analytic memos, which I used to write this section and the study results. According to Saldaña (2021), coding and writing analytic memos should be concurrent analysis strategies to record the development of the coding system and the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon. For the final step of the data analysis process, I wrote narrative profiles for each participant. I reorganized participant's stories into a similar framework and included context about their upbringing, college experience, and details about their study abroad experience. I pulled from Creswell and Poth's (2017) restorying process, although I did not follow it exactly because I did not include a detailed, chronological account of all events that happened during participants' study abroad experiences. I present the resulting narrative profiles in Chapter 4.

Quality and Trustworthiness

I used various strategies to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of my research. Throughout the data analysis process, I provided three opportunities for member checking. Member checking involves presenting participants with data, interpretations, and conclusions so they can review the information for accuracy and credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2017). First, I provided participants with corrected focus group and interview transcripts to review. One participant responded with a few minor corrections, which I made before coding and analyzing the data. Similarly, I provided participants with drafts of their narrative profiles to review. One participant confirmed everything looked good and a second responded with a minor correction. Finally, I sent participants a 2-page summary of the results along with the summary of findings table included in Chapter 7 for their review and feedback. At each opportunity, I invited participants to respond if anything needed to be corrected, clarified, or modified.

As previously described, peer experts also reviewed my study design and data collection protocols as another way to increase the quality and trustworthiness of the study. During the peer review process, someone familiar with the researched phenomenon reviews the data and research process (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Given my positionality and identity as a white researcher who did not share a racial/ethnic identity with my participants, this process was especially important. Creswell and Poth (2017) described the peer reviewer as "an individual who keeps the researcher honest; asks hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations; and provides the researcher with the opportunity for catharsis by sympathetically listening to the researcher's feelings" (p. 263). The five peer reviewers I consulted during this study provided invaluable insights and feedback about my study design and data analysis.

Finally, I used triangulation to increase the quality and trustworthiness of the data. There are various ways of performing triangulation in qualitative research, including using different types of data sources, methods, investigators, theoretical orientations, and environments (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Specifically for this study, I used data triangulation, which refers to using several sources of data to establish findings and identify themes (Stahl & King, 2020). As outlined, I collected both focus group and interview data to understand participants' study abroad experiences. Data triangulation helps reduce possible bias by drawing from more than one data source. Finally, the data analysis tools in Dedoose helped ensure I was not exaggerating the frequencies of themes or codes.

Researcher Positionality

My identity and my personal and professional experiences influenced my approach and commitment to this research. K. Green (2014) noted one of the first steps in conceptualizing a research agenda should be the critical step of exploring the researcher's positionality. Although

this examination of positionality is important for all researchers, I believe it was particularly critical for me as a white researcher studying the experiences of People of Color. Various scholars have written about the ways whiteness has been concealed, kept invisible, and unacknowledged in the research process (Chadderton, 2012; Hurtado & Stewart, 2004; Milner, 2007; Roegman, 2018; Scheurich & Young, 1997). As Scheurich and Young (1997) posited, white beliefs, experiences, and ways of knowing are often taken as the norm. Thus, as Milner (2007) noted, these norms become the standard by which all other experiences are measured. Every researcher also brings their researcher gaze to their work (Giampapa, 2011). However, as Alim and Paris (2017) stated, white researchers bring what Toni Morison coined the white gaze to their work; and thus, white researchers have a critical obligation to interrogate and unpack their whiteness. Given my identity, I was committed not to unintentionally misrepresent or dehumanize the participants in my study. I took specific steps to minimize this possibility including consulting with peer reviewers on the research design, using member checking at three different points, triangulating data, and recording analytic memos.

As Milner (2007) noted, issues of race and culture are important considerations during the research process. For this study, it was important to acknowledge that, as a white researcher, I did not share a racial/ethnic identity with the study participants. Given this, my understanding of the participants' experiences was not based on my personal experience but, rather, on my understanding of their narratives. Although I was acutely aware white researchers can and have caused harm through research on People of Color, I also believed white international educators have a responsibility to understand the experiences of Students of Color who study abroad. As Sweeney (2014) noted, if white researchers exclusively focus on white students, whiteness will continue as the norm in the field. Perpetuating whiteness results in the invalidation and erasure of

the experiences of Students of Color (Q. Green, 2017). That said, it was critical I acknowledge and unpack my identity including my whiteness.

As a white, cisgender, straight, female from an upper middle-class background, I have benefited and continue to benefit from various privileges due to my positionality. Growing up, I was largely unaware of my race and how I was racialized as I attended K–8 and high school at private, Catholic schools where most students, teachers, and staff were white and upper-middle class. In addition, I enrolled at three PWIs for my postsecondary degrees. Given this, I have almost always been in the racial/ethnic majority during my educational experiences. The rare exceptions were when I studied abroad.

The summer after high school, I enrolled in courses at a local university while living with a host family in Cuernavaca, Mexico. This was my first time living away from home and my first international experience in a country consisting predominantly of People of Color. That summer, as my worldview expanded dramatically, locals frequently referred to me as *gringa* or *güera*. Initially unfamiliar with these terms, I asked my host brother what they meant. He explained *gringa* referred to white women and *güera* referred to light-skinned women. Later, I learned these terms have additional translations (Ramirez, 2013) and are more complex than I originally understood. However, that summer was the first time I remembered my race being explicitly named, which felt jarring. Despite my race being frequently named and noted in Mexico, it did not result in discrimination or negative treatment of which I was aware. Conversely, I more frequently received unearned benefits and privileges due to my whiteness and U.S. citizenship.

During my junior year, I enrolled at Universidad de las Américas in Cholula, Mexico. During that fall semester, I met my partner Bill, who was on the same program organized by our undergraduate institution. Although we participated in the same study abroad program, our

positionalities meant we experienced and navigated this opportunity differently. My partner is a Latino, cisgender, bisexual male who was a first-generation college student. Bill's mother was born in Mexico to a U.S. citizen mother and a Mexican citizen father. During our semester in Mexico, I became aware of the ways Bill and the other two Hispanic/Latino students in our program were treated differently compared to me and our white classmates. At the time, Bill and I had a relatively similar level of Spanish skills. However, in interactions with locals, most people defaulted to directly engaging with Bill and talked to me through him. It seemed, based on his appearance, that people assumed he was a local or at least spoke the language fluently, while I was seen as an outsider. Although these situations likely had to do both with our race/ethnicity and gender, I was frustrated as I was eager to practice and improve my Spanish. However, listening to Bill and our Hispanic/Latino classmates talk about their experiences at our PWI also helped me recognize and understand the notable white privilege I experienced daily. Spending time abroad and leaving the U.S. context helped me critically examine and see more clearly U.S. socialization, racialization, and my own understanding of race and ethnicity.

Reflecting on our different paths and experiences studying abroad helped me better understand how international education opportunities could be more inclusive. Furthermore, as we coparent our multiethnic children, I often imagine what experiences our children might have as college students and consider if the work I am doing positively contributes to making the university environment more inclusive and supportive for individuals with a variety of positionalities different than my own. Despite being an outsider regarding the phenomenon of this study, I was not a complete stranger due to witnessing my partner and Hispanic/Latino classmates navigate our semester-long study abroad program. My professional experience as an

international educator for the past 13 years has also allowed me to learn about this type of experience through the reflections of various Students of Color with whom I have worked.

Further, my professional experience impacted my researcher positionality and my relationship to this research. Informed by my social work education, I have been dedicated to creating and managing international education opportunities that extend access to students typically underrepresented in study abroad, especially Students of Color. One professional experience that strengthened my commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work was being invited to be a part of a schoolwide DEI committee. My time as a committee member expanded my understanding of the complexity of collaborating with diverse stakeholders to work toward institutional change at a large university. Although I was often frustrated by the structural barriers that made this work difficult, I also came away from this experience strongly committed to doing this work within my own area of the university—international education. One of the biggest lessons I learned from serving on the DEI committee was that diversity efforts that are not complemented by inclusion efforts can ultimately do more harm than good. During a school-wide session, I listened to students share that although our school was doing a better job recruiting more diverse students, we were doing very little to understand their needs and actively support them in completing their degrees. This experience helped influence my decision to conduct research focused on the lived experiences of Students of Color so the resulting data can, hopefully, better inform inclusive study abroad programming. Recruiting diverse students is only the first step and must be followed by intentional and informed support.

While conducting this research, it was critical I consider how my positionality and personal and professional experiences shaped my understanding of this topic. It was also crucial I question if I was truly hearing what participants were saying, even if their views and beliefs

were different from my own. As is true with any researcher, it was also important that I not frame my findings according to what I expected or wanted to see instead of what the data were actually illustrating. Thus, I used various strategies to check and interrogate my assumptions and understandings of this topic, including (a) seeking feedback from peer reviewers, (b) carrying out member checking, (c) triangulation of data, and (d) writing analytic memos.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I outlined why qualitative methods—specifically narrative inquiry—were appropriate for this study. I included an explanation of how narrative inquiry aligns with my epistemology and CRT. Next, I provided an overview of the philosophical origins and important components of this methodology before describing in detail the participant selection criteria, recruitment strategies, data collection plan, and data analysis process. Following this, I included an overview of the strategies I used to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of the data. Finally, I concluded with an examination of my researcher positionality and outlined how it potentially impacted the study.

CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Before turning to the results of this study, I present brief overviews of the focus group participants followed by more detailed profiles of the participants who completed an individual interview. Creating these profiles helped me understand the participants holistically by providing important context about their lives. I hope readers similarly find these profiles interesting and helpful in gaining a sense of the individuals who participated in this study.

Each profile includes details about the participant's study abroad experience and a description of how they self-identified in terms of their racial/ethnic identity.[5] Most profiles include details about where the participant grew up and reflections on how they experienced their university environment. Each profile concludes with short reflections about how the participant viewed their study abroad experience overall. Often participants' own words are included through direct quotes. Finally, all profiles include a description of the most memorable food the participant ate while abroad. I included these fun facts because all participants shared this information during the focus group icebreaker, which was intended to start the group conversation in a relaxed and fun way.

Although not included in this chapter, shorter profiles of the nine focus group participants who were not interviewed can be found in Appendix I for readers who would like additional contextual information about the participants who only took part in a focus group. Finally, Table 1 provides a summary of key demographic information for all 18 participants. The pseudonyms of the nine participants who took part in both a focus group and an interview are identified in Table 1.

[5] Throughout this chapter, including in Table 1, I use the same wording and capitalization the participants used when describing how they self-identified in terms of their race/ethnicity.

Table 1

Participant Demographics and Descriptors

Focus group	Pseudonym	Gender	Self-identified race/ethnicity	Study abroad location	Time abroad	Country of birth
A	*Ella	Female	Asian	Harbin, China	8 weeks	China
A	*Teresa	Nonbinary	Indigenous/ Mestiza	Cusco, Peru	3 weeks	USA
A	Alina	Female	Asian American	Khon Kaen, Thailand	3 weeks	USA
A	*Kayla	Female	Black	Havana, Cuba	4 weeks	USA
B	*Shawn	Male	Black	Kumasi, Ghana	12 weeks	USA
B	Tara	Female	Biracial Korean and White	Seoul and Jeju Island, South Korea	3 weeks	USA
C	Sarah	Female	African American, third generation Kenyan American	Tanzania	4 weeks	USA
C	Ada	Female	Mixed, half Vietnamese and half white	Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam	4 weeks	USA
C	*Ying Yue	Female	Asian American	Khon Kaen, Thailand and Jakarta, Indonesia	8 weeks	China
C	Mariela	Female	Hispanic/Latina	Barcelona, Spain	4 weeks	USA
D	Julie	Female	Chinese American	Hong Kong, P.R.C.	3 months	USA
D	*Kat	Female	Chinese	Harbin, China and Shanghai, China	3 months each	China
D	Cora	Female	Black African	Dar es Salaam, Tanzania	6 weeks	Kenya
D	*Zeus	Woman	White/Hispanic (Colombian)	Madrid, Spain	6 weeks	USA
E	Adriana	Female	Cuban and Native American	Havana, Cuba	3 weeks	USA
E	*Chris	Male	Black	Cape Town, South Africa	3 weeks	USA
E	Laura	Female	Hmong/White (biracial)	Tokyo, Japan	3 weeks	USA
E	*Danielle	Female	Black (Afro Latina)	Cape Town, South Africa	8 weeks	USA

Note. *These individuals participated in both a focus group and an individual interview.

Focus Group A

Focus Group A was the first focus group and included four participants—Ella, Teresa, Alina, and Kayla. In describing their racial/ethnic identity, participants used the terms Asian (Ella), Indigenous/Mestiza, Mexican American (Teresa), Asian American (Alina), and Black (Kayla). Teresa identified as nonbinary, and the other three participants identified as female. From this group, Teresa, Ella, and Kayla later completed interviews. This focus group had the most participants selected for an interview.

Ella

Ella studied abroad for 8 weeks after her first year. She completed a Chinese language and cultural immersion program at the Harbin Institute of Technology in China. Ella and her classmates had 4 hours of language classes 5 days a week. Several afternoons a week they had cultural classes and activities. The group lived in international student dorms, and Ella practiced her language skills with her Chinese roommate. The program also included 2-weekend homestays with a local family. Ella shared that one of the most memorable foods she had abroad was a gyro with tzatziki sauce on a recent trip to Greece.

Ella identifies as Asian and is ethnically Chinese. She was born in China, and at 11 months old her single, white mother adopted her. Ella reflected, “Growing up, I was always used to people staring at me when I was with my family because I was the only Asian in a white family.” Because of her upbringing, Ella was accustomed to sticking out and reflected she was no longer self-conscious about it. Ella grew up in a middle-class, wealthier suburban area. Despite the town being about 40% Asian, race was not frequently acknowledged or discussed in her community. Because she grew up close to the university she attended, Ella was not surprised by the racial/ethnic demographics at college. Ella shared she wanted her first experience abroad

to be in her homeland. She said, “I wanted my first time, on my passport stamp, to be in China.” This was a major reason she picked her program. Also, Ella double majored in international relations and economics with a Chinese minor. Thus, the program in Harbin was a good educational fit.

Ella reflected going to China “felt really weird, but a good different being surrounded by Asians.” However, she also reflected, once she spoke, it was apparent she was not Chinese because her language skills were not strong or as good as some of her white classmates. Thus, although Ella fit in in some ways, she did not in others. During college, Ella learned a lot about her racial/ethnic identity, which began during her study abroad. She said, “I knew I was Chinese, but that didn’t really have any meaning to me until I went to China, until I experienced being in China as a Chinese person, but not really being a Chinese national.” Ella shared her study abroad experience helped her understand the difference between being Asian and Asian American. After going to China, Ella knew she wanted to return. She recently started a master’s degree that included 1 year studying in London and then a 2nd year studying in China.

Teresa

Teresa (they/them[6]) was abroad for 3 weeks with around 17 classmates to study architecture and the Indigenous culture in Peru. The program started with participants taking a course on the effects of globalization on Peruvian Indigenous cultures for 2 semesters prior to departure. During the program, Teresa lived with a local host family. Two of the most memorable foods Teresa ate in Peru were guinea pig, of which they were not a fan, and a wide variety of Peruvian potatoes.

[6] During the focus group Teresa stated, “I use any pronouns.” On the participant survey, Teresa listed nonbinary for the question about gender. Given this, I made the choice to use they/them pronouns for Teresa.

Teresa self-identifies as Indigenous/Mestiza. Mestiza translates to mixed race. Teresa is a second-generation Mexican American and uses the terms Hispanic and Latino to describe their ethnic identity. Teresa's mother is from Jalisco and their father is from San Luis Potosi, where Teresa spent many summers. Teresa grew up in a primarily Hispanic area of a larger urban city. This meant attending a mostly white college was a big change. Teresa reflected, "I don't think I'd been in a room with majority white people until I was in university." Teresa considered studying abroad earlier but was not able to until their senior year. As a low-income student receiving Pell Grants, program cost was a major consideration when choosing where to study abroad. Additionally, Teresa double majored in Spanish and international studies and, given their heritage, had a strong interest in Indigenous issues, so the program in Peru was a good fit.

In Peru, Teresa felt they were perceived differently depending on the context. While in the large, diverse city of Lima, they fit in more easily than in the smaller less diverse town of Cusco. Many Peruvians guessed Teresa was Mexican because of their Spanish accent. Teresa said, "And so, while I fit in as someone in the majority, I was still, depending on where I was, questioned where it's like, 'You're not exactly from here, but you are still someone who is Hispanic.'" Teresa felt a sense of Latino solidarity in Peru, but they did not feel the experience changed their perspective on their ethnic identity. However, after studying abroad, Teresa reflected they felt the right to claim their Indigenous identity despite being lighter-skinned.

Kayla

Kayla studied abroad for 4 weeks in Cuba learning about Afro-Cuban history through dance. The program was taught by a faculty member from her university in conjunction with a study abroad program provider located in Cuba. Many students in the program were Black and Hispanic, and the group was very tight knit. They lived in a hostel where they debriefed as a

group each evening. Kayla grew up bilingual, but, because not all her classmates spoke Spanish, the group had translators for some guest lecturers and community activities. Additionally, Kayla had studied abroad in Ecuador 2 years earlier where she had a challenging experience as the only Black person in her group. When asked what was one of the most memorable foods she ate while abroad, Kayla shared it was empanadas in Ecuador.

Kayla identifies as Black. She and her family are very fair-skinned, which impacted the ways she was perceived abroad. Kayla said, "So, I do think that does affect my experience, and I'm also only 5'3" so I'm able to move into white spaces and I'm not seen as a threat." However, Kayla noted she spoke up for herself and was not afraid to call out racism, which she encountered in college and from her classmates in Ecuador. Kayla is a lesbian, which caused some confusion in Cuba when people tried to correct her Spanish when she said she had a girlfriend—*novia*—instead of a boyfriend—*novio*. She found this situation funny. Kayla grew up in a predominantly Black area of a wealthier suburb of a large city. Growing up, she went to school with all Black kids. She said, "So my normal is being around other Black people." Kayla noted many of her college classmates assumed all Black people grow up poor, even though that was not true and not her experience.

Due to Kayla's negative study abroad experience in Ecuador, she was intentional about picking her second study abroad location and enjoyed traveling to Cuba with some of her Black sorority sisters. Kayla felt much more comfortable in Cuba, especially as it related to being bilingual and Black. She said, "I mean, it was nice because it was the first time that I did not feel odd for being Black and speaking Spanish because, in all my Spanish classes at [university], I was one of three Black people." Kayla shared she felt it is really important for leaders in

predominantly white institutions (PWIs) to understand they need to have study abroad programs specifically for Students of Color and not just send them all to Europe.

Focus Group B

Focus Group B was the fourth focus group and had two participants—Shawn and Tara. In describing their racial/ethnic identity, participants used the terms Black male (Shawn) and biracial Korean and White (Tara). Tara identified as female and Shawn identified as male. This was the smallest group. Initially, two other people indicated they would be available for this focus group. However, neither joined the Sunday afternoon Zoom call nor replied to text message reminders at the time of the meeting. From this group, Shawn later completed an interview.

Shawn

Shawn completed a 3-month research internship in Ghana with six other students from his college. He was on a team of three students conducting research on maternal health looking at low birthweight babies. Shawn and his classmates lived in a local hotel similar to a bed and breakfast. The most memorable food Shawn ate while abroad was fufu, which has a dough-like consistency and was eaten as a side dish with many meals. He first tried to eat it with a spoon, which caused others to make fun of him because it was traditionally eaten with one's hands.

Shawn identifies as Black, African American. He grew up in a predominantly Black suburb of a major city. Shawn noted, where he grew up, there was more access to resources and better schools compared to the nearby city. Attending a PWI, Shawn was a minority on campus in the college town, which was a new experience. During college, he said, "[this resulted in] feeling like I always have to prove myself, prove my work, and feeling like I have to work twice as hard to get to where I want to be." Shawn always knew he wanted to study abroad. He was

studying premedicine at the time he studied abroad and chose the program in Ghana because many of his premedicine peers had previously completed this program. Earlier in college, Shawn spent a summer in Germany, so his study abroad in Ghana was not his first experience abroad.

Shawn enjoyed the change of context in Ghana. He said, "Everybody there looks like me and, when I'm there, people try to guess where you're from. I tell them, I'm Black and from America and they say, 'Oh, you look like you're from here.' So that was pretty cool." Shawn identifies as a gay man. Although he was not out while in Ghana, he was conscious of this identity as Ghana is a Christian country with homophobic areas. Overall, Shawn's experience was positive and expanded his perspective on life. He shared he hoped to return to Ghana someday. Shawn reflected, "So, I think that was just really cool just being able to be there and experience that and not be the minority, not feeling pressure." Although he was not curious about his ancestry before traveling to Ghana, Shawn reflected he has considered doing an ancestry test since returning home to narrow down where his family might originally be from in Africa.

Focus Group C

Focus Group C was the second focus group and included four participants—Sarah, Ada, Ying Yue, and Mariela—who all identified as female. In describing their racial/ethnic identity, participants used the terms African American, third-generation Kenyan American (Sarah); mixed, half Vietnamese and half white (Ada); Asian American (Ying Yue); and Hispanic/Latina (Mariela). From this group, Ying Yue later completed an interview.

Ying Yue

Ying Yue studied abroad in Southeast Asia as part of a public health research project. The program started in Thailand for 2 months followed by 1 month in Indonesia. After her program was over, Ying Yue spent another month in China visiting family. One of Ying Yue's

public health professors advertised the opportunity for students to participate in cancer research abroad and she was one of four students selected. Ying Yue was the first undergraduate selected for this opportunity. The students lived together in a hotel or Airbnb-type setting. The most memorable food Ying Yu ate while abroad was shrimp omelet Pad Thai, which she ate right after she landed in Thailand after over 24 hours of travel.

Ying Yue identifies as a first-generation Chinese American. She was born in China and immigrated to the United States when she was in preschool at the age of 4 or 5. Ying Yue felt that because of the way she was raised, she more strongly identifies with her Chinese side compared to many other Asian Americans in the United States. Ying Yue noted it seemed attending college was the most diverse environment many of her classmates had experienced. However, for Ying Yue, it was the reverse because her college was much less diverse than where she grew up. Ying Yue grew up in one of the largest and most diverse cities in the United States.

Ying Yue felt she easily adjusted to Southeast Asia because she grew up in such a diverse environment. She felt her upbringing helped her adapt more quickly to cultural aspects such as societal conservatism compared to her classmates. Although Ying Yue could not speak the Thai language, she was still mistaken for Thai by locals and other international students. She found it shocking she was Thai passing. Despite outwardly blending in, Ying Yue shared it was confusing. She said, “When it actually came for me to speak or interact with any of the locals, I obviously couldn’t do any of that.” Ying Yue’s study abroad helped her realize living away from family and friends in a place where she did not speak the language was not as hard as she expected. Ying Yue reflected studying abroad did not influence how she thought of her Chinese American identity because she was already strongly connected to it before traveling.

Focus Group D

Focus Group D was the third focus group and included four participants—Julie, Kat, Cora, and Zeus—who all identified as female. In describing their racial/ethnic identity, participants used the terms Chinese American (Julie), Chinese (Kat), Black African (Cora), and White/Hispanic Colombian (Zeus). From this group, Kat and Zeus later completed interviews.

Kat

Kat studied abroad in China twice during college. First, she studied abroad for 3 months on a faculty-led program. During that program, she lived in an international dorm and took advanced Chinese classes with local students. During her second study abroad, Kat was in Shanghai for 3 months. She lived in an apartment and completed an internship with a start-up company, which allowed her to use her business Chinese language skills. This opportunity was a good fit educationally because Kat minored in entrepreneurship. The most memorable food Kat ate while abroad was at her host parents' birthday party where they ate grilled duck heads, including the brain and tongue.

Kat identifies as a Chinese American transnational, transracial adoptee. She was born in China and was adopted at the age of 2 by a Polish mother and German father. Kat grew up near a major U.S. city where "almost all the Asians in [her] town were adopted." As a result, everyone assumed she was adopted, and her race was not really discussed much until college. Between high school and college, Kat spent a gap year in an international Chinese language program in Taiwan. Kat reflected on that first experience abroad:

> When I went to Asia, it was the first time I felt like my identity as a person had been completely erased. Everybody looked the same as me, they spoke a language that I didn't understand, and I felt so lost in this sea of people.

This feeling changed considerably during Kat's two college study abroad programs in China when her language skills improved considerably.

In college, Kat found many Asian American classmates did not think she was Asian enough to be a part of the Asian American community, which she found strange because she spoke better Chinese than many of them. Kat also spent time with international Chinese students during college. Kat did not learn Chinese growing up. However, as she became more fluent in China, she felt she fit in better though she still was asked where she was from, if she was "half," or if she was adopted. Once people learned she was born in China, they did not consider her American or Asian American but saw her as a Chinese person returning home. Ultimately, Kat felt China was more accepting than the United States. During college and through studying abroad, Kat developed a strong connection to her Chinese culture and heritage. Since graduation, much of her work has involved using her language skills with Asian programs and centers.

Zeus

Zeus studied abroad in Madrid, Spain, for 6 weeks as a part of a program with students from two large colleges. The program was led by one professor from Spain and one from the United States. Zeus chose to live in the dorms. Although Zeus generally enjoyed the program, her university later decided to discontinue it. The program included one group trip outside Madrid. Zeus and her classmates also traveled throughout Spain during the weekends. Finances were a concern for Zeus, so she was careful about her spending and was thankful for scholarships that helped her study abroad. One of the most memorable foods Zeus ate in Spain was croquets, which are a popular Spanish *tapa*, or appetizer.

Zeus identifies as White/Hispanic. Her mother and brother were born in Colombia, while she was born in the United States and considers herself Colombian America. Her father's parents

immigrated from Europe. She grew up in a small, rural town, which she described as "very white, very, rural, very white, very conservative." Zeus reflected she had white-passing privilege that her mother and brother did not. Growing up, people in her hometown often stared at her family because they spoke Spanish. When Zeus went to college, it was a considerable demographic shift. She said, "And then I went to [university] that's huge and super diverse, and I'm so thankful for that to have been surrounded by other people that weren't just one ethnicity or just one race." However, Zeus found that some Hispanic classmates judged her because she was white-passing. Ultimately, she did not feel close to the Hispanic community on campus.

Before college, Zeus traveled to visit family in Colombia a few times and traveled to Costa Rica and Canada. Zeus knew she wanted to study abroad in college. The program in Spain was a good fit because she earned credits for her psychology major. Also, she said, "I do think there was some level of comfort in traveling somewhere where I speak the language." In contrast to her experiences in the United States, Zeus found people in Spain very accepting. She said, "Nobody questioned my identity or told me you're not [Hispanic] or you are." In Spain, Zeus received many affirming comments about her Spanish. She shared studying abroad made her appreciate her language skills, which she was committed to passing on to her children someday.

Focus Group E

Focus Group E was the fifth and final focus group and included four participants—Adriana, Chris, Laura, and Danielle. In describing their racial/ethnic identity, participants used the terms Cuban and Native American (Adriana), Black (Chris), Hmong/White biracial (Laura), and Black Afro Latina (Danielle). Adriana, Laura, and Danielle identified as female, and Chris identified as male. From this group, Danielle and Chris later completed interviews.

Chris

Chris studied abroad for 3 weeks with about 20 classmates in South Africa. The program was led by a business school dean and focused on formal and informal business structures. The group traveled throughout the country. Along the way, Chris and his group learned about local business firsthand through visits to small villages, townships in big cities, diamond mines, boat manufacturers, and tourist businesses such as safari companies. One of the most memorable foods Chris ate while in South Africa was Zebra. He enjoyed it and described it as a leaner corned beef.

Chris identifies as Black. He grew up in a major U.S. city in what he described as a disenfranchised area and a "Black bubble." Chris lived in a city and attended a high school "full of Black people." Given this, he described going to a PWI as a culture shock. Chris was part of a TRIO[7] bridge program, which heavily promoted study abroad. In addition, Chris was intrigued because many of his friends studied abroad and talked a lot about it. When he started college, traveling to Africa was a dream of Chris's and was on his bucket list. Chris was able to study abroad with a close friend who also attended the same high school.

Chris really enjoyed being in South Africa given the racial demographics. He said, "It kind of touches your spirit almost to be around that many Black people, especially with it being the motherland, it's just a great feeling." He felt safe and mentioned he did not fear people discriminating against him or being killed by police while there. However, learning about apartheid and the current racial dynamics "blew [his] mind." One thing that stood out to Chris was learning many of the common myths or conceptions Americans have of Africa are untrue

[7] TRIO programs are federally funded outreach programs that aim to support and motivate students from disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue educational opportunities.

and a product of narratives created by the media. Chris came away from studying abroad with the feeling Black people around the world are connected and share a universal culture.

Danielle

Danielle studied abroad in Cape Town, South Africa, for 8 weeks. The focus of her program was public health and endemic diseases. The students in her group were from two large universities, including the one she attended. While abroad, Danielle and her classmates completed observational rotations in community-based hospitals and learned how health care and insurance work in South Africa. Danielle decided to study abroad in South Africa because she wanted to study public health in a global context and wanted to be abroad for a longer time. Earlier in her undergraduate, Danielle studied abroad in Argentina where the population was less than 1% Black. Danielle shared this was not the best experience because she was uncomfortable with people constantly staring at her. Given this, Danielle wanted to study abroad a second time where she was in the majority. One of the most memorable foods Danielle ate while abroad was ice cream made from scratch in a small local shop in Argentina.

Danielle identifies as Black and Afro-Latina. Her mother was born in Panama and her father is Black American. Growing up, Danielle was closely connected to both sides of her racial identity through food and music. Danielle lived in a predominantly Black neighborhood in a large urban city and attended predominantly Black schools. Given this, attending a PWI for college was an adjustment. Even though Danielle was in the racial minority when she participated in sports and dance recitals when she was young, it was only for short periods. She said, “But to live amongst individuals who didn’t look like you was something that was an adjustment.” Danielle reflected the difference was not only living with people who did not look like her but also with people who were culturally very different.

Outside of not speaking any of the local languages, Danielle blended in while in South Africa. In addition to her complexion, Danielle felt having her hair braided made a big difference. One of Danielle's Ethiopian classmates wore her hair naturally, and locals did not identify her classmate as African, which Danielle found interesting. Being in South Africa felt very comfortable for Danielle and she compared it to home. She said, "I didn't feel out of place. And it was just interesting having a lot of locals treat me as though, that I was from there and even speaking to me in their native languages." Overall, Danielle's time in South Africa was more comfortable than her study abroad experience in Argentina.

Chapter Summary

This chapter contains brief overviews of the focus group participants followed by detailed profiles of the nine participants who completed an individual interview. The profiles present information about the participants, including details about their study abroad experience, information about their racial/ethnic identity, and short reflections about how they viewed their study abroad experience overall. Table 1 provides a summary of demographic and descriptive information for the 18 study participants. Throughout the results chapters, I include quotes and excerpts from the focus group conversation and individual interviews. It may be helpful to refer to Table 1 (see page 71) and the participant profiles while reading through the study findings to contextualize the participants' quotes and experiences.

CHAPTER 5: PARTICIPANT MEANING MAKING

In recent years, I have had various opportunities to explain my research to family, friends, classmates, colleagues, funders, and even complete strangers. Like most doctoral students, my answer to the "What are you doing/studying?" question has shifted and thankfully narrowed over time. In a few notable instances, I found myself giving my research elevator speech to a Person of Color who had studied abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. The resulting conversations were often enlightening as I listened to people's reflections and reactions. These chance encounters also required me to refrain from asking a million questions of the unwitting person who had not signed up for my study.

In Fall 2022, I found myself in such a situation while exchanging pleasantries at a conference with someone I will call Amber. As we chatted, Amber and I discovered we were both doctoral students. Naturally, our conversation turned to discussing our dissertations. As I described my research, Amber's eyes lit up, and she shared she had studied abroad as a graduate student in an African country on a program that mirrored those of my participants. She was clearly intrigued by the topic and curiously asked me what was emerging as I coded my data. Admittedly I stumbled through organizing my thoughts and articulating the initial themes. Amber patiently waited as I tried to succinctly present my thoughts before she excitedly shared details of her time abroad, how she grew up as one of only a few Black people in a predominantly white area, and the resulting feelings she had about these experiences.

After Amber described some of the impactful parts of her study abroad, we began to compare her experience to those of my participants. Although there were obvious differences, there were more commonalities. Eventually, our conversation wound down, we wished each other luck with the dissertation process, and we returned to our respective laptops. During my

flight home, as I replayed our conversation, I was struck by a sense of immense responsibility to do justice to participants' words and experiences. In retrospect, I felt a bit chagrined about the academic and theoretical way I felt compelled to talk about my preliminary findings.

Amber was much more interested in sharing her own experience and learning how my study participants felt about their time abroad than she was in theoretical conversations. She wanted to know if their experience was exhilarating, confusing, affirming, challenging, or meaningful. This conversation confirmed what some of the participants had already shared with me during the focus group. They were excited to meet other people who shared a similar experience and wanted to learn more about how peers understood their study abroad as it related to being a Person of Color. While writing a dissertation is decidedly an academic exercise that requires theorizing, citations, and academic terminology, this chance encounter served as a powerful reminder about the obligation I have to share the words and stories of the participants in an engaging and accessible way that does justice to their lived experience.

Although the stories and reflections shared in this qualitative study are as contextual and unique as the 18 participants themselves, common themes about meaning making emerged as I reviewed and coded the data. Through critically examining participants' experiences and narratives, I identified three main ways participants made meaning of their study abroad experience in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. Participants made meaning by (a) examining the feelings they felt related to studying abroad, (b) comparing their time abroad to other life experiences, and (c) reflecting on the resulting impacts and influences of their study abroad experience.

In the following sections, I describe these three themes that pertain to the first research subquestion: How do Students of Color make meaning of studying abroad in a location where

they were part of the racial or ethnic majority? In the next chapter, I turn to the second research subquestion: How do Students of Color understand race and ethnicity through their study abroad experience? Throughout both chapters, I rely on participants' quotes and excerpts to illustrate and contextualize the identified themes. I prioritized weaving participants' words and reflections throughout the results to forefront and honor their stories. Finally, beginning in this chapter and more extensively throughout the next, I describe how participants' experiences illustrate and connect to tenets of critical race theory (CRT) and its extensions.

Feelings

During the focus groups and interviews, participants extensively described the feelings they had while abroad and after they returned home. These feelings helped participants make meaning of their study abroad experience. Participants' feelings were wide-ranging, sometimes complex, and often dependent on who the participant was interacting with and the specific context. Participants' feelings and emotional reactions often fluctuated throughout their time abroad. Despite these nuances, I identified distinct subthemes related to participants' feelings: (a) Comfort, (b) Discomfort, (c) Connection, and (d) Otherness. However, not all feelings fit cleanly into these categories. Thus, in the final section of this chapter, I provide examples of complex and sometimes conflicting feelings that were less easily categorized.

Feelings of Comfort

During the focus groups and interviews, participants repeatedly used the word comfort to describe how they felt studying abroad in a location where they were a part of the racial or ethnic majority. Some participants elaborated by describing how they felt comfortable because they did not stand out, although other participants felt comfortable because the environment abroad was similar to those in which they grew up. Still other participants described comfort as a sense of

relief from not having their racial/ethnic identity continually referenced or questioned; others found comfort in speaking the local language. Finally, many participants described feeling safe while abroad.

While in Thailand, Ying Yue described how nice it was to walk through the streets without anyone "giving you a second glance." Overall, she noted, "I wouldn't get as many weird looks as other people in my group." Ying Yue described her time abroad as more positive compared to her classmates. Similarly, Chris, who traveled to South Africa, shared, "Like I said, it's just more comfortable to be around people who look like you." He expanded by saying, "I didn't feel people were staring at me. I didn't feel I stood out. And I think anybody, if you stand out, it'll make you more uncomfortable." Ying Yue and Chris felt comfortable abroad because they did not stand out. Other participants described feeling comfortable abroad because they blended in or passed for a local. I explore this related phenomenon in depth in the next chapter.

Some participants described how the environment abroad felt comfortable because it was similar to those in which they grew up. Sarah grew up in a predominantly Black environment and shared the following about her experience growing up and her study abroad experience in Tanzania:

> I think then going to Africa and Tanzania and it kind of being a switch back to my upbringing where now we are the majority and you might see a couple white folks and if you do, then you're just like, the random white people there, was interesting for me. It was comfortable, I guess I should say; it wasn't something that I felt like I had to adjust or do a lot of work to navigate, not in that sense.

Kayla and Chris also expressed similar feelings about feeling comfortable in the racial majority abroad because of how they grew up, which I explore later in the section on comparisons.

Julie and Zeus expanded the meaning of comfort to include not having their identity questioned. Reflecting on her study abroad experience in Hong Kong, Julie noted:

> It was just so validating in a way, and I didn't have to explain myself. Because when I'm in America, especially in [hometown], I've gotten a lot of questions like, "Oh, where are you from?" "Are you from here?" And people trying to pry and say stuff like that.

Similarly, Zeus said, "[Spaniards] never would make small comments that maybe sometimes you hear that make you question your identity, like, if you do or you don't have an accent or you do or you don't look Hispanic." Although Julie and Zeus did not use the term microaggression, it appears they were more comfortable abroad because they did not experience this "form of systemic, everyday racism used to keep those at the racial margins" (Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2015, p. 298). Given what they shared, Julie's and Zeus's experiences abroad contrasted with their experiences in the United States. Thus, feeling comfortable for some participants came from not dealing with microaggressions like having their racial/ethnic identity explicitly questioned while abroad.

For some participants, foreign language skills helped them feel comfortable abroad. Zeus, who grew up speaking Spanish, said, "I think there was definitely comfort in being able to travel somewhere where you speak the language when it's somewhere foreign." Zeus provided an illustrative example when her cohort inadvertently selected a restaurant where the waitstaff only spoke Spanish. Zeus ended up translating and placing orders for the group. She described feeling almost "godlike" at that moment because she was the only person fluent in Spanish. Zeus said, "So, I was looked highly upon because it came as a resource to everybody else." Zeus's language skills resulted in feelings of comfort for her while also being an asset for her classmates.

Kayla also described being comfortable as a Black Spanish speaker in Cuba and contrasted this with what she experienced on her college campus. Kayla reflected, "It was nice because it was the first time that I did not feel odd for being Black and speaking Spanish because, in all my Spanish classes at [university], I was one of three Black people." Both Zeus and Kayla described how their language skills previously made them stand out, but this changed in a positive way when they were part of the racial or ethnic majority abroad.

Safety is closely related to comfort. Physical safety was a major topic in two of the focus groups and was touched on in some interviews. Participants directly named feeling safe and described not feeling unsafe while abroad. Although some respondents explicitly used the word safe, others described safety. When discussing this topic, many participants shared experiences of feeling unsafe in the United States—including at the predominantly white institutions (PWIs) they attended. Generally, participants felt safe while abroad. However, in the subsection on discomfort, I discuss instances where participants did not.

Laura specifically mentioned feeling safe abroad. She explained that although there was not a Hmong community in Japan, "regardless, I still felt very safe in Japan overall. If anything, I was just very, very self-conscious about coming across as too American in Japan." Here, Laura illustrated how she was more preoccupied with being identified as an ugly American rather than her safety. Kayla also talked in depth about the importance of safety in her focus group, describing how safety is a key consideration for Black students deciding to study abroad. Kayla explained how Black students at her college often chose the program in Cuba she participated in or another program that specifically examines the Black experience in a European city. She explained the reason Black students pick these programs: "It's because you feel safe, and you don't feel. . . . You already have to deal with people being racist to you all the time, so why

would I pay extra to experience that?" Kayla's reflection elicited immediate agreement and some laughter from Ella and Teresa. They built on Kayla's comments:

> Ella: Oh, I love that! "Why would you pay to experience racism?" [laughs]
>
> Kayla: Why would you pay for that?!
>
> Teresa: That's exactly the reason why I didn't want to go to Spain and that's exactly the reason why I know a lot of People of Color don't want to go to Spain, specifically people who are Black, because in Spain they're super racist and they're still super racist against Mexicans and anyone from Latin America because they're like, "You guys deserved it. You should thank us." And we're like, "No." But then also I think that's super important because if you're experiencing racism in the U.S. and then you go to a place that is also racist and you're just getting it squared instead of just experiencing it, just like you said, where you're just paying to experience it, but in a prettier area, maybe.
>
> Ella: Racism with a view.
>
> Teresa: Yeah. [laughs]

This powerful conversation demonstrates that for some Students of Color, studying abroad where they were more likely to avoid racism was important and contributed to their feelings of safety. Interestingly, this conversation occurred between Black, Indigenous, and Asian participants. This points to the importance of considering students' racial/ethnic identities related to issues of safety and comfort abroad.

Later, during her interview, Kayla spoke in detail about how not standing out in Cuba allowed her to relax and engage in a way she cannot in predominantly white spaces. She said:

> I also think it was safe. And I think that there is an element of hyper visibility in white spaces that I did not enjoy where I have to be hypervigilant about my surroundings. I

> think that having to take that away, even being abroad and just have to worry about regular safety concerns, I think just allowed me to engage more because I didn't have all this thinking about. Because you don't stand out, so I don't have to really think about it.

Kayla contrasted this comfort with how she felt at her PWI. She shared, "I would say that I felt more nervous walking around at [university] than I did where I was [in Cuba]." Kayla also said, "I feel like you need spaces where other people look like you." Kayla's excerpts demonstrate safety is contextual and, for her, based in part on the racial demographics of a location. For Kayla, being a part of the racial majority abroad was more comfortable than navigating her PWI.

Related to feeling safe, other participants described never feeling unsafe. Ella said, "I think that, on all the excursions, I never felt unsafe or anything like that while I was there." She continued by saying she experienced a lot in China because she did not fear judgment there because she was a part of the racial majority. Ella contrasted this with feeling unsafe growing up as an Asian transracial adoptee. Although Chris did not explicitly use the word safe, he provided a powerful description of the safety he and a Black friend felt in South Africa. He said:

> We didn't feel restricted. We felt free. It was like, we can go here. We can go here. We can go anywhere as long as we know somebody who knows somebody or we with somebody who we familiar with. We good. We don't feel like we scared.

Chris grew up in a predominantly Black city and attended primarily Black schools. Thus, South Africa felt comfortable and safe. As seen through these quotes, many participants compared the safety they felt abroad with the lack of safety they felt in the United States due to discrimination and racism. Later in this chapter, I further explore how participants used comparisons to make meaning of their study abroad experience.

Feelings of Discomfort

Although participants more frequently described feelings of comfort and safety abroad, some did describe feelings of discomfort. These feelings mostly resulted from noticing structural oppression and how People of Color were treated abroad. However, Chris experienced blatant individual racism directed at him. Chris shared a white girl called him and his friend the N-word in a South African McDonald's. He was especially shocked because he said no one in the United States had ever referred to him this way. Chris said, "We couldn't believe it! I was appalled. Yeah, her saying that was crazy! It just proved that to me, that white people are really racist as hell. But I don't know. That's a whole different level of racism." Chris's feelings went beyond discomfort to outrage and disbelief. Although Chris was the only participant to share an experience of blatant individual racism, numerous participants described the sadness and helplessness they felt when witnessing structural racism and the impacts of colonization.

Both in the focus group and in her interview, Kayla reflected in depth on the impact of visiting an impoverished Black Cuban community that lacked basic infrastructure. She described in detail witnessing people living in shacks surrounded by garbage with no running water, toilets, or schools. This did not "sit right with [her] spirit" because, as Kayla said:

> This is also a result of systemic racism and that there are Black people who live in similar conditions in every country. So, to see how that worked, it was really sad, and I didn't take any pictures, but I can still see it in my mind, exactly what it looked like. So, there were a lot of tears when we were there, but I think that's just studying how colonization has worked.

Kayla's poignant discomfort and sadness from witnessing the effects of colonialism and global racism were shared by others who reflected on racial inequities where they studied abroad.

Both Chris and Danielle described being uncomfortable due to South Africa's history of apartheid. Chris was upset and said it "blew [his] mind" to learn about apartheid. He said, "The dynamic of Black and white people, even though it was predominantly Black people, it's like white people still moved as though they were still masters." Danielle shared how visiting Robben Island where Nelson Mandela was incarcerated for decades was challenging and emotional. These reflections powerfully illustrate how structural racism and the impacts of colonization made Black participants uncomfortable while abroad.

Yet, Black participants were not the only ones who experienced discomfort when reflecting on the treatment of People of Color abroad. Teresa, who is an Indigenous and Mestiza Mexican American, described how Peruvians "using indigeneity as a prop for tourists was something that was bothersome to [her]." Teresa felt locals tokenized Indigenous practices to attract and cater to tourists and shared they had seen similar commodification of Indigenous culture in Mexico. Teresa wondered if non-Latino students even noticed this dynamic.

These excerpts illustrate the CRT and TribalCrit tenets that racism and colonization are endemic (D. Bell, 1992; Brayboy, 2005). As previously noted, CRT asserts racism is endemic and permanent in society (D. Bell, 1992). Building from this, TribalCrit asserts colonization is also endemic (Brayboy, 2005). Although these frameworks were developed in the U.S. context, the impacts of racism and colonization are not isolated and occur throughout the world as illustrated by participant excerpts in this section. Despite traveling to countries predominantly made up of People of Color and generally having positive experiences, the existence of systemic oppression was notable for some participants and negatively impacted their experience.

Feelings of Connection

Many participants discussed feelings of connectedness while studying abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. Although connection and comfort are related, they are distinct. Connection is defined as "a relationship in which a person, thing, or idea is linked or associated with something else" (The Oxford Pocket Dictionary of Current English, 2018). Some participants described a connection to home while studying abroad; others talked about feeling connected to their roots, ancestry, and/or cultural heritage.

Five participants specifically used the word home to describe a strong and familiar sense of connection they felt. Interestingly, the phrase "at home" can also refer to feeling especially comfortable. However, I interpreted participants to be describing something beyond this type of comfort that extended to a connection to their home itself. Kayla expressed feeling at home while in Cuba despite acknowledging her family is not Cuban. Danielle also described feeling at home while in South Africa. She said, "It just made me feel like I was closer to home. Or even when I just got to South Africa, I just felt like I was at home. It was the weirdest feeling." For Danielle, studying abroad was a phenomenal experience; yet, when she left South Africa, she felt homesick even though, paradoxically, she was returning home. Danielle explained, "And so, when I left South Africa, I immediately felt like I was being homesick even though I was at home." Both Kayla and Danielle acknowledged feeling a strong sense of connection despite not having any known ancestral ties to the country of their study abroad program.

Of all the participants, Chris expressed the strongest connection to home while studying abroad. Throughout the focus group and interview, he stated numerous times that being in South Africa felt like home regardless of whether he was in a rural or urban environment. Chris said:

> I was sitting in a village in a bar, and I was like, "Yo, I feel like I'm at home." I don't know why. I feel like I'm going to walk out of here and go home. I feel like I'm in a bar by my house. It's just weird. It was weird. It was a real comfortable feeling, like I lived there.

When visiting a well-known township in Johannesburg, Chris said, "It's just the energy over there; it just all seemed right. It just felt good, felt better. It felt like home. This is home, too." Chris shared that his close friend, who is also Black and grew up in the same predominantly Black city, also felt like the township was home. Finally, Chris reflected, "Everybody I know who's been to Africa, they all say the same exact thing. They talk about it for hours. They love it. They feel like they want to move there. It's home." Although Chris felt this strong connection in Africa personally, he noted other Black people he knew felt similarly.

Sarah felt at home in Tanzania and acknowledged the complexity of her experience, saying:

> It was interesting experiencing my Blackness in a sense that feeling like I was home almost, being in Africa. But also understanding that my Blackness was still different in a way, which of course all Blackness is dynamic but also different in the way that I experienced my Blackness in the context of the United States and America and coming from a developed country.

Similarly, Chris reflected on the distinct experiences of being Black in the United States and abroad. He expanded on a comment Danielle made where she shared the United States does not always feel like home for Black people. Chris agreed, saying, "And then going somewhere where majority Black people that isn't home, and [I] didn't feel foreign, versus being at home, feeling more foreign than being away to a foreign land."

Black participants were not the only ones who experienced a connection to home while abroad. During their interview, Teresa shared that Peru reminded them of the geographic area of Mexico where their family is from. Teresa reflected, "I think I had an especially good time there [Peru] because of the fact that it felt so similar to where I am familiar with [Mexico]." Teresa discussed connections to home they felt when the word home referred both to the United States to their ancestral homeland of Mexico.

Other participants also felt connections to their roots, ancestry, and/or cultural heritage. When describing how it felt to be a Black person in a majority Black country, Chris shared the following: "It kind of touches your spirit almost to be around that many Black people, especially with it being the motherland. It's just a great feeling." Similarly, Shawn said not being in the minority in Ghana was "really cool," especially because he explained he likely has ancestors from West Africa. For both Chris and Shawn, their positive experiences appear to be not only due to blending in but also due to a connection to their African ancestry.

Asian participants also discussed feeling closer to their heritage through studying abroad. Kat shared she was not always welcomed into Asian American spaces at her PWI because she was not seen as "Asian enough" due to growing up in a white family. She contrasted this with how she felt in Asia. Kat said, "But when I go back to Asia, everybody's always so welcoming. They're so happy that I've returned back to my culture and learning the language. And it's just very strange to see the differences." Kat also shared, "I felt more white before my study abroad experiences, and I definitely felt I had connected with my Chinese side after my [study abroad]." Other Asian participants shared Kat's feeling of connection with her heritage.

Tara, who is biracial Korean and white, reflected she did not completely fit in while in Seoul because most Koreans are "full Korean," and her biracial identity was distinct. However,

she also shared going abroad helped her feel more connected to her heritage. Tara said, "I feel a lot more connected with my Korean side." Similarly, while in Hong Kong, Julie said, "I felt very immersed, and I felt I really embraced my cultural background when I was there." Julie suggested a reason for this connection and familiarity was because people speak Cantonese both in the part of China where her parents are from and in Hong Kong. Finally, some participants described a strong sense of connection to their specific racial/ethnic identity and individuals with this same identity. I explore this type of connection in detail in the next chapter.

Feelings of Otherness

Although all the interviewees and most focus group participants felt a sense of connection through studying abroad, some participants also felt othered or like an outsider. Sometimes, these feelings emerged due to the composition of the study abroad cohort, but other instances occurred due to participants' lack of language skills or their accents. Finally, some participants felt a sense of otherness because people abroad identified them as American.

Ada explained she was the only person in her group with Vietnamese heritage and the only one who spoke any Vietnamese. Given this, she helped classmates with things like ordering at restaurants. Although, ultimately, Ada shared she was glad to be traveling with a cohort. She said, "I definitely did wish that at least some of them were Vietnamese because it was a lot of pressure, I feel like, to be the only person who knew [Vietnamese] and had to explain things to them." Thus, for Ada, being different from her classmates added some stress to her time abroad. Relatedly, Zeus talked about being one of only a couple of Hispanic students in her program. Although Zeus's strong Spanish skills resulted in her feeling like she fit in well with locals, when it came to her classmates, she was still "very consciously aware, [she is] not like the rest either." These examples show how Students of Color felt different compared to their classmates.

Ella shared a notable example of feeling left out. She described "FOMO," or a fear of missing out on what her white classmates experienced. Ella recounted how a local Chinese mother took a photo of her children with Ella's white classmates but did not include her. She said:

> And so that was just something that I didn't get to experience, which I don't know why I got sad about that because it is weird, but I don't know. I just felt left out because I wasn't the American that they wanted.

In this instance, Ella felt othered due to her race and specifically for not fitting the stereotypical image of a white American. In the next chapter, I explore how participants noticed whiteness as normative and desirable abroad despite being primarily among People of Color abroad.

Finally, several participants talked about feeling othered due to language. Kat shared that during her first time in China, locals had a hard time placing her because of where she learned Chinese. She explained, "I learned my Chinese in the north, which has conflicting, kind of like Spanish from Mexico and Spanish from Spain. But you're mixing all the words and phrases." Kat felt othered due to her Chinese accent. Additionally, she shared her appearance made her feel othered, which I discuss further in the next chapter in a section on participants' experiences passing as someone from the location they studied abroad. However, during her second study abroad in China, Kat's sense of otherness changed considerably as her Chinese improved enough that she eventually passed for a local student. Kat's changing sense of belonging demonstrates how feelings of otherness can evolve over time. In the next chapter, I explore more examples of how language skills impacted participants' ability to pass as local. Overall, participants more frequently felt comfortable or connected as opposed to uncomfortable or othered while abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. Yet, this was not universally true.

Complex and Conflicting Feelings

As previous excerpts demonstrate, some participants had complex and conflicting feelings about studying abroad as a part of the racial or ethnic majority. For some, these feelings changed over time; but, for others, they persisted throughout the experience. Kat, who was born in China and adopted into a white family, had complex feelings about her identity during her study abroad experiences in Asia. Initially, she described feeling erased due to physically blending in, which was not the case for her in the United States. Kat reflected:

> When I went to Asia, it was the first time I felt like my identity as a person had been completely erased. Everybody looked the same as me, they spoke a language that I didn't understand, and I felt so lost in this sea of people.

Yet, ultimately, after studying abroad in China twice, Kat felt more accepted in and connected to China. It appears one reason for this change from feeling lost and erased to accepted and integrated was due to her improved language skills. However, throughout both the focus group and interview, Kat shared various complex and conflicting feelings about her experience.

Sarah also had complex feelings about her study abroad. Although she was in the racial majority in Tanzania, she was not in the majority in her cohort, which was frustrating at times. She shared, "So, it was just a very multifaceted experience, I would say, being equally frustrated with being a part of a predominantly white group and having to have some what I feel like were ridiculous conversations and some commonsense conversations." Yet, Sarah also shared it felt great to connect with other Black students and to be surrounded by Black Tanzanians. She said:

> And then going to Tanzania and being like, there's so many Black people, literally everybody, and kind of having that being celebrated within yourself, not just from you

being able to identify with that, but just also the people around you celebrating that, the people around you just existing in that Blackness, was very unique.

At the same time, Sarah experienced frustration due to racial dynamics in her cohort while simultaneously feeling her Blackness was celebrated due to being surrounded by Black people in Tanzania. Both Kat and Sarah felt a sense of in-betweenness abroad where they sometimes fit in but did not in other ways. I explore this in-betweenness further in the next chapter. Examining feelings related to studying abroad appeared to be a major way participants made meaning of their study abroad experience despite their feelings not always being easy to categorize and sometimes changing over time or based on circumstances.

Comparisons and Juxtapositions

A second, major way participants made meaning of studying abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority was by making comparisons to other life experiences or the experiences of other people. The main juxtapositions participants made included comparing their study abroad to (a) previous life experiences growing up or in college before they studied abroad, (b) other international travel opportunities, and (c) the experiences of their classmates in the same study abroad program.

Comparisons to Previous Life Experiences

In the section on feelings, there were numerous occasions when participants explained their feelings about being part of the racial or ethnic majority abroad by making comparisons to previous life experiences. Many participants directly compared the environment of their study abroad with the environment where they grew up. Participants also frequently juxtaposed their study abroad experience with their college experience. Although participants made these comparisons both during focus group conversations and individual interviews, the focus group

transcripts contained multiple instances in which one participant would make a comparison to a previous life experience and then another participant would agree or disagree. Many times, these comparisons occurred naturally without my prompting and appeared to help participants express how they understood being part of the racial or ethnic majority while studying abroad.

During a focus group, Cora provided a powerful illustration of how different her experience in Tanzania was compared to her experience growing up. Cora described what would happen when her Black family traveled to predominantly white areas in the state where she grew up. She said, "The moment my family walks out of a car, everyone immediately stares at us. And it's always like, 'Oh, this is awkward.'" She contrasted this with her experience abroad, saying:

> But then I had similar situations when I was abroad because I was the only East African in my study abroad group, so the moment we walked out of a car, everyone would stare, but I knew they weren't staring at me because you can't feel that glare. So, it was like a 360-culture shock, being like, "Oh, this time they're not staring at me, they're staring at everyone else." So, it was kind of weird to be on the other side, because I'm just so used to being the person stared at, and just awkwardly moving around to not disturb the peace.

Ella, a transracial adoptee, also talked about being stared at as the only Asian in her white family. Ella noted when she visited her mother's hometown, she was often the only Person of Color (POC). She said, "Whenever we'd go back, I was usually the only POC in the room, like at the restaurant, wherever we were at. And so, I was used to getting stared at, and now I'm not as self-conscious about it." Ella contrasted this with her experience in China saying:

> But whenever I was alone, just walking to class, or if I went out by myself, or even when I was with my host family, I felt I was passing. Just in the street, no one's staring in the street; they just treated me like a local.

Many other participants, including Julie, Kat, Zeus, Laura, and Mariela, also described how being part of the majority abroad notably contrasted with their experiences in their hometowns.

However, other participants were familiar with being in the majority because of their upbringing. Kayla, who grew up in a predominantly Black area, said, "It is normal for me to be around Black people. That is my normal. That is my regular everyday life. And it's because of how I grew up. I think being in Cuba was normal." Other participants—including Chris, Sarah, Danielle, Teresa, and Shawn—also described studying abroad in a location where they were a part of the majority as reminiscent of how they grew up as part of the racial/ethnic majority.

Participants also made meaning of being part of the racial/ethnic majority abroad by drawing comparisons to their college experience. In a focus group conversation, Kayla and Teresa shared similar observations. Kayla described studying abroad as not much different than being at home. Further, she recalled feeling more nervous walking around her college campus than she did abroad because there were many Black people in Cuba unlike on her campus. Teresa, who grew up in a predominantly Hispanic area, built on this by saying, "I don't think I'd been in a room with majority white people until I was in university." Teresa contrasted their alienation at a PWI with the more comfortable experience studying abroad in Peru, saying:

> And so, the experience of going abroad actually felt more similar to my home environment in [city] than [university] where it's being in a place where it is a majority white people to being in a place where it's majority People of Color.

Although some participants described attending a PWI as a unique experience compared to growing up and studying abroad as part of the racial/ethnic majority, this was not true for everyone. Some participants grew up in predominantly white areas and, thus, their college

campus was a considerably more diverse environment than their norm. Mariela experienced this and explained:

> I cosign on what you said about going to [university] is the most diverse for some of us. I grew up in a very white, very Dutch American town, and I've been here for most of my life. So, kind of going to [university] was that first mini, outside of the U.S. culture, but not too outside. Because it was the first place that I was finally having more than a couple, one or two kids that weren't white in my classrooms.

Throughout the focus groups and interviews, participants frequently explained what they experienced studying abroad through comparison to where they grew up and attended college. However, these were not the only comparisons that helped participants process studying abroad.

Comparisons to Other International Experiences

Several participants compared their study abroad in a location where they were part of the racial/ethnic majority with other international experiences. Some participants traveled abroad before the study abroad experience that they reflected on for this study; others traveled abroad afterward. Shawn described his arrival in Ghana, and, to provide context, he said, "That wasn't my first time abroad because I also spent a summer in Germany 2 years prior, after my freshman year. But even juxtaposing that experience to this experience in Ghana was interesting." Shawn continued noting Americans attracted a lot more attention in Ghana. Zeus compared her study abroad in Spain to a high school trip to Costa Rica. In Costa Rica, she was also one of the only Spanish speakers, but the experience was more controlled given it was a high school trip with a tour guide and she did not have much opportunity to use her Spanish. Additionally, when sharing about her time in Southeast Asia, Ying Yue mentioned a prior service-learning experience in Peru, which she described as "completely different" for various reasons.

Kayla talked at length about her previous study abroad in Ecuador where there were few Black people. Notably, she shared there was only one Black girl at the school where she taught. Kayla said, "I was probably the first Black teacher she ever had. And she'd be like, 'Oh wow, I can play with someone who looks like me.'" Kayla reflected on how it felt to stand out, saying, "So just different stuff like that, where it was like hypervigilant because you're the one [Black] person. So, essentially, if somebody wants to look, they know where you are because you're the only one that they've seen." Kayla said she did not experience this hypervisibility growing up in a predominantly Black city, while later studying abroad in Cuba, or while currently living in a predominantly Black city. Kayla summarized the impact of her Ecuador experience, saying:

> I had a really bad experience in Ecuador. I was the only Black person, and it was actually the people from [university] who were really racist to me. That was hard. So going on this trip, I was much more intentional of being like I would like to have a better experience.

In Kayla's case, her study abroad in Ecuador influenced her subsequent decision of where to study abroad. Ultimately, Kayla felt comfortable in Cuba because she was not an outsider.

Similarly, Danielle's prior study abroad experience in Argentina influenced her decision to later study abroad in South Africa. During the focus group, Danielle recounted:

> I was a minority there. I think [Argentina's] population only has less than 1% Black people. So, I didn't have the best experience because a lot of people was staring at me and it just made me very, very uncomfortable.

Danielle, who is Afro-Latina, said Argentines did not frequently see Black people. This resulted in intense stares directed at her and the assumption she was Brazilian. Danielle said, "They did not believe that I was from the United States, which was interesting. So, I really wanted to go to

a study abroad where I was more of a majority." Danielle concluded South Africa was a better fit for this reason and because the program focused on public health. For both Kayla and Danielle, standing out and feeling uncomfortable due to their race during previous study abroad experiences presented challenges that influenced their subsequent study abroad decisions. These participants were looking to avoid further racism abroad if they could.

Like Danielle, Adriana was also mistaken as Brazilian. She shared she was not surprised to fit in well in Cuba because of her Cuban and Native American identity. However, Adriana was surprised to blend in while in Brazil because she is not Cuban. She said, "When I went to Brazil, it was really easy for me to blend in too because I just look like I'm Brazilian. And I learned Portuguese really fast." Adriana noted it took multiple people asking if she was Brazilian for her to realize the similarities. She said:

> I wasn't aware [of blending in] in Brazil, so I guess I can speak to that because it really took a lot of people telling me, "You look like a Brazilian." Or like, "Are you from here?" Or like, "I didn't notice that you weren't from here until you really got to talking."

Adriana reflected on how her appearance made it easier to navigate being abroad.

Although Kayla, Danielle, and Adriana made comparisons to previous study abroad experiences, Ella reflected on international trips she completed after studying abroad in China. Ella described being the only Asian on a college spring break program in Mexico:

> But I was so nervous going on that, too, because it was the opposite of my first study abroad because I was Chinese going to China. Right? But a lot of my classmates were Mexican American going to Mexico; that was their homeland. So that was a really opposite experience for me.

Although Ella enjoyed her time in Mexico, the racial/ethnic makeup of the cohort made her nervous prior to departing. Ella also discussed an alumni trip she went on in Europe. Ella described being cognizant of the racial/ethnic makeup of the group and being a bit nervous about visiting predominantly white countries, implying this was due to concerns about racism. In both instances, Ella described being more hesitant and more aware of her identity, which was a marked contrast to her study abroad experience in China. Comparing study abroad experiences seemed natural for many participants and helped them make meaning of what they experienced.

Comparisons to Study Abroad Classmates

Several participants compared their study abroad experience with that of their classmates in the same program. Most participants in this study traveled abroad with a cohort, and it appears juxtaposing their experience with that of peers on the same program provided a helpful way to make meaning of their experience studying abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. Some participants found similarities with peers, but others found notable differences. Some participants also juxtaposed their experience abroad with that of other Students of Color; others compared their experience with white classmates.

Several participants explained locals often looked to them as a spokesperson for their group or assumed they were fluent based on their appearance. For Mariela, who studied abroad in Spain, communication skills helped her realize she was part of the majority abroad. She shared, “So, it was just kind of like if I were to go out with friends, I would just notice that I would get spoken to in Spanish and they wouldn’t.” Mariela continued:

> But if we were to go [to] a smaller town, they would only speak in Spanish and they would speak to me in Spanish, and that’s how I knew like, “Oh, physically speaking,

> you're making the assumption that I know more," . . . but it was the communication that kind of made me realize that I was finally in a majority space.

Teresa experienced something similar in Peru, saying, "I definitely feel like I was kind of looked at more when it came to communicating with people who were from Peru." Teresa continued, "It was kind of that thing where if someone said something, they would just turn, and then people would be staring at me. And then I'd start talking." According to Teresa, this was also true for the two other native Spanish speakers in the group. Mariela, Ada, Zeus, and Teresa—who all had advanced language skills—discussed being looked to as more fluent than their classmates and, thus, translating for them, which made their experience different from their peers.

Ella and Sarah also said local people often assumed they spoke the language, which they implied was due to their physical appearance. However, for both Ella and Sarah, their classmates had similar or more advanced language fluency. Ella shared this:

> My friends, their Chinese was better than mine, so it felt weird to be. . . . The locals would, if we were in a restaurant, they'd go to me first. But my friends who were white, their Chinese was better than mine.

Ella noted this made her feel a bit weird. Sarah had a similar experience and shared that even though she thought Tanzanians could tell she was American; they still spoke to her more because she was Black. Sarah recalled thinking, "I don't know any more [Swahili] than any of the rest of these folks on here." Sarah concluded her appearance likely resulted in Tanzanians being more comfortable engaging with her. She continued, "But I think that there's still that inherent sense of community that they identify with because you look like me, and so I'm just going to talk to you because that's what I'm comfortable with." Thus, in some situations, physical appearance, rather than language skills, seemed to be more important for connecting with locals.

Participants reflected on other ways being in the majority was positive compared to the experience of their classmates who were in the racial/ethnic minority. Ella described the challenges a Black classmate encountered in China, explaining, "He's Black and he has a beard, and so the taxi drivers, they'd want to touch his skin, touch his beard, that whole fetishization, and so that's something very negative that he experienced." Ella directly contrasted this with her experience, saying, "I think at times I definitely had a more positive experience because I was, in a way, able to live like a local more than they were because we could do the same things." Laura also noted her classmates had a different experience than she did. Although Laura admitted not thinking about her race much in Japan, she observed this was not true for her classmates. She said, "But I do know there were people in my group who had very different experiences; they were saying, 'I don't want to be here anymore because everyone keeps looking at me, because I look so different from everyone.'" Relatedly, Kayla shared her Singaporean classmate had a negative reaction to being a minority in Cuba. Their Black professor reminded the Singaporean student this experience is similar to what Black people experience daily in the United States.

Danielle shared a conversation she had with a white classmate who felt uncomfortable in South Africa because it was a majority Black country. Danielle said, "I thought that was very interesting because sometimes those are feelings that I have being in the United States and being from there." Danielle said, compared to the white students in her group, "There was definitely a huge difference on how we were treated." She noted white students were more likely to be asked for money, followed around, and targeted for theft. For example, a white classmate had her phone stolen. Danielle also recounted how her white classmates were not admitted to a block party because the local security guard was afraid the party would get shut down because the white students might be mistaken for the police. In this case, white students had an experience

similar to what many People of Color experience in the United States. In addition to comparing their time studying abroad with classmates of a different racial/ethnic identity, some participants compared their experience abroad to other students who shared their racial/ethnic identity.

As noted previously, Sarah experienced some frustration with the racial dynamics in her cohort. However, she also mentioned how nice it was to talk and connect with the four other Black students in her program who similarly experienced being part of the racial majority in Tanzania. Sarah said, "I mean, just being able to share that experience of being somewhere where we could see all of us, and to see very few of anybody else." Sarah went on to explain for the Black students, the experience in Tanzania was starkly different than the environment at their PWI where there were few Black students. Reflecting on this difference, Sarah suggested the Black students had a similar positive experience in Tanzania.

Conversely, Danielle had a different experience in South Africa compared to one of her Black classmates. She shared this:

> One of my classmates, she also identifies as Black, and she wore her hair in curls, her natural hair in curls, and they thought that. . . . I don't know, she just had a lot of issues. They thought that she was not really Black and maybe mixed, even though she's actually African herself.

Despite being Black with Ethiopian heritage, Danielle's classmate did not blend in as well as Danielle who wore her hair braided instead of in a natural style. Thus, it is important to note there were nuances in the way participants of the same racial/ethnic identity experienced studying abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority.

Finally, Ying Yue shared some interesting observations when I asked her a follow-up question about how she thought her experience abroad compared to that of her peers. She began

by contrasting her experience with that of the two white students and one Indian American student. Ying Yue described fitting in considerably better than her three classmates. She said, "At least on the surface, visually speaking, [I] had a much easier time blending into the crowd compared to the other students that I was with." Yet, Ying Yue later described how she and her Indian American classmate connected over shared cultural upbringings that helped them more easily navigate Thailand and Indonesia compared to their white peers. She shared:

> We actually talked a bit about how our experiences were different than I guess the other two girls. And we kind of bonded over some of the similarities we found with him and his experiences in India with his family versus my experiences in China with my family.

However, ultimately, Ying Yue said she did not think she and her Asian classmate were afforded more opportunities due to their race. She said, "I think that was definitely pretty equal across the board." Although Ying Yue felt she and her Indian American classmate adjusted more easily to Southeast Asia, she felt everyone had similar educational opportunities. Participants frequently made meaning and explained what they experienced studying abroad through comparisons.

Impacts and Influences

Participants also made meaning of studying abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority by reflecting on the resulting impacts and influences. Although participants described many impacts, not all—including the desire to continue traveling and poststudy abroad academic and career decisions—were directly related to participants' racial/ethnic identity and, thus, are not included here. The main impacts and influences related to the research questions include participants gaining (a) a strengthened sense of their racial/ethnic identity, and (b) a wider perspective as it relates to how race and ethnicity operate.

Strengthened Racial/Ethnic Identity

According to Danielle, studying abroad influenced and strengthened her racial identity. She explained:

> I would say my awareness of my identity definitely deepened going to South Africa and being around people who looked like me but also acted like me as well. I felt like I was able to grow a stronger connection to who I was and really understand myself on a deeper level and also just see and meet Black people of different parts of the world was something that also impacted my own identity. Because I realized that even though we're so far away or born in different countries, we're pretty much the same in aspects of our values and some of our experiences growing up. It may not be entirely the same, but some aspects are the same, and that is how we are able to make that connection.

For Danielle, connecting with other people of African descent strengthened her racial identity. She noted that when she left South Africa, she felt grounded and peaceful. Sarah also used the word grounded when describing the impact of studying abroad in Tanzania. In terms of her racial identity, Sarah reflected, "I think it just put me more in tune with who I was in my personhood and made me more grounded, I guess you could say, and more rooted in who I am." Other participants also developed a strengthened sense of self including their racial/ethnic identity.

At the end of his interview, I asked Shawn if heritage-seeking factored into his decision to study abroad in Ghana. Shawn said it did not. However, he noted since returning from abroad, "I feel like I've just been more explorative of who I am as a person." He continued, "Now, I feel like I'm becoming more confident in myself, who I am as a person, and so wanting to explore and find out different parts of myself and where I come from is one of that." For Shawn,

studying abroad resulted in increased confidence in his racial identity and a new interest in learning about his ancestry.

Although Ada felt more connected to the Asian and Vietnamese part of her biracial identity after studying abroad, this new sense of self was bittersweet. Ada said:

> I think for me, going there [Vietnam] really made me realize how much I kind of settled for the whiteness of everywhere I was living and everything. I lived with my white family for most of my life and lived in really white communities and kind of just went without a lot of the things that are unique to the Vietnamese part of me, and that part of my culture that I never really thought about, because it was just how I grew up.

This realization was challenging as Ada acknowledged, "how much I was going without all of that and that side of me. So, it was a little bit bittersweet." Developing a deeper connection to their racial/ethnic identity was generally a positive process for participants, but it was more complex for some. Although many participants developed a stronger racial/ethnic identity, others found studying abroad instead reaffirmed their existing feelings about their racial/ethnic identity.

On multiple occasions, Zeus talked about feelings reaffirmed in her Hispanic identity through studying in Spain. For Zeus, who has a lighter complexion, the resulting confirmation of her ethnicity was closely intertwined with her Spanish language fluency. During the focus group, she shared, "Being able to speak Spanish is one of the most affirming things for me. And being abroad, that kind of influenced people affirming for me that I was Hispanic." For Zeus, it appears Spaniards' acknowledgment and confirmation of her ethnic identity aligned with the pride she already had for her ethnicity. Conversely, Kat talked about identity development as an individual endeavor. She shared, "I think study abroad is just one of the most amazing things to do. It's when you are truly by yourself, to really figure out who you are, and your identity." Throughout

her focus group and interview, Kat talked about how understanding and claiming her racial identity had been challenging because she was adopted into a white family, which substantially impacted how others, and she herself, viewed her racial identity.

For some participants, an increased confidence in their identity resulted in a change in how they described or claimed their race/ethnicity. This was true for Kat who felt "not Asian enough" at various times and questioned how she could and should identify. Kat shared:

> When I came back to [university], I was like, "It's okay to be confused. You can be more white, you can be more Chinese. You can be whatever you want. You can exist within this color scale. But other people cannot judge how Asian you are. You are just yourself."

Later in her interview, Kat made a powerful statement that she felt her study abroad experiences solidified her identity and allowed her to let go of how others viewed her identity. She said, "My study abroad experiences, all together, have created my identity, and it's something that I don't think about anymore. I've come to peace with being an adoptee." Kat concluded by saying all of her identities are now at ease.

Cora immediately built on Kat's comments and described becoming more confident in explaining and owning her racial identity after studying abroad in Tanzania. She shared:

> I think a big thing for me is, before my study abroad experience, often I think about when you do those surveys, applications, you're like, "What is your race?" "What is your ethnicity?" And a lot of times, it's African American slash Black. Or sometimes it just says African American. And after my experience, I've learned not to just put myself in this box, an idea of what people think who I am, just because it's easy and convenient for them. And to really make a stand and be like, "Hey. I'm Black. But I'm also African. I

> don't have the African American experience. That is not my culture. And I can't speak on behalf of that culture because that's not who I am."

Cora felt strongly the definitions of racial categories should expand. She said if People of Color don't share their experiences people will "never know and just continue classifying us in this box because they don't know anything better."

Both Kat and Cora's comments connect to aspects of CRT and its extensions. Cora's call to expand racial definitions points to the importance of not essentializing everyone in a racial group in a way that ignores those who differ from the norm (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). In this instance, Cora pointed out that although there are similarities, the experiences of Black Africans are distinct from those of African Americans. Relatedly, Kat's assertion that others do not get to decide how Asian she is illustrated her rejection of Asianization, or the way U.S. society racializes Asian Americans through white supremacy and dehumanizes and excludes Asian Americans (Iftikar & Museus, 2018). It appears leaving their U.S. context helped Cora and Kat recognize and reject certain harmful aspects of racialization.

Teresa, who is "lighter-colored Mexican" with Indigenous ancestry, also talked about how studying abroad in Peru helped them gain confidence in their racial/ethnic identity regardless of others' opinions. Teresa said:

> So, I think that's something that I noticed more clearly was being surprised because there were a lot of times where I felt because of the fact that I was lighter, I didn't have the right to claim my Indigenous identity. But seeing that it doesn't matter; it's more so about the practices. That was the thing that I think changed a little bit to make that perspective in my head where it's like it doesn't matter if you look one way or another.

Teresa described how, in the United States, Indigenous identity is often based on the amount of Indigenous blood a person has, or their blood quantum. While in Peru, Teresa observed Indigenous identity was more based on engaging with Indigenous practices and traditions rather than the percentage of one's ancestry or physical appearance. Teresa's excerpts connect to TribalCrit's emphasis on self-identification. TribalCrit asserts Indigenous people desire tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification (Brayboy, 2005). Specifically, Brayboy (2005) defined self-identification as "the ability and legitimacy for groups to define themselves and to create what it means to be Indian" (p. 434). After studying abroad, Teresa ultimately felt more confident owning and claiming their Indigenous identity because they felt it did not need to be based on any one specific definition.

Although many participants developed a stronger sense of identity—especially as it related to their race/ethnicity—as a result of studying abroad, not everyone had this experience. During a focus group, I asked if studying abroad influenced or impacted the way participants felt about their racial/ethnic identity. Ying Yue responded to this prompt by sharing the following:

> I think that, because I've been fortunate enough to grow up in environments where there have always been a lot of Asian American people around me, I've never felt, I guess, insecure about the fact that I'm technically a minority in terms of what America deems as a minority. But if you think about it on a global context, that's not necessarily true. And I think being abroad for that long in Asia kind of reinforced that thought with me. And yeah, I don't know, I don't really think it's really changed much about what I think about myself as a Chinese American.

For Ying Yue, studying abroad reinforced the sense of self she already had, which was contrary to the majoritarian U.S. view of Asians as a minority. Ying Yue makes a striking point that,

although Asians are minoritized in the United States, they are in the majority when considering the world's total population. Both Ying Yue and Teresa's reflections on their identity provide powerful examples of how race and the meaning ascribed to it are contextual. Through a CRT analysis, participants' reflections in this section affirm the importance of recognizing multiple consciousnesses or the ways "most of us experience the world in different ways on different occasions, because of who we are" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 63). I discuss the contextual nature of understanding race/ethnicity in the following chapter.

Expanded Perspectives Regarding Race and Ethnicity

In addition to gaining more confidence in their racial/ethnic identity, multiple participants described how studying abroad helped them gain a wider perspective or worldview. Often this newfound perspective was more general and included things like exposure to different ways of living, introduction to new foods, or a new awareness of U.S.-centric mindsets. However, for other participants, this expanded perspective resulted in gaining a new understanding of how concepts of race and ethnicity, combined with nationality, play out around the world.

The earlier section on developing a stronger sense of identity from studying abroad includes a quote from Teresa explaining how studying abroad helped them expand their understanding of Indigenous identity beyond the concept of blood quantum. That excerpt about Teresa's realization relates both to developing more confidence in their racial/ethnic identity and to expanding their perspective as it relates to the concepts of race and ethnicity. Teresa specifically noted their perspective changed to include seeing a person's actions and cultural practices as an important component of their Indigenous identity. Teresa explained:

> So, I think it really shifted my perspective on who has a right, or who feels a right, to identify with Indigenous culture. And really, it's being brainwashed into thinking that

> you are not actually Indigenous or that you don't want to identify with that Indigenous culture, even if you do actually have that connection, which is just a part of that white supremacy that is part of, I would say, most colonized places.

This impactful quote illustrates how studying abroad helped Teresa recognize the ways majoritarian white narratives impact the view People of Color have regarding their race/ethnicity. Stepping outside the U.S. context allowed Teresa to recognize and reject negative narratives about indigeneity more clearly.

Chris described an interesting way studying abroad helped widen his perspective about what it means to be a Black person. He shared that his study abroad included visits to animal reserves. Chris reflected on his initial reaction to going on a safari saying:

> I was like, "Yo.' Black people are like, 'I'm too Black for this.'" That was another thing for me mentally that got debunked from me being over there. In America, we be like, "Oh, that's a white people thing." You know? Like, "That's white people stuff. We ain't doing that." Outside with the nature, of course not.

Chris shared how a local South African explained it is normal for Africans to be in touch with nature. This changed Chris's perspective on who should interact with nature. Chris said:

> It ain't no white thing. It's our thing. I was just, "You right. You right." It made me get more in touch with my nature side, so now I go for walks in the park and go on river trails, go on nature trails, and do all types of stuff now because of that. Because I was like, "Yo, you're 110% right. Black people touched every part of this planet first."

Other participants, including Teresa and Danielle, also described how studying abroad resulted in becoming more in touch with nature. However, unlike Chis, they did not talk about this in direct relation to their understanding of their racial/ethnic identity.

Shawn, who studied abroad in Ghana, reflected on the experience and its impacts. He said, “It definitely helps to expand your mind.” He continued, “I definitely want to go back to Ghana because it was just such a great experience. And now being more aware of race, ethnicity, the subtle differences between those, I guess, I have a whole different experience.” Shawn acknowledged studying abroad helped him look at the world differently and become more aware of issues related to race and ethnicity in the United States and beyond. He summarized:

> It was just, overall, a great experience, just being able to gain a different perspective of the world. I really enjoyed. I think I was able to see Black people in a different context. Seeing how they operate and how society is run there, and another successful way for a society to be run, I guess. So that was really interesting to me.

Shawn continued, “I feel like the dominating narrative for me, at that time, was that Africa was a country that was ridden with poverty, strife. And so, it was really cool to see Ghana in that light and experience it firsthand.” Shawn’s realization that Ghana was quite different than the dominant U.S. narrative about African countries was shared by other participants who also recognized the ways racialization works in different contexts.

Chris reflected at length on what he now recognizes as false narratives about Africa. He talked about how different being in South Africa was compared to the media images of Africa he saw prior to studying abroad. Chris shared, “It’s really different over there. It’s really crazy to see that firsthand, up close and personal with my own two eyes, and then see the garbage on TV. It’s like, ‘Wow, that’s some bullshit.’” Chris noted that although some Africans live in extreme poverty, this is not the case in all of Africa as the media portrays it. He also realized the U.S. narratives about Africa did not include the expansive beauty he saw. Chris recounted his reaction driving into Cape Town saying, “But seeing the views on the way there, nonstop beauty. I was

like, ‘Man, this place is beautiful. Why not market this stuff?’ Never seen this stuff on the TV.” Chris described his realization that the media’s portrayal of Africa and Black Africans was inaccurate and his resulting changed perspective as a paradigm shift. Overall, Chis noted studying abroad debunked a lot of things for him. It helped him gain a wider perspective related to harmful and untrue narratives told about Black people versus the reality of their lives.

Teresa shared a similar reflection about the inaccurate way many people view Latin American civilizations. They reflected, “I have more first-hand knowledge on the amazing feats that the Incan people did in terms of just how clearly smart they were and how under-appreciated.” Teresa went on to say people “make it seem like the whole noble savage kind of story, and it’s like, in reality, you have to understand that things were very different in places that aren’t the Western world.” For both Chris and Teresa, studying abroad helped them recognize false narratives perpetuated about People of Color around the world. Related to CRT tenets, these participants recognized new narratives are needed to stand in opposition to white majoritarian narratives about People of Color.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explored how participants made meaning of their experiences studying abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. First, I explored the ways participants’ feelings helped them better understand their experiences. Often these feelings included comfort and connection but also included feelings of discomfort and otherness. Next, I examined ways participants made meaning of studying abroad by drawing comparisons to their own life experiences and to those of others. Finally, I discussed ways participants understood their study abroad experience by examining the impacts and influences of their time abroad,

which included participants developing a strengthened sense of their racial/ethnic identity and a wider perspective of how race and ethnicity operate globally.

CHAPTER 6: PARTICIPANTS' UNDERSTANDING OF RACE AND ETHNICITY

In this chapter, I critically examine participants' experiences and narratives related to the second research subquestion: How do Students of Color understand race and ethnicity through their study abroad experience? Participants' understanding of race and ethnicity was unique based on their distinct identities. Their understanding was also contextual based on where they studied abroad and who they interacted with there. Despite these nuances, I identified three common themes related to this research subquestion. Participants understood race and ethnicity abroad through (a) Shared Experiences, (b) Contextual Experiences**,** and (c) Experiences of Passing or Not and Everything in Between as part of the racial or ethnic majority. As in the last chapter, I extensively use participant quotes and excerpts to illustrate and contextualize the identified themes. I prioritize weaving participants' words and reflections throughout the results to forefront and honor their stories. Finally, throughout this chapter, I explore connections between participants' experiences and tenets of critical race theory (CRT) and its extensions.

Shared Experiences

During the focus group conversations and interviews, many participants described ways people who shared their racial/ethnic background were treated similarly regardless of the location and context. The experiences and narratives of the participants in this study suggest there are some universal aspects of race and ethnicity-based social structures that exist around the world. Outcomes related to these social structures include racism and ideologies rooted in colonialization and white supremacy, which participants experienced and witnessed despite being in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. However, many participants also experienced a positive sense of community with individuals who have the same racial/ethnic identity despite being from different locations and contexts. The main ways

participants understood shared aspects of race/ethnicity while abroad were through (a) noticing the impacts of racism and colonization, (b) observing how whiteness was upheld as normative and desirable, and (c) experiencing a sense of global community or solidarity with others who shared their racial/ethnic identity.

Racism and Colonization Abroad

Some participants observed and experienced ways racism showed up abroad even though they studied abroad in a location where People of Color made up the racial/ethnic majority. Throughout the focus groups and interviews, participants discussed instances where they either experienced or noticed the centrality of racism. Some participants appeared to anticipate they might witness or experience racism abroad, while others seemed surprised to encounter it.

Generally, Chris described his experience in South Africa as positive. He said, "Overall, for the race dynamics and me being Black in South Africa, A+, best trip I've ever been on in my life." Yet, throughout the focus group and his interview, Chris talked about his surprise at seeing racism in a predominantly Black country. He said, "But in Africa, it's a thing which tripped me out because white people, it's such a small group of them, yet they control everything over there and they still are racist." Chris went on to reflect on systemic racism around the world:

> And the race dynamic's the same way. White people hold the majority of wealth in America. They hold the majority of wealth in Africa. They hold the majority of wealth everywhere you go, Latin America. They hold the majority of wealth everywhere. That's not a coincidence. You can't tell me like, "Oh, that was just in America. That was an American thing." No, it's not. Race is not an American thing. It is a global thing. You can go to any country in the world—Black people are the poorest people in that country. Go

to any city in America—Black people are the poorest people in that city, state, period.

This is not an accident. And to go and see it, it confirms, this shit ain't an accident.

Thus, although Chris enjoyed studying abroad in a majority Black country, he recognized Black people around the world are profoundly impacted by racism and anti-Blackness, and these systems of oppression are not mitigated by being in the racial majority abroad. Chris reflected, "Black people, it's global and it's crazy because we go through the same thing race-wise. It's nowhere where Black people were accepted and not demonized, nowhere." These excerpts illustrate the ways Chris came to understand how racism and anti-Blackness exist and impact Black people globally regardless of their location.

Ella provided another example of global racism and anti-Blackness that she witnessed in China. During her program, her cohort stayed with host families over two weekends. However, one of her classmates did not have a good experience. Ella explained, "The guy that happened to be Black on the trip, his host family was definitely disappointed that he was Black, and he knew it. It was obvious." So, although this racism was not directed at Ella, she witnessed the anti-Blackness a Black classmate experienced in China.

Related to global racism and anti-Blackness, Teresa said their study abroad experience helped them understand racism and anti-Indigeneity and internalize anti-Indigeneity, both in Mexico where their family is from, and in Peru where they studied abroad. They reflected:

> I knew that there was a lot of internalized hatred, or not internalized hatred necessarily; hatred might be a strong word, but just internalized racism in Mexico in terms of identifying with your Indigenous roots. I was surprised at the level of disconnect that some people in Cusco might have had toward their own Indigeneity as well . . . . So, there

> was a lot of racism and a lot of misunderstanding of what it means for someone to be Indigenous and their perspectives on Indigenous people as a whole.

In an excerpt also included in the last chapter, Teresa described the brainwashing that resulted in many Peruvians not acknowledging their Indigenous roots because of the negative stereotypes of Indigenous people. Teresa said:

> And really, it's being brainwashed into thinking that you are not actually Indigenous or that you don't want to identify with that Indigenous culture, even if you do actually have that connection, which is just a part of that white supremacy that is part of, I would say, most colonized places.

Later in their interview, Teresa discussed how studying abroad helped them understand the "overall effects of the mestizaje agenda that happened during the main peak of colonialism." The Spanish word *mestizaje* refers to the mixing of races and cultures that occurred in parts of the Americas colonized by the Spanish and Portuguese (Martínez-Echazábal, 1998). Teresa said the resulting impact of this mixing was Indigenous individuals no longer identifying as Indigenous, but rather as Mestizo or Mestiza. Teresa felt this led to "Indigenous erasure." Teresa's observations connect to a tenet of TribalCrit, which states many policies and approaches toward Indigenous peoples are "intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429). As a result of studying abroad, Teresa recognized the ongoing harmful legacy of colonization that still impacts individuals with Indigenous ancestry, making them more likely to ignore, downplay, or deny their Indigenous roots.

In the same focus group, Kayla quickly built on what Teresa shared, saying, "Similarly, a lot of the museums that we went to ignored that there were Black people. They were like, 'Nope, we're all Cuban.'" Kayla continued, "It was interesting to see how the white Cubans actively

ignored racism. And there was a really big movement with Fidel and how he was like, 'We have got rid of racism. We have passed it.'" Kayla noted white Cubans were ignoring and denying the continued existence of racism. The belief that society has transitioned to a postracial society in which race no longer matters is part of the liberal, dominant ideology CRT challenges (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Kayla continued, "So, I think that was interesting and interesting to hear that it really is just white supremacy and colonization at work, even if you're in a different country." In this example, Kayla pointed to the universality of systems of oppression, including racism and colonization, that impact People of Color regardless of location.

Chris, Ella, Teresa, and Kayla's excerpts illustrate the CRT and TribalCrit tenets that racism and colonization are endemic (D. Bell, 1992; Brayboy, 2005). Their experiences also demonstrate how these tenets extend beyond the U.S. context. As discussed in the first chapter, CRT asserts racism is endemic and a permanent aspect of society (D. Bell, 1992). Further, because racism is a fundamental characteristic of U.S. society, many structures and institutions are race-based (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Chris powerfully described how studying abroad helped him recognize that systemic racism and anti-Blackness exist all around the world. Ella and Kayla also witnessed this in China and Cuba, respectively.

As noted in the last chapter, TribalCrit builds from CRT's tenet that racism is endemic by asserting colonization is endemic and perpetuates the oppression of Indigenous people (Brayboy, 2005). Teresa's recognition of internationalized anti-indigeneity in Peru speaks to the ways colonization is so complete that Indigenous individuals take up colonialist thought even at their own expense (Brayboy, 2005). Kayla deftly connected the use of slavery to the colonization that occurred in Cuba. She acknowledged the ongoing devasting impacts of slavery and colonization on Cuban individuals of African descent who were forcibly removed from Africa and enslaved.

Like Chris's experience in South Africa, Teresa and Kayla generally described their study abroad as positive. However, these participants explicitly noticed and named the ongoing presence and negative impacts of racism and colonization on People of Color where they studied abroad.

Whiteness as Normative and Desirable Abroad

Participants in this study primarily traveled to countries where People of Color make up the racial/ethnic majority. These countries included China, Cuba, Ghana, Indonesia, Japan, Peru, South Africa, South Korea, Tanzania, Thailand, and Vietnam. The only exceptions were the participants who traveled to Spain[8]. However, despite traveling to countries where People of Color were the majority, several participants noticed whiteness was still desirable or the norm.

During his interview, Shawn contrasted his experience in Ghana with that of his white female classmates. He shared this:

> One thing that I also noticed was that even in a country that is all Black, white is still seen as beautiful. So, I thought that was really, really. . . . I guess white was seen as the standard of beauty. I noticed because there was a fascination with white women.

Although Shawn's white classmates stood out in Ghana, it was in a positive way, which differed from his experience as a Black person in the United States. Related to Shawn's observation that even abroad whiteness was the standard of beauty, both Kat and Ada described colorism and the preference for pale skin they observed in China and Vietnam, respectively. Ada, who is biracial (Vietnamese and white), was somewhat aware of this preference before studying abroad, but she was surprised at just how often people commented on the lightness and beauty of her skin. Ada shared, "When I went there, all the Vietnamese people who I talked to made a point to talk about

[8] Although participants had to self-identify as a Person of Color to be eligible for this study, I did not indicate that participants had to study abroad in a location that was predominantly made up of People of Color. Thus, I did not exclude respondents to the eligibility survey who were Hispanic/Latino and studied abroad in Spain as Spain is a predominantly Hispanic country and thus these participants were in the ethnic majority during their study abroad.

how light my skin was. And they were like, 'Your skin is so pretty, it's so light' and blah, blah, blah." Ada said it seemed like literally every person she talked to commented on her skin tone. Kat's and Ada's experiences connect to the AsianCrit tenet of transnational contexts. As explained by Iftikar and Museus (2018), "Transnational contexts emphasize the importance of situating Asian Americans and the operation of White supremacy within a network of global relationships, at individual and larger policy and structural levels" (p. 940). These two examples illustrate ways white supremacy thought operated abroad and impacted participants on the individual level even though most participants were in countries primarily made up of People of Color.

Likewise, Zeus shared experiences with colorism abroad and how it impacted her. During her interview, she contrasted her study abroad experience in Spain with her experiences traveling to Colombia to visit her mother's side of the family. Zeus said:

> Colorism is definitely a thing. I think the fact that I'm very white and I have this Eurocentric look, it gets kind of praised. And they don't mean it with malintent, but as a kid, I always felt like I looked very different from all my cousins and it kind of bummed me out. But for them, it's like, "Zeus is so tall and she's so white."

Similar to AsianCrit's recognition of the impacts of global relationships and transnational contexts, LatCrit focuses on international linkages (Lazos, 2000) and local–global contextualism (Valdes & Bender, 2021). As explained by Hernández-Truyol et al. (2006), LatCrit scholars have sought to move beyond the domestic/foreign dichotomy to "map global patterns out of local particularities that help us to understand the interconnection of the structures of power across the globe, and to show how these structures work in tandem as systems" (pp. 215–216). These power structures are not geographically isolated. Zeus experienced how white supremacy ideology is

upheld globally even in Colombia where People of Color are the majority. The transnational contexts and local–global contextualism are helpful tenets to examine "the interconnection of the structures of power across the globe" (Hernandez et al., 2010, p. 216). The individuals with the most power are not always the ones in the racial/ethnic majority.

Ella shared another powerful example of her understanding that whiteness was desirable in Asia. Prior to staying with a host family, Ella was apprehensive because she worried her host family would be disappointed she was not white. She explained this was because many Chinese people assume all American students are white. However, as it turned out, Ella's host family had spent a year in the United States, so they were not surprised or disappointed when they met Ella. She shared the following reflection:

> I was glad that they had that American experience, and I didn't have the burden of showing or being their American, I guess, exposure. I didn't have that burden. I just like being me versus them being disappointed that I wasn't white. So, I guess in the way that could be negative, but I guess I just brushed it off because I'm used to not being the American standard of beauty.

Although Ella did not have a negative experience with her host family, she anticipated that she might due to her race. Danielle experienced a similar situation on a different study abroad program in Argentina where locals did not believe she was American because she was Black. Danielle commented, "Yet again, another country associating whiteness with being American." Despite studying abroad in countries predominantly comprised of People of Color, participants were not able to escape the impacts of racism, colorism, and white supremacy ideology.

A Sense of Global Racial/Ethnic Community

Despite encounters with harmful systems of oppression previously described, many participants simultaneously experienced a sense of racial/ethnic community while studying abroad. This sense of connection with individuals who shared the participant's racial/ethnic identity transcended geographic borders and nationality. In the following section, I provide examples of this positive sense of global racial/ethnic community or solidarity. In some cases, participants felt a sense of racial/ethnic community with locals from the country where they studied abroad, and, in other cases, participants felt a racial/ethnic community with study abroad classmates. The racial/ethnic community described in this section is closely related to the feeling of connection many participants described in detail in the previous chapter.

During a focus group conversation, Danielle and Chris described a sense of community they felt with Black people around the world. Danielle noted Black people globally share similarities. She said, "One thing that surprised me was just, some traditions or things that Black people enjoy doing in the U.S., they also enjoy doing in South Africa." Danielle recounted a South African friend invited her to a block party where people were barbecuing, playing music, and dancing. Danielle really enjoyed the environment and shared the following reflection:

> But I just thought it was interesting because if you see the block party, it literally looks exactly how it would look at a block party here in the U.S. or the Black people. So, I thought that was something that really surprised me a lot. And just small things about culture. Even though they have different culture, some things were just pretty similar.

Although Danielle noticed various similarities, she also acknowledged cultural distinctions. Chris added, "I would second what she was saying. And it taught me universally Black people are all synonymous in a very, very interesting way. Even though we're culturally different, not

really." Chris described the similarities in Black cuisine worldwide. He said, "Because we eat the exact same food everywhere you go in the world. Over in South Africa, they love chicken and rice, Black people in America love chicken and rice, Black people in Latin America love chicken and rice." Chris concluded studying abroad taught him, "we were universal as Black people." Despite not having many known familial ties to South Africa, both Danielle and Chris felt a sense of community with Black South Africans.

Shawn shared a similar observation about the resemblance between Ghanaian food and southern U.S. Black food. Shawn shared how food is the way to his heart and continued saying:

> Eating the red red, which is black-eyed peas with red sauce, and the chicken, and the jollof rice; I love jollof rice, was really nice. And also recognizing how Black culture is still connected to our roots, and just being able to compare some of the ways that Black culture [in the United States] is connected to Black culture in Ghana.

Additionally, Ella, who studied abroad in China, described how gaining familiarity with Chinese food resulted in her feeling more connected to her racial identity and those who shared it. Ella said growing up she did not eat much authentic Chinese food and joked she was most likely to eat at a Panda Express. However, in China, she enjoyed learning about the food and described how this new cultural understanding helped her feel a part of the Asian community when she returned from abroad. Ella said, "But now with my friends who are mostly POC [People of Color], and Asian/Asian-American, if we go out to dinner or whatever, it's like we're going to go get Asian food." Ella said it is an unspoken rule her friends always eat Asian food and not burgers or tacos. Ultimately, after studying abroad, Ella felt more connected both to her Chinese heritage and to other Asian American students after studying abroad. These three examples illustrate how food helped participants connect to their specific racial/ethnic community.

Later, during his individual interview, Chris used a metaphor to succinctly illustrate the similarities and differences between Black people globally. He said:

> And then go there [South Africa] and feel connected was just even crazier because it's just like, mind blown. Because you're in a country or a continent full of these people who look Black, and we all different in so many ways that it was just kind of crazy that way to see it up close. But we the same. It's the weirdest thing. It's like having a car in different models, different colors, but it's the same car.

Although he acknowledges the differences, Chris appears to conclude there are more similarities. Relatedly, Sarah said, "The cultures within Africa are different, but inherently there are some things that are similar." Sarah, who has Kenyan heritage, studied abroad in Tanzania. Although she acknowledged the distinctions between the two cultures, she also noted many similarities, including the importance of hierarchy and respecting elders. Finally, Shawn recounted how, growing up, there was "a divide between Black Americans and people who are from Africa." He described how in his high school African students were often made fun of for being different. However, after studying abroad Shawn felt closer to African people. He shared:

> Going to Ghana kind of made me feel more connected to people who actually come from Africa. I feel like we do have that different culture, but we're still connected, our experiences are very similar. If you have an African American and someone who actually comes from Africa, we're still marginalized, we still go through different struggles. So, I think for me, it just made me feel more connected to people who come from Africa.

For Chris, Sarah, and Shawn, it appears studying abroad helped them feel a strong sense of community with Black people around the world despite the obvious differences.

Kayla made similar observations while studying abroad in Cuba. She reflected:

> It was interesting to see how the diaspora has worked and how other Black people live and how other Black people live pretty much the same, even though there's been. . . . And the definition of community is really similar, it just was really nice to see.

Interestingly, Ella, who is Asian, also witnessed a strong sense of community among Black people that spanned borders. During her interview, she referenced a recent alumni trip to Europe where she described the sense of community some of the Black alumni in her group experienced when meeting non-American Black people abroad. Ella said:

> They did the bro thing where they give them a hug, "What's up?" That thing. And I was like, "Oh my God, do you know them? That's so cool!" And they're like, "No, we're just Black." And so, then they immediately vibed because, you know what I mean, right? . . . And they were instantly best friends, they took a photo together, it was a whole thing. And I thought that was the coolest thing because that's something I've never experienced.

Ella mentioned how cool it was to witness this interaction and added, due to being adopted, she always felt barriers to fitting in with Asian and Chinese Americans.

The global sense of Black community numerous participants felt or witnessed connects to the concept of racial kinship. Howze and Weberman (2001) argued for the existence of what they described as racial kindship or racial solidarity. Unlike kinship based on genealogy, this form of kinship or solidarity comes from social connections. Although study participants did not use the specific terms racial kindship or ethnic kinship to describe the global sense of community they felt while abroad, these concepts fit well with what participants described. Some participants also used the term solidarity to describe the community they felt with others who shared their racial/ethnic identity.

While most Black participants described a global sense of community or racial kinship, some non-Black participants referenced a similar sense of community with others who shared their racial/ethnic identity. Teresa noticed similarities between Indigenous and Latino foods from different countries. Teresa's observations about these culinary commonalities are similar to what Shawn, Chris, and Ella described. Teresa shared:

> There were things that I was like, "Oh, this is something clearly connected to Mexican food," where it would have essentially [been] gorditas. But over there, I guess it would be arepas, but I think they would call it something else. So, seeing those connections between both of us, I think that also made it a little bit more special than if I would have gone somewhere where I didn't have that kind of connection.

Relatedly, Teresa described a feeling of solidarity with other Latinos even though it seemed obvious to some locals Teresa was not Peruvian. They noted, "When I was in Cusco, I think that the way that they still recognize me as someone who was Hispanic and someone who was Latina, but not from Cusco." Teresa said many Peruvians assumed they were Mexican given their accent. Despite this, Teresa described a connection to a broader sense of Latino community, stating, "There is that Latino solidarity essentially in the experience." Teresa shared cultural similarities and Latino solidarity made their study abroad experience special in a way it would not have been if they had traveled somewhere with no connection to their racial/ethnic identity.

Ying Yue also described a sense of community she and her South Asian classmate felt with the Southeast Asian locals in Thailand and Indonesia. She said:

> But there was kind of . . . I don't really know how to explain it, but I remember talking to the intern who identifies as Sikh. But there was a little bit of a feeling of solidarity in the

> sense that even though we're not Thai or Indonesian, we are still, at the end of the day, People of Color.

Ying Yue was careful to note her Chinese identity and experience were different from her classmate's Indian identity and experience because they are from distinctly different Asian contexts. She noted, "I think some of that [solidarity] is misplaced because the United States groups all Asian Americans into one ethnic group." Ying Yue's comments directly connect to the AsianCrit tenet about strategic (anti)essentialism. As explained by Museus and Iftikar (2013), strategic (anti)essentialism calls on researchers and activists to "generate an understanding of Asian American communities as a whole and build on the possibility of unity provided by the larger racial categories, while recognizing and developing intricate knowledge of the diversity and complexity that exists within these populations" (p. 26). While recognizing the distinct experiences she had compared to her classmates and the people of Indonesia and Thailand given their different Asian heritage, Ying Yue still felt a sense of Asian solidarity that transcended geographic borders, heritage, and nationality. In this section, participants described multiple ways they understood and saw the ways race and ethnicity played out in similar ways despite the geographic location. Some of these shared experiences were harmful, while others helped participants develop a positive sense of global racial/ethnic community or solidarity.

Contextual Experiences

In addition to experiencing and understanding how race and ethnicity operate in shared ways, many participants made observations about the context-specific ways they saw race and ethnicity play out while studying abroad. Participants' experiences included in this section demonstrate the ways context, space, and location matter as they relate to understanding race and ethnicity. In describing contextually specific experiences, many participants made comparisons

between how they experienced and understood their race/ethnicity growing up, while at college, and during other periods in their lives. Often participants compared their experiences with and understanding of their racial/ethnic identity to that of their study abroad classmates. Participants mainly described the contextual ways they understood race and ethnicity related to navigating (a) space and location and (b) multiple aspects of identity.

Navigating Space and Location

Many participants discussed or alluded to different ways they experienced or understood their race/ethnicity while abroad compared to how they experienced it in the United States. Chris discussed not having to worry about being profiled or about his physical safety in South Africa. He said, "I didn't think about getting killed by the police over there. I wasn't thinking about anybody discriminating or following me around the store." Chris continued saying things that crossed his mind in the United States never crossed his mind in South Africa, such as "Will the police kill me? Will people not understand? Will I be profiled? Can I go in certain neighborhoods?" Chris acknowledged racism occurs in South Africa but felt it was not at the same rate as in the United States, concluding, "It was a good feeling; even though it was away from home, it feels more like home than actual home." Whether he was actually safer or not, Chris felt safer in South Africa and expressed he had a more positive experience as a Black man in South Africa than he did in the United States.

Similarly, Zeus felt her Hispanic identity was more affirmed in Spain than in the United States. She said, "I feel like abroad, I got a lot of affirming comments about my ethnic identity." Zeus shared, "I also, honestly, actually kind of expected maybe a little bit more backlash toward being Colombian, because there is a lot of colorism in the Hispanic community." She continued acknowledging there is colorism in many racial and ethnic communities, but, surprisingly, she

did not experience colorism in Spain. In contrast, Zeus talked about negative experiences she had in the United States due to her Hispanic and Colombian identities. She said:

> If I mentioned I'm Colombian, the only representation of Colombia we [Americans] ever see is the drug cartel. Nobody ever has a positive thing to say. It's always, "Oh, did your family come on a boat?" and "Do you know anybody in the mafia?" And I'm like, "That's not really an appropriate question to ask me."

During the Trump administration, people began asking Zeus about her documentation status. She said, "It was like all of a sudden, I had peers who would never ask me a question like that, ask if my family was documented. And I was like, 'It's pretty inappropriate to ask, but yeah.'" Zeus's quotes demonstrate how, in addition to ethnicity, nationality factored into people's perceptions of her. LatCrit scholars bring attention to this intersectional form of discrimination called racist nativism. As defined by Pérez Huber et al. (2008), racist nativism is:

> *The assigning of values to real or imagined differences in order to justify the superiority of the native, who is perceived to be white, over that of the non-native, who is perceived to be People and Immigrants of Color, and thereby defend the native's right to dominance.* (p. 41, emphasis in original)

In other words, racist nativism is oppression based on the assumption that a person is a foreigner, regardless of whether they are or not, simply because they are nonwhite. Although Zeus anticipated she might experience this type of discrimination abroad, she never did. As I noted in the previous chapter, some participants did not experience common forms of racial/ethnic microaggressions abroad they often experience in the United States. I explore the intersection of race/ethnicity and nationality further in the section on navigating multiple aspects of identity.

Similarly, Kat compared her experience with race in the United States as an Asian adoptee in a white family with what she experienced abroad in China. She shared:

> I've always been stared at, and people have always asked me, "Oh, that's not your mom." It's been very strange. So, for a very long time, I've had to justify to other people that I am with this family. And when I went to Asia, it was the first time I felt like my identity as a person had been completely erased. Everybody looked the same as me, they spoke a language that I didn't understand, and I felt so lost in this sea of people.

Kat's narrative suggests she experienced racialization in the United States as an othering that made her hypervisible. Conversely, when she did not experience othering in China, Kat ended up feeling invisible. The differential treatment Kat experienced growing up due to her race was so powerful that, when it did not exist in China, she felt lost. While Kat described her initial experience in Asia as erasure, as I discussed in the previous chapter, other participants described a sense of relief and freedom in no longer being othered. These different reactions speak to the diverse and complicated ways participants understood and experienced their race/ethnicity.

In Japan, people did not question Laura's racial/ethnic identity, which was new for her. She started explaining this difference by sharing the feelings of in-betweenness she had growing up. Laura said, "I guess as someone who is biracial. So, I grew up seeing two different sides of things." She continued, "I often like to joke, 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and apparently so is ethnicity' because it really just. . . . To white people, I look Asian, to Asian people, I look white." Although Laura used the word ethnicity, it appears she is referring to how people perceive her race as either Asian or white based on their own racial identity. Laura's observation illustrates CRT's assertion that race is fluid and constructed through social thoughts and relations (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998; Omi & Winant, 2014). As Laura experienced, racial categorizations

and definitions shift because race is a social construct. Given her experience growing up, Laura was curious about how she would be perceived in Japan. She shared:

> When I think about it, usually in the States, when I go about and interact with people, I guess pre-COVID when I would go into an Uber or just go to a lot of restaurants, people would be bound to ask me the classic, "What are you?" question. And that did not come up in Japan. I could just go to the convenience store, and they would just tell me my total for my curry in Japanese and I would pay. And I would just go on my merry way.

Given her description, it appears Laura fit in physically in Japan. However, Laura also described not fitting in fully while in Japan. I will discuss the feeling of in-betweenness Laura, and other participants, experienced at the end of this chapter.

In addition to comparing her experience abroad to her experience growing up, Laura also compared it to the experiences of her study abroad peers. She described being less conscious of her racial/ethnic identity abroad. Laura said, "Honestly, I don't recall thinking about my race too much while I was abroad in Japan." This differed from the experience of her non-Asian classmates. She continued, "But I do know there were people in my group who had very different experiences; they were saying, 'I don't want to be here anymore, because everyone keeps looking at me, because I look so different from everyone.'" This quote suggests Laura's peers who were less aware of their race/ethnicity in the United States became more aware abroad while Laura had the opposite experience. Thus, Laura and her classmates experienced their racial/ethnic identities and their impacts differently due to a change in location and context.

It appears Laura and other participants did not consciously and regularly think about their race and how others viewed them abroad. This lack of awareness mirrors how many white people experience racialization in the United States. As explained by the Alberta Civil Liberties

Research Centre (n.d.), “While white people are also racialized, this process is often rendered invisible or normative to those designated as white” (para. 2). Given the observation Laura shared about her non-Asian classmates’ experiences, it appears some of her classmates who were not in the racial/ethnic majority abroad experienced the opposite in which they became more actively aware, and at times uncomfortable, due to the differential treatment they received. These excerpts and others from the section on comparisons suggest the process of racialization is, at least, partially location dependent. In the following chapter, I discuss Charnell Peters’s (2021) concept of differential spatial racialization because it helps illustrate how space and location matter relate to race/ethnicity.

Navigating Multiple Aspects of Identity

In discussing how they experienced studying abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority, participants also talked about the salience of other aspects of their identity beyond race/ethnicity and how these additional aspects impacted their experiences. As put forth by (Savicki & Cooley, 2011), a student’s social identity is not unidimensional or fixed, and students studying abroad may consider and reconsider multiple social identities at the same time (Savicki & Cooley, 2011). In this section, I describe how participants’ heritage, nationality, and citizenship status intersected with their racial/ethnic identities. These aspects of identity closely intertwine with how participants understood their race and ethnicity abroad. Although other aspects of identity also impacted participants’ experiences abroad, they did not come up as frequently, and, thus, discussing these impacts is beyond the scope of this study. In describing how their identity was perceived abroad, many participants compared their study abroad experience with how their identity was perceived in other places and contexts.

Throughout her focus group conversation and interview, Kat expressed ambivalence about how others, and she herself, viewed her racial identity and nationality. She described not being sure if she was American or Chinese. Kat was adopted into a white family and thus visibly stood out from her family members. During college, she became more connected to her Asian identity, in part, through participating in Asian clubs and student groups. Yet, this process was not smooth as she was not always fully accepted by these groups. Despite growing up in America as a U.S. citizen, Kat reflected her Americanness was not the most salient part of her identity to Chinese people. She shared, "In China, they don't consider you American, or they never considered me American. They said because I was adopted, that I'm just Chinese. And that even though I grew up in America, I should return back home to China." Kat went on, "There's no concept of, let's say immigration [in China]. You're always from the country no matter how many generations you've stayed somewhere else." The Chinese conception of nationality resulted in Kat feeling more accepted in China than she did in the United States, which she found confusing. Ultimately, Kat decided it did not matter how others saw her because it is her identity.

Ella, who was also adopted by a white family, similarly expressed uncertainty about how people perceived her and her identity. At times, she felt her American identity mattered while studying abroad in China, but, at other points, it seemed unimportant. Ella reflected:

> But they knew I was Asian, and I felt more Chinese when I was there even though I feel when you go abroad as a Person of Color, an American Person of Color, your Americanness really comes out because they don't really see you as one of their own. No one saw me as a Chinese person. They knew I was American, but I felt more Chinese when I was there.

Ella suggested her American identity impacted how Chinese people perceived her. Despite this, she felt a strong connection with her Chinese heritage. Ella described feeling like an insider despite being viewed as an outsider. However, Ella contradicted this later by saying Chinese people did see her as Chinese even though she herself did not feel Chinese. Ella said, "Going to China and seeing, oh, Chinese people think I'm Chinese. That was reaffirmed in a way. Also, not really because I don't feel Chinese, because I don't really know the culture or the language." Here, Ella felt like an outsider despite her perception she was viewed as an insider. The contradiction in her reflections provides an example of the complexity some participants felt navigating and understanding multiple aspects of their identity during their study abroad.

Throughout both the interview and focus group, Ella made a distinction between being Asian and Asian American. At one point she noted, in college, "I learned what it meant to be Asian American, and the difference between being Asian and Asian American in terms of identity versus just race and ethnicity." During her interview, Ella, like Kat, noted these concepts are treated and understood differently in China. To provide evidence, Ella explained there is no Chinese word for Asian American or Asian Canadian. She said:

> So, if you look in Chinese dictionaries online, if you type in Chinese American, Asian Canadian, or whatever, it's not a phrase. I have to ask my friends because I always forget what it is. But they use *hǎiwài*, which is "overseas Chinese," when speaking, but they'll still call you American or whatever, where you live now.

Ella said being born in China is the most important part of identity for Chinese people regardless of where a person grew up or now lives. Although it is understandable that issues of heritage and nationality are complex for transnational adoptees, Kat and Ella demonstrate how they understood and experienced their identity differently as it related to their location.

Relatedly, Sarah discussed how being American impacted her study abroad. She explained her cohort had in-depth conversations about identity, including their Americanness, prior to departing for Tanzania. She shared:

> We had to have conversations about how, even though we, as Black people in the group, we would still kind of be seen as outsiders, especially not being native to Tanzania and being able to be clearly identified as Americans.

Despite visibly blending in as a Black person in Tanzania, Sarah understood her outsider status might impact her experience. Yet, she reflected even though her Tanzanian peers could tell she was American, they still spoke to her more than to her non-Black U.S. classmates. Sarah thought this was because she looked like local students, and, thus, Tanzanians were more comfortable with her. Although Sarah was prepared for her Americanness to be the most salient aspect of her identity abroad, it appeared her Blackness mattered more. Sarah's experience, along with others shared in this section, complicates some of the findings from previous studies on Students of Color studying abroad that have suggested students' American identity was most salient and often negatively impacted their experience (Guerrero, 2006; Landau & Moore, 2001). In Sarah's case, it appears racial kinship might have had a stronger impact than her nationality.

Finally, Zeus repeatedly stated studying in Spain was extremely affirming for her ethnic identity. She initially thought people might judge or treat her differently if they found out she was Colombian. As discussed previously, this fear came from the negative experiences she often had in the United States when someone found out she was Colombian. Conversely, Zeus shared this type of discrimination never happened in Spain, and, thus, she felt very accepted there. Although Zeus's ethnicity and heritage remained the same when she studied abroad, the way she was perceived changed when she moved physical locations. In the United States, Zeus and her

family experienced racist nativism or discrimination based on the assumption they were foreigners. Yet, in Spain, Zeus did not experience this same form of microaggression although she anticipated that she might.

The concepts of antiessentialism and intersectionality are helpful in understanding Zeus's experience. LatCrit has a strong commitment to not essentializing individuals and, thus, recognizes the sameness and difference across the diversity of Latino people (Hernández-Truyol et al., 2006). Although Latinos share the same ethnicity, other aspects of their identity, such as race, nationality, and heritage, can lead to differential treatment. In the United States, Zeus experienced discrimination at the intersection of her ethnicity and her family's heritage. The CRT concept of intersectionality recognizes the ways overlapping inequality or disadvantage creates unique experiences of oppression for marginalized individuals (Crenshaw, 1989). Zeus's different experience in Spain illustrates the way the same two aspects of her identity interacted differently based on her location. Although intersectionality draws attention to the experiences of those with overlapping disadvantaged identities, it is important to note that most examples in this section do not pertain to multiple sites of oppression. Instead, some participants' reflections examined the ways a privileged identity, such as U.S. nationality, and an oppressed identity, such as a particular racial/ethnic identity, resulted in a particular experience. In this section, participants described multiple ways they understood race and ethnicity through contextual experiences based on the space and location of their study abroad and the multiple aspects of their identity.

Passing or Not and Everything in Between

As stated in the first chapter, racialization is a complex and sometimes contradictory process where a person is identified as being part of a specific race and, based on this

designation, is treated differently or unequally (Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, n.d.). One way this designation frequently happens is based on physical appearance (e.g., skin color, facial features, hair, and so forth), but it can also happen based on other nonphysical characteristics such as language or communication skills. To learn more about how participants experienced and understood their race/ethnicity while abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority, I asked all interviewees if they thought they passed while abroad and how this impacted their experience (see Appendix E).

Passing is defined as a person's ability to be considered a part of a social group that is not their own. Passing can be proactive when a person actively seeks access to a particular identity for some type of gain, or it can be passive when others make assumptions about the social group a person belongs to based on various cues (Renfrow, 2004). Although I only directly asked the interviewees if they felt they passed while abroad, many focus group participants naturally shared their experience and perception of passing or not without my prompting. The section includes participants' reflections on whether they passed due to their physical appearance as well as due to their communication and language skills. The excerpts in this section add to quotes already shared in the previous chapter related to participants feeling comfortable or othered where they referenced blending in or passing. Determining if they passed was frequently complicated and not clear-cut. Participants often had complex and sometimes conflicting feelings about passing or not, which I explore in the final section on the feeling of in-betweenness many participants described.

Physical Appearance

In her interview, Danielle described passing as Xhosa, a South African ethnic group. She shared:

> I noticed that a lot of people thought that I was Xhosa, which blew my mind because I had no idea. There was various instances where I was at the grocery store, people were speaking to me in different languages, or even at the airport I remember someone walking up to me and speaking to me in a different language and then being very surprised when I told them that I was American. And I never [will] forget, she was like, "Why do you look like us?" And I was like, "What are you talking about?" And she was like, "You look like my people. You look like you're one of us." And I was like, "I have no idea. Like, I don't know."

Later, Danielle noted she thought she passed due to her physical appearance. She explained:

> I do think I did pass as South African during my time there. I think it was for many reasons. Like for one, is for my race, my skin complexion, but also at the time I was wearing braids. So, I think that definitely helped me pass.

As described in the previous chapter, Danielle contrasted her ability to pass with the experience of her African classmate who wore her hair naturally and was assumed to be "not really Black" or mixed despite actually being from Africa. This contradiction speaks to the complicated, and at times contradictory, process of racialization as South African locals perceived Danielle, who is African American, as more Black or African than her Ethiopian classmate.

Zeus discussed physically passing in Spain but also noted it was contextual. She said:

> I think in those moments I passed because I guess, to the naked eye, if you were to walk by, it's just people speaking Spanish, they're hanging out. And because Spaniards tend to be lighter skinned, I could pass for a Spaniard more than I could pass for somebody. . . . Next to my brother, I don't pass. So, I think there [Spain] I had a lot more blending in,

> even though it wasn't my direct ethnicity. But it was dependent on who I was with and the setting.

As a comparison point, Zeus shared her darker-complected brother passes as Hispanic more easily. Zeus also alluded to the complexities of passing, noting she blended in depending on who she was with and the context. As discussed in the previous chapter, Tara noted something similar, saying the way she was perceived as a biracial person in Korea was very subjective. Tara and Zeus were not the only participants to comment on the subjective nature of passing.

Teresa also reflected on the importance of context for passing. Teresa said, "I think the difference in how I was perceived depends [sic] on where I was." Teresa expanded by describing their experience in Peru's cosmopolitan capital versus in a smaller less urban city, stating:

> Yeah, when I was in Lima, I definitely felt like I was passing because Lima is very diverse in terms of the way that people look. I would say that in Cusco, I definitely stood out, and so people knew that I was Hispanic, but they knew that I was not from Cusco because I am significantly taller than most people in Cusco.

As noted in Chapter 5, participants often made meaning of their study abroad by making comparisons, which both Zeus and Teresa did when reflecting on the question of passing.

Other participants contrasted their experience passing abroad with their experience at home. Julie described visibly fitting in while in Hong Kong and contrasted this with her experience growing up Chinese American in a predominantly white community. She shared:

> When I went to Hong Kong for the first time, just seeing all the faces that looked just like me, and I felt like I just blended in completely. Let's see, there weren't any stares or anything like I feel like I would get back in my hometown, so that was really awesome, to be honest.

Relatedly, Shawn described growing up in a predominantly Black area and then discussed the notable change he experienced attending a predominantly white institution (PWI). He compared these experiences with arriving in Ghana. Shawn said, "Everybody there looks like me and when I'm there, people try to guess where you're from and I tell them, 'I'm Black and from America.' And they say, 'Oh, you look like you're from here.'" Shawn said this was a pretty cool feeling.

Ella responded she physically passed in China. She said, "I could walk in the street, and I could go unnoticed. I didn't get stared at, or I didn't feel out of place because everyone looked like me." Ella reflected this new experience made her feel normal and "more Asian." Ella also described how she felt her experience differed from her non-Asian classmates. She said, "I think at times I definitely had a more positive experience because I was, in a way, able to live like a local more than they were because we could do the same things." Ella perceived she passed physically because she did not stand out or get noticed in China.

Other participants specifically described passing or being mistaken for a local. During a focus group, Chris said, "I didn't feel like I was standing out, with everybody looked the same, everybody looked like me." He continued, "If anything, everybody thought I was a local. So, it was a good feeling to be in Africa, around majority Black people." Chris went on to say passing can be unique for Black people who grow up in the United States. Danielle, who is Afro-Latina and was part of the same focus group conversation, added her perspective, saying:

> I do agree with what Chris said. I think for me it was very interesting to not only blend in. A lot of times when I was going to local supermarkets, just grocery shopping, there were people coming up to me speaking in one of the many languages that they speak in Cape Town. And that was very surprising because they actually thought that I was from there.

Danielle makes a distinction between only blending in and the ability to pass for a local. Although many participants felt they passed while abroad, not all did.

Many participants felt they passed at times or in certain ways, but not all the time or fully. Kayla generally felt she passed in Cuba but pointed out one way she did not. She said:

> I think the only thing that maybe not passes because I wear linen pants. I was not wearing jeans. They only wear jeans there. I am not wearing jeans. It is 90 degrees with 100% humidity. There is no way.

Kayla continued, "But appearance-wise, besides the clothes, I did blend in." Other participants—including Chris, Ella, Julie, Kat, and Ying Yue—provided examples of how their clothing gave them away as Americans, which impacted their ability to fully pass. Often clothing served as a marker of nationality, and, in many instances, nationality took precedence over a participant's racial/ethnic identity when it came to passing. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed ways race/ethnicity and nationality are closely intertwined.

In another example, Kat, who studied abroad in Asia 3 times, described the importance of cultural knowledge and mannerisms for passing. She said, "I feel like passing in Asia is also an interesting topic because a lot of it has to do with your mannerisms." Kat explained how properly holding chopsticks or eating a whole fish with bones factored into passing. She reflected how her mannerisms and language skills improved the longer she stayed in Asia, but she still felt she did not fully pass while abroad despite being born in China. Kati shared:

> My parents never thought I looked traditionally Han Chinese. And even when I went abroad, it was something that was always questioned. Although I was accepted during my study abroad experience, I think somehow Western culture affected my appearance. So, people would always ask if I was half.

Kat shared that Chinese people asked her where she was from and even if she was adopted. Similarly, and despite also being born in China, Ella felt she never fully passed. She said it was affirming to realize people saw her as Chinese but quickly followed this by saying, "Also, not really because I don't feel Chinese, because I don't really know the culture or the language." Ella further described how her lack of language skills identified her as an outsider, stating, "But I definitely did feel like I passed in some ways, until of course I opened my mouth and the Chinese that I do know has a very thick American accent." Similarly, many participants discussed the way language and accents aided, prevented, or complicated their ability to pass abroad.

Communication and Language Skills

Mariela, who identifies as Hispanic/Latina, described how locals in rural Spain where less English is spoken directed their conversation to her instead of to her classmates. She said:

> If we were to go [to] a smaller town, they would only speak in Spanish and they would speak to me in Spanish, and that's how I knew like, oh, physically speaking, you're making the assumption that I know more.

Mariela said this experience helped her realize she was in the majority. It also suggests she passed in Spain not only due to her language skills but also due to her appearance. Similarly, as described in the previous chapter, Julie said speaking Cantonese helped her blend in and embrace her cultural background while she was in Hong Kong.

As noted previously, Kat had mixed feelings about physically passing. However, she felt confident her advanced Chinese skills meant she passed in terms of language. She said, "I guess I've always blended in language-wise right after I learned the language in Taiwan." Zeus felt similarly in Spain. Growing up she felt she did not look Colombian because she was fairer

skinned. However, her Spanish provided a strong connection to her ethnic identity. As previously discussed, this was also true in Spain where she felt her ethnicity was affirmed due to her Spanish skills. Zeus said:

> I agree a lot with what we said about language. I definitely feel like, as somebody who doesn't look her ethnicity, being able to speak Spanish is one of the most affirming things for me. And being abroad, that kind of influenced people affirming for me that I was Hispanic.

Zeus also shared how, right before she traveled abroad, she was "feeling a lot less Hispanic" due to not speaking much Spanish at her PWI. Zeus reflected on how studying abroad helped her realize the value she places on language fluency and how it is fundamental to her identity.

Kat shared an experience where students at the Chinese university she attended assumed she was a local student due to her high level of Chinese proficiency. She said:

> My language skills were so good that at one of the meals that my roommate invited me to there was just a large group of students from her program. And it was really awesome because I just talked with them normally in Chinese and there was no questioning of, "Oh, so you're from Michigan?" They just assumed I was some other student from [Chinese university] who had been brought along to this dinner.

Kat described this as a positive indication her language skills had sufficiently improved. Her experience also seems to indicate she physically passed as well.

Although many participants shared how language skills factored into their ability to pass, Teresa provided a powerful example of another way language impacted passing. They said:

> A lot of times when I'm here in the U.S., for example, if I give my order at Starbucks, because my name is more complicated, I guess, to a certain extent it's not necessarily an

> American name, I'll usually just give a different name because I don't want to deal with having to spell my name out.

Teresa then explained how it was the opposite in Peru because locals were familiar with Teresa's Latino name while American names were foreign and hard for locals to pronounce. In this case, the familiarity of Teresa's name for Peruvians resulted in them being able to pass in a way they did not in the United States. Although language skills helped many Asian and Hispanic/Latino participants pass abroad, lack of language skills or having an accent resulted in some participants feeling they did not fully pass while abroad.

In Thailand, Ying Yue reflected how "at least on the surface visually speaking," she blended in. However, she noted, "It wasn't really until I had to interact with local people where it became apparent that I was a foreigner, that I was not from the area." Ying Yue explained:

> Yeah, so definitely passing was prevalent in Thailand. Until I opened my mouth, I didn't think many people knew that I wasn't Thai. I think one thing that did stand out was, obviously, when I opened my mouth and spoke fluent American English. People probably caught on to the fact that I wasn't Thai.

Chris, who extensively discussed feeling comfortable in South Africa, noted he passed "from an optic point." However, he knew local people could tell he was not South African because his American accent was a "big giveaway." Danielle similarly noted how, although English was widely spoken in South Africa, locals were not accustomed to English with an American accent and American slang words. Danielle felt these things gave her away as an American.

Somewhat related to having an accent, Teresa discussed the differences in regional and country-specific Spanish words. Teresa reflected how their Mexican accent and the fact that they used Mexican-specific Spanish words made it clear they were not Peruvian. Teresa said, "I think

the moment I opened my mouth, they were like, 'Oh yeah, you're Mexican because of your accent. The way that you speak Spanish.'" Issues related to language were the most referenced reason participants felt they did not pass abroad. However, in Teresa's case, language and communication skills both helped them pass—as evidenced by the Peruvian baristas' familiarity with their name—but also contributed to them not passing due to their accent and the Mexican-specific Spanish words they used. The excerpts in this section speak to the complexity of passing, which is highly contextual and fluid.

In-Betweenness

The question of passing (or not) is complex because it depends on the context, whose perspective is considered, and what aspects of identity are examined (e.g., physical, cultural, linguistic, etc.). As illustrated by excerpts shared earlier in this chapter and the previous one, many participants felt an in-betweenness when it came to passing, meaning sometimes they thought they passed and sometimes they did not. Some participants also experienced a clash between how they were perceived by others and how they self-identified.

Frequently, participants described passing in some ways and to some extent but not in all ways and fully. For example, Kat felt her Mandarin language skills helped her pass but also felt her lack of cultural understanding and her physical appearance resulted in her not fully passing. Conversely, Danielle and Chris felt they could physically pass for locals until they spoke and then their lack of local language skills and American accent gave them away as outsiders. Further, some participants felt they passed in some settings but not in others. This was true of Teresa who felt they could pass in urban and more diverse Lima than they could in rural and more homogenous Cusco.

In addition to the feelings of in-betweenness related to passing, some participants felt an in-betweenness regarding their racial/ethnic identity and their American identity. For example, Julie shared the following reflection:

> I have family in China. And when I was visiting them, too, they were just telling me, they were like, "Oh no, you're full Chinese. Your parents are full Chinese, you're Chinese." And I also identify as American. So, I don't know. It felt really good to be like, "Yes." Embracing my Chinese background and everything. But yeah, it was kind of like some clashing with my identity in a way.

Julie described tension when she was perceived as Chinese, but her American identity was not acknowledged. In the same focus group, Julie and Cora both discussed how fellow students in their groups were identified as foreigners when they were not, despite being American as well. Cora explained how Tanzanians called her classmates *mzungu*, which translates both to a white person and sometimes more broadly to a foreigner. Notably, fellow Black students were called *mzungus*, but Cora was not because locals could tell she was East African. She shared:

> It was kind of interesting to be affirmed, not only in my cultural background as East African but also still being able to be there for my peers, who I still do identify as American as well, too, at a level.

Cora talked about the uniqueness of being both East African and American. Julie then shared the following story about making friends with some other U.S. students while in Hong Kong:

> They were white, and I felt like I was a kind of middleman, too, between both of our groups and everything. And I remember meeting a lot of locals. And they would be like, "Oh, you're hanging out with some *gwailous*." And that's pretty much like a foreigner, translates to the foreigner. And yeah, it was just funny that you mentioned that, too, Cora,

> because that's like this dissonance in a way. But yeah, I'm like, "Am I considered a *gwailou*?" Because I am also from America, same as my friends as well. But I never got called that.

These reflections on in-betweenness as it relates to identity and passing connect to the section where I explored the ways multiple aspects of identity impact the way participants understood race and ethnicity through studying abroad.

Another reason some participants felt an in-betweenness is because they experienced a clash between how they were perceived by others and how they self-identified. Shawn experienced this tension where his self-perception was different than the perception of local Ghanaians. When asked if he passed Shawn said:

> I'm going to say no. I think it was very evident that I wasn't from Ghana. I mean, I had people tell me that, "Oh, you look Ghanaian." And so that felt good to know maybe I potentially have roots and ancestors in Ghana, but as far as being able to fit in as a Ghanaian, no, that is not something I was able to do. I think it's just, culturally, there's just so many different aspects of the culture that's different than the experience here in the United States.

Shawn's excerpt is interesting because it demonstrates how locals thought he passed as Ghanian. Yet, he perceived himself as not passing due to cultural differences. This illustrates how racialization, which is largely done to a person by others, is distinct from how a person self-identifies or perceives themself.

Like fish who do not realize they are swimming in water because it is all they know, some participants in this study were not as cognizant of the water they were swimming in (i.e., U.S. racialization) until they were removed from it when studying abroad. Some of the narratives

from this study reveal moments when participants recognized the racialization process and then made decisions about their own identity regardless of others' perceptions. Kat provided a powerful and illustrative example of this phenomenon:

> I was like, okay, well, if everybody in America says that I'm not Chinese enough, but then people in China say that I'm Chinese, and I can be what the heck I want, then, of course, I'm going to choose the culture that is more accepting.

In the final chapter, I summarize and further discuss the results of this study as they relate to the research questions and the implications for international education professionals.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explored how participants understood race and ethnicity through their experience studying abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. First, I explored the ways participants understood race and ethnicity through shared experiences, including (a) noticing the impacts of racism and colonization, (b) observing how whiteness was desirable abroad, and (c) experiencing a sense of global community or kinship with others who shared their racial/ethnic identity. Next, I examined ways participants understood race and ethnicity abroad through contextual experiences based on the space and location of their study abroad program and the multiple aspects of their identity. Finally, I discussed the ways participants understood race and ethnicity through experiences of passing (or not) as part of the racial/ethnic majority. I concluded this chapter by examining the feeling of in-betweenness many participants had while studying abroad as a part of the racial or ethnic majority.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this qualitative study I examined the study abroad experiences of Students of Color using focus groups and narrative interviews. Specifically, I explored the following research questions:

How do Students of Color experience studying abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority?

(a) How do Students of Color make meaning of this experience?

(b) How do Students of Color understand race and ethnicity through their study abroad experience?

As evidenced in the preceding two chapters, the stories and reflections participants shared are as contextual and unique as the participants themselves. However, as I analyzed the data, common themes related to how participants made meaning of this experience and how they understood race and ethnicity while studying abroad emerged.

I begin this chapter by summarizing the study design and the findings. Next, I discuss the data focusing on contributions to the study abroad literature, the application of critical race theory (CRT) and its extensions, and methodological implications. Next, I examine practice implications and recommendations that emerged from this study. Finally, I conclude by exploring the limitations of the study and suggesting possible directions for future research.

Study Summary

To qualify for this study, individuals had to self-identify as a Person of Color and have studied abroad as an undergraduate in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. Additional study criteria included attending one of two predominantly white institutions (PWIs), being over 18 years old, and having primarily attended U.S.-based K–12

schools. Ultimately, 18 individuals participated in five focus groups. Six participants self-identified as at least part African American or Black, eight participants self-identified as at least part Asian, two participants self-identified as at least part Indigenous or Native American, four participants self-identified as at least part Hispanic/Latino, and three participants used the term biracial or mixed to identify their race or ethnicity. Of the 18 focus group participants, I invited nine individuals to complete an individual narrative interview.

Following the completion of data collection, focus group and interview recordings were professionally transcribed. Next, I reviewed each transcript for accuracy before sending it to the participants for their review and approval. I subsequently coded the focus group and interview transcripts using Dedoose data analysis software. After conducting two rounds of thematic coding, I performed a third round of coding using a four-step CRT data analysis technique developed by Winkle-Wagner et al. (2018). During the iterative coding process, I refined the codes and looked for themes within the data to answer the main research question: How do Students of Color experience studying abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority? Table 2 contains a summary of the study findings organized by research subquestions with emergent themes, which are bolded.

Table 2

Summary of Findings

Research subquestion	Findings
How do Students of Color make meaning of this experience?	Participants made meaning of studying abroad by examining the **feelings** they had abroad and once they returned home. Common feelings included comfort and connection. Some participants also experienced discomfort and otherness or had complex and contradictory feelings. Participants made meaning of studying abroad by **comparing and juxtaposing** their time abroad with other life experiences. Common points of comparison included their experiences growing up and attending college, other international travel experiences, and the experiences of their peers on the same study abroad program. Participants made meaning of studying abroad by reflecting on the resulting **impacts and influences**. Some participants gained a strengthened sense of racial/ethnic identity and others developed a wider perspective related to how race and ethnicity operate.
How do Students of Color understand race and ethnicity through their study abroad experience?	Participants understood race and ethnicity through **shared experiences** that were not location dependent. Some participants noticed and observed racism, colonialization, and white supremacy ideology abroad. Yet, many participants felt a sense of community with individuals who shared their race/ethnicity that transcended geographic boundaries and cultural differences. Participants understood race and ethnicity through **contextual experiences** specific to the space and location of their study abroad program as well as specific to multiple aspects of their identity (e.g., heritage, citizenship, and language skills). Participants understood race and ethnicity by considering their **experience of passing or not** while abroad. Many participants felt they passed, yet some felt they did not fully pass. Participants often felt a sense of in-betweenness related to some aspect of passing.

Discussion

In this section, I discuss the findings that emerged from this study. I begin by examining how this study adds to the existing study abroad literature on Students of Color. Next, I consider the use of CRT and its extensions as theoretical lenses for understanding participants' experiences. Finally, I explore the methodological implications of this study. This discussion section provides a segue into practice implications.

Contributions to the Literature

This study makes several important contributions to the study abroad literature on Students of Color. First, this study focuses on the actual experiences of Students of Color who studied abroad. This is notable because many existing studies focused only on the intent and decision-making of Students of Color considering study abroad opportunities (e.g., Cheppel, 2012; Đoàn, 2002; Hembroff & Rusz, 1993; Key, 2018; Lu et al., 2015; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015; McHan, 2019; Perkins, 2020; Salisbury et al., 2009; Stroud, 2010). This study's focus on students' time abroad is useful because the findings illuminate the lived experiences of Students of Color abroad instead of limiting findings to what students envision about studying abroad.

As discussed in Chapter 5, participants commonly made meaning of studying abroad by examining the feelings they experienced both while abroad and after they returned home. Specifically, many participants experienced feelings of comfort and connection while in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. Multiple participants described feeling comfortable because they did not stand out or because they blended in. Some participants also described a sense of relief from not having their racial/ethnic identity continually referenced or questioned. This lack of microaggressions experienced abroad was notable and welcome for these participants. Many participants talked about feeling connected to their roots, ancestry,

and/or cultural heritage and a sense of global community with local people who shared their racial/ethnic identity. However, it is important to note some participants also described feelings of otherness, discomfort, and complexity at points during their time abroad. Taken together, these findings point to the importance of not essentializing the experiences of Students of Color who study abroad given the diversity of this group of students.

Findings from this study are helpful because, although the *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* data confirm Students of Color have notably lower study abroad participation rates compared to their white peers (IIE, 2020), some studies have suggested the intent of African American and Hispanic/Latino students to participate in study abroad is no different than their white peers (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015; Salisbury et al., 2009). Given this, it is important for international education to have a clearer understanding of how Students of Color experience being abroad so that prospective Students of Color who are interested or considering studying abroad can make informed decisions about their participation. Findings from this study suggest Students of Color generally had positive feelings about studying abroad in a location where they are part of the racial or ethnic majority. However, Students of Color should also anticipate having some complex and contradictory feelings including those of discomfort and otherness. These findings are important because they could be used in advising Students of Color who are considering studying abroad and/or where to study abroad. I explore this and other practice implications in the next section.

This study also contributes to current study abroad scholarship on Students of Color by providing information relevant to some of the fears Students of Color might have related to studying abroad. Scholars have suggested Students of Color who have experienced discrimination may be less likely to study abroad given their fear of experiencing discrimination

abroad (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015). As described in Chapter 5, Ella, Kayla, and Teresa acknowledged experiencing and navigating racism in the United States during their focus group conversation. These participants had an animated conversation about this topic, ultimately agreeing they would not want to pay to experience racism abroad—or for "racism with a view," as Ella described it. This conversation, taken with other participants' reflections suggests the location of a study abroad program may be an important consideration for Students of Color who are concerned about encountering discrimination abroad based on their race/ethnicity.

Further related to the issue of fear, Chapter 6 included excerpts about participants' reflections on observing racism, the impacts of colonialization, and white supremacy ideology while abroad. Findings illustrate how studying abroad in a location where the student was part of the racial or ethnic majority did not completely remove Students of Color from these systems of oppression. It is important to note the fear of experiencing racism abroad has most frequently been discussed in the literature related to African American/Black students. Some studies have confirmed the existence and relevance of this fear (Carroll, 1996; Hembroff & Rusz, 1993; Murray Brux & Fry, 2010) while others have contradicted it, finding the fear of racism was not relevant (Washington, 1998; Wick, 2011). Danielle and Kayla, for example, recounted personal experiences of microaggression and racism they encountered when studying abroad previously in locations where they were not part of the racial or ethnic majority. Danielle's study abroad in Argentina and Kayla's study abroad in Ecuador influenced their subsequent decisions in selecting study abroad locations and experiences where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. The finding that Students of Color noticed and observed how systems of oppression (e.g., racism, anti-Blackness, the effects of colonialization, and white supremacy ideology)

operated abroad is important to consider alongside the fact that these same participants generally had positive feelings about their study abroad experience.

Notably, most of the instances of discrimination participants described were not personal experiences but, rather, observations of structural oppression that impacted locals. For example, Chris shared his surprise in learning that despite being the racial minority, white people controlled almost everything in South Africa. Kayla reflected on the impacts of structural racism and colonization when visiting a poor Black community in Cuba that lacked basic infrastructure. With the notable exception of Chris being called the N-word, participants largely observed the impacts of structural racism, anti-Blackness, and colonialism rather than experiencing these personally. For many participants, their experiences related to their racial/ethnic identity abroad contrasted considerably with the often negative experiences they had in the United States and at their PWIs. Findings from this study illustrate how the concept of race is a social construct that is contextual and thus changes depending on one's location.

This study also extends the study abroad literature on Students of Color beyond examining heritage-seeking students. This expansion is important because not all Students of Color are interested in a heritage-related study abroad program or know their family heritage. Specifically, many Black and African American people in the United States are descendants of enslaved people who were forcibly removed from their homelands; thus, they may not know from where their families originate. I intentionally widened the focus of this study to make the findings more broadly applicable to Students of Color who study abroad in a location where they are part of the racial or ethnic majority, but where they might not have ancestral ties. Assuming all Students of Color want to complete, or would be best served by, a heritage-seeking program is a reductive recommendation that does not account for the background, motivations, and goals

of Students of Color. If study abroad advisors would not assume all white students want to travel to their families' countries of origin, they should not make this assumption for Students of Color. The findings from this study expand the current study abroad literature on Students of Color in various ways.

Applying CRT and its Extensions

As introduced in Chapter 1, I used CRT and its extensions as lenses to examine the experiences of Students of Color who studied abroad in a location where they are part of the racial or ethnic majority. CRT and its extensions acknowledge and forefront the way U.S. social structures are race-based. Further, these theories provide lenses to examine how resulting policies and practices differentially impact People of Color. In this section, I examine the fit and usefulness of CRT and its extensions for examining how Students of Color understand their race/ethnicity in study abroad locations predominantly populated by People of Color. First, it is important to note participants generally did not use words and phrases such as "racialization," "microaggressions," and "white supremacy ideology" when they spoke with me. Nor did they use the academic language used to describe the tenets of CRT and its extensions. Throughout this study, I translated participants' experiences using the language and concepts of CRT, AsianCrit, LatCrit, and TribalCrit to examine the usefulness and shortcomings of applying these theoretical lenses to answer my research question.

First, it is important to recognize CRT is a U.S. legal theory focused specifically on U.S. society. However, study participants left the U.S. context to study abroad in a different national context where they experienced their race/ethnicity differently. Given this, it could be argued using CRT as a theoretical lens for this study is not a good fit because it is a U.S.-centric lens being applied to a transnational experience. However, it is also important to recognize that

participants were socialized and racialized in the U.S. context and, thus, brought these experiences and their resulting understanding of race and ethnicity with them abroad. For this reason, I argue using CRT and its extensions as an analytical tool has merit.

Some scholars have pointed to CRT's exclusive focus on U.S. society as a shortcoming. Meghji and Niang (2022) noted, "CRT tends to analyse [sic] national racialized social systems outside of their global interlinkages" (p. 133). However, there is a recent growing trend of scholars adopting aspects of CRT and its extensions for use in other locations including Australian, Chinese, European, Indian, South African, and South American contexts (Gillborn, 2005; Goodnight, 2017; Hylton, 2011; Roberts et al., 2007; Warmington, 2020; Zhu et al., 2019). As argued by Busey and Coleman-King (2023), "The promise and potential of CRT is exhibited in its growing international thrust" (p. 1333). Furthermore, many of the CRT extensions examine the wider implications of how race and ethnicity impact individuals across borders. Examples include AsianCrit's attention to transnational contexts (Iftikar & Museus, 2018), LatCrit's acknowledgment of international linkages and local–global contextualism (Hernández-Truyol et al., 2006; Lazos, 2000; Valdes & Bender, 2021), and TribalCrit's focus on colonization (Brayboy, 2005). Originally when designing this study, I only planned to use CRT. However, as I listened to participants' narratives and the focus group conversations, I began to see multiple connections to CRT extensions and, thus, decided to incorporate concepts of AsianCrit, LatCrit, and TribalCrit in my coding and analysis.

Despite CRT's focus on U.S. society, the experiences and narratives of participants in this study point to ways the world operates under similar race and ethnicity-based social structures that negatively and disproportionately impact many People of Color—whether they are in the racial/ethnic majority or minority. Some aspects of these structures of oppression

include racism, anti-Blackness, colonialization, and white supremacy ideology, which I explored in the previous chapter. Thus, despite the U.S. origin and focus of CRT, the tenet that racism is ordinary and pervasive in U.S. societal structures and institutions can arguably be extended beyond the U.S. context. CRT and its extensions were also useful in this study because U.S. students bring their socialization and understanding of race and ethnicity with them abroad. Although the translation of theory internationally can be challenging and incongruent, components of theories can be useful when adapted to differing national contexts as long as the unique aspects of the new context are taken into account (Goodnight, 2017).

In addition to illustrating some common ways race and ethnicity-based systems of oppression operate globally, participants' narratives simultaneously illustrated how they experienced and understood their race/ethnicity in context and location-specific ways. Many participants contrasted their negative experiences in the United States due to their race/ethnicity to positive experiences they had abroad when they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. Although this was not the experience of every participant, it was frequently the case. The location-specific ways participants experienced and understood their race/ethnicity align with the idea of differential spatial racialization (DSR).

Peters (2021) put forward the concept of DSR in a study examining the use of social media by Black travel companies. Peters (2021) posited, "Differential spatial racialization builds from the Critical Race Theory concept of differential racialization to explicate how race and racial meanings change across spatial contexts" (p. 201). Further, Peters (2021) argued DSR responds to the critique that CRT is U.S.-centric through the examination of race and racial meaning across space and "illuminates our understanding of the contingency of racial meanings in varying contexts" (p. 202). Findings from the current study about the contextually specific

ways participants understood and experienced their race/ethnicity demonstrate the concept of DSR can be helpful in understanding the lived experience of Students of Color who studied abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. I discuss practice recommendations for using DSR later in this chapter.

Findings from this study provide support for the careful use of CRT and its extensions for conducting research on and understanding the lived experiences of Students of Color studying abroad. However, using CRT and its extensions as theoretical lenses also comes with limitations, which could be addressed by the addition of other theoretical frameworks that have a more transnational orientation. This is an area for future research I discuss later.

Methodological Implications

The design and outcomes of this study also have methodological implications. As previously outlined, I intentionally started collecting data with focus groups before conducting narrative interviews. I anticipated that participants would feel more comfortable sharing their experiences with fellow Students of Color first before completing an individual interview with a white researcher. Given their rich discussions and the way the conversations followed without much prompting from me, I believe participants experienced the focus groups as low-pressure, comfortable environments. Allowing the focus group discussions and themes to develop organically also helped me decenter my role as a white researcher. Focus group discussions can help researchers build rapport and trust with participants (D. L. Morgan & Hoffman, 2018), which I believe resulted in participants feeling comfortable sharing their individual narratives during the subsequent interviews. Although all researchers need to consider their positionality, it is critically important for white researchers, like me, to attend to how researcher identity may impact data collection. I believe results from this study support the use of focus groups prior to

individual interviews as an effective tool for researchers to build rapport and trust across identities. In designing and implementing this study, I was committed to centering the experiential knowledge of People of Color. Working to build rapport and trust with participants before their interviews was critical to this effort.

Findings from this study also demonstrate participants with different racial/ethnic identities were eager to discuss their study abroad experiences with fellow Students of Color who also studied abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. As noted in the methods chapter, I intentionally did not limit the focus groups to students of the same racial/ethnic identity (e.g., a focus group of only Black students) because I wanted to create diverse groups across various characteristics. In addition, limiting focus groups to one racial/ethnic group would not have worked for biracial and multiracial students (e.g., the Afro-Latina participant). Participants in these mixed race/ethnicity focus groups found various commonalities in their experiences despite having different racial/ethnic identities. Participants noted they valued connecting and reflecting with other Students of Color and found the resulting discussions affirming. As will be discussed in the practice implications section, I recommend that international educators provide space for Students of Color, regardless of racial/ethnic identity, to process their study abroad experiences together. Findings from this study also suggest researchers do not need to limit studies to students of only one racial/ethnic identity.

Practice Implications

The stories shared in this study point to important considerations for working with Students of Color studying abroad. Participants' experiences and reflections highlight implications for study abroad advising, program design, and support for Students of Color before, during, and after they participate in a study abroad experience. As an international

education professional, I am committed to the action orientation of CRT and its extensions that goes beyond simply producing knowledge and works for social justice and social change. I believe the practice recommendations from this study will help international educators better serve Students of Color, and, ultimately, these efforts could help reduce the persistent study abroad participation disparity for Students of Color.

Given my belief in the value of the experiential knowledge of People of Color, this section draws from participant recommendations shared during focus group conversations and subsequent individual interviews. At the conclusion of each interview, I asked the following question: "Do you have any advice or feedback you would like to share with study abroad professionals related to working with Students of Color studying abroad in a location where they are a part of the racial or ethnic majority?" The following recommendations include excerpts from participants' responses. In addition to centering participants' advice, this section also includes my own recommendations informed by my analysis of the study data coupled with my professional experience.

Student Preparation

Several participants shared that their programs could have better prepared them to study abroad by providing in-depth pre-departure information about socio-historical issues related to race/ethnicity in their study abroad destination. Ella made the following observation:

> I think something that isn't emphasized is really what it's like going abroad as a Person of Color, or just racial dynamics, I guess I don't know what the right word would be, in the country you're going to. . . . But I think being real about what it's like, whatever identity is in that country, I think is really important in mentally preparing students for that.

Relatedly, Shawn shared the following reflection about his program in Ghana:

> I think one way that our program specifically could have improved was going deeper in depth of the culture of the country that we were going into. I feel like what we talked about was kind of, I don't want to say surface level, but I feel like it definitely could have gone deeper.

These reflections point to the importance of providing Students of Color—and I would argue all students—with detailed information about the racial and ethnic dynamics and history of their study abroad destination. Knowing the sociohistorical context, especially if it includes issues of racial or ethnic oppression or discrimination, is crucial so Students of Color are not surprised and can decide how to engage in-country (K. B. Taylor & Reynolds, 2019). However, international educators should be careful not to oversimplify or stereotype the cultures and peoples of the destination. Information about the racial/ethnic dynamics and history of the location should come from reliable, varied sources and must include the perspectives and voices of People of Color.

Further, I recommend sociohistorical information about the racial and ethnic dynamics of the destination be discussed during study abroad advising with Students of Color. As Ella, Kayla, and Teresa pointed out during their focus group, Students of Color probably do not want to pay to experience racism abroad. Colorblind approaches to advising that ignore a student's racial/ethnic identity and how it might impact their time abroad do a disservice to students and could even put them in harmful situations. However, study abroad advisors must also avoid essentializing or assuming all Students of Color will have the same experience or same goals based on one aspect of their identity. Essentializing Students of Color flattens their identities and could lead to one-dimensional study abroad advising. Discussing the concept of DSR, or the way race and racial meanings change based on location and context (Peters, 2021), could be helpful

in preparing Students of Color for what they might encounter abroad. It appears many study participants were surprised by the ways race and ethnicity played out differently abroad.

Program Design

As mentioned previously, a frequently recommended strategy for increasing the number of Students of Color studying abroad is the development of heritage-seeking programs (Cade, 2018; Comp, 2008; McClure et al., 2010; R. M. Morgan et al., 2002; Murray Brux & Fry, 2010; Picard et al., 2010). However, findings about the outcomes of heritage-seeking programs are mixed and inconclusive. Results from this study suggest international educators should consider developing and recommending study abroad programs in locations where a Student of Color will be in the racial or ethnic majority as another option. Many Students of Color in this study had positive experiences studying abroad as part of the racial or ethnic majority. Further, this option might be a good fit for Students of Color concerned with experiencing interpersonal discrimination abroad.

Offering this type of program for Students of Color is important for at least two reasons: (a) it expands the geographic locations where some Students of Color may feel comfortable studying abroad, and (b) not all Students of Color know their family's country of origin. For example, the ancestors of many Black or African American individuals were forcibly removed from their ancestral homeland and enslaved, which means these students may not know where their families originated. Defaulting to the idea that all Students of Color prefer or enjoy a heritage-seeking program essentializes these students. Similarly, I am not suggesting all Students of Color should study abroad in a location where they are part of the racial or ethnic majority. Rather, this option could be a good fit for some Students of Color as determined through advising.

Reflection and Debriefing Opportunities

Another recommendation made by several participants was to create more intentional reflection and debriefing opportunities. Ella felt discussing and reflecting on one's identity before studying abroad would be helpful for Students of Color. She said:

> I just think it'd be nice if everyone going abroad had more of an introduction to talking about your identity, because I feel like you'll still have these types of thoughts, but you wouldn't be able to articulate them as well. . . . I wish more people thought about that before going abroad and then reflecting upon it after.

International educators should design predeparture opportunities for students to reflect on the multiple aspects of their identity and how their identity might impact their experience abroad. Relatedly, Zeus noted the need to debrief after studying abroad:

> That is maybe something that I don't remember was offered for my study abroad that could also be good, like debriefing on your experience. Getting active reflection and advice and critiques, maybe not right away, but soon after the trip.

From my professional experience, Students of Color who studied abroad as part of the racial or ethnic majority have been very eager to unpack their experience with others.

Kat also wished her program had intentional post-experience reflection opportunities, saying, "When you return to the States, I just wish there was more of a 'What did you gain from this experience?' With guided questions, like a journal." Kat continued, "You have growth when you think about your experiences. You don't have growth just by going through them. You have to be able to reflect on it." In addition to offering predeparture reflection sessions, international educators should design intentional debrief opportunities during and after the program. Although creating intentional space to debrief has long been recognized as a study abroad best practice, the

feedback from participants in this study suggests this practice might be especially important for Students of Color who navigate a study abroad location where the racial and ethnic context differs from the United States. After observing the focus group discussion for this study, I would argue debrief sessions do not need to be limited to individuals with the same racial/ethnic identities.

Program Leadership

Related to the recommendations to create ample opportunity for reflection before, during, and after study abroad experiences, two participants spoke about the importance of who leads and facilitates study abroad programs. Kayla shared the following reflection:

> If you're going to go and you're going to assist students, you have to be culturally diverse because you have to be able to support your students' needs. I also think there is an element of curiosity that I think you can have when you work with kids, really young adults in this case, that are not of the same group as you.

Teresa also mentioned the importance of program leadership. Teresa said, "I think having people who are really knowledgeable about the places, and then just having people who are aware of different cultures and cultural expectations among their students, as well."

Both Kayla and Teresa felt the faculty who led their programs were knowledgeable about the location and effective at facilitating debrief sessions that contributed to a positive experience. Thus, institutions should intentionally select program leaders based on their content and country-specific knowledge, but also on their ability to facilitate reflections on students' social identities and positionality. Because not all study abroad leaders will already have these skills, study abroad offices need to offer professional development opportunities on facilitating identity-conscious reflections.

Connecting Students of Color

A final recommendation from participants was to connect Students of Color with one another. Ying Yue noted it was helpful having a fellow Person of Color abroad so the two of them could reflect on their identities and navigate this type of experience. She shared:

> And also when I was able to bond with the other POC [Person of Color] research intern in my group, I feel like that was a very helpful experience, as well, just to show people that you're not the only one in this kind of situation and that there might be others in your group, as well, who are also asking the same questions that you are. I guess having that option for these kinds of students to connect with each other and share their experiences is helpful.

Relatedly, Ella recommended sharing the composition of the group with participants in advance, so students know if there are fellow Students of Color on their program. In making this recommendation, Ella reflected on her experience being the only Asian student on a study abroad program and the experience of a classmate who was the only Black student in her China program. Ella explained:

> But knowing, because then it's, like in China, there was only one Black student on the trip. He didn't have anyone to talk to. He could talk to me, right? But I can't relate firsthand. I can empathize as much as I can, but I'm not Black, I'm never going to have that experience. So, I think that's something that's, or at least having someone that identifies similar to you to be able to talk to before, after, during, be mentally prepared.

From these excerpts, it is clear peer support from fellow Students of Color is important. It would be ideal for Students of Color not to be "the only one" on their programs, which Ada previously described as isolating. However, in cases where this might not be possible, international

educators should connect Students of Color who have previously studied abroad with those preparing to depart. I would also recommend Students of Color traveling to different locations be connected via digital tools such as blogs or social media so they can reflect on their experiences and provide peer support to each other. Finally, international educators could organize debrief sessions for Students of Color from different programs upon their return. Both Zeus and Kayla expressed how much they appreciated the opportunity provided by the focus group to connect with and share their experience with other Students of Color who had also studied abroad in a location where they were part of the racial/ethnic majority.

Limitations

As with any research (J. S. Bell, 2002), there are limitations to the data from this study that impact the findings. In this section, I explore some of these limitations, including (a) the absence of individuals with particular racial/ethnic identities, (b) participant self-selection, (c) participants' decisions about what to share, and (d) researcher bias and identity.

Overall, participants in this study had diverse racial and ethnic identities. However, despite this diversity, it is worth noting certain Students of Color were not represented. As described previously, I intentionally chose not to impose a specific definition of, or parameters to, the term Person of Color when recruiting. Instead, recruitment materials stated participants must self-identify as a Person of Color. I made this decision not to inadvertently leave out students who identify in a way that would be excluded by a narrow definition. Despite this, not all potential racial/ethnic identities were included in the sample. For example, there were no Arab American/Middle Eastern or Pacific Islander students. As noted by Ying Yue and AsianCrit scholars (Iftikar & Museus, 2018), Asian people are often collapsed into a broad Asian category despite the considerable diversity of countries and regions in Asia. The Asian

participants in this study were all East or Southeast Asian. Individuals from other parts of Asia including South Asia (e.g., India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan), were not represented. The narratives of these students would have added to the richness of the data, and their absence means the study findings are not generalizable to students with these identities. Another related limitation of the recruitment is only one Hispanic/Latino participant studied abroad in Central or South America with most Hispanic/Latino respondents studying abroad in Spain. As discussed below in the future research directions section, this has some interesting implications.

Second, individuals self-selected to participate in this study. Notably, those who responded appear to primarily have had positive study abroad experiences. Thus, the narratives included in this study leave out the perspective of students who had negative study abroad experiences. It is possible that students who had a negative experience were less willing to talk about their time abroad. Participant self-selection and their decisions about what to share shaped the findings of this study, and not all Students of Color voices and experiences are represented in this study.

Every methodology has advantages that help illuminate some findings as well as drawbacks that may obscure others. Originally, I envisioned this as a phenomenological study. However, my committee suggested I instead consider the benefits of using narrative inquiry given its alignment with my theoretical lens. After considering the benefits and weaknesses of each methodology, I decided to use narrative inquiry because I felt it would yield rich results while centering the voices of Students of Color in line with CRT and its extensions. Nevertheless, there were limitations in how study participants responded to the narrative interview prompt.

For the individual interviews, I used a largely unstructured narrative interview protocol (see Appendix F). After asking participants four directive questions to gather context about their identity and their study abroad program, I asked participants to tell me their study abroad story from beginning to end. I then listened to the participants tell their narrative without interrupting. Afterward, I followed up with some emergent questions based on what they shared. This approach allowed participants to decide what was most central and important for them to share. However, it also meant some topics were not systematically discussed by all participants because not all interviewees chose to center the same aspects of their study abroad experience.

If I had instead used a more structured interview approach, I might have gathered more information related to how participants understood their race/ethnicity while studying abroad. Although all participants touched on this topic, some discussed it at length, but other participants focused on other aspects of their study abroad experience. The fact that participants generally did not mention their intersectional identities when telling their study abroad story stood out to me. Although I approached this study with intersectionality in mind, what participants chose to share did not elicit much discussion related to intersectional identities. Despite this limitation, this narrative interview approach closely aligned with the CRT tenet that recognizes and centers the experiential knowledge and voices of People of Color. As a white researcher, I wanted to uphold this value as much as possible throughout the research process, and, thus, I wanted participants to decide what to share rather than asking more directive questions.

Finally, as discussed previously, my identity impacted this research. Notably, I do not share a racial/ethnic identity with the study participants, and, thus, it is probable my presence as a white researcher resulted in participants being more hesitant to share aspects of their experience related to their racial/ethnic identity. This leaves me wondering how the narratives

from this study would have been different if the person conducting the focus groups and interviews was a Person of Color. Additionally, I have a Hispanic/Latino surname through marriage. Because I recruited via email, it is conceivable participants made assumptions about my racial/ethnic identity that were untrue, and this may have impacted who decided to participate. At the end of the focus groups, I shared the reasons for my interest in this topic and a bit about my identity, which included explicitly naming that I am not a Person of Color. I also shared the ways I would attend to the resulting biases that inevitably existed. However, one of the Hispanic/Latino participants I invited to complete an interview never responded. There is no way to know if this lack of response was related to my identity or another reason. Despite my efforts to recognize and minimize my bias, my white identity inevitably influenced this study and is a limitation. It is my fervent hope that researchers of color expand and strengthen scholarship in this area.

Future Research Directions

In this section, I describe several directions for future inquiry. The findings, practice implications, delimitations, and limitations of this study informed these possible research directions. Related to the limitations previously discussed, recruiting more diverse Students of Color and adjusting the research methods could be important aspects to address in future studies. Participants could also be recruited from other institutional types and subthemes that emerged from this study could be highlighted in future studies. Finally, other theoretical lenses and research methodologies could be used to consider the same or related research questions.

The participants for this study came from two large, public, predominantly white, research-intensive institutions. Future research could include participants from different institutional types such as community colleges, regional comprehensives, or private institutions.

Additionally, instead of sampling from PWIs, future studies could recruit from Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Asian American and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions, or other similar institutions. It could be interesting to compare the experiences of Students of Color studying abroad from different institutional types. For instance, it would be interesting to see if students attending minority-serving institutions were better or differently prepared for this type of study abroad experience. As has been illustrated repeatedly in the results chapters, context matters, which is likely also true when it comes to the home institutional context and their approach to study abroad programing and preparation. Furthermore, recruiting students from more diverse institutions would likely help diversify the included voices represented. As noted above, this study did not include any Arab American/Middle Eastern, Pacific Islanders, South Asian, or multiracial students along with others.

As noted previously, most of the Hispanic/Latino participants who responded to the recruitment survey studied abroad in Spain. Because Spain is a predominantly white country, the Hispanic/Latino participants in this study who self-identified as a Person of Color and studied abroad in Spain were in a different context compared to the rest of the participants who studied abroad in a country that was predominantly made up of other People of Color. This difference in combination with the Spanish colonization of the Americas raises some interesting questions about how the study abroad experiences of Students of Color in Spain might differ from those of Students of Color in Latin America. An interesting area for additional inquiry might be to explore this difference by comparing the experiences of Hispanics/Latinos who studied abroad in Spain versus Latin America.

Another area unexplored by the current study is if the study abroad program type impacts how Students of Color experience studying abroad. Future researchers could design a study to see if different program types (e.g., faculty-led, direct enroll, language intensive, independent study, etc.) impact the way Students of Color experience studying abroad as part of the racial/ethnic majority. Relatedly, future research could also compare the outcomes of programs that intentionally prepare Students of Color to reflect on their multiple identities and those that do not include this type of preparation. A study with this focus would be helpful for identifying best practices. Other adjustments for future research could include using different theoretical lenses and research methodologies and methods. Researchers could use more transnational theoretical lenses. Decolonial theories could offer interesting alternatives. As discussed above, the use of U.S. based theories such as CRT and its extensions has limitations. Rather than adapting U.S. based theories to other contexts, future researchers could look for theories related to understanding race and ethnicity that originate from other countries. For example, extending the concepts of TribalCrit to understanding experiences of indigeneity in other contexts is imperfect as Indigenous people in the United States occupy a unique space related to their political and racialized identities (Brayboy, 2005). Additionally, concepts like U.S. tribal sovereignty are not easily adapted to other settings. Thus, researchers could benefit from using multiple lenses to examine and conceptualize these issues that are not bound by national boundaries (Shahjahan & Kezar, 2013).

Future studies could also employ other research methodologies such as phenomenology or methods such as ethnography or structured interviews. Additionally, subthemes that emerged in this study could be investigated in depth in future studies. Possible additional areas of inquiry include (a) the impact of study abroad on racial/ethnic identity development; (b) the existence of

a global sense of community participants felt with others who shared their racial/ethnic identity; (c) the experience of transracial, transnational adoptees; (d) the impact of different levels of language fluency, and (e) the impact of intersectional identities. Finally, collecting data closer to the conclusion of the student's time abroad might elicit different data and insights. Originally, I planned to collect data the semester after students returned from abroad. However, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, this was not possible. Future researchers could adjust the data collection timing.

Finally, my identity as a white researcher may have impacted what participants decided to share and how I interpreted and presented this data. Although no researcher matches with their participants on every aspect of identity, it is notable that I did not share a racial/ethnic identity with my participants. Given the salience of this identity to my research questions, I intentionally and continually checked my interpretations and understanding of the resulting data. However, future research conducted by Researchers of Color might elicit different data that could be informed by the researcher's own lived experiences. Findings from a study conducted by researchers who have personally navigated this specific type of study abroad experience could help further expand international educators' understanding of how to best serve Students of Color before, during, and after their study abroad experiences. I hope research in this area continues to grow.

Conclusion

Through this qualitative study, I sought to examine the experiences of Students of Color who studied abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. I conducted focus groups and narrative interviews with participants to learn about their experiences with the goal of adding to the study abroad literature focused on Students of Color.

It is my hope that the findings from this study will be used to inform and improve practices related to supporting Students of Color before, during, and after their study abroad experiences. Further, study participants shared valuable recommendations about how to better support Students of Color studying abroad. I firmly believe international educators must carefully listen as Students of Color share their lived experiences to effectively support these students and increase their participation in study abroad opportunities. I remain firmly committed to this work and am newly energized by what participants shared with me.

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APPENDIX A: Sample Peer Reviewer Request Email

Hello!

I hope you are doing well and staying healthy. I am writing to see if you would consider providing feedback on a research study I am designing. As you may remember, I am a part-time doctoral candidate in the Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education program at Michigan State University.

For my dissertation, I plan to conduct a study to learn about the experiences of Students of Color who studied abroad in locations in which they were a part of the racial or ethnic majority. I hope that research on this topic will uncover insights for international educators to better support Students of Color before, during, and after studying abroad.

My interest in this topic comes from years of working with Students of Color in the MSW program who had this specific type of study abroad experience. The reflections students like you shared with me during debrief conversations really stood out. During my Ph.D. coursework., I found that research in this area is minimal and pretty narrow thus leading to my planned study.

I am reaching out since I remember you discussing how your [racial/ethnic] identity impacted your field placement experience in COUNTRY and how you were received locally. Before starting my data collection, I am connecting with alums who had this type of study abroad experience to seek their honest feedback about my study design. This is where you come in!

If you are interested and willing, I would email you additional context about the study (I promise not too much!) along with the draft recruitment email and focus group & interview protocols for your review. I would then like to schedule a 30-45 minute Zoom meeting where you provide feedback and ask me questions. (Written feedback would also work if we can't find a meeting time). I anticipate the total time commitment would be about 1.5 hours including the meeting.

Please let me know if you are interested and I will follow up. I am available to meet during the week or over weekends depending on what best suits you.

Your feedback would be invaluable, but no pressure or worries if you are not interested/available.

Thanks for considering,
Katie

APPENDIX B: Recruitment Email

Dear Study Abroad Returnees,

My name is Katie Lopez, and I am a Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education doctoral candidate at Michigan State University.

I am conducting a study titled From the Minority to the Majority: Study Abroad Experiences of Students of Color, which focuses on the experiences of Students of Color who studied abroad in locations where they were in the racial or ethnic majority (e.g., a Mexican American student who studied abroad in Costa Rica, an African American student who studied abroad in Uganda, or a biracial Asian and white student who studied abroad in South Korea). This dissertation study is supervised by my advisor, Dr. Kristen Renn.

If selected, you will be asked to share your study abroad experience with 3-5 people in a focus group that will last approximately 60 mins. Additionally, you may be invited to complete an individual interview that will last approximately 60–90 mins.

The benefits of participation include the opportunity to share and reflect on your study abroad experience. Additionally, I hope the findings will uncover insights that allow for better support of Students of Color before, during, and after studying abroad. The risk of participation is anticipated to be low and no riskier than what you encounter in everyday life. As a token of appreciation, focus group participants will receive a $25 Visa gift card and interviewees will receive a second $25 gift card.

To be eligible for the study, you must:

- Be 18 years old or older
- Self-identify as a Person of Color
- Have primarily attended U.S. based schools for K-12 education
- Attend or have attended Michigan State University or the University of Michigan as an undergrad
- Have studied abroad as an undergraduate in a location(s) where you were a part of the racial or ethnic majority for a minimum of 3 weeks during 2018 and/or 2019

If you meet the eligibility requirements and are willing to share your experience, please complete this short survey. **If you know someone else who might meet the study criteria, I would appreciate it if you would forward this email.**

If you have any questions, please email me at XXXXXXX@msu.edu. If you complete the survey, you will be informed by email if you have been selected for the study.

All the best,
Katie Lopez
Ph.D. Candidate
Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education
Michigan State University

APPENDIX C: Participant Survey

Thank you for your interest in this research study on Students of Color who studied abroad in a location where they were a part of the racial or ethnic majority. Examples of eligible individuals would include a Mexican American student who studied abroad in Costa Rica, an African American student who studied abroad in Uganda, and a biracial Asian and white student who studied abroad in South Korea.

Please take a few minutes to complete this eligibility questionnaire, which will determine if you qualify for the study. A few optional demographic questions are included in an effort to identify a diverse group of participants.

By completing this questionnaire, you agree to be considered for participation in this study, although you may withdraw your consent at any time. Only the researcher will have access to your identifying information.

1. Do you identify as a Person of Color? *
   - Yes
   - No

2. Please describe your race or ethnicity. *

3. Did you attend one of the following universities as an undergraduate? *
   - [University name]
   - [University name]
   - Neither

4. What year did you graduate, or do you anticipate graduating?

5. Did you study abroad as an undergraduate student? *
   - Yes
   - No

6. Please list your study abroad host city and host country. If there were multiple cities and/or countries, please list them all. *

7. This study seeks individuals who studied abroad for a minimum of 3 weeks. Please provide the start and end date of the study abroad program(s) where you were a part of the racial or ethnic majority. *

8. Was your relevant study abroad experience ended early due to COVID-19? *
   - Yes
   - No

9. This study seeks individuals who primarily attended U.S. schools for their K-12 education. Did you complete more than 12 months (cumulatively) of your K-12 education outside the U.S.? *
    - Yes
    - No

10. What is your country of birth?

11. If you were born outside the U.S., what was your age at arrival in the U.S.?

12. What is your gender?

13. What year and month were you born?

14. Please provide your contact information. *
    - First name (please do not include your last name):
    - Email address:
    - Phone number:

Thank you for responding to this survey. Your response has been recorded. You will be notified via email if you are selected for the study. If you are not selected, your identifying information will be destroyed.

If you have any questions about this study or your eligibility, please contact Katie Lopez XXXXXX@msu.edu.

APPENDIX D: Participant Consent Form

Study Title: From the Minority to the Majority: Study Abroad Experiences of Students of Color
Principal Investigator: Kristen A. Renn, Ph.D.
Co-Researcher: Kathleen L. Lopez

Description of Research:
You have been invited to participate in this research study about your experience studying abroad in a location where you were a part of the racial or ethnic majority. You have been invited because you meet the eligibility criteria for the study, including self-identifying as a Person of Color, being 18 years old or older, and having participated in a specific type of study abroad experience.

The purpose of this study is to produce a rich description of the experiences of Students of Color who studied abroad in a location where they were part of the racial or ethnic majority. Research on this topic will help uncover useful insights for international educators to better support Students of Color before, during, and after studying abroad. This work is important as Students of Color are underrepresented in study abroad.

What Will Participation Involve?
You will be asked to share your study abroad story during a focus group (3-5 people) that will last approximately 75 minutes (but no longer than 90 minutes). Additionally, you may be invited to participate in a follow-up narrative interview that will last approximately 1-2 hours. By signing this consent form, you agree to have the focus group and interview recorded. Afterward, you will be sent the transcription so you can make changes or corrections if needed.

Are There Risks to Participation?
There is minor risk to participating in this study. This level of risk is no more than is expected in everyday interactions. The risk might include psychological stress from responding to questions and prompts which result in recalling and describing uncomfortable or sensitive past experiences. If requested, you will be provided with follow-up information about available support services.

Participation in the study is voluntary. At any point, you can ask to take a break, decline to answer any question, or end the interview. Additionally, you can contact the researchers at any time to ask that your responses be withdrawn from the study.

What are the Benefits of Participation?
The benefits include the opportunity to share and reflect on your experience of studying abroad in a location where you were a part of the racial or ethnic majority. Findings from this study will be shared with the international education field, may be published, and have the potential to better inform how international educators support Students of Color who study abroad.

How Will Confidentiality Be Protected?
All information collected for the study will be confidential. To facilitate this, you will be asked to select a pseudonym, or one can be selected for you if preferred. Only pseudonyms will be used

in the researcher's notes and dissertation manuscript to protect your identity.

Will Compensation be Offered?
As a token of appreciation for your time, focus group participants will receive a $25 eVisa gift card by email. Some focus group participants will be invited to complete a follow-up interview. Interview participants will receive an additional $25 eVisa gift card by email.

Who to Contact with Questions?
If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, you may contact the researcher, Kathleen Lopez at XXX-XXX-XXXX or XXXXXXX@msu.edu, or the dissertation advisor and principal investigator, Dr. Kristen Renn, Professor of Higher, Adult, & Lifelong Education, College of Education, Michigan State University at XXX-XXX-XXXX or XXXXXXX@msu.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd, Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

By clicking the → button below, you indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this study.

APPENDIX E: Focus Group Protocol

Each participant will be encouraged to select a pseudonym before the focus group recording. If they prefer not to utilize a pseudonym, I will ask them to refrain from using their name.

The following questions are a guide for the semi-structured focus group discussions. Additional topics and questions will be allowed to emerge organically.

Focus Group

1. Please introduce yourself including how you identify in terms of your race and ethnicity. Then tell us the most memorable food you ate while abroad.
2. Next please briefly share details about your study abroad experience. Where and when did you study abroad and for how long? What kind of program was it (prompts if needed, include was it faculty-led, a direct enroll program, internship based, etc.)?

As we move into the next questions, I want to encourage you to engage in conversation with your fellow participants as opposed to taking turns responding to every question in order. For example, if someone discusses something that resonates with your experience, please share. If you had a different experience, please share that.

3. Tell us about a time when you were aware of being in the racial/ethnic majority during your study abroad experience. Share the context and how it made you feel.
4. Considering your race and ethnicity, how was navigating your study abroad context different or the same as navigating the U.S. environment? If a story comes to mind that illustrates this experience, please share it.
5. Now that you've been back from your study abroad for a while, are there ways that the experience influenced or influences how you think or feel about your racial/ethnic identity?

APPENDIX F: Interview Protocol

It's nice to see you again, thank you for agreeing to participate in a follow-up individual interview.

As I shared through email, this will be a narrative interview. Narrative interviews use open-ended questions that ask interviewees to share the story of a particular phenomenon. This allows the interviewee to share their story/narrative without much interruption and influence by the interviewer. I chose this approach as I want to center the words and reflections of participants (you) on this experience (as opposed to being more directive and determining the topics and flow).

Again, all the information you share will be kept confidential. I will use the same pseudonym for you for the focus group, my notes, and my dissertation. (If you did not select one, but would like to now, please just let me know).

As a reminder, your participation in this study and interview is voluntary. At any point today you can ask to take a break, decline to answer any question, or end the interview. Additionally, you can contact me at any time to ask that your interview be withdrawn from the study.
I anticipate that the interview will take anywhere between 1-2 hours. The timing is dependent on how much you would like to share. Please do not feel like you are talking too little or too much as this is your story to tell. As with the focus group, I will record the interview so I have an accurate record that will be transcribed, and I will send you a copy to review once it is finalized.

Like I did for the focus group, I will start with a few specific questions. This part of the interview will be comparatively short but will provide me with context to better understand your identity and study abroad experience. During the second part of the interview, I will ask you to share the story of your study abroad. (This is the prompt I sent you ahead of time). I anticipate the second part of the interview will take most of our time together. After you share your story, I may ask some follow-up questions.

Before we get started do you have any questions for me?

I am now going to start the recording

Identity Questions

> During the focus group you shared that you are [racial/ethnic identity]. If you wish, please share any additional relevant information about your racial or ethnic identity (e.g., its importance to you, your family heritage, your nationality, etc.).
>
> In addition to your race or ethnicity, please tell me about other aspects of your identity that are important to my understanding of your study abroad experience (reference the identity wheel image).

Thinking about your college experience before you studied abroad, how important or notable was your racial/ethnic identity compared to other aspects of your identity? Do you feel like that changed while you were abroad or after you returned?

As you know, this study focuses on the experiences of Students of Color who study abroad in a location where they are a part of the racial or ethnic majority. Given this, I would like to hear your reflection on passing. Do you feel that you passed or blended in with the local population while in Cuba? Did this impact your experience abroad?

Thank you for sharing this context as it will help me better understand your experience. Now I would like to transition to the second part of the interview, which will be much more open.

Study Abroad Narrative Prompt

For the remainder of the interview, I do not have a pre-arranged set of questions, but rather a more general and open prompt. During this part of the interview, it is your time to share your story with minimal interruption. As I am listening, I will take some occasional notes and I may ask a few questions after you are finished sharing.

Let's get started. I would like to hear the full story of your experience as a Student of Color who studied abroad in a location where you were a part of the racial or ethnic majority. Please tell me about your experience as if it were a story, with a beginning, a middle, end (or how it continues to impact you today). You can think about the beginning as your decision and preparation to study abroad, the middle as your time abroad, and the end (or ongoing story) as how studying abroad impacted (or continues to impact) you.

Aspects you might address could include, but are not limited to, how you decided on your study abroad program/location, what it was like being [racial/ethnic identity] in [country], how your racial or ethnic identity affected your experience abroad if your time abroad impacted your understanding of issues related to race or ethnicity either in the US or abroad, and how you made meaning of this experience. Remember, you should share whatever is most relevant for you and you do not need to touch on all or even any of the potential aspects I just mentioned. I want to hear about your entire experience including negative, positive, neutral, and unexpected aspects.

You can take as much time as you need to tell your story and the details that are important to you. Please don't try to share what you think I want to hear and be as open and honest with me as possible. There is no right or wrong way to respond.

Possible Follow-Up Questions

[Ask limited follow-up questions from notes and possibly some of the questions below]

Thank you again for sharing your story.

Tell me a bit about the context where you grew up. Were you in the racial or ethnic majority where you grew up and went to school? How did where you grew up compared

to the environment at your college campus? How did it compare to the location where you studied abroad?

How if at all, do you feel that you were treated differently while abroad compared to your classmates?

In terms of your student abroad experience, did you consider yourself a heritage seeking student? A widely accepted definition of heritage seekers by Szekely is "individuals who choose their study abroad location based on their cultural heritage with the goal of enhancing knowledge of their cultural background" (Szekely, 1998, p. 2).

As you may recall, one of the goals of my dissertation is that it impacts and improves current practices related to supporting Students of Color before, during, and after their study abroad experiences. Do you have any advice or feedback you would like to share with study abroad professionals related to working with Students of Color studying abroad in a location where they are a part of the racial or ethnic majority?

Before we end, is there anything else you want me to know about related to your study abroad experience in a location where you were a part of the racial or ethnic majority?

Closing

At the end of the focus group, I shared with the group a bit about my positionality and the reasons I decided on this research topic. Before we close out today, I want to check and see if you have any follow-up questions for me about this research study and what I shared previously.

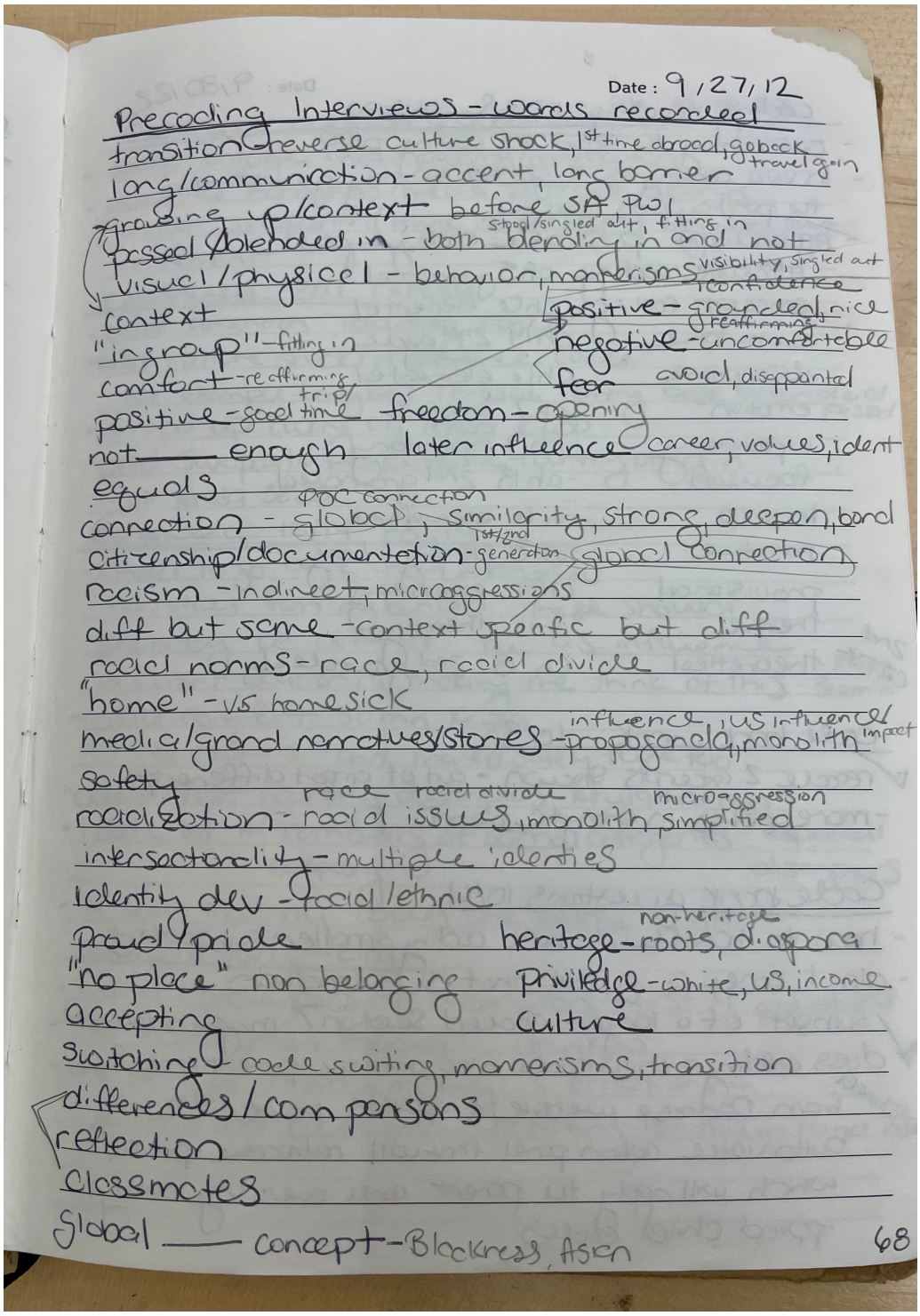
As before, as a token of appreciation for your time and willingness to share your experience, each of you will receive a $30 eVisa gift card. You should receive the gift card to the email you provided within about 2 weeks.

Thank you again for trusting me with your story.

APPENDIX G: Emerging Codes

Figure 3

Emerging Codes



APPENDIX H: Parent and Child Codes

Descriptors- information for participant narratives

- Personal descriptors
    - Growing up
    - College context
    - Language/communication skills
- Study abroad program
    - Preparation
    - Host country
    - Group dynamics
    - Motivation/decision making

Quotes- interesting quotes that are descriptive or illustrative of a concept

Feelings- descriptions of feelings related to studying abroad as part of the racial/ethnic majority

- Comfort- "It was just really comfortable"
- Discomfort- "Struggled with a little bit"
- Safety- "So it just is safe"
- Fear or lack of safety
- Connection- "Connection between both of us"
    - "It felt like home"
    - Connection to racial ethnic identity
    - Connections to roots
- Otherness- "I just felt left out"

Comparing & Juxtaposing- "juxtaposing that experience to this experience"

- Back home
    - Growing up or college experience in the U.S.
    - Country of origin/ancestors
- Additional time abroad
- Study abroad peers
- Different but the same- "It was just different. No, it was very similar"
- Grand narratives/stereotypes
    - Rejected or complicated- "Debunked a lot of stuff"
    - Confirmed
    - Fascination with U.S. influence abroad

Impacts and Influences- how the study abroad experience influenced participants

- Career/study influences- "Career influencing"
- Connection to nature- "It made me get more in touch with my nature side"
- Desire to travel more- "Bigger itch to travel"
- Strengthened identity- "My study abroad experiences altogether have created my identity"
- Wider perspective- "Different perspective of the world"

Experiences related to race and ethnicity- ways participants understood their study abroad related to their race/ethnicity

- Passing or blending in- "Fitting in"
    - Physical appearance
    - Language & communication
    - Clothing and dress
    - Customs and culture
- Not passing- "Not Asian enough"
- Identity salience
    - Other identities (e.g., citizenship)
- Racial dynamics
- Global racial or ethnic norms- "Global concept of _____ness"
- Instances of racism or discrimination
- Whiteness as the norm/standard/desirable

Central Tenets of CRT, LatCrit, AsianCrit, or TribalCrit- concepts of CRT or its extensions

- Anti-essentialism
    - Strategic (anti)essentialism
- Anti-subordination principle
- Assimilation
- Challenge to the dominant ideology
- Counter-storytelling
- Differential Racialization
- Differential Spatial Racialization
- Intersectionality
- In betweenness
- Local-Global Contextualism
- Racism as ordinary and pervasive
    - Asianization
    - Colonization as endemic
    - Racist nativism
- Revisionist history
- Self-determination and self-identification
- Transnational contexts

Feedback and advice- feedback for international educators on how to support Students of Color

APPENDIX I: Focus Group Participant Profiles

Sarah

Sarah completed a month-long language and cultural immersion program in Tanzania with about 18 other students. Her group had daily Swahili lessons at a local university, and they were also paired with language partners from the university. Sarah and her classmates had all previously studied Swahili, and the group was made up of majority white students. In addition to language learning, Sarah took part in various cultural activities including meeting government representatives, visiting markets and historical sites, and touring a national animal preserve. During the program, Sarah's group stayed in a hostel/resort and even spent some time living with host families. One of the most memorable meals Sarah had in Tanzania spaghetti dinner she and her classmates cooked for their host family using local ingredients.

Sarah identifies as African American, and, more specifically, as a third-generation Kenyan American. She is lighter skinned, which meant she was seen as an outsider despite having roots in neighboring Kenya. Sarah grew up in a predominantly Black area of a large urban city and went to school with mostly Black students. Attending a university where there were few Black students "was definitely a culture shock." For Sarah, going to Tanzania was comfortable and she adjusted quickly because it was similar to her upbringing where she was in the racial majority. Sarah shared being in Africa felt like home although, through her study abroad, she came to recognize her Blackness is specific to the U.S. context and different than Blackness elsewhere. Sarah reflected her study abroad did not necessarily change the way she viewed herself, but it did put her more in touch with her racial identity.

Ada

Ada completed a volunteer abroad program in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The program lasted 4 weeks and included about 10 other university students. Ada and her classmates lived together and volunteered to teach English to adults with disabilities so the adults could eventually earn an income teaching English to others. On days off, she traveled to nearby cities and beaches. When she arrived in Vietnam, Ada's Vietnamese family took her to have bún bò huế, which is like a spicy pho. This was one of the most memorable meals Ada had while abroad because her family was so excited she was there.

Ada identifies as mixed, specifically half Vietnamese and half white. Her dad is Vietnamese, and her mom is white. Growing up, Ada lived in a white community with her white family and was less connected with her Vietnamese family. She described herself as "very Americanized." However, when Ada went to college, she sought out and befriended mostly Asian students. Going to Vietnam, things "completely flipped" because the group of students she spent the most time with were non-Asian. In Vietnam Ada looked like most of the population and was no longer a racial minority. Ada described her experience as bittersweet because, while she enjoyed studying abroad, it also made her realize she was not as connected to her Vietnamese side and had settled "for the whiteness of everywhere [she] was living."

Mariela

Mariela studied abroad in Barcelona, Spain, at a smaller school. During the 4 weeks in Spain, she lived in an apartment. Mariela wanted to graduate early so she looked for a study abroad program that allowed her to take summer classes. She did not travel with anyone she knew, but her classmates included other students from her university as well as students from Australia and the United Kingdom. Although there were some differences between Spanish and

Latin American culture, the language was very similar, and, thus, Mariela did not experience much culture shock abroad. One of the most memorable foods Mariela ate while abroad was a huge paella she split with four other friends after a long hike.

Mariela identifies as Hispanic/Latina and a first-generation Mexican. She was born in the United States but spent the first 5–6 years of her life living in Mexico. Mariela shared it is "tricky" to answer the race question. She said, "Because I have to click white technically, but I don't know if I consider myself white, as far as culture goes." Mariela's first language is Spanish, but she now considers herself more fluent in English. In elementary school, she went through English as a Second Language programs. She grew up in a very white town where she remembered often being the only Hispanic kid in her elementary school. Attending college was a change because there was more diversity, but Mariela still described Hispanics as "the minority minority" on campus. In Spain, Mariela realized she blended in physically because locals spoke to her in Spanish, assuming she would understand. Living abroad helped Mariela realize she could do so much more than she previously thought.

Adriana

Adriana studied Afro-Latino and Afro-Cuban history through dance for 3 weeks in Havana, Cuba. Adriana's study abroad classmates lived in the same neighborhood where some of her Cuban family lived. Adriana's study abroad classes and activities were arranged by a local Cuban program provider. As a part of their program, Adriana and her classmates learned about Santería, a predominant religion in Cuba that members of her family practice. Before traveling to Cuba, Adriana volunteered abroad at a childcare center in Brazil. One of the most memorable foods Adriana had while abroad was on the trip to Brazil where she ate pastel, which is a buttery cheese pastry that can be eaten plain or with ketchup.

Adriana identifies as Cuban and Native American, specifically Lipan Apache. Her dad came to the United States from Cuba in the 1980s. However, he passed away when she was less than 2 years old, so she did not have much connection with her Cuban family growing up. While in Cuba, Adriana met a half-brother she did not previously know. In college, Adriana studied international studies with a focus on the global environment and health in Latin America. Adriana picked the study abroad program in Cuba because she wanted to be in touch with her roots and meet some of her Cuban family. She reflected she felt more comfortable and even liberated in Cuba compared to the United States, where she felt "like an outlier." Adriana came away from her study abroad experience feeling empowered and connected to her Cuban roots.

Laura

Laura studied Japanese history for 3 weeks in a program through a university in Tokyo, Japan. Her program had around 30 students who were split into two groups with either morning or afternoon classes. Laura had previously taken Japanese courses while about half of her study abroad classmates had not. She found knowing the language made it easier for her to navigate Japan. Laura selected her study abroad program to improve her Japanese skills and also to study abroad with a friend. In addition to their history classes, the group also went on excursions to temples and other sites, including Kyoto. One of the most memorable foods Laura ate while in Japan was shabu-shabu, which is a Japanese hot pot.

Laura identifies as biracial—half white and half Hmong. Her father is white, and her mother is Hmong and Asian. She lived in a small white town where people frequently asked, "What are you?" regarding her race. Growing up Laura found white people thought she looked Asian while Asian people thought she looked white. Laura did not think about her race much while studying abroad in Japan. However, afterward, she reflected "on how whitewashed [she]

may or may not have been growing up" because she lived in a white area and did not spend much time with the Hmong side of her family. After returning from Japan, Laura felt more drawn to her Asian family and wanted to reconnect with her roots.

Julie

Julie studied abroad in Hong Kong for 3 months as an exchange student at a sister school to her home university. She traveled by herself to Hong Kong. Julie shared, "Honestly, [it was] one of the most stressful times of my life, because I was placed in the city and had to fend for myself, so that was pretty fun." Julie selected her study abroad program because she wanted to gain more confidence speaking Chinese and earn credits toward her Chinese minor. Another reason she picked the program was because she wanted to visit nearby family whom she had not seen in 11 years. The most memorable food Julie ate while abroad was curry fish balls.

Julie identifies as Chinese American and grew up speaking some Cantonese and Taishanese. Her parents were born in nearby cities in the Canton region of China. Julie grew up in a predominantly white community where she often was asked, "Where are you from? Are you from here?" After studying abroad, Julie reflected she felt Asia was more accepting than America. She said, "When I went to Hong Kong for the first time, just seeing all the faces that looked just like me, and I felt like I just blended in completely." However, even though she blended in, Julie was surprised locals knew she was American given her accent. Julie reflected her study abroad in Hong Kong helped her embrace her cultural background and bridge the gap between her and her parents.

Cora

Cora studied abroad in a Swahili language immersion program for 6 weeks in Tanzania. Her program was faculty-led and included about 12 students. In addition to classroom language

learning, there was also an internship component of the program. Cora and her classmates split their time among three cities. They mostly lived together, but, in one city, they lived with host families. Cora picked her study abroad program to challenge herself to improve her Swahili skills. Cora shared one of the most memorable foods she ate while abroad was quail, which was notable because she was vegetarian except when she was abroad.

Cora identifies as Black African. She was born in Kenya, where much of her family still lives. Cora came to the United States at age 4. She grew up in a rural area and often felt "too American for Kenya, and too Kenyan for America." When she was growing up her family was frequently stared at for being different, but in Tanzania, she experienced the opposite. Cora shared, "This time they're not staring at me; they're staring at everyone else. So, it was kind of weird to be on the other side." Although Cora grew up speaking Swahili, she forgot much of it when she came to the United States. She now speaks Swahili more like a Tanzanian than a Kenyan. After her study abroad, Cora felt confident in identifying as Black and African as opposed to being boxed into the African American experience, which does not accurately describe her identity or capture her experience.

Alina

Alina studied in Thailand for 3 weeks. Her program started with a course before she departed. The program was led by local faculty and focused on global public health issues in Thailand. Alina lived on campus and had a Thai roommate. The program included learning some of the Thai language as well as volunteering in local villages and health centers. One of the most memorable foods Alina ate in Thailand was a duck dish she ate at a Michelin-star restaurant.

Alina identifies as Asian American, specifically as Chinese American. Her parents are from near Hong Kong and her "home language" is Cantonese. Alina reflected the dialect of

Cantonese she speaks is similar to Thai, which she felt helped her pick up Thai quickly and meant she was mistaken for a native speaker. Alina selected her study abroad program because it focused on public health rather than because of its location in Asia. However, looking back, she reflected she was grateful the program was in Thailand. Alina said, "I think I got to experience, I don't know, a lot more things and not fearing judgment as much just because I was a part of the majority there." Ultimately, after studying abroad, Alina felt closer to her Asian heritage.

Tara

Tara studied abroad for 3 weeks in South Korea with about 15 other students from her home university. While abroad she took Korean language classes at a local university. Tara's program included an exchange component where Korean university students she met abroad later studied at her home university. One of the most memorable foods Tara ate in South Korea was heuk dwaeji barbecue, or black pig barbecue.

Tara identifies as biracial, "mixed," White, and Korean American. Her dad is white American, and her mom was born and raised in Korea. Tara grew up in a low-income household in a community she described as mostly white and Black with few Asians. Because of this, she was considered Asian growing up. She said, "It wasn't until I went to [university] where it was so much more diverse that I actually started being viewed more as white American, which I thought was interesting." As a result of studying abroad, Tara said, "I felt a new sense of pride of being Korean. I've always been proud to be Korean, but I think going there and experiencing it and just being thrown in like that, I just have this new sense of love for the country."