

Black Students in China

Identity, Environment and Institutions in the Individual's Perception of Racial Encounters

An Honors Thesis for the International Relations Program

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Abstract

In recent years, American study abroad and scholarship programs have profoundly targeted the Black demographic, a group largely underrepresented amongst the study abroad community. Researchers have contributed a wealth of understanding about the personal and professional benefits of study abroad, and how to make these benefits more accessible to Black students. However, a general lack of understanding the perceptions of racial encounters amongst the Black study abroad population, and the specific variables that shape these perceptions, pose a problem both for administrators and recruitment efforts for study abroad. This study, focused on American Black students who have studied in China, identifies three lenses, identity, institution, and environment, that allow us to better describe the student's process of interpreting racial encounters while abroad. Results found that of these three factors, identity and environment were equally significant to the student's understanding of racial encounters in China, while institution held little to no significance. Students' lack of confidence in and connection to their study abroad institutions cause them to place larger weight on their identity and the study abroad environment, while the institution remains a passive entity. This information raises a host of questions about the role of the study abroad institution in the minority student's unique experiences abroad, and to what extent they can adapt to better serve an increasingly diverse study abroad population. Further research is suggested to measure the effectiveness of study abroad programs in creating an optimal environment for diverse cohorts of students.

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Chapter 1: The Realities of Study Abroad

Study abroad and its capacity to enrich learning experiences is becoming an increasingly vital topic in higher education. In exploring the tangible benefits of studying abroad, conversations concerning making these benefits accessible to underrepresented groups have also emerged in recent decades. Research in both the international relations and education communities has begun to challenge traditional sentiments and “universal agreements that study abroad experiences are valuable and enriching” (Hembroff and Rusz 1993, 1). Two current goals among study abroad researchers are 1) to understand the nature of benefits produced in the home and host country during the study abroad experience, and 2) to measure, discuss, and improve the participation of minorities (Penn and Tanner 2009).

This study refers to the term *study abroad* using the same definition as the term “International Educational Exchange,” defined by the Forum on Education Abroad:

The migration of students (secondary, undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate) and scholars between educational institutions in different countries. A narrower usage of the term “exchange” refers to reciprocal agreements that allow students, faculty, or staff to spend a specified period of time at institutional partners of their home institutions. (Glossary 2015)

This definition incorporates any study abroad program which takes a student out of the context of their home institution and places them in an institution away from their home country, with the purpose of introducing them to the culture and customs of the country in which they are studying. In this study, I explore particular study abroad programs individually and their specific

functions in students' learning experiences. These functions differ based on each institution's pedagogical approach, which I discuss in the following section.

The Constructivist Framework and International Education

International education, like any form of education, necessitates a conversation about goals for, and approaches to, learning. A unique element of study abroad is that it incorporates the process of encountering and interpreting different perspectives than one's own into the learning experience (McLaughlin 2006). This serves to bridge a noticeable gap between traditional education practices and pedagogies that prioritize cognitive development and critical thinking (Duffy and Jonassen 1992). Constructivism is a particularly useful social science theory that can explain the cognitive growth students experience during study abroad, for reasons I explore in this section.

In scholarly discussion of international relations, rationalism and interpretivism are two social science paradigms that have traditionally occupied opposite poles. Rationalism, which encompasses theories such as realism, neorealism, liberalism, and neoliberalism, is mostly "empowered by positivist and exclusively materialist philosophies of science" (Adler 1997, 321). In particular, realists and neorealists take a methodical approach to international relations, and suppose that states' actions are predictable, rational, and reliant on external forces (Adler 1997). These "external forces" are critical to an understanding of realism and neorealism. According to these ideologies, pressures such as the pursuit of power, security, and access to natural resources drive states to behave in a manner that supports their best interests (Adler 1997). Conversely, interpretivist frameworks, including postmodernists, poststructuralists and the many branches of critical theory, contest the nature of these external forces and challenge the objectivity of their

effects on states' behavior (Adler 1997). These frameworks give credence to the many differing realities that individuals experience, which have a tangible effect on the motivations of individuals, and by extension the motivations of states (Adler 1997).

Constructivism is a paradigm of international relations that assumes that “the manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world” (Adler 1997, 322). The constructivist can answer the question of the existence of external forces in the international realm; these forces do indeed exist as a result of collective understandings between groups of individuals, which become solidified and reinforced over time (Adler 1997). However, the constructivist places emphasis on the argument that these forces are simply ideas to which individuals attach significance, and these ideas can vary according to an individual's social context, values, beliefs, norms, and so on (Adler 1997).

Another important contribution that constructivism has provided to our collective understanding of international relations is the idea that not only do individuals' interpretations of external forces vary, but that these interpretations can potentially change over time (Adler 1997). While constructivism acknowledges the idea that individuals can be influenced by external forces, the paradigm also assumes that individuals are capable of changing the amount of significance they attach to these ideas, in essence reconstructing their understanding of the world (Adler 1997). As such, individuals can mutually influence and change these external forces themselves (Adler 1997). Linking ideas of socio-cognitive development with empirical social science theory, constructivism interprets the rigid elements of rationalist theories as more fluid (Adler 1997).

My study takes a similar approach to Emanuel Adler (1997) in his journal article “Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics,” in which he re-evaluates the positioning of constructivism as a social science theory. Adler (1997) argues that constructivism is often associated too closely with more interpretivist theories, and therefore little effort is made to support constructivist claims with empirical research or to connect them to socio-cognitive factors (Adler 1997). In his article, Adler (1997) claims that constructivism can feasibly occupy a middle ground between rationalist and interpretivist theory, as it helps to identify empirically observable external social forces while it accounts for the importance of subjective experiences in the realm of international relations. One underlying theme of Adler’s that I employ in this study is the following statement: “Constructivism can illuminate important features of international politics that were previously enigmatic and have crucial *practical* applications for international theory and empirical research” (Adler 1997, 323). Constructivism may lack the empirical confidence that is often associated with rationalist theory, but it has the potential to incorporate elements of both rationalism and interpretivism in order to develop a logical, yet versatile framework for addressing complex social issues.

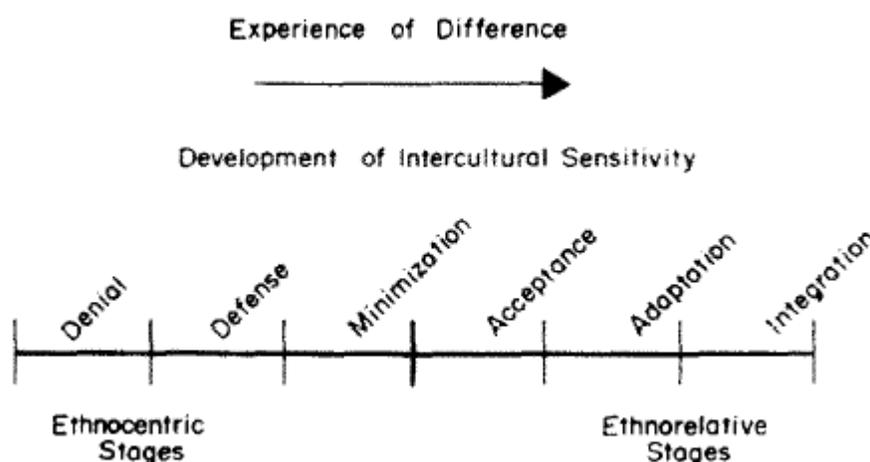


Figure 1- “Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity.” (Bennett, 1986)

One can make a strong connection between the topic of cognitive development in constructivist theory and in study abroad literature. Milton J. Bennett, a scholar on intercultural communication and sociology at the Intercultural Development Research Institute, is responsible for creating the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). It provides a language and framework for understanding how individuals undergo the process of acculturation (Bennett 1986). The DMIS and many subsequent studies hypothesize that, through the appropriate amount of time and exposure to different cultures, an individual can create, restructure, or completely destroy the schema that organize our understanding of the world (Bennett 1986). This statement reflects the language of constructivist theory, and demonstrates the constructivist notion that schema can in fact be changed over time. The DMIS attempts to clearly delineate the particular stages of an individual's cognitive adaptation to unfamiliar concepts, which may support the constructivist argument by providing specific, identifiable phases in the restructuring process of one's understanding of the world.

Another element that constructivism and study abroad share is the often optimistic, progressive interpretation of an individual's cognitive transformations. Both concepts suggest that the interaction of conflicting norms can be a positive, even synergistic experience. Fosnot and Perry (1996) describe constructivism as a "psychological theory of learning." In their article, they compare constructivism to a wide variety of theories such as behaviorism and maturationism, which contribute to an overall understanding of the process of learning (Fosnot and Perry, 1996). To them, the cognitive restructuring that occurs in constructivist theory resembles the basic course of human evolution, and the ability for humans to adapt to constantly changing interpretations of the world is, in and of itself, development (Fosnot and Perry, 1996).

One can see a similar sentiment from the DMIS, which incorporates “Adaptation” as one of its more advanced stages of acculturation, and organizes the process of acculturation along a spectrum defined as “Development of Intercultural Sensitivity” (Bennett 1986).

This optimistic sentiment also lies at the core of study abroad, and brings clarity to why it may be an attractive investment for both home and host country. Study abroad, using education as a conduit, can introduce students to the experience of acculturation in a manner that non-immersive cultural study cannot. It also tests the assumptions of constructivism by bringing students into an environment that causes them to drastically reassess their internal understanding of the world. Of course, these benefits are disproportionate to people of different races, genders, religions, sexualities, etc. The uneven terrain of study abroad is becoming an increasingly salient topic, one that is central to this study. In this study, I apply constructivist theory to explain the racial normative conflicts that occur in the study abroad context.

New Challenges in Study Abroad

In scholarly literature, study abroad is overwhelmingly portrayed as positive. Only recently have researchers disputed this claim with suggestions to empirically test the positive effects of studying abroad. Dennison Nash (1976) produced one of the first academic writings to test the objectives of study abroad themselves. In his study, Nash (1976) urges American higher education to evaluate the precise areas of growth that study abroad produces in the student, such as “increased autonomy” or “differentiation of self.” He tests a few of these areas of growth on an experimental and control group using qualitative measures, and determines that study abroad created significant, yet somewhat superficial, personality changes in the experimental group (Nash 1976).

Regarding the question "for whom is study abroad beneficial?," certain patterns regarding the accessibility and priorities of study abroad have slowly emerged throughout literature. A clear example of such patterns is a study conducted by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1958), an empirical study about the beneficial elements of study abroad. Their study "American Objectives in Study Abroad," like many others of its time, brought to American society's collective attention the growing popularity of study abroad as a tool for academic and professional development (Gullahorn & Gullahorn 1958). Among the study abroad objectives that they identify is "to promote international understanding and goodwill among the peoples of the world as a contribution to peace" (Gullahorn & Gullahorn 1958, 369). However, a glaring issue with this study is an issue that study abroad literature in this timeframe share: it is biased towards students belonging to a certain cultural elite. Gullahorn and Gullahorn's (1958) study subjects lived in France, most of whom, through prior exposure to academia, have "already achieved considerable skill and [believe] that [they are] ready to work on a high level," in fields mostly concerning literature and other humanities (Gullahorn & Gullahorn 1958, 370). Even more, elements of the students' identities such as race, gender, religion, and so on were not given so much as a mention in the article. Through this study and many similar to it, one may observe the tendency of study abroad literature to refer to and emphasize a self-selective group of individuals that has historically, and currently, dominated the discourse of international education.

Starting roughly in the 1990s, organizations and researchers of study abroad began more robust, retrospective analyses of study abroad literature. A popular study concerning diversity in study abroad conducted by Hembroff and Rusz (1993) for the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) directly challenged the self-serving narrative of most study abroad literature. More researchers gradually began to criticize study abroad elitism, aiming to bring the

benefits of study abroad to a larger pool of students. Such an objective could bring tangible benefits to students, study abroad institutions, and the host country of the study abroad program alike. Later studies such as the research conducted by Brux and Fry (2010) identify the socioeconomic, structural, and academic barriers that multicultural students face, leading to the demographic disparity in study abroad we see today.

Main Topic

Racial minorities in the US experience tangible differences when compared to their White counterparts not only in their educational experiences at higher institutions at home (Hurtado 1992; Cabrera et al. 1999; Smith, Allen, & Danley 2007), but they also have a radically different experience than their White counterparts while studying abroad (Talbert & Stewart 1999; Evans, 2009; Brux & Fry 2010). Though many believe that diversity would undeniably improve study abroad institutions by introducing more perspectives, therefore increasing the potential for intercultural understanding, I argue that the belief that diversity leads to linear growth is a dangerous one. Racial norms, defined in this study as “understandings of the stratification of race,” differ from person to person and from culture to culture. The interaction of these racial norms in study abroad have not been adequately discussed in literature, and I intend to highlight the nuances and difficulties that arise in study abroad institutions when conflicts of racial norms are introduced.

The following example depicts the interaction of racial norms on more than one occasion between a Black study abroad student from the United States and Chinese natives:

One time, several times, I'd be at a restaurant and the waiter/waitress would ask which country I'm from in Africa. I'd tell them I'm American, and they'd say, “But you're dark enough that I

thought you were from Africa!” That was always interesting, and it’s always part of [the conversation] about the growing knowledge of nationalities and race and skin color... in China. Not everyone’s up to speed on that, not that everyone’s gotta figure it out.

This interaction apparently contradicted with two ideas in the Black study abroad student’s subconscious. One, the assumption that the student was from Africa was unfounded and, to the student, based in ignorance. Two, the student found that voicing of the assumption itself was more forward than interactions he was used to in America. However, though both parties’ understandings of Black people differ in the context of their own understanding of race, the study abroad student’s understanding of race causes him to evaluate the intelligence of the waiter/waitress in a negative light. In that way, this interaction between the study abroad student and the waiter does not seem to follow the clean continuum depicted in Bennett’s DMIS; in fact this interaction leads to further ethnocentrism on the part of the study abroad student, and in the fact that the other party was not willing to abandon their previous understandings kept them in the realm of ethnocentrism as well. This brings to question whether or not complete acculturation is possible when it concerns racial norms, and if so, whether or not the process of acculturation for these norms differ radically from that of cultural norms. Racial norms also illuminate the dangers of collective understandings. Often, collective understandings of certain racial groups directly lead to systemic oppression of those racial groups within societies.

The central question of this study is as follows: *how do Black students perceive racial encounters while studying abroad in China?* In this study, I define *racial encounter* as “any situation which directly causes one to become aware of one’s race, and its relationship to other individuals or one’s surroundings.” Racial encounters have particular importance in the study abroad experience. As mentioned earlier, study abroad literature and constructivist theory alike

often depict the interaction of norms and restructuring of cognitive schema as positive. One can see the nuances that complicate this viewpoint when one considers the interplay of racial norms. In the context of this study, I utilize racial encounters as identifiable instances in which racial norms present themselves in the student's consciousness. This study seeks to critically evaluate the so-called benefits of diversity in study abroad by exploring the reality of the interaction of racial norms, and how race exposes the disparities and inequalities of international education.

I examine racial encounters using a model I have created called "The Three Levels of Normative Analysis." The three levels are *identity*, *institution*, and *environment*. Each level has a specific definition for the purposes of this study. *Identity* refers to "anything that defines one's individuality, e.g. your race, sexuality, gender, personality, etc.." It represents the different interpretations of racial norms amongst different individuals. *Institution* means "the study abroad program itself, its administrators/staff, housing arrangements and any accommodations provided by the program." It incorporates the reach of the study abroad program within a foreign country, and the racial norms it establishes within this reach. The institution level in particular must meet a specific set of criteria in this study: each study abroad program must have a relationship to a US-based university or organization, a focus on academic and linguistic goals, and a housing arrangement provided directly via the program's resources. Finally, *environment* means "one's study abroad location"— in the context of this study, it refers to China at large and the racial norms it encompasses. The environment is the larger cultural background that the study abroad student experiences, which takes on particular importance when its racial norms and those of the study abroad student are incongruent.

This model is loosely based on the concept of the three "images of analysis," introduced by Kenneth Waltz in his 1959 novel, *Man, the State, and War* (Waltz, 1959). The first image of

analysis can be described as either individuals or human nature; this lens focuses on the elements of human beings that may or may not make war an inevitability (Waltz, 1959). The second image of analysis is the state, which refers to governing bodies that dictate the legislative and societal boundaries upon which groups of people agree (Waltz, 1959). The third image is the international system, or the unordered interaction of all of the states in their individual pursuits for power, resources, and security (Waltz, 1959).

While Waltz uses these images to speculate on the causes of war, this study's focus on the individual, institution, and environment seeks to determine which of these elements are the most prominent in the student's understanding of their study abroad experience. The definition of these three levels parallel Waltz' three images. The individual, like the first image, accounts for the variability in each person and their specific ways of understanding and interpreting the world. Both the institution and the second image refer to deliberately constructed establishments, the agendas of which are often, but not always, determined by the best interest of its constituents. Finally, the third image is similar to the environment level as it reflects the larger context under which the second and first images function, and the unpredictable nature of this context. In the next few sections, I will analyze each of these levels of norms in depth, and how students relate to them during their time abroad. In order to do so thoroughly, I have chosen to analyze a case study for a specific group of study abroad students: Black/African-American students studying in China.

Identity- Norms and Race

Study abroad is a racialized endeavor. On one hand, the largest group in US study abroad remains, to this day, upper middle class White females studying social sciences in Europe (Penn

and Tanner 2009, 267). Many arguments can, and have, been made about the reason for this trend in study abroad demographics. What is more difficult to disprove, however, is the resultant disproportionate effect that this trend has had on the structure, priorities, and goals of study abroad programs. On the one hand, study abroad in its present state serves the needs of this group best. On the other hand, study abroad has been actively trying to turn the tides of this trend by recruiting minorities specifically.

Minorities are largely underrepresented in US study abroad programs. In particular, a strong trend exists that suggests that in addition to underrepresentation caused by traditional study abroad recruitment, Blacks often seem to be averse to the idea of study abroad as well (Hembroff and Rusz, 1993; Penn and Tanner, 2009; Salisbury et al., 2011). Systematically, social factors such as lack of access to cultural capital needed to prioritize international education affect Black students' decisions to study abroad (Salisbury et al., 2011) This trend can be seen in the composition of study abroad students; while Blacks comprise 14.7% of students in US secondary education, they only make up 5.6% of students who study abroad. ("Trends in U.S. Study Abroad | NAFSA," 2014) In response to this, study abroad and scholarship programs have profoundly targeted the Black demographic, promising a positive experience abroad after removing economic obstacles. To address Black underrepresentation abroad however, one must consider all the factors behind the trend, which include not only economic, but also social, academic, and ideological factors. An establishing work in this field of study is Penn and Tanner's (2009) article. This article uses surveys of a group of Black undergraduates to test a set of factors identified in previous literature believed to be the causes of Black under representation abroad.

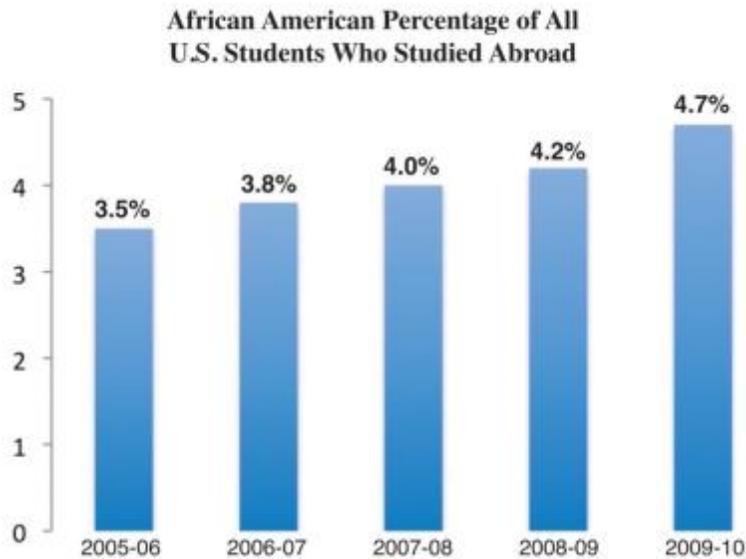


Figure 2- "African Americans Make Up Less Than 5 Percent of All U.S. Students Who Study Abroad." (2011)

Study abroad has successfully advanced past the dismal numbers for Black students that it has seen in the early 2000s. However, despite the efforts of Penn and Tanner and those of many similar studies, Black underrepresentation in study abroad continues to be an issue for US study abroad institutions. The lack of Black students, and all minorities, in study abroad produces and reproduces a significant inequality within international education, depriving entire demographics from the benefits previously touted by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1958). One pathway that literature has largely overlooked is examining the experiences of Black students who have already studied abroad, and considering whether or not their accounts are in line with Gullahorn and Gullahorn's (1958) image of the supposedly positive study abroad experience.

Institution- Study Abroad as an Entity

The foundations for study abroad can be seen for centuries throughout world history, even predating the Westphalian concept of sovereign states. The modern concept of study

abroad, however, was a conscious, post-WWI and post-WWII effort on the part of global powers to promote international education as a means of promoting peace in the aftermath of global turmoil (Dessoff 2008, 20). In the US, years directly following WWI and the Great Depression were times of increased national focus on the issue of diplomacy, and the question of "interventionism or isolationism?" loomed ("The Complete History of Study Abroad," 2012). At this time, the first colleges devoted to international studies and diplomacy began to be established ("The Complete History of Study Abroad," 2012). A similar pattern could be seen after World War II. The National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA) was a US organization established in 1948 in order to provide assistance to international students, which had become a concern directly resulting from the war. (Dessoff 2008) This was the same year that the first participants of the US Fulbright program went abroad for the first time. (Dessoff 2008)

In China, study abroad was also a well-established concept, however the opportunity to take advantage of study abroad in Western countries came relatively late. China's stance on international affairs in the Western Hemisphere during the beginning stages of the PRC was definitively isolationist (Bullock et al. 2005). However, from Deng Xiaoping's Reform and Opening movement starting in 1978, exchanges in international education between China and the US not only became a priority, but after only two decades, it became a commonplace practice (Bullock et al. 2005). This marked the beginning of an invaluable symbiosis between the US and China. Although there were initial concerns of a "brain drain" and of the continued proliferation of Western idealism and imperialism, education seemed to be the most reliable venue of promoting peace and understanding between two starkly different countries (Bullock et al. 2005).

Expectations for study abroad as an entity, as well as measures of the effectiveness of international education, developed relatively slowly. As mentioned in the previous section, study abroad continued to see an overwhelming majority of upper middle class White females from social science majors, with concerted efforts for diversification within academia only appearing in the early 90s. Furthermore, study abroad as a support structure for students of diversified backgrounds is even more of a novel concept that mostly emerged in academia in the 2000s. Mentions of “outcome assessment,” a concept which measures the effectiveness of study abroad in producing certain beneficial effects, began the process of solidifying goals for international education and holding institutions accountable for achieving these goals (Williams 2005, 357). However, the extent to which study abroad provides necessary support and an optimal environment for students to realize their potential varies widely from program to program.

Environment- Studying Abroad in China

If study abroad is best explained with a constructivist paradigm, educational exchanges between the US and China starting in 1978 is the perfect example of a phenomenon which only constructivism can justify. Though study abroad groups had been previously exchanged infrequently on the part of both the US and China, China's extensive political reforms in 1978 can be said to proceed the beginning of formal, widespread educational exchanges between China and the US in the 20th century. Bullock et al. (2005) describe this moment in history, using political theory to remark on its significance. The main argument of their novel *Bridging Minds Across the Pacific* is that the constructivist, more so than the realist or liberal, can explain why educational exchanges between two countries as ideologically opposed as the US and China has such lasting implications for the future of international relations (Bullock et al., 2005). They use

the term "norm diffusion" to identify the resulting phenomenon that occurred with American study abroad students in China and vice versa (Bullock et al., 2005). This term reflects the socio-cognitive aspects of constructivism that are valuable in discussions of international education, and suggests that normative interactions are a beneficial part of the study abroad experience.

The year 1978, a globally significant year which marked the beginning of Deng Xiaoping's Reform and Opening, was the first time in history that many countries could seek to establish lasting and mutual economic and diplomatic relations with China (Bullock et al., 2005). As mentioned in the previous section, both China and the US took immediate advantage of the opportunity to promote peace using education as a conduit (Bullock et al., 2005). China sending students to the US was a largely symbolic gesture for China's opening, and a reflection of both countries' goal to upset norms both globally and domestically (Bullock et al., 2005). Such a goal created an opportunity to normalize relations between both countries, even in the face of such turbulent events as the Tiananmen student movement in 1989 (Bullock et al., 2005). Predictably, such a progressive attitude on the benefits of study abroad led to a dramatic increase of US students allowed to, and willing to, study abroad in Chinese cities (Bullock et al., 2005).

This phenomenon became even more noticeable with developments from the early 2000s to approximately 2013, including China's economic rise, the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and an overall increase in programs and funding for Chinese study abroad programs (Lewin, 2008). Though interest in China among study abroad students has waned in more recent years (Harney 2015), the influx of American students to China during the previously mentioned period significantly increased the presence of US study abroad institutions in many Chinese cities. Types of study abroad programs in China include language study, study at Chinese universities, pre-service professional training/internships and ethnographic research/fieldwork, among others

(Dixon 2013, 106). It is also worth noting that while the study abroad programs that many American students participate in Chinese areas are semester- or year-long programs, while Chinese students are likely to become international students in US colleges and universities for full 4-year bachelor's programs (Wang 2016).

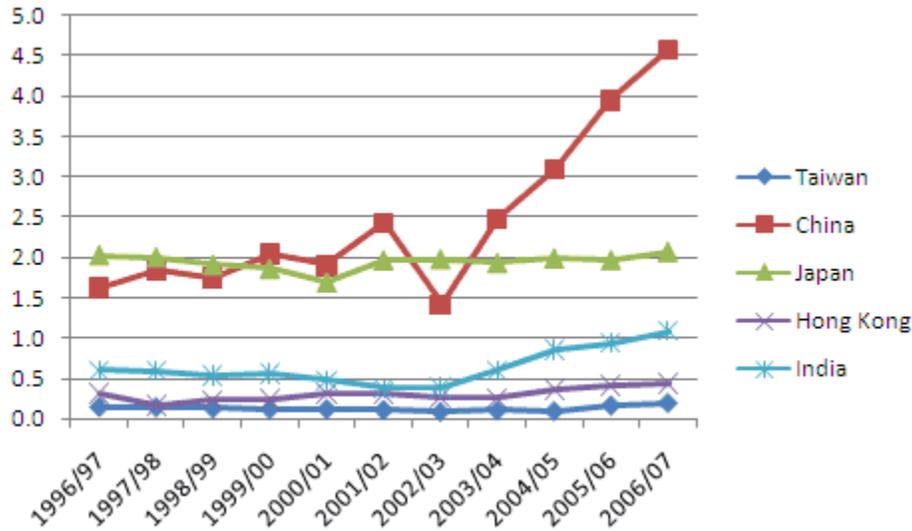


Figure 3- "Percent of study abroad performed in select Asian destinations, 1996-2006." (2008)

In Chinese history, racial hierarchization has been both internally constructed and radically affected by foreign interactions. The Guomindang Party incorporated, for the first time, ideas of "Chineseness," or *minzu zhuyizi*, into political and social discourse, with influences from Sun Yatsen and his writings (Jenner 2001). These ideas were not clearly delineated, but they formalized the parallels between nationalism and a racial identity that defined what it meant to be Chinese (Jenner 2001). With the introduction of the Chinese Communist Party as the single leading party in 1949, race was discussed more directly in political discourse, and more deliberate attempts were made to respect and acknowledge the needs of minority groups within China, including Mongols, Tibetans, Koreans, and other groups (Jenner 2001). As racial

ideologies and images proliferated through China with increased foreign contact, Western modern discourse on race and racism was introduced, further complicating how race was handled on a societal level.

In contemporary Chinese society, there is a considerable African presence in a number of major and coastal cities. As a result of this, the concept of the “Black experience in China” has slowly started to take shape. Bodomo (2012) is the authority of the African experience in China. His book *Africans in China* maps out the African groups of merchants, students, and expats in most major Chinese cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Xi’an. In the history of these accounts, one can see both the embrace of Africans into the Chinese economic and educational spheres, and the racism and lack of tolerance that has developed in urban areas (Bodomo 2012).

The history of Blacks in China is complex, and rife with opportunities for both socio-political alignment and racial distancing alike. It is my goal in my study to examine the many understandings of racial stratification that exist among people in China, their potential sources, and the Black study abroad student’s perception of resultant racial encounters.

Significance

Dennison Nash (1976) produced one of the first academic writings to test the objectives of study abroad themselves. In his study, Nash (1976) urges American higher education to evaluate the precise areas of growth that study abroad produces in the student, such as “increased autonomy” or “differentiation of self” (pg. 196). He tests a few of these areas of growth on an experimental and control group using qualitative measures, and determines that study abroad

created significant, yet somewhat superficial, personality changes in the experimental group. (Nash 1976). Nash also provides an important consideration from Leonard (1964): “not all students can be expected to change significantly as a result of their educational experience overseas, but it is not always clear whether the claims made about the effects of such experience refer to a few elite or to a majority” (Nash 1976, 195).

It is this statement by Leonard that motivates this study. Study abroad, as a relatively new structural presence in US education, is in need of stricter evaluations, not only for the students it claims to serve currently, but for the underrepresented students that it will serve in the future. Once study abroad makes its values accessible to all, it will truly accomplish its central objective of promoting beneficial and meaningful cultural exchange. In measuring the reality of minority students’ experiences, I hope to uncover necessary improvements for study abroad in order to get closer to this objective. In doing so, study abroad will hopefully not only improve, but established measures of the effectiveness of study abroad will also improve, so that institutions can better discern how to improve and better serve the needs of all students.

Chapter 2- Review and Evaluation of Scholarly Literature

Scholarly literature provides extensive research in this study's central question and each subtopic it explores. However, more unanswered questions remain in some subtopics than in others. In this section, I will evaluate the terrain of available research surrounding each of these topics, discuss the level to which previous studies are able to answer our research questions and new questions that may arise, and finally, identify gaps in research that this study seeks to fill in later chapters.

Central Research Question

The central research question, "how do Black students perceive racial encounters while studying abroad in China?" seeks to explain how students interpret racial encounters in differing ways, and what independent variables may determine their perception. Several sources speak to the subjective nature of the perception of racial encounters. A foundational, moral approach to understanding this is "Moral Perception and Particularity" by Lawrence Blum. This work argues that moral relativity affects how different individuals interpret events differently not necessarily because of varying moral principles, but rather that perceptions of the events *themselves* differ from person to person (Blum 1991). This means that the way that individuals see and interpret events dictate the way they choose to respond, and one should take note of perceptions rather than responses (Blum 1991). I draw a parallel between this concept and my own claim, which is that reactions to racial encounters are due to a host of independent variables that affect perception. I propose that the three levels of normative analysis that I identify, identity,

institution and environment, serve as lenses to explain differences between how students interpret racial encounters in study abroad.

The perception of racial encounters, that is the individual's perceived evaluation of an event involving race, is commonly discussed in literature. Cheryl R. Kaiser and Carol T. Miller (2001) published a commonly cited article that focuses on racial perceptions, and possible consequences that occur when an individual attributes their perceptions of a racial encounter to discrimination. This article contributes much to our understanding of individuals' thought processes when experiencing an event that concerns race. The results they reached were that generally, there is social pressure not to attribute an event to discrimination due to the negative social costs that result from bringing up discrimination (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Another important claim this study makes is the idea that stigmatized individuals, like the ones in their study, are motivated to avoid confronting discrimination in their daily lives, a consequence which serves to perpetuate the occurrence of microaggressions and racism (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). With these conclusions, one can begin to make predictions about how students may interpret racial encounters during their time abroad.

While useful, Kaiser and Miller's (2001) study seeks to prove that there are indeed social forces that affect an individual's perception, rather than clearly demonstrating what effect the social forces have on their perception. With a clearer understanding of the invisible social pressures that influence perceptions of racial encounters, and with the intention of building on this premise, a focus of my study is to explore what variables besides social costs may contribute to interpretations of racial encounters in study abroad.

Racial Encounters in Higher Education

To better understand perceptions of racial encounters in study abroad, I will now turn to two studies that deal with the occurrence of racial encounters in higher education institutions in the home country (in this case, the United States). Nora and Cabrera (1996) discuss a decline in college participation amongst African Americans, coupled with rising attrition rates (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). In their study, they explore how perceptions of racial discrimination affect the student's relationship with their institutions, particularly in predominantly White institutions (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Another article called "Assume the Position... You Fit the Description" illustrates the very real existence of racial prejudice in a series of selective, predominantly White colleges and universities, including Harvard University, Michigan State University, UC Berkeley, and others (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Students said that they suffered from what researchers define as *racial battle fatigue*, which includes the use of coping mechanisms, frustration, anger and exhaustion (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007).

A failure of Nora and Cabrera is that it assumes that "the structure underlying perceptions of discrimination and prejudice is fairly consistent among different minority groups," and that "the model may also be stable across minority groups" (Nora & Cabrera 1996, 139). My study differs in that it argues that perceptions of discrimination differ both across minority groups and within minority groups as well. However, I can utilize conclusions from Nora and Cabrera (1996) to understand how prior experiences may influence a student's interpretation of a racial encounter, furthering this study's premise. Smith, Allen and Danley (2007) not only confirm points made in Nora and Cabrera (1996) by discussing the high prevalence of racial encounters for African-American students in these institutions, but also bring to light the individual effects these encounters have had on these students' perception and overall mental state (Smith, Allen,

& Danley 2007). My study will expand on this study's attention to individual accounts, exploring what elements may make perceptions differ.

Racial Encounters in Study Abroad

Further approaching the central research question of this study, I will finally evaluate sources that mention perceptions of racial encounters in study abroad. Talburt and Stewart (1999) conduct an ethnographic study originally intended to observe students in a 5-week summer program in Spain, evaluating the relationship between their curricular and extracurricular activities (Talburt & Stewart 1999). Soon however, they begin to focus the study on the lived experiences of the only African American student in her program, Misheila (Talburt and Stewart, 1999). It soon became apparent that her interaction with the study abroad program were indisputably shaped by her race and gender (Talburt & Stewart 1999). In the introduction of their study, Talburt and Stewart (1999) discuss the very gap in literature that I came across in my research of the literature: "With few exceptions... we found that research has tended to generalize students' experiences abroad to find, largely, silence about these topics... This silence is particularly disturbing given calls for 'greater diversity in participating students, in foreign locations, and in types of programs'" (Talburt and Stewart 1999, 164). Their goals are to address this silence in their research, and contribute to a more realistic analysis of the experiences of students from diverse backgrounds.

This study argues two important points. First is the fact that study abroad in academia is seen as a universal experience, without adequate attention given to differences across identity groups (Talburt & Stewart, 1999). Second is the idea that these differences in identity shape students' study abroad experiences, including their curricular and extracurricular activities, and personal development (Talburt & Stewart, 1999). These are innovative concepts, but they lack a

discussion of exactly how intercultural exchange may produce mutually significant benefits or drawbacks for the student, the study abroad program, and the country in which they are studying. They argue that “different linguistic and cultural lessons and coping strategies that students learn from how members of the host culture perceive and treat them— the lessons of the raced and gendered nature of study abroad— should form an integral part of the formal on-site curriculum” (Talbert & Stewart 1999, 174). Similarly, my study will feature discussions of students’ coping mechanisms, but it will further explore how incorporating different experiences in a curriculum could produce initially negative, but potentially positive outcomes.

Similarly, a paper called “African American Women Scholars and International Research” puts to the forefront the individualized experiences of Black study abroad students (Evans, 2009). Like Talbert and Stewart (1999), Evans (2009) focuses on the intersection of race and gender in study abroad, highlighting the rich and rarely researched history of African Americans in study abroad. She examines the premise that identity and international awareness are inextricably linked in study abroad: “Given the particular social location of Black women in every nation—a subjugated status based on multiple oppressions—I argue... that Black women’s position offers a unique standpoint from which to analyze and effectively address human problems: we are ‘delicately sensitive to social atmospheric conditions’ indeed” (Evans 2009, 94).

Evans (2009) uses similar sentiments as Talbert and Stewart (1999) to highlight the importance of African American women in study abroad. In a revolutionary way, she posits that true intercultural exchange necessarily involves individuals with many differing and intersecting identities (Evans 2009). My study furthers the efforts of this study by continuing to place a focus on the student’s identity, and also to include the study abroad institution, and the environment, or

location of their study abroad experience, in the discussion of subjectivity in study abroad. I believe that from intercultural exchange, not only do individuals stand to gain rich study abroad experiences, but the study abroad institution and the surrounding community benefit as well. My study will ultimately explore the importance of these three levels of normative analysis and their role in the student's perception of racial encounters. In the next few sections, I will evaluate literature on each of these three factors as they pertain to racial encounters abroad.

Three Levels of Normative Analysis

Identity

The first of our three subtopics focuses on identity, or the elements of a person's identity that would contribute to their understandings of racial stratification, as the independent variable at play that would shape a student's perception of a racial encounter while studying abroad. This section seeks to understand how the elements that make up a study abroad student's individual identity form a lens that affects the student's perception of their study abroad experience. In this section, I will discuss both the larger concept of identity that applies universally to each student, and the specific racial identity of the Black student. Then, I will seek answers to how a student's identity may interact with their study abroad experience. Finally, I will look for evidence that a Black student's race might have immediate and tangible influences on their experiences abroad, as well as their interpretation of racial encounters abroad.

First Impressions of Identity in Study Abroad

Literature on this topic appears as early as the 1970s. In a journal called *Improving College and University Teaching*, Michielli (1972) discusses two types of study abroad

programs; one research-centric, and the other enrollment in a foreign university as an international student, mostly focusing on the latter. He proposes that study abroad students who decide to conduct independent research often do so because they share a particular feeling of disenchantment with American education, and suggests that students seek opportunities abroad in order to clarify their perspective "which might help them to relate to the Establishment they so deeply have come to eschew" (Michielli 1972, 160). He also infers that students who decide to undertake independent research abroad are "well disciplined, bright individuals bent on carrying out their programs, with a capacity to adapt to living in foreign environments, and yet sensitive to new mores which may require different, acceptable life style" (Michielli 1972, 161). Nash's (1976) study seeks to further examine the then-novel concept of personal development beyond language acquisition. He concentrates on personality-centric values such as *Increased Autonomy*, *Expansion or Differentiation of Self*, and *Increased Tolerance and Flexibility*, and uses a t-test design to evaluate whether a group of overseas students experience a change in these areas as opposed to a control group at home (Nash, 1976). His results found that only a few realms of personal development could be reliably confirmed to have existed in study abroad students, and that these changes only persist for a short amount of time after the duration of overseas study (Nash, 1976).

These earlier accounts of the benefits of study abroad programs predictably lack an understanding of identity as a factor that might affect a student's study abroad experience. Michielli's (1972) article closely follows the first substantial waves of American students in study abroad, however little is said in the article to distinguish between students of different identities who would be attracted to the concept of international education. Furthermore, the "well disciplined, bright individuals" (Michielli 1972, 161) that he describes comes from a

presupposition that only those who have already been equipped with the tools for study abroad success are viable candidates for international research. Such a belief only serves to perpetuate the elitism of study abroad, and fails to consider either the value of study abroad students outside of the cultural habitus that Michielli (1972) identifies, or the responsibility of the study abroad program to prepare students for an intellectually and emotionally demanding experience. Nash's (1976) study is useful in measuring the extent of personal growth and identity formation for the study abroad student as compared to their counterparts at home. Still, much like Michielli (1972) and other similar commentaries of its time, Nash treats the study abroad student as one monolithic group, and misses the opportunity to describe the nature of students' growth in relation to their identities, or even which factors of growth the individuals may find significant given their identities. Neither article brings to light the subjectivity of the experience based on the individual student's race, gender, socioeconomic class, and other variables.

Making Connections Between Identity and International Study

Despite decades of experience, more recent literature on study abroad focuses more heavily on improving access to study abroad for minority students than anything else, though one can find limited commentary on how students' identities produce subjective outcomes during their study abroad experience. Sam (2001) researches the individual experiences of international students, a group distinct from study abroad students, measuring Satisfaction With Life (SWL). Tomich et al. (2003) seek to understand how personality types might affect an international student's adaptation process, Dolby (2004) explores the American study abroad student's process of coming to terms with their American identity, and Hashim (2003) attempts to make a connection between an international student's gender/cultural background and their methods of coping with stress.

Sam (2001) discusses a set of demographic factors that may affect or predict a student's subjective SWL scale. However, the study mostly focuses on cultural and economic differences, and noticeably sidesteps a conversation about race. The study discerns from students from different nationalities, but neglects to mention race as a demographic category (Sam, 2001). Although Sam (2001) acknowledges that African international students seem to have a significantly lower SWL rating than students from any other region, as well as the fact that the areas of life ranked lowest by these students include "perceived discrimination," a discussion of this phenomenon still does not consider how race may be a viable predictor of SWL. Similarly, Tomich et al. discuss three broad categories that affect a study abroad experience: "skills, attitudes, demographics, and personality" (Tomich et al. 2003, 23), but focus on gender and age demographics while avoiding race. Dolby reflects the same trend: "It is undoubtedly true that students' race affected their experiences in Australia, though that discussion is beyond the scope of this article, and is only noted as relevant" (Dolby 2004, 154). Finally, Hashim (2003) includes African and Western international college students in a study of stressors and coping strategies, but in a list of identified stressors such as "Differences in religious beliefs" and "Roommate conflict," does not include racial stressors or discrimination, only mentioning discrimination briefly throughout the study itself. These studies demand further questions concerning the implications of varied experiences for study abroad student based on racial identity.

Race and Identity in Study Abroad

The closest attempts in study abroad literature to addressing the topic of racial identity in abroad experiences are few and far between. Williams (2006) successfully synthesizes previous writings that have dealt with racial engagement in study abroad, drawing upon four accounts (Day-Vines, 1998; Day-Vines et al., 1998; Morgan et al., 2002; Talburt and Stewart, 1999) of

African-American students who come across racial stratifications while studying abroad, all of the accounts but one having taken place in an African study abroad location. Williams' (2006) study also focuses on students in a study abroad program in Southern Africa, which leaves to the imagination how different racial encounters might look in a context where Black students are not commonly seen. Jackson (2006) contributes further to the “African American student studying abroad in Africa” narrative, commenting on the "sojourn" that African students commonly take via study abroad in search of self-identity. Nanney (2015) does more to uncover the experience of a Black study abroad student in a completely unfamiliar environment; the study focuses on students in predominantly White institutions (PWIs) whose encounters with race were not necessarily shared nor understood by other students, leading to a more internalized process of self-realization. A missing element from each of these studies, however, is a discussion of how race may affect the experience of a Black study abroad student in a context which may not be accustomed to the presence of Black students.

Institutions

Our second subtopic, institutions, focuses on the study abroad institution as the independent variable at play that would shape a Black student's perception of a racial encounter while studying abroad. One must take care to understand the unique position of the study abroad institution in comparison to our other two subtopics. For one, the institution is an actor whose very nature can be actively changed and deliberately chosen in a variety of ways, via change of administration, change in academic policy, in political stance, etc. Therefore, the study abroad institution raises a variety of questions when it comes to its position in the student's perception of a racial encounter. How does a study abroad program choose its values and norms? What are its economic and political objectives? How do study abroad programs take responsibility for a

student's development and growth? What role do study abroad programs play in the context of international relations, and what implications do they have for political relationships between host and source country?

An Alarming Trend

Fortunately for the sake of my research question, a rapidly expanding and well-discussed topic for research is the trend that African-American students are not commonly seen in study abroad. Evidence of this trend is clear: the percentage of Blacks in the US in 2013 was 12.6%, the percentage of Blacks in higher education was 14.6%, and the percentage of Blacks in study abroad was 5.6% (Institute of International Education, 2016; “Population estimates, July 1, 2015, (V2015),” 2015). This information highlights a number of interesting points. For one, Black higher education participation is at a higher proportion than the percentage of Blacks in the US, while participation of Black students in study abroad is less than half of the proportion of Blacks in the US. In addition, we can see that the Black and Hispanic populations are the only populations in US racial demographics to see such a decreased proportion of participants in study abroad.

Finding Solutions

The reasons for this trend have also been widely discussed, and have even been considered immediate concerns for higher education pedagogy. Hembroff and Rusz (1993) highlight a few common explanations for the absence of minorities in US study abroad programs, including minorities students' choice of major, attrition rates, lower socioeconomic levels than White students, and lack of institutional support. Penn and Tanner (2009) conducted one of many expansions on the original findings of Hembroff and Rusz, and suggests a Service Learning Model to actively involve Black students in the abroad experience. They use the

acronym EAR to describe goals for this model: "E" standing for education, or the most traditional component of the abroad experience, "A" for action, or applying the academic experience to their larger study abroad experience via service activities, and "R" for reflection post-travel (Penn & Tanner, 2009).

Penn and Tanner's study (2009) and those of its kind were revolutionary in that they wrenched the trend of the Black absence in study abroad from the factors that Hembroff and Rusz were suggesting, and turned our collective attention toward the conclusion that Black students need to find deeper meaning and internal reflection in their international studies (Penn & Tanner, 2009). This study provides invaluable information on the disparities of racial minorities in study abroad, but at the same time demand more from its findings and raise unanswered questions. In particular: what have been the lived experiences of the Black or minority study abroad students in comparison to the pedagogical goals that Penn and Tanner suggest? What kind of mentorship do Black students seek while abroad? Arguably most important, why is it that Black and minority students more noticeably require deeper meaning and internal reflection than their White counterparts? Our understanding of minorities in study abroad still lack active assessment of student's needs in the realm of international education.

Taking an Active Role

Literature on study abroad in the 21st century has been more promising than its predecessors in discussing the role of the study abroad program in a student's experience abroad. Salisbury et al. (2009) remarks on the continuing lack of Black students in study abroad despite institutional efforts to remove barriers of access, and discusses the differences in study abroad participation across identity markers such as gender, race, and socioeconomic class. One of the most significant contributions of this study is the suggestion that scholars focus on "the

importance focusing on achieving growth on educational outcomes across diverse student groups rather than merely equalizing participation across a litany of activities" (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella 2011, 146). Simon and Ainsworth (2012) focus on patterns of study abroad participation amongst individuals of different races and socioeconomic classes, and builds upon the findings of Salisbury et al. (2009) by evaluating how habitus and cultural capital reproduces inequality in higher education. Gerhards and Hans (2013) provide a similar analytical approach, concluding that the gains of study abroad, "transnational human capital," is distributed unequally amongst social classes. The availability of research on measures of accountability for study abroad programs (Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004) is an encouraging sign that this paper's study, and those that follow will be rooted in productive dialogue on the improvement of institutions for study abroad.

A noticeable absence exists, however, in the conversation concerning how study abroad programs may improve the lived experiences of multicultural and diverse study abroad students. A set of standards and established language on the role of study abroad programs in the non-White student's cultural and emotional adjustments to a foreign environment remains to be seen. A result of this is that study abroad programs remain disconnected in approaches to improving diversity, regardless of their individual successes or failures. A goal of my study is not only to examine the relative impacts that study abroad programs have had on students' perceptions of racial encounters, but how, and how the study abroad program involved itself in a student's racial encounters, if at all.

Environment

The final subtopic of this study, environment, focuses on the study abroad location as the independent variable at play that would shape a student's perception of a racial encounter while studying abroad. *Does location matter as a student interprets a racial encounter, and if so, how much does it matter?* In this section, I will focus specifically on China as a study abroad location in order to provide concrete examples. What kind of environment does China provide American students as a study abroad location? What kind of environment does it provide Black students in various parts of the African diaspora? What is the nature of China's racial hierarchy, and how are Black students treated within it? What motivating factors are there that might lead a Black student to take interest in China as a study abroad location? What are some preconceptions that Americans have about China? How often does the environment factor into a student's interpretation of a racial encounter? Finally, how might being in China affect how a Black student interprets a racial encounter? I will evaluate the literature based on our ability to answer these questions.

A Question of Location

Dervin (2009) takes an interesting stance on the concept of "culture" in study abroad. He argues that study abroad, to its fault, perceives the culture of the study abroad environment as a monolithic, homogenous entity that foreign students come into contact with (Dervin, 2009). He urges study abroad researchers to make a mental shift from "the commodification of intercultural understanding" to the appreciation of one's diversity and that of others" (Dervin 2009, 120). I agree with his assertions for the most part; I believe that languages, ideas and customs do not comprise a "culture," but rather these are common factors that act as social forces, dictating norms within a society. With this understanding, I do not assume that, given a

certain societal judgement on a particular race, every individual within a certain society will treat people within that race the same, nor will people within that race encounter the same treatment. For the sake of my study, it is important to keep in mind the nuances of individuals when discussing environment as a factor that influences racial encounters. At the same time, using constructivism as a tool to describe the existence of a "culture," I acknowledge that there are indeed pronounced collective understandings within societies that contribute to the understandings of race and racial stratification for each individual within that society.

Looking further into the literature, we can find more examples of the environment being an important variable in the study abroad experience. Tomich et al. (2003) provide a list of variables that may influence a student's study abroad experience, including language, cultural similarity/distance, interaction with host country members, and host environment receptivity among them (23). The study's results found that in general, Asian students tended to have a more difficult time adapting to life while abroad in America than did their European counterparts (Tomich et al., 2003). One reason for this was the cultural dissimilarity and social idiosyncrasies between the Asian students and their American environment (Tomich et al., 2003). Hashim (2003) echoed these findings, discovering that African students had higher sources of stress in categories such as difficulties in Chinese reading and writing, roommate conflicts, and change in social activities (190). Higher levels of stress, as Hashim (2003) notes, also directly correlates to higher levels of post-interaction anxiety in the study abroad environment (185). These two studies make concrete the idea that an environment plays a role in cultural adaptation. However, their faults are similar to ones mentioned in my discussion of identity in racial encounters. While both of them focus on the relative ease of adaptation for two separate cultural groups, they both remain rather silent on the topic of race.

To examine racial encounters specifically, I turn again to Talburt and Stewart's (1999) study. In its vivid account of the lived experience of Misheila, the only African-American female student in the program, the article indirectly illustrates how a location might affect a student's racial perceptions. Misheila mentions initially not anticipating that race would be an issue in Spain, soon realizing that "[racial otherness is] all over. People say it's not there, but it's there" (Talburt and Stewart 1999, 168). She soon realizes that her race in Spain means something very specific, and that based on the color of her skin she was sexualized and harassed on a nearly daily basis (Talburt and Stewart, 1999). Such disappointments in the racial climate caused her to "[slip] into generalization in her efforts to understand Spaniards' behaviors and cope with racism" (Talburt and Stewart 1999, 168). Another study conducted by Lee and Green (2016) gives another vivid account of how perceptions of a racial encounter may differ in a particular environment. Four Black students interviewed in this article discussed a better understanding of their racial identity after a 25-day long program in South Africa (Lee and Green, 2016). In this environment, "Black students had the opportunity to discuss and experience the complexities of race and racial identity" and "share their experiences in a comfortable environment with one another and with whom they interacted in South Africa" (Lee and Green 2016, 72).

Misheila's story in Talburt and Stewart's (1999) study demonstrates how being in Spain gives nuance to her response to racial encounters. Later in her narrative, Misheila "[draws] on her historical readings of Spanish feminism to point to changes in conceptions of gender roles that would validate her stance" (Talburt and Stewart 1999, 170) on the unacceptable behavior of men in her immediate environment. It is evident from this account that Misheila was able to use her developing knowledge of her study abroad environment to make sense of recurring racial encounters. I argue that her process of acculturation to a Spanish environment allowed her to

cope with and digest a racial encounter which she might've interpreted differently if in a different country, or in the US. We can see a similar theme in Lee and Green's (2016) study. The environment becomes even more salient in this case because the program in South Africa gives Black students in the program in the necessary context to discuss race, whereas in the program in Spain in Talburt and Stewart's (1999) article noticeably provides a different arena for racial discussion. Students in the South African program not only had the opportunity to explore their own identity in this environment, but they also had the advantage of not being in the racial minority, which made racial discussions all the more likely. In the following section, I will discuss what kind of environment China is for Black students, and how the country affects their perceptions of racial encounters.

China as a Study Abroad Context

China's relatively recent opening to educational exchanges with the West brings to light China's unique character as a study abroad location. Tian and Lowe (2013) delve into the lived experiences of American students in an exchange program with a prestigious Chinese university. The study explores students' pre departure perceptions of China, adaptation processes, and self-reflection after the conclusion of the abroad program (Tim and Lowe, 2013). A common theme among most students was the "exotic" nature of China that clouded preconceptions, and their increased appreciation for individuality and heterogeneity of Chinese society (Tim and Lowe 2013, 292). Similarly, in my study, I hope to discuss the differences between Black students' preconceptions and changes in sentiment towards Chinese society. This study, focusing on American students, does well to capture the internal transformation that many American students undergo while participating in study abroad in China. However, both individual Black

experiences and the shared Black experience in the context of China are necessarily separate conversations.

Significantly less information is available on the experiences of Black students in China. Bullock et al. (2005) help us to see constructivist theory at play in initial educational exchanges between the US and China, but for Black students these exchanges were often not the mutually beneficial interactions that a constructivist would expect. Robeson Taj Frazier's *The East Is Black* (2014) discusses the ideological parallels between African American activists and Chinese revolutionaries during the era of Mao. In the face of the oppression of non-Whites and newly emerging anti-Western narratives in the United States, China during Mao's dictatorship presented a favorable rhetoric to many African Americans, which seemingly anticipated diplomatic and political ties between the two groups (Frazier, 2014). In certain accounts, the intersection of radicalism in both communities seemed harmonious; however, one can see another side of the story when one examines the history of Africans in Chinese study abroad programs (Bodomo, 2012).

These works give an unavoidably fragmented picture of the Black experience in China. An African-American student studying abroad in a Chinese location would be likely to have encounters that reflect any one of these many images of Blackness in Chinese society. In my study, my goal is to discuss the historical and cultural significance of certain racial encounters in the Chinese context. A better understanding of the source of these images and racial sentiments may help in describing China as a study abroad location for Black students.

Conclusion

Though evidence exists in literature to provide foundational information, the central research question of this study remains largely unanswered. Racial perceptions is a concept that rarely enters the discussion of study abroad. This study is also unique in that it involves the intersection of three independent variables, identity, institution, and environment, all of which have not yet been synthesized in a discussion of study abroad or racial perceptions.

A weakness of the question of identity in racial perceptions abroad is the fact that researchers are more likely to focus on barriers of access to study abroad, and not the lived experiences of those who have already studied abroad. The demographics of students who study abroad are often dependent on recruitment methods and not the actual success of programs, which means that students from diverse backgrounds are subject to the pre-existing study abroad structure that was not necessarily built to serve students from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, writings on identity in study abroad tout the importance of diversity mostly for the sake of the study abroad programs themselves, and do not discuss either the issues that diversity may raise, or the foreseeable outcomes for the individual contributing their diversity to the program, or the country at large. A danger in seeing diversity from the perspective of the institution is that it neglects implications for the individual student, especially when the institution's own understandings of race and racial stratification is obscured.

The question of institutions in racial perceptions abroad is becoming more and more of a salient topic, which bodes well for the future of study abroad administration and its level of accountability. However, much remains to be said about how much of a role study abroad administration can play in a student's interpretation of their study abroad experience, let alone their interpretation of racial encounters. Study abroad needs to undergo structural shift in

attention from participation rates to improving experiences of students who participate. In this way, study abroad literature is blindsided when attempting to discuss the effectiveness of a program and its impact on a student's future, especially as it pertains to race.

Finally, the role of an environment in racial perceptions abroad is at least acknowledged, but literature lacks the analysis of causal mechanisms of a location on the racial climate of a study abroad program. The concept of "norm diffusion," as described by Bullock et al. (2009) is central to our understanding of why context is important for the Black study abroad student. This is because norms of race and racism in the Black study abroad student's home country inevitably come into conflict with the norms of their environment while abroad. The nature of this conflict is defined by differences between the study abroad student's home country and study abroad location.

To illustrate this point, I turn back to Bennett's (1986) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). As the Black study abroad student experiences *acculturation*, or the "process of learning the cultural traits or social patterns of another group" ("Acculturation," 2005), their internal racial schema interact and conflict with those of the surrounding society. If this interaction is beneficial in nature, a student may find themselves able to experience full acculturation. However if this interaction is negative and significantly different than that of the individual's prior understandings of race, a student may find themselves consistently on the "ethnocentric" end of the DMIS model (Bennett, 1986). In order to promote true acculturation and more effective cultural exchange, I place an emphasis on the institution in this study as the only factor that can actively and consciously promote positive interactions between members of the host country and the study abroad environment.

Chapter 3- Methodology

Research Questions

The primary research question of this study is as follows: *How do Black students perceive racial encounters while participating in a study abroad program in China?* The secondary research questions are listed below:

1. To what extent do the students associate the encounter with their identity?
2. To what extent do the students associate the encounter with the study abroad program/institution?
3. To what extent do the students associate the encounter with the study abroad environment?

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the primary research question is a case study with the purpose of better describing a larger phenomenon, that being Black students' perceptions of racial encounters in study abroad. In order to describe this larger phenomenon, I utilize the three levels of normative analysis mentioned in earlier chapters: identity, institution, and environment.

Some racial encounters may emphasize one of these three levels of analysis disproportionately. For example, if a student strongly associates a racial encounter with their identity, they might feel that the encounter was not likely to happen to other students with which they studied abroad, and therefore take on the burden of dealing with the occurrence. This happens in circumstances when students are singled out for their racial, gender, religious, etc. identity, and asked to speak publically on certain topics. An encounter strongly associated with the study abroad institution would mean that the study abroad institution stepped in at some point

in the racial encounter, either improving or worsening the situation for the student. Common examples of this are when counselors or teachers help students deal with students' difficulties in adjusting as a Black individual. Finally, an encounter that is strongly associated with the study abroad environment is an encounter that the student believes was prompted by the study abroad location. Often, encounters happen that wouldn't occur in other countries, such as when Chinese people take pictures of Black students, either with or without asking.

Hypothesis

This study adopts the approach of exploratory data analysis (EDA) rather than traditional hypothesis testing (Naumova, 2017). EDA, a stage of data analysis that directly follows initial data analysis, is simply the observation of data before making claims or conclusions on the research questions (Naumova, 2017). EDA also normally comes before developing a hypothesis (Naumova, 2017). However given that the topic of racial encounters amongst Black study abroad students has not been adequately discussed in literature, this study is exploratory by nature, and EDA grants the flexibility needed in order to inform the direction of future research. EDA allows this study not only to remain objective in its observation of students' perception of racial encounters, but also to potentially generate new hypotheses from its results. Some questions that can be explored using EDA include:

- What trends can we see between different racial encounters?
- Can a student's personality and background explain their perception of certain racial encounters?
- Is there a disparity between how different genders perceive racial encounters?

- How is the length of time since their study abroad experience a factor in students' perception of racial encounters?
- Can we use data to identify recurrent successes or failures within study abroad institutions?
- Is the “three levels of normative analysis” model effective?

In this study, the collected data serves as a starting point for observations and hypotheses that I suggest for further research in future studies.

Research Goals

The main goal of this study is to provide an answer to the primary research question. I use the “three levels of normative analysis” model to discuss how Black students perceive racial encounters in China, and any observable trends amongst these perceptions. Using contextual information about the students, their study abroad institutions, and the social backdrop of China, I seek to complete the picture of specific racial encounters and provide a comprehensive explanation for how students have interpreted them. While identifying trends amongst racial encounters is significant to this goal, discovering outliers and unexpected results is an equally significant part of the process.

As I progress into analysis of specific racial encounters, a second goal of this study is to describe the importance of each of the three levels of normative analysis by answering the secondary research questions. How prominent is identity, the study abroad institution and its structure and function, and the surrounding culture of China in the student's perception? Furthermore, what is the role of each of these three factors? Could any of them have played a part in making a positive encounter better, or mitigating the effects of a negative encounter?

The third goal of this study is to use data to produce hypotheses that may be explored in future studies. These hypotheses will seek to explain questions about common trends amongst different racial encounters. For instance, an effective test would be to analyze the strength of a trend amongst negative racial encounters. If all negative racial encounters seem to be associated with a trend, how strong is the trend and what are some explanations for it? These hypotheses may come from both the qualitative and quantitative observations of this study.

A fourth goal, a meta-analysis of this study, would be to understand whether or not the framework of the three levels of normative analysis is useful. If understanding how much a student associates an encounter with each of the factors helps to describe the student's overall perception of that event, then it can be understood that the three levels of normative analysis are indeed valid tools for discussing racial encounters in study abroad.

Recruitment Process/Interview Procedure

After obtaining approval to conduct the study from the Tufts Institutional Review Board (IRB), I contacted research participants using one of three methods: sending an e-mail to the offices of US study abroad institutions, advertising for participants on social media, and word-of-mouth. I was able to coordinate with 6 study abroad offices in total, and contacts from those study abroad offices responded either by forwarding information about the study to individual students, or by reaching out to their alumni networks. Social media proved to be a useful tool in sparking interest for the study, but few students on social media followed up to participate. Study abroad offices, professors at Tufts, and confirmed research participants were also able to distribute information for the study to others via word-of-mouth. Each of the participants were asked to confirm all of the following criteria: they must identify as Black/African-American,

they must have studied abroad as an undergraduate in mainland China since the year 2000, and their study abroad program must have been done either through a US accredited university or a US-based study abroad institution.

The process of collecting information in this study took the form of structured interviews and online surveys. Once students responded to the study using contact information in recruitment e-mails and advertisements, I sent them a consent form and asked them to confirm the previously listed criteria, and to officially consent to participating in the study. This began the interview/survey process. Interviews were conducted if students requested an in-person or Skype conversation, and if they were not available for those options they were given an online Tufts Qualtrics survey. The interviews and surveys are identical in terms of content, but interviews allowed me to gain more familiarity with the student, focus on the details of their experience, and ultimately gave me more information about the “identity” factor. In both the interview and survey process, the student answered two series of questions: background questions, and a questionnaire which gives students the opportunity to recount specific racial encounters. The total number of interviews and surveys administered was 16.

The background portion focuses on the details of the student’s study abroad experience: their housing arrangements or their fears about studying abroad, to name a few. Its purpose is to provide contextual information for describing that student’s set of three factors: their identity, their institution, and their environment. The questionnaire portion asks students to recount 6-10 racial encounters, rating them overall on a 0-100 scale (0 being extremely negative, and 100 being extremely positive). Then, the student is asked to consider how much they associate each of the three factors with each experience, and rate the association on a 0-100 scale (0 being no association, 100 being a great deal of association). All student interviews and online surveys

were stored in a secured location, and students as well as study abroad institutions assigned a pseudonym which will be used throughout the Results and Discussion chapters.

After collecting this information, I clean the raw data using Excel, and import the cleaned data to Stata. I then reshape information provided by each student so that rather than having each student represent one observation, each racial encounter provided by the students becomes the new unit of analysis. Then, turning questionnaire information into numerical or categorical data, I perform a series of analyses such as correlations, regressions, and plot graphs with lines of best fit. These analyses, discussed in Chapter 5, will provide necessary numerical and statistical explanations for phenomena I will explore in Chapter 6.

Chapter 4- Student Experiences and Context

Interviews were conducted over a one-month period. Of the 14 study abroad institutions contacted in this period, 7 institutions responded by forwarding recruitment messages for the study to the alumni of their programs. Recruitment messages were also posted on four Facebook group pages, and students were encouraged to distribute the message to friends who fit the study's criteria via word-of-mouth. In total, 33 students from 10 different study abroad institutions responded to the recruitment messages, and of those students 16 of them successfully completed the interview process. Interviews were conducted either in person or via Skype, and eight interviews were completed on the online survey. In general, more background information came from the in person and Skype interviews than the online surveys, as the conversational nature of these interviews uncovered more about the students' personalities, as well as more details about their experiences. Each student provided one to six (an average of three) racial encounters, resulting in a total n=66 racial encounters.

Further information on the respondents is provided below, sorted by institution. Each student and institution have been given a pseudonym. Locations, with the exceptions of Beijing and Shanghai, have also been given pseudonyms to preserve the confidentiality of institutions which take place in lesser known cities.

Name	Current Age	Gender	Home Institution	Age During Study Abroad	Duration of Program	Location of Study Abroad	Living Situation	Study Abroad Experience Rating (0-100)
Oluwa Abioye	22	Female	Large Northeastern University	22	2 months	North-eastern Coastal City	Host family	75

Table 1- Institution A

Oluwa Abioye, from Large Northeastern University, participated in a summer program with Institution A for 2 months. Her time abroad was not too long before this interview took place. Her time at Institution A was her second experience abroad, her first being a 6-month program that was affiliated with her university. After having enjoyed her experience in the 6-month program, Oluwa decided to take a more dedicated approach to improving her Chinese language skills. It wasn't until she arrived at the program in Institution A that she realized how prestigious and language-intensive the institution was. Having come from little over a year of Chinese language skills, she was placed into one of the lower levels of Chinese classes in Institution A, amongst other students with widely varying levels of proficiency. "[The diversity of language skill] was really interesting, and something that made our community better... I didn't expect [it] going in, but it was a good surprise once I was in the program," Oluwa says.

Oluwa mentions that race wasn't of particular concern to her the first time she went abroad:

I had heard stories but didn't really pay attention; I think I had a unique perspective especially with my parents being African and me being a first generation American. Through my parents' view and my

family's view, going to China was very cool because it was kind of a mecca for business... and it just made sense. ...A lot of my family traveled to Asia, but they had a Black American experience versus an African experience, which might be very different, and that's a different topic for a different day. ...It was a culture shock being in China, definitely... just that I was such an anomaly that I was gawked at and touched and taken pictures of. So that first time was a real shock, but I think the first time I laughed it off...

Her second time going abroad, she had a better sense of what to expect. However, since her experience as a Black woman in China was less of a novelty to her, she felt that her treatment was more of a disturbance than anything else. "This time I was way more annoyed, and maybe because I knew Chinese culture more and could express myself more, I felt that I could be annoyed and also express how annoyed I was in Chinese."

Oluwa gives her overall experience under Institution A a 75 out of 100. Her reasoning for this was that she expected more of a "study abroad" and "travel" experience, rather than one that was so language-centric and curriculum-heavy. She felt that her institution reflected the academic norms and values of a Chinese education system, focusing on rote memorization and 5-6 hours of study per night. Finally, she mentions that after 6 months of digesting the experience, she has come to appreciate the nature of Institution A's strict curriculum, as she believes that it helped her to improve her Chinese skills. Oluwa provided 3 racial encounters, two negative and one positive.

Name	Current Age	Gender	Home Institution	Age During Study Abroad	Duration of Program	Location of Study Abroad	Living Situation	Study Abroad Experience Rating (0-100)
Kalima Gaston	27	Female	Small Midwestern College	21	5 months	Beijing	Dormitory	90
Daniel Skelly	21	Male	Medium-Small Northeastern College	20	4 months	Beijing	Dormitory	80

Table 2- Institution B

Kalima and Daniel both participated in Institution B, a study abroad program in Beijing. While Kalima was intent on improving the Chinese language skills she had developed in high school, Daniel had no prior experience with Chinese; he was a Classics major and hoped to experience a culture he was completely unfamiliar with. Daniel discovered, in his shift from Western to Eastern pedagogy, that Chinese culture places significantly less stress on the individual and more on the collective society, which fascinated him in his time abroad. Both Kalima and Daniel heard about Institution B because it was highly praised and well advertised by their professors.

Kalima and Daniel’s expectations of how they would be treated in China based on their race differed. Daniel researched what his experience would be as a Black man before leaving:

We all thought at first, “Oh my gosh, you’re gonna be super discriminated against when you go to China!” There are actually a few blogs in China that just say, don’t go to China because you will get discriminated against. ...My mother was actually terrified, like, have you heard about the washing machine commercial? (Graham-Harrison 2016) ...So she was like, “David, this is what you’re gonna have to go up against when you go to China! There was a little worry, but it all went away when I actually experienced it. It was actually quite milder than I expected.

Kalima was not as concerned with how her race would affect her in China:

...My light skin causes many to misidentify me and I expected that would be the case in China. Some friends and family thought it was cool I wanted to go China, others were confused about why I wanted to go, but no one mentioned race as a potential issue. Honestly, I was more worried about whether my Chinese roommate would find out about my sexuality and how she would react.

Despite their individual preoccupations about how they would be received in China, both had excellent experiences that they did not regret. While David faced a host racial stereotypes that he learned how to navigate, Kalima received “the same special treatment when out in Beijing as [her] White classmates.” Overall, Kalima rated her experience a 90 and provided two negative racial encounters, and Daniel rated his experience an 80 and provided six racial encounters, three negative and three positive.

Name	Current Age	Gender	Home Institution	Age During Study Abroad	Duration of Program	Location of Study Abroad	Living Situation	Study Abroad Experience Rating (0-100)
Gregory Eshe	26	Male	Medium-Small Northeastern University	21	12 months	Beijing, North-Eastern city, Eastern Coastal City	Dormitory	80
Kenneth Harrison	24	Male	Medium Mid-Atlantic University	20	6 months	Beijing, North-Eastern City	Dormitory	85
Charles Stewart	28	Male	N/A	25	3 months	North-Eastern City	Dormitory	75

Table 3- Institution C

Gregory, Kenneth, and Charles each have mixed feelings about their experiences at Institution C. For all three of them, language proficiency was by far the most significant of their goals going into the program. “You take a language pledge...not to speak any English with anyone in your program or your roommates, so my expectations were that all these commitments better pay off,” Charles recounts. In such an intensive program, academics are heavily stressed, and cultural experiences are more peripheral to the experience. Furthermore, the program took place in Northeastern City, a less internationally-minded city in northern China. This was a challenge for Charles in particular, who participated in the program after graduating.

It was a different experience for me than for the other people who were doing study abroad in college; this was their study abroad experience, and for them, they were getting graded after the program. Whereas for me I had already graduated and was trying to figure out, what’s the motivating factor for me here? Do I care about my grades? Is all of this gonna pay off? Why did I do this? I could be back in cosmopolitan

Beijing rather than here...

While Kenneth and Charles were well aware of the difficulties of studying in a less cosmopolitan Chinese city as Black males, Gregory had no prior experience with race relations in China. "My concerns were of the normative, just going abroad, amenities, food differences. ...There was never really anything racial about [my concerns] until I got there." During the program, Gregory, Kenneth, and Charles encountered awkward racial moments rather frequently, but were willing to take advantage of most situations as long as they provided an opportunity for lateral communication. Franklin describes his thoughts:

These people don't know why I'm here or why I'm this color, so let's help them understand why I'm here, what it means to be this color, and what the history is associated with it. If you're the first Black person they see, you probably have a lot of power because you can kind of shape the way they look at an experience, and African American people from here on out. If you're rude to them, act like you're better than them, or have any sort of negative reaction to them, that's what they take away. For any sort of interaction I looked at it as "this is something new that they may have not experienced, so let's make it a positive experience for both of us."

Gregory, Kenneth, and Charles gave their overall experiences a rating of 80, 85, and 75, respectively. Gregory recounted three negative and two positive encounters, Kenneth two negative and two positive encounters, and Charles three positive, two negative, and one neutral encounter.

Name	Current Age	Gender	Home Institution	Age During Study Abroad	Duration of Program	Location of Study Abroad	Living Situation	Study Abroad Experience Rating (0-100)
Ethan Burrows	25	Male	Large Mid-Atlantic University	20	4 months	Shanghai	Dormitory	81
Justine Frances	21	Female	Large Mid-Atlantic University	18	4+ Years	Shanghai	Dormitory	87
Ava Postigo	19	Female	Large Mid-Atlantic University	18	4 years	Shanghai	Dormitory	65
Shoshanna Welters	25	Female	Small Historically Black Southeastern College	16	1 sem.	Shanghai	Dormitory	90

Table 4- Institution D

Ethan, Justine, and Ava all attended Large Mid-Atlantic University, but decided to participate in study abroad programs at Institution D for different reasons. Ethan Burrows had a broad appreciation of Eastern culture. Large Mid-Atlantic University placed emphasis on the study abroad experience, and his decision for a location was between China and Ghana. Either way, he wanted a unique experience and to gain “a more balanced outlook on the world.” Justine had been studying Chinese since middle school, and was accepted to two different offers for study abroad programs in China. Deciding to take on both, she was eager to make use of her language skills and soak in the experience of a longer stay in China. Ava was encouraged to participate in Institution D because of the financial support that the program offered, and this informed her decision to embrace the opportunity to experience a new culture. Both Ethan and Justine placed faith in Institution D; Ethan in particular had heard of the other study abroad programs promoted at Large Mid-Atlantic University and wasn’t interested. He believed that

“many people enjoyed the European cities and treated it more so as a vacation than a learning experience.” Ava, however, had heard nothing about Institution D and applied to the program on a whim. It was only until she was accepted that she could process what a prestigious program she was about to join.

Shoshanna Welters was a bit younger than the other three students when she first studied abroad in China. She describes living a steady, monotonous life at home, making the spontaneous decision to study abroad, and realizing that the opportunity to do so was a privilege for her. Coming from a supportive community in her historically Black college, Shoshanna was more concerned about joining students in Institution D, a notoriously competitive study abroad program, than she was concerned about her new experiences in China. Indeed, her peers in Institution D fit the description, and her relaxed attitude allowed her to fit in despite the “showy” culture she describes.

Both Ethan and Justine had their expectations about how race would affect their study abroad experiences. Justine was well aware of the challenges that faced her in China, as she had been abroad before. She was “concerned because it can be overwhelming and exhausting,” but not particularly fearful. Ethan drew from his experience at a predominantly White high school in which he was “somewhat used to not fitting in with the crowd.” Ava knew little about the racial climate of China, and although her parents were apprehensive about her decision to study in China as a Black woman, she used support from her friends to convince her parents of the value of the experience. Ethan rated his experience an 81, and Justine, who studied there for a significantly longer period of time, rated hers an 87. Ava describes a difficulty in adjusting to life in China, and after 4 years of living in China, she gives her overall experience a 65. Shoshanna appreciates her experience in China as one of four Black students in Institution D, and rates her

experience a 90. Ethan provided one negative racial encounter, Justine two positive and two negative encounters, Ava four negative and two positive encounters, and Shoshanna one negative encounter.

Name	Current Age	Gender	Home Institution	Age During Study Abroad	Duration of Program	Location of Study Abroad	Living Situation	Study Abroad Experience Rating (0-100)
Michaela Perry	24	Female	Medium Northeastern University	21	4 months	South-eastern City	Dormitory	85

Table 5- Institution E

Michaela Perry recounted her experience in Southeastern City from three years ago. A prestigious and well-advertised study abroad location at Medium Northeastern University, Institution E drew Michaela in after falling in love with the Chinese language in her freshman year. Like many other study abroad students who go to China, Michaela had full intentions to improve her Chinese language skills going into the program, and was seeking a language-intensive experience. However, in terms of culture, she was less certain of what to expect. She placed trust in Institution E to help her have a great experience, and felt comfortable under the auspices of the program. "...It seemed very organized and structured, and it had a close relationship with the university, so I think that also appealed to me... It seemed [to say] 'We're here for you,' like a first step..."

As the only Black student accepted to Institution E, Michaela knew that her Blackness would give her a different experience than her non-Black counterparts. Still, because she went with a close high-school friend, her fears were significantly decreased. She noted how Institution

E dealt with race in her orientations before leaving for Southeastern City.

I think they [mentioned race] in a roundabout way, stuff like when they were like “Be Chinese!” and we were like... how is that gonna work? [Other] things like “You will be the first foreigner” and that’s definitely based in race. That’s a distinct [statement], you’ll know that you’re different. But I don’t think they specifically mentioned race, I remember they talked a lot about mental health and if that’s something you have an issue with, then it’s best not to go. And I remember that stood out more... we were all like, “Wait, are you serious?”

This quotation from Michaela is telling; the pre-study abroad preparations provided by the study abroad institution is a critical factor in the student’s adaptation and participation in the study abroad experience in itself. From this instance, two things are evident: one, in Michaela’s perception, race was an important enough factor that she already felt singled out for not being able to “be Chinese” like her institution suggested. Two, rather than being a time of encouragement and acceptance, the orientation ended up marginalizing students who didn’t seem to fit the traditional study abroad image. I discuss these ideas in more detail in the following chapter.

Michaela appreciated her first experience in China with Institution E, which became the benchmark for her trips to China afterward. She developed a close relationship with the other students in her cohort, the program administrators, and the people she met in China. She gives the overall experience an 85, attributing the loss in points to a desire to have even more rigorous of a language program. She recounts 6 racial encounters; three negative, two positive, and one neutral.

Name	Current Age	Gender	Home Institution	Age During Study Abroad	Duration of Program	Location of Study Abroad	Living Situation	Study Abroad Experience Rating (0-100)
Imani Frances-Brave	24	Female	Large Western College	19	5 years	South-eastern Coastal City	Dormitory	97

Table 6- Institution F

Imani Frances-Brave has a unique story as a Black study abroad student in China. Being from a large city in California, Imani had lived in close proximity with many Chinese-Americans. Her exposure to Chinese culture in the past was ill-informed, she admits:

[In our city] I think a majority of them speak Cantonese, and I think that just by having a lot of stereotypes about China, Chinese people, and Chinese culture, we really have a very shallow understanding of it. There’s a stigmatization attached to Chinese culture from when I was in high school, in my perspective. It never crossed my mind; [in college] I wanted to [learn] French or Italian, because I had just come back from Italy and it was all about the whole European life, you know?

She soon changed her perspective with the advice of an acquaintance:

I was working at a grocery store, and there was a Black woman who spoke Chinese. She was a frequent customer and we became close friends; she’s actually become one of my biggest mentors. I was telling her I wanted to do this Champs-Élysées [trip], I wanna be learning French. She was like, “Oh no, learn Chinese, it’s the language of the future.” Me being someone who knew nothing at the time about culture or politics or anything, I was like, “Chinese, ew! Ching chong, food that I don’t like, Panda Express”... Panda Express is not Chinese whatsoever, but someone who doesn’t know that thinks it’s Chinese... It took months for her to persuade me... I remember just to shut her up I said okay, and I signed

up for [my first Chinese class]...

After a semester of Chinese, Imani made a snap decision to study abroad in China. She had few preoccupying thoughts about her race before leaving for China; although negative stereotypes about Chinese people surrounded her, and although she understood her obstacles as a Black woman, she welcomed the experience as a challenge. While she was there, she found out about Institution F, which would provide her the opportunity to stay in China for her entire undergraduate career as an international student in a prestigious university in Shanghai. She jumped at the opportunity to do so. Even in the long duration of her time at Institution F, her experience as a Black woman in China was not a main concern. “I’ve never felt threatened in China,” she says. “If I had any racial [experiences], I’ve always been able to disprove someone... I see it as giving them a learning experience.” She was, however, disappointed in her treatment as an American student in a Chinese school system:

...Everything is on [my] shoulders, especially having to do a major in a language that isn’t my own... I feel like there is zero help out there even when I’m actually seeking help. I would’ve gotten so much more out of my college experience if I had better counselors or better professors who are like “Listen, we know you’ve only known Chinese for 2 years, you can’t [compete] with these students. I can’t really blame the professors, because they’re just doing their job. I think it’s the fault of [Institution F], because they set up this system.

Despite her academic struggles in Institution F, which she is still currently studying in to complete her degree, she gives it a high score of 97. “I’ve finally been able to say that I’m not stupid, I just have a different fight, and overall my experience has taught me that you can do anything.” She provides four racial encounters; two negative, one positive, and one neutral.

Name	Current Age	Gender	Home Institution	Age During Study Abroad	Duration of Program	Location of Study Abroad	Living Situation	Study Abroad Experience Rating (0-100)
Nakira Kame	20	Female	Large Northwestern University	20	15 months	Mid-western City, Beijing	Dorm, Apartment	78

Table 7- Institution G

Nakira Kame’s decision to study abroad in China was informed by her study of foreign aid patterns during her undergraduate career. Though her original intent was to study in Germany after having spent one year at a German university, one of her professors at Large Northwestern University convinced her to challenge herself and study Chinese foreign aid instead. She decided to participate in a program at Institution G, a program that was well-known at Large Northwestern University and that had a helpful alumni network which helped inform her decision. She knew to expect special treatment as a Black woman in China based on a two-week trip that she took in Beijing a year prior.

Her overall experience in China through Institution G was shaped by her race, and the fact that she was only Black woman in the program. She found that the position that she played as the only Black woman was quite draining: “I am not at 100% everyday and being a ‘Black Person Ambassador’ is a full time job.” Though she took responsibility for the role, she also lacked support from the administrators of her program in dealing with her adjustment:

I remember one time in particular our university site coordinator mentioned that I need to step outside

of my comfort zone. I was very surprised because being in China was not exactly cozying it up in my comfort zone and it took a lot of effort to be seen as more than a foreigner (compared to my Asian and White American peers). She also mentioned that it was interesting I didn't liked being stared at but choose a program in China. Normalizing cultural differences and stereotypes make it hard to honestly discuss difficult topics such as racism and sexism. Saying "Oh that's just Chinese culture" devalued my experiences and struggles. I almost felt ashamed that I was struggling with being Black.

Despite this discouragement, Nakira found comfort in her friends, the alumni network, and academics. She gives her overall experience a rating of 78, providing three negative racial encounters and one positive racial encounter.

Name	Current Age	Gender	Home Institution	Age During Study Abroad	Duration of Program	Location of Study Abroad	Living Situation	Study Abroad Experience Rating (0-100)
Rafia Adene	21	Female	Medium-Small Single-Sex Northeastern College	20	2 months	Beijing	Dormitory	84
Brianna Evers	26	Female	Large Northeastern College	21	6 months	Beijing	Dormitory	100
Angela Green	22	Female	Medium-Small Single-Sex Northeastern College	21	1 year	South-eastern City	Dormitory	83

Table 8- Institution H

Rafia, Brianna, and Angela each wanted to make significant progress in their Mandarin skills through an immersive experience. Institution H, as advertised, would help any student achieve a high level of Mandarin through its strict academic policies and strong focus on immersion. Not only was it well promoted, but for Brianna in particular, there was little other choice for her in terms of study abroad options in Large Northeastern College.

[Large Northeastern College] professors tried to encourage us to stick to the [Institution H program] because they knew it had a certain standard... they made it really difficult for us to apply to other programs besides [Institution H], and if you were doing a major it was a task to get [credits] to qualify. ...It was exactly how they described it. Our classes were taught in an American format, so we weren't similar to everything [in China] with memorization... [but] you'd expect that your GPA would take a hit. You worked really hard to do well.

Rafia and Angela were sensitive to how race would be a factor in their time abroad. They both feared the anti-Blackness in China that they heard from blogs, newspapers, and Black alumni of Chinese study abroad programs. Brianna was raised in a largely multicultural and multi-ethnic community in the Caribbean, so her family was more comfortable with the idea of her travelling and experiencing a radically different society. However, her Chinese and American friends alike warned her of reception in China, especially amongst her peers in Large Northeastern College. Her friends made her aware that she would be treated differently because of her skin color: “Because a lot of [Large Northeastern College] kids were wealthy, they had money for [activities] like drugs or drinking, and some of them carry over their habit into China. [My friends said] you are *not* privileged in that way, understand that.”

Rafia, Brianna, and Angela all use the words “life-changing” to describe their experiences in China. Rafia gives her overall experience an 84, Angela an 83, and Brianna the highest score of 100. Rafia provides three negative, one positive, and one neutral encounter, Angela gives two negative encounters, and Brianna gives four negative and two positive encounters.

Chapter 5- Results and Data

Overall Ratings

During the study, respondents were asked to provide overall ratings for their study abroad experiences in China on a scale of 0 to 100, 100 being extremely positive. The lowest score given amongst the respondents was 66, and the highest 100, with the average being an 82.9. The standard deviation of the overall rating distribution was 9.15, which means that there was a moderate level of variation amongst the students' interpretations of their overall experience. Students generally enjoyed their experiences; many discussed the initial difficulties that they experienced in acclimating to a Chinese lifestyle as Black students, and others described the increased affinity they felt for Chinese culture and customs. The Levels of Normative Analysis model proved effective to students in their efforts to describe their experiences as Black students; many were able to synthesize their personal (identity), academic/social (institution), and cultural/linguistic (environment) understandings to paint a complete picture of their times abroad.

Encounter Ratings

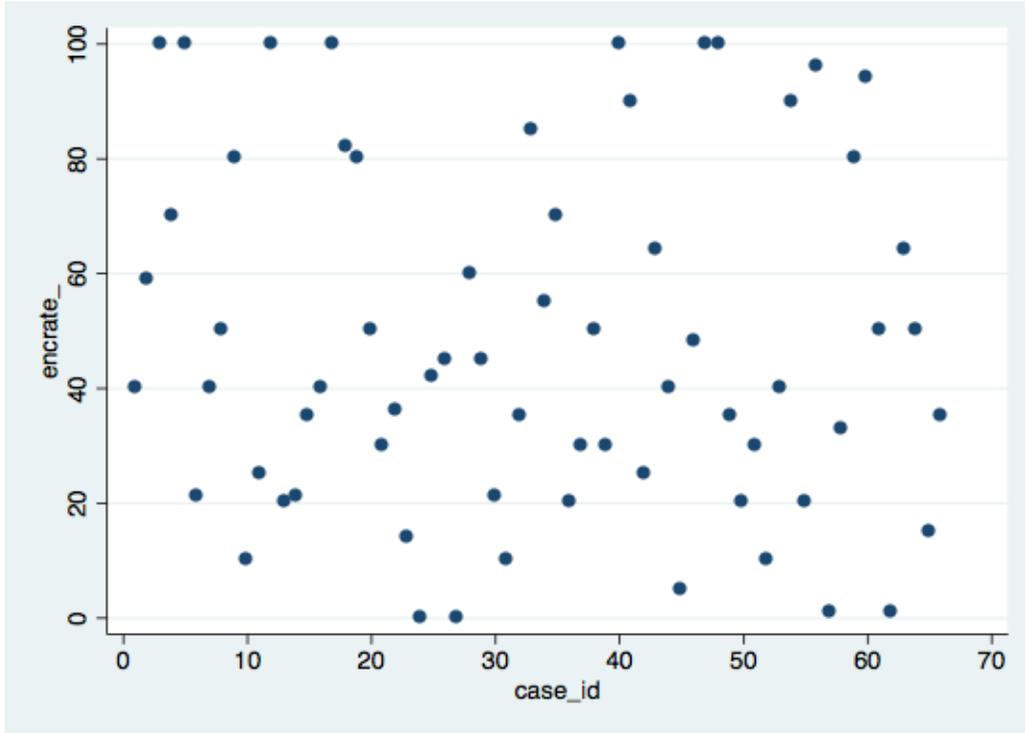


Figure 4- Each encounter's positive/negative rating; encounters numbered from 1 to 66.

Of the 66 racial encounters provided, 28 were given a neutral or positive rating, and 38 were given a negative rating. As is evident from the scatterplot in Fig. 4 (x axis=# of encounter, y axis=positive/negative rating), positive and negative encounters were fairly evenly distributed in this dataset. The mean rating for all encounters was 47.5, further proof that the positive and negative encounters were evenly distributed. The standard deviation for this dataset, however, was 30.6, which demonstrates the high level of variance amongst individual encounters.

Means of Factors

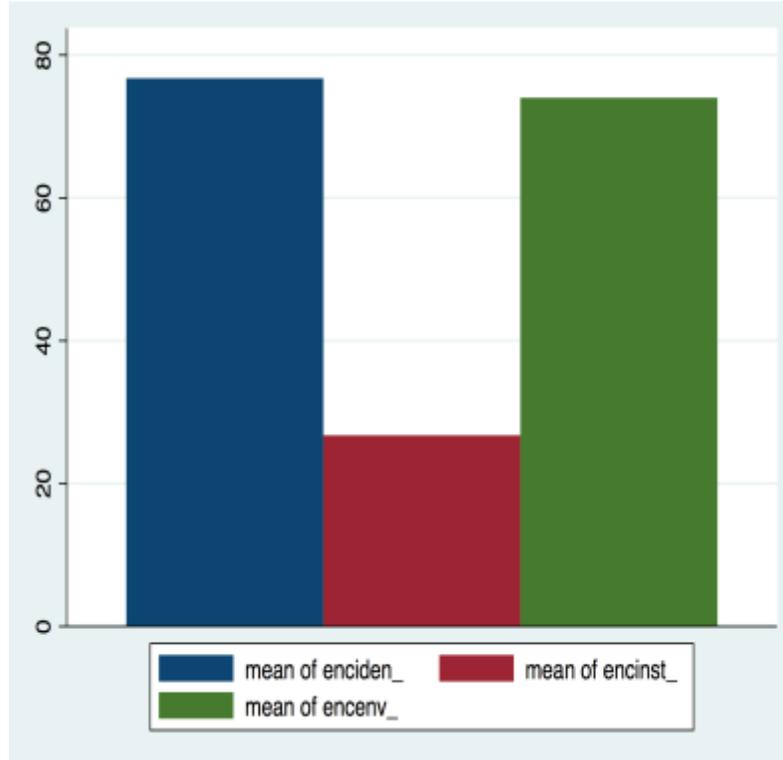


Figure 5- The mean value of the association rating of each factor.

The graph in Fig. 5 illustrates the average association of each factor throughout all 66 racial encounters provided. The average identity association was 76.7, institution 26.7, and environment 74. It is worth noting that 30 of the 66 racial encounters were given an association rating of zero for institution, while only three encounters were rated zero for identity, and two rated zero for environment. In the following chapter, I will explore and discuss in depth the possible reasons for these trends in association.

Perceptions of identity

Many of the racial encounters provided were strongly associated with the identity factor. Out of the 66 encounters, 58 of them were rated 50 and higher for its association with identity,

and 22 of the encounters were given a rating of 100. In 41 of the 66 racial encounters, identity had the largest relative rating of all three factors. Given that the mean rating for identity for all 66 encounters was 76.7, one can assume that identity played a large role in how Black students interpreted their racial encounters in China.

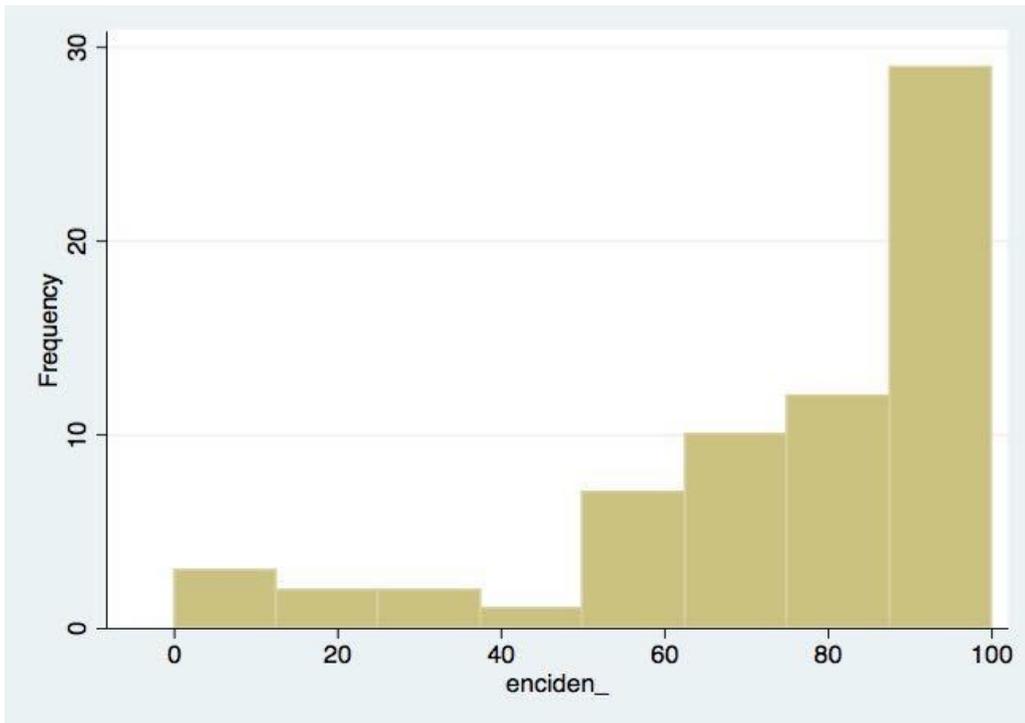


Figure 6- The frequency of each identity association rating.

The histogram in Fig. 6 illustrates the distribution of racial encounters based on their ratings for identity. One can see in this distribution the gentle downward slope of responses given ratings 0-40, and from 50-100 a sudden sharp uptake. This information suggests that a majority of racial encounters were likely either to be not associated with identity at all, or strongly associated with identity.

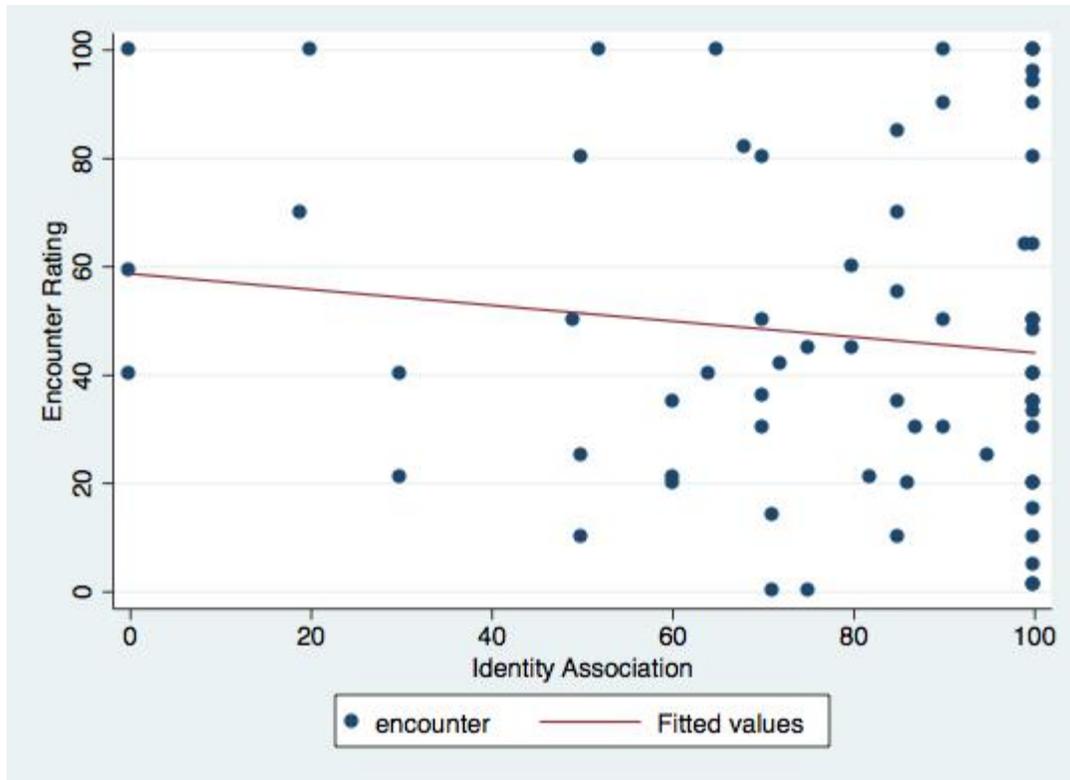


Figure 7- A scatterplot of encounters, x axis= identity association, y axis= positive/negative rating.

The scatter plot in Fig. 7 measures each encounter's identity rating in the x axis, and the encounter's positive/negative rating in the y axis. The higher the encounter's identity rating, the further along the x axis it is located; similarly, the more positive the encounter, the higher on the y axis it is plotted. The red line was generated by Stata using the “lfit” function, which produced a line of best fit, predicting the overall trend of the encounters. From this plot, there is not necessarily a strong trend regarding the correlation between an encounter's identity rating and its positive/negative rating. What is immediately visible is the high number of encounters given an identity rating of around 100. By running a correlation between the two variables however, I discovered that there was in fact a weak, but negative relationship between the two variables ($r = -0.13$). A regression analysis between these two variables showed a similar coefficient of -0.15 , but with a p-value of 0.3. From both these analyses we can see that there might be a slight

relationship between how much students associate an encounter with identity and how negatively they perceive the encounter, but the statistical evidence for this claim is not strong.

Perceptions of institutions

Students did not often associate racial encounters with their study abroad institution. Of the 66 racial encounters provided, 30 of them were given an institution rating of 0, and only 19 of them were given a rating above 50. Nine of these 19 encounters were positive, and 10 were negative. The fact that institution had a noticeably low average rating of 26.7, and that the 75th percentile of institution ratings was only a rating of 50, one can see a clear absence of the institution in students' perception of racial encounters.

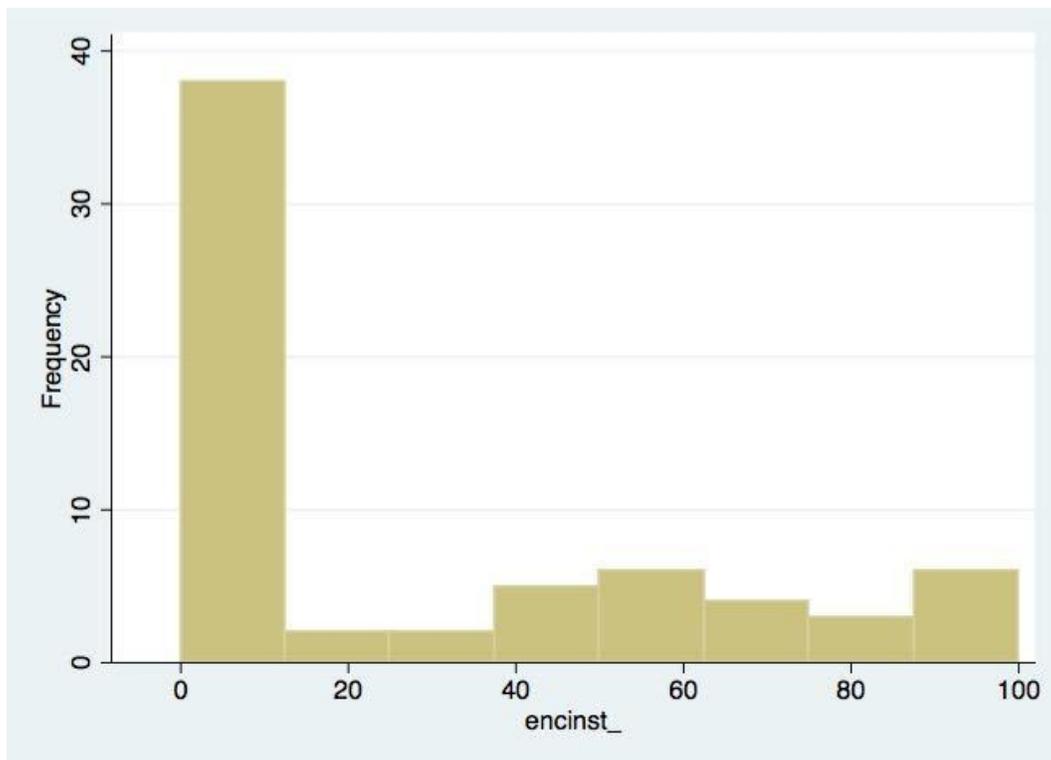


Figure 8- The frequency of each institution association rating.

The histogram in Fig. 8 illustrates the distribution of racial encounters based on their

ratings for institution. The majority of racial encounters had an institution rating of 0, and only a slight incline can be seen above ratings of 40.

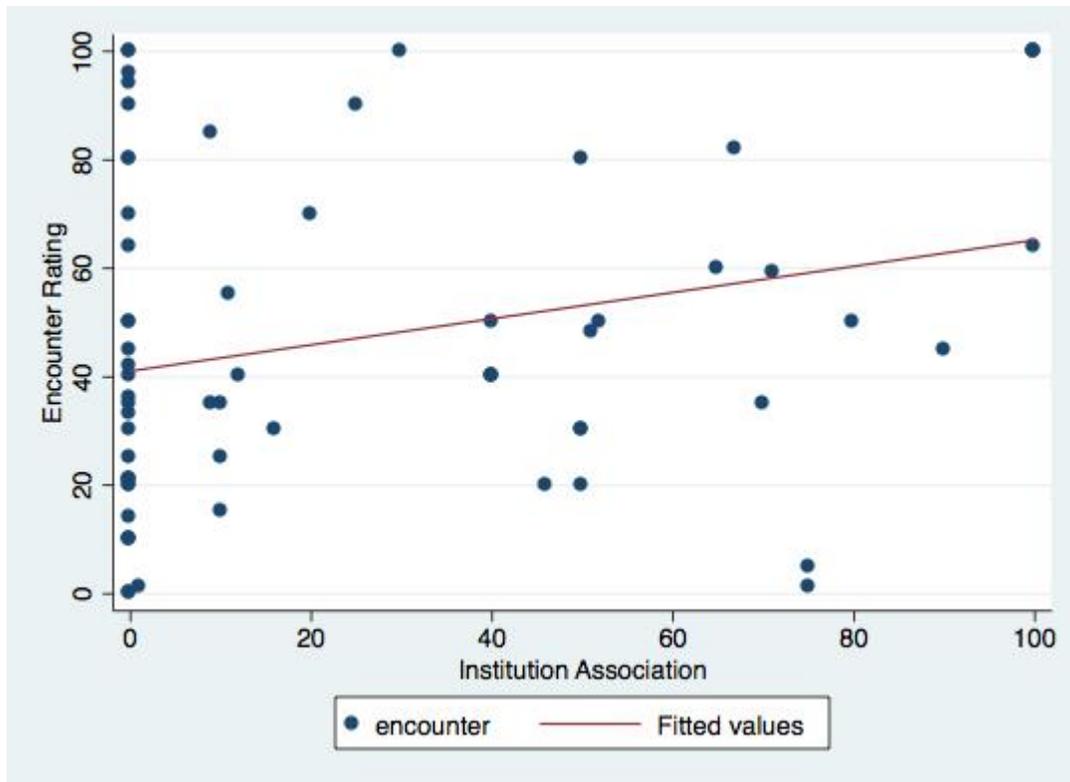


Figure 9- A scatterplot of encounters, x axis= institution association, y axis= positive/negative rating.

The scatter plot in Fig. 9 measures each encounter's institution rating in the x axis, and the encounter's positive/negative rating in the y axis. The higher the encounter's institution rating, the further along the x axis it is located; similarly, the more positive the encounter, the higher on the y axis it is plotted. The plot shows an aggregation of racial encounters closer to 0 on the x axis, which reflects the information from the histogram in Fig. 8. There is a positive correlation between the institution variable and the positive/negative rating ($r= 0.27$). A regression between these two variables produces a similar coefficient of 0.24, with a statistically significant p-value of 0.03. The line of best fit also reflects this positive trend between these two variables. These analyses suggest that the more the student associated encounters with their institution, the more

positively students perceive the encounter. Considering the number of encounters given an institution rating of zero, however, this information does not necessarily point to a reliable trend.

Perceptions of environment

Environment is a factor that is, similarly to identity, commonly associated with racial encounters. Of the 66 racial encounters provided, 57 of them were given an environment rating of above 50, 13 were given a rating of 100, and only two were given a rating of 0. Clearly, environment is likely to factor into a student's perception of a racial encounter, and it also may dictate how a student chooses to interpret that racial encounter.

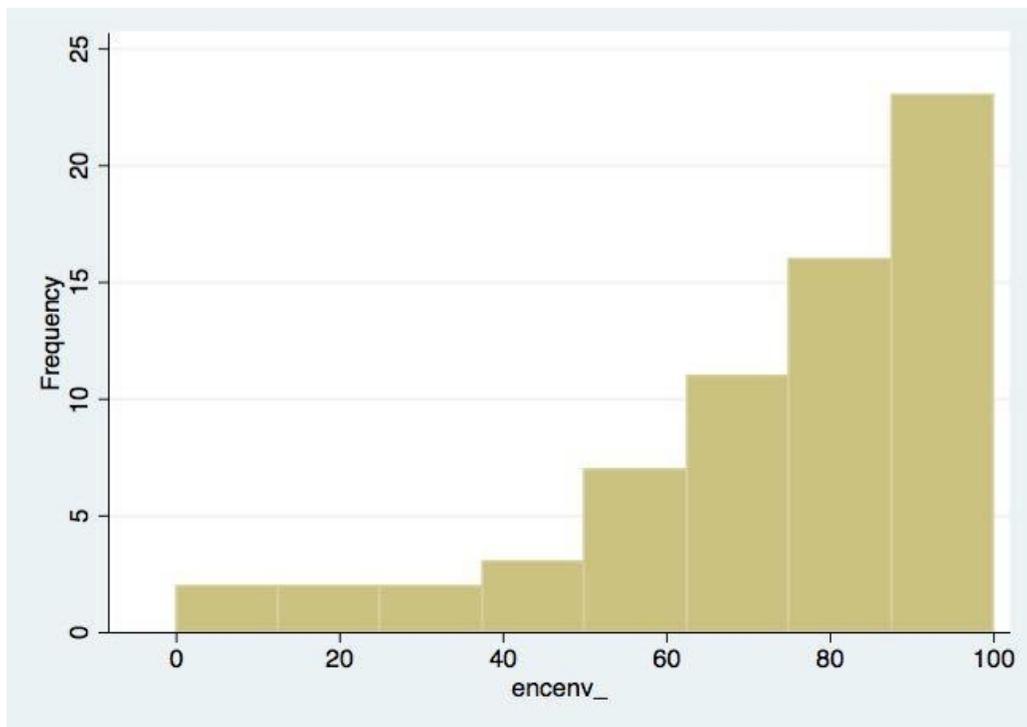


Figure 10- The frequency of each environment association rating.

The histogram in Fig. 10 illustrates the distribution of racial encounters based on their

ratings for environment. A consistent incline on this histogram demonstrates the fact that students were likely to associate many of their racial encounters with the environment in which they studied.

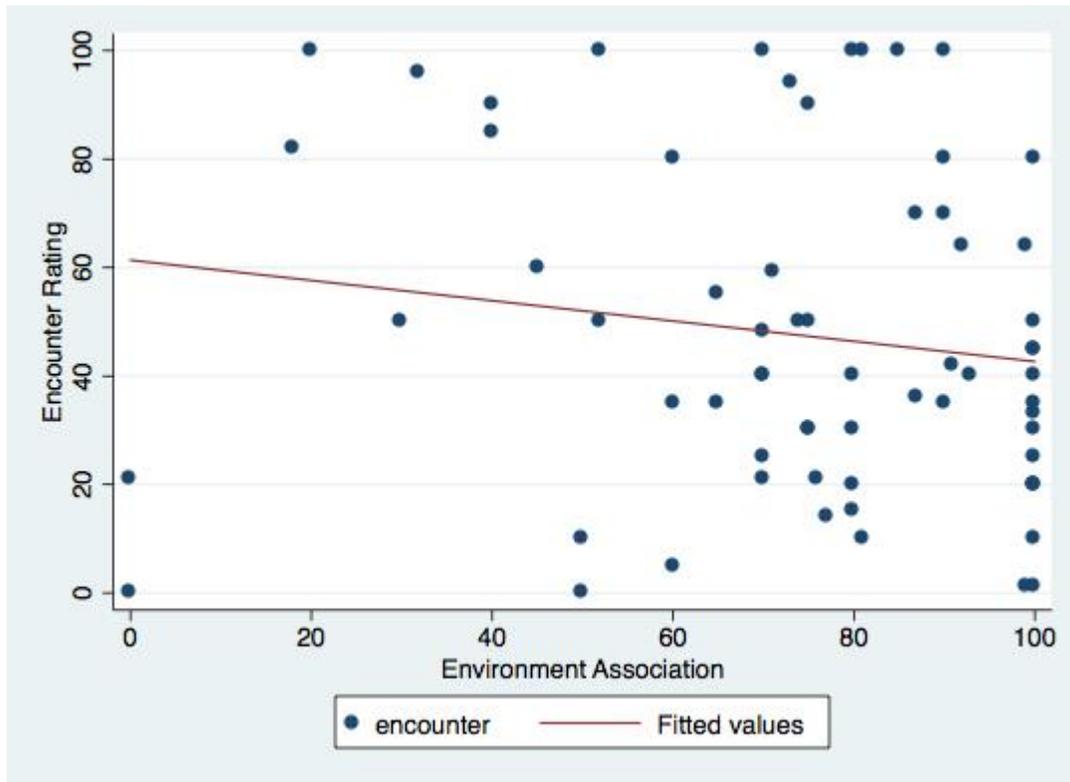


Figure 11- A scatterplot of encounters, x axis= environment association, y axis= positive/negative rating.

The scatter plot in Fig. 11 measures each encounter's environment rating in the x axis, and the encounter's positive/negative rating in the y axis. The higher the encounter's environment rating, the further along the x axis it is located; similarly, the more positive the encounter, the higher on the y axis it is plotted. Most of the encounters aggregate closer to 100 on the x axis, and the relationship between the two variables seem to be a slightly negative trend. A correlation analysis produces a coefficient of -0.15, and a regression analysis gives a similar coefficient of -0.18; however the P value is not statistically significant (0.22). One could argue that the more an

encounter is associated with environment, the more negatively the student perceives that event, but there is not much statistical evidence to support this claim.

Chapter 6- Discussion and Analysis

Identity

Many of the racial encounters provided were strongly associated with the identity factor. Out of the 66 encounters, 58 of them were rated 50 and higher for its association with identity, and 22 of the encounters were given a rating of 100. In 41 of the 66 racial encounters, identity had the largest relative rating of all three factors. Given that the mean rating for identity for all 66 encounters was 76.7, one can assume that identity played a large role in how Black students interpreted their racial encounters in China.

Three particular negative encounters that were given a rating of 100 for identity demonstrate how students interpret events that seem discriminatory in nature. Shoshanna Welters talks about wearing her afro in the campus' dormitory, when a Chinese worker in a restaurant on campus pulled her hair, and expressed excitement in doing so. She describes feeling like a "walking tabloid." Imani Frances-Brave talks about a state-of-being encounter having to do with dating in China. She describes her feelings of rejection when in her previous relationship with a Chinese man, he says that "his parents would never understand our relationship," the reason being that she is a Black woman. Finally, Brianna Evers recounts going to a club in the Sanlitun district of Beijing, where the coat checker took everyone else's coats and completely ignored her. She says, "it was really hurtful because it just contributed to the fact that a lot of the time, my presence or my beauty [went ignored] in those spaces where guys are always on the prowl."

These negative experiences indicate an important claim about the Black experience in China. For Black students, identity is a central part of their study abroad experience, making it difficult to participate in a fully immersive experience. Their identity causes them to be singled

out, excluded, and scrutinized. Though the racial norms of Chinese society certainly make these racial encounters more pronounced, each of these identity-centric encounters also place a certain weight on the individual for being different in the first place. Racial encounters with strong associations to identity also depend on how each individual student handles the situation.

Another student, Oluwa Abioye, explores this idea in the following encounter:

We traveled somewhere in China, a group trip, and I found that group trips were where I would have the worst encounters... I remember not wanting pictures taken of me and being very explicit about that, in Chinese. [I was] being followed around with a camera. And so I would have friends who were either Chinese or White, I'd kind of hide behind them or say I'm just gonna stand with you, or cover my face with your face because they're not gonna find that interesting, and somebody specifically made a comment like, "Why do you think it's a big deal?" and it was someone who was White who really liked pictures being taken of them...

In this circumstance, Oluwa was clearly burdened by her identity in a way that her White peers could not understand. She resorted to deflecting attention from herself by hiding behind people whose identities were not as closely scrutinized. This encounter perfectly illustrates the inescapable nature of the identity factor in the student's perception of most racial encounters.

The encounters that were given an identity rating of less than 50 were particularly interesting, as there were only eight of them. Justine Frances recounts an experience in which her non-Black friend "decided to take it upon himself to answer questions he knew the answer to because it was such a common line of questioning for [her]." She rates this encounter a 71 for its association to environment and institution. In this circumstance, one of Justine's peers deflects the pressure of being Black in China away from herself, after they determined that an issue that she encounters daily was his responsibility as well as her own. This may account for her low

identity rating; her peer was willing to disturb the structural pressures that Justine faced based on her identity.

Daniel Skelly tells of a time that he participated in a “Culture Night” at his university, giving he encounter an identity rating of 0.

I began to realize that I saw the various backgrounds of my peers... I would rate it 100 because it was a positive experience; you get to discover where everyone is and how they view the world... I mixed it up because I wanted to do something beyond America, so [I decided to] do a Chinese topic. I feel that sometimes there is this inferiority complex like America is so great, so I just wanted to change that or do something different.

In this instance, Daniel puts aside his own identity in order to praise the culture that he was immersed in. He also took advantage of the opportunity to shed the responsibility to constantly explain or justify his identity that he mentions experiencing, and instead focus on the identity of the people around him. In doing this, Daniel has an extremely positive experience that he looks on fondly.

Finally, Michaela Perry has three racial encounters with an identity rating of below 50, which is particularly interesting given the fact that she talks about the “identity-obsessed” nature of China in her interview. Michaela talks about taking pictures with Chinese locals. In fact, she splits this encounter into two, and discusses both the positive and negative aspects of taking pictures. The difference between the two is that her positive encounters with taking pictures are always done with respect on the part of the people asking for a picture, and opens up the opportunity for her to learn from them and vice versa. She only gives these encounters an identity rating of 19 and environment rating of 90, because in those circumstances she was able

to understand that it was normal for Chinese locals to want to take pictures of her based on how she looks, and knew that it had little to do with racial stratification.

Institution

As mentioned earlier, institution is a factor that was rated relatively low in terms of its association to racial encounters, while identity and environment were both rated quite high. From this information, one can make two conclusions. One, students were equally inclined to think of their own identity and the environment of their study abroad program when they interpreted racial encounters. Two, students rarely associated a racial encounter with their study abroad institutions. This second statement is in fact the case based on the data; of the 66 encounters, 30 of them were given an institution rating of 0, and only 19 of them were given a rating above 50. Nine of these 19 encounters were positive, and 10 were negative.

Notably, all five encounters that were given an 100 rating for institution were also rated positively, and four of them were given an overall rating of 100. To better illustrate the precise effect that institution has on an experience, I will discuss two separate encounters provided by Oluwa Abioye, one positive and one negative, both rated highly for institution. In the first encounter, a positive one, Oluwa recounts the comfortable home environment created by her host family.

...When I met my host family there were no comments about me being Black or anything. Maybe it was in part because they got a letter from me before I came and a picture, so maybe they had time to discuss it. I had 2 younger host sisters, one was 5 one was 7, and they also had another Japanese student they were hosting who was in high school. Those were all very different cultures. And so usually my encounters with kids they would be, "Look a Black person," or "She's so Black!" But no comment from my host sisters about that; my host family in general treated me just like another American, and it was really nice. Even when I would meet

their friends, some of the family friends' kids would make comments about me being Black, and then my host sisters would be like, "You're just dumb" or "Don't say that to my sister!" ...My host mom also studied English in school so... even though she wasn't supposed to, she spoke English with me a lot, and it felt nice to feel like a normal American instead of being questioned about how American I was.

In the second encounter, Oluwa discusses a language partner assigned to her in school.

With my language partner, we just had a very slow start... I sensed that we weren't hitting it off the way it was expected... pretty much within the first 10 minutes right off the bat she goes, "It doesn't seem like we have a lot in common." That made me feel really uncomfortable, and I do feel that that was a racial encounter, it just seemed like that [was an] assumption based on the first 10 minutes ...I spoke about it with Daisy who is a Chinese woman who had been working with [Institution A] for 5 years ...The institution had good intentions. It was like a "check and balance" institution, Daisy being able to check and balance what happened and help me push forward with the language partner because I wanted to change partners...

From both encounters, it seems that full cooperation from a study abroad institution most likely results in more positive racial encounters. In the first encounter, Institution A's pre-emptive intervention in screening for a family that would best fit Oluwa's needs is what resulted in such a positive encounter. Oluwa interestingly gave this encounter an identity rating of 65, the lowest of the three factors, which would suggest that identity did not come to the forefront of her mind in her home environment. The effort that Institution A went to to make sure that the family respected Oluwa's identity and made her feel included played a large role in Oluwa's satisfaction with her host family.

In some circumstances however, institutions cannot necessarily orchestrate students' interactions so nicely, nor can they predict outcomes. In the second racial encounter, Oluwa's

discomfort came from the fact that she happened to be assigned a language partner who was not sensitive to her or her identity. Notable is the fact that Oluwa does not dwell on the student's lack of tolerance, but turns to focus on how Institution A intervened in order to rectify the situation. Later in her description of the encounter, Oluwa mentions that it was most likely her language partner's first one-on-one interaction with a Black person. This thought is reflected in the fact that Oluwa gives this encounter a higher environment rating (100) than its identity rating (80). Oluwa was able to interpret the situation as incidental, and although it was initially uncomfortable, it was made better when Institution A stepped in and gave Oluwa the chance to reflect on what happened. It was this intervention from the institution that allowed her to process the encounter more fully and positively, allowing her to continue building a relationship with her language partner despite initial difficulties.

Looking at the negative encounters rated highly for an association with institution, one can see examples of institutions missing critical opportunities for engagement and intervention.

Gregory Eshe describes one of these negative racial encounters:

We had a study room; it was in the evening time so it was study time in our dorms. ...I think we were in our study room and someone was playing a movie... it sparked discussion about how Black people and minorities are treated in the US. Some kid said in a very short cut way "It's a very bad situation but America has gotten a whole lot better." I looked at him like, yeah it's a bad situation but could you go a little bit more in depth? Whatever impression that you're trying to get across, this is gonna be the Chinese impression of racial relations in the US. I'm a very shy and timid person so I didn't really say anything I just let it go... If I [had been] a little bit more assertive in getting my opinions across, would I have had that support? Especially from those who weren't minorities or didn't affiliate with any ethnic US minority...

In this situation, Gregory felt stifled by the institution itself as the only Black student in a

room full of American and Chinese students. He was faced with the responsibility of correcting a member of the majority on behalf of his entire race, under the risk that Chinese students in the room would be left with an incorrect impression of race relations in the US. He rated this encounter a 35, and also interestingly gave institution (70) a higher rating than identity (60). The institution, including his peers in the program, failed to either realize both the impact of the discussion and Gregory's position and need for help in that situation. His ratings suggest that Gregory would've preferred help from his peers as opposed to taking up the responsibility of speaking up himself.

In contrast to this situation, another encounter provided by Rafia Adene shows the importance of providing a platform for Black students to share their experiences and dictate their own narratives in the context of China. Rafia chose to do one of her writing assignments on Blackness, and "the general lack of understanding about different Black cultures like Caribbean, African American, Black Canadian, Latin American (Afro-Latinx), Black European, etc." She discussed these differences in front of her class with limited Chinese skill. She rates this encounter a 64 overall, and gives both identity and institution a rating of 100. Given that she mentions looking into how her race would affect her before she went abroad, it makes sense that she would place stock in informing others about important aspects about race when given a platform. The high rating for institution suggests that she realizes that Institution H played a part in offering such a platform, and in respecting her ability to express herself and ideas that are important to her.

The institution in the Black student's perception, from these examples, can shape a student's daily life, the outcome of racial encounters, and even their entire experience. One final example of this would be an example rated 100 overall by Brianna Evers, and 100 in all three

factors. She describes one of the American teachers in Institution H whom she remembers fondly:

He made a concerted effort... We went to Chinese opera, Hunan restaurants, Night Market... Experiences with him were extremely positive, and we definitely dealt with a great deal of our identity. He wanted us to realize that as a foreigner in another country, it is your imperative to totally immerse yourself in the culture, however that might be. I think he saw the drastic parallels between people who do that and people who don't. [He would say] there's no way to become fully proficient and master a language unless you understand the people's culture, history, and everything that has to do with its creation... For the people he noticed weren't interested, he pushed even harder. He would stick with them and try to keep their interest in little things... He was just an amazing professor and person in general.

This teacher's involvement in every single student's progress is an effective tactic, but his philosophy on being a foreigner in China proves especially beneficial for Brianna as a Black woman. He encouraged her to be actively involved in the surrounding culture, which allowed her to focus her energy on learning rather than dealing with racial encounters. He encouraged students to discover their weaknesses or fears, and actively work to overcome them during their time in the program. We can see from these examples that an institution is most successful when it manages students' difficulties in adjusting to the study abroad experience by acknowledging these difficulties as an integral part of their curriculum. In these examples, institutions were successful in doing so by allowing students a platform to express themselves and their individuality, responding to negative racial encounters and transforming them into learning experiences, and by encouraging students to commit to fully immersing in Chinese culture. Such active approaches to improving a student's study abroad experience certainly has a positive effect on racial encounters and students' perceptions of them as well.

Environment

Environment is a factor that is, similarly to identity, commonly associated with racial encounters. Of the 66 racial encounters provided, 57 of them were given an environment rating of above 50, 13 were given a rating of 100, and only two were given a rating of 0. Clearly, environment is likely to factor into a student's perception of a racial encounter, and it also may dictate how a student chooses to interpret that racial encounter.

Many students felt that China was such a unique country that many racial encounters could simply be chalked up to being in the country, and the student wouldn't take offense. Brianna Evers describes this:

It's a formative experience to understand that not everyone's gonna like me, not every experience is gonna be positive, not every action that I do is gonna be rewarding, and that was just the truthful honesty of China. I think when I went to China, I don't know how it's changed now, but it was very "You get what you get." And it's sometimes hard to explain to people how it's just China.

The feeling of being in a country with such a distinctive set of customs plays a significant role in how Black students interpret many racial encounters that occur in China. The specific history of China, Chinese politics, Chinese foreign relations, Chinese race relations and so on, are each so complex that Black students often understand that the context and the intent of many racial encounters differ in significant ways from racial encounters in the United States, and even elsewhere in the West. In many circumstances, students' familiarity with the difficult history of China as well as its struggle with its own identity give it an endearing quality in students' minds. Many students understand that they cannot possibly demand the same level of racial sensitivity

from China than they do from the United States. Imani Frances-Brave uses this rhetoric in her understanding of the act of Chinese people taking pictures of her: “It’s a positive racial experience. You know the ones where it’s like people have encountered in the South, being spit on, et cetera... That’s negative. These people literally have no ill intentions. That’s what you gotta think about.”

Many other students see otherwise negative racial encounters as positive, because it opens a necessary pathway for communication between two drastically different societies. Kenneth Harrison saw odd racial encounters that were strongly associated with environment to be an opportunity, rather than a nuisance:

If I saw a purple person walking down the street, I would stare at them, not because I hate purple people, but because I’d never seen a purple person before. Why are you purple? That’s often the way I looked at it. These people don’t know why I’m here, why I’m this color, so let’s help them understand why I’m here, what it means to be this color, what is the history that is associated with that. If you’re the first Black person they see, you probably have a lot of power because you can kind of shape the way they’re gonna be looking at an experience, and African-American people from here on out. If you’re rude to them, act like you’re better than them or have any sort of negative reaction to them, that’s what they take away. For any sort of interaction, I looked at it as, this is something new that they have not experienced, so let’s make it a positive experience for both of us.

However, in a circumstance when the person on the other end of this encounter had no interest in creating a positive experience, Kenneth realizes that the experience becomes even more negative:

Another experience that I had was another time in a park, me and two African American male friends were

together, and these guys were... badgering, asking incessant questions, using racial stereotypes associated with Black people... I think that was one of those kind of annoying, unpleasant experiences where it was like, I realize that I look different, and I am happy to engage with you if you want to learn, but if you're not interested in learning and listening to the answers that I give you and you just want to associate my Blackness with the stereotypes you have about Black people, then there's really no avenue for communication in that situation. And if you're not interested in communicating, then I'm not interested in talking to you.

In these two encounters, one can see how the individual on the other side of the encounter can dictate whether an encounter becomes negative or positive. In these situations, the interaction between the two differing groups represents a clash of norms, and it leaves a lasting impression on both parties. One can observe this with the fact that students often interpret these encounters as being associated with identity and environment to similar extents. Though students sometimes judge encounters based on the pre-existing notions of the other party, they do place a particular significance on how the other party chooses to respond to a challenge to these notions. The outcome of these encounters also depend on the student involved, their specific ways of interpreting the event, and whether or not they feel competent enough to determine whether the encounter is ultimately negative or positive.

Interestingly, interviews show that the more acquainted the student is with Chinese culture, the less likely they are to view these environment-centric racial encounters positively. Oluwa Abioye is a good example of this phenomenon:

It was a culture shock being in China... in the way that I was treated not necessarily negatively, but just that I was such an anomaly that I was gawked at and touched and taken pictures of. So that first time was a real shock, but I think the first time I more so laughed it off, a... but this time around it was definitely more annoying to me, because I had so much more time to think about it. The difference this time was that my

language speaking ability was much better, so I was able to express myself a lot to Chinese people and say no... I got much more annoyed because I felt [having pictures taken of me] was disruptive more than it was cool or attractive or flattering.

Despite students' inclination to orient racial encounters in the context of China, the daily stress and annoyance of having to experience these racial encounters begin to take a toll on most students. Therefore, it often matters how long the student has spent in China as well as how familiar they are with Chinese culture in their interpretation of racial encounters.

Overall, environment is an interesting factor in that a negative racial encounter associated with it is not necessarily seen as bad. In this way, environment can be seen as a sort of buffer in experiences in which students believe that people did not have negative intentions. On the other hand, it can serve as an amplifier in instances when the other party is not willing to listen and learn.

Chapter 7- Conclusion

The three factors used in this study, identity, institution, and environment, provide a clearer picture for how Black students in study abroad interpret racial encounters. From the data, identity and environment are often associated with racial encounters, while institution is rarely associated with them at all. The racial encounters themselves widely vary, but there are evident trends in how students interpret the different encounters similarly. In this section, I will discuss each of the factors in depth, consider their implications, and make specific policy suggestions for institutions, which will result in more positive and productive study abroad experiences for Black students.

Implications

Identity

Identity is central to the Black student's study abroad experience in China, and to their interpretation of racial encounters. This runs counter to many efforts in study abroad to put aside the identity for the sake of an immersive experience. Black students, in the examples provided by this study, do not have the luxury to put aside their race or their background, nor do they have the privilege to define their own identity within Chinese society. In fact, their identities are often a constant reminder to them, and they are determined by others within the society. This can cast a feeling of powerlessness onto the student, as it is not up to them to dictate how much they can fully immerse in their study abroad experience.

One could ask whether or not this is the case in other countries. China, a country placed into global scrutiny after its opening to the West in 1978, has made many significant alterations

in terms of the definition of a “Chinese identity.” In this way, identity, for the individual and for the society at large, has become an important concept, one that is constantly in question.

However, it remains unclear what a country with an “established identity” might look like. How might identity be treated in such a country, and how accepting would this country be of other identities? Furthermore, is the fact that the concept of identity is in constant turmoil in China necessarily a negative factor in the Black student’s experience?

Deconstructing Identity Abroad

It is necessary to analyze, as the study abroad institution, how identity will be dealt with in the study abroad context. In China, it may initially seem as if foregoing one’s individuality may be the best way to ease into an immersive experience. In many ways, this approach is not necessarily wrong. It assumes that the ultimate objective of the student’s experience is to achieve a level of acculturation, and to step outside of oneself and one’s understanding of the world out of respect for and better understanding of a foreign culture. In these examples, however, we can see that not only can shedding one’s identity be impossible for some students, but it can also stifle the opportunity for realistic and meaningful exchange.

Of course, different students will have different relationships to their own identities, and students interpret their individuality in their home country differently than they might in an abroad context. It is largely up to the student to determine how much they are willing to engage with the construction and deconstruction of their own identity while abroad, and in their home country as well. Study abroad is an opportunity for students to learn more about themselves in an environment that challenges their essential understanding of who they are. In the case of this study, the students’ Blackness, their personalities, habits, levels of comfort and discomfort, and even their sexuality were in a constant state of formation. In this sense, one half of answering the

question of “how important is identity in study abroad” comes from the student themselves. However, another half of this legwork comes from the study abroad institution.

The power of the institution is illuminated by Harper (2009b), and echoed by Sweeney (2014):

...Questions concerning effort must be shifted from the individual student to her or his institution. Effective educators avoid asking, what’s wrong with these students, why aren’t they getting engaged? Instead, they aggressively explore the institution’s shortcomings and ponder how faculty members and administrators could alter their practices to distribute the benefits of engagement more equitably. Accepting institutional responsibility for minority student engagement and success is the first step to race-conscious educational practice. (pg. 41)

As was evident in the racial encounters where students took the opportunity to teach Chinese people about their Blackness and what it meant to them, intercultural exchange is most beneficial when both parties are engaging and sharing bits of their identity. It is the task of the study abroad institution to provide both opportunities to do so, and an encouraging environment to frame these exchanges in positive ways. Oluwa Abioye’s language partner encounter illustrates this perfectly. In this situation, Institution A provided a context in which sharing identities and interacting with people from different cultures was an active pursuit. This pursuit, however, is unpredictable in nature, and it is not always the case that simply providing the opportunity for exchange will result in the beneficial symbiotic learning that the institution hopes for. Therefore, Institution A’s response when Oluwa’s interaction with her language partner went wrong was another essential part of this story. Daisy spoke to Oluwa, and encouraged her to keep going with her language partner. This ended up allowing Oluwa to resolve a potentially negative experience, but more importantly it taught both students that intercultural exchange is not

necessarily easy or always beneficial, and therefore it is important to keep trying. It is this rhetoric that institutions should apply to their activities both curricular and extracurricular.

Environment

Environment also plays a large role in the student's interpretation of racial encounters. Many of students' encounters in China were unlikely to happen in other countries, and the unique nature of many of them allowed students to re-interpret them under a Chinese context. A common theme was the idea that many racial encounters with Chinese people, especially those from the countryside, were not based in malice and were simply the result of lack of understanding of the racial norms that exist in the United States. Indeed, many images and notions of the West are specifically tailored in Chinese media, and may account for the existence of many stereotypes of Blacks, harmful or benign.

In this way, studying abroad in China is understandably a huge undertaking, one that many students were aware of before going abroad. Many of them were intently looking for a new and different experience, and others were aware of exactly how different Chinese culture— and East Asian culture in general— is from Western norms and ideas. Ironically, the fact that China is a “challenge” in terms of countries to study abroad makes it easier for many Black students to interpret their racial encounters there. A simple answer to the origin of racial relations and perceptions of Blacks in China makes it that much simpler to digest an encounter when it happens.

Contexts and Conflicts

While it may seem obvious why the environment of China has a huge impact on perceptions of racial encounters, it should not take the place of deliberate and thoughtful understanding of racial relations within the country. The fact that China has had limited contact

with the West throughout its history does not fully and completely explain why a certain racial encounter might've happened. Encounters vary based on generation, city, educational and socioeconomic level, and other factors of the opposite party in a racial encounter. Simply attributing an experience to being in China precludes the student from understanding the depth of the encounter, and doing so runs the risk of creating rigid schema for the entirety of Chinese society.

In order to prevent this from happening, institutions should again take a more active role in students' experiences and their understanding of the environment. In the case of taking pictures, institutions could make students aware of why Chinese locals may want a picture, why they may ask in certain cases and not ask in others, and what having a picture of a Black person may mean to them. In another example, when Black students were asked if (or told that) they were from Africa, it is not sufficient to leave this encounter uninterpreted by the institution. The institution could discuss China's history with Africa, the existence of African students in China (even before formal US-China education exchanges), their treatment, the construction of African expatriate districts in cities such as Guangzhou, and so on. This way, students may make more sense of the encounters, and attribute them to more nuanced historical narratives within China.

Institution

Finally, the role of institutions requires closer scrutiny. The study abroad institution plays an active role in the student's experience, whether or not these institutions are aware of this role. In China in particular, institutions are the necessary liaison between American students and the Chinese environment. In many cases, the establishment of study abroad institutions is largely dependent on the institution's administration and the institution's diplomatic standing within Chinese society. Often, the institution hides away the work it takes to establish itself in the

surrounding environment. It also tends to shy away from individualistic student growth and adaptation.

In many cases, the study abroad institution as a passive structure may prove beneficial for the student's acclimation to the new environment. It provides facilities and privileges to its students that it may have enjoyed in the United States, both physical and ideological, such as an American teaching system, access to internet, single dorm rooms, and so on. Often, it also eases the student into the environment of the host country by initially providing them with a neutral academic setting, and then gradually introducing them to the surrounding culture, via a host family, school-sanctioned trips, and other activities that monitor interactions with Chinese natives.

Playing Its Hand

Study abroad institutions have a wide variety of tools at its disposal that can enrich the intercultural experience of both study abroad students and individuals in the study abroad environment. In the case of racial encounters, it can apply the same model it uses to promote acculturation in order to facilitate the interaction of differing racial norms. Institutions have the choice of doing so more actively, through their curriculum and the activities they promote in exchange with Chinese natives, or more subtly through the values it promotes. For instance, if a student experiences a difficult negative racial encounter, the study abroad institution can make it known that it supports the student and is willing to hear them as with any other difficulty in adjusting.

Though it is significantly more difficult to extend this rhetoric to the surrounding environment, the study abroad institution can maintain, within the reaches of its power, a setting of intolerance for racial discrimination. In this way, the study abroad institution can facilitate or

mitigate racial encounters for Black students, regardless of the source. The active engagement with and acknowledgement of racial norms would be ideal not only for the Black students participating in these study abroad programs, but for the institutions as well. Harper (2009b) offers further insight on this symbiotic effect:

Critical race theorists posit that Whites who endeavor to improve the status and conditions of racial minorities rarely do so without first identifying the personal costs and gains associated with such efforts (Delgado and Stefancic 2001). Thus, it is important to make clear how majority persons will benefit from their work with and on behalf of minorities. Not well documented in the higher education literature are the educational profits conferred to individual faculty and predominantly White institutions when racial minority students are engaged in an assortment of high-impact activities. (pg. 44)

By facing topics of race head-on, study abroad institutions would ultimately benefit, as they would discover the needs and sentiments of the minority students they seek to serve. Doing so would uncover discussions and interactions that would encourage the constructive exchange of racial norms, which should be an imperative of study abroad programs that recognize the importance of cognitive growth and transformation.

Proposed Solutions

To discuss solutions concerning study abroad institutions and their involvement in racial encounters, I refer to the “field course experiential learning model,” which has three steps: “1) pre-trip preparation, 2) trip experience, and 3) post-trip synthesis” (McLaughlin 2006, 66). These three steps in the student’s study abroad experience “facilitates critical thinking and illustrates the scientific process—inquiry—in action” (McLaughlin 2006, 66). By establishing a pre-trip

relationship with students that involves a discussion of race, monitoring the racial experiences and comfort or discomfort of students during their time abroad, and following up with students to play an active role in their effort to process the racial encounters they've experienced, study abroad institutions can provide genuine and lasting support to students for whom race is an inextricable factor of their participation in study abroad. The following initiatives are targeted towards the study abroad institution, and they seek to initiate this consistent interaction between the institution and either the individual students or the larger context of the study abroad environment.

Determine racial/normative positioning. Just as the study abroad institution should make an effort to increase participation rates among minority students, it should also make efforts to engage deliberately with its own racial and normative positioning. This should happen in the interim period between study abroad cohorts, in most cases in the summer between school years. This initiative should also precede the “pre-trip preparation” step of the field course experiential learning model, as the institution’s process of determining its positioning should occur independently of the institution’s interaction with individual students. This level of preemptive engagement with racial norms would demonstrate that the study abroad institution is competent in managing racial encounters when they might happen.

Set realistic advancement goals for students. Practices such as “shedding one’s identity” and “becoming Chinese” is not a possibility for individuals whose identities are central to their study abroad experience. As such, study abroad institutions should abandon rubrics for individual growth and advancement that hold complete acculturation as an objective. Instead, institutions should adapt measures of cognitive advancement to each individual student. In similar ways, study abroad programs with participants from many different home institutions

adapt to fit students' disparate linguistic, academic, and social capabilities. Study abroad institutions should regard racial norms and the extent to which one can acculturate to them as a variable of the individual student. Ideally, institutions would only push students to acculturate to slightly past their levels of comfort, while not putting in jeopardy the significance they attach to their own identities.

Incorporate discussions of race. Study abroad institutions suffer by ignoring or bypassing discussions of racial norms. As was evident in this study, racial norms differ not only between cultures, but also between individuals of the same culture. In the same way that the prevalence of racial discussions indicates the overall tolerance and heterogeneity of higher institutions of learning at home, study abroad institutions should also take advantage of opportunities to highlight the diversity within and outside of the institution itself. The normalization of these discussions will give validity to the experience of minority students, and engage majority students in necessary conversations as well.

Address the Identity-Environment exchange. It should no longer be the case that cognitive development with the interaction of norms only happens to the student. In a majority of a student's set of racial encounters abroad, the opposite party is a member of the society in which the student is studying abroad. Institutions should not shy away from these interactions simply because they are more difficult to monitor under the auspices of the program. When students are left to interpret racial encounters without the involvement of the study abroad institution, not only is the burden of processing the event on the student alone, but their ability to process the event may itself be misguided. Institutions can play an active role in acknowledging and managing these exchanges of racial norms between the student and the surrounding community in three ways: 1) incorporating a discussions of the racial norms of the environment in the

institution's curriculum, allowing students to better understand and process their interactions, 2) providing students with a comfortable setting in which they can discuss these racial encounters with administration or faculty, and 3) deliberately creating situations in which students are engaging with the surrounding community, including race in the process of cultural exchange. These three strategies will help to shift the onus of racial encounters off of the student and produce more meaningful exchanges, benefitting the environment and institution as well.

Facilitate further interactions. Expanding on the third strategy listed in the previous paragraph, institutions benefit by creating intentional spaces for the exchange of norms. These spaces may manifest in the form of "cultural exchange organizations," or groups of students from both the study abroad institution and the surrounding community that discuss the differences and similarities between the two cultures. These organizations may arrange specific events such as food exchange parties, movie screenings, speech contests and roundtables, and other activities that promote direct ideological engagement between students of the home and host societies. In order to improve experiences for minority students, these interactions would hold racial norms as an essential element.

Provide post-trip support for students. After students have completed their sojourn, the institution can continue to utilize interactions with students to continue to improve the program. By encouraging minority students to share their experiences, their disappointments and hopes for the institution regarding racial norms, institutions involve students in the continual improvement of the institution itself and its ability to manage racial encounters. Furthermore, the students' experiences will serve as trial-and-error to better inform the decisions of the institution in the future, and cohorts that follow.

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OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST FOR RESEARCH

Social, Behavioral, and Educational Research
Institutional Review Board
FWA00002063

February 3, 2017 | Notice of Action

IRB Study # 1701001 | Status: ACTIVE

ATTENTION: BEFORE CONDUCTING ANY RESEARCH, PLEASE READ THE ENTIRETY OF THIS NOTICE AS IT CONTAINS IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT PROPER STUDY PROCEDURES.

Title: Black Study Abroad Students in China: Identity, Environment and Institutions in the Individual's Perception of Racial Encounters

PI: Nia Hamilton
Faculty Advisor: Elizabeth Remick

The PI is responsible for all information contained in both this notice of action and on the following Investigator Responsibilities Sheet.

Only copies of approved stamped consent forms and other study materials may be utilized when conducting your study.

This research protocol now meets the requirements set forth by the Office for Human Research Protections in 45 CFR 46 under Expedited .

Reviewed 2/1/2017 – Expires 1/31/2018

- Approved for 40 participants for the duration of the study.

Protocol Management:

- All translated study documents must be submitted for review, approval, and stamping prior to use.
- For all changes to the protocol, submit: *Request for Protocol Modification* form
- All Adverse Events and Unanticipated Problems must be reported to the Office of the IRB promptly (no later than 7 calendar days after first awareness of the problem) using the appropriate forms.
- Six weeks prior to the expiration of the protocol on 1/31/2018, investigators must submit either a *Request for Continuing Review* or a *Request for Study Closure*
- All forms can be found at: <http://www.tufts.edu/central/research/IRB/Forms.htm>

IRB Administrative Representative Initials: _____

In-Person Interview

Background

This portion will ask you to provide background/demographic information, and to discuss certain elements of your experience studying abroad in China. You may skip any question you like, but please do include as much information as you feel comfortable sharing.

Age:

Gender:

US Undergraduate College/University:

Study Abroad Program/Institution:

Age at Time of Study Abroad:

Duration of Study Abroad Program:

Location of Study Abroad Program:

Living situation (Host family/dorm?):

Background Questions:

- What were your expectations of China before studying abroad?
 - Why did you decide to study there?
 - Did you consider other destinations?
- What were your expectations of the study abroad program before studying abroad?
 - How did you find out about the program? How was it advertised?
 - What did you hope to get out of your experience?
- Before studying abroad, how did you think your race would affect your experience?
 - Did you have any fears/concerns about your race before you studied abroad?
 - What did your friends/family say (about race)? Did they talk to you about race in the context of studying abroad/China?
- How would you describe your overall experience? How would you rate it on a scale of 1-100?

Questionnaire

This portion will ask you to discuss specific racial encounters that you remember during your time abroad. It is suggested that you provide at least 3 and at most 5 positive/neutral encounters, and at least 3 and at most 5 negative encounters. However, you may provide as many or as few encounters as you feel comfortable.

Definitions

Race- This study draws from the US Census Bureau, which “collects racial data in accordance with guidelines provided by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and these data are based on self-identification.” (Bureau, 2013) Similarly, this study recognizes self-identification as the primary determinant of race, and therefore racial categories “generally reflect a social definition of race recognized in this country and not an attempt to define race

biologically, anthropologically, or genetically.” (Bureau, 2013) This survey operates on an understanding that you, as the respondent, identify as Black/African-American.

Racial encounter- any situation which directly causes you to become aware of your race, and its relationship to other individuals or your surroundings

Concrete- a "concrete" racial encounter is a particular, non-continuous event that can be described using time, place, and individual(s) involved

State of being- a "state of being" racial encounter is a broadly defined feeling, emotion, or abstract concept that cannot be associated with one particular event

positive/neutral- any encounter that was given a rating of 50-100

negative- any encounter that was given a rating of 0-49

environment- your study abroad location (in your case, studying abroad in China)

A high rating for “environment” means that you strongly associate the encounter with the specific location in which you studied abroad, and you believe that the encounter’s occurrence was related to the culture, customs, and norms of the encompassing society.

Ex. “A woman on the subway asked to take pictures with me.”

identity- anything that defines your individuality, e.g. your race, sexuality, gender, personality, etc.

A high rating for “identity” means that you strongly associate the encounter with yourself and your personal characteristics, and you believe that the encounter’s occurrence was not likely to happen to other people with whom you studied abroad.

Ex. “I was not able to find a hairdresser who could manage my hair type.”

institution- the study abroad program itself, its administrators/staff, housing arrangements and any accommodations provided by the program.

A high rating for “institution” means that you strongly associate the encounter with your study abroad program, the program’s resources and capabilities, and its ability to react or respond to the encounter.

Ex. “My advisor helped me to manage my feelings of isolation as a Black person in China.”

Questions (answered on Qualtrics survey)

Can you think of a time where race/racism was a a part of your experience? Briefly describe one racial encounter.

- Please rate the encounter (0-100), 0 being an extremely negative encounter, 50 being a neutral encounter, and 100 being an extremely positive encounter.
 - How much do you associate your identity, study abroad institution, or study abroad location with this racial encounter?

CONSENT FORM

Title: Black Study Abroad Students in China: Identity, Environment and Institutions in the Individual's Perception of Racial Encounters

Principal Investigator: Nia Hamilton

Background and Purpose: I am conducting a qualitative study on racial encounters in study abroad, which will focus on the surveys and interviews of Black/African-American students who have studied abroad in mainland China. Participants are encouraged to share any stories, opinions, and suggestions that they feel will provide a nuanced and realistic depiction of the unique experiences of Black/African-American study abroad students.

Procedure: Participants will be asked to discuss their experience studying abroad in China, provide background/demographic information, and discuss specific racial encounters that they remember during their time abroad. The interview portion will focus on background information, and questions that seek to describe the participant's experience as a whole. The survey portion will focus on racial encounters, and participants will be asked to provide a minimum 3/maximum 5 positive racial encounters, and a minimum 3/maximum 5 negative racial encounters. Overall, the interview/survey process will take a maximum of 60 minutes to complete, and can be conducted in-person, via Skype, or online using a Tufts Qualtrics survey. In-person and Skype interviews will, with your permission, be documented in an audio recording, solely for the purpose of transcribing the interview, and the recordings will remain confidential.

Potential Risks: There are no direct risks associated with this study, but participants may be asked to revisit difficult emotional experiences that concern race, and perhaps some negative overall experiences while studying abroad.

Potential Benefits: There are also no direct benefits of this study, but participants may personally enjoy recounting study abroad experiences, or feel a sense of comfort from being able to articulate and vent negative experiences. The future potential benefits of this study include bringing to light a previously under-researched demographic, Black students who study abroad in China, and suggesting improvements for institutional responses to racial events. I hope to contribute to an overall discussion on how to improve the study abroad experience for Black American students.

Confidentiality: The principal risk associated with this study involves the confidentiality of information. Therefore, this study will make the utmost effort to keep personally identifiable information strictly confidential, and participants will remain anonymous, as the study will use pseudonyms for individuals and institutions. Data used within the study will also not be personally identifiable, and all collected data included recorded interviews will be stored in a secure location for 3 years after the study is complete.

Withdrawal of Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary, and participants may choose to withdraw at any point in communications between themselves and the investigator, without any penalty or prejudice. Participants also may choose to refrain from answering any question within the interview without further questions.

Further Information and Contact: Participants may ask for further information, questions, or contact the principal investigator at any time. Please direct any questions or concerns to Nia Hamilton, at [e-mail address], or at [phone number].

Hello ____,

My name is Nia Hamilton, and I am a senior in the International Relations program at Tufts, with an East/Southeast Asian concentration. I am reaching out to you because I believe you would be extremely helpful in the recruitment process for my honors thesis. The study focuses on the experience of Black/African-American students who have participated in a study abroad program in mainland China through a US college/university or institution.

I am a Black American student who lived in Beijing for nine months in my junior year of high school. I strongly believe that my experience, and the experiences of other Black/African-American individuals who have studied and lived in China are critically important, yet largely understated. My goal is to help fill this gap in existing research and address these unique perspectives.

I am conducting a qualitative study on racial encounters in study abroad, which will focus on the surveys and interviews of Black/African-American students who have studied abroad in mainland China since 2000. The interview/survey portion will take a maximum of 60 minutes to complete, and can be conducted in-person, via Skype, or online using a Tufts Qualtrics survey. Participants are encouraged to share any stories, opinions, and suggestions that they feel will provide a nuanced and realistic depiction of the unique experiences of Black/African-American study abroad students.

If [you/anyone you know] [are/would be] interested in participating in this study, please [encourage them to] contact me at [e-mail address], or at [phone number]. I am also eager for the opportunity to spread the word, so if you would like to pass along this message, please feel free to do so, or respond to this message with contacts or a relevant Listserv. Thank you so much for your time and consideration. Looking forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,
Nia Hamilton

Participant Information Sheet

Title: Black Study Abroad Students in China: Identity, Environment and Institutions in the Individual's Perception of Racial Encounters

Purpose: I am a Tufts senior conducting research for my senior thesis, a qualitative study on racial encounters in study abroad. The study will focus on the surveys and interviews of Black/African-American students who have studied abroad in mainland China. Participants are encouraged to share any stories, opinions, and suggestions that they feel will provide a nuanced and realistic depiction of the unique experiences of Black/African-American study abroad students.

Contact Information: If you have any questions, comments, or would like to receive an update of this study when it is completed please contact me using the following information.

Principal Investigator: Nia Hamilton

E-mail: [e-mail address]

Telephone: [phone number]

Do you identify as Black/African-American? Have you studied abroad in mainland China at some point in your undergraduate career? Share your experiences and help contribute to a wider understanding of Black perspectives in study abroad!

I am a Tufts senior conducting research for my senior thesis, a qualitative study on racial encounters in study abroad. The study will focus on the surveys and interviews of Black/African-American students who have studied abroad in mainland China. The interview/survey portion will take a maximum of 60 minutes to complete, and can be conducted in-person, via Skype, or online using a Tufts Qualtrics survey. Participants are encouraged to share any stories, opinions, and suggestions that they feel will provide a nuanced and realistic depiction of the unique experiences of Black/African-American study abroad students.

If you are interested in participating, know someone who would be interested, want further information or would like to help/spread the word, please contact me at [email address] and mention the working study title: Black Study Abroad Students in China