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The University of San Francisco

BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS DIFFERENCE  
THROUGH INTERNATIONAL SUMMER IMMERSION PROGRAMS:  
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY IN RACIAL IDENTITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE  
ORIENTATION

A Dissertation Presented  
to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
Department of Leadership Studies  
Organization and Leadership Program

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

by  
Breanne Wing Tcheng  
San Francisco  
December 2018

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
Dissertation Abstract

Building Bridges Across Difference Through International Summer Immersion  
Programs: A Narrative Inquiry in Racial Identity and Social Justice Orientation

International experiential learning programs provide opportunities for young people to develop the necessary skills to succeed in and adapt to the complexity, diversity, and ever-changing landscape of the globalized workforce. There are however, several barriers that prevent students of color from accessing opportunities to be fully engaged in a global discourse – placing them at a severe disadvantage when compared to their White counterparts. While current efforts focus on increasing access for students of color, there is often little done to understand how these students experience and are impacted by these programs.

The purpose of this qualitative study sought to understand how a student's racial identity shapes their experience in a multiracial international service-learning program – and more specifically how it shapes their own ideas and actions around race, belonging, and difference. The study also sought to understand the ways teachers can influence student's development and learning throughout the immersion trip.

There are four major findings of the study: (1) Students' racial identity shapes their experiences in an international service-learning program in ways that can be both empowering and disempowering, (2) Class shapes the types of connections students formed with their peers and others abroad. Middle to upper-income students adopted a helper mentality, while low-income students felt a sense of responsibility tied to similar experiences of systemic oppression, (3) Class and racial privilege combine in unique ways which shape how students draw lessons from the program and experience

encounters with extreme poverty, and (4) The life experiences of teachers and their critical reflections of their own racial identity, power, and privilege fundamentally shape their teaching approach and work as leaders and mentors.

These narratives and findings have implications that can be applied more broadly to the ways we approach study abroad experiences for students of color and trainings for educators or support staff. Recommendations include incorporating intentional discussions centered around race and privilege, curriculum that is culturally relevant to students, and educator trainings that build their critical consciousness.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Breanne Tcheng  
Candidate

December 6, 2018  
Date

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December 6, 2018

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## CHAPTER I: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

### Statement of the Problem

Study abroad programs play an important role in developing global perspective and the skills necessary to succeed in today's globalized workforce (Institute of International Education, 2015; Kitsantas, 2004). This success demands a high level of international and multicultural competence building that is often missing from traditional school curriculum – one that incorporates “an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change” (Hovland, 2010).

This immersive experience also provides students with the social and emotional skills to understand and succeed in a diverse and rapidly changing world. More specifically, it helps them develop a sense of social responsibility, strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical, and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge in real-world settings (Hovland, 2010).

For me personally, an international service-learning program pushed me out of my comfort zone at a young age, and allowed to connect with cultures and communities I had never known existed before. The experience forced me to define my Chinese-American identity as “the other” abroad, and I began to reflect on my racial identity in a greater globalized context. It allowed me to sit with, grapple with, and begin to peel back the layers of my intersectional privilege. And perhaps most importantly, it allowed me to care about and contribute to issues that extended beyond my daily life. Years later, I am

certain this experience planted the early seeds of my racial identity development and social justice consciousness.

Access to these transformative opportunities however, are often blocked by financial challenges and risks for many students. Currently, less than 10% of U.S. students study abroad by the time they graduate from college and the vast majority come from affluent, Caucasian communities (Institute of International Education, 2015; NAFSA, 2015). As the demographics of the United States rapidly changes, such “discrepancies in international engagement by students of color speak to an inconsistency that affects the future global workforce, economy, and opportunities for students of color to be full participants economically, socially, politically, and intellectually in the global discourse” (Davis-White Eyes, 2013, p. 44). More importantly, study abroad experiences for students of color can play a pivotal role in fostering the development of one’s political consciousness and personal agency on a global stage.

While there has been a recent surge of initiatives and research to increase the underrepresentation of students of color, these efforts focus primarily on the barriers and challenges that prevent students from accessing and participating in study abroad programs (Brux & Fry, 2009). There are few studies however, that explore the continued challenges students of color have during their programs and the ways in which their racial identity impacts their experience abroad. Several gaps remain, and this lack of understanding around what it means to be a student of color studying abroad ignores the very real experiences, thoughts, and feelings of these students. To fully actualize study abroad programs that are both diverse and inclusive, there is a need for further research in this area.

## Background and Need for the Study

Study abroad by U.S. students has more than tripled in the last two decades, reaching a new high of 325,399 – an increase of 3.8% since the last Open Doors report was released two years ago. (Institute of International Education, 2017). Upon closer observation of the 2017 IIE Open Doors report however, in 2015-2016 (the last year data was available) “71.6% of study abroad students were White, 8.4% were Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander, 9.7% were Hispanic or Latino(a), 5.9% were Black or African-American, 0.5% were American Indian or Alaska Native, and 3.9% were multiracial” (Institute of International Education, 2017). Due to barriers for multicultural students such as finances, family concerns, fear of discrimination abroad, and other institutional factors, these percentages haven’t improved greatly for minority students since then (Brux & Fry, 2009).

The experiences for students of color however, are unlike their White counterparts (Brux & Fry, 2009). Many multicultural students gravitate towards heritage seeking programs – or programs related to their national, religious, cultural, or ethnic background (Szekely, 1998) – allowing them to connect to the host country more easily and experience a sense of belonging they may not feel in the United States (Brux & Fry, 2010). As they interact with students and communities abroad, they will be forced to reflect on and redefine their understandings of identity construction. Thus, by removing the social and political context of the United States, students are often able to gain perspective – reflecting on both their background and other’s perceptions of race abroad (Carew, 1993; Norton, 2008). This perspective allows students of color to name and

critique the ways power and privilege shape their identities both within a global context and within context at home (Davis-White Eyes, 2013).

While current efforts focus on increasing access for students of color, there is often little done to address the additional support students need to unpack and understand these profound experiences of cultural dissonance.

This research also primarily exists within tertiary education. For over fifty years, organizations like Educations First (EF) and American Field Service-USA (AFS-USA) have been promoting global awareness and cultural competency through their programs for high school students (EF, 2017; AFS-USA, 2017). Yet there is little to no research on the impact of these programs on high school students. Current research on K-12 programs often focus on intercultural development in K-12 teacher education programs or are programs based in countries such as Europe or Australia (Pungas, Taecht, Realo, & Tammaru, 2015; Spnader, 2011; Walton, Paradies, Priest, Wertheim, & Freeman, 2014).

Further still, there is rarely a focus on diversity or access within these programs. More recently, AFS-USA, one of the oldest and largest international high school exchange programs in the U.S. has made an intentional shift to move from diversity to inclusion – including the addition of a specific webpage, programs, and resources to address the needs and interests of its diverse participants and to make study abroad more accessible and meaningful. Since 2007, the AFS-USA Faces of America scholarship program has provided scholarships to address the financial barriers to study abroad for over 2,000 students (Faces of America, 2017). In 2015, AFS-USA formed a Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group (DIAG) made up of staff and volunteers to “evaluate, monitor, and implement diversity initiatives across the organization” (AFS-USA, 2017).

A 2009-2010 report indicated that from 2000-2009, AFS-USA sent 15,016 high school students abroad. Of that however, 69% were Caucasian, 6% were Hispanic, 4% were Asian or Pacific Islander, 5% were African American, 1% were Native American, and the remaining identified as other or unknown. While DIAG has laid the foundation for understanding current efforts to increase diversity and access to K-12 study abroad programs, it is clear there is much more that needs to be understood to best direct future policy and practice so that efforts can truly be inclusive of all students' unique needs.

### Global Glimpse: Overview and Background

One organization that is working to specifically address access and equity issues within K-12 study abroad programs is Global Glimpse. Founded in 2007, Global Glimpse is an international nonprofit organization working to inspire America's next generation to become responsible and successful global citizens through after school programming, a transformative summer travel experience in Latin America, and a post-immersion alumni leadership program to continue student engagement and intercultural leadership development. The program's experiential learning based curriculum develops global competence, civic engagement youth leadership, and college readiness – inspiring and empowering youth to become agents of change in their local communities and in greater communities abroad (Global Glimpse, 2017).

The program begins in the spring of high school students' junior year with seven academic afterschool workshops. The workshop themes include – Fundraising, Leadership, Globalization, Culture, Aid and Development, Latin American History, and How to be a Savvy Traveler. The workshop curriculum was developed by World Savvy,

and is designed to prepare students with a foundation of contextual knowledge, prior to their immersion in the developing world.

The summer immersion trip, will then take place in one of three countries – in Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, or Ecuador, in small towns and communities that are off the beaten path from popular tourist attractions. Students travel in delegations of 16-22 diverse students from across the greater Bay Area for a 16-days. The program curriculum consists of three major components – global education, service-learning, and leadership. The hands-on, experiential-learning, and community-integrated activities, guest speakers, and field trips are centered around an array of themes including history, culture, education, deconstructing poverty, global business, and aid and development. For example, in the Dominican Republic, on a culture day, students may learn about the vibrant and eclectic beats in Dominican music, then participate in merengue dance lessons. Or on a global business day, students may visit the Central Sugar Consortium (CSC) – one of the top Dominican sugar companies – to learn about the sugar harvesting and production process. This is followed by a visit to a batey, a local Haitian community employed by the CSC to hear, ask, and learn about the ways this global industry impacts both the local economy and its communities. Often times, themes of injustice, community organizing, and hope are discussed, and students are given an opportunity to personally connect with local community members. Following these fieldtrips, students are asked to reflect and critique the ways their choices impact the companies and communities they visited. Collectively, the purpose of these experiences is to provide students with a 360 understanding of the developing world – from the very stark conditions of poverty to the beauty and resiliency of the country as well. By removing the social and political

contexts of the United States, students are given the space to name, critique, and develop a broadened awareness of the world and their positionality within greater systems. Lastly, students will learn about sustainable development and develop a deeper sense of personal agency through their Community Action Project (CAP) – a cumulative collaboration with and service to the community.

Following the summer immersion, students have the option to apply to an Alumni Leadership Program in which students build upon the lessons they learned abroad, and inject those learnings back into their school community and college and career trajectory.

Nationwide, Global Glimpse partners with approximately 65 high schools in the Bay Area, New York City, Chicago, and Western Massachusetts regions and several national college preparatory programs including Summer Search, SEO Scholars, Schuler Scholars, and College Track to serve majority underrepresented students. According to the organization's 2017 Impact Report, Global Glimpse served 933 students from 2016-2017. Of that, 35% identified as Hispanic/Latino, 21% identified as White/Caucasian, 15% identified as Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African-American, 14% identified as East Asian, 6% identified as South Asian, and 9% identified as Other (Global Glimpse, 2017).

As one of the first organizations of its kind specifically committed to increasing access, equity, and diversity within study abroad programs at the secondary level, it is important to understand how students of color experience the program, and the ways in which the program can support or further marginalize them in their experience. Further, as there is little research on the broader dynamics of race and identity development in study abroad programs, and a deeper understanding of these students' experiences may inform or illuminate issues beyond the context of the Global Glimpse program.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is threefold; first, to understand the ways racial identity shapes the way students experience the Global Glimpse program, second, to understand the ways it shapes students' identity and social justice orientation, and third, to understand the ways Global Glimpse Leaders can influence this student development and learning. Findings from this research will inform policy and practices for increasing diversity within international service learning and study abroad programs.

### Theoretical Framework

#### Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Ladson-Billings' culturally relevant pedagogy is a theoretical model that seeks to both acknowledge, accept, and affirm students' cultural identities, while also fostering and supporting their success (1995). For the past thirty years, this pedagogical tool has been used in diverse and multicultural classrooms to improve student achievement and performance (Jordan Irvine, 2009; Au & Kawakami, 1994; Howard, 2010).

To do so, culturally responsive teachers must use intentional strategies to help diverse students achieve academic success. As society and institutional structures work to keep students of color subjugated, teachers must counteract this by celebrating and affirming students' cultural backgrounds. By utilizing an assets-based approach as opposed to a deficit-based approach, teachers create positive learning environments that encourage students to set high personal expectations, thereby disproving society's low expectations for minority students (Roller, 2015).

Learning must also be culturally contextualized and infused into instruction (Roller, 2015). Students should be recognized for their individual strengths and how they

can uniquely contribute to the larger learning community. By incorporating students' lived experiences in the learning process teachers can legitimize students' strengths and backgrounds and increase their "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzales, 1992). While these "funds of knowledge" often allow students to work and learn within a familiar context, unfortunately they still need to "fit" into a school system culturally dominated by Whiteness and meritocracy. These students' sense of "otherness" is still maintained within the social structures of the school.

Thus, culturally responsive teachers challenge society's conventions and the status quo – particularly this notion that the "other" must assimilate to a meritocracy. Rather than ignoring the social and hierarchical structures that create inequalities for students of color, culturally relevant pedagogy challenges them. This pedagogical approach and social justice orientation fosters students' ability to perceive social inequalities and work to dismantle them. In recent years, Ladson-Billings expands upon "culturally relevant pedagogy" to include "culturally sustaining pedagogy" – allowing "for a fluid understanding of culture, and a teaching practice that explicitly engages questions of equity and justice" (2014, p. 74).

Thus, when applied in a classroom setting, this pedagogy encourages academic success from classroom instruction rooted in students' lived experiences. It also fosters cultural competence by celebrating diverse students' culture and developing an appreciation for others. And most importantly, culturally relevant teaching cultivates a sociopolitical consciousness that urges students to apply their learnings to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems.

## Research Questions

The research questions for this inquiry are as follows:

1. How does racial identity shape the experience of international service-learning programs for U.S. high school students? More specifically, how does it shape their own ideas and actions around race, belonging, and difference?
  - a. How does a multiracial residential international travel program mediate the ways a group of high school students of different racial backgrounds shape their ideas and actions around race, belonging, and difference?
  - b. How does a student's socioeconomic status shape the way students engage in international service learning?
  - c. In what ways can leaders contribute to students successfully moving towards understanding their identity, power, and privilege?

## Limitations

A limitation of this study is its focus on the Global Glimpse program - one program, among many in the travel education field. Its program model, demographics, and curriculum are unique to the organization. As a result, the findings from this study cannot be used to generalize or draw any larger conclusions about diversity in the greater field of study abroad. Further, the study focuses on the student experience in the Bay Area, California region and within the context of the organization's 42 partner high schools in the area.

Another limitation of the study is the varying program quality. Although the curriculum across sites and countries follow similar themes, discussions and the teachable moments that arise through the activities can vary widely based on the Global Glimpse

Leaders' and Program Coordinators' ability to facilitate discussions. Student group demographics and dynamics can also play into how participatory discussions can be, and whether students feel comfortable sharing their reflections and experiences.

Additionally, this study has a defined temporal limitation and will be conducted throughout spring, summer, and fall 2018. This temporal limitation bounds the study not only by its start and proposed finish dates, but also by a specific group of students who have traveled to San Juan de la Maguana, and GG Leaders that have expressed interest in improving the program at the time the study is conducted.

The last limitation is possible researcher bias. As a former Global Glimpse Leader and Regional Director for the Bay Area program, the research was closely tied to my day-to-day work and interactions with students. While my experience and perspective can provide a solid foundation and context for the study, it can also lead to personal assumptions and blind spots as well.

#### Educational Significance

This study seeks to provide educators and program managers with a more holistic understanding of the impact international service-learning programs have on the leadership development for students from diverse backgrounds – particularly students of color. As globalization paves the way for increased opportunities to connect, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of the implications of these exchanges and its impact on both the individual and their communities.

Further, by centering the study around these students' unique experiences, this research will highlight what barriers to access continue to exist and persist, despite current organizational efforts. It will also provide a foundation for understanding where

scholars and practitioners can direct future efforts to improve access, diversity, and inclusion within K-12 international experiential learning programs.

This research also aims to inform curriculum and program development for students of color prior to departure and upon return from an international experiential learning program. As international educational experiences are becoming increasingly popular, preparation and re-entry programs range from non-existent to detailed and fully developed. A thoughtful and intentionally focused preparation program can influence not only the individuals embarking on the journey abroad, but also the community in which they visit, and the school community to which they return. The findings from this research may be useful in the development of culturally competent curriculum for similar programs at the high school level.

#### Definition of Terms

This section lists and defines terms and programmatic elements that will be used throughout this study to ensure a consistency in understanding. While other definitions may exist, these will be used for the context and purpose of this study.

- **Alumni Ambassador:** A Global Glimpse Alumni Ambassador is a senior student who participated in the program during his or her junior year in high school, and applied to participate in a follow-on leadership program. Through the Alumni Ambassador program, students further develop their leadership, presentation, and networking skills in preparation for college and their careers (Global Glimpse, 2017).
- **Bring It Home discussion:** At the end of each academic themed day, students will participate in an engaging “Bring It Home” discussion that will connect their

day's activities and learnings with their experiences from home (Global Glimpse, 2017).

- **Discovery Challenge Questions:** Students will have the opportunity to develop and discuss questions that they would like to ask the guest speaker or learn more about throughout the day (Global Glimpse, 2017).
- **Food for Thought:** Facts about the program's themed day as it relates to the international community, the United States, the country, or the local city or partner (Global Glimpse, 2017).
- **Glimpser:** Glimpser refers to a junior student currently participating in the Global Glimpse program (Global Glimpse, 2017).
- **Global Glimpse Leader:** Global Glimpse Leader refers to a volunteer educator or community mentor that runs the afterschool workshop program and/or leads the summer in-country program discussions and reflections (Global Glimpse, 2017).
- **Lider Del Dia:** Lider Del Dia refers to the student who is selected to support and lead the group in the day's activities (Global Glimpse, 2017).
- **Mental Warm Up:** Prior to each themed day, students participate in a mental warm up designed to provide them with context, background information and facts regarding the theme and activity or guest speaker for the day. The Mental Warm Up includes the Food for Thought, Quote of the Day, Discovery Challenge Questions, and the Bring It Home discussions (Global Glimpse, 2017).
- **Program Coordinator:** Program Coordinator refers to the Global Glimpse staff members that plan and manage the logistics of the in-country program (Global Glimpse, 2017).

- Quote of the Day: A daily quote that is intentionally chosen to help students think more deeply about the day's theme (Global Glimpse, 2017).
- SJM: SJM refers to the San Juan de la Maguana program in the Dominican Republic (Global Glimpse, 2017).
- Students of color: A non-white U.S. student that identifies with a minority group. For the context of this research, this includes those that self-identified as "East Asian," "South Asian," "American Indian or Alaska Native," "Latino or Hispanic," "Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American" or "Other" on their application to the Global Glimpse program.
- Study abroad/Experiential learning: Although, it is a commonly held belief that study abroad by definition is experiential education, without intentional pedagogical practices and context for understanding, students could for example, spend a semester or longer in another country without truly immersing themselves in the local culture or developing a widened worldview and deeper appreciation for global understanding (Kauffman et al., 1992; Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002). For the purposes of this study however, the researcher will use study abroad and experiential learning program interchangeably.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Restatement of the Problem

International experiential learning programs provide opportunities for young people to develop the necessary skills to succeed in and adapt to the complexity, diversity, and ever-changing landscape of the globalized workforce. There are however, several barriers that prevent students of color from accessing opportunities to be fully engaged in a global discourse – placing them at a severe disadvantage when compared to their White counterparts. While current efforts focus on increasing access for students of color, there is often little done to understand how these students experience and are impacted by these programs.

This chapter will focus on bodies of literature as they relate to the experiences of students of color in study abroad programs. The first section will present a brief overview of the history of study abroad and its benefits within higher education. Additionally, an overview of K-12 study abroad research will be provided – highlighting several gaps in understanding. The next body of literature will examine current research on study abroad and race, focusing on the ways race shape study abroad as a category of education. Specifically, this section will cover the barriers to participation for students of color, the impact of heritage programs, and racism abroad. The final body of literature will explore the pedagogy of study abroad program and its impact on identity development.

### History of Study Abroad in U.S. Higher Education

In the aftermath of the WWI, colleges, religious groups, and peace organizations advocated for students to learn about the world around them. In times of world crisis, opportunities for international exchange and for developing mutual understanding could

prepare our future generation of leaders to collaborate and communicate effectively with those from different countries and backgrounds (Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich, 2002). This growing sentiment was the catalyst for college students to pursue course credit overseas that would be counted towards their undergraduate degree. In the years between WWI and WWII, international exchange was made up of predominantly language and culture programs, and involved mostly female students. It was not until after WWII, and most notably in the 1960s, that study abroad became an integrated part of U.S. higher education (Hoffa, 2007).

#### Benefits of Study Abroad in U.S. Higher Education

There are many perceived benefits to study abroad from language acquisition to the development of a global perspective and understanding (Burn, 1980). By removing students from the sociopolitical context of the United States, they are opened to alternative narratives and histories. Often times, study abroad programs lead to a newfound appreciation and tolerance for other cultures - reducing ethnocentrism and nationalism (Carlson & Widaman, 1988).

#### Study Abroad in High Schools

Using an array of search terms and combinations including “study abroad,” “exchange program,” “high school,” “secondary education,” “secondary school,” “diversity,” “cultural differenc\*,” “ethnicity,” or “multicultural education,” I found little to no research that studied the experiences of U.S. high school students abroad in summer immersion programs like Global Glimpse. Widening my search, I found little research about high school students in general, much of which focused on language acquisition, pre-service teacher training, or did not focus on U.S. students but rather programs

internationally (Pungas, Taeht, Realo, & Tammaru, 2015; Spenader, 2011; Walton, Paradies, Priest, Wertheim, & Freeman, 2014). Most recently, I came across a published dissertation that explored the long-term effects of a high school immersion program. Evidence indicated that the experience abroad contributed to students pursuing international careers or careers that required intercultural skills (Flom, 2014).

“More research is needed to further educators’ understanding of what advantages exist to studying abroad prior to college, both socially and psychologically” (Spenader, 2011, p. 393). Because of the dearth of literature involving high school students and the absence of literature regarding a program like Global Glimpse’s unique program model, I expanded my search to include study abroad in higher education. Although the student participants are several years older and therefore at a different point both in their academic career and psychosocial development, research regarding this level of study abroad informed my understanding of the topic and the construction of this study.

### Study Abroad and Race

#### Barriers for Underrepresented Students

Research has identified specific barriers that prevent underrepresented students (low-income, first-generation, students of color) from participating in study abroad programs – including cost, lack of information, and family constraints (Eyes, 2013). Despite this understanding, over the past decade, there have been small increases in the proportion of students of color who participate in study abroad. This growth is likely a product of the growing numbers of students of color on U.S. college campuses, rather than direct efforts to increase enrollments (Stallman, Woodruff, Kasravi, & Comp, 2010; Sweeny, 2013).

Quantitatively, research shows that parents' socioeconomic status (measured by parent's education, parent's occupational prestige, and parent's income) is a positive and statistically significant predictor of study abroad participation (Simon and Ainsworth, 2012, p. 25). Further studies highlight financial concerns that extend beyond expenses for travel or tuition, and to the opportunity cost of foregone earnings while abroad can be an added constraint (Brux and Fry, 2010; Hembroff & Rusz, 1993).

In addition to these economic and social barriers, minority families do not have the historical tradition of sending young people abroad. Many predominantly White, upper-class families however, have established traditions of sending students abroad for "finishing" (Jackson, 2005, p. 23). Students of color who do express interest in studying abroad are met with varying reactions from their families. Some parents are proud and supportive of their students studying abroad to connect with their culture, while others are shocked that their child would want to return to a country parents left to provide a better life for the family (Tsantir, 2005). These attitudes and historical patterns and exclusions to study abroad lead students of color to believe that these opportunities are "not for people like me" (Sweeny, 2013; Jackson, 2005).

Lastly, students of color also face institutional barriers on college campuses – ranging from inadequate program offerings and inadequate information, awareness, advising, and long term planning (Brux and Fry, 2010). Study abroad programs too, are often marketed as an opportunity for students to explore new cultures. Students of color however, already successfully operate in multiple cultural contexts in their everyday lives within the U.S. (Jackson, 2005).

Heritage Programs

Most often, students of color choose study abroad location based on cultural heritage with the goal of enhancing knowledge of their cultural background (Brux and Fry, 2010). In a 2005 study, Tsantir examined the benefits of study abroad for heritage-seeking multicultural students including African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Latino students. While students expected to be challenged by the culture abroad, they also expected to feel a sense of acceptance and homecoming. Although individual experiences vary, Tsantir found that students of color believed they benefited from their heritage-seeking experience because it allowed them to explore their own identities (2005).

#### Racism and Discrimination Abroad

Based on their experiences with racism in the United States, many students of color may fear similar or worse instances of racism and discrimination when participating in study abroad programs (Mattai & Ohiwerei, 1989; Perdreau, 2002). According to Cole (1991), African American students experience and understand American racism, and therefore “question why they should venture into foreign variations of racism” (Brux and Fry, 2010). Additionally, students have reported a lack of mentors with which they felt comfortable having race-based conversations with about potential racial issues aboard (Simon and Ainsworth, 2012).

For all study abroad participants, but particularly for students of color, these issues of racism, U.S. and foreign stereotypes, privilege, and economic disparities - as it relates to the program abroad - need to be discussed openly (Grusky, 2000).

#### Current and Future Diversity Efforts

Currently, many colleges and universities focus their efforts on increasing the compositional diversity of its study abroad programs, failing to take a more comprehensive approach to inclusive excellence (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005). Existing research too, often focuses on issues access and equity and numbers of participants, rather than examining the challenges and unique experiences for students of color (Sweeny, 2013). Understanding who has access and why may only be the first step to impacting underrepresentation of students of color who participate in study abroad programs. In order to move beyond discussions about barriers, future efforts are needed to understand what models for success look like for students of color, and if meaningful patterns exist.

#### Pedagogy, Education and Identity Development

Research suggests that study abroad has a positive impact on the racial/ethnic and national identity for U.S. students of color (Day-Vines, Barker, & Exum, 1998; Landau & Moore, 2001; Ng, 2003; Sweeny, 2013). Experiences abroad cultivate formal and informal discussions about differences – often including conversations about race and ethnicity, culture, and history. This physical separation from dominant U.S. culture can allow students to define and reflect on their identity as minorities both at home and abroad (Sweeny, 2013).

However, students of color must be equipped with the pedagogical frameworks for reflecting and interpreting their experiences abroad. “Inadequate preparation may result in students developing unfair, misinformed or even oppressive interpretations of the social contexts in which they are learning” (Rennick, 2015, p. 71).

Dewey, Friere, and Mezirow

Intentional and culturally relevant pedagogy will give educators and students a framework to reflect on and draw meaning from their experiences abroad. Rennick (2015) synthesized the theoretical frameworks established by John Dewey, Paolo Freire, and Jack Mezirow because of their understanding of transformative learning and education for social change. This framework will be the starting point to understand how international learning experiences can shape how students think about their identity or engage with complex world issues.

Education for Dewey, Friere, and Mezirow is a deeply embedded social institution. Dewey focuses on the interplay between active self-development and the common good. Friere focuses on education that raises awareness of oppressive powers and promotes critical dialogue to challenge them, and Mezirow focuses on the process of transformation and informed action (Rennick, 2015). Further, they all share an understanding that learning is a part of the human experience, particularly within family life and culture (Rennick, 2015). These critical themes provide a synthetic framework with which to analyze and understand experiences abroad as an opportunity for growth.

In applying this framework abroad, students have a unique opportunity to not only participate, but collaborate in creating a learning experience outside of their everyday environment. Students participate in daily activities and guest lectures that directly correspond with the academic theme of the day – allowing them opportunities to listen and engage with the local community. These experiences and its subsequent reflections and discussions are designed to create both cognitive and emotional dissonance for students as they start to unpack their role and positionality to issues they either experience or witness abroad. Any transformation and action then, forces students to

grapple with, and move beyond the savior-victim state of mind to a more complex context for understanding.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### Restatement of the Purpose

Although AFS-USA Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group have begun to collect, analyze, and assess current diversity initiatives and programming (DIAG, 2017), a dearth of literature in this area remains. In the current K-12 international education space, Global Glimpse is an organization specifically committed to increasing equitable access and diversity for all students. The purpose of this qualitative study is threefold; first, to understand the ways racial identity shapes the way students experience the Global Glimpse program, second, to understand the ways it shapes students' identity and social justice orientation, and third, to understand how to best prepare leaders to facilitate meaningful program outcomes for all student participants. Findings from this research may inform policy and practices for increasing diversity within similar international service learning and study abroad programs.

The present study addresses the following questions:

How does racial identity shape the experience of international service learning programs for U.S. high school students? More specifically, how does it shape their own ideas and actions around race, belonging, and difference?

- a. How does a multiracial residential international travel program mediate the ways a group of high school students of different racial backgrounds shape their ideas and actions around race, belonging, and difference?
- b. How does a student's socioeconomic status shape the way students engage in international service learning?

- c. In what ways can leaders contribute to students successfully moving towards understanding their identity, power, and privilege?

### Research Methodology and Design

This qualitative study utilized semi-structured interviews with alumni students and leaders, as well as an open-ended online survey for teacher volunteers. In designing my research methodology, I initially drew from Creswell, who claims that a qualitative approach is used when the inquirer aims to synthesize the socially and historically constructed meanings of individual experiences to develop theories, themes, or patterns (Creswell, 2012, p. 18). However, Creswell's focus on the qualitative process and procedure attempts to make the findings more "objective" by removing the self and the relationship from the research. Given my racial identity, relationship to, and experience with the topic at hand, my methodology for data collection and analysis will be inherently partisan. As a result, I also engaged more broadly with the critical qualitative approaches laid out by Denzin (2010), Canella & Lincoln (2012) and Kuntz (2015). Denzin (2010) asserts, "the qualitative researcher is not an objective, politically neutral observer who stands outside and above the study of the social world. Rather, the researcher is historically and locally situated within the very processes being studied" (23).

Thus, applying a critical qualitative perspective to my methodological approach recognizes power – and its role in creating unjust and oppressive inequities in educational opportunities for students of color. Further, my study engages with issues of race and socioeconomic status – two major "components of historically reified structures of oppression" (Canella & Lincoln, 2012, p. 105). Therefore, in combining these concepts,

the way that I think about my approach to this research focuses on the interactive nature, and institutionalization of power, oppression, and injustice.

This critical qualitative methodology allowed for multiple, complex perspectives and narratives to emerge – particularly with respect to a student or teacher’s racial identity. The researcher then allowed “conclusions [to] grow out of the material reported in the findings” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 222).

### Pilot Study

From June 15-18, 2017, the researcher conducted a pilot study utilizing in-country observations of the San Juan de la Maguana program in the Dominican Republic. The learning from these observations informed and shaped the proposed study. A pilot study was conducted because the Global Glimpse program is an immersive, experiential global education program which students experience with all five senses. As a result, it was important for the researcher to not only capture student and teacher experiences through narrative accounts, but to allow initial observation data and personal programmatic experience to inform the direction and focus of the study.

The in-country program site selected for the pilot study was San Juan de la Maguana, Dominican Republic from June 9-23, 2017. The delegation was made up of 21 students from 17 different schools. While in-country, students were immersed and integrated in the local San Juan community – as the Global Glimpse programming and itinerary is often centered around community-run businesses and organizations. Students tutored English at a nearby school, and their community action project was implemented in Arroyo Loro, the same community students spent time with on their “Living Like a Local” Day.

The researcher conducted participant observation from June 15-18, 2017, and participated as an active member of the student delegation to gain a subjective insider's perspective of the program. The researcher observed and was a part of all activities ranging from nightly meetings with the entire delegation, to candle lit reflections in small groups, to morning mental warm ups, guest speakers and field trips. Specifically, the Living Like a Local Nightly Meeting, Immigration Day, Global Business Day, and the Community Action Project Discovery and Design Phase was observed. Field notes included both descriptive notes of the activities and conversations, and reflective notes in an effort to filter any personal reaction, judgment, or emotion in response to the data collected. Notes were recorded in the field or shortly after each activity to capture as much data as possible (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Data collected from in-country observations provided a deeper understanding of the program's experiential components. An analytic memo was written to capture and synthesize the in-country program experience (Appendix B). The perceived impact of the program on the student delegation included increased social and self-awareness, and a strengthening of responsible-decision making and relationship skills. What I found through the analysis though, was that while my initial framework of social and emotional learning fit well to understand the overall impact of the program - the more compelling data collected was the diversity in experiences within the student delegation itself.

More specifically, two specific student experiences stood out in my analysis – those of Erika and Lisa. Erika is a low-income, Nigerian, female student who attends a public high school in Hayward, CA. She is student I believe was the most aware of social and racial injustices globally and in the U.S. I noticed her making comments like “of

course” or “it is what is is,” - hinting that these types of injustices are neither new or shocking for her to experience as it was for someone like Lisa. Lisa on the other hand, is an upper-income, White, female student who attends a public high school in El Cerrito, CA. I witnessed Lisa processing feelings of guilt, sadness, and hopelessness – likely struggling with her own racial identity and privilege in ways that are different than Erika’s experience – but arguably just as powerful. I wanted to dig deeper into this nuance with my research. I wondered how “eye-opening” the experience truly was for students of color, who often navigate cultural differences regularly at home in the United States – and what the missed opportunities for growth and learning were in the absence of this understanding.

In order to allow students the time and space to reflect critically on their racial identity and program experience, the researcher needed to build trust. Thus, the pilot study, memo writing process, and its subsequent analysis not only helped refine the research questions but also served as the foundation to build the interview design and guide for the study.

### Research Design

The study took place throughout the Spring of 2018 and utilized qualitative interviews with alumni students and GG Leaders, and an open-ended web-based survey to all teacher volunteers. A total of ten students were selected for an in-depth one-hour interview. Participants were purposefully selected from the 2016 and 2017 cohort of students who traveled to San Juan de la Maguana based on their self-identified race/ethnicity, school, income-level. Interviews with students were conducted in two parts.

In the introductory portion of the interview, students were asked to bring two artifacts of their choice – one that represents their racial identity, culture or family background, and the other that represents a significant memory or incident from their summer program. This activity primed students for a reflective and open discussion about their understanding of their identity and their summer program experience. The interview protocol utilized an elicitation method to prime students to share personal experiences and reflections. Loizos (2000) suggests:

Images are resonant with submerged memories and can help interviewees focus, free up their memory, and create a piece of “shared business” in which the researcher and the interviewee can talk together, perhaps in a more relaxed manner than without such a stimulus. (p. 98)

In this case, the elicitation method was effective for participants because it served as a starting point for conversation – particularly if the student was shy, nervous, or unable to connect with the interview questions. Physically, the artifacts also served as a focal point to return to that is evocative and stimulating for the student (Johnson & Parry, 2015). Students looked at, held, and touched their artifacts to draw meaning for the interview. The researcher observed the ways students interacted with the artifacts as they spoke, and took note of any nonverbal cues.

Prior to the interview, the researcher asked for permission to photograph the artifacts to include anonymously in any notes or research. This agreement was also outlined in writing on the assent and consent forms signed by both the students and their parent or guardian.

The second portion of the interview protocol utilized a responsive interview design. This method “emphasizes the importance of building a relationship of trust between the interviewer and interviewee that leads to more give-and-take in the conversation” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 36). To accomplish this, the researcher used “a pattern of questioning that is flexible; questions evolve in response to what the interviewees have just said, and new questions are designed to tap the experience and knowledge of each interviewee” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 36). This method provided limited structure based on racial identity and the immersion program experience, and at the same time allowed space and time for rich data to emerge through participant stories, memories, and reflections. The interview guide for student interviews can be found in Appendix D.

Simultaneously, the researcher administered an open-ended online survey to all Global Glimpse partner school teachers who have led both the afterschool workshop preparatory program and the summer immersion trip. The survey focused on their summer immersion experience as a chaperone, mentor, and facilitator for a diverse group of students. The responses allowed the researcher to gather a broad understanding of the program impact for an array of teacher volunteers with respect to their diversity in gender, age, background, school, and experience. To incentivize and encourage survey participation, the researcher randomly selected a survey participant to receive a \$50 Amazon gift card.

The survey specifically asked participants to reflect and share a critical incident analysis of an event or experience on their Global Glimpse trip (Appendix F). The survey asked teachers to:

1. Describe the incident.
  - When and where it happened (time of day, location and social context)
  - What actually happened (who said or did what)
  - What you were thinking and feeling at the time and just after the incident
2. Analyze this critical incident, ask yourself questions such as:
  - Why do I view the situation like that?
  - What assumptions have I made about the student, colleague, problem or situation?
  - How else could I interpret the situation?
  - What other action could I have taken that might have been more helpful?
  - What skills or knowledge would help me to navigate similar incidents in the future?
  - What will I do if I am faced with a similar situation in the future?

This pedagogical theory developed by David Tripp allowed educators to reflect on teaching situations and the characteristics, conditions, process, and knowledge that contribute to success (2011). Tripp suggests that “incidents happen, but critical incidents are produced by the way we look at a situation: a critical incident is a value judgement we make, and the basis of that judgement is the significance we attach to the meaning of the incident” (2011, p. 8). Allowing teachers to reflect on any critical incidents during the summer immersion program encouraged discussions about the potential successes and misses for multicultural and diverse student participants.

The researcher then purposefully selected five teachers who have experience running the afterschool workshop program, traveled previously with a student delegation,

and have expressed interest in program development. If participants have not already, the researcher asked teachers to complete the critical incident analysis survey, prior to the interview, as it often served as a foundation and starting point for the conversation. Additionally, as the student participants did, the teachers were also be asked to bring and share a personal artifact that has significance to their racial identity, family, or cultural background. This activity for teachers, not only allowed the researcher to gain a better understanding of teachers' reflection - or lack thereof - on their racial identity, but also the ways it can color their teaching practice. The interview protocol was open-ended, reflective, and semi-structured to allow leaders to share their genuine reflections of their role and responsibility as trip leaders and educators (Appendix E).

Finally, to triangulate the data collected from artifact elicitation, responsive interviews with students and leaders, and survey responses, the researcher utilized member checks. One week after the interview, the researcher shared interview transcripts and allowed participants to comment, correct, omit, or elaborate on any portion of the interview. This also gave participants an opportunity to share any additional reflections may have come up for them.

Periodically, as preliminary themes and conclusions emerged, the researcher shared the analysis with student and leader participants to verify and validate that the researcher's interpretations are appropriate and accurate (Creswell, 2012). To collaborate further on the analysis, the researcher also encouraged participants to question and critique the preliminary findings by identifying gaps in knowledge or understanding (Bhattacharya, 2017). This interactive process will allow the researcher to verify and validate the findings.

## Research Setting

The program observations of the pilot study and the student participant's summer immersion program took place in San Juan de la Maguana, Dominican Republic. San Juan is in one of the poorest provinces in the Dominican Republic and is located about one hour from the DR-Haiti border. As part of the Global Glimpse program students visit the border to learn about immigration issues and the history of racial prejudice that divides Hispaniola. On this day, "students use their own experience with immigration as a framework for exploring how immigration between the Dominican Republic, Haiti and the United States connects history, cultural identity and present-day human rights." (GG Leader DR Handbook, 2017).

The interviews with students and teachers in the study took place in the California Bay Area. Because students and teachers are living, attending, or working at schools across the greater Bay Area, the researcher met participants at a coffee shop or public space near their school or community to conduct and record the interviews.

## Participants

Ten high school students of who participated in the 2016-2018 Bay Area Global Glimpse program, and traveled to San Juan de la Maguana, Dominican Republic were selected for this study. The researcher used purposeful sampling to identify a diversity of students with respect to gender, school, social economic status, and race/ethnicity. There are 42 school partners in the greater Bay Area ranging from as far north as Sebastapol and Davis, to as far south as San Jose. The student participants' social economic status ranged from low-income, to middle-income, to upper-income. This was determined by the organization based on a student's total gross adjusted family income, number of

dependents in the household, and the free and reduced lunch priced meal (FRPM) percentage at the student’s school. This information was self-reported in the scholarship portion of application and verified by staff during the scholarship review process. Lastly, students were selected based on their self-identified race/ethnicity on their application including “White or Caucasian,” “East Asian,” “South Asian,” “American Indian or Alaska Native,” “Latino or Hispanic,” “Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American,” or “Other.”

Although this study focused primarily on the experiences of students of color in diverse residential learning communities abroad, it was just as important to understand the experiences of their White counterparts. This students’ perspective and reflection illuminated a deeper level of understanding in comparison or in contrast to the experiences of her peers. A table of participant demographics can be found below – including each student’s gender, self-identified race/ethnicity on their program application, income level, and their school’s percent eligible for free and reduced priced meals.

Name	Gender	Self-identified Race/Ethnicity	Income level	School FRMP
Irene	Female	White or Caucasian	Upper-income	67.2%
Kristina	Female	East Asian	Upper-income	37.9%
Brooks	Male	South Asian	Upper-income	15.1%
Vincent	Male	South Asian	Middle-income	31.6%
Gabriela	Female	Latino or Hispanic	Low-income	64.7%
Jake	Male	Latino or Hispanic	Low-income	46.4%
Jeremy	Male	Latino or Hispanic	Low-income	46.4%

Erika	Female	Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American	Low-income	65.4%
Leila	Female	Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American	Upper-income	11.9%
Ivonne	Female	Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American	Middle-income	67.2%

Additionally, five trip leaders were selected for this study based on their self-identified race/ethnicity, gender, and school. The researcher used her knowledge of the organization and the varying school programs to purposefully select teachers who are reflective and have expressed interest in discussing ways to improve the student learning outcomes and teacher experience for all students. A table of participant demographics can be found below – including the teacher’s gender, self-identified race/ethnicity, and their school’s percent eligible for free and reduced priced meals.

Name	Gender	Self-identified Race/Ethnicity	School FRMP
Wesley	Male	White or Caucasian	50.3%
Sierra	Female	East Asian and White or Caucasian	41.0%
Diana	Female	East Asian and South Asian	64.7%
Geraldo	Male	Latino or Hispanic	45.7%
Cynthia	Female	Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American, and White or Caucasian	11.9%

Each participant was asked to sign a consent form and was asked to choose a pseudonym for anonymity and confidentiality (Creswell, 2012). Any student under eighteen years old also gained signed permission from at least one parent or guardian. Any names of schools or teachers were also be changed for an additional anonymity and confidentiality.

## Data Collection Tools

To answer the research questions, the researcher developed an interview guide to allow participants to shape the content with the stories they shared, and allowed room for the researcher to explore areas that they brought up more deeply.

The interview guide used with students included two introductory personal artifact activities and two sections of questions (Appendix C). Because the nature of the topic required students to be reflective about their individual identities, the researcher began with the personal artifact activity to prime the students for the discussion. The first section of the interview protocol focused on students' racial and cultural identity and focused on building a trusting relationship. The second section of the interview protocol asked the student to share a second personal artifact. This personal artifact represented a significant event, memory, person, or reflection from the student's summer immersion and served as a starting point for reflections about the trip experience and program components. The full personal artifact activity prompt and interview guide can be found in Appendix B and Appendix C respectively.

A GoogleForm survey with an open-ended opportunity to report a critical incident that occurred during the summer immersion was also sent to all past teacher volunteers via email (Appendix E). Additionally, teachers received a personal reminder via email, text, phone, or in-person from the researcher to encourage their participation.

The researcher followed up with the five selected teacher participants to solicit their participation in an in-person interview at a date, time, and place of their choosing. The interview protocol focused on their pre-selected and completed critical incident

analysis and its implications for program improvement. The full interview protocol and guide can be found in Appendix D.

#### Data Collection Procedures

To triangulate the data, the researcher corroborated data across multiple participants, types of data, and methods of data collection (Creswell, 2012, p. 259). The triangulated data collection approach utilized the pilot study's observations of the in-country San Juan, Dominican Republic summer program, one semi-structured, in-person interview with ten diverse student alumni, survey data from leaders, and in-person interviews with five leaders.

During the pilot study, the researcher traveled to San Juan de la Maguana, Dominican Republic to observe the summer program – including the activities, guest speakers, and student reflection sessions. The researcher was a participant observer, participating and processing alongside the students in all activities and group discussions. By doing so, this built a trust and transparency that allowed students to be candid in small group discussions. Data and field notes were collected to ensure appropriate themes and quotes are accurately captured.

To purposefully select interview participants, the researcher obtained a list of students who traveled to San Juan de la Maguana in summer 2017 or 2016, and sorted by their self-identified gender, school, socioeconomic level, and race/ethnicity. The researcher contacted each student by email and phone to determine if they are interested in participating in the study. Those that expressed interest were asked to sign an assent form. Whenever the participants were under 18-years old, they also had at least one parent or guardian sign a consent form. Then, a mutually agreeable date and location for

a one hour in-person interview was arranged. The personal artifact prompt and more information on the study was sent to each student one week prior to the interview to allow the participant to review the information, ask questions, and select personal artifacts with intention. (Creswell, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

With permission, each personal artifact was photographed, and each interview was recorded to capture the full extent of each participant's stories and experiences. The interviews were reviewed, then professionally transcribed. Then, the researcher sent the transcripts to participants for their review. This allowed participants to check for accuracy, and omit, add, or comment on any additional reflections that may have come up in response to the initial interview (Creswell, 2012; Denzin, 2010).

Next, a short survey was created using GoogleForms and the survey data was collected using GoogleSheets. The researcher sent this survey and more information about the study to all previous Global Glimpse Leaders via email.

Finally, the researcher purposefully selected five teacher volunteers who represent a diversity of gender, school, and age for a one-hour in-person interview. Teacher participants were sent information about the personal artifact activity and interview protocol one week prior to the interview to allow them to prepare and think through their specific critical incident in advance. Prior to starting, participants signed a consent form. Each personal artifact was photographed and the entirety of the interview was also recorded to capture the nuances of the personal reflections and experiences. The interviews were professionally transcribed and transcripts were also sent to participants to review for accuracy and to allow participants to omit, add, or comment on any additional

reflections that may have come up in response to the initial interview (Creswell, 2012; Denzin, 2010).

### Data Analysis

Qualitative research works within the context of human experiences, and is often used to uncover and understand the ways in which meaning is drawn from these experiences (Bhattacharya, 2017). As such, because this study aims to understand how racial identity shapes the experiences of international immersion programs for high school students, a qualitative design was selected.

To analyze the data collected, the researcher utilized a grounded theory approach to make comparisons between the data sets to identify, develop, and relate concepts. Originally developed by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967, the grounded theory approach “begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 12). This approach was used because of its emphasis on discovery and the continuous interplay between analysis and data collection – allowing for the research findings to continually shape the theory.

This method for analysis uses specific and systematic procedures to develop a theory about a phenomenon. First, to organize and categorize data, all interviews with students and Global Glimpse Leaders were transcribed and sent to participants for member checks and for any additional thoughts or reflections that may have come up since the initial interview. Once accuracy was confirmed, the initial coding process broke the data into conceptual components (Charmaz, 2014). Next, because each interview was unique and rich in data, the researcher utilized analytical memos to record ideas and connections at a specific point in the research process, as they came up. Thus, the data

collection and analysis process was interrelated and conducted in iterations – which allowed the researcher to both recognize important themes, patterns, and relationships as data was collected, and adapt future data collection, as needed (Charmaz, 2014).

Finally, the researcher organized and analyzed emerging themes and trends to integrate, refine, and build a theoretical model.

### Background and Positionality of Researcher

As I conducted this study, it was important for me to continually be aware of both my background and my positionality as a researcher in relation to experiential learning and study abroad programs. This topic is deeply personal to me. It has served as the foundation for what I believe is a viable educational tool with the potential to transform communities and build bridges across similarities and differences. As a second-generation Chinese-American, I witnessed the sacrifices my parents made to ensure that I always had educational opportunities available to me here in the U.S. Their sacrifice, fuels me to make educational opportunities that were so impactful to me - study abroad and service-learning trips - not only accessible, but equitable for all students.

Additionally, in the summer of 2014, I served as a Global Glimpse Leader – chaperoning a delegation to Esteli, Nicaragua where I was exposed to the program first-hand. I was also formerly the Bay Area Regional Program Director at Global Glimpse. Day to day, I managed and led the recruitment, admissions, and operations of the K-12 study abroad program across 50+ diverse public high schools in the Bay Area, as well as the post-immersion student Alumni Ambassador leadership program. As such, with permission from the organization, I gained access to existing student demographic data and contact information as a starting point for my analysis and inquiry.

## Limitations

Although qualitative studies often warrant smaller sample sizes, this could also be seen as a limitation for this study. A small sample size meant that only a few participants of each self-identified race/ethnicity and income level were interviewed. If a student or teacher dropped or became unresponsive to the researcher's methods to stay connected, this could have limited the reach of the findings significantly (Creswell, 2012). Critical qualitative research however, often focuses on the social and self-transformation for both the participant and researcher – regardless of how small the sample size may be (Kuntz, 2015).

Interviews too, can create limitations if the equipment used to record the session malfunctions or if the student wished not to be recorded. Additionally, due to the sensitive and potentially triggering nature of asking students about their racial/ethnic identity and the challenges that are associated with that identity, the researcher gathered varying amounts of data. Some students have not been reflective about their racial identity, and therefore were not able to unpack and articulate their experiences fully. Because the study is limited to the self-reported reflections of high school students who may be at varying stages of their social and cognitive development, this also limited the researcher's ability to triangulate the data collected (Creswell, 2012).

Lastly, as the researcher identifies as a woman of color, there is the possibility of bias when data was collected. Additionally, researcher bias as a former employee of Global Glimpse was another limitation. It was important for the researcher "to be self-reflective about his or her role in the research, how he or she is interpreting the findings,

and his or her personal and political history [as it] shapes his or her interpretation” (p. 259).

## CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

### Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, this study sought to understand how students of color experience an international service-learning program, and the ways teachers can support students' critical reflections and growth abroad. Specifically, the study examined how students' racial identity shaped their own ideas and actions around race, belonging, and difference, and further, how their socioeconomic status shaped the way they engaged with service-learning. The chapter begins with an overview and personality profile of each student and teacher participant. It is then organized by the four major findings that emerged from the data.

### Student Profiles

Irene is an 18-year old, upper-income, female student from Pittsburg, California. She identifies as “White and Hispanic...but raised in an Italian culture” where “we are loud and people talk with their hands.” She credits this largely to being raised by traditional Italian grandparents, whom she and her mother lived with until this past year. Irene’s family however was far from traditional. Her mother and her brothers were all adopted – and only one of her uncles was what she referred to as “natural” and would thus often be out of the loop in their family rhythm and dynamic. Her grandparents also started a U.S. host program for foreign exchange students – and Irene and her mom continued the tradition with students from Japan and Bolivia.

Kristina is an 18-year old, upper-income, female student from El Cerrito, California. She identifies as Chinese-American – particularly because she often feels caught between her two cultures and identities - a dutiful Chinese daughter and a bubbly

American student who chose to learn Spanish over Chinese in school. Although she sometimes felt isolated from her family because of her “American-choices and opportunities,” she always found comfort at the kitchen table – with a bowl of steaming hot rice, a home cooked meal, and surrounded by her multigenerational family. They may not always be able to communicate through language, but certainly communicated love through food.

Brooks is an 18-year old, upper-income, male student from a suburb of San Jose, California. He identifies as Indian-American, and although he was born in India, moved to the U.S. at one year old. Admittedly, his racial identity was not something he considered often because he describes everyone “around here as pretty much the same.” In recent years though, Brooks explains that he has “drift[ed] father from traditional Indian culture” and tries not to “take life too seriously anymore.” Through laughter and electronic music, he found he could build meaningful connections with others on his trip.

Vincent is an 18-year old, middle-income student from San Jose, California. He identifies as an extroverted, gay, Vietnamese-American male – who is also an identical twin. Growing up in a predominantly Vietnamese and Latino neighborhood, his friends often assumed he was “smart and raised by a tiger mom.” “People look at you the first thing they recognize is your race,” and while this was frustrating for him, standing out also motivated Vincent to prove these stereotypes wrong.

Gabriella is a 19-year old, low-income female student from Modesto, California. She is a proud Mexican-American who in recent years has come to find her voice. From birth, Gabriella did not have it easy. Diagnosed with down syndrome and born prematurely at 2 lbs, 7 months – she is now not only healthy but is thriving as an Ethnic

Studies and Public Health student at UC Merced. Because of her unique beginnings, she always knew she was born to be different – “not from here, or there...just in between” both Mexican and American culture.

Jake is a 19-year old, low-income student from Hayward, California. He is a confident, and unapologetically bold, Chicano male who also identifies as LGBT. Jake’s personality flourishes when he speaks in Spanish, as he proudly proclaimed, “I don’t care. I’m doing me.” In doing so, he finds ways to push against traditionally masculine ideas of “machismo” and express himself through fashion. He is currently studying at CSU East Bay and working part-time.

Jeremy is an 18-year old, low-income student from Hayward, California. He deeply understands his privilege as a White-facing Latino-American, and has no problem using the privilege he has to lift and support others in his community. He credits who he is to the power of his community. “When my mom was in college, she relied on the student parent community. Then before that, we relied on our Latino community because we’re not the richest or the most educated here because my grandma and my mom, they came here. They couldn’t cross the border so my grandma, she actually carried my mom across the border when she was two years old. So they didn’t really have that growing up. They needed that help and they needed to be able to rely on people in order to get opportunities that they needed.”

Erika is an 18-year old, low-income student from Hayward, California. She is optimistic, curious, and grounded. As a Nigerian-American, Erika understands that at a time in her life when teenagers are trying to figure out who they are, she also must be cognizant of how she is perceived as a black, female. She explains, “[Being black] just

makes me really aware of people's perceptions, and just how prejudices and every type of judgment [work], and how I'm supposed to navigate that, and still be myself." Erika found that the trip experience allowed her to get to know others for who they truly were – which consequently allowed her to step into a space where she could also let her true self shine as well.

Leila is an 18-year old, upper-income, art student from Oakland, California who is driven and confident. Growing up in a family of successful lawyers, she is no stranger to the extra effort that is required of a young, Black, female to make it in this world. "There's not enough room to make mistakes," she shares partly because this is her reality, and because she has seen negative consequences play out in unjust ways for her friends. As a result, she was excited to share her unique experiences as a Black female participant, has joined a diversity task force at her school, and has decided to attend Spelman College in the fall.

Ivonne is an 18-year old, middle-income, Black female student from Oakley, California. She has a vibrant personality and although has struggled with her Blackness in a predominantly White community, is proud and confident about who she is. Ivonne explains, "it's important to have that confidence, because I feel like if you're not proud of your racial identity, there's going to be so many other things you're not proud of." This revelation for her, meant embracing her natural hair and keeping her "melanin glowing."

#### GG Leader Profiles

Wesley is 33-year old, White, male English teacher at a large low-income public school. He describes himself as a "mixed bag of salad" because he's had a variety of life

experiences – from studying the injustices of the school to prison pipeline to growing up with foster sisters to relief work in the Philippines – that has shaped who he is and led him to his teaching career in East San Jose. Wesley has no strong ties to his racial or cultural identity, but is conscious of the privilege he has as a White male.

Sierra is a 31-year old, multiracial female science teacher at a large low-income public school in Redwood City, California. She also coaches and councils the AVID students at her school. Sierra identifies as German, English, Swedish, and Korean, and because of her mixed identity never really fit in. Her optimism for challenges though, is something she role models for her students. She often tells them, “It’s okay that you don’t really know where you fit in, because even the person who looks like they fit in, doesn’t really know how to fit in.”

Diana is a 35-year old, multiracial female math teacher at a small low-income charter school in Hayward, California. She is down-to-earth, nurturing, and loved by students because she “keeps it real.” For Diana personally, traveling to Thailand and witnessing the prostitution in the red-light district ignited a fire that carried into her identity and feminist work in college – and into her work in education as well. As a strong social justice activist, she often pushes students to think more deeply about their “why” for participating in the program, and what they will do with their new learnings.

Geraldo is a 34-year old, male Ethnic Studies teacher at a large low-income public school in South San Francisco, California. He identifies intentionally as Chicano – instead of Mexican and Guatemalan because he believes the label is connected to something bigger – a legacy and history rooted in indigenous culture. He is also a DJ, loves history, and will often lend his students books from his personal “Ethnic Studies

Library” – including the book that changed his perspective at 13 years old – *500 Years of Chicano History*. Knowing your history and roots, he feels, is essential to inform where you are going and your role in the resistance.

Cynthia is 27-year old, female Ethnic Studies teacher at a public charter arts school in Oakland, California. She identifies as a biracial Black American who developed her racial consciousness and identity by stumbling upon a Mixed Heritage Week flyer on her college campus. For the first time, she felt like she belonged – and eventually came full circle to plan and organize the same week long event her senior year. This experience spills into her teaching methods – where she often pushes students to embrace the uncomfortable and to critically reflect on why the discomfort is there.

#### Finding 1: Racial Identity Shapes Students’ Experiences Abroad

First, I found that for students of color, their racial identity and ability to access their community cultural wealth allowed them to draw deeper meaning from their experiences abroad. As a result, students of color in the program experienced international immersion programs differently from their White counterparts in ways that were both empowering and disempowering. When removed from the racial and political context of the United States, students could reflect on their own racial identity in relation to others – and this new context abroad. For some students, this experience was freeing, and allowed them to feel empowered in ways that they don’t often experience at home. For some however, racial power dynamics between the leader and students of color led to feelings of disempowerment.

Navigating multicultural contexts was not a new experience for the participants of color. Each student spoke about code switching depending on if they were at school with

friends, with family, or in a professional setting. This proved to be a source of cultural capital for many students to support their navigation of Dominican contexts abroad. For Jake in particular, he felt like he could be more of his full self when he accessed his linguistic capital. “When I speak Spanish, I’m more confident. I’m more fun. I’m more friendly” whereas he says he is much shyer when he speaks English. Jake specifically spoke to the advantage he felt when interacting with local Dominicans, and the instantaneous connections he formed as a result. They would often spend time teaching each other different slang phrases, or making fun of how fast Jake could speak Spanish. “But at the end of the day we would just crack jokes,” he explained. “It felt like family again or like a good friend.”

Because of this cultural connection, Jake was also able to see himself in the local Dominican youth. This had a profound impact on the way he chooses to embrace and express his identity through fashion. Growing up, Jake shared that he often went to the rodeo with his family. Men dressed a certain way there, and were *machismo* or strong and masculine. Being in the DR surrounded by people that he identified with however, challenged his definition of Chicano *machismo* identity. He noted that “[Dominican males] are “not scared of fashion.” And “after I came back from the Dominican, I had actually just stopped caring. I really don’t care with the machismo look with baggy pants.” This experience and reflection – although minute – allowed Jake to feel a sense of empowerment and liberation through his own self-expression. It shifted his perspective on what masculinity looks like, and can be. The experience built Jake’s confidence - in the way that he presents himself, and the way that he carries himself in the world.

Specifically, he remembers feeling “free” while swimming in the ocean, and like he was with “family.”

Another student, Erika, was surprised at how easily she could adapt to a foreign culture abroad and felt a strong sense of empowerment as a result. In particular, Erika shared her experience visiting a *batey* – or a Haitian settlement near the sugar cane fields. There, the students had an opportunity to share a meal with the community and learn about their lives, the challenges they face, and their dreams for the future. Although the entire day’s activities can open students’ eyes to some of the gross human rights and global injustices in the DR, this was not what was most profound for Erika. At the end of the day, she shares, “We were walking, and it was just the whole group and this little girl she runs out from her house and she points at me. She's all like, "Mira la negra." [Look at the Black girl] ...and she was just like a little black girl, too. It just made me think of how much other service trips especially to black communities globally have... and how much people must never see themselves. Then I guess, when she saw me, she saw herself as well, which really touched me. I was all like, ‘Yeah, that's me.’”

This micro moment and brief exchange was a powerful experience for Erika because she was affirmed for her racial identity. She goes on to explain, “I was so surprised at how, especially coming from [the U.S.], and just really escaping the cultural paranoia that sometimes I would have, and how easily I was able to take things into a different context, and I didn't realize that that's also what I did.” This allowed Erika to feel more confident about moving away for college in the fall – and even beyond as she moves through life. “I liked how easily I was able to adapt,” she reflected proudly.

These experiences however, can also be disempowering for students of color. In one case, a White trip leader was exhibiting microaggressive behavior towards Leila and her friend, who is also Black while they were working on their nightly blog post. The situation came to a head when the leader made the girls write their reflections separately, instead of as a collaborative post as other students had done. Leila exploded angrily in the moment – and since then has reflected on letting her emotions get the best of her. Unapologetically though, she shared a suggestion and her genuine reflections from the exchange:

On her side is like, preparing herself to be dealing with a lot of different types of kids, because I think that it's very common for students of color to have more aggression, not that like we're all aggressive people, but I think that we've been challenged and told that we're wrong and singled-out and always being ridiculed for our whole lives. There has to be a point where like, "I don't want this anymore. That's not what I want." So for me, when people ridicule me now, I'm like, "No." Like I'm about to stand in who I am. Like I am who I am and this is what I'm doing. So I feel like being singled-out, especially by like a White person, it made me feel like, "You're not higher than me and that's what we're not going to do here." A lot of my anger's consumed that, and I know a lot of people that show the other side, like they're shy. Like my friend in this situation, like she's shy and she's holding back and she doesn't want to be told that she's too sassy or that she has too much attitude.

As bold as Leila is though, even she admits that she doesn't always feel empowered to call out these microaggressive encounters because she doesn't want to be labeled as the

“angry” Black person who brings race into every situation. Instead, Leila explains that she needs to learn to not let her anger get the best of her – placing the burden of emotional labor entirely on herself.

Unfortunately in this instance, the leader did not check her own biases and was not aware of her microaggressive behavior, causing Leila to feel further marginalized and disempowered in the process.

### Finding 2: Socioeconomic Status Shapes the Connections Built

When analyzing students’ experiences and stories with respect to socioeconomic status, it was clear that class shapes the types of connections students form with others abroad, as evidenced by their interactions with service. Middle to upper-income students adopted a helper mentality, while low-income students felt a sense of urgency tied to systemic oppression.

The experience visiting the *batey* for Kristina, an upper-income Chinese-American student, was one of her first encounters with extreme poverty – and subsequently was difficult for her to process and understand. “It really shook me that was the condition that some people had to live in and I kind of cried after the big circle. I felt weird, I went to my room and cried some more,” she shared. She had trouble articulating what caused her to cry, but started to speak to a sense of guilt she felt from a more privileged standpoint. “I don’t know, it’s just the contrast. The conditions we were living in were really nice and to see, to go to a place where it’s not that nice. The people don’t have the opportunity to have a better life. It’s just hard to see that.” This experience has fueled Kristina in her transition to thinking about the impact she wants to make on the world. “I still don’t know exactly what I want to do but I do know I want to be part of a

change for the future, so that helped me hone in on what exactly my goal is.” She did not speak to any specific causes or organizations but generally that she wants to “help the world.”

For Jeremy, as a low-income Latino student raised by a single mother, he credits much of his success to his community. He describes feeling a sense of brotherhood – and a direct connection to his Latino roots – when he was with his soccer team. His coach was a father-figure who taught him what community meant. “The teams that he coached weren’t just teams. They were families. Little communities that everybody could rely on each other.”

This sense of personal responsibility and agency, he feels, was developed over the years, and culminated with his Community Action Project during his time abroad. Students worked in solidarity with the local community to repair and beautify a school, and Jeremy specifically got hands on experience fixing a leaking roof. The dilapidated building reminded him of his family’s homes in Mexico. “In [the] Dominican Republic,” however, he shares that, “it was the first time I could actually do something with my own hands...See the progress that it could make and see the people that are going to benefit from it and are happy to have us there, happy to see us.”

At the start of his senior year though, Jeremy shares that one of his best friends on the soccer team dropped out of high school. Shocked, he shares,

This whole time, I had seen him every day. I had training with him every day. He wouldn't tell me anything. I had no idea he was going through this whole struggle. He told me, "I didn't want to seem like I was weak." That's a whole Latino thing, the whole *machismo* stuff. He didn't want to seem weak. He didn't want to seem

dumb and he didn't want to ask for help because he felt that if he couldn't do it himself, he didn't deserve to be able to accomplish it.

For someone who benefited so much from this community – he felt compelled to give back. Empowered by what he could accomplish when given the opportunity abroad, Jeremy decided to take the issue into his own hands. Just as students tutored in small groups abroad, Jeremy thought some of the athlete students may benefit from small group tutoring as well. And so, he developed a tutoring program for athletes and presented it to his administration. As a White-facing Latino, he describes accessing certain privileges when talking to administration, and actively taking advantage of that privilege to bring about change at his school. Understanding what it was like to grow up with a working single-mother, Jeremy also used his personal experiences to support his community in the ways they needed. “I wouldn't just tutor them. If they were barely able to play soccer or stay in school, then I would set up meetings with their teachers. If their parents couldn't go, I would go. I acted like their little father, the way other people did for me.”

### Finding 3: Socioeconomic Status and Racial Privilege Combined Shape Students' Interactions with Poverty

Next, when I analyzed and compared student experiences across socioeconomic status and race, I found that class and racial privilege combine in unique ways which shape how students draw lessons from the program and experience encounters with extreme poverty.

As a low-income, Chicano male, Jake not only identified with those he met abroad because of their similar complexion, but he accessed his linguistic capital, opening him to form inside jokes in Spanish and relationships that felt like “family.” This

connection allowed Jake to see himself in those he met on the group's visit to the city dump, and as a result, the experience was difficult for him.

As an added layer, he was the Líder del día – or the student leader of the day who is selected to lead the mental warm ups, ask questions of the guest speaker, and be a role model for the delegation. “A lot of us were just emotionally distraught. I tried not to bawl my eyes out. A few of us were. I tried my best to comfort them as best I could.” For Jake though, the experience unfortunately was not new to him. “I was like this is reality sometimes.” This did not mean that the experience was not powerful or triggering for him. “It was something that's kind of close to home since we were basically almost homeless for a bit. I try to be optimistic as much as possible and just seeing that did bring a tear to my eye, but like at the same time, like I can't be...to me it's just *machismo* thing again where like I can't be weak, but I also want to be there for others.”

Leila had a similar experience identifying with the Haitians she met on her trip. “When I went to the *batey* and it was like people that looked like me, and I was understanding what they were saying and it was something that I could relate to. Like knowing you need something and you don't have it and you don't know where to get it. It's so hard.” Growing up in a family of successful lawyers, Leila knew she had to use her privilege to make a difference. She felt connected to their struggle, felt the weight of shared systemic oppression, and was inspired to resist by doing and achieving more.

Tired of having to explain her experiences to her White teachers at school, she is hopeful and has goals for her future. Thinking about her freshman year at Spelman, she proclaims, “I think that when you go to a college where they've been teaching black kids, somebody's already paved the way for me. I just want to learn.” Her success, she

attributes to her family – who are her role models. “I’m lucky...I feel like I’m not always in a disadvantaged situation because of my race. I’ve seen people who look like me do well.” And there was no question in her mind that this was just the beginning. She plans to “be a doctor, I want to be a surgeon, so I know that like my main goal is to return to the Dominican Republic, specifically San Juan, and do something with my profession there, because that was like a moment where I was like, ‘I can’t leave and not think about this anymore.’”

#### Finding 4: Teachers’ Critical Reflections on Racial Identity, Power, and Privilege Frame Their Teaching Philosophy and Approach

Each teacher interviewed was asked to share a critical incident from their trip, their reflections on their own racial identity development, and how they feel that understanding influences their work as trip leaders. Although each participant had unique stories, I found that the life experiences of teachers and their critical reflections of their own racial identity, power, and privilege fundamentally shapes their teaching approach and work as leaders. The curriculum then, plays a less important role in terms of guiding students’ critical reflections than their own role as mentors. This is evidenced by the teachers’ ability to translate their lived experiences into brave spaces for connection, which provides an environment for critically engaged dialogue and reflections on race, identity, power and privilege to occur.

#### Geraldo

Geraldo had clearly thought deeply about his role and responsibility as a trip leader for a diverse student group – specifically as a leader of color. He wanted to be a role model, who pushed his own personal boundaries and worked to create a “brave

space” – or “a space where it’s okay to be uncomfortable, but not lock yourself up to new knowledge.” For Geraldo, this meant finding a healthy balance between sharing personal opinions to provide food for thought and stimulate discussion, and creating space for students to delve deeper and dialogue on their own.

This is the type of teaching and mentorship Geraldo had received himself. At 13-years old, a mentor lent him the book, *500 Years of Chicano History*. The book was easy to read, and mostly made up of pictures and short paragraphs, but for the first time, it opened his mind to history he never knew about. Instead of telling a young teen what to think or how to feel, his mentor allowed him to learn about and consider a different perspective of the Whitewashed history prescribed to him.

This is the approach Geraldo took as a leader in the nightly meetings in the Dominican Republic. For example, after an emotionally heavy day spent visiting the Central Sugar Consortium and a *batey*, many students walked away feeling distraught, guilty, and sad. And just as his mentor did, Geraldo shared a mantra to help shift students’ perspectives, that goes, “Where there is oppression, there will be resistance.” He encourages students to draw that same connection in different parts of history that they have studied – and bring the reflection back to their own personal histories and experiences in the U.S. Students were then able to reflect on and discuss the ways in which oppression occurs everywhere – even at home. Geraldo then nudged them a little further – pushing students to consider the ways they can apply their learning to their Community Action Project and in their communities at home.

Cynthia

Cynthia believes that to fully engage abroad, the work begins with understanding oneself within “the context of power and privilege, and how [these forces] change the dynamics.” She developed her racial identity and consciousness through her involvement with the Mixed Student Union in college. “I think that because of my skin tone...I’m always going to have a lot more privilege than people within my community, so what am I going to do with that privilege?” she asked aloud. Because she has reflected critically on her racial privilege, she is comfortable moving seamlessly through experiences with both identities. She proclaims, “I’m a woman of color. I’m a mixed race, black woman who is in education. And that alone is pretty political. It’s pretty powerful, and I think of how many of my connections with the students, that’s been the foundation.” As a result, students feel safe and comfortable confiding in her.

Specifically, on her trip, one of her students struggled with anxiety and depression and confided in Cynthia after a particularly emotional day. Cynthia shared that her younger brother struggles with mental health issues and shared trauma from their childhood. This experience, she felt, allowed her to feel compassion and see the situation from the perspective of a student who struggled with her own mental health issues. Further, as an educator who proudly identifies as a Black, female, she has been a support system for students like Leila at her school, who deserved to be heard and validated in her experiences with race abroad.

Wesley

Wesley had a difficult time defining his Whiteness, and struggled to identify with anything other than being “Scottish, Irish, English, or whatever.” Growing up in San Jose, he understood that he had certain privileges his friends did not. They would often

joke, “we’re not going to get pulled over if the White guy is driving!” When probed to think about his racial identity more deeply, he responded instead by sharing a more salient part of his identity development – his role as a brother to his six foster siblings. He explains, “so with that mix, you get a lot of varied personalities, a lot of very different things that have happened in their lives. Traumas, successes, things like that.”

Wesley is certain that these experiences prepared him to empathize with and support a student issue in-country. “Being very understanding toward foster kids growing up, sharing that space, I think it enabled me to keep an open mind and really just kind of respond to her positively and constructively as much as possible.” He goes on to share other “successes” – for example, Ethan, a transgender student who trusted him enough to come out to him, before his parents. Wesley supported Ethan through his full gender transition, and devotes his career to students like him.

He goes on to share “I don’t really like living in San Jose all that much, but I feel needed here. I feel like what I have to bring to the table is a unique skillset that these kids could really appreciate. Whether it be my Latino kids, Vietnamese, Chinese, whoever.” The way he describes his personal connection to the teaching and mentorship for these students of color is reminiscent of the White savior complex – placing himself on a proverbial pedestal for the work he chooses to do. This tone and perspective is distinctly different than those of Geraldo and Cynthia – whose are rooted in a shared experience and interaction with systemic oppression.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the study and important conclusions drawn from the complex stories, intersectional identities, lived experiences, and data presented in Chapter 4. The chapter also provides a discussion and analysis of each of the findings as it relates to current research, implications for action, and recommendations for future studies. While this research in no way represents the experiences of all students of color, it is my hope that as U.S. education continues to diversify and internationalize, this study can serve as the beginning of a much-needed conversation to address issues of race, belonging, and difference in our world.

### Summary of the Study

According to the 2017 Open Doors report, over a ten-year period from 2005-2006 to 2015-2016, the proportion of U.S. minority students studying abroad has increased modestly from 17% to 28%. Upon first analysis, this increase seemed to validate the past decade of research and advocacy work done by many nonprofits and universities. However, when contextualized, the number of U.S. minority students is growing disproportionately to the rapidly changing ethnic/racial demographics of college campuses. According to the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, from 1990-2013, the “largest increases in undergraduate enrollment were observed for Hispanic and Black students.” The increased numbers of minority students studying abroad then, has only increased marginally likely due to general increase in minority student enrollment nationwide.

To understand this growing disparity then, it is important to consider the 2014 ERASMUS Impact study - which measured the effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalization of higher education. Amongst the key findings are that students who study abroad are in a better position to find their first job upon graduation and the educational experience enhances their career development. Given the potential economic impact, addressing and understanding the growing disparity is an equity issue. And as higher education diversifies, we as scholar-practitioners in the field need to understand how diverse students experience international immersion programs, to begin to address and support their unique student needs.

The purpose of this qualitative study sought to understand how a student's racial identity shapes their experience in a multiracial international service-learning program – and more specifically how it shapes their own ideas and actions around race, belonging, and difference. The study also sought to understand the ways teachers can influence student's development and learning throughout the immersion trip.

Specifically, the research questions were:

1. How does racial identity shape the experience of international service-learning programs for U.S. high school students? More specifically, how does it shape their own ideas and actions around race, belonging, and difference?
  - a. How does a multiracial residential international travel program mediate the ways a group of high school students of different racial backgrounds shape their ideas and actions around race, belonging, and difference?
  - b. How does a student's socioeconomic status shape the way students engage in international service learning?

- c. In what ways can leaders contribute to students successfully moving towards understanding their identity, power, and privilege?

To answer these questions, a total of ten alumni students of diverse backgrounds participated in a one-hour in-person interview. Additionally, five teachers of diverse backgrounds also participated in a one-hour in-person interview. The interview guide and the stories shared were centered around participants' racial identity, and their experiences abroad with respect to their racial identity. At several points throughout my data collection, I intentionally paused to reflect, wrote analytic memos, and continually refined the interview process. Using a grounded theory approach, I stayed close to the narratives and allowed codes, themes, and findings to emerge from the data.

#### Discussion of Findings

While the way participants identify themselves, their lived experiences, interactions with others, and takeaways from the program may vary, each of the findings reflect salient experiences of student participants and teachers throughout their journey abroad. Each finding is described and discussed in detail in the following sections.

There are four major findings of the study: (a) Students' racial identity shapes their experiences in an international service-learning program in ways that can be both empowering and disempowering, (b) Class shapes the types of connections students formed with their peers and others abroad. Middle to upper-income students adopted a helper mentality, while low-income students felt a sense of responsibility tied to similar experiences of systemic oppression, (c) Class and racial privilege combine in unique ways which shape how students draw lessons from the program and experience encounters with extreme poverty, and (d) The life experiences of teachers and their

critical reflections of their own racial identity, power, and privilege fundamentally shape their teaching approach and work as leaders and mentors.

#### Finding 1: Racial Identity Shapes Students' Experiences Abroad

Current and existing literature often focuses on the tangible barriers of participation for students of color including finances, family attitudes, or lack of appropriate mentors of color (Sweeny, 2013). Few studies exist that focus on the unique experiences of students of color abroad, many of which focus on what the Institute of International Education has coined a "heritage seeking" student.

For ethnic minority students, learning about their heritage is an important part of their identity development, and going abroad offers students an opportunity to connect with their ancestral history and culture firsthand. They choose to study abroad in a country where their family comes from then, "not because it is unfamiliar and new, but rather because it is somewhat familiar" (IIE, 2006). As a result, studies have found that heritage seekers can have overwhelming and emotional homecoming experiences – allowing them to develop deep ties to their roots, or feel more appreciative and connected to their American identity (Tsantir, 2005). Most importantly, these experiences allow students of color to learn about themselves and where they fit into the global context.

For the student participants, their racial identity shaped their experience in ways that were consistent with the literature for heritage seeking students. The narratives and stories collected often centered around how they felt, interacted, or identified in relation to others abroad. More specifically, every student spoke to moments of micro-exchange, mostly through unstructured dialogue with others, that impacted them most profoundly. In the Dominican Republic, discrimination is based heavily based on skin tone and less

on ethnic heritage, like in the United States. Thus, for these students of color, their complexion combined with their U.S. citizenship status afforded them contextualized privilege that allowed for deeper reflections on the power that racial identity has in different parts of the world.

For students like Jake and Erika, their relationships with local Dominican youth or other students engendered self-reflexivity in relation to their own race, belonging, and difference. These exchanges – and the subsequent sense of empowerment they felt – are consistent with the benefits for heritage seeking students of color summarized in the literature. This connection is significant because the interactions and the exposure to another way of seeing themselves adds to the importance and complexity of our work with minority students abroad. In preparing students of color and our educators to travel abroad, we must consider both students' racial identity and the social context in our approach to fully actualize such powerful learning and development.

However, while scholars agree that experiences abroad can have a positive impact on students of color (Day-Vines, Barker, & Exum, 1998; Landau & Moore, 2001; Ng, 2003; Sweeny, 2013), Leila's story and the interview data proved that these experiences can also leave students feeling disempowered and further marginalized. While Leila was able to look back on the microaggressive situation and reflect on her growth since then, much of the learning and discussion occurred serendipitously by chance between other students or with a trusted leader. This interaction therefore highlights significant gaps and areas for improvement to consider when designing the program curriculum or training leaders.

Leila's experience unfortunately, is all too common for students of color who are taught by White educators. Although the classroom environment abroad is non-traditional, the learning continues to be reinforced by White normative culture (Hitchcock & Flint, 2015). Discussions that both challenge these norms and center the identities and needs of students of color are critical to fully support Leila and others like her.

A multi-racial international immersion program can create palpable experiences and the context to prompt formal or informal discussions about difference. What is most salient perhaps for Leila though, is that her experience as a Black student on the trip was profoundly different from her peers. She, along with other Black students spoke of being able to "see themselves" in the people living in the *batey* in a more personalized way than non-Black students. Those living in the *batey* were also the most disenfranchised people students met in the Dominican Republic. Thankfully, Leila had a strong sense of self and a support system who affirmed her as a young, Black, female. Without this support system, she – and potentially other students of color could internalize and develop misinformed or oppressive interpretations of global anti-Blackness.

Global anti-Blackness is deeply rooted in the colonial legacies of race and White supremacy worldwide. These racial hierarchies and power dynamics transcend borders and is not located in one context or one country. As such, it seems illogical that a program designed to serve students of color abroad neglects to address and unpack Whiteness as a discourse of power globally. Whether they acknowledge or are aware of it, students and their leaders have a relationship to Whiteness and, by extension, these systems of power. Leila's experience reminds us that although leaders may be well-intentioned, they may be unknowingly reproducing similar systems of oppression abroad.

To appropriately support these students in unpacking their experience in the *batey*, teacher leaders must also be aware of their own understanding of and relationship to Whiteness.

#### Finding 2: Socioeconomic Status Shapes the Connections Built

The data suggests that students' socioeconomic status shapes the types of connections formed with others abroad. Middle to upper-income students adopted a helper mentality, while low-income students felt a sense of responsibility tied to systemic oppression. This is evidenced by students' attitudes towards and approach to service-learning in-country. Kristina, for example, was overwhelmed with the contrast in privilege she had access to at home in the Bay Area and those that she met in the *batey*. Channeling her emotion into action, she felt empowered by her delegation's ability to fully execute their community action project. Driven by the impact this had on her life and worldview, she knows she wants to "help the world." However altruistic her intentions may be, her financial privilege positions herself as a "helper" or "savior." Jeremy on the other hand, identified with the stories and encounters with oppression he witnessed in the *batey*. Drawing from his own experiences, he felt a responsibility to pay it forward and continue to do right by and for others in need.

The most common tension that students expressed was what to do with their newly developed global awareness. Most students had a strong analysis of what they had seen, but when it came to action-based solutions, they either went to simplistic answers of raising money or remained vague in saying they wanted to help others in need. Many students felt feelings of sadness or guilt, and later developed a sense of empowerment and gratitude because of their community action project. However, the level to which

students understood privilege for example, was minimal and surface-level. Within the diverse group of students alone, several interactions with privilege and oppression emerged from the narratives. For students, and particularly those of color, this prompted varying levels of critical reflection. This often began with a student's ability to analyze and interpret the inequities and injustices they witnessed, and then connect the experience to their own social condition. Delving further into the historical roots of injustice – including globalization, colonization, and slavery, as well as an in-depth analysis of the functionalities of power would allow students to contextualize and draw meaning from their own social condition. These conceptual building blocks are the foundation to developing students' critical consciousness, and can provide them with the knowledge base to develop more complex ways to "help."

The problem here however, is that a service based program inherently places students in a dominant position, without the appropriate tools to critically examine the acts, decisions, and policies that lead to such domination and injustice (Mitchell, Donahue, & Young-Law, 2012). As an alternative, a social justice paradigm that draws from students' critical consciousness creates the space for service-learning projects to address how systems of power are created, maintained, and ultimately changed. Integrating this social justice approach to service-learning can play a pivotal role in the development of students' knowledge, skills, and agency to reimagine and create just social systems.

**Finding 3: Socioeconomic Status and Racial Privilege Combined Shape Students' Interactions with Poverty**

The majority of students of color interviewed either identified with the locals because they could communicate in Spanish or because they identified with their appearance or experiences. This personal connection allowed students of color to deepen their understanding of racial privilege and oppression in a global context. However, at a pivotal time in a young person's identity development, these experiences and lessons could have a critical and momentous impact on their trajectory – in a range of potentially affirming or subjugating ways. Those that identified with others abroad, talked about feeling a sense of comfort to be a part of the majority, or even more specifically described a feeling of freedom from U.S. racism at home. Stepping outside of their everyday realities in the U.S., can have liberating effects on the way a student identifies with their race and social condition. While the experience can give room for students to reimagine and redefine their racial identity, this outcome is largely dependent on the nature of the students' interaction with race and difference abroad. Students of color may still encounter White supremacy and racism in countries where the White population is a minority (Gearhart, 2005). Often, the same systems of oppression that minority students experience at home in the U.S. are being reproduced within student cohorts or in the classroom. Without the proper awareness and intentionality, these programs abroad can reinforce messages of internalized oppression for students of color, and perhaps even more so on a global scale.

For both Jake and Leila, the very real experience of both understanding the people in the *batey* and identifying with them physically allowed them to feel more deeply connected to the injustices at hand. For Leila, this personal understanding pushed her into an uncomfortable and vulnerable space, forcing her to make sense of the emotions and

thoughts that came up. This widened perspective and perhaps the vast reach of global anti-Blackness sparked a sense of urgency and personal responsibility within her.

Although she is often disenfranchised as a young, Black female, she understood that even though she identified with the Haitians, she has certain privileges as a U.S. citizen and college-bound student that she can leverage to make a difference globally. This was evident by her goals to learn and thrive at an HBCU, and eventually return to San Juan to make a difference.

In a 2012 study of students' path to participation, a quantitative analysis of cultural capital suggests that a student's access to cultural capital "importantly predicts study abroad participation" (Simon & Ainsworth, 2012). Leila's drive not only to participate, but to actively engage in a solution could be because she comes from an economically privileged position, and thus has more access to social and cultural capital in her immediate network of resources and mentors. Her mother, for example, was financially able to afford the program cost, despite the minimal scholarship Leila qualified for based on her family's income. Further, when asked about any obstacles to participation, Leila shared that her own mother studied abroad during her time at Spelman College, and encouraged her to participate at an even younger age in high school. Thus in Leila's case, she not only had financial access to this transformative experience, but the support and affirmation throughout her journey to make sense of her new worldview. This finding is significant because it brings attention to perhaps what is lacking in current efforts to address the unique needs of students of color who participate in service-learning programs abroad – an affirming and assets-based approach to understanding their experiences with race and difference abroad.

Jake on the other hand, identified with the Haitians because they were impoverished – triggering memories where his own family had faced housing insecurity in the Bay Area. Coincidentally, that day he was assigned to be Líder del Día, or the role model for the entire delegation. Despite the emotional chord the experience struck for him, he was able to channel a learned, cultural concept of strong, masculine *machismo* leadership to serve as stable guide for his peers when they needed additional support.

This begs the question though, that if Jake were not the Líder del Día, would he have experienced those triggers the same way? If he hadn't had the responsibility to be strong for others, would his experience and interaction with poverty abroad be different? How can educators ensure students of color are empowered by these interactions and do not internalize global definitions of racism and oppression?

Perhaps the larger issue at hand is that a service-learning program inherently positions the volunteer to approach problems with deficit-based thinking – as if these communities needed saving. Deficit-based thinking does not leave room for intersectional identities or the experiences of individuals, and presupposes that an outside force must sweep in to accurately identify and solve the existing problems.

Instead if pedagogically we approach service-learning for students of color based on strengths, the emphasis for learning can be expanded to consider the individual student and their interactions with race, belonging, and difference abroad. Programs built intentionally in this way can hopefully create opportunities for empowerment and authentic empathy building across cultures.

The problem is that the program overall strives to be apolitical, and the act of building one's critical consciousness cannot be neutral. As our country continues to

diversify, our work as educators, practitioners, and scholars can no longer neglect to address the role race and racism plays in international education. We must strive to radically transform global learning environments into brave spaces, committed to racial justice - only then can education and student learning come together in powerful and transformative ways. This issue however is not unique to Global Glimpse. A 2003 study utilized a critical consciousness framework to critique community service and character education programs, and found that the majority “embrace a vision of citizenship devoid of politics” emphasizing “developing individual character traits, . . . volunteerism, charity” and lack “teaching about social movements, social transformation, and systemic change” (Kahne & Westheimer, 2003, p. 36). This finding, and the aforementioned research highlight the need for social justice, system change, and issues of power to be incorporated in service-learning programs.

#### Finding 4: Teachers’ Critical Reflections on Racial Identity, Power, and Privilege Frame Their Teaching Philosophy and Approach

Teacher leaders played many roles during the immersion trip – from chaperones, to mentors, to pseudo-parents, and educators. What was most apparent from the interview data however, was their role as mentors abroad. Evidence from the literature suggests that “mentoring may facilitate racial/ethnic identity development” (Sanchez & Colón, 2005, p. 156). The data proved to be consistent with the broader literature in that the teachers that connected personally with students were successful at guiding them through their self-discovery process. However, when making sense of race and racism globally, educators who had developed their own critical consciousness were successful in supporting students of color through their feelings of cognitive dissonance. For example,

Geraldo fostered Erika's intellectual curiosity by providing alternative narratives to help her understand the repercussions globalization has on communities of color abroad. Cynthia, on the other hand, affirmed and heard Leila when she felt unfairly treated by the normative teaching methods of White leaders. In the context of the developing world, these teachable moments often occurred through unstructured dialogue or candid interactions with differences in racial identity, power, and privilege. How then, can we account for or support these seemingly serendipitous moments of growth?

In considering how to support this success, the literature suggests that teacher development and learning is "an essential component of teachers' effectiveness in the classroom with students (Milner, 2003). I would argue that when teaching in the context of an international immersion program, teachers must be challenged to reflect on experiences far beyond the traditional walls of a classroom – creating room to address the idiosyncrasies that persist in multiracial learning environments. To be most effective in a diverse and multicultural "classroom" abroad, teachers must first actively reflect, (un)learn, and develop their own racial and multicultural competence – particularly within context and as a mentor to students of color. Thus, the educational pedagogy that shapes teacher trainings must holistically develop their critical consciousness because this inevitably shapes who they are in the classroom and who they will be abroad.

It is not enough however, for leaders to be aware of how their lives and teaching practice are influenced by their relationship to and with Whiteness, power, and privilege. They must also be willing to do the difficult work of racial justice education praxis to dismantle and transform the very systems that create the oppression. This certainly is easier to discuss academically, than to execute in practice. However, these experiences,

narratives, and the findings inform possible and tangible implications for current and future efforts.

### Implications for Practice

As the data and findings have shown international immersion experiences have the potential to be powerful and transformative for young people – particularly for students of color. Currently however, the program as it exists places the onus on the students to unpack and interpret their experiences – or ideally, the teacher to support and guide them through their process. Given the complexity of each student or teacher participant’s identity and temperament, this could be a missed opportunity for rich learning and discussion, and is an issue Global Glimpse and other youth travel programs need to address programmatically, if as practioners we are to continue our efforts to increase access for diverse student groups.

First, formalized discussions and reflections centered around racial privilege is needed as a base foundation for learning – starting with vocabulary with which students can begin the discussion. This starts with the concept of race, why it was created, and race as a social construct. “Race is such a significant dimension of all human beings’ experiences, especially racially marginalized individuals’ daily activities, that is seems inconceivable...to reflect without explicit dialogue (Gay & Howard, 2000), strategies, and techniques that address race” (Milner, 2003). The discussion and learning must be centered around student narratives, experiences, and knowledge as a way of reframing and challenging racist educational norms.

Pedagogically, the multidimensional framework to best understand transformative learning and education for social change draws from concepts by Dewey, Mezirow, and

Freire. The curriculum currently incorporates self-reflection and development discussions, and the hands-on activities scaffold the learning allowing students to both experience a shift in their global perspective, and an opportunity for informed action through their community action project. Where the curriculum and learning outcomes fall short however, is in addressing a more explicit awareness and understanding of racial privilege and oppression. Specifically, these types of global immersion programs need intentional dialogue that not only brings awareness to these oppressive powers but also addresses the role race – and U.S. politics – plays in creating global inequities. Thus, for students of color to fully actualize the benefits of an international immersion experience, the program needs to incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy that promotes critical dialogue in which students can unpack and challenge the global dominance of Whiteness. This nuanced understanding and perspective can help students connect how they experience race in the U.S. with how they may experience race abroad – developing a more complex understanding of their own racial identity, power, and privilege.

Curriculum then, also needs to specifically delve deeper into the functionalities of power, and the historical roots of global inequality. Drawing connections to colonialism, slavery, consumerism, and capitalism will aid in students' ability to extrapolate meaning from their experiences abroad. Specifically, to actualize the transformative power of an immersion experience, students must pause to consider what it means to be an “American” participating in a service-learning program abroad. A service paradigm wrongly implies that the students and their efforts are the key to the solution. This narrative however, can hide the fact that “poverty is produced rather than naturally occurring, and that our consumption in the First World is intimately tied to scarcity in the

global South” (Roy, Negrón-Gonzales, Opoku-Agyemang, & Talwalker, 2016). This contextual understanding and awareness is critical for service-learning to move towards system analysis and change.

Lastly, it is important that teachers are trained to approach learning and development holistically – considering how each student’s racial identity, power, and privilege will shape their experience abroad, and how their own racial identity impacts the learning. Further, if teachers are facilitating conversations related to race, they must also be trained fully to do so. This study’s findings suggest that to do so, leaders must actively interrogate their own relationship to Whiteness, and the privileges or lack thereof they receive from its dominance in education. Specifically, for educators like Wesley, we must be careful not to invisibilize their racial identity as a White teacher by only focusing on the students of color. Whiteness is a discourse of power, and the power central to Whiteness inevitably plays out in their work with students. The tangible implications of changing one’s relationship to Whiteness is to understand how it comes out in the classroom – likely in the form of microaggressions. Within the context of trainings, this could begin with the definition and examples of microaggressions, then in small groups teachers can explore strategies on how to navigate when they come up, and ways to hold oneself and others accountable.

#### Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This research study was qualitative in nature, and focused on a sample size of ten students and five teachers. The sample size of each racial/ethnic group as a result was small – and although captured a narrative depth for each student – the data could not be used to make any generalizations or conclusions about a specific racial/ethnic group. This

study can be expanded to focus on the racial identity development for a specific population. For example, future research could focus on the development of the critical racial and social justice consciousness of Chicana students that travel to Spanish speaking countries or on Black, African-American, or Afro-Cuban students traveling to countries with historical connections to the Afro-Caribbean slave trade.

Additionally, it was clear from the data that the Global Glimpse Leaders had a key role in the learning and development for students of color. This study however, focused on a small sample, and each participant was selected for an interview based on the researcher's prior knowledge of their social justice consciousness. What was intriguing about the interview data however, was uncovering the ways in which White leaders can either exhibit microaggressive behaviors towards students of color, or make room for and support their unique experiences – albeit from a White savior lens. This research can be broadened to understand more specifically how White leaders impact the international immersion experience for students of color. The findings and data could be used to further inform how to decenter Whiteness in pre-trip teacher trainings.

Lastly, while the research still agrees that qualitative research was the correct approach for this study, qualitative research tools such as interviews, are limited by design, to a single perspective and narrative. Future research may also consider adding a quantitative component to further illustrate – with data – that students of color experience international immersion and service-learning programs distinctly differently than their White counterparts. While qualitative studies capture narratives and the heart of research participants' stories, quantitative data can provide an alternative lens with which to view the same experiences. When coupled with a quantitative survey and subsequent statistical

analysis for example, additional evidence can be used to holistically strengthen this study's data and findings.

### Significance of Findings

This study contributes to academic knowledge on how students of color experience international service-learning programs, and how an immersion abroad can shape their social justice consciousness. Given the small sample size, this research captures a snapshot of the student and teacher experiences in the Global Glimpse Bay Area program. The study addressed four specific questions:

1. How does racial identity shape the experience of international service-learning programs for U.S. high school students? More specifically, how does it shape their own ideas and actions around race, belonging, and difference?
  - a. How does a multiracial residential international travel program mediate the ways a group of high school students of different racial backgrounds shape their ideas and actions around race, belonging, and difference?
  - b. How does a student's socioeconomic status shape the way students engage in international service learning?
  - c. In what ways can leaders contribute to students successfully moving towards understanding their identity, power, and privilege?

#### Question 1

To address the first question, it is important to acknowledge that the oppressive powers of race and White supremacy are prevalent worldwide. As such, each student's immersion experience abroad is also shaped by their racial identity and its relationship to Whiteness. For young students who are in a critical developmental stage in their lives,

stepping into a foreign version of White supremacy abroad undoubtedly shapes their experiences, ideas, and actions around race, belonging, and difference. For students of color, who have experience being marginalized in the U.S., their experiences abroad can present a palpable shift in what is perceived as “normal.” Forming connections with others that look like them abroad can evoke familial comforts, and can provide a fresh and empowering perspective on what it means to be a person of color in today’s world. This was the case for Erika, whose identity was called to question when she was perceived as “African-American,” “Haitian,” or “Dominican.” These critical reflections of her own intersectional racial identity, power, and privilege were initially prompted by interactions with others abroad. Her ability to make sense of these interactions however, were supported most often by her leader, Geraldo, who throughout the trip lent her additional readings, providing an alternative narrative for unpacking such feelings of cognitive dissonance.

If not facilitated properly however, students of color can miss opportunities to critically reflect on their unique experiences and may end up internalizing global messages of anti-Blackness. For White and some Asian students too, the experience of being a minority abroad can be an important and powerful opportunity to reflect on what it means to be arbitrarily given such privilege, and have a meaningful discussion about what to do with the responsibility that comes with such privilege.

## Question 2

In addressing the second question – which seeks to understand the value of a multiracial residential international immersion program – evidence from each student and teacher story has demonstrated the opportunity this experience provides to create

meaningful connections across racial, social, and cultural divides. Because each student's racial identity uniquely colored and shaped their experience, a multiracial program can cultivate rich discussions. The diversity of the group in some instances can create cliques, but by design a residential program creates informal opportunities for connection – often late at night while playing cards or swapping stories about life at home. Further, all students, regardless of their previous or nonexistent access to travel, experience vulnerability traveling to the developing world together – and that in and of itself is a bonding experience.

What is perhaps the most transformative part of the program is its ability to foster and build empathy across such divides. Empathy helps participants reflect on their prejudices and biases, and when cultivated in a foreign context abroad, allows them to reflect on, be aware of, and connect with difference. This was the most apparent from the experiences of White and Asian-American students who were most often perceived as “others” abroad. When these students were vulnerable and allowed themselves to step into the shoes of their peers or the community members they met abroad, they formed genuine and meaningful bonds that transcended cultural, racial, and social boundaries. This held true for all participants – students and teachers alike. In today's increasingly diverse and polarized world, these types of authentic connections serve as the foundation for challenging and fighting for equity and justice for all.

### Question 3

To answer the third question, which investigates how a student's social economic status can shape the way they engage with international service-learning, an analysis across class was conducted. Students' experiences with service abroad varied depending

on the class and perspective from which they come from. As such, their learnings and takeaways varied as well. Those that were more economically privileged most often felt overwhelmed by guilt, sadness, and/or had an immense desire to help. They often fell into a savior mindset which reinforces the notion that as U.S. citizens, we are more qualified to provide aid. Those that were considered less economically privileged, also felt similar feelings, but they were instead driven by a shared understanding or a relatable experience.

Understanding the nuanced way students experience and learn from an international service-learning program is significant because it can inform individualized teaching approaches to deepen and complicate students' understanding of foreign aid. With a framework to tease out and discuss students' racial, economic, and American privilege, students may be able to develop more complex ways to "help." Otherwise, they could easily adopt a false sense of Western superiority and self-righteousness from their experiences.

#### Question 4

Lastly, the final question aimed to understand how teachers can support students to unpack their identity, power, and privilege throughout the immersion trip. The data and analysis from the interviews revealed that teachers played a pivotal role in guiding students' reflections and educational experience abroad. Educators that were most successful were those that had a strong sense of their own racial identity and privilege, and who used their experiences as avenues to connect with the students. They often pushed students to critically reflect on their positionality in the greater world, and frequently engaged students in dialogue about their experiences.

These results are significant because they begin to identify the ideal teacher profile to lead students of color through an international immersion program. These findings may also inform areas of improvement for teacher recruitment and training purposes. However, due to the small sample interviewed, additional research may be needed to draw more substantive conclusions.

### Conclusion

In a world that is constantly evolving, it is critical that educational experiences prepare students to understand the complex world in which they live in, and more importantly, the way local and global issues are intertwined. Study abroad and international service-learning programs can expose students to the risks and implications of globalization and contextualize their role and responsibility in contributing to a global community. Given the tension and polarized nature of our current political affairs, creating spaces for genuine connection across difference is the type of educational experience we need more of.

As teachers and international immersion programs provide students the opportunities to see, experience, and feel the effects of globalization, young leaders can begin to understand how it shapes their daily lives. These educational experiences not only help students make sense of the world in which they live, but also allow them to find their voice in it. In today's world, I'd argue that there is no more important educational opportunity for students – especially our students of color to experience fully.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Analytic Memo from Pilot Study

WORKING TITLE: Building Community Across Difference Through K-12 International Summer Immersion Programs: A Narrative Inquiry in Identity and Social Emotional Learning

QUESTIONS AS OF JULY 2017:

1. In what ways does the GG summer immersion program support students' social emotional learning?/How can international immersion programs like Global Glimpse shape students' social and emotional learning?
2. How does the Global Glimpse program influence students' identity?/How does the GG summer immersion program support students' identity development?
  - a. What factors lead to positive program outcomes?
3. OR... Evaluate the GG experience/program using the [Inclusive Excellence Scorecard](#)?

IRB CONSENT FORMS: *Briefly summarize the status of your consent forms. Who is the person who has your consent forms? How many consent forms have been returned (you can know the total number, just not the specific students)? Is there anything else you could try to get more consent forms returned (that is not bribery)? Explain.*

- I have gotten consent from 17/22 parents via email or via a scanned copy of the completed form. The remaining 5/22 parents were contacted via phone and I received verbal confirmation.
- Once in-country, I made an announcement at the first activity and collected signed consent/assent forms from all 22 students, 2 GG Leaders, and 2 Program Coordinators.

DATA COLLECTION:

*What data have you collected so far? What is the process of data collection like so far? What parts are easy and convenient to collect? Explain.*

- I've captured participant observation [notes](#) from my time with the San Juan de la Maguana delegation from Thursday, June 16th to Sunday, June 19th. This included participating and being a part of the adult leadership team during the Nightly Meetings, Field trip to the DR-Haiti border, Binational Market, Self-Reflections, Field trip to the Central Sugar Consortium, Field trip to Batey 6 with Guest Speakers from Plataforma Vida, and the CAP Design.
- I've captured a number of photos to illustrate the activities and spark my memory.
- I've saved the delegation's [blog posts](#) (a collective journal in which the Líder del Día writes a summary and reflection of the day's theme and activities).

*What parts are inconvenient or seem like they will be challenging to collect? Explain.*

- I didn't anticipate how difficult it would be to capture data as a participant observer. Since I also work for the organization and have experience being a trip

leader myself, I was often pulled into problem solving with the adult leadership team vs truly being present and with the students. For many of the activities too, it was not appropriate to have my notepad or laptop with me, so I had to rely on my memory to download every activity, conversation, body language or facial expression. Memory is funny too - because sometimes your feelings or personal perceptions can embellish what truly happened. I feel that this is okay for the moment though, because these observations are meant to inform my RQs.

- What I sometimes picked up on though, were the times where Emiezo (the student I believe was the most aware of social and racial injustices globally and in the U.S.) would make comments like “of course” or “it is what is,” - hinting that these are experiences that are neither new or shocking for her to witness. I’d like to dig more on this sense that I got and I wonder how “eye-opening” the experience really is for students of color, who likely navigate cultural differences regularly in the States. This will be challenging because I believe it takes an element of trust in order to dig deeper and capture student’s genuine reflections .

What have you done with this data? What data will you be collecting next?

- I’ve compiled the notes and photos from my observations (doing the best to fill in approx conversations) on this [document](#).
- Next, I’d like to review the student surveys once they are completed at the end of the summer, and disaggregate the data by self-reported race/ethnicity to see if the data reveals anything else.

Make an ASSERTION or claim for at least one of your research questions; an assertion is finding a pattern in your data.

1. The GG summer immersion program helps students develop social emotional skills with respect to SEL’s five core competencies: responsible decision-making, relationship skills, social awareness, self-awareness, and self-management.
2. The GG program allows students to unpack and begin to understand their cultural identity and intersectional privilege.
3. When not facilitated well, the program can miss the mark on powerful learning opportunities and further marginalize students of color.
  - a. Be more critical - White facilitators not equipped to talk about race and power.

PROVIDE EVIDENCE to support each assertion (give an example, sample from interviews, journal, methods notebook, student work, etc.).

1. Evidence of the growth along 5 core competencies of SEL:
  - a. Responsible decision-making: Students choosing to prioritize the beautification project that the community expressed need for over their personal goals of doing “more.”
  - b. Relationship skills: Students learning to live in residential settings with diverse students. Students share rooms with others from across the greater Bay Area. Students are placed on trips based on their availability, country preference, and to maximize diversity of schools, gender, race/ethnicity, and income level.
  - c. Social awareness:

- i. Students became aware of the human rights violations and injustices that occur in the DR, which allowed them to then examine and be more critical of similar ways injustices occur at home too.
- ii. Data from 2016 Impact Report: 96% of students report that they can better understand and empathize with people from different backgrounds because of Global Glimpse.
  - 1. 95% of students report having developed an understanding of globalization and global interdependencies because of Global Glimpse.
  - 2. 97% of students report that they now care more about issues in other countries as a result of their Global Glimpse experience.
- d. Self-awareness: The Líder del Día activity is designed to help students develop a greater sense of their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for growth. It is an opportunity for every student to step out of their comfort zone and stretch their capacity as leaders. I saw many students over the course of my few days with the SJIA delegation step up as leaders in their own way. For example, one student used encouragement as a form of motivation for students to drink water, and used facts to help the group understand how important it was to stay hydrated. (Ex. “Did you know your body is 60% water? You should take a sip of your water to stay hydrated!”)
- e. Self-management: The Líder del Día activity also lended to supporting the development of student’s self-management skills. For example, on field trips, the Líder del Días were often in charge of making sure all students were accounted for by initiating head counts. In the developing world, this pushes them to effectively manage their stress in a leadership position.
  - 2. Evidence of students struggling with their identity and privilege:
    - . Students asking and reflecting on, “what can we do?”
    - a. Students feeling guilty or sad or hopeless; This is evidence of them sitting with these feelings and trying to make sense of them.
    - b. Students reflecting on being children of immigrant parents; understanding all that their families have sacrificed for their educational opportunities in the States.
  - 3. The program can miss the mark and further marginalize students of color:
    - . BIA delegation - cliques formed due to weak leadership and facilitation skills. As a result, negative stereotypes were reinforced.

WORKING HYPOTHESIS about "what is going on here?" (thinking about the bigger picture directed toward the development of themes); you may have one hypothesis for each research question, or possibly a hypothesis that encompasses two or more of your research questions

The GG program has the potential to support students’ SEL by allowing students to connect with the global community. In the process of understanding and learning about difference, students are able to unpack their own identity and privilege. The scaffolding of learning opportunities and hands-on learning allows students to develop a sense of personal agency.

There are many variables that lead to successful trips that develop students across all five core SEL competencies including the strengths and weaknesses of the Program Coordinators and GG Leaders to not only execute the itinerary, but also facilitate meaningful discussions. Group diversity can be positive, if facilitated well.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED TO DO NEXT, what you will need to know and where you should look for it. I.e., what more do you need to get out of your data (and what you need to gather if you do not have it, e.g., questions you will ask in the next interview).

- I am curious to compare my experiences and observations with the results of the post-summer evaluation surveys from students and parents. I'd like to see if the perceived program impact varies by race/ethnicity, and by leadership and team quality (weak adult leadership teams, conflict, or language barriers could be factors?)
- I need to read more literature to get a feel of what types of studies about study abroad and identity development are out there. I know there is a lot about heritage programs for students of color.
- I need to read more literature on SEL, its impact, and the intersection of SEL/study abroad (does this exist?)

## Appendix B: Personal Artifact Activity

### Overview:

During your interview, you will be asked to share two personal artifacts - one that holds meaning for you and represents your life, culture, or identity, and the second that holds significance for you about your Global Glimpse in-country experience. This introductory activity will allow you to explore and reflect on meaningful moments, events, experiences, and/or people in your own life. The process of sharing personal artifacts allows participants to both define and reflect on their identity and summer trip experiences.

### To prepare:

- *Artifacts* are any object made, used, or belonging to human beings. *Archeologists*, or people who study human beings and their cultures who lived in the past, often use artifacts to tell them something about that past person's life and community.
- For personal artifact #1: Think of an item that is special to you and that has significance to who you are today. This item probably involves a personal story, and may bring up happy or sad memories. For example, the item you choose may be anything from a blanket you had when young, to a cultural heirloom, to a picture of a loved one. The only requirement is that this item must be significant to you and who you are in some way.
- For personal artifact #2: Think of an item that has significance to your Global Glimpse immersion experience. This item probably involves a specific activity, reflection, person(s), or growth area for you. For example, the item you choose may be anything from a note from your roommate, to a bracelet from a community member, to a picture of your delegation. The only requirement is that this item must be significant to you and your Global Glimpse immersion experience.
- Note: If your item is fragile or too difficult to bring to the interview, please feel free to take a photo of the artifact or do your best to draw it. Because of the personal nature of this activity, please only select artifacts that you feel comfortable speaking about.

### Some questions to consider while selecting your personal artifacts:

- What the artifact is (describe it)?
- How/when did you get it?
- Why the artifact is special to you?
- How does the artifact represent who you are?

## Appendix C: Interview Guide for Student Participant Interview

### *Prior to interview:*

1. Select student participants through purposeful sampling.
2. Send email introduction about the study.
3. Once confirmed, send informed consent/assent, personal artifact information, and reminder one week prior to scheduled interview time and date. Send reminder the day before via email and text message.

### *Introduction:*

- Re-introduce myself and the purpose of the study: Share my own study abroad experience and how it impacted me. (Identity development as a second gen Chinese-American - understanding and unpacking my own privilege, connecting to my cultural identity, understanding the sacrifices my parents made, sense of purpose beyond oneself, etc.)
- Review overview of the format: personal artifact #1, first set of questions (identity, family background/growing up, questions about high school experience), personal artifact #2, second set of questions (GG trip)

*Personal Artifact #1:* Think of an item that is special to you and that has significance to who you are today. This item probably involves a personal story, and may bring up happy or sad memories. For example, the item you choose may be anything from a blanket you had when young, to a cultural heirloom, to a picture of a loved one. The only requirement is that this item must be significant to you and who you are in some way.

1. Tell me about the personal artifact you brought.
2. Thanks for bringing it, and for sharing with me. Now, close your eyes for a minute and think about what you remember when you got it. Where were you?  
  
How did you feel in that moment? Describe that memory to me.
3. Why is the artifact special to you?
4. How does the artifact represent who you are?

*Identity:* This set of questions will focus on your racial and cultural identity/background, growing up and your high school experience. Feel free to draw from the meaning of your personal artifact to guide your reflections.

1. Tell me more about what makes you – you. Think about your identities in every aspect of that word – your cultural, racial, social, sexual identity, etc.

2. Tell me a little bit about your experience as a [high school name] student in [town]? Do you feel like you have had different experiences from other students in your schools? (ie. White students or students of color?)
3. What part of your identity do you feel is most representative of you in your everyday life? Does this change when you are in different places or with different people? (at school, at home, with your friends?)
4. What is your race/ethnicity?
5. For some students, their race/ethnicity is very important and for other students it is not important. How important is your racial/ethnic background in your life? How does having this background impact who you are? How does your racial identity influence the way you see and are seen in the world?
6. Has your understanding of your background as \_\_\_\_\_ shifted or changed since your Global Glimpse trip until now? Is your understanding the same?

*[Break here, if needed]*

*Transition to personal artifact #2 and questions about the GG experience.*

*Personal Artifact #2:* Think of an item that has significance to your Global Glimpse immersion experience. This item probably involves a specific activity, reflection, person(s), or growth area for you. For example, the item you choose may be anything from a note from your roommate, to a bracelet from a community member, to a picture of your delegation. The only requirement is that this item must be significant to you and your Global Glimpse immersion experience.

1. Tell me about the personal artifact you brought from your GG trip.
2. Thanks for bringing it, and for sharing with me. Now, close your eyes for a minute and think about what you remember when you got it. Where were you? How did you feel in that moment? Describe that memory to me.

3. Why is the artifact special to you?
4. How does the artifact represent who you are?

*Experiences of Students in the Global Glimpse Program: This next section of questions will focus on your experience in the Global Glimpse program, with respect to your cultural, racial/ethnic, and/or social identity. The questions will primarily focus on the experiences that were particularly meaningful to you, or any challenges you may have encountered at any point in the program.*

1. Tell me about the country and location you visited.
  - a. Describe in your best words the social atmosphere of the country.
  - b. Did you notice any social differences in gender, race, class?
  - c. Did your host country perceive you as American or “something different”?  
If “something different,” what?
2. What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about others – like your roommates or the other students on your delegation? What did you learn about Dominicans?
3. How has your GG experience influenced your understanding of other cultures?
4. How has your GG experience influenced your understanding of your identity? Of the U.S. and Americans?
5. Do you feel that your identity played a role in how you experienced the GG program?
6. How do you feel now that you are back, and in your senior year? Has your GG experience impacted the way you think or act? In what ways?
7. Thank you for sharing your stories and reflections with me. Is there anything else you’d like to share about your GG experience?

## Appendix D: Interview Guide for GG Leader Interview

### *Prior to interview:*

1. Select leader and teacher participants through purposeful sampling.
2. Send email introduction about the study.
3. If confirmed to participate, send informed consent form, personal artifact information, and questions for review one week prior to scheduled interview time and date. Send reminder the day before via email and text message.

### *Introduction:*

- Re-introduce myself and the purpose of the study: Share my own study abroad experience and how it impacted me. (Identity development as a second gen Chinese-American - understanding and unpacking my own privilege, connecting to my cultural identity, understanding the sacrifices my parents made, sense of purpose beyond oneself, etc.)
- Review overview of the format: personal artifact #1, questions about identity, power and privilege, critical incident sharing/elaboration, questions about missed opportunities and gaps in the curriculum

*Personal Artifact:* Think of an item that is special to you and that has significance to who you are today. This item probably involves a personal story, and may bring up happy or sad memories. For example, the item you choose may be anything from a blanket you had when young, to a cultural heirloom, to a picture of a loved one. The only requirement is that this item must be significant to you and who you are in some way.

1. Tell me about your personal artifact.
2. How/when did you get it? Is there a story to it?
3. Why is the artifact special to you?
4. How does the artifact represent who you are?

*Identity:* This set of questions will focus on your cultural identity/background, growing up and your high school experience. Feel free to draw from the meaning of your personal artifact to guide your reflections.

1. Describe your racial, cultural and/or social identity? What does it mean to you?
2. Which identities do you feel are most salient in your everyday life? Do these change in different contexts and environments (at school, at home, with your friends?)

3. How does your identity influence the way you see and are seen in the world?
4. Tell me more about the school you teach at. (What is the campus climate like?)
5. Is there anything else you'd like me to know about you, your background, or your identity?

*[Break here, if needed]*

*Transition to critical incident analysis and questions about the GG experience.*

1. *[Share my thoughts on the participant's critical incident analysis.]* Now that you've had the time to reflect on this, are there any additional thoughts or reflections that you'd like to share?
2. How do you feel your identity played a role in your experience as a Global Glimpse Leader? (Both as a participant, and in interactions with students as a leader.)
3. Describe the aspects of the teaching and learning experience that you executed best. What role did you play?
4. Reflecting on your role, would you have done anything differently?
5. What systems of support would you have wanted in that moment?
6. What prior skills, knowledge, or training do you feel would have best prepared you for incidents like this?
7. What suggestions do you have for Global Glimpse on the student learning experience – this can be anything related to the curriculum, the activities, or the trainings for GG Leaders or in-country staff? *[Probe for details.]*
8. In your opinion, how can Global Glimpse bring further awareness to students' and leaders' understanding of their identity, power, and privilege?

## Appendix E: Critical Incident Analysis GG Leader Survey

### [Critical Incident Analysis GoogleForm Survey](#)

THANK YOU AND BIG LOVE for your support with my dissertation research. You all make the #purposehustle worth it, and I'm immensely grateful to work with you. -Bree

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Prior to filling out this survey, please review the following contextual information:

What is a "critical incident"? A critical incident need not be a dramatic event; usually it is an incident which has significance for you. It is often an event which made you stop and think, or one that raised questions for you. It may have made you question an aspect of your beliefs, values, attitude or behavior. It is an incident which in some way has had a significant impact on your personal and professional learning and/or on your teaching.

In a teaching setting, a critical incident might include:

- an aspect of your trip that went particularly well
- an aspect of your trip that proved difficult
- a student relationship or group of students that you found particularly demanding
- a student relationship or group of students that increased your awareness, or challenged your understanding, of social justice issues, ie. Equity and access issues, Whiteness in school systems, etc.
- an incident involving conflict, hostility, aggression or criticism. This may concern a colleague or a learner.

Critical incidents may relate to issues of communication, knowledge, treatment of and by others, culture, professional or personal relationships, emotions or beliefs.

Now, please think back to your Global Glimpse in-country immersion experience. Choose a critical incident, interaction, or event that occurred on your Global Glimpse trip.

You may find it helpful to discuss these points with someone you can trust – or you may prefer to jot down your thoughts. By structuring your responses to the bullet points above, you are distancing yourself slightly from the issue. This may help you to think more clearly and less emotionally about the best way to address whatever incident you are considering.

3. Describe the incident.
  - When and where it happened (time of day, location and social context)
  - What actually happened (who said or did what)
  - What you were thinking and feeling at the time and just after the incident
4. Analyze this critical incident, ask yourself questions such as:

- Why do I view the situation like that?
- What assumptions have I made about the student, colleague, problem or situation?
- How else could I interpret the situation?
- What other action could I have taken that might have been more helpful?
- What skills or knowledge would help me to navigate similar incidents in the future?
- What will I do if I am faced with a similar situation in the future?