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AUTHOR Sanders, Kathryn Ann; Morgan, Marilon
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ABSTRACT

Today, a person can find a variety of travel and study programs as diverse as that person's imagination and pocketbook. This paper considers today's study abroad programs in developing countries, particularly study abroad in Africa. The paper discusses the educational value of study abroad in Africa. It focuses on perspective transformation, that is described as "the emancipatory process of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships." The paper highlights a study that examined the perspective transformation of students participating in the 1999 Gambia and Senegal study abroad program. It states that pre- and post-interviews were given to a sample of the undergraduate group before and after visiting and experiencing two historical West African slave ports. Of the 19 students (both black and white, ages 21 to 58), 11 were asked to participate in the semi-structured interviews. The report on the study results note that, at the end, all of the respondents believed that each person was accountable for their actions toward others and the world around them, and until each person accepted that responsibility, racism and prejudice would continue. Appended are respondents' demographic information and interview data. (Contains 30 references.) (BT)

**STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS:
A MIRROR FOR ADULT LEARNING AND
PERSPECTIVE TRANSFORMATION**

DR. KATHRYN ANN SANDERS

LANGSTON UNIVERSITY

TULSA, OKLAHOMA

&

MARILON MORGAN

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA

SO 035 038

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Study Abroad Programs: A Mirror for Adult Learning and Perspective Transformation

Travel, for the purpose of learning, is not a new concept in the field of adult education. Today, one can find a variety of travel and study programs as diverse as one's imagination, and pocket book. The new millennium brings with it an acknowledgment and realization of the "age of globalization" connecting people and nations economically, technologically, and culturally (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1991, p. 23).

According to the Advisory Council for International Educational Exchange (1988):

"Internationalization of higher education, including study abroad, is no longer merely desirable; it is a necessity...Every day great numbers of our citizens deal with problems and decisions arising from relationships with other people in other parts of the world" (p. 21). Colleges and Universities are playing an important role in addressing the needs associated with globalization, and are increasingly "more cognizant of their responsibility" to maintain a world-class workforce (Yantis, 1990, p. 27).

By internationalizing the curriculum, [colleges and universities] are aiming at developing a learned, rather than trained society that is educated, aware, productive and adaptive. Therefore, international education, in today's increasingly interdependent world, is at the threshold of becoming an integral

part of the institutional mission. (Reghenzani, 1991, p. 15-16)

Study Abroad Programs

Study in a foreign country for the purpose of education is not a new concept. The idea of “foreign educational experience for undergraduates really began with the junior year abroad programs which first developed in the mid- and late-1920s” (Marion, 1974, p. 1). These programs, however, attracted only wealthy students interested in improving their foreign language skills. It was during the mid-1950s that “study abroad for Americans was [becoming an] accepted instrument for the general education of the many” (Abrams, 1968, p. 24).

Study abroad programs have also expanded beyond enhancing foreign language skills, to include business, science, political and social sciences, and agricultural interests. In addition, study abroad opportunities have expanded beyond the borders of European countries to include study opportunities in Third World countries (Marion, 1974; Allaway, Elder, Fugate, & Snell, 1987; Booth, 1991).

Study Abroad in Third World Countries

It is increasingly more important that institutions of higher education provide opportunities for study in Third World countries. The fact that the United States economy is becoming more dependent upon Third World countries and that the United States national security is vitally affected by the Third World, makes it imperative that Americans learn from the lives of Third World peoples; their cultures, their accomplishments, and their challenges (Blake, 1983; Allaway et al., 1987).

Study abroad programs to Third World countries provide students with new perspectives on their American values, ideas, and behaviors (Blake, 1983). “We see the effects of our foreign policies, not only what we are told for domestic or political consumption in the United States, but as it is felt and perceived by the recipients of our judgments and actions...or inaction’s” (p. 3). As a result of study abroad to Third World countries, the people of Third World countries become real to American students and they begin to realize their responsibility as a citizen of a recognized world power (Blake, 1983; Allaway et al., 1987).

Study Abroad in Africa

In May of 1999, Langston University, Langston, Oklahoma, sponsored a six-week study abroad program to Gambia, West Africa. Four graduate students, nineteen undergraduate students, and three faculty members from four cooperating universities (Langston University, Northeastern State University, Oklahoma State University, University of Oklahoma) participated in the program. Ranging from 18 to 58 years of age, twelve Black Americans, two Native Americans, one Mexican National, eight Caucasian American students, and three faculty members; one African (a professor who fled Nigeria and is living and teaching in the United States), one Black American, and one Caucasian American participated in the study abroad program. Special efforts were made to address the issues of diversity in this study abroad program and encouraged students from under represented groups of race and age to participate in the program (Booth, 1990). This complement of maturity and diversity provided a variety of life experiences and cultural dimensions to the study abroad program.

Reflection on Africa Study Abroad Orientation

During the spring semester prior to the trip, orientation sessions were held by the faculty to inform students of the Gambian culture and its' history. The travel agenda, the religious customs and practices, the currency, the appropriate dress and behavior, the required inoculations, and travel necessities were discussed. Experienced faculty provided information pertaining to the conditions of poverty and extreme need that often exists in a Third World Country.

Participating in a culture that seemed one hundred years behind in technology, city and state governance and infrastructure, transportation, agriculture and industry, and available health/medical services to name a few, can be extremely disorienting. Every convenience one knows and takes for granted, as well as one's cultural assumptions, signs, and symbols of social intercourse are stripped away. "He or she is like a fish out of water. No matter how broad-minded or full of good will he/she may be, a series of props have been knocked out from under him/her" (Gordon, 1992, p. 1). Any orientation to prepare students for study in a developing nation must address the issues associated with the profound culture shock as opportunities for personal growth and

development (Fugate, 1987; Gorden, 1992). The study abroad program to Gambia provided opportunities for students to experience, first hand, life in a Third World country. Students were able to gain an understanding of a people and a culture, “to come into contact with different political and ethical concepts and expectations, and to confront a whole range of relationships never before encountered in the homeland” (Fugate, p. 14).

American students confront unique problems of personal adjustment when they elect to study in Africa. For the White American student, it becomes his/her first very real experience of being a visible minority, in contrast to the Black American student who experiences “what it means to be in the majority” (Fugate, 1987, p. 14). Because the familiar cues that traditionally support cultural assumptions were no longer available to the students, non academic counseling proved to be essential in helping students process experiences while grappling with their own heritage and history (Fugate, 1987; Madden & Powers, 1971).

Educational Value of Study Abroad in Africa

Experiencing the Gambian culture affected each individual and challenged the way each perceived, understood, and felt about

his/her own world and culture. It was an experience of self-examination and, for some, emancipation. The educational value of the Gambia study abroad program primarily occurred in the affective, social, and emancipatory domains of learning, which include values clarification, attitude change, personal development, and social maturity (Habermas, 1971; Immelman & Schmeider, 1998). The dominance of affective, social, and emancipatory learning in the Gambian study abroad program fostered transformative learning (Taylor, 1998).

“Transformative learning attempts to explain how expectations, framed within cultural and psychological assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the meaning derived from experience” (Taylor, 1998, p. 6). It is a “comprehensive and complex description of how learners construe, validate, and reformulate the meaning of their experience” (Cranton, 1994, p. 22). The impact of experience on an individual’s culturally and psychologically defined meaning structures can create “a structural reorganization in the way that a person looks at himself and his relationships” (Mezirow, 1978, p. 162). Changes in the way an individual views him or herself, in and within his/her world, is the result of meaning structure

reorganization or what Mezirow (1981) also refers to as emancipatory action (Cranton, 1994). The reorganization or changes to meaning structures that are acquired by adults throughout a lifetime, is explained through the process of perspective transformation (Taylor, 1998; Imel, 1998).

Perspective Transformation

Perspective transformation is described as “the emancipatory process of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships” (Mezirow, 1981, p. 6). As a process, perspective transformation explains how adults revise their psycho-cultural assumptions that are the foundation for an individual’s meaning structures (Taylor, 1998; Cranton, 1994).

Meaning structures are culturally and psychologically defined assumptions and long held beliefs that are shaped by one’s experiences and dictate one’s behavior and one’s worldview. Meaning structures act as a frame of reference for daily experiences and are inclusive of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives (Taylor, 1998). Meaning schemes are “made up of

specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgments, and feelings that constitute interpretations of experience” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 5-6). Meaning schemes are realized in an individual’s habits and expectations, which influence individual behaviors and views. They are supported by psychological assumptions and are defined as “rules, roles, and expectations that govern the way we see, feel, think, and act” (Cranton, 1994, p. 24).

Meaning perspectives are a “collection of meaning schemes made up of higher-order schemata, theories, propositions, beliefs, prototypes, goal orientations, and evaluations” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 2). In addition, meaning perspectives provide an individual with criteria to judge or evaluate a situation or experience as “right and wrong, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, true and false, or appropriate and inappropriate” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 44). Meaning perspectives are acquired during childhood through socialization and acculturation, and “mirror the way our culture and those individuals responsible for our socialization happen to have defined various situations” (p. 131).

Meaning perspectives become a general frame of reference that individuals depend upon to rationalize an often irrational world, as well as to “operate as a perceptual filter to organize the

meaning of our experiences” (Taylor, 1998, p. 7). When an individual encounters a new situation, it is filtered through one’s meaning perspective in order to interpret and give meaning to the new experience. If the experience is congruent with one’s perspectives, it will then be assimilated into the meaning perspective. However, if the experience is radically different and incongruent, then, it will either be rejected or the meaning perspective will be transformed to accommodate the new experience (Taylor, 1998). The transformed meaning perspective enables the development of a new meaning structure. It is this developmental process which is “at the heart of Mezirow’s theory of perspective transformation – a world view shift” (Taylor, p.7).

Mezirow (1991) defines perspective transformation as:

the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and finally making choices or otherwise acting on these new understandings. (p. 167)

Common themes drawn from Mezirow’s (1991) definition of perspective transformation are “centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse” (Taylor, 1998, p. 8). Centrality

of experience refers to the learner's experience, which provides the starting point for transformation of meaning perspectives. These experiences are viewed as socially constructed so that they can be deconstructed and acted upon (Taylor, 1998).

Critical reflection refers to "questioning the integrity of assumptions and beliefs based on prior experience" (Taylor, 1998, p. 9). This process occurs when the experience is inconsistent with what an individual holds to be true. In a process of reflection, one turns his or her attention toward "the justifications for what he/she knows, feels, believes and acts upon" (Mezirow, 1995, p. 46).

The final theme, rational discourse, is the process an individual uses "when he/she has reason to question the comprehensibility, truth, appropriateness (in relation to norms), or authenticity (in relation to feelings) of what is being asserted" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 77). For an individual, discourse is the arena in which critical reflection is put into action. It is here that assumptions and beliefs are challenged and where meaning perspectives and meaning structures are transformed (Taylor, 1998).

Mezirow (1990) states that "the process of perspective transformation begins with a disorienting dilemma or experience in

which one's old patterns of response are no longer effective" (p.8). To cope with the dilemma, an individual will critically reflect upon long held beliefs and assumptions in order to seek effective responses to new experiences. By effectively challenging old assumptions and beliefs, new ones develop in order to make sense of the dilemma/experience, resulting in a new orientation to one's world. Mezirow (1981) describes the results of this process "as a transformation within the very structure of one's assumptions" (p. 8).

Study abroad programs provide an ideal opportunity for individuals to develop a greater capacity to adapt to and act upon prior knowledge and experience through critical reflection (Taylor, 1998). By their very nature, university study abroad programs foster transformative learning.

Perspective transformation provides a model for adult learning by explaining the process of how personal paradigms evolve and expand in adulthood. In essence, it offers an explanation for adult development, that of developing a greater adaptive capacity to capitalize and act on prior knowledge and experience through critical reflection. (Taylor, 1998, p. 11)

Certainly, a study abroad program forces the participants to adapt to new experiences. As a result of the new experiences, perspective

transformation often takes place. In light of the developmental and transformative learning outcomes, a pilot study was conducted during the Gambia study abroad program to determine how the perspectives of the participants may or many not have been transformed as a result of studying abroad.

Pilot Study Purpose and Procedure

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspective transformation of students participating in the 1999 Gambia, West Africa and Senegal, West Africa study abroad program. Pre and post interviews were given to a sample of the study abroad group before and after experiencing two historical, West African slave trade ports. The first port visited was Fort James, located inland on the Gambia River. The second port visited was Goree Island located near Dakar, Senegal. The focus of the pre interview (conducted during the second and third weeks of the six week study abroad program) was to capture the individual's expectations, framed by cultural assumptions and presuppositions that influenced the meaning given to experiences, prior to visiting slave ports. The post interview (conducted during the final week of the six week study abroad program) focused on capturing the

individual's revision of long held meaning structures that have shaped his/her assumptions as a result of seeing and experiencing the slave ports of Fort James and Goree Island.

The persons selected for pre and post interviews were representative of the undergraduate study abroad group in terms of race, gender, and age: eight females, one male, five White, three Black, and one Native American, ranging in age from twenty-one to fifty-eight. Of the nineteen undergraduates, eleven students were asked to participate; two Black students declined. A semi structured interview technique was used because it provided a starting point from which questioning expanded and further dialogue was explored. Appendix A details the demographics of the respondents. Appendix B gives the interview data that supports the seven themes gleaned from the respondents' remarks prior to visiting the historic slave ports. Appendix C gives the interview data that supports the five themes gleaned from the respondents' remarks after visiting the historic slave ports.

The Gambia, West Africa study abroad program provided an environment that challenged the assumptions of each student. The assumptions that were challenged focused on an individual's experience as a Black or White American, an individual's

educational experiences and knowledge of history, and an individual's social context and cultural interaction within society. The opportunity to critically reflect upon long held assumptions without the usual perceptual filters was evident throughout the study abroad program. Subjected to new experiences, individuals were challenged to interpret their reality. This paper, focusing on individual critical reflections of pre and post experiences at slave trade ports, examines the pivotal experiences that enabled transformational learning.

Results of the Pre Slave Port Visits Interview

The pivotal experiences evidenced through interviews conducted prior to visiting historical slave ports challenged the participant's existing knowledge and his/her interpretation of that existing knowledge as real or valid. The pre interviews (See Appendix B) indicated that all of the respondents were experiencing a disorienting dilemma to their existing assumptions, challenging their pattern of responses and behaviors (Mezirow, 1981). The pre interviews were conducted during the second and third weeks of the program. Each pre interview asked the respondents to examine their reasons for coming to Africa, to

discuss their perceptions of the Gambian culture and people, to discuss any perceptions that were different from their expectations, and to discuss any issues within the study abroad program. The remaining questions flowed from the initial responses of the interviewee. The pre interviews produced several dominant themes.

Pre Slave Port Interviews: Common Themes

The semi-structured interviews gleaned seven recurrent themes. The seven recurrent themes were: (1) Reasons for going to Africa; (2) Initial perceptions of Africa; (3) The differences between oppression and disadvantaged; (4) The role of the Gambian government; (5) Most Americans lead a privileged life; (6) Reactions to the Gambian culture; and (7) Racial tension.

The ideas and concepts that emerged from the semi structured interviews, completed prior to visiting the historical slave ports, clustered around these seven themes. The themes are supported by the interview data (See Appendix B).

Thoughts and Conclusions on the Pre Interviews

A summary of the conclusions from each theme are: Theme one: the respondents chose to go to Africa to experience another part of the world and its' culture, for the excitement of travel, and the majority felt they were drawn to Africa spiritually or ethnically. Theme two: the respondents' initial perceptions of Africa ranged from what was expected, based on the orientation sessions, to being shocked at the level of poverty. Theme three: many of the respondents raised the issue of the differences between being an oppressed people or a disadvantaged people and wondering where the Gambian people fell. Some saw the plight of the Gambian people as one of oppression, while others saw it as one of being disadvantaged. Theme four: all of the respondents expressed confusion regarding the role of the Gambian government and its' relationship to its' people. Many saw the government as oppressive and unresponsive to the needs of the people. Theme five: the respondents felt that most Americans lead a privileged life and could learn a great deal from the people of the Gambia. Theme six: the respondents were touched by the values for community, family and extended family, children, and respect for elders evidenced within the Gambian culture. Theme seven: all of the

respondents felt a racial tension within and among the members of the study abroad group. None of the respondents felt racial tension from the Gambians.

The study abroad program provided new experiences, which caused the respondents to either organize or reorganize the meaning of their experiences. For some, (Respondents 4, 5, and 8 – See Appendix B), assumptions and experiences were interpreted and easily integrated into their existing cultural and psychological assumptions. For others, (Respondents 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, and 9 – See Appendix B), the experiences were incongruent and stressful, causing the respondents to critically reappraise their assumptions (Taylor, 1998). The centrality of these experiences (each respondent experienced the same Gambian culture) created opportunities for critical reflection and rational discourse for each respondent (Mezirow, 1990).

Initially, the respondents viewed the Gambian culture through American eyes, filtering their experience through their American cultural expectations and assumptions. This view caused them to see only extreme poverty and a lack of governmental concern for quality of life. The respondents were shocked and confused because their assumptions regarding quality of life and

the role of government were challenged. After spending time with the Gambian people and observing their way of life, the respondents found their assumptions regarding quality of life and governance, to be subjective. The respondents assumed Gambia would be like their world, where the opportunity for a quality life is often based on one's earning power. Once this assumption was challenged, the respondents opened to the Gambian culture and realized that what is valued in one culture, may not be valued in another.

The respondents began to understand that culture incorporates "social norms, standard forms of conduct, religious beliefs, and other common elements structured together to maintain social organization" (Miller, 1993, p. 3). With this in mind, the American students began to view the Gambian customs associated with family and community, as well as the openness and inclusiveness of the Gambian people, as virtues that the students determined to be lost in their American culture. While the respondents envied many of the Gambian customs, the level of poverty they encountered overwhelmed them. Everywhere they looked, there were the poor, people begging for money, paper, pencils, plastic bottles, anything that would help them live a little

bit better today than yesterday. This disorienting dilemma caused the respondents to challenge their assumptions regarding begging and poverty.

Learning about cultural customs includes respecting the spiritual customs of a culture. As a Muslim country, Gambia embraces the Islam custom of begging. Seen as a spiritual privilege, the act of begging allows others to give to the less fortunate (Personal Conversation with Taxi Driver/Guide, 1999). Although the respondents began to understand the act of begging from the Gambian Muslim perspective, the issue of poverty continued to challenge their assumptions.

Initially, the respondents viewed the Gambian people as being oppressed. Then, finding the government negligent in the situation, they changed their view and labeled the people as disadvantaged. They, then, began to question their assumptions regarding poverty. The students' very definition of poverty was challenged by how the Gambian people accepted their conditions as ordinary. They began to question how poverty is determined, by whose standards. The American students observed that the people lived communally, taking care of each other through extended family. No one in need would ever be turned away from a rice

bowl. The respondents recognized that poverty, as defined by cultural assumptions, was an accepted way of life in Gambia. The respondents also acknowledged that Americans tend to impose their values for quality of life on other nations. Even though some of the Gambian people want more government assistance to raise the standard of living, the respondents accepted the fact that the Gambian standard of living would probably continue to remain at poverty level by American standards, or at least by the Americans' cultural assumptions.

The most compelling challenge to the respondents' assumptions were the issues of prejudice that emerged within the group. Initially, none of the respondents, regardless of race, viewed themselves as prejudiced, yet, many of their comments suggested otherwise. The White respondents' experience with race related prejudice was limited. The White and Native American respondents' underlying assumptions regarding interracial relationships were challenged. Confused about the discrimination they were feeling from some of the group members, the White and Native American respondents reexamined their personal assumptions regarding interracial relationships. Choosing to ignore the issue of discrimination by viewing prejudicial behaviors

directed toward them as 'issues' or 'baggage' that the Africa experience brought out in some of the group members, most of the White and Native American respondents decided not to take inter group discrimination personally. Choosing to not take the discrimination personally became a major theme of the White and Native American respondents, prior to visiting the slave ports. By ignoring, or excusing, the prejudicial behaviors of others, the White and Native American respondents found a comfort zone in which to live with the group. The White respondents felt the reaction to the new environment, by some of the Black Americans, to be valid, even though, as White, they did not fully understand the exhibited reverse discrimination. For many of the non Black respondents, the experience of discrimination was disorienting and painful. The assimilation of the new experience either reinforced previously held cultural perceptions of Black Americans and/or prejudice, or assimilation of the new experience was rejected. The White and Native American respondents rejected the new experience by either denying any prejudice or discrimination towards them, or by labeling prejudice or discrimination as a Black American problem.

The Black respondents referred to the reverse discrimination that existed, as a result of the unresolved 'issues' or 'baggage' of some of the Black group members. In general, the Black respondents identified the underlying assumptions that Black Americans hold about White Americans as the trigger for prejudicial behaviors. The Black respondents assumed that White people exhibited an attitude of superiority and imposed their ethnocentric views on other cultures/races. They attributed that assumption to be the primary cause of Blacks being prejudiced toward Whites. The Black respondents also held an assumption that the White members of the group were, for the first time, beginning to understand how it feels to be considered, and treated, as a minority. As the Black respondents reexamined their reactions to their assumptions, some of the Black respondents found themselves exhibiting prejudicial behaviors without realizing they were being drawn into that way of thinking. Others found that Blacks, and Whites, often misinterpreted the verbal and nonverbal communication between the two races, creating false assumptions about each race. All of the Black respondents resolved to remain uninvolved in the prejudicial behaviors exhibited by some members of the group.

Visiting the Slave Ports

The importance of the respondents' visit to the slave ports must be framed within the context of the history of those slave ports. Because of the limited space, this section was deleted from the monograph. No one will ever know how many slaves were captured in West Africa and transported to the New World in the four centuries of slave trade. It has been estimated that as many as fifteen to twenty million Africans were shipped. The average number was 20,000 per year in the sixteenth century, rising to 100,000 per year at the height of the slave trade in the eighteenth century (Gray, 1966; Ndiaye, 1967; Camara & de Benoist, 1993; Dinkiralu, B.I. Chosan, Tawal, Nannin, Ada, Mofan, & I.M. Chosan, 1998). It was amidst these daunting statistics that the post interviews were conducted.

The students understanding of the historical perspective of James Island and Goree Island was extremely limited. They were not given an appropriate orientation to prepare them for what they were going to see. The students visited the exhibition 'Voyage of No Return – The Atlantic Slave Trade and the Senegambia' at the old trading post village of Albreda. Albreda is within sight of James Island. The fort on James Island was used as a holding tank.

Slaves were packed into the small cells prior to being shipped to Goree Island and then overseas (Davidson, 1965). While the exhibition showed pictures and estimated the number of slaves traded, nothing could have prepared the students for the visual assault on their senses of seeing the cells on James and Goree Islands. One could almost smell the blood and taste the sweat. It was after the students visited these slave ports that the post interviews were conducted.

Results of the Post Interviews

The post interviews were conducted after the respondents visited the slave ports on Fort James Island and Goree Island. The post interviews indicated efforts on the part of each respondent to critically reflect on his/her beliefs and assumptions in order to make sense of his/her disorienting dilemma. The interviews also indicated that most of the individuals were in a process of “transforming the structures of one’s assumptions” (Mezirow, 1981, p. 8). Each post interview began with the same two questions: Looking back, have your perceptions of the study abroad program to Africa changed in any way? and what impacted you the most when visiting the slave ports of James Island and

Goree Island? The remaining questions flowed from the initial responses of the interviewee. The post interviews produced five dominant themes.

Post Slave Port Interviews: Common Themes

The semi structured post interviews gleaned five recurrent themes. The five recurrent themes were: (1) Visiting the slave ports was an overwhelming experience; (2) Awareness of the role different peoples played in slavery; (3) Transformation of assumptions; (4) An increase in racial tension; and (5) Study abroad was a life changing experience.

The ideas and concepts that emerged from the post interviews clustered around these five themes. The themes are supported by the interview data (See Appendix C). Theme one: the respondents felt overwhelmed by the experience and felt that the new knowledge they learned, as a result of visiting the slave ports, led to an increased understanding of the issues surrounding slavery. Theme two: the respondents became increasingly aware of the role different peoples played in the promotion and perpetuation of slavery. Theme three: many of the respondents experienced a transformation in their assumptions as a result of visiting the slave

ports. Theme four: prejudice and racism became intensified as a result of the slave port visits. Theme five: the respondents felt that the study abroad program had affected their lives on a very personal level.

Thoughts and Conclusions on the Post Interviews

The post interviews indicated that the respondents were in what Mezirow (1995) calls critical reflection and rational discourse. In the critical reflection phase, the respondents were in the process of restructuring their assumptions and beliefs to be more inclusive and integrative, because many of their experiences were inconsistent with what they held to be true. In this process of reflection, the respondents turned their attention toward “the justifications for what they knew, felt, believed, and acted upon” (Mezirow, 1995, p. 46). Most of the respondents failed to accept their own prejudices, even though their comments supported their prejudicial beliefs. Since the post interviews were conducted after visits to the slave ports, the growing level of prejudice within the group shaded the respondents’ comments. That negative group interaction led the respondents to conclude that the study abroad program was an experience in learning about ones’ self.

The rational discourse phase of perspective transformation was evidenced throughout the post interviews. The respondents questioned “the comprehensibility, truth, appropriateness (in relation to norms), or authenticity (in relation to feelings) of what was being asserted” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 77). For the respondents, rational discourse was the arena in which critical reflection was put into action. It is here that assumptions and beliefs are challenged and where meaning perspectives and meaning structures are transformed (Taylor, 1998).

As a result of visiting the slave ports, the respondents were given a more complete historical account of the slave trade. Visiting the slave ports became the disorienting experience that forced the respondents to question their basic assumptions concerning slavery and prejudice. All the respondents reported acquiring new knowledge that changed their assumptions and beliefs. All respondents acknowledged the involvement of both Blacks and Whites in the business of slave trading. The Black and White respondents also felt a connection with the slave trading ports. The Black respondents felt an ancestral relationship with the slave ports, and the White respondents felt they did not have a relationship to the slave ports, but expressed profound sadness and

grief for what was done to the slaves. Some of the respondents referred to standing at a specific location at Fort James or at 'The Door of No Return' on Goree Island and realizing what it must have been like for the slaves. All of the respondents expressed feelings of sadness for what happened at Fort James and Goree Island, as well as disgust for the inhumanity exhibited by the slave traders. Both White and Black respondents were affected by the slave port experience and expressed greater sensitivity to the issues of inhumanity and slavery at any level.

The respondents were acutely aware of a greater division within the group because of prejudice. The division was not only between White and Black, but also between Black and Black, and White and White. The respondents recognized these issues to be an opportunity for deeper insight into themselves and their personal issues with prejudice. Many of the respondents believed that individuals have a choice to either hang on to hate and anger or to let it go. The respondents also believed that the object of hate and anger, whether it is a person, place, thing, or entire race, becomes the target upon which their misfortune and misery can be blamed. Most of the respondents recognized that they had choices to make as a result of the study abroad trip. They could take the new

experiences afforded them as a member of the study abroad group, and change their beliefs and assumptions or alter them. The study abroad program provided the opportunity to solidify those choices by serving as a mirror for the students. They could not run away from that mirror. It followed them wherever they went and served as a self-reflection to their very souls. When the respondents were faced with the disorienting dilemmas, they had to accept their own prejudices or restructure their belief system. All of the respondents believed that each person was accountable for his/her actions toward others and the world around him/her, and until each person accepted that responsibility, racism and prejudice would continue.

Reflections

Perhaps, the greatest value of a study abroad program is its' ability to expose Americans to their American-ness. Exposing them to the world's stereotypical view of America, as well as revealing America's failings and virtues, as seen through the eyes of a foreigner, helps expand their worldviews. Students experienced a heightened sensitivity towards themselves, their country, and other nations of the world. The study abroad program to Gambia, West Africa, exposed students to the dynamics of their

cultural and psychosocial assumptions, revealing how unaware they were of the role their assumptions played in their daily lives. It is these long held cultural assumptions, beliefs, and values, which are taken for granted truths used to validate one's experiences and give meaning to one's world. Distanced from the familiarity of one's culture, assumptions become a double edged sword, revealing the constraints to, and subjectivity of, one's worldview (Taylor, 1998). The removal of these constraints, through emancipatory learning, was a journey of personal transformation for all of the members of the study abroad group (Mezirow, 1991).

Freire (1973) believes that the ability to challenge cultural and psychosocial assumptions is a unique trait of human beings, and characterized it as one's ability to "reach back to yesterday, recognize today, and come upon tomorrow" (Freire, 1973, p. 3). The study abroad program gave each participant an opportunity to do just that. For the Black participants it is was portrayed as a coming home or going back to their roots. They, indeed, had to reach back to yesterday in order to reflect upon their newfound feelings and emotions. They had to recognize that yesterday is not today. Things have changed and as respondent four pointed out,

“last time I looked, my passport said American, not African American. We are Americans. We are not Africans; and as a Black American, I have American problems and American issues to deal with when I return home”. She recognized that the past is an important element to understanding one’s historical perspective, that the present must be dealt with as a reality, and with that reality, she must prepare to make changes for tomorrow.

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Appendix A
Respondents' Demographic Information

Respondent's Gender	Respondent's Age	Respondent's Ethnicity
Respondent 1 – Female	32	Black American
Respondent 2 – Female	41	White American
Respondent 3 – Female	22	Native American
Respondent 4 – Female	49	Black American
Respondent 5 – Female	53	Black American
Respondent 6 – Female	33	White American
Respondent 7 – Male	26	White American
Respondent 8 – Female	21	White American
Respondent 9 – Female	24	Native American

Appendix B
Pre Slave Port Visit Interview Data

Theme One: Reasons for going to Africa: In response to the opening question, why did you choose to come to Africa for your study abroad program, the respondents had similar responses. The following are some of the responses in direct quotation format:

I always wanted to come to Africa and always knew I would come...I felt drawn to the homeland (Respondent 1). I wanted to come and find my roots. I wanted to get an idea of where I came from. I wanted to get a personal definition/self-definition (Respondent 4). I love to travel and see other parts of the world...to experience what's out there (Respondent 3). I wanted to experience Africa...to see what it would be like (Respondent 5 and 6). There was a bigger purpose for me to travel to Africa, not just for study abroad. I felt called to come to Africa...for spiritual reasons (Respondent 9).

Theme Two: Initial perceptions of Africa: Most students' knowledge of Africa was based on what was told to them during orientation sessions. Some felt ill equipped to handle the realities of The Gambia. Some of the responses were as follows:

I did not know what to expect or what I would be doing...I knew there would be poverty, but until I saw it, I did not realize its' level...no matter what is done, it would not be enough (Respondent 2). I thought most of Africa would be more rural and primitive (villages and huts) than it actually is (Respondent 4). I came with the perception that The Gambia was not westernized at all. I have seen, however, that in some areas, The Gambia is westernized. Poverty is everywhere...the best thing we can do for the Gambians is to teach them to help themselves (Respondent 5). I didn't realize it would be so deforested. I thought it would be more developed. I thought sewage would be covered (Respondent 7). I knew there would be poverty in Africa, but I resented the begging that went on as part of the Islam religion. I was confused by my own feelings of frustration for the level of poverty that I was not adequately prepared to encounter (Respondent 9).

Theme Three: The differences between oppression and disadvantaged:
The respondents' feelings about the living conditions and poverty they

witnessed, that coupled with the reading materials for the courses, caused them to reflect on the difference between being oppressed or being disadvantaged.

The respondents made the following comments:

My perceptions of Africa have changed as a result of seeing first hand how they live. I didn't think there would be a dominate western culture keeping Africa impoverished, but I have had that thought validated (Respondent 1). I was most impacted by the day to day survival needs. Village people are at a disadvantage because they are stuck with what they have...(Respondent 2). The Gambians lack so much on every level...They don't feel disadvantaged. They are unaware of their possibilities outside The Gambia (Respondent 3). The Gambian people need clean water, a sewer system, a power system, hygiene knowledge, and medicine. They are hungry for education, better clothes, and perhaps an up-grade of conditions. Oppressed...No...Disadvantaged... Yes (Respondent 4). The Gambians are complacent and accepting of their oppression. In order to move ahead, they need to stand and create a new mind set... The Gambians need to refuse their self-perpetuated oppression (Respondent 5). It never occurred to me that things run out. There's never enough...paper, pens, electricity, change...Everything runs out except mangos (Respondent 7). Some people suffer. The lines between rich and poor are distant...So much poverty and so many disadvantages (Respondent 8). The United States can not continue to give money to The Gambia. Money is not the answer. Show the people how to use resources. Teach them about sanitation, health issues, etc so they will not continue to be disadvantaged (Respondent 9).

Theme Four: The role of the Gambian government: In discussing the role of the government in the lives of the Gambian people, it became apparent that the respondents felt that there was a growing dissatisfaction among the people with the government. The respondents addressed the following issues:

The government is cruel and they are exploiters. The government makes money off the people. They get aid and then keep it from the people. Where is all of the money going? In my conversations with the locals regarding the government, the locals ask the same question—where is all this money going? I know they are corrupt. When I went to check on dual citizenship, I was ushered into a back doorway to cut a deal for \$500.00. Corrupt!...The people are very needy (Respondent 1). I sense dissatisfaction with the government. I

have not seen the government taking an active hand in helping the people. The infrastructure and public health issues are not being visually addressed. Where's the money going? That's what I didn't see (Respondent 2). The Gambia is growing and evolving; using what they have been given from neo-colonialism. However, I have not seen the government reach out to significantly help the people reach a higher standard of living (Respondent 3). From speaking with the Gambians, their major concerns are issues with the government. They wonder what the government is doing about improving the existing conditions (Respondent 4)...Here (The Gambia), if you get fired, you don't go to the unemployment office (Respondent 7).

Theme Five: Most Americans lead a privileged life: Perhaps, one of the most profound realizations of the respondents was that of what a privileged life they lead. The following comments reflect on their realizations:

Being in The Gambia has made me realize how spoiled I am...I want to try not to be so wasteful...we are a very comfortable society (Respondent 2). The Gambian people see Americans as spoiled. We have so much (Respondent 4). The Gambians have taught me to be more content with what I have. We (Americans) aren't willing to sacrifice...we want it all, now!...My kids have way too much (Respondent 6). I thought of myself as aspiring to middle class. I feel vastly rich here. I have taken so much for granted and will keep this in mind when I return home...appreciate what you have and don't be a slave to it (Respondent 7). The lines between rich and poor are distant. We have a middle class. We worry about money sometimes, but not daily (Respondent 8).

Theme Six: Reactions to the Gambian: It was evident in the pre-interviews that the Americans (whether Black or White) were touched by the warmth and generosity of the Gambian people and their sense of community. Some responses were:

Even though there are many hardships in The Gambia, I liked their sharingness and responsibility for and to the children by everyone in the village. Respect for elders...that was pretty cool too...I never felt discrimination from the Gambians (Respondent 1). The Gambians are thankful for even the smallest things...(Respondent 2)...I want to take back this feeling of peacefulness...The "no problem" attitude...Color is not an issue in The Gambia (Respondent 4). The Gambians

have taught me humility, pride in their origin, community, and the value of family. Money isn't everything...Children are first. I see the respect and care people show for the elders. This will change how I feel about life. It will change the way I deal with my children (Respondent 6). The Gambians have taught a new attitude, the no problem attitude. Carpe Diem! Acceptance, without reservation, what a concept (Respondent 7). I admire the way the Gambian people rely on each other for needs. No one is ever turned away. We could learn a lot about sharing and giving from these so-called Third World people. Here, family is very important and when someone ages, they don't get put in a nursing home; the people of the village take care of them (Respondent 9).

Theme Seven: Racial tension: The racial tension experienced from within and among the members of the study abroad group by the respondents is reflected in the following comments:

It's hard to leave baggage behind, especially since it happens in Oklahoma, but I did. White people brought their own ethnocentric views and put down this culture. That is what is wrong with the world. How can people hate you because of your color? I don't understand that. Black people, I think, are taught not to put down other cultures. They refer to another person by their color in order to form a point of reference. No one is going to put me down! What I hate the most was my own connection with racism. I realized that the Afro-Americans were also exhibiting racist behaviors on this trip, and I was being drawn in. People are barbaric on every side and in every color...so, let's admit it and move on. Sometimes, I believe education is the answer. Separate education may be better because it will empower...(we need to) learn the truth and teach "never, ever let this happen to anyone again." To see beyond oppression and ask the question "what are we going to do with this information?" (Respondent 1). I have felt no racism from this country (The Gambia). Personally, everyone has been nice to me. As the days go by, however, I've overheard conversations that lead me to believe things are going to come to a head soon. Oddly, I was asked before I left if I would grow tired of seeing Black people...I laughed because it never crossed my mind. I try not to see skin color or gender, but focus on personality. I don't see the behaviors and attitudes within our group as a color issue, but a spiritual issued masked by racism. You need to give people a lot of space to work through issues and not take it (the comments) personally. Yesterday morning, one of our group members was going on and on about how White people should not be here because it is not their homecoming. Although this

was being said loud enough for us to hear, there was no sense getting angry about it, nothing was going to change that person's mind. It bothers me to be placed in a lump group because no one knows me as an individual...You can't assume I think, act, or believe like the group. What surprises me is that the behaviors (racist actions) they (Blacks) hate so much, they are doing...you would think they (Blacks) would do just the opposite (Respondent 2). I have not experienced any prejudice from the African people. They have been loving and accepting of me. Sadly enough, the prejudice I have experienced comes from within our own group, both prejudice and racism. If you have racism, there is prejudice. I feel that they (Black Americans) feel like they have more of a reason to be here than I do. This may be true. I feel it is a spiritual thing for them and I don't take it personally. For me, I signed up for a study abroad experience, and was not told that it was a homecoming for Black Americans only...I never really realized how scrutinized Black Americans are every day in America. I guess because I never treated anyone like that. I've been naive to the situation. Then again, I've never lived as intimately with Black Americans as I have here. There is reverse discrimination, and that surprises me. It surprises me because I've tried to establish friendships and hang out with American Blacks, but they choose not to hang with us (Whites). It's probably because of the spiritual feeling of "coming home" that they have. Look around, Whites hang with Whites, Blacks hang with Blacks. Afro-Americans are Americans; they are not African. Aren't we all from other ethnic/cultural backgrounds? It doesn't really bother me because I don't take it personally...This experience had definitely heightened my awareness of racism. I've seen the flip side. I didn't realize how bad it is. The experience with the Gambians and with our group will enable me to address racism. Maybe not to change a mind, but to bring attention to its existence. Racism issues are not the bulk of what I'll be taking home. This (racism) occurred within our group, not among the Gambians. I'm not seeing this experience as an oppression or racism issue, or slavery issue...I see it as experiencing the country (Respondent 3). I think low self-esteem is probably the basis for Blacks' feelings of oppression from Whites. If Whites give the "superiority" game on Blacks, then rage occurs in militant Blacks. I haven't experienced racism from our group, but I have not exposed myself to all people in the group. I put myself in a comfort zone and if I see it (racism), I do not play. I am aware, but I do not play that game. We (the group) have too many chiefs. Too many people are imposing their authority on others. I try to make peace and keep peace so I work to smooth over the rough personalities. People's insensitivity to others feeds into the chaos...Knowingly or unknowingly, people are pushing other

peoples' buttons...personalities clash! Can't we just all get along? The group taught me to hold back on speaking on every issue. Learn to smile rather than share an opinion about things that don't necessarily concern me. I realize that I have a choice in when and where to share my opinion (Respondent 4). Within our group, I see racism and individualism. We should leave those bags at home! Whites have experienced reverse discrimination and I feel it's about the Whites being out of their own element. This is not coming from the Gambians; it comes from our own group. Even though Whites don't share the African heritage, we both (Whites and Blacks) share the impact of the continent. We need to let go of the past and work together for our future. When I see, hear, or witness racism, I avoid participation in it. I don't like it around me...All of this is about growth. Some of us are there; some of us are not there. Hopefully, most of us will get there (Respondent 5). This trip has opened my eyes to racial issues among African-Americans. I'm surprised at the racists there are among the African-Americans. I didn't expect it. I haven't experienced it before. I've been around them, but not ones that had a chip on their shoulder. The trip brought out racial tensions. I isolated myself from the African-Americans. I could stay in America to experience racial issues. It's embarrassing! It's embarrassing for me as an American. I wanted to crawl under a rock and dissociate. I didn't want to leave that image with the Gambians (Respondent 6). I see problems within the group dynamics, but it's okay. I've chalked it up to everyone going through emotional issues and facing things. We (individuals) deal with them differently. I don't feel uncomfortable. I understand that the African-Americans have a different experience. I feel like my experience is secondary. Africans don't have a problem with Whites, African-Americans do. White Americans and Black Americans have more in common with each other than they do with the Africans. I see Gambians, not as Black, but as foreigners (Respondent 7). We all brought our problems and issues here with us and need to work them out...I didn't consider that those problems were race related...Everyone needs space (Respondent 8). I'm angry! I roomed with a Black person and I was afraid. My roommate made me afraid. I am angry because I took it (the comments and insults). I'm angry because I am a Native American. Black people are not the only victims of oppression, historically. Get over it! Move on! I sensed that my roommate felt that if you are not Black, you have no reason to complain. I resent all of the hurt inflicted on me by someone else's' ignorance (Respondent 9).

Appendix C Post Slave Port Visit Interview Data

Theme One: The respondents felt overwhelmed by the experience and felt that the new knowledge they learned, as a result of visiting the slave ports, led to an increased understanding of the issues surrounding slavery. Visiting the slave ports significantly impacted the respondents, as evidenced by the following statements:

I expected to learn the truth and I did. Everybody had a part in slavery. Now, what happened on the Island (the ways the slaves were treated) was another story, but it changes your views on how you see other races after that experience. I was brought up to believe White people should be treated differently. We received family instructions on how “to be” with White people. I’ve learned, basically, that all people are heathens. I used to feel racism was my problem because I was Black, but now, if a White person has a problem with me, it is not my problem, but their issue about being White. I’m going to do my best to accept everyone, regardless of color. I know I have prejudices, but I am looking beyond them to see everyone as an individual (Respondent 1). I cried more at James Island than I did anywhere else, and I cried a bunch in different situations. But I just felt that was such a sad place because of its history, even though it’s not used for slavery now. You know it’s sad because the people I started to care about and who were with us were so upset and sad and grieved by what they saw and what they understood that place to be and how it affected them personally. That’s the part that really upset me most of all. When I went down into that little dungeon...just overwhelming sadness, and that made me upset for the people in our group (Respondent 2). Goree Island was breath taking. To think that human beings could do that to other human beings, regardless of race or color. I had a hard time believing that we (as Americans) could treat people like animals. We treat our animals better. Initially, I could not believe the Africans allowed that (slavery) to happen. After the readings, I could not believe the Portuguese, Dutch, English, and Americans could do what they did. What was their socialization and psychological processes that told them that slavery and inhumane behavior was acceptable (Respondent 3)? In general, both Islands were enlightening. There were things the guides told us that I did not know. I don’t think I could have gone through what the slaves went through. It was emotional. I don’t think it changed me in any way. It was just good for information (Respondent 4). The

trips (slave ports) reinforced what actually went on...how it (slave trade) happened...how it (slavery) came to be and the effect it (slavery) had on people. It proved to be a learning experience in terms of its (slavery's) history. Its effect on people is a matter of choice. I choose not to be a slave to that pain. I choose to let go of it. Hopefully, people can learn from the experience and not go there again. We have some racists in the group. Most people understood the experience as historical and something to learn from, but there were those who choose to hold on to the pain...When we went to Goree and Fort James, those experiences brought out their racist attitudes/behaviors even more...I want to say something about the Whites. The good thing was that most Whites understood what the Blacks were going through and allowed them to have those feelings. They did not take it personally. I thought that was a good thing because I know it was confusing and difficult at times...My kids want me to go to some of the movies that are out about slavery and the slave trade. I don't want to go because it is history to me. I've seen and know enough. I don't need the entertainment. It was awesome, however, to be on Goree. Standing in that "door of no return", realizing what they were realizing...it was awesome! (Respondent 5). Viewing Fort James and Goree Island was a realization. Africans were treated horribly, but because of the racial tensions, it made it harder for me to have much empathy. The anger within the group already had built up. It was hard to connect with them. I wanted to...I wanted to feel what they were feeling (Respondent 6). Visiting Fort James caused an overwhelming sadness and grief for the institution of slavery. What a tragedy! The inhumanity of it all is mind boggling. My tears for the Blacks in our group were genuine despite all of our differences during the trip (Respondent 9).

Theme Two: The respondents became increasingly aware of the role different peoples played in the promotion and perpetuation of slavery. The overwhelming sadness of the slavery issue prompted many of the respondents to question their role in the slavery issue. They made the following comments:

Basically, all people are heathens. We all played a role in slavery

(Respondent

1). Being White and visiting the slave ports did not bug me. I knew that that did not have anything to do with me as a person. I did not feel any guilt because I was White, because it wasn't me who was responsible for it so as far as me feeling a lot of pressure on myself, I didn't (Respondent 2). I hated

what happened to the slaves, but why should I feel guilty for something that happened 200 years ago by people I didn't even know? It's about how we treat each other now that counts (Respondent 4). I understand the anger associated with slavery...that stuff happened to the ancestors of many Americans, but I was not involved and resent being blamed (Respondent 6). We all must make sure that slavery never happens again. It is a scar on our humanity (Respondent 7). Slavery is horrible, but Blacks are not the only people who have been enslaved. People have been persecuted for ages. I had to let it go as a Native American and I believe that Black Americans should also let it go. We all have faults, but we are Americans and should treat each other with respect (Respondent 9).

Theme Three: Many of the respondents experienced a transformation in their assumptions as a result of visiting the slave ports. In response to the opening question, looking back, have your reasons for going to Africa changed in any way, the respondents had similar experiences. The following are some of the responses:

When I reflect on why I came to Africa, I find that I am angry, not because I came to Africa, but for all of the issues that were brought up and skirted under the table. There was a lot of opportunity to deal with issues of racism that were not talked about. Granted, we were a diverse group, but we should have left The Gambia as a close group of people and we didn't. What a waste of six weeks! I need to be more aware of my actions and words, in terms of how they effect others (Respondent 1). Basically, I did what I wanted to do. I learned more than what I anticipated about myself, the people in Africa, and the people in our group. I learned that I know very little about slavery and that I had many false beliefs about Blacks...I don't like for people to generalize and I don't like for people to not get to know who I am before they compare me to someone else and put me in to whatever mold they want to put me into. That makes me mad. I don't like that and I try not to do that to others...Yet, on this trip, I found myself doing some of the very things I hate (Respondent 2). I have been affected and amazed by the trip because I never thought I had a racist bone in my body. I viewed everyone equally; everyone stood on the same ground to begin with and it was his or her actions that determined my prejudice, not now! I came for the education and the experience of traveling to a foreign country. I leave with a definite change in how I view Black Americans. The Africans were inclusive, warm, and

accepting of me...and everyone else, regardless of color/race. Our Black Americans see nothing but color and that is the one thing they blame if things go bad. Heaven forbid that it might be because of an individual's lack of judgment or character, or integrity, morals, or ethics (Respondent 3). I wouldn't say my reasons for coming to Africa changed. I changed because of the group experience we had. As a group, we did not do enough things together to get the cultural benefits of Africa. When people invaded other people's beliefs, that created tensions. Many of the students were unable to handle having their beliefs questioned (Respondent 4). I wanted to go to Africa for the experience. In fact, it was overwhelming. It was emotionally overwhelming. I will have to look at the pictures where I was laughing to know that I had a good time. You see the poor all around you in Africa. The experience made me feel rich, materially and opportunity wise. I think it was very sad how my forefathers were brought to the United States, but in a way, they paved the way for me. If they had never come to America, I would be back in Africa. Do you know what I mean? I wouldn't want that. I don't want to go back to The Gambia (Respondent 5).

Theme Four: Prejudice and racism became intensified as a result of the slave port visits. While most of the respondents felt an overwhelming sadness for the very existence of slavery, they felt visiting the slave ports only deepened the racial tensions within the study aboard group. The following statements evidence this:

I thought I lived above prejudice because I lived among other colors, but it (the trip) raised up prejudices that were buried and I need to work on them. I was not as impacted by the effects of the slave ports as most other were. I think what really made me see my personal prejudices was the night [she] called you guys f—ing white crackers. Up until that point, I was buying into the racial crap that was taking place within the group. I was defending some of the Blacks attitudes when I should have been telling them they were wrong...I want to see the person first, not their color (Respondent 1). Unfortunately, in my little world, I don't get to be around many ethnic groups and I think that is real sad, for me. I don't like it, but there is not much I can do about it. But...the way people were making a big issue of it (Black/White), while here (in Africa) made me mad...anytime I think that someone tries to inflict prejudice on someone, regardless of race or gender or whatever, that makes me mad (Respondent 2). Visiting Goree really separated us (the group) more than we already were.

Before we got on the bus we were separated, Blacks/Whites. Racism was there before we began the trip (to Goree) and as the trip progressed, the racism increased Blacks towards Whites. Circumstances at Goree, when we were separated (White/Black [by lead professor]), that increased the animosity, the feelings of racism. I have relatives who say “Oh those African Americans...”, and I would stop them and defend the Blacks. Now, I would stop them and say, “No, do not use the word African to be associated with Black Americans. I’ve been there and there is a difference.” I am tired of Black Americans going off on me because I am White, and for no other reason. That is pure racism (Respondent 3). Maybe, Fort James and Goree should have been first, instead of at the end of our trip, and then we could have healed. The length of the trip (six weeks), and those events led up to a real mean situation at the end. Anger and verbal abuse...Prejudices...straight up prejudice. Some of the prejudice was still a result of miscommunication, but in some Black people, they would pre-plan it. Like if you said something, the people would take it wrong just because you were White. There were some angry White people who also made it uncomfortable for everyone. By the time we went to the slave ports, I would not have been able to make any suggestions on how to handle it better. It was too late. I went my own way. Once those few troublemakers surrounded themselves with followers, it (prejudiced attitudes) grew like a brush fire. Something needed to have started earlier to make us into a group...There was no offer to join or participate with the group (troublemakers). There was a direct order on what to do or not to do with the Whites. Things like, “Don’t hang around with the Whites” and “You don’t need to be with them”. Once, I was even threatened. I was told, “Keep hanging around with the Whites and you might find yourself missing one morning”. That scared me a little, but I’m my own person and avoided being sucked into the games. I’m not a prejudice person, but I also was too afraid to confront some of the issues. Besides, last time I looked my passport said American NOT African American. We are all Americans. We are not Africans. We should be asking each other what it means to be Black in America, not what happened to our ancestors or how we got to America. Is it any different from someone who was an Irish immigrant and now lives in America (Respondent 4). The trip to Goree and Fort James affected everyone in the group. We had some racists in the group. Most people understood the experience as historical and something to learn from, but there were those who choose to hold on to the pain. One person admitted to me that she was racist. She holds on to racism and strikes out at White people. I feel there were White and Black racists in our group, but I’m talking about the Black racists in our group. When we went to

Goree and Fort James, those experiences brought out their racist attitudes/behaviors even more. I don't like looking at slavery pictures because it does bring out strong feelings of racism. People have a choice to hang on to anger and hate. Some people are so miserable that they have to blame someone else for their misery. The racism within the group was definitely fueled by the trip to the slave ports (Respondent 5). Going to Goree Island intensified the racism. It's interesting that the Gambians don't like African-Americans. Some people were creating problems. They didn't really have issues, they just created problems. Some went to feel and experience their ancestry. I don't see how ancestry has to do with racial issues...by seeing and relating to their people. It just added a jolt of electricity to the racial problems. I felt that the Tennessee group (a group from Tennessee State University that [the lead professor] included in the trip) instigated a lot of the tension. We're all racist. We're all prejudiced in some way (Respondent 6). I saw myself going through different stages of anger, then acceptance throughout the trip. Being asked about being a minority and how it felt was strange, but it's not the same thing, because I have an automatic escape. I am a privileged minority and a temporary minority while in Africa. I didn't let the racial tension ruin a wonderful experience. I tended to focus on the Africans, not on the issues brought about by White and Black Americans (Respondent 7). I was more protected than the rest of the group from racial tensions. Because of the death of my mother while I was in Africa, I think everyone left me alone and did not try to involve me in the racial issues (Respondent 8). Visiting the slave ports increased the racist attitudes of many of our group. The Blacks used it as an excuse to take out their anger on everyone else. I'm tired of all of that garbage and will be glad to get home (Respondent 9).

Theme Five: The respondents felt that the study abroad program had affected their lives on a very personal level. The respondents were significantly impacted by their trip to Africa. They reflected on the study abroad program stating:

I walked away from Africa wanting to help everybody in the world. I think that is a good thing to want to give to others...I learned that all of the little things I do that I think are cute tend to annoy some people, and that some things I say can hurt people. I need to be more aware of my actions and words, in terms of how they affect others...I was glad I went and did the study abroad,...but we should have left Gambia as a close group of people and we didn't. What a waste of six weeks!

(Respondent 1). This trip should have had a better screening process, but I don't know how you would do that fairly. How can you weed out troublemakers and people who aren't a little broader minded that what they need to be? Some of the issues we went through, I think we had to go through them. I don't think there is any way we could have prepared each other for what happened...I'm not sure there is really a way to ward off or ward against issues like the racial issues and the Black/White thing. I'm not sure if there is...So, I mean, maybe you could forewarn a little bit more. Maybe the next group we could go and say this is what we experienced, but then, they are still going to be taken by surprise a little bit once they get there and you're in that separated element...Did the study abroad change me? Definitely! I am so thankful for my life, yet, I am aware of my responsibility to be kind to all of mankind. I will definitely be more charitable now as a result of having been on this trip to Africa (Respondent 2). Having gone through a great deal of racial tension for six weeks, I would say that the study abroad program impacted me significantly. Some for the good and some for the bad. I came home more prejudiced than I left. I learned more about slavery and more about people. What continues to impress me the most are the lessons I learned from the Africans. Their sharing and caring attitude is desperately needed in the United States. I hope I brought that sense of community home with me and I hope I can get rid of my overwhelming anger with some of the Blacks who went on this trip (Respondent 3)...I thought the leader should have stepped in to solve some of the problems and relieve some of the racial tensions...It was emotional...There were changes among group members. For example, I started off being good friends with another Black participant. At the end there were tensions, and I found myself just wanting the trip to be over. The trip was too long. People started wearing on each other. I loved the African people. I am forever touched by their generosity and kindness. For those reasons alone, I would be thankful for the study abroad trip (Respondent 4). It would be worthwhile for those of us who went to The Gambia to speak to next year's group. But, people are so different and until you get there and live it, I don't think anyone will truly understand. At least they will remember that someone told them this or that may happen. Maybe the selection of participants could have been different. People are so different and until you get to know them as individuals and how they react in dynamic situations, you just can't know what to expect from them. But, I do think each person should be screened. I also think each person should sign a contract agreeing to stay on site (at the hotel) with the group, and not date the locals; things like that. This is not only for the groups' protection, but to protect the individual. Too many problems arose because individuals did their own thing with no regard

for the group. Also, if they violate the contract, the leaders can send them home. I don't want to go back to The Gambia, but I do want to go to other parts of Africa. I will never forget my personal experiences with the people of The Gambia. I felt accepted and loved. Wouldn't it be great to have that naïve acceptance of our fellow man (Respondent 5)? The Gambians taught me humility, pride in their origin, community, and the value of family. Money isn't everything. Time means nothing to them. I don't necessarily agree, but in America, rush equals money. They taught me to be more content with what we have and be willing to sacrifice instead of seeing what we can get out of every situation. Children are first in The Gambia. I see the respect and care people show for the elders. This will change the way I feel about life. It will change the way I deal with my children...I would like to take my husband and children to The Gambia. It's been a good trip. It's been valuable. I wouldn't do a group thing again (Respondent 6). I think travel to any country would change a person...I have taken so much for granted and will keep this in mind when I return home. The Gambians are a patriarchy. Their social mores, level of conscience, the place where poverty words, the caste system all affected me. I've had to deal with culture shock. I associate crime and poverty. I feel nervous with poverty. It's a reflex to feel threatened. There's nothing that intrinsically links crime and poverty. I learned that from the Africans. My worldview had been changed by the trip. I would recommend study abroad to anyone, even though we had problems (Respondent 7). This trip has changed me. I will be more giving of myself and what I have to offer to others...I expected a transition and the trip helped me to grow up (Respondent 8). My beliefs have been challenged as a result of this trip. I never thought I would ever be prejudiced, but I am. Even though the dynamics of the group challenged many of my personal beliefs, I would definitely recommend a study abroad program to every student. Reading about a country and its people is one thing, but to experience that country and those people first hand it amazing. You can't get those personal feelings out of books. I was saddened by the poverty of the people, but hopeful because of their community spirit. I was saddened by the behavior of so many of our group members, but hopeful for a healing to take place. I want to help others. I will continue my spiritual work by helping send supplies and Christian materials through [the lead professor]. I have grown as a result of this study abroad program (Respondent 9).

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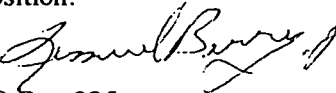
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