

Embracing Disruptions of Identity: How Can Sociology Enhance the Experiences of Students of Color in Study Abroad?

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Abstract

Efforts are underway to globalize sociology in the United States through study abroad experiences. At the same time, there is a push to extend the reach of such programs to students of color. We use student journal entries and fieldnotes from trips to South Africa to analyze how students of color grapple with a disruption of identity in a Black majority setting. Findings reveal that students were challenged by new axes of identity, namely, language and place, and were confronted with their own relative privilege. Sociology can play a critical role in helping students maximize benefit from such experiences if undergraduate curricula incorporate additional axes of intersectionality and include more scholarship from Africa and the Diaspora. Moreover, study abroad programs need to devote significant time to structured debriefings in all pedagogical activities. This would provide faculty and students a space to productively manage and even embrace the disruption of identity.

Keywords

study abroad, race, identity, South Africa, intersectionality

A *New York Times* essay in which an African American student recounts the jarring experiences of racism she endured on a study abroad trip to Italy (Phillips 2018) brought to mind our study abroad trips to South Africa. Our students, all identifying as nonwhite, did not have beer or racial slurs hurled at them, thankfully, but did confront a very different set of challenges that centered on identity. Although a growing body of work calls for the need to diversify study abroad programs, far less attention has been paid to understanding how students of color manage the disruption of identity outside the US and, in particular, in a setting that is majority Black but where they see themselves treated as the “other.” U.S. sociology has long been at the forefront of teaching on intersectional identities (Collins 2019; Crenshaw 1990), but the focus on a particular formulation of race has limited its contributions to

understanding contexts outside of the United States. In this article, we address the challenges and opportunities of “diversifying study abroad” in the larger context of globalizing sociology.

We draw on student journal entries¹ and fieldnotes from two cohorts of a study abroad program in South Africa to (1) document how students of color experience disruptions to identity in specific activities and (2) identify steps that can be taken to support students to meet both intellectual and practical challenges of being non-White “outsiders” in

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non-White contexts. Doing so can enhance teaching on intersectionality and, in turn, deepen student understanding of social inequality, identity, and exclusion. Moreover, a well-designed study abroad program enables students to understand that although one's sense of belonging and identity is formed and enacted in specific historical, political, and cultural contexts, it can be understood, contested, and possibly reconfigured as spatial outsiders (Halsey 1990). In this way, this analysis makes an important contribution to ongoing efforts to "globalize" or "internationalize" undergraduate sociology curricula.

GLOBALIZING SOCIOLOGY THROUGH DIVERSIFYING STUDY ABROAD

Goodman and Berdan (2014), in an op-ed piece, wrote,

Making study abroad a part of their education is the most effective and accessible means for students to develop needed skills because it pushes a student to get out of her comfort zone to experience another culture, language, environment and education system. It teaches students to appreciate difference and diversity firsthand and enables them to recognize — and then dismiss — stereotypes they may have held about people they had never met.

This call for action has been embraced by U.S. universities, made evident in a notable increase in study abroad enrollment over time. According to the International Institute for Education (2019), the number of American students studying abroad grew by 2.3 percent in 2016–2017 compared to the previous year. The report also noted that more than 16 percent of BA students take part in study abroad at some point in their undergraduate career. Although students in most study abroad programs tend to be White and materially privileged, the report shows an increase from 18 percent in 2006 to 29 percent in 2016 in the number of non-White students enrolled.

Despite this encouraging trend, students of color are still woefully underrepresented in study abroad programs (Bhandari and Belyavina 2011; Stallman et al. 2010; Tensley 2015). Some of the reasons for such disparities are cost, lack of support from family driven by concerns about the value of

such experiences, absence of role models, and lack of programs in places of interest (Acquaye and Crewe 2012; Brux and Fry 2009; Willis 2015). Our knowledge of the experiences of students of color who do participate is very limited, but what does exist points to negative experiences such as micro-aggressions and isolation (Willis 2015; Womack 2016). Building on this work, we turn our attention to the disruption of identity that students of color experience in Black majority settings in Africa. Sociology can play a role in both understanding such disruption as well as supporting student learning.

Most sociology curricula in the United States focus heavily on the U.S. context in teaching intersectionality. However, there has been a movement toward internationalizing sociology, made evident in a special issue of this journal devoted to globalization in sociology. In the introduction to this volume, the editors wrote, "Incorporating globalization in some way (e.g., via study-abroad programs, online or face-to-face interactions with students in different countries, or a section of a course) encourages students to apply the sociological imagination and engage in global critical thinking" (Giuffre and Sweet 2017:309). Indeed, a number of innovative approaches have been used to accomplish this. Nordmeyer, Teig, and Bedera (2017) designed a study abroad program in Sweden and Norway to assess the extent to which gender egalitarianism operates in countries commonly hailed as gender utopias. Core (2017) demonstrated the value of a short-term program in Shanghai embedded in a semester-long course on the connections between demographic, environmental, and social change. Shupe (2013) developed a study abroad curriculum on the psychology of inequality in Nicaragua that challenged her students to critically assess their own beliefs about the relationship between moral deficits and poverty by exposing them to deep-rooted structural barriers that prevent the poor, and particularly women, from escaping the poverty trap.

Moreover, there is a rich scholarship on using experiential learning in the United States to teach about both global issues and inequalities. Dallinger (2017) paired her students with immigrant children in a mentoring program and concluded that service learning can greatly enhance understanding of immigrant challenges and reduce prejudice. Clever and Miller (2019) showed how students' socioeconomic background shapes students' engagement with service learning. They found that students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds were more empathetic. Grauerholz and Settembrino

(2016) used experiential learning on public transport to provide students an in-depth perspective on inequality and intersectionality and open their “sociological imaginations.” Earlier work by Tonnelat and Kornblum (2017) incorporated students into their ethnographic research of diversity, assimilation, and inequalities on the storied “Number 7” subway train in New York City. These projects allow students a window into the lives of those born outside of the United States through participant observation in shared spaces.

Although these approaches to challenging and expanding the sociological canon are welcome, we have little understanding of how students of color from the United States process intersectionality in settings in which they are no longer the racial “minority” but instead face challenges to their racial identities in unfamiliar ways or, in some cases, not linked to race at all. More specifically, how does a student of color based in the United States process and respond to the complexities of relative poverty in Black majority spaces, language barriers, animosity as a tourist, and being treated as “American” even if the student does not identify as such? In an inversion of DuBoisian double consciousness,² our students were pushed to reflect on their outsider status as Americans and, in some instances, their relative privilege, in a context in which they were part of the racially dominant group. The perceived security in their identities, created within a uniquely American tableau, was both reinforced and dislodged in the South African setting. We suggest that this process is not only productive for personal growth but also invaluable for feeding the sociological imagination. We now turn to a description of our program and our analysis to demonstrate how this might happen.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The course, *Social Inequality in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, was created in response to a call to “Diversify Study Abroad” at our home institution to attract more students of color and low-income students. Although the university has a long history of running study abroad programs and actively encourages undergraduates to enroll in at least one, the vast majority are in Europe, and the students who enroll are disproportionately White, although the participation of students of color has been steadily increasing. Perhaps not surprisingly, one of our biggest hurdles in running the program has been funding. Whereas the university offers

a limited amount of support and students are encouraged to seek outside support such as the Gilman Fellowships, access to needed finances is a major challenge. As a sociologist teaching on Africa for decades, Madhavan welcomed not only the opportunity to share her passion for the continent with students who might not have the means to experience it but also the chance to deepen and expand teaching on core sociological topics of race, intersectionality, and identity. Moreover, in its small way, such programs offer a counternarrative to the rise of nationalism in both the United States and South Africa by presenting an opportunity for interactive learning between U.S. students and hosts. The program was significantly enhanced by its coleader, Dlamini, who was born and raised in rural South Africa. Similar to Bruce’s (2012) finding that Black students in a study abroad program appreciated the presence of Black faculty and/or a cultural guide, our students found tremendous value in having a program leader who straddles both country contexts as a Black person.

We designed our course explicitly as a comparison of urban and rural contexts because it is not possible to understand South Africa today without an appreciation of the historical and contemporary significance of rural areas. A South African living in a rural community has a different set of challenges and advantages compared to his or her counterpart in urban areas. Those in the cities, for the most part, have better access to basic public services such as running water, but rural residents may enjoy more physical security and social support. Moreover, the coleader’s intimate familiarity with a rural community was an invaluable resource most study abroad programs lack. The inaugural cohort in 2016 and the subsequent trip in 2018 had nine and eight students, respectively. Both groups included African American, first/second-generation African, and Indian students. Although they came from a range of disciplines, including sociology, African American studies, government and politics, criminology, and public health, all had some exposure to intersectionality in their undergraduate coursework. Their knowledge of South Africa, however, was minimal.

The program⁴ started with an intensive one-week predeparture orientation covering the historical context and key areas of social inequality in our course: economic opportunities and income disparities, education, spatial segregation, language/ethnicity, health care, and immigration. Throughout, we drew on an intersectional approach, particularly with race, class, and gender. We also made a concerted effort to

include a diversity of perspectives (e.g., race, gender) in the selected readings. Lectures were complemented with films, guest speakers, and discussion, and students were required to write daily analysis papers on the assigned readings. The last day of the session was devoted to logistics and preparation for arrival in South Africa. The activities in South Africa included visits to political struggle sites, engagement with peers in university activities, service learning, guest lectures, and ample time in the morning for activity preparation and debriefing. The rural component of the trip also included homestays with families in villages. Students were expected to maintain journals throughout the trip and collect data for individual projects. Upon return to the United States, each student presented his or her project, after which we held a concluding group debriefing. Each component was assessed using a rubric presented to students beforehand.

ANALYSIS

We draw on 17 journals with approximately 150 entries. Students were free to write about any issue of their choice. Therefore, topics ranged from observations of social interactions (including and not including the student), difficulties with language, reactions to food, cultural misunderstandings, missing home, and comparison to the United States, to mention just a few. After every journal submission, we provided detailed feedback in writing and followed up with a discussion as needed. We integrate this feedback as well as fieldnotes from group level debriefings and discussions throughout the trip in our analysis. These debriefings lasted between 30 minutes and two hours. The group debriefings usually covered three key dimensions: (1) emotional responses to people, places, incidents, activities; (2) academic discussion integrating literature; and (3) drawing comparison to the United States. These fora also provided us the opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of pedagogy and our ability to respond to student challenges and consider modifications.

Our process of analysis loosely followed a phenomenological approach (Eberle 2014), which is particularly effective in bringing to light the lived experience of difference, power, and social positioning in structures of oppression (Ahmed 2007). In keeping with the tenets of this protocol (Cooper, Fleischer, and Cotton 2012), we started with data immersion. This included both authors carefully reading each student's entries, annotating questions and comments, and paying close attention to

subjectivities of both student and the authors. Second, we identified key themes across students and over time. In reading through the entries, it quickly became apparent that all the students were grappling with the challenges to their identities as American, African American, African, non-White, and, in some cases, even privileged, made evident by repeated entries throughout the trip. Third, we compared entries across students to identify similarities and differences in language use and tone. Lastly, we drew on our feedback to the students and fieldnotes from group discussions to better appreciate how individual students and the group as a whole experienced identity disruption. Taken together, this process led us to view the disruption of identity as a phenomenon experienced by each of our students in specific ways but notably manifesting in the same four social and/or physical "spaces." It is to these spaces that we turn to next.

RACE AND THE DISRUPTION OF IDENTITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Under apartheid (meaning separation of races), Whites held the most power in political, social, and economic spaces, followed by Indians, then Coloureds,³ and, at the bottom, Black Africans who made up well over 80 percent of the population. Twenty-five years after the defeat of apartheid, racial stratification continues to be critically important in understanding social, political, and economic life in South Africa but is no longer the only or, in some cases, the most important structural barrier to upward mobility. Indeed, there is no shortage of scholarship drawing on intersectionality to examine a range of issues, including masculinity (Moolman 2013), feminism (Gouws 2017), disability (Swartz 2013), and language (Hunter and Hachimi 2012). The debate surrounding the primacy of race was brought home to our students during a lecture by Hlumelo Biko, son of Black Consciousness Movement leader and one of South Africa's great anti-apartheid icons, Steve Bantu Biko. He threw down a most unexpected challenge to his rapt, student audience: "Black South Africans should stop using race as their primary identifier and start identifying simply as South African." His point was that Black South Africans have won control of political space but still lag behind in the economic realm; therefore, the struggle needs to focus on the economic liberation of the country's African population (Biko 2012). This provocative call to

action set in motion a “disruption of identity” that our students faced throughout their stay in South Africa. In the sections that follow, we analyze how this disruption played out in four specific spaces: economic, linguistic, touristic, and African.

Am I Disadvantaged? Understanding Relative Privilege in Black Spaces

Given the history of apartheid and, in particular, residential segregation, and increasing economic inequality within race (Mattes 2015), there are many variants of Black identity reflecting both privilege and marginalization. The students stayed in Melville, an upper-middle-class area of Johannesburg that takes pride in being the face of the “new South Africa,” racially diverse though predominantly White and urban chic. Our students were quick to notice that an African who lives in Melville is materially well off, but their numbers are still much smaller than Whites. Not far from downtown Johannesburg is the storied township of Soweto. A *township* in South Africa refers to an area on the periphery of urban centers created by the apartheid state to house non-White labor and ensure that White urban spaces remained White. Novelist Jacob Dlamini (2009:109) writes, “Townships also induce nostalgia because they have always had people with sufficient cultural imagination to show that township life is not all doom and gloom.” Dlamini’s iconoclastic perspective challenges the impression that most non-South Africans, and some non-Black South Africans, have about townships as places of chaos, poverty, and violence. Dlamini, while not denying the hardships that township residents endured, wants to ensure that his voice as an African man living in a White-created Black space is given legitimacy in constructing an historical narrative about his country and, more importantly, his place in it.

Most South African townships, to this day, remain African spaces, although increasingly differentiated by class. Soweto holds historical prominence because of the many watershed events that took place during apartheid (our tour guide was one of the students who took part in the pivotal 1976 Soweto Youth Uprising) and because it is home to anti-apartheid icons including Lillian Ngoyi, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. Soweto is unique among townships for its extreme class stratification. After visiting Vilakazi Street, where our students mingled with upper-middle-class Sowetans enjoying lunch and shopping in upmarket stores, they visited Nomzamo informal settlement, a warren of shacks

made of tin and cardboard with no access to basic amenities. This area is named in honor of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, revered by many Black South Africans for her fierce loyalty to Soweto and as a tireless champion of the poor. There was noticeable silence among the group as we walked around, on one hand astonished at the sheer brutality of human existence and, on the other, perplexed by the seeming indifference of a government that could allow this to happen in a country as wealthy as South Africa. Whereas Black poverty in the United States can partly be explained by limited power in the hands of the oppressed, how do we explain this level of poverty in a country where political power rests with the formerly oppressed? The academic answer goes back to Biko’s point that political power does not automatically translate into economic power, but our students, nonetheless, struggled with the very visible disjuncture between the two.

During our visit to Alexandra, one of Johannesburg’s poorest townships (located just three miles from Sandton, one of its wealthiest neighborhoods), the students spent time in a primary school tutoring school children who offered them insights about the hardships of township life but also their connection to the rest of the world through Black global icons, as explained here:

I had the opportunity to come in contact with some very inspirational youth in a township called Alexandra. They were so eager to hear us speak more than actually being tutored because of our American accents. The learners asked us questions like, “Have you ever met Beyoncé?” And even, “Have you met Obama?” Being asked about our president was such a surprise. Reflecting back on when I was their age, I wouldn’t have even known much about our own president. Despite their disadvantaged education system, they still learn. Whether it stems from their passion, their teachers or even the Internet, they’re still prevailing. Although I was doing the tutoring; they most certainly schooled me.

Debriefing. We engaged in a lively conversation about Black spaces as contexts of deprivation, material privilege, and empowerment. On one hand, our students could see similarities between townships and Black cultural spaces in the United States such as Harlem. Moreover, they felt empowered in their own racial identity, learning about the

pivotal role that Soweto played in the liberation struggle. On the other hand, they had trouble making sense of the extremes of wealth that were visible in the same township, neither of which they could easily identify with. Moreover, there was unspoken acknowledgment that they felt physically and psychologically more secure in Melville because of the similarities to the United States. Similarly, the tutoring interaction produced joy for the student in her ability to make a connection with her tutee despite her foreignness while, at the same time, incredulity that she was perceived as having access to the likes of Beyoncé and President Obama because she is Black and/or American.

Townships are not the only Black spaces; many rural communities are predominantly Black, also by design. The apartheid government's homeland policy created what it considered autonomous governance for rural areas based on a crude classification of ethnicity but deprived them of any means to ensure a livelihood. Therefore, they became labor-sending areas for Black men to service the mines and commercial farms, which has given South Africa its wealth. Coleader Dlamini describes growing up in such an environment:

Save for three or four families in the village that were better off, most households were poor. Our lives were ordinary and though we aspired to become doctors, lawyers, and artists, we knew our choices were limited to being police officers, teachers, nurses, or mineworkers—which confined us to village life. Invariably, a few of us ended up as farm workers, and a great majority languished in the villages desperate to be productive. Clearly something was very wrong when generations of young people grew up to believe these are the only available career choices in their worlds.

This description offered the students some familiarity in that they could draw comparisons between the curtailing of opportunities for Black South Africans during and after apartheid and similar struggles underway in poor communities in the United States. However, our students had come with very limited exposure to rural contexts in either their own lives or courses on race and social injustice back in the United States. In South Africa, it is impossible to leave out the rural context in any discussion about racial injustice given the centrality of labor migration in connecting Black rural and

urban spaces that began under apartheid and continues today.

Our students, having been exposed to sensationalized portrayals of Africa in popular media in the United States, associated Africa with poverty and, in particular, rural communities with dire poverty. What they encountered was a place where most people struggle to sustain a livelihood and lack indoor plumbing but have access to basics such as cell phones and TVs and in some cases even cars, Internet access, and plans for foreign travel. On an academic level, the students might have understood that material consumption is a global phenomenon triggered by capitalism and that it can coexist with generalized poverty. Nonetheless, they struggled making sense of the heterogeneity they saw, having expected to see some mythical homogeneity of rural life. The alien nature of rural life was evident for the students as they struggled in their homestays with families. Not only did they need to adjust to not having access to running water or reliable electricity but also had to accept a very slow pace of life marked by walks and visits to neighbors and local shops and limited dietary diversity, as explained here:

Also, not having access to fast food is killing me. This experience is making me rethink my relationship to fast food. At home, I know that if I don't want to go to the store, don't want to cook, or just need something quick and on the go, I can find it. I can find something out to eat without a problem no matter the time or the place. Here, if you don't cook or have family/friends in the area who cook, you don't eat. I've gotten grilled chicken while out twice and it just doesn't provide the complexity or variety necessary to be completely satisfying. [This student also had difficulty with hygiene and, in particular, the lack of proper refrigeration.]

Debriefing. We had a challenging discussion about structural inequality, personal responsibility, and relative privilege. Quite impressively, she recognized the inconsistency in her difficulty to apply the same structural inequality explanation that she would easily use in the United States to understand her present circumstances. Moreover, she found herself considering her relative position of privilege coming from the United States and openly questioned the extent to which race had anything to

do with basics such as nutrition and hygiene. We gently pushed back and asked her to think about power and the development of public health norms and, more importantly, the inability of village residents to abide by such norms when running water is a luxury. The discussion ended with her suggestion to write about the tension between her racial insider status and her spatial outsider status and her difficulty in adapting to limited choice.

Am I Black? Feeling Exclusion in Linguistic Spaces

Perhaps the most challenging dimension of the program for students was the loneliness they felt from not speaking a language other than English, as made clear in the following poignant journal entries:

This trip has been the best decision I have made in my life. I feel like I have learned so much. Perspective is such a powerful thing to have that I have gained in so many environments while here. I am really going to miss this place. I have found a new home in South Africa. But I also feel like I have almost lost or been stripped of some sort of my black identity while I have been here. Maybe I am being a little dramatic. Its [*sic*] just interesting to see and encounter how other black people, African people can make you feel so...exotic. And from their perspective I understand completely. But from mine, I feel like an outcast, I feel ignorant sometimes, and like I don't belong. Some of my conversations have been frustrating as hell. Mainly due to the language barrier. As a black person, I felt so much judgement from many people in the village for English being my "mother tongue." Or not knowing where I am from—and when they ask me they mean where in Africa. It really sucks to say I don't know, and it's even worse when they look at me crazily for not knowing, like it's my fault or something.

The pastor then welcomed us and asked us to read a scripture from the bible in front of the whole church. The boy next to us had to read this scripture again because church members stated that due to our accent it was difficult to understand us. The language barrier seemed to be the biggest barrier

because although we had translators they both struggled to translate the service. It became difficult for them to find some of the English translations. One thing I found to be unique was the fact that their bibles were in English. For me to witness this was disbelief because many people did not even speak English yet had a bible in the English language. I wondered if speaking the language was the issue but they understood. I also wondered whether an English Bible is a reflection of class.

Debriefing. Not only did the language barrier accentuate outsider status, but it also brought up uncomfortable questions about heritage and, ultimately, Black identity. In fairness to hosts, knowledge about slavery in the United States and the subsequent severing of ancestral ties has always been extremely limited in school curricula in South Africa. Therefore, such interactions likely reflect more surprise than judgment. Although students were intimately familiar with the debates around Black vernacular English in the United States, and, in particular, its role as both a tool of resistance and a form of stratification, they were not prepared to navigate the linguistic politics of South Africa, which carries expectations of Black Africans speaking an African language. Our discussion, therefore, needed to start with a wider lens that included the role of linguistic segregation under apartheid, the challenges and opportunities of living in a multilingual country, and the intersection of language, Christianity, and class (as noted in the second vignette).

All African countries are multilingual, reflecting diversity in ethnicity and in many cases, class. The South African context is particularly interesting given the critical role of language in the liberation movement and the privileging of some languages over others. Even though rural residents are acutely aware that English—and a particular way of speaking English—is critical for accessing employment opportunities (Hunter and Hachimi 2012) and upward mobility, knowing local languages such as siShangane, siSwati, seSotho, or sePedi is a source of immense pride and a critical aspect of identity for rich and poor alike. It is a critical aspect of Black South African identity *across* class made evident by the proliferation of TV shows that feature Black actors who effortlessly switch between "posh" English and native language. Regarding the experience at church, we explained that although there are Bibles in

XiTsonga and, indeed, one of the main jobs of missionaries in Africa was to have the Bible translated into local languages, the use of the English version was likely for the student's comfort. Also noteworthy is the reaction to the students' American accents that ranged from amusement, fascination, to simple lack of comprehension. Speaking English (and not speaking the local language), while presenting seemingly insurmountable challenges initially, evolved into an opportunity to appreciate diversity in a new dimension and in some cases, motivated students to learn a few words of the language itself.

Am I a Tourist? Managing Race Dynamics at a Game Park

The rural community in which the students stayed is also home to one of South Africa's most popular tourist destinations. The Kruger National Park is one of Africa's most famous game reserves (safari), famed for its spectacular natural beauty and success in protecting wildlife, allowing visitors to see endangered animals in the wild. Because the bulk of visitors—both South African and international—are not Black, the park can be seen as a "White space" in the larger Black (and poor) province. Moreover, the villages surrounding the park provide much of the labor for the park, leading some to suggest that the apartheid era labor reserve system continues (Tapela and Omara-Ojungu 1999). Our students unwittingly found themselves managing this tension as non-White tourists exemplified in the following three entries:

When I found out that we would be visiting the Kruger National Park, I was elated to say the least. Though I was prepared to see a variety of animals, I was not prepared to experience such poorly hidden resentment from both tourists and park employees. By the end of the day, I felt more comfortable amongst the lions than I felt amongst the people. After the safari, we stopped at a nearby restaurant. As we walked to a table, I realized that we were the only Black tourists. Nevertheless, I felt comforted by the presence of Black serving staff. After we sat down, a waitress took our order. Her demeanor was cold. I looked around and noticed Black staff and white patrons watching us intently with the same coldness. I felt vulnerable and exposed, much like the

wild animals we gaped at earlier. We waited for our food for almost two hours as white patrons arrived, were served, and left. When we asked about our order, our waitress was dismissive. Once our food finally arrived, we ate, paid, tipped, and left. As we walked back to our truck, I heard yelling. I turned and saw our waitress following us. She accused us of not paying the entire bill. We looked at the bill and explained to her that she misread the payments. I felt humiliated and foolish for thinking that a generous tip would alleviate her misconceived notions of us. During the ride home, I reflected on this seemingly endless experience. Given Kruger's history, I understand if the staff feels resentment toward tourists. However, my understanding is complicated by the fact that they eagerly accommodated the white tourists while treating the few Black ones with disdain. It felt as though the staff's resentment was targeted and they projected their internalized prejudice onto us. Was it solely because we are Black? Was it also because we are American? I am curious to know whether our race and/or nationality further disrupted their culturally fragile and historically complex space at Kruger.

Overall, I would describe this Kruger national park journey as educational yet shocking. It was educational because you could learn more about how animals should live and what their home looks like and who were the predators and who is the prey. The shocking aspect of this trip was the demographics of the visitors for the park. 95 percent of the tourists I saw were white. The other 5 percent looked Asian. How can this be? Do black people not visit Kruger park? Why are all the employees at Kruger black? There has always been this speculation that mostly white people travel, explore and broaden their horizons. I am starting to truly believe that is true. But [R] explained to us that seeing animals is not a big deal where she is from [another African country] so is that the case for black Africans?

First thing I noticed was the large number of white tourists throughout the park. Literally the one Asian man was the only non-white person I saw the whole 5–6 hours that we

were at the park and I only saw one white man working at the park the whole time as well. This got us started in a debate while in the car. Should this racial dynamic be socially accepted? On one hand the park brings in millions of tax dollars to the country that needs financial support. On the other hand, there is the slave dynamic of the blacks working for the whites. I fall somewhere in the middle because I hate the dynamic of blacks working for the “white man” but without the money generated from the park, South Africa would not be able to have the welfare government that it has today. The real question that needs to be asked is how does Africa become independent from the “white man’s” money? That is the million dollar question we should all be looking for.

Debriefing. What is perhaps most notable in these observations is the exclusive focus on race. Although race most certainly is a critical part of game park dynamics, other factors such as age and being a foreigner need to be considered. The students are young and, therefore, may be assumed to have limited resources for tipping. Similar to low-wage workers in other well-known tourist meccas, the serving staff at Kruger National Park’s restaurants may not necessarily share the welcoming spirit that well-paid managers and upper administration aspire to display. Moreover, we pointed out to them that the warden of the park is Black and that state institutions and corporations that implicate all racial groups need to be held accountable for at least some of the visible power dynamics. Not mentioned here but clear to everyone was the obvious comparison to the famed national parks in the United States where the vast majority of visitors are White. The difference is that in the United States, the parks are located in states with mostly White populations, whereas with the Kruger National Park, the space outside the park boundary is a Black space.

Conservation and tourism are not often included in undergraduate curricula on race in the United States, but they need to be critically examined in the South African context for three reasons. First, they raise central issues related to political economy in that tourism provides employment in Black communities both rural and urban. South Africa’s natural beauty brings in large amounts of tourist dollars and positions the country as a go-to destination because of its first-world amenities, setting it

apart from much of the continent. Additionally, it also fuels wealth for investors, a great majority of whom are White, raising important concerns about the power of capitalism. Second, the protection of flora and fauna is often viewed in competition with the investment in the rural population, all of whom are Black and mostly poor. Why is there no indoor plumbing in villages when tourist lodges in the park offer first-world amenities? Third is the issue of patrimony. Whom does the park belong to? All South Africans? Do Black South Africans feel welcome in the park? Although efforts are underway to increase the numbers of local Black visitors to the park (including free entrance for schoolchildren), the numbers are still very skewed, made visible to the students. In terms of teaching and learning, these issues pushed the students to enter some uncharted territory in their education on race and economic justice. Moreover, it forced them to confront their relatively privileged positions as tourists in a space that historically excluded Black South Africans and continues to struggle in making it welcoming for all.

Am I African? Special Challenges for Black Immigrant Students

The students who identified as African immigrants experienced a unique form of identity disruption. In the United States, there is increasing attention paid to intra-Black diversity and in particular, the comparison of native born and foreign born. Black South Africans have an ambivalent relationship with the rest of the continent, also fueled by apartheid, made tragically evident in recent xenophobic events (Tella 2016; Zondi 2008). All our students were surprised that Black South Africans might not welcome people from other African countries, particularly when a number of these countries had given critical support to the liberation struggle. The African students in our group expressed additional concern over their own personal safety, something they had not felt in the United States. Moreover, it also made visible the extent to which racial identity can be trumped by other factors. For example, the Ethiopian students in our group were elated to find an Ethiopian café owner in a rural town and spent a good portion of their time at this establishment. They recognized the irony of bonding with “home people” in South Africa but, nonetheless, felt obligated to show their allegiance to the owner, who clearly welcomed their presence. For these students, they connected with the owner on being “the other” in a context in which their presence is often

met with hostility. At the other extreme is the loss of identity, as described here by a student who identifies as West African:

I feel like I have lost my African identity. Grocery shopping with gogo [grandmother] was interesting. When we walked down the aisle she points to noodles, biscuits, chocolates, canned food etc. To her I'm from the U.S, therefore, I love them. I don't like canned food, nor am I a fan of American food. I smiled when she showed me how to start a fire not because it was funny but if only she knew I could make my own fire. I was sad when P asked me if I ate rice.

Debriefing. The ensuing discussion delved into the student's disappointment in not being validated as an "African" by a fellow African. Although she was used to the label *exotic* in the United States, she had expected to easily integrate into this context because of her African identity. Moreover, she saw herself as different from her classmates in being able to relate to economic challenges in rural communities. For example, in our discussion about the game park interaction, this student put more emphasis on the economic benefits of tourism than on the racial dynamics. Therefore, her palpable frustration reflected in this journal entry opens up needed conversations about shared African identity and the prospects for Pan Africanism and/or solidarity in the African Diaspora.

LESSONS LEARNED AND MOVING FORWARD

This analysis reveals the opportunities and challenges of globalizing sociology through diversifying study abroad programs. Although the racial politics of the United States has a unique historical and cultural context, it does not preclude positioning it globally to identify points of commonality and difference. For example, one of our students beamed with pride when she realized that the Black Power movement in the United States served as the inspiration for the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced yet more opportunities for innovative pedagogical approaches at the same time as it has imposed restrictions on travel. In this spirit, we offer these suggestions for strengthening the value of these programs for all students and in particular, students of color.

Predeparture

The ideal model would be to integrate the trip into a semester-long course on race and identity that enables more systematic learning and teaching similar to Core's (2017) program in Shanghai. The course would take a comparative approach across various contexts to expose students to different models of intersectionality and prepare them to embrace the identity disruption they will undergo. This would mean developing a curriculum that includes sociological theory and empirical studies specifically from the Global South and in particular, Africa and the Diaspora. Furthermore, it would offer students of color the needed tools to balance exaggerated visions of a "return to the motherland" and experiencing "outsider status." If the semester course is not possible, the one-week orientation of the kind that we used in our program can be effective, but it should incorporate intersectionality and identity more explicitly in all aspects of teaching. More time should be devoted to thinking about what it means to be African, American, and a student from a predominantly White university with all the privilege that it entails. More attention might be given to the diverse perspectives of students, educators, and scholars and very importantly, how people living in host communities think about spatial outsiders who are racial insiders. This could be done through discussions of public opinion, analysis of scholarship on the geopolitical relationship between countries, and gaining familiarity with popular culture. The goal is to help students understand how they might be seen as different from the way they see themselves and be better prepared for dialogue with others.

During the Trip

Based on discussions with the students and the formal assessments of the trip, the activities were successful. Students particularly appreciated the continuous debriefings, which provided a forum to unpack and contextualize specific events. More importantly, it provided needed structure for students to process intellectually and emotionally challenging interactions. More could be done to leverage this opportunity. For example, a discussion around why students felt more comfortable in Melville than in the rural area could generate important insights into race, space, and identity. The role of social and physical location in influencing perceptions of risk (Lupton 1999) has been made even more visible by COVID-19 in both

countries. Indeed, it is not clear at the time of writing when we will be able to return to South Africa. Students also found immense value from peer engagement to “soften” the disruption of identity and to allow space for shared identity. We brought students from the University of Witwatersrand (WITS) and the U.S. students together to allow both sides to learn from one another and share common experiences of injustice. Codirector Dlamini made this observation:

On social justice issues alone, our students became a useful resource to debate issues with their South African counterparts as well as taking steps towards thorough interrogation of specific social problems for possible solutions. From their participation in seminars, lectures, and presentations, the UMD students began noticing the absence of Black people as intellectuals who could speak on topics from both personal experience and scientific perspectives. South African students have begun asking the very same question. A collaboration between students in the United States and South African could yield new and creative ways to think about, seek solutions, and implement interventions to address specific social problems in both settings.

The notion of global social movements such as Black Lives Matters belies a more complicated reality of regional and local power differences and identities. Nonetheless, social media has been extremely successful in connecting Black spaces globally, as demonstrated through the recent protests ignited by the killing of George Floyd at the hands of the police. The message resonates well in a country steeped in a protest tradition and Black activism similar to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. However, South Africa is also trying to hold on to, albeit with increasing difficulty, Mandela’s dream of the rainbow nation. In this spirit, future programs could try to incorporate time for U.S. students to take part in sociology classes at South African universities. Indeed, initial discussions have taken place with a historically disadvantage university (HDI) in South Africa to explore possibilities.

Return

Two key challenges need to be addressed upon return: maintaining intellectual interest and supporting the

emotional aspects of return. In fact, some have suggested that the most important part of an international voyage is coming back (Bathurst and La Brack 2012). This takes on particular relevance with students of color returning from Africa, who are likely to experience a variant of reverse culture shock engaging with the racial politics of the United States in their own social circles and as part of a national conversation. For starters, instructors need to take on the responsibility of following up with students either individually or as a group to offer more structured spaces for continued learning. One idea to extend the reach of study abroad learning is to invite students who participate in such programs to sociology classes and/or use social media to share their experiences with other students of color. A more structured approach is to develop a sociology course centered on the disruption of identity across global contexts. An even more ambitious proposal is an exchange program between U.S. and other universities that would enable a deeper engagement with the formation, resistance, and evolution of various identities.

The central task in the globalization of sociology as represented in study abroad programs should be to expand the understanding of the other and facilitate a deeper understanding of self in relationship to the other. The core experience of students in study abroad programs is the opportunity to learn more about the other through a range of firsthand experiences while at the same time (re)evaluating one’s own identity. Achieving this task is often impeded by the expectations about the other and a failure to understand the factors that influence the views of self. Both parties bring to this encounter an understanding of their own personal identities and a set of characteristics and identities they attribute to the other. Part of what students bring are the concepts and theories grounded in sociology and social sciences, more generally. This training often proves insufficient and, in some cases, inappropriate to fully understand a new context. Therefore, there are differences in the foundational knowledge and theories that structure the encounter as well as the way students see themselves, see the other, and perceive to be seen by the other. These differences are complex and not easily overcome. However, as we have shown in this article, they become grist for the mill of discussion, contemplation, and discernment as they inevitably rise up as students interact with others. Such reflections generate personal growth and strengthen the value of globalizing sociology.

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NOTES

1. Permission was attained from each student whose entries are included.
2. W.E.B. DuBois's use of the term focuses on the racial oppression of African Americans that lead to the tension of being black and American in the United States.
3. *Coloureds* refer to "mixed race" ancestry and are concentrated in the Cape Province.
4. The detailed course curriculum can be provided upon request to the corresponding author.

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