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I, Peggy A Shannon-Baker, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies.

It is entitled:
Microaggressions, Self-Segregation, and Performing Gender: Exploring Undergraduate Students’ Culture Shock in a Study Abroad Program

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Microaggressions, Self-Segregation, and Performing Gender: Exploring Undergraduate Students’ Culture Shock in a Study Abroad Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies from the School of Education of the College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services

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Abstract

Institutions of higher education are increasingly utilizing international education programs (Institute of International Education, 2014), also known as “study abroad” in the USA, especially as a mechanism for increasing students’ cross-cultural awareness (e.g., Marx & Moss, 2011; Salisbury, 2011). The literature on and implementation of such programs does not fully consider two critical issues: the socio-emotional impact of study abroad on participants (i.e., the culture shock they experience), and the relation of cultural identities, such as race, gender, and class, to students’ experiences while abroad. To address this issue, I investigated the ways in which students’ experiences of culture shock were connected to their identity related to race, gender, and class. I used a concurrent mixed methods research design that entailed collecting and analyzing three sets of data: arts-based (self-portraits and students’ reflections on their portraits), qualitative (observations, interviews, and students’ reflections), and quantitative (Revised Cultural Distance Index, a self-rating for culture shock, and demographic information). I collected the data from a sample of students (n =14) who participated in the Ecuador: Immersed in Culture and Education program, which was a short-term program where students taught in indigenous primary schools in Ecuador after a semester-long course.

I found that students experienced a range of amounts of culture shock, that it manifested differently for students across race, gender, and class, and that students enacted varying strategies to cope with their culture shock (and the culture shock of others) while on the trip. Whereas students of color were cognizant of how they portrayed themselves and their culture shock to others from the beginning, white students became more conscious of their self-images after being in Ecuador due in part to feeling like a minority for the first time. For white students from affluent backgrounds, their culture shock tended to be more intense and manifested in
complaints and repeated use of words such as “small” to describe themselves in their self-portraits. Students of color and working class white students generally experienced less culture shock quantitatively, but experienced their own culture shock in witnessing their white affluent peers’ complaints. As a result, these students chose to segregate themselves. All of the students sought out like-peers across race and class to find comfort and manage their culture shock. I also found that two students made intentional choices about their gender performance as a strategy to manage their culture shock in relation to their interactions with Ecuadorians. Finally, I found that students’ limited understanding of culture shock and gender impacted how they quantified their culture shock and analyzed their experiences based on gender.

As a result of these findings, I argue for a more expansive view of culture shock that gives more emphasis to the impact of cross-cultural relationships among students while they are abroad. For the students in this study, their manifestations and strategies to adapt to culture shock were intertwined with their perceptions of others across race, gender, and class. I also conclude that international programs must critically engage with cross-cultural issues both in terms of the content of pre-departure training/coursework as well as in terms of the relationships between students in the program. I also argue for training leaders and students in how to identify and manage culture shock. I also discuss some methodological implications for this research, my positionality, and future research.
I dedicate this dissertation to the students involved. Each of their perspectives impacted me professionally and emotionally. Without their openness and frankness about their experiences, none of this would have been possible.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

In our increasingly globalized world, higher education has sought to better prepare students for cross-cultural relationships in many ways. One approach has been through the development of study abroad programs. According to the Institute of International Education (2014), 289,000 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit in 2012-2013. This represents a two percent growth from the previous year. About nine percent of all U.S. undergraduates study abroad at some point before graduating. Sixty percent of students participated in a “short-term” program during the summer or eight weeks or less (Institute of International Education, 2014).

Among all of the U.S. students who study abroad, four percent come from an education field (Institute of International Education, 2014). International cross-cultural experiences are used in teacher education programs to better prepare these future teachers for working with a diverse range of students (Marx & Moss, 2011; Sharma, El-Atwani, Rahatzad, Ware, Phillion & Malewski, 2012). Study abroad programs, unlike typical multicultural experiences in nearby school districts, offer a diverse array of cross-cultural interactions that are “not possible in traditional field experience settings” (Malewski & Phillion, 2009, as cited in Sharma et al., 2012, p. 283). These unique experiences include language immersion and personal, culturally based reflection exercises through the guidance of program leaders.

Yet, I have found that research on study abroad tends to lack serious consideration of the impact of program structure, activities, and length of time abroad on the students’ experiences and development. For example, some research has indicated that programs must have certain characteristics in order to support a reduction in prejudice, such as equal status among groups, collaborative engagement on a shared goal, intimate interactions between groups, and supportive
authority figures (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Other research has found that staying abroad longer does not mean students will become more culturally adapted (Hamad & Lee, 2013).

I argue that study abroad is not working, or at least not in terms of having a long-term effect on students’ cross-cultural competence, critical thinking, and global interconnectedness (Caton & Almeida Santos, 2008). I suspect that these shortcomings relate to those found by Jennifer Ng (2003) in her examination of the limited effectiveness of multicultural education in preparing future teachers to work in diverse settings. She argues that such courses: 1) separate multicultural education from its historical and political implications, 2) fail to consider the subtle and implicit messages within multicultural approaches and curricula, 3) do not consider the psychological and social implications of changes to racial identity development, and 4) lack a critique of White privilege. In other words, the limited long-term effectiveness of study abroad programs might be due to two critical issues that programs are not fully considering: the socio-emotional impact of study abroad on participants (i.e., the culture shock they experience), and relation of cultural identities, such as race, gender, and class, to students’ experiences while abroad. I also speculate that these issues are interrelated.

**Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this study was to investigate how experiences of culture shock among undergraduates in a study abroad program related to race, gender, and class. During study abroad programs, students often experience anxiety, confusion, mental and emotional shock, and overall disorienting experiences. In the literature, these feelings are referred to as cultural dissonance or culture shock (Furnham, 2010). In this study, I examined students’ experiences of culture shock affiliated with a short-term (nine day) program to Ecuador. This program was embedded at the end of a semester-long course about Ecuadorian education, history, and culture.
Research Questions

This study was based on the following overarching research question and related sub-questions:

*Overall question:* How does a student’s identity in terms of race, gender, and class relate to how they manifest and respond to culture shock in a study abroad program?

- **Sub-questions:**
  - *Arts-Based:* How do students visually depict their culture shock? What are the differences across race, gender, and class in how students visually represented themselves? How do they discuss these differences in terms of how they chose to portray themselves?
  - *Qualitative:* How do students discuss their experiences of culture shock in relation to race, gender, and class? How are their narratives of salient moments coded by race, gender, and class?
  - *Quantitative:* Is there a relationship between how students quantify their cultural distance from the host country and their own racial, gender, and class based identities?
  - *Mixed Methods:* Is there a relationship between the frequency of race, gender, and class codes and the extent of cultural distance the students identified? In what ways do the three strands of data converge and diverge in revealing the relationships between experiences of culture shock and race, gender, and class identities?

The overall question was designed to examine the relationships between students’ experiences of culture shock and their own identity in terms of race, gender, and class. I designed
the arts-based question to address both how students generally depicted their culture shock (since this type of data collection is not widely used in the literature), and how they used signifiers for race, gender, and class in their portraits. The qualitative sub-question referred to potential “salient moments” students discussed in their journals. Based on my own experiences of culture shock and witnessing it in students, there tends to be various critical moments where students are confronted with cultural differences or their changing beliefs about the country they are visiting. I believe that during these moments, students are working through their culture shock. In the quantitative question, I was interested in investigating if there was a relationship between the student demographics, and how they quantified their cultural differences with the visiting country and with their overall feelings of culture shock. Finally, the mixed methods sub-questions were designed to investigate how the three types of data collected supported or complicated one another to provide new insights into how we understand culture shock.

**Defining Key Terms**

In order to establish a frame of understanding for the language I used in this study, I provide definitions of several key words below, including how I define arts-based research, culture shock, mixed methods research, and other terms. It is important to note that I discuss my intentionality throughout the study. To me, intentionality refers to my conscious decision-making around such issues as methods or considerations for ethics. I documented my intentionality throughout the study by keeping a research journal in which I reflected on my thoughts and feelings about each stage and the decisions I made. I discuss my intentions behind the decisions I made in order to highlight my rationale for why I proceeded in a particular way. It is my hope that such discussion not only illuminates my own process but also makes my thinking clearer to those who are interested in replicating this study.
**Acculturation**: Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) define acculturation as the active process of “changes that occur as a result of sustained first hand contact between individuals of differing cultural origins” (p. 43). Even though these scholars state that “culture shock” has been replaced by acculturation, and others use the two terms interchangeably (e.g., Berry, 2006), I do not consider these to be synonymous. Instead, I conceptualize culture shock as a part of the process of acculturation (see “culture shock” below).

**Arts-based research**: For me, arts-based research is characterized by the centrality of artistic processes to the overall inquiry (Austin & Forinash, 2005; Leavy, 2009; Ledger & Edwards, 2011; Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis, & Grauer, 2006; Slattery, 2003). These artistic practices might include but are not limited to the creation of artistic pieces as data, a method of analysis, and/or sharing research results; intensive reflection on the researcher’s and participants’ subjectivities; and heightened concern about form, representation, and creation of art pieces. The art itself can be created by the participant, by the researcher, or by both as a collaborative process. Arts-based research has been characterized as a “set of methodological tools” (Leavy, 2009, p. ix), as living inquiry (Irwin & Springgay, 2008) and a “dynamic process of inquiry” (Sinner et al., 2006, p. 1229). Some see arts-based research as “generative” and “theory building” (Rolling & Bey, 2012), and even as an “emerging paradigm” (Slattery, 2003). Four characteristics have been attributed to arts-based research: commitment to aesthetic and educational practices, inquiry-laden process, searching for meaning, and interpreting for understanding (Sinner et al., 2006)

**Cultural identities (i.e., race, gender, class)**: This research is based on the belief that identities such as race, gender, and class are socially constructed, embedded within social systems throughout the world, impact one’s daily experience, and intersect in unique ways given
the socio-historical context and other identities. In this study, I asked the student participants to self-identify their cultural identities as part of the demographic survey in the quantitative survey.

*Race* – generally refers to differences along physical attributes such as skin color, bone structure, hair, and eye color that warrant differential treatment. This is distinct from ethnicity which generally refers to a cultural group that might share a national origin or heritage.

*Gender* – refers to the roles, behaviors, dress, mannerisms, how we interact with others, and other attributes associated with one’s identity generally based on social and cultural expectations. Gender may refer to the spectrum between feminine and masculine qualities. Gender may or may not relate to one’s sex, which is based in one’s biological identity (female, male, intersex).

*Class* – or socioeconomic status generally refers to the composite effect of education, one’s occupation, family income, and family size on one’s access to social institutions and a certain standard of living.

**Culture shock:** I define culture shock as the socio-emotional response to being in a new, cross-cultural environment during the process of acculturation. Culture shock typically entails feelings of anxiety, confusion, frustration, and a sense of being overwhelmed with new cultural expectations. This response is the result of both the “loss of perceptual reinforcements from one's own culture” (Adler, 1975, p. 13) as well as the gap in one’s expectations about (Pitts, 2009), or the distance between the cultures involved (Mumford, 1998; Searle & Ward, 1990). Although culture shock can be experienced via cross-cultural encounters within a country (Ward et al., 2001), my research refers specifically to culture shock experienced while visiting another country.
The “gaze”: My research also generally addresses the “gaze,” or how we look at one another, how we interpret what we see, and who is looking or being looked at in a visual exchange. In feminist theory, the gaze typically refers to a gendered power differential of the male gaze on female bodies (e.g., Mulvey, 1990). Michel Foucault’s (1999) notion of the panopticon refers to a gaze of exerting a powerful surveillance over others. Rosemarie Garland-Thompson (2009) argues that staring, a type of gaze, is more of a meaning-making encounter between the person staring and the person being stared at depending on the level of attention the staring person gives. For example, she argues that staring longer, such as at a person with a physical difference, signifies that we view the person as stareable, thereby demonstrating one’s power over them. By engaging with the starer though, Garland-Thompson argues that the person being stared at can shape the discourse of the stare.

Mixed methods research: I frame mixed methods research as philosophically grounded inquiry that utilizes an intentional mixture of various approaches in a single study (e.g., arts-based, qualitative, quantitative). The mixture, or integration, of these approaches can occur at various stages of the research process, such as at the theoretical level, during data collection, or as a method of analysis. Mixed methods researchers are thus particularly interested in the unique outcomes as a result of this integration of various approaches. Thus, mixed methods is a design often used to uncover new nuances or enhance an understanding of a particular phenomenon where such uncovering would not be possible through a single approach alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Morse & Niehaus, 2009).

Sojourners: This term refers to the “individuals who travel voluntarily to a new culture, usually for specific objectives such as educational and occupational opportunities, who view their residence in the new culture as fixed and finite, and who usually have expectations of
returning to their country of origin” (Ward & Kennedy, 1994, p. 331). I use this term interchangeably with students who study abroad, though sojourners can include more than students.

**Qualitative research:** Qualitative research is characterized by the desire for researchers to explore the complexity of a phenomenon in its natural setting through such methods as observation, interviewing, open-ended writing, and other kinds of first-hand accounts. This type of research is generally (though not always) associated with a constructivist worldview, which believes that realities are socially constructed. Qualitative researchers are especially interested in participant perspectives, the centrality of meaning to a phenomenon or experience, and emergent research methods. They tend to use inductive data analysis techniques. These researchers are also especially attuned to implications of subjectivity, reflexivity, and view the researcher as the “data-gathering instrument” (Hatch, 2002, p. 7).

**Quantitative research:** Quantitative research, generally, seeks to identify generalizable trends in and causal explanations of phenomena. Quantitative researchers in particular look for objective, measureable variables that can be controlled for or manipulated in a research study. In this way, quantitative research is typically researcher-defined, but emphasizes methodological approaches for objectivity. These researchers also tend to use deductive data analysis techniques. The design for quantitative research follows an *a priori* fixed design, and generally is associated with a post-positivist world view, which believes that researchers can know and measure some truths to one’s experiences. Common research methods include scale-based or close-ended questions on a survey instrument and direct observations (Hatch, 2002).
My Assumptions and Positionality as the Researcher

I have thus far had a wide variety of international experiences, both as a student and as a program leader. As a student, I have lived for more than four months in Ireland, have had extended stays of two or more weeks in India, Japan, and Cameroon, and traveled for shorter periods of time to Australia, Canada, Italy, Northern Ireland, and England. I have also led groups of undergraduate and graduate students to Tanzania, Kenya, and Ecuador. I have experienced culture shock both as a student and as a leader. One of my first experiences of culture shock was related to the ease with which Irish people could identify me as American. I also was struck by the social norm of staring at others, particularly foreigners, in India. I have also been frustrated in the past with the flexibility of scheduling and timeliness that many countries of the world follow, but have since adapted to this when I travel. As a leader, I have experienced culture shock with trying to manage multiple roles (e.g., teacher, researcher, and liaison in Tanzania). Strategies that have helped me manage my own culture shock are: journaling, talking with others (especially with other leaders when I experienced culture shock based in my leadership roles), and post-trip reflections on specifically what caused my feelings of culture shock.

My own experiences abroad and with culture shock have shaped my own assumptions about the importance of study abroad, how students learn, and the social construction of identities. First, I believe that study abroad provides unique experiences of cross-cultural interactions compared to in-country multicultural experiences. By traveling to another country, a student is almost completely removed from their familiar environment, or an environment that has expectations and stimuli that are familiar to them. Without the ability to return home or leave the unfamiliar environment, students are forced to deal with this new cultural environment, making feelings of culture shock more acute. Importantly though, with the increase in mobile
technology and the development of peer relationships among study abroad participants, students who travel abroad are not completely removed from their connections with home.

Second, I believe that some of the most important and life changing things we can learn are those that we learn through difficult experiences and taking risks. A learning experience is difficult when we are confronted with information that challenges or even completely contradicts our prior knowledge. Encountering such new knowledge is difficult because it forces us to either reject the new information or find some way for it to fit into our belief and value systems. I believe that cross-cultural encounters have a high prevalence of these kinds of events because the nature of interacting with someone who is different reveals different beliefs, values, and life experiences. Thus, I see engaging in these kinds of encounters as a form of risk-taking given this potential for transforming one’s beliefs.

I hold the skill of being able to work with others across cultural differences in high regard. To me, this skill is characterized by empathy for others, the ability to listen to differing viewpoints, and the careful consideration of the impact of one’s actions on others. I see this skill as critically important for the wellbeing of each other in our globalized world. Institutions of higher education, among other groups, can be beacons for improving these skills among their students. However, I believe that this must be done both intentionally and through having difficult conversations about difference.

Difference, particularly in terms of cultural identities like race, gender, and class, are socially constructed. In other words, one’s experience of these identities is impacted by our social interactions, community values, and our particular place within a socio-historical context. I see these identities as interconnected and influencing one another. I believe that while we can
have similarities across shared identities within race, gender, and class, our other identities make our lived experiences unique.

My experiences with study abroad programs (as a student and teacher) in addition to my beliefs about the importance and transformative nature of study abroad influenced my design and implementation of this study. I used these assumptions and beliefs to intentionally design aspects of the study. For example, I anticipated that discussing one’s culture shock would be a difficult conversation for some student participants. For this reason, I made particular efforts during the course and throughout our time in Ecuador to build deep relationships with each student. Another example of my intentionality would be in how I used three sets of portraits instead of a single portrait as a method of arts-based data collection. When I reflected on the nature of doing arts-based research and considered the difficulty that some individuals have with using artistic methods such as drawing, I decided to include three portraits in this strand of data collection. This allowed me to not only collect data on how their visions of themselves changed over time, but also provided students the opportunity to become more familiar with drawing as an intentional method for research and for self-representation.

It is also important to point that this research study is greatly influenced by my teacher-practitioner identity. The notion of practitioner-based inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Hubbard & Powers, 2003) is important here because it argues that practitioners’ experiences and learning are worth investigation and theorizing within a formal research study. Although I did not specifically study my own practices the study I report on here, how the research impacted the classroom, my relationship with the student participants, and the students’ development in the program was ever present on my mind. I connect this to my emphasis on using my experiences as teacher/practitioner as a starting point for research. I was especially interested in completing a
study that was integrated within my own practice as a teacher in general and as a leader of study abroad programs. I believe that research should be intimately interconnected with practice, both informing the other continuously. This influenced my desire to produce programmatic suggestions for myself and others in leading study abroad programs that carefully consider the implications of both culture shock and race, gender, and class on students’ experiences and development.

Theoretical Foundations

This research has been informed by several theoretical frameworks: dialectics, non-unitary subjectivity, Critical Race Theory, and feminist theory. Dialectics helped to provide an overall theoretical paradigm for how to bring together multiple forms of data and multiple theoretical frameworks. Non-unitary subjectivity provided an ontological framework for considering my own and the students’ identities. Critical Race Theory and feminist theory shaped my understanding of the social construction of identities and the particular importance of sharing the narratives of peoples’ experiences.

Dialectics. The paradigm I am using for this research study overall is dialectics. This perspective is characterized by “respectful dialogue” between paradigms (Greene & Hall, 2010, p. 124). Indeed, this general philosophy has been used as a philosophical framework for mixed methods research based on the belief that diverse perspectives are critically important in investigating the complexity of a phenomenon (Greene & Caracelli, 2003). Dialectics in particular offers an emphasis on divergence within the data including at the integration stage, emphasizing the new conclusions that are born out of this dialogue (Shannon-Baker, 2015b). Furthermore, I see this emphasis as critical for this research study, not just in terms of the dialogue across the three strands of data I collected (i.e. arts-based, qualitative and quantitative
data), but also across the text-based and art-based data. I was interested especially to investigate how the different forms of data diverge as well as how the results from each of the integration analyses (discussed below) converged and diverged. The dialectic perspective then encouraged me to discuss both convergences and divergences, including why these might be in the data (Shannon-Baker, 2015b).

In this research study, I considered the interconnections of pragmatism and critical realism. Given the goals of this study to have practical implications for study abroad programs, this is consistent with the “what works” philosophy of pragmatism. This perspective, like dialectics, seeks to disrupt dichotomies through a complementarity approach to research design (Morgan, 2007; Shannon-Baker, 2015b).

In terms of discussing the implications of this study for U.S. programs that travel to other countries, the pragmatist perspective was especially important. This perspective considers whether the research can be “transferred to other settings” (Morgan, 2007, p. 60). Similarly, critical realism brings in “abduction,” which allows for research studies to be both “theory-generating” and still based in their specific contexts (Shannon-Baker, 2015b). For my study, addressing both the transferability and abduction of the meta-inferences was key in attesting to the particular context of the Ecuador program—i.e. based in a School of Education, with a diverse range of students, over a short period of time, etc. The impact of the relationships between me as the researcher and the participants, their relationships with other students and with host nationals, the details of the program, etc. all in some way also impacted the research process.

The other perspective I combined here with pragmatism was critical realism. This perspective in particular offers the point of view that theories can only be “impartial or otherwise
incomplete views of reality” (Shannon-Baker, 2015b, p. 11). This is based on the belief that reality exists outside of our senses and perception (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010). This is not only the case for pre-existing theories of culture shock but also the implications of this research. This belief was especially important in considering what data collection approaches to use in each of the strands and which quantitative instrument to use. I could not expect that the data collection procedures would measure all aspects of culture shock nor all of the ways in which race, gender, and class might be related to students’ experiences of culture shock; this is not possible according to critical realism. Critical realism also emphasizes the research inquiry process (Shannon-Baker, 2015b), which was particularly important to this study. In the design of this study, I took particular care to consider the impact of timing of the data collection and analysis to ensure the most valid results.

Finally, critical realism highlights the importance of the mental and emotional aspects of the research process (Shannon-Baker, 2015b). For this research, although the nature of this topic was focused on feelings and emotions associated with the students’ experiences abroad, I interpreted this aspect of critical realism in several ways. First, it was important for me to attest to these emotions—both the students’ emotions related to the international program, as well as their emotions and my own during the research inquiry. I believe that this careful attention can be given through the effective use of qualitative quotes and imagery, and even more so through the use of students’ own analyses of their experiences provided vis-à-vis their interviews during the integration stage (discussed below). I also interpret critical realism’s emphasis on emotions as highlighting the importance for me to keep reflective journals throughout the process. I used several research journals to document my own feelings and responses to the inquiry process throughout—including during recruitment, data collection, analysis, and integration. Since I too
have experienced my own culture shock, I felt it would be important for me to attest to that in my notes but also in considering how my own experiences impacted my frames of analysis. In response to this, I also saw dialectics as a helpful perspective to use in arguing the importance of bringing together both the students’ interpretations of their data and my own (e.g., Shannon-Baker, 2015a).

**Nonunitary subjectivity.** This research is based upon the theoretical notion of nonunitary subjectivity. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994, as cited in Bloom, 1996), subjectivity is juxtaposed against objectivity. It refers to conscious and unconscious impact of personal beliefs, experiences and values. In the context of qualitative versus quantitative research debates, objectivity is preferred as a mechanism for maintaining detachment so as to not influence the research. Qualitative research, however, is generally based on constructivist beliefs (Hatch, 2002), and encourages the disclosure of one’s subjectivity, such as the researcher’s role and relationship with the participants. Qualitative researchers believe that such subjectivity inevitably impacts the research. This belief can manifest in the inclusion of self-reflection and positionality statements with the research, though this has been critiqued as merely a gesture aimed at “political correct[ness]” (Marcus, 1994, as cited in Bloom, 1996, p. 177).

Feminist qualitative researcher Leslie Bloom (1996) argues that this notion of subjectivity needs further investigation in favor of a more complex notion of subjectivity. The unitary belief of subjectivity, that it represents an essence of a person, denies the possibility of it to change over time; mask[s] the critical roles that language, social interactions, and pivotal experiences play in the production and transformation of subjectivity; and ignore[s] gender as a social position that influences the formation of subjectivity (p. 178).
Bloom states that women’s subjectivity in particular is “fragmented” (p. 178) as a result of living under patriarchal discriminatory systems. If this is true, then I would argue that such fragmentation becomes further complex when considering other systems of dominance, such as race and class. Thus, nonunitary subjectivity supports fragmentation and multiplicity. It recognizes that subjectivities change over time, especially as a result of new experiences, relationships, and awareness of social systems.

Bloom (1996) argues that discussions of subjectivity typically are based on that of the researcher. However, her research points to the need to recognize a more complex notion of subjectivity with research participants as well. According to her analysis of a faculty’s narratives, she found that when her colleague allowed for a nonunitary subjectivity by rejecting singular interpretations of herself, she was able to narrate a more complex version of herself based on internal conflicts and shifting identities. Bloom calls for research that encourages participants to investigate their own narrative constructions and “critically interpret their self-representations” through multiple storytelling events (p. 192). The impact of such focus for participants (or whomever is considering their own subjectivity in a nonunitary fashion) is a deeper understanding of themselves and how their subjectivity changes. “This strategy might encourage respondents to replace desire for positive self-representation with proactive efforts to use the research process to understand themselves better” (p. 193). I would argue that such effects are possible also for the researcher in considering their own subjectivities.

I identified non-unitary subjectivity as an important theoretical framework for this research for several reasons. First, what initially drew me to the theory was the complex understanding of identities and how our subjectivity changes over time. As I discuss below, culture shock impacts one’s identities and sense of self in relation to others. Also, I believe that
our various identities influence one another. Thus, I used this theoretical framework as a mechanism to stress the importance of investigating race, gender, and class, and all of these over time (i.e. throughout students’ participation in the international experience and after).

Second, I saw this framework as also stressing the importance of examining the changing and complex subjectivities of both the researcher and the research participants. Journaling my own thoughts and emotional reactions has always been important to me as researcher. Within this framework, tracking changes and nuances to my beliefs and observations becomes another important component of this inquiry. This framework, in concert with dialectics and being a White researcher using critical race theory (discussed next), further provides substantiation for why I should deeply consider my own subjectivities.

**Critical Race Theory.** *Critical Race Theory* (CRT) is a methodological tool and epistemology used by researchers interested in addressing race, racism, Whiteness and White privilege. It was developed in response to critical legal studies (Bergerson, 2003), which was seen as avoiding a more direct conversation on how race and racism played a fundamental role in building the legal system (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Some of the main goals of CRT are the presentation of narratives to validate experiences of race and racism, seeking an end to racial oppression, recognizing the social construction of race, and highlighting the intersectional and symbiotic nature of other forms of oppression with racism (Parker & Lynn, 2002). CRT at its core also emphasizes the voices and experiences of people of color through narratives and storytelling (Bergerson, 2003; Milner, 2007). These kinds of “counterstories” help to create bonds and cohesion among communities of color around their experiences, and thereby challenge dominant narratives.
I identified a few tenets of CRT as being particularly important for this study. First is a general “skepticism of liberal approaches” to race and racism, such as neutrality, colorblindness, and the belief in meritocracy (Bergerson, 2003, p. 52). I see neutrality and colorblindness as intimately connected. They point to the idea that one can erase the importance and impact of race-based experiences. This neutrality is what allows White people the privilege to be unaware of race and how it impacts our daily lives. Whiteness also then becomes the base upon which all people are measured (Bergerson, 2003; Pugliese, 2005). The belief in meritocracy, or that through enough hard work anyone can become successful, then relies on this colorblindness, this lack of awareness of the persistence of racism. According to Bergerson (2003), considering race and racism “as everyday realities” might cause White people to have to “face their own racist behaviors as well as the privileges that come from being White” (p. 53). Thus, some White people believe that even engaging with race will cause them to lose some of their privileges (Sleeter, 1995).

**Critiquing the presence of White scholars in CRT.** There is discussion among CRT scholars about whether or to what extent White scholars can use CRT, whether in research specifically or in research about people of color. Bell’s (1995) original discussion of CRT included White people:

members [who] are both existentially people of color and ideologically committed to the struggle against racism, particularly as institutionalized in and by law.

Those critical race theorists who are white are usually cognizant of and committed to the overthrow of their own racial privilege (p. 898).

This ability to recognize of one’s privilege and yet maintain a position of advocacy against it has been referred to as “white racial dualism” (Winant, 1997, p. 41). This dualism is a
result of inheriting the “legacy of white supremacy” and its privileges, while also being “subject to the moral and political challenges” named as a result of racial justice movements (p. 41).

Other critical race theorists have also argued that the researcher does not need to share the same racial background in order to do research with and about a particular group (Milner, 2007; Tillman, 2002), and that critical dialogue on race is possible between races (Nebeker, 1998). Since then, however, others have raised serious questions about the extent that White people should be involved with CRT. For example, Bergerson (2003) discussed how her colleagues of color expressed concern that White scholars would “take over CRT to promote our own interests or recenter our positions while attempting to ‘represent’ people of color” (p. 52). Bergerson decided that White people could not claim a “critical race theorist” identity because ultimately this theory was created by and for people of color to theorize their own experiences.

Bergerson, however, did decide that she could still use CRT in her own work. She also believed that White people could use the tenets of CRT to center race and racism in their daily lives. Even more so, Bergerson argues that White people should use CRT because discussions of race and racism need to take place among White people, even when no person of color is present. Another White scholar, Kristin Nebeker (1998) also took this position, critiquing her own access to White privilege and her position of authority in CRT. She argued that White scholars could be “truly antiracist” (p. 39) by engaging with White communities in serious discussions of race, racism and Whiteness. Others like Malcolm X (Haley, 1993) and critical race theorist Richard Delgado (1997) have also argued this point.

**Feminist theory and research.** I define feminist theory as the perspective that argues for the importance of gendered experiences by revealing the existence of patriarchal systems of power. Feminists generally believe in the social construction of gender, and the distinction
between gender and sex (which is based in biology). Related to this is Judith Butler’s (1990) notion of gender performativity. Gender performance refers to how the ways in which we dress, interact with others, carry ourselves, and maintain certain personality traits communicate particular gender identities. I believe that as we grow up, we learn from others the culturally specific signifiers for gender, such as which genders wear dresses or which genders keep their eyes down. Whereas Butler (1990) would go so far as to argue that gender does not exist (because, as a postmodernist, she believes that gender is a simulacrum that does not actually have an original reference except in its interpretation through visual signifiers like dress), I believe that gender and gender performance critically influence our daily lives. For example, as a teacher, I take special consideration into how I dress because, in my experience, my dress informs the assumptions students make about my authority and knowledge base.

Within a research context, feminists place particular emphasis on authority, objectivity, and the construction of knowledge. As a feminist, I believe in the social construction of knowledge, question the notion of objectivity, and seek to disrupt traditional forms of authority and knowledge construction (Hatch, 2002; MacKinnon, 1982). Feminists often utilize consciousness raising activities (for themselves and others) (MacKinnon, 1982), which are approaches that reveal how patriarchy persists in our daily lives.

I agree with the argument made by Catherine MacKinnon (1982), a feminist, that writing can be a product and form of feminist practice. This is demonstrated in a feminist approach to research. According to Hatch (2002), feminist researchers specifically focus on material differences across gendered experiences. These researchers also tend to be focused on critiquing the status quo in an effort to expose systems of discrimination and power imbalance based on gender. Feminist researchers are also driven by the goal of having participants understand their
own experiences in order to critique and change them (Hatch, 2002), much like researchers who operate within a transformative-emancipatory philosophical paradigm (Mertens, 2003; Shannon-Baker, 2015b). This consciousness raising is possible through close relationships between the researcher and participant (Hatch, 2002). Finally, feminist researchers take particular care to reflect on their own impact and positionality within the research (Hatch, 2002).

Significance

The goal of this research was to engage in a serious examination of race, gender, and class in relation to experiences of culture shock. That such culturally laden identities are not explicitly discussed in the culture shock literature (as discussed in Chapter 2) is notable. Through this research, I hope to encourage future research examining how the extent of one’s culture shock, particularly for White students and students of color who have been heavily socialized in White society, relates to having to deal with race, gender, and class in new environments. In some cases, these students many be dealing with these identities and confronting discrimination based on them for the first time. I believe that if we are truly interested in the development of cultural competence within students—a primary purpose for creating study abroad programs—then we must engage in these conversations during these international programs. Thus, I sought to provide some suggestions for how to promote this kind of critical engagement.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Numerous studies have indicated that study abroad experiences have a positive impact on developing students’ cross-cultural competence (e.g., Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen & Hubbard, 2006; Cushner, 2008; Gaw, 2000). For example, one study found a decrease in students’ beliefs that their own culture was superior, and an increase in those students’ ability to adapt to various cultural differences (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen & Hubbard, 2006). However, this pre-/post-test study was based on a small sample of students (n = 16) in a 4 week program that traveled to English speaking countries. Other studies have pointed anecdotally to the potential of programs to increase students’ “empathetic appreciation” for others (Cushner, 2008, p. 170), and greater levels of autonomy and identity changes beyond typical maturation (Gaw, 2000).

Other research, however, has complicated and critiqued these findings. For example, using a longitudinal, pre-/post-test design, Salisbury (2011) found that study abroad influences student’s contact with diverse people but had no significant impact on their appreciation of cultural differences or their comfort levels with diversity. He wrote, “If studying abroad only increases the inclination toward diverse contact but does not contribute to growth along other domains as the present research suggests, then study abroad may not be contributing to the kind of holistic transformative effect that it claims” (p. 94). Salisbury also argued that many of the studies he surveyed in his literature review were limited in their theoretical grounding and use of methodologically rigorous designs. As a result, these studies fail to take into account potentially confounding factors, such as the specific characteristics of those students who tend to participate in study abroad compared to those who do not (Salisbury, 2011). Salisbury, An, and Pascarella (2013) argue that selection bias is a serious concern in study abroad research since those who
participate in these programs differ from those who do not (c.f., Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010).

This research is based on my argument that both the literature on international programs and the implementation of these programs do not fully consider two critical issues: the socio-emotional impact of study abroad on participants (i.e., the culture shock they experience), and the relation of cultural identities, such as race, gender, and class, to students’ experiences while abroad. To ground my research, I address and connect the areas of literature on acculturation, or the process by which an individual takes on or adapts to another culture (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001) and culture shock and reverse culture shock. Given that I conceptualize culture shock as part of the process of acculturation, it is important to discuss acculturation here. This discussion provides a greater understanding of the factors that affect culture shock, and understanding the implications of culture shock for an individual. I frame these discussions by first addressing culture in general in order to demonstrate the interconnectedness of culture, race, gender, class, and culture shock. It is problematic then that these interconnections are rarely indicated in the literature on culture shock, as I discuss below.

Literature Review Methods

I used multiple tools and strategies to conduct this literature review. For online search engines, I used Google Scholar for its tools in tracking number of citations and University of Cincinnati’s Summon database. I initially searched for sources using the following key words (on their own and in combination): culture shock, study abroad, international education programs, cultural competence, and reverse culture shock. I used Google Scholar to identify sources that were cited very frequently, which I used as a measure for identifying seminal research in the field. I then read the abstracts for each item to identify if it met several criteria:
studied college age students and discussed the conceptualization and/or measurement of culture shock.

While reading at this point and later in my literature review process, I kept detailed notes and summaries for each reading. My notes included the design of the study (or a designation as theoretically based or as a published literature review), key words, discipline of the publication and the researchers, the key conclusions, additional readings to research, limitation of the research, participants, and my own critical responses and reflections on the reading.

I then generated a new reading list from the reference lists of the pieces I read, and by reviewing the list of sources that cited the original text. In other words, I identified more sources to read by branching out from the original articles I read. I used this approach in several iterations, identifying 20 or more sources to read each time. While reading, I also paid attention to the original theorists that researchers cited in relation to how they conceptualized culture shock. This helped me to track “camps” within the literature on culture shock since there are differing theories about the sequence of emotions or stages that individuals experience in when in culture shock.

In the end, I compiled about 80 pages of readings notes. From here, I identified the key conceptualizations for the influencing factors before culture shock (e.g., expectations), how culture shock was manifested (e.g., emotional and social responses), and how individuals responded to the culture shock (e.g., what strategies they used to alleviate some of the culture shock). This strategy helped me to identify the stages in the process of acculturation, which I discuss further below. Then, I identified the topics and approaches that characterized recent research on culture shock. Finally, I identified trends in the methods used by the literature by
reviewing my original reading summary notes. The following subsections present my findings from this literature review.

**Process of Acculturation**

In this section, I discuss acculturation, including how it is defined, and its various stages based on combining multiple frameworks. *Acculturation* is considered an active process of “changes that occur as a result of sustained first hand contact between individuals of differing cultural origins” (Ward et al. 2001, p. 43). This contact is discussed in two ways, as either “within-society contact” or “between-society contact” (Ward et al., 2001). *Within-society contact* represents contact across cultures with those who intend to stay in the new country, such as immigrants and refugees. Much of the research on culture shock originated from studying these groups of people. *Between-society contact* represents those cross-cultural encounters between temporary visitors and a host country, such as tourists, international students and business people. This literature review is particularly interested in the culture shock experienced during between-society contact. Much of the recent research on culture shock also focuses on this group of people.

**The “ABC” Model of Acculturation.** Culture shock is experienced in three domains: affect, behavior and cognition (Ward et al., 2001). This theory of culture shock is referred to as the “*ABC*” model of acculturation. *Affect* refers one’s psychological wellbeing. *Behavior* refers to the set of social skills needed to navigate in a particular culture. *Cognition* refers to how one’s self-identification in relation to a particular culture(s), where this identity is particularly susceptible to stereotypes, bias, and prejudice. Kim’s (2001) integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation similarly pinpoints three domains, though articulated in a different manner: in social functional capacity in order to operate more smoothly
in the host community; in mental health in order to alleviate psychological or emotional stress; and in one’s cultural identity in order to make sense of the new cultural values learned.

**Acculturation strategies.** In response to culture shock, a person can enact one or more acculturation strategies (Berry, 1994; Berry & Kim, 1988; Berry, Kim, Power, Young & Bujaki, 1989). Berry and colleagues (Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok, 1987; Berry et al., 1989) identified four acculturation strategies that individuals use to manage their culture shock when exposed to another culture: *Integration* (maintaining both one’s own and another culture’s values), *Separation* (maintaining one’s own cultural values and not valuing those of the host culture), *Assimilation* (holding the host culture’s values above one’s own original culture), and *Marginalization* (valuing neither one’s own nor the host culture). Based on how researchers have found that sojourners can move more fluidly through stages of culture shock than previously measured (Paola & Lemmer, 2013), I believe one person might enact multiple strategies at a given time. For example, a student may be more open to integrationist strategies in terms of religious beliefs but maintain a separationist strategy for differences in gender roles between their home and host cultures.

**Sociocultural and psychological adjustment.** Researchers have also identified two interrelated outcomes of acculturation: sociocultural and psychological adjustment (Ward et al., 1998). *Sociocultural adjustment* refers to the ability to blend in or effectively navigate the host country’s culture and environment. It is affected by the distance between cultural norms of the host and origin countries (also known as “cultural distance”), the amount of contact with people of the host country, and cultural knowledge. *Psychological adjustment* refers to psychological wellbeing and emotional satisfaction, and is influenced by “personality, social support, and life change variables” (Ward, et al., 1998, p. 279). Investigating these forms of adjustment can help
identify whether an international program should help sojourners attain culturally appropriate skills before traveling (to mitigate potentially difficult sociocultural adjustment), or help them deal with homesickness or loneliness (addressing psychological adjustment) (e.g., Brown & Holloway, 2008).

Research has found that sociocultural and psychological adjustment are interconnected. For example, cognitive variables (e.g., expectations) predict sociocultural adjustment (Searle & Ward, 1990), and increases significantly after spending 12 months or more abroad (Ward, et al., 1998). Additionally, Ward and Kennedy (1994) found that co-national identification impacted psychological wellbeing, whereas identification with host nationals impacted sociocultural adjustment. In other words, valuing one’s own culture over the host culture seemed to improve sojourners’ psychological wellbeing but inhibited their sociocultural adjustment. Conversely, those sojourners who readily accepted the host culture by dismissing their own cultural identity had an easier time adjusting to social expectations, but had poor psychological wellbeing.

**Repeating the process of acculturation.** In some cases, the original motivations, expectations, etc. change, and the acculturation process is repeated for a new cross-cultural encounter (Pitts, 2009). This reciprocal part of learning and changing has also been called *acculturative learning* (Rudmin, 2009), referring to the changes an individual makes in order to alleviate their feelings of culture shock. Finally, once the person returns home, they will engage the process again with peers, friends and family at home. The experience of culture shock at this time is referred to as reverse culture shock (Gaw, 2000). In the following section, I will discuss in more depth how culture shock (and reverse culture shock) have been defined and framed, trace its historical roots in the literature, and describe recent trends in the research including several challenges to the study of culture shock.


**Culture Shock**

In this section, I discuss the literature on culture shock in more detail. First, I discuss the various definitions and synonymous language for “culture shock” used in the field. I also define reverse culture shock. Next, I discuss how I envision culture shock (and reverse culture shock) as a response to a problematic moment, or the realization of new knowledge that competes with one’s own understandings. Then, I elaborate on the historical roots and recent trends in the research. In particular, I discuss the recent research that relates to issues specifically relevant to my study, i.e., the impact on culture shock: length of time spent abroad, interactions with others, and expectations. I then attempt to discuss the literature on culture shock that specifically engages with a discussion on race, gender, and class, though this literature is sparse. Finally, I discuss the general methodological approaches and designs used throughout the literature, and conclude by highlighting the limitations and challenges to studying culture shock as a phenomenon.

**Defining culture shock.** *Culture shock* has been defined in many ways. One of the earliest definitions cited is from Oberg (1960): “Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (p. 177). Some years later Adler (1975) expanded this definition:

Culture shock is primarily a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one's own culture, to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences. It may encompass feelings of helplessness, irritability, and fears of being cheated, contaminated, injured or disregarded (p. 13).
Gaw (2000) discussed the “chaotic and fatiguing nature” of culture shock (p. 85). Whereas most definitions in the literature point to the emotional and psychological response to culture shock, Furnham (2010) added how culture shock is part of a larger process of socializing newcomers to a foreign culture. He stated that it is a “loss of one’s culture, a marker of moving from one culture to another, and a resocialisation in another culture” (p. 87), as well as a “serious, acute and sometimes chronic affective reaction to a new (social) environment” (p. 88).

More recently, culture shock researchers have attempted to either expand upon these definitions of culture shock or redefine it using new terminology. *Culture unrest*, proposed by Moufakkir (2013), addresses the culture shock experienced as a result of within-society contact, specifically looking at the impact of immigration on people’s perception of the immigrants’ home country and the likelihood to travel there. “Cultural adjustment” has also been used interchangeably with culture shock (Paola & Lemmer, 2013) as well as “adjustment difficulties” (Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998), referring to the changes in the self that are needed to maintain both one’s psychological wellbeing and appreciation of the host culture. Finally, *cultural dissonance* refers to the sense of “discord or disharmony” experienced by people during a “difficult” “cultural change,” though not necessarily the result of a cross-cultural encounter (Macdonald, 1998, p. 2).

**Reverse culture shock.** Reverse culture shock, also referred to as “reentry” shock (e.g. Szkudlarek, 2010), is defined as “the process of readjusting, reacculturating, and reassimilating into one’s own home culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time” (Gaw, 2000, p. 83-84). Common problems associated with reverse culture shock relate to academics, cultural identity, relationships, depression and anxiety, alienation, discrimination, stress, fear, and disenchantment (Gaw, 2000; Sahin, 1990; Szkudlarek, 2010; Zapf, 1991).
Returning sojourners may also have to relearn some of the norms and skills from their home country that have either been forgotten or replaced with other norms from the host country (Szkudlarek, 2010). Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) stated that the primary difference between culture shock and reverse culture shock was the expectation from sojourners that home life, friends, and family would be unchanged upon their return. Some research has even suggested that sojourners’ experiences of reverse culture shock are more intense than their feelings of culture shock while abroad (e.g., Shannon-Baker, 2015a; Werkman, 1980).

Some research has found that those who experience higher levels of reverse culture shock are more likely to report on their problems adjusting to being back home (Gaw, 2000). However, the same study also found that those experiencing more severe reverse culture shock were less likely to utilize student support services such as tutoring services and advising. Gaw (2000) explained this discrepancy by stating that while students might feel they were willing to reach out, their actual tendency to do so was less likely. “This suggests that their reverse culture shock experience may have been a serious inhibitor in their reaching out for professional help” (p. 100).

Other research has focused on the impact of age on the magnitude of reverse culture shock experienced (Szkudlarek, 2010). There is some evidence that children and adolescents experience greater reverse culture shock compared to adults (Gaw, 2000; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963) due to differences in the strength of their cultural identities. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) noted that those sojourners with firm self-perceptions and identities suffered less reverse culture shock. Since, developmentally, youth are already experiencing changes in their identity, the stress associated with identity changes are exacerbated by reverse culture shock when experienced at this age.
Reverse culture shock, however, does not always have a negative impact on the individual. For example, the literature is inconsistent on the impact of reverse culture shock on relationships back home. Some suggest that the impact is negative (Seiter & Waddell, 1989), while others have found that the impact is not significant (Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010). Additionally, some research has shown a positive impact of reverse culture shock, such as greater levels of autonomy and identity changes beyond typical maturation (Gaw, 2000), though it is unclear if this is due to the international experience in general or particular to reentry experiences. It is also unclear what impact the length of time spent abroad has on the magnitude of reverse culture shock (Szkudlarek, 2010).

Culture shock as a response to problematic moments. Kent and Cumming (2008) state that a problematic moment “refers (1) descriptively to the qualitatively unique features and potentials of a certain kind of phenomenological and discursive event and (2) theoretically as a reference point, enabling groups to create meaning about the past’s emergence in the present through proactive recognition and intention to alter social relations previously reified in discourse” (p. 4). In other words, a problematic moment is a point during which we are confronted with some piece of information that challenges our previously held beliefs, values, and/or cultural identities. For example, Kent and Cumming (2008) highlight a problematic moment in their course when discourses about anti-Semitism collided to reveal what was socially acceptable and unacceptable. They argue that working through a problematic moment is critical in developing the consciousness of students despite how traumatic the moment can be.

As mentioned above, I define culture shock as a response to the gap in expectations one has about traveling abroad. These expectations might be about the local people, what the sojourner will do while traveling, how they might react in certain circumstances, or how easily
they expect to fit in and adjust to their new life abroad. I believe that when these expectations are not met, this creates a problematic moment for the sojourner. In my experiences traveling abroad, there are many times when expectations are not met. This means that many problematic moments thereby become compounded on top of one another. Depending on the extent of pre-departure training in terms of sociocultural skills and psychological wellbeing, the sojourner may or may not be able to deal with these problematic moments as they occur. Even with some amount of training, the individual might feel some anxiety, but with a larger gap in expectations, and thus more problematic moments, the sojourner will experience more culture shock. Research on culture shock has thus sought to predict, alleviate, and respond to the impact of these problematic moments.

**Historical roots.** Culture shock was not studied systemically until after the 1950s when researchers were interested in the mental welfare of the large influx of immigrants and refugees into the U.S. (Ward et al., 2001; Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman 2008). Original studies also addressed the negative effects (e.g., depression, anxiety) of cross-cultural movement for international education, immigration, and work (Zhou et al., 2008). These studies were largely based in psychology and psychiatry, where much of the culture shock literature today is still framed.

The field gradually moved away from the medical focus, and shifted instead to the investigation of social skills and culture learning perspectives. By the 1980s, research advocated for international orientations and training for the skills needed to work with a different culture (Zhou et al., 2008). This perspective is characterized by a dynamic view of the experiences of both sojourners and the host culture. People who traveled abroad were seen as proactive in their ability to prepare for culture shock (Zhou et al., 2008), rather than as passive recipients of
inevitable culture shock that was said to be the case with all cross-cultural interactions. Researchers also investigated how sojourners were able to manage and change while experiencing culture shock (e.g., Pitts, 2009).

Research on culture shock through the 1970s was focused on establishing a framework for understanding the various experiences as part of culture shock. For example, the U-curve hypothesis, proposed by Lysgaard (1955), stated that sojourners experience a honeymoon stage upon arriving in a new country, followed by depression as they are confronted with difficulties in adapting to the new culture, and ending with a “recovery stage” during which they have successfully adapted to the host country’s culture. Several studies have elaborated on this model (e.g. Brown & Holloway, 2008; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1960, 1963; Moufakkir, 2013). Another framework was designed by Oberg (1960) that was based on the belief that culture shock is experienced in stages: honeymoon, crisis, recovery and adjustment. Ward, Okura, Kennedy and Kojima (1998) later discredited this model, arguing that the greatest culture shock is experienced much earlier upon arrival in a foreign country (c.f., Brown & Holloway, 2008), yet researchers continue to rely on Oberg’s framework (e.g. Gaw, 2000; Moufakkir, 2013).

However, no frame was ever consistently used by culture shock researchers. Indeed, there is still dispute among scholars as to the exact origins of the term “culture shock” (Furnham, 2010). To this day, researchers still make a point to indicate which of the original frameworks they align with. This lack of a single accepted framework among researchers has perhaps created issues that still exist in this field such as inconsistent or weak theoretical grounding in empirical studies (Salisbury, 2011).

**Trends in current research.** In general, contemporary research on culture shock has relied more on social psychology and educational perspectives. This influence can be seen in the
conceptualization of culture shock based on models of cultural learning (e.g., Ward et al., 1998), stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and social identification (e.g. Pitts, 2009). The result of this shift is the increasing use of culture shock research to inform international program development (e.g., Chang, Yuan, & Chuang, 2013; Sayers & Franklin, 2008), creating pre-departure training to help alleviate sojourners’ experiences of culture shock, and identifying how higher education institutions can best support sojourners when they return (e.g., Gaw, 2000; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010). Instead, sojourners as seen as proactive in their ability to prepare for culture shock (Zhou et al., 2008) as well as in their abilities to manage and change while experiencing it (e.g., Pitts, 2009).

In the sub-sections below, I discuss several trends in recent research on culture shock. First, I elaborate on the ways in which recent research has critiqued and expanded upon the original frameworks for culture shock (e.g., the work of Lysgaard and Oberg). Next, I highlight the increased focus of this research on students’ experiences of studying abroad. Whereas much of the original research was on immigrants and refugees in the USA, a significant portion of the research on culture shock is now based on U.S. students’ experiences of culture shock related to international education experiences. This shift is due in part to researchers’ ease of access to this population as well as higher education institutions’ increased use of international education programs. This is also the demographic for my research. Finally, I discuss recent studies that specifically look at the impact of several variables on students’ experiences of culture shock: length of time spent abroad, interaction with peers and with host cultures while abroad, and sojourners’ expectations prior to travel and about returning home (which relates to their experiences of reverse culture shock). I also discuss the few studies I found that explicitly examined the relation of race, gender, and/or class on experiences of culture shock.
Disputing old frameworks for culture shock. A significant trend in recent research on culture shock is work that seeks to expand, redirect and/or critique the traditional frameworks. Hottola (2004) argues that the commonly used frameworks for culture shock are out of date, particularly in terms of theorizing the experience of sojourners from Western, developed countries visiting developing nations:

An American visiting France experiences confusion but hardly shock.

Conventional mass tourists, the majority of tourists, rarely experience serious problems because they do not actually enter another culture [...] Even if they leave their touristic metaspaces, the advancing hybridization of cultures paves the way to mutual understanding rather than conflict [...] despite the continuous existence of features of culture which keep people apart (p. 452).

Hottola’s argument highlights how one could critique whether U.S. Americans feel any culture shock traveling to a country with limited cultural distance from the U.S.A. In other words, where the cultural distance is much smaller, the sojourner would experience much less culture shock. This line of argument then highlights the importance of investigating how the processes of globalization and international education impact experiences of culture shock.

Moufakkir (2013) asks a related critical question: “In our shrinking world, is the concept of culture shock still valid?” (p. 327). In response to this question, Moufakkir articulates a new concept: “culture unrest.” He conceptualizes culture unrest as the culture shock that is “negotiated at home before the overseas trip begins” (p. 324). He argues for this concept on the basis that other cultures have already impacted the world of sojourners before they leave their own countries through social media, popular culture, immigration, etc. Through such initial contact, according to Moufakkir, some culture shock has already occurred. Moufakkir’s culture
unrest model follows the U-curve model of Lysgaard (1955), though with several more distinct phases.

Moufakkir frames culture unrest within the context of increased immigration of Moroccans to The Netherlands. He found that those with positive perceptions of Moroccans were more inclined to visit Morocco, which is in line with other research studies (e.g., Reisinger & Turner, 2003). However, he also found that while Dutch natives perceived Moroccans living in The Netherlands negatively, Dutch perceptions of Morocco and Moroccans in their own country were generally positive. Notably, Moufakkir does not discuss this contradiction.

Other scholars have critiqued specific components of the frameworks for culture shock. One study found that students’ initial emotional response to being abroad did not exemplify the “honeymoon” stage typically associated with beginning of culture shock (Brown & Holloway, 2008). Paola and Lemmer (2013) found that students moved more fluidly back and forth between stages of cultural adjustment than typically discussed. Specifically, Paola and Lemmer critique Oberg’s (1960) framework, pointing out its rigidity, lack of consideration for differing lengths of stay abroad, and the “negative connotations surrounding the idea of culture shock as a pathological state” (p. 83). For their students, relationships with both foreign and host nationals were very important in students’ adjustment. Contrary to Lysgaard (1955), who stated that cross-cultural relationships occur at the later stages of adjustment, Paola and Lemmer (2013) found that students’ concerns for cross-cultural relationships impacted their experiences and expectations much earlier. However, they do not discuss the impact of the students’ participation in extracurricular activities at the host institution, which may have prompted faster relationship building with their peers and host nationals.
Lastly, Rudmin (2009) argues that acculturation research was originally based in discrimination against aboriginal and immigrant minorities. Rudmin emphases that acculturation in general is not a minority group’s assimilation with the dominant group, “but the individual’s assimilation of an alien culture” (p. 110). The stress experienced during this “assimilation” is in having to decide whether to be “assimilated by the new culture, or to be separated from it, or to become biculturally integrated, or to just endure the stress of marginalization” (p. 107). He presents a model of acculturation where one’s motivations impact acculturative learning, which thereby causes changes in the individual, having consequences on various aspects of life. According to Rudmin, this process and specifically changes to the individual are impacted by their identity (Rudmin names class specifically) and experiences of discrimination.

Whereas Berry (2006) described culture shock as an acute form of acculturative stress, Rudmin (2009) here presents culture shock as part of the acculturative motivations, thus impacting acculturative learning. In fact, he argues against investigating acculturative stress at all because it has “no easy operationalization, resulting in a history of confusion and confounds” (p. 116). By instead focusing more on the process of acculturation, he believes that this will allow for more focus on the “positive psychology of acculturation,” such as feelings of “freedom, competence and personal growth” (p. 117).

**Increased focus on experiences of students traveling abroad.** Whereas much of the original research stemmed from the study of immigrants and refugees (Zhou et al., 2008), more recent research investigates the experiences of temporary international travelers such as students. It has been argued that this demographic of sojourners is frequently represented in the literature due to their ease of access for researchers (Ward et al., 2001). This increase in studying students
also coincides with record numbers of students studying abroad each year (Institute of International Education, 2014).

Specific to international students, this literature has primarily focused on predicting the extent of culture shock (e.g., Spencer-Rodgers, Williams & Peng, 2010; Zhou, et al., 2008) and considering the consequences of culture shock (e.g., Moufakkir, 2013). The college-age sojourner faces particular issues that affect the measurement of culture shock, such as those associated with late adolescence and young adulthood, and those issues associated with being academics (Furnham, 2010). Research on this population has looked at the impact of social networks (e.g., Pitts, 2009), stress and coping mechanisms (e.g., Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010), and academic performance (e.g., Brown & Holloway, 2008; Sayers & Franklin, 2008). Specifically, longitudinal studies have looked at successful pre-departure preparation and changes in adaptation over time (e.g., Salisbury, 2011; Salisbury, An, & Pascarella, 2013).

**Impact of length of time abroad.** More institutions are utilizing study abroad programs in general, and in particular more students are studying abroad vis-à-vis “short-term” programs (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Institute of International Education, 2014). Notably, what characterizes “short-term” in the literature is inconsistent. One study for example defined short-term as two weeks to one semester (Pitts, 2009). However, in terms of investigating culture shock, this distinction is critical. How much time abroad is needed to experience culture shock? Can time as a variable even be parsed out or is it too connected to other confounding variables like program design or the distance between one’s own and the destination culture? These are questions I still have that need further future research.

Some research has compared the impact of short-term to long-term programs on students. For example, Medina-López-Portillo (2004) found that sojourners who were abroad for shorter
periods of time tended to focus more immediately on visible, behavioral differences in the host
culture, while those from longer-term programs recognized more nuances within the host culture.
They also noted that students had significantly high opinions of their own intercultural
sensitivity. Additionally, some research has shown that students who participated in shorter study
abroad programs had significantly lower reverse culture shock (Wielkiewicz & Turkowski,
2010). My own research, however, has found that feelings of reverse culture shock were
qualitatively more intense than feelings of culture shock while in country for a short-term
program (Shannon-Baker, 2015a). Hamad and Lee (2013), who compared programs based on
time abroad, reported that individuals who spent more time abroad reported having a weaker
ethnic or cultural identity upon returning. I speculate that this might be due to sojourners feeling
more need to acculturate to their host cultures while spending longer time abroad. As a result,
they spend less time maintaining their original cultural values.

**Impact of interactions with others.** The impact of interactions with others on sojourners’
experiences of culture shock has also received increasing attention in recent research. These
interactions can be characterized in two ways: interactions with co-nationals, or students from
their own home country or students similarly studying abroad, and interactions with host
nationals, or those from the location of the study abroad program. Research on these interactions
has indicated that higher involvement with both groups can be supportive for students in
different ways. For example, Pitts (2009) found that everyday conversations with co-nationals
helped to refine and create new expectations for sojourners. Contrary to the literature on long-
term study abroad experiences, Pitts found that co-national support helped adjustment during
short-term experiences. Such support “provides sojourners the agency to make the cognitive,
behavioral and affective adjustments necessary to succeed abroad” (p. 459). She provided the
figure below to visualize the impact of these conversations. Her figure shows how expectations can feed into the cross-cultural interaction. When there are gaps between a sojourner’s expectations and actual experiences, they have increased stress which can then be buffered by talking with co-nationals. These conversations can also help to redefine sojourners’ expectations, thus impacting their experiences of culture shock later on.

Conversely, Chang et al. (2013) found that high involvement with local populations also helped sojourners’ cross-cultural adaptability. They compared sojourners who had low to high involvement with host-nationals. Contrary to the research they surveyed, Chang, Yuan, and Chuang found that sheer frequency of number of times being abroad was not correlated with higher cross-cultural adaptability. They concluded,

simply sending people overseas did not necessarily lead to an increase in cultural adaptability. In other words, physically being abroad may not be the key determinant for desired international competence. Rather, how people engage with the host society and how much they are involved in the new context have more of an impact on competence development (p. 272).

**Impact of expectations.** The impact of expectations on experiences of culture shock and reverse culture shock also represents an important trend in the literature. Expectations are impactful on the decision to travel, the adaptation process, and the overall outcomes of the experience (Goldstein & Kim, 2006; Pitts, 2009). Gaps in expectations and the reality of a sojourner’s time abroad have also been found to have significant impact on the overall experience (Vande Berg, 2007). In general, those with positive expectations and previous international experience tend to experience less stress, higher satisfaction with the experience, and an easier adjustment (Kealey, 1989; Pitts, 2009). Conversely, when expectations are not met
or “violated” (Pitts, 2009, p. 451), this creates added stress, distraction, and disorientation for the sojourner (Burgoon, 1993). With regard to reverse culture shock, the impact of expectations is “largely unexamined” by scholars but also “unexpected” by sojourners (Szkudlarek, 2010, p. 4). In other words, neither researchers nor sojourners seem to be carefully considering sojourner expectations about how they will adjust to being home or what it will be like when they return. Some research has demonstrated that the lack of preparation for reverse culture shock results in a proportional increase in reverse culture shock (Chamove & Soeterik, 2006).

Pitts (2009) investigated the relationship between communication types and the impact of expectations on culture shock for students studying abroad at a French institution. She identified several important sources for expectations including the host university, co-students, friends and family at home, host families, and one’s home university and faculty members. In particular, she found that the most direct influence to study abroad came from mentors who had themselves studied abroad. She found that students managed their expectation gaps through various types of communication such as humor, gossip, storytelling, giving advice, etc. (Pitts, 2009).

Dearth of Research Relating Culture Shock to Race, Gender, and Class

Significantly, there is a dearth of research on culture shock and reverse culture shock that closely consider race, gender, and/or class. As I discussed in the previous chapter, my positionality as an anti-racist feminist from a working class background made this lack of discussion about these cultural identities more apparent. One example is from Paola and Lemmer (2013), who worked for the US Consulate and the University of South Africa in Durban respectively, investigated students’ experiences with studying abroad in South Africa. They reported that African American students felt the “most positive aspect” was being part of a majority while in South Africa, while the White students “found themselves part of a White
minority for the first time” (p. 90). One student said, “intellectually, I knew I was coming as a minority. It just didn’t occur to me that it would hit me like this. It’s hard. I’ve never experienced not fitting in automatically” (p. 90). Some students however refused to see how race might impact their experience or interactions with black South Africans. Students were able to identify racist beliefs when, for example, they were cautioned not to become friends with black students, or when they refused the sexual advances of black males. Paola and Lemmer (2013) claimed that the students did not arrive with any “crude stereotypes of Africa” (p. 92). However, this is complicated by the deeply held fears about contracting HIV/AIDS that several students discussed.

Paola and Lemmer (2013) found that “all the female participants were influenced by what they considered unnecessarily aggressive sexual behaviour from South African men of all racial backgrounds” (p. 89). This description could be based in part on culturally-laden expectations around cross-gender reactions. They reported that none of the students became romantically involved while abroad for various reasons including concerns of contracting HIV/AIDS, a fear which Paola and Lemmer say “bordered on paranoia” (p. 89).

Szkudlarek (2010) discusses the research on reverse culture shock regarding different demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and socioeconomic status. Curiously, no discussion was given to race or ethnicity, even to say that it did not come up in their review of the literature. However, Szkudlarek does argue that the research on reverse culture shock is largely based on Western perspectives. According to their review, gender represented the most frequently researched variable. Some research does seem to indicate that women have more difficulties in readjusting back to home life, including in relation to their families and daily life. Women are also more inclined to notice differences in their social environment than men.
(Brabant, Palmer, & Gramling, 1990, as cited in Szkudlarek, 2010). With regard to age, most research found that older sojourners were better able to readjust back to home life than younger sojourners. Finally, in terms of socioeconomic class, Szkudlarek noted that “surprisingly” very little research has looked specifically at this variable, even despite some acceptance that working internationally might result in a loss of social status and financial resources (p. 6). I speculate that this loss in status upon returning might particularly be the case for sojourners who travel to countries with a weaker currency, and thus become accustomed to having a relatively luxurious lifestyle.

**Why Study Culture Shock**

The study of culture shock—the experience of it, its effects, what predicts the amount of culture shock, and how to manage it—has serious implications for those interested in cross-cultural work. For example, studies on culture shock have established arguments for particular types of pre-departure programming and training for sojourners. Pitts (2009) recommends that program directors “encourage and facilitate the development of reasonable expectations” and promote the development of “supportive co-national ties prior to departure” (p. 460, emphasis in original). She also suggests having pre-departure training on how to recognize and manage external expectations, which she found to have greatly impacted students’ experiences abroad. More generally, research on culture shock can be used to determine whether to focus such training more on culturally relevant skills, such as greetings and general communication, or to better prepare for the psychological stress of cross-cultural encounters (Brown & Holloway, 2008).

Other research has demonstrated implications for responses to sojourners’ experiences and needs upon returning from abroad. Culture shock research has shown a gap in the utilization
of student services such as counseling, tutoring, and career help compared to similar peers who did not study abroad (Gaw, 2000). Gaw (2000) studied the severity of reverse culture shock among students who completed their secondary schooling abroad and returned to the USA for college. He found that these students in particular could benefit from targeted counseling outreach due to their “personal adjustment problems and shyness concerns” (p. 99), as well as their increased alcohol usage compared to peers. Targeted students services outreach was also supported in the work of Wielkiewicz and Turkowski (2010) who argued for hosting more group-type discussions upon return to help students work through reentry shock. Also, they suggest that those on campus working to prevent or promote safer alcohol consumption should specifically target these students.

Finally, some research suggests that host institutions and communities may need to make changes in response to experiences of culture shock. Depending on the nature of the international travel, “hosts” could be local institutions such as non-profits or universities, host families, tourist workers, business colleagues, etc. Sayers and Franklin (2008), instructors in human resource development, noticed the increased number of international students in their classrooms. They made slight changes to their own course to address the “high anxiety” they identified in this growing international student population and to address misunderstandings the instructors had with students based on culturally-laden assignments and course organization. Although these teacher-researchers seemed to prioritize their own cultural values over those of the students by making only slight changes while expecting that students adapt to meet their original expectations, this example demonstrates the possibility for change in course-affiliated study abroad programs in response to experiences of culture shock.
Methods for studying culture shock. The literature on culture shock spans numerous disciplines, from counseling (e.g. Gaw, 2000) to student development (Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010), business (Chang, Yuan & Chuang, 2013) to psychiatry (Mumford, 1998). However, psychology represents the largest amount of research, which is not surprising given that the study of culture shock originated in this field. Despite the abundance of research across disciplines, I found little research that is actively interdisciplinary. Similarly, more of the research draws upon psychology based research than from other schools of thought. This lack of interdisciplinary research, I argue later, is one of the limitations to this literature.

In terms of methodological design, much of the earlier work was qualitative (e.g., Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960). After the 1990s, some researchers still heavily relied upon qualitative approaches (e.g., Paola & Lemmer, 2013), but there was a significant increase in quantitative research, particularly in the development of instruments to measure the effects and outcomes of culture shock (e.g., Kelley & Meyers, 1995; Mumford, 1998; Searle & Ward, 1990). Two articles were found that used both quantitative and qualitative work: one was an ethnographic design (Jackson, 2008) and the other was a case study (Medina-López-Portillo, 2004). In both cases though, these studies were more focused on the issue of cultural competence than culture shock directly. One used a practitioner-based action research model (Sayers & Franklin, 2008), though the researchers did not identify the research explicitly in this way. No studies reviewed here were self-identified as mixed methods and none were found that used visual or artistic methods.

Limitations and Challenges to Studying Culture Shock

In my survey of the literature on culture shock, I have identified several critical challenges if not limitations to the investigation of culture shock in general. Some of the critiques
I found of this research from other scholars were methodological based. For example, some disliked the use of “anecdotal” and “inconclusive” evidence (Ward et al., 1998, p. 278). This critique in particular seemed to be more of a critique of using quantitative versus qualitative approaches to the study. Indeed, others critiqued the rigor of the research on culture shock (e.g. Salisbury, 2011). I would agree that although there are serious methodological considerations to the study of culture shock, there are other issues that are symptomatic of the nature of this phenomenon, particularly as one related to educational based studies. Below, I discuss several key challenges: limited theoretical and conceptual grounding, issues with generalizability and selection bias, the strong potential for confounding variables, the limited amount of research specifically addressing race, gender, and class, and the dearth of interdisciplinary research.

**Lacking in theoretical and conceptual grounding.** Searle and Ward (1990) argued that the lack of theoretically grounded research and the lack of a consistent framework for culture shock was a serious limitation. Szkudlarek (2010) similarly pointed out this lack of theoretical grounding in their review of the literature on reverse culture shock. In fact, Searle and Ward (1990) argued that “culture shock” had been used as both a descriptor and explanation, even though “culture shock” as a “descriptor” inadequately addresses the intense impact of culture shock. I argue that this is still the case since contemporary research still uses frameworks for culture shock (e.g., Oberg, 1960) that have been strongly criticized by other researchers (e.g., Paola & Lemmer, 2013).

I attribute this issue as a symptom of the lack of consistency in the use of culture shock frameworks, which I see as both a positive and negative point for this field. I certainly support the critique of older frameworks for culture shock, especially those that specifically point to contemporary driving forces of globalization and internationalization of higher education (e.g.,
Moufakkir, 2013). I also think that the varying conceptualizations of culture shock can allow for discipline-specific operationalization of this phenomenon. However, this might be part of the reason why culture shock research lacks serious interdisciplinarity (as I discuss below). I also firmly believe in the strength of having theoretically grounded research, both to guide the inquiry process and to ground one’s research in the literature. Without this grounding, research stands to repeat already critiqued avenues of research.

To better understand how the various conceptualization of acculturation and culture shock relate to one another, I created a graphic of the process of acculturation based on the findings from my literature review. I combined several frameworks in Figure 2.4 to show the cyclical nature of how one experiences and responds to culture shock (Berry, 1994; Gaw, 2000; Moufakkir, 2013; Pitts, 2009; Rudmin, 2009; Ward et al., 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 1994).

![Figure 2.1. Process of acculturation.](image)

Each stage of acculturation involves various influencing factors, manifestations and further details that would be too much to include in a single figure. There are several factors that
influence the cultural encounter including details of the affiliated international program, such as time spent abroad or the depth of cross-cultural interactions. Then, during the cross-cultural encounter, a person experiences a “gap,” whether in their expectations (Pitts, 2009) or in terms of the cultural distance between their own beliefs and those of the host country (Mumford, 1998; Searle & Ward, 1990). Culture shock, then, is the result of this gap. In response to this gap, one must enact various strategies and adjustments to their daily life, expectations, and interactions with others (XXX). Then, with each new cultural encounter, one experiences culture shock again through these newly refined expectations, beliefs, etc. This process may result in overall identity changes. Finally, in the case of international experiences (whether short- or long-term), returning home entails another layer of culture shock—i.e. reverse culture shock—where the individual is confronted with their expectations of what home life will be like upon returning. This time is also when individuals are confronted with their original beliefs and expectations as exhibited and expected by one’s friends and family. By framing culture shock as part of this larger process of acculturation, this research considers the multifaceted influences on, manifestations of, and responses to culture shock.

**Generalizability and selection bias.** Many research studies on culture shock rely on particular populations (e.g., Gaw, 2000; Ward, Okura, Kennedy & Kajima, 1998). For example, Gaw’s (2000) work on reverse culture shock is often cited. However, I argue that this is problematic given that this study addresses a very particular population, i.e., sojourners who completed on average 10 years of their k-12 schooling abroad. Not only is this large amount of time abroad typically not found in the literature on culture shock, this time abroad for his participants took place during their childhood when they experience more changes in their perceptions of self and identity (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). The use of a single population
presents an important challenge to the generalizability of results for understanding culture shock among citizens of countries. As Szkudlarek (2010) indicated for the literature on reverse culture shock, much of these studies are based on U.S. populations, particularly with regard to students traveling abroad (e.g., Salisbury, An, & Pascarella, 2013).

Not only is much of the research on this phenomenon based on university students (Ward et al., 2001), but many of the studies are based on samples in which White students are the dominant demographic. Although this does mirror the fact that White students do make up the majority of those who study abroad (Institute of International Education, 2014), this does not mean that students across racial identities experience culture shock in the same manner. Thus, more research is needed on culture shock experiences among students of color, as well as whether students in highly diverse study abroad programs (i.e., those programs with a mix between students of color and White students) experience culture shock differently compared to more homogenous programs.

**Difficulty in addressing confounding variables.** Ward et al. (2001) state that it is hard to identify the relationships between affect, behavior, and cognition as aspects of culture shock due to instrumentation. In this case, cognition is distinct because it is based more on internal mental processes than observable behavior, making it more difficult to measure. Salisbury (2011) critiques the literature on not using random-assigned control grouping, though I would critique whether this is really possible in educational research in general. Other researchers have pointed to their inability to use a control group to identify any external confounding factors that might influence their findings, such as age maturation (e.g., Anderson, et al., 2006). Also, the lack of discussion of missing data, particularly for the quantitative studies, is disturbing given the potential for sampling bias since there are particular populations involved (or not) in
international, cross-cultural work (Gaw, 2000; Salisbury, 2011; Ward & Kennedy, 1994; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010). Rudmin (2009) critiqued the domination of sociologically based studies in the field of psychology, arguing that they are based too often on “non-random opportunistic sampling of minority groups [that] are unlikely to produce valid or reliable measures” (p. 109).

However, I would argue that seemingly “opportunistic” or convenience sampling could be necessary for more in-depth discussion on such difficult experiences as culture shock. In cases where the researcher is involved with a study abroad program throughout its duration, they would be able to develop closer relationships with the participants. This would then impact the comfort of the participants in sharing especially personal experiences, as well as the validity of the data in qualitative studies (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Perhaps critiquing himself though, Rudmin (2009) goes on to say that universal scales have not worked well in measuring culture shock due to the individual nuances of a person coming from one culture and interacting with another. Given the potential benefits of mixed methods research, which could both account for individual nuances while making context-driven generalizable results, use of this methodology in the future is strongly needed.

Limited explicit investigation of race, gender, and class. Another gap in the literature is in the explicit discussion of the implications of culturally based identities such as race, gender, and class. Given that experiences of these identities are culturally specific, and cultural distance has been shown to impact culture shock (Mumford, 1998), more studies are needed to investigate how race, gender, and class (among other cultural identities) impact the experiences of culture shock. Additionally, there was no explicit discussion in the culture shock literature regarding the implication of Westerners (or US Americans in particular) traveling to developed versus
developing countries. Szkudlarek (2010), a Dutch researcher, was the only critique I found concerning the Westernization of the literature on culture shock in general. How might this status differentiation between sojourners and host cultures impact culture shock?

**Lack of interdisciplinary research.** It was surprising to note the lack of interdisciplinary work in my review of the literature. There is instead research that connects the study of international education programs (and thereby the impact of such programs on sojourners) in a variety of disciplines. For example, there is a body of literature on that investigates the impact of study abroad programs for students in teacher education programs, or pre-service teachers. One study found that pre-service teachers who studied abroad had increased self-efficacy, praised their students more, and were better prepared to confront problems in the classroom (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Another study argued that research on the impact of study abroad should also examine how a teacher’s experiences abroad might impact their students (Cushner, 2008). Yet, this literature has not been directly connected to studies on culture shock.

There is a disconnect between the literature on the implications of international education programs for pre-services teachers and the literature on culture shock. To what extent does culture shock impact future skills and the pre-service teacher’s future students? How much culture shock, or perhaps cultural distance, is too much? What is the magnitude of the relationship between student identity development and learning and their experiences of culture shock? I am also left with questions that bring together subthemes in the literature. How does the length of time abroad impact the level of reverse culture shock specifically? How does involvement with the host culture impact reverse culture shock? In other words, if increased involvement reflects greater acculturation, then is the shift back to the home culture more difficult? Does this depend on the level of acculturation (e.g. assimilation versus integration)?
Implications for Cultural Competence

Cultural competence, also referred to as “intercultural competence,” generally refers to one’s reaction to and efficacy in interacting cross-culturally. As one’s cultural competence develops, they are able to more effectively “manage and understand increasingly complex intercultural situations and interactions” (Stallman, 2009, p. 4). Cultural competence, in part, relies on the mastery of communication-based skills specific to a culture. The greater the distance (or differences) between cultures, the greater the distance between cultural communication patterns, which results in more difficult relationships. In these scenarios, a lack of skills to communicate cross-culturally results in more stress and ineffective communication. Thus, the goals of cultural competence or multiculturalism require “bicultural communication competence” (Ward et al., 2001). Ward et al. (2001) discuss culture training, but primarily in terms of managing the effects of acculturation. To extend their work further, research is needed to connect how culture shock affects the development of cross-cultural competence.

In order to discuss the specific implications of research on culture shock for cultural competence, it is important to first discuss the context of cultural competence in relation to a particular cross-cultural encounter: study abroad programs. People generally believe that studying abroad will improve cultural competence despite little empirical evidence to support this claim. This belief is based, at least in part, on the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), which states that contact between two groups will decrease prejudices held between individuals in the groups. Thus, study abroad programs have been used as a way to address potential prejudices and promote cultural competence.

One study that attempted to investigate the relationship between participation in study abroad programs and increases in cultural competence (Salisbury, 2011). Salisbury found that
study abroad had a statistically significant positive effect on intercultural competence. He found no evidence to suggest that this effect differed by race, gender, socioeconomic status, institution type, academic preparation, or college experiences.

Specifically though, Salisbury (2011) found that study abroad influences a student’s contact with diverse people but had no significant impact on their appreciation of cultural differences or their comfort levels with diversity. Discussing this finding, Salisbury wrote, “if studying abroad only increases the inclination toward diverse contact but does not contribute to growth along other domains […], then study abroad may not be contributing to the kind of holistic transformative effect that it claims” (p. 94). To address this, Salisbury recommends that program developers include more “intentionally developed educational experiences” to address various aspects of cultural competence (p. 94).

Salisbury and colleagues did not investigate the experiences of culture shock in particular for their potential impact on changes to participants’ cultural competence over time. However, culture shock has been shown to have an impact on learning. Adler (1975) argued that culture shock can also provide opportunities for deep cultural learning and personal growth:

Although culture shock is most often associated with negative consequences, it can be an important aspect of cultural learning, self-development, and personal growth. The problems and frustrations encountered in the culture shock process are important to an understanding of change and movement experiences, and such transitional experiences can be the source of higher levels of personality development. Implicit in the conflict and tension posed by the transitional experience lies the potential for authentic growth and development (p. 337).
Paola and Lemmer (2013), in making the case for foreign students to consider planning their study abroad in South Africa, also argued that culture shock can be seen through a positive lens. They recognized the ability of culture shock to promote self-learning and the growth of new value systems. Rudmin’s (2009) model for acculturation also includes the potential impact of culture shock on acculturative learning.

Other studies point to the potential convergence of culture shock and cultural competence literature. Jackson (2008) argues that culture shock impacts learning and relationships with host nationals. Specifically, students who were ethnocentric tended to be unaware of linguistic gaps and cultural nuances which had a negative impact on cross-cultural relationships. Contrary to previous research, Jackson found that having a high level of language fluency did not relate to a higher level of intercultural sensitivity.

Another study found that sojourners experienced more successful cross-cultural adaptability through programs that entailed more “greater involvement” with host nationals (Chang et al., 2013). This study also connected involvement to length of stay, arguing that international experiences labelled as “tourism” and “short-term study tours” should be characterized as “lower involvement” with host nationals, which questions whether high involvement is possible in a short-term program.

**Building on My Pilot Study**

My current research builds upon a pilot study I conducted in 2014. The pilot study was based on the same international program to Ecuador as this current research study, though the students travelled during the middle of the semester instead of at the end. The course assignments and syllabus were largely the same, i.e., focused on giving students a foundation on the education, history, and cultures of Ecuador. The design for this study was also very similar to
my pilot study. In my pilot study, I collected three sets of data (arts-related, qualitative, and quantitative), at relatively the same time (i.e. within the span of about three weeks including before, during and after their time abroad), studied the data sets separately (i.e. arts-based, qualitative, and quantitative), and then integrated the strands for the integration stage.

I have since published on the findings from my pilot study in the *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* (Shannon-Baker, 2015a). Specifically, I argued for the combination of arts-informed and mixed methods research approaches in qualitatively driven work based on how these approaches prompted me to reanalyze my qualitative data. I found that students wanted to “appear happy” to program leaders and Ecuadorians in a show of appreciation for their being on the trip. The students self-portraits displayed both the appearance of being happy as well as their experiences of being “sad” and/or “confused” (Shannon-Baker, 2015a, p. 14). I also found that the drastically different landscape (compared to the program’s originating city), limited Spanish skills, and that some of the students’ expectations about the trip were not met had been the cause of some of their culture shock.

Another important finding that came out of my pilot study was the intense feelings of reverse culture shock that the students felt upon returning to home. The program iteration that I studied for the pilot study had students traveling over Spring Break and then returning to regular classes, work, and life immediately afterwards. Students wrote about their reverse culture shock as feeling “strange” and “disoriented” by such differences as seeing a large number of television screens in the airport (Shannon-Baker, 2015a). Given the intensity of their experiences of reverse culture shock, I advocated for better post-trip support for the students in the next program.

In response to my pilot study, I made several changes to my methodology for the study I report on here. First, I changed the overall purpose of the study. In my pilot study, I was
primarily interested in understanding how culture shock manifested in students and how they represented the experience visually, qualitatively, and quantitatively. Second, my pilot study was largely driven by a qualitative approach to research. All forms of data collection related back to qualitative journals, I analyzed the arts-related data under the qualitative strand, and focused heavily on text-based analysis. My research was initially qualitatively driven for several reasons. Most of my research methods training had been in qualitative methods, so I felt the most comfortable with this research approach.

For the current study, however, I decided to place more emphasis on the arts-based component by making it its own strand in the data collection process and increasing the number of portraits collected from one during the trip to three (before, during, and after the trip). I made this change to give the student participants more practice with thinking about themselves and their experiences vis-à-vis portraiture. I also wanted to add more arts-based data to strengthen that strand in comparison to the qualitative and quantitative strands. Finally, I added more arts-based data, specifically portraits spread throughout the trip, in order to measure how the student participants’ experiences and senses of self changed over time.

I also added more quantitatively focused analysis strategies to the integration stage, namely through the quantitizing my qualitative data. I made this change primarily to strengthen the amount of quantitative focus in the current study, whereas the pilot study seemed very qualitatively focused in terms of amount of qualitative data collected and in terms of the emphasis on qualitatively based analysis techniques.

Other important changes I made to this research design compared to the pilot study included changing the quantitative instrument used, adding interviews with each of the participants as part of the integration stage, and identifying clearer products that I hope to come
out of the entire research project. Each of these are discussed in more detail in their relevant sections.

Conclusions

In conclusion, culture shock is a part of acculturation, where acculturation is about negotiating multiple cultures and the changes in one’s identities and beliefs as a result of this negotiation. If we value diversity and cross-cultural work, we have to be able to “develop and maintain a bicultural, mediating identity” (Ward et al., 2001, p. 273). Developing this identity is based on our abilities to successfully manage acculturation and, with it, culture shock. This can be done, based on the literature discussed here, by effectively engaging sojourners about their pre-departure preparation, in-country relationships with peers and host nationals, cultural identification, and reentry. However, to join the literature on culture shock with the literature on cultural competence, we need to develop meaningful experiences in order for students to learn and draw from in the future. Thus, culture shock work needs to be about more than just “managing” the experience but extending the outlook to the impact of these experiences on future skills and practices for working cross-culturally. Such studies could investigate: how much culture shock is necessary in order to promote positive identity development, or how much is too much and result in regressive multicultural attitudes? Is culture shock while abroad even necessary for the experience to still promote cultural competence? Also, does the magnitude of culture shock experienced in any way impact a pre-service teacher’s relationships with students once they become in-service teachers? There is still much to be known about the relationship between these two phenomena. Such research has serious implications for the design of international education experiences and the short- and long-term impact on sojourners.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

For this study, I utilized a mixed methods research design that combines arts-based, qualitative, and quantitative approaches to study how race, gender, and class relate to students’ experiences of culture shock in relation to an international education program. The use of arts-based methods and a mixed methods design in particular were selected based on their lack of representation in the literature on culture shock. I chose them also based on their promise for potentially uncovering unique aspects of culture shock than those elucidated in the literature on culture shock to date. This chapter is devoted to discussing the research methodology for this study. I begin by giving an overview of the context for the study, i.e. information on the program that this study relates to and my role in this program. Next, I detail the design of the study. I discuss the methods for data collection, and the procedures for the various stages and strategies of analysis. Then, I address the concerns regarding validity for each of the three data sets as well as the validity concerns particular to mixed methods research approaches. I conclude by discussing the pilot study upon which this research was built. I chose to discuss the pilot study at the end since the majority of the methodology used in this study was based on the pilot study. Therefore, I wanted to discuss the “how” and “why” to the research design before discussing the results from my pilot study.

Context of the Study: About the Program

This research was embedded within the “Ecuador: Immersed in Culture and Education” study abroad program. I chose to do this research on this program because of my leadership role in the program (discussed in more detail below). As a result of my two-year history with the program, I had a base knowledge about Ecuadorian culture and history. This knowledge assisted me in developing the quantitative instrument I used in this study, for example, by informing me
as to which cultural aspects might impact the culture shock that students’ would experience. I also had an established relationship with two of the three other co-leaders in the program. (The third person came on as a new leader this year.) Additionally, already being a leader in the program and being embedded throughout the program’s process (e.g., recruitment and coursework) gave me the opportunity to build deeper relationships with the students than if I were a researcher that only joined the group during the international component. In other words, being involved with the program throughout the process afforded me the opportunity to demonstrate care for the students’ growth and experiences. I anticipated that the relationships I built with the students would further their trust in me, thereby helping them feel more comfortable with sharing intimate parts of their experiences of culture shock. Since I actively participated in program discussions and activities but was also clearly a leader, I considered myself to be a participant-observer (Patton, 2002).

This program was considered short-term because it included a 10-day trip to Ecuador at the end of a semester-long course. Students who participated in the program took a course during the 2015 Spring Semester hosted by the School of Education. This course covered such topics as the history of Ecuador, education, race relations between the indigenous population and those of Spanish heritage, the impact of colonialism and globalization on Ecuador, Spanish language, and Teaching English as a Foreign Language. As part of the course, students prepared a service-learning project, which was a series of lesson plans the students taught in primary (k-8) schools in Ecuador. The course also included papers, presentations, group discussions, and speakers.

During the trip to Ecuador, we worked with a non-profit located in the area. They assisted in the logistical planning and our networking with local schools. On weekdays, the students observed and taught their lesson plans in local indigenous-serving schools. During the evening,
students also participated in “cultural immersion” experiences, such as meeting an indigenous woman who was sold as a child to be a servant to a wealthy family. (The students read a novel based on the woman’s lived experiences during the class before travelling to Ecuador.) We also toured the local town, shopped in the local famous market, learned Afro-Ecuadorian dances, and took a tour of a nearby organic farm.

**My role in the program.** I served as the liaison for the School of Education for this trip. The primary leader for the program was in charge of creating the course syllabus and working with the non-profit in Ecuador about our trip details. I was in charge of facilitating the recruitment of education students, including addressing their concerns about funding and course credit. I was also responsible for recruiting faculty speakers from the School of Education to present in our class on American cultural values, Teaching English as a Foreign Language, and everyday living in Ecuador from an Ecuadorian living locally. I taught our course topics on cultural identities and race relations in Ecuador. I intentionally chose these for the purpose of students to get used to talking to me about culture, race, gender, and other identities, since these were the focus of my research. There were two other leaders who also assisted in recruiting students from outside of the School of Education, teaching basic Spanish, and other pre-trip preparations.

During our time in Ecuador, I met with the leaders from the local non-profit along with the other three leaders. These meetings were to share expectations for the trip, go over schedules and proposed activities, and discuss any issues as they arose (e.g. several students experienced health problems at various points). Each of the four leaders then had a small group of students to observe and supervise during our school visits. On any given day, each of the groups was in a
new school, so this allowed the leaders to split up among the students and help them with the lesson plans where needed. My group had six students.

After we returned to the USA, I assisted in organizing a “check-in” dinner with the students who were still in the area. Since the program took place after the Spring Semester had finished, many of the students returned to either summer classes, jobs, or home life. I was concerned about the students’ reverse culture shock as a result of the findings from the pilot study, so I wanted to ensure that this check-in was available to students who needed it. I also made myself available to students via email and during the post-trip interviews for my research study (discussed further below).

My role as a researcher. Since the pilot study took place during the 2014 trip, the other leaders were aware of my research interests for this iteration of the program. I made it clear to the students throughout the program what my research was on and why I was doing it. For example, I mentioned this during the interviews for the program when we introduced our responsibilities for the program. I also mentioned my research throughout the course. Additionally, given the nature of my research data asking students how they were doing emotionally and socially throughout the program, I was able to provide the other leaders with general details about the students’ perspectives on what was happening. For example, one of the leaders had an idea of inviting the local non-profit leaders to our evening debriefing sessions with the students. However, in the context of my study I learned that the students were concerned about how this would disrupt their relationships and bonds with the other students as well as the nature of what they might share during these meetings since these leaders were unknown to them. I shared this information with the other leaders, without revealing who it came from to
protect their identity and status in the research. The leaders then decided not to invite the non-profit leaders to our evening meetings.

With the exception of the interviews, all of the other data collected were considered part of the students’ coursework. This meant that even students who were not in the study completed the self-portraits for example. I was then in charge of collecting the assignments that were affiliated with this study. The arts-based assignments in particular offered unique insight into how students were adjusting, particularly while we were in Ecuador. I then shared the portraits for all of the students with the other leaders. One of the discussions that came out of my decision to do this was how the program in the future needs to more explicitly address race, since racial segregation amongst the student participants was addressed in several of the students’ portraits (discussed in more detail in the next chapter).

Further, due to my familiarity with the students and the international program, I was better able to collect genuine and rich data than if I were an outsider. This also helped to collect more valid information about the students’ experiences of culture shock, which can be a sensitive topic. Additionally, since I have experienced culture shock myself during international travel, I was able to better relate to the students’ experiences as well as help them identify what they were experiencing as culture shock.

**Population, Recruitment, and Consent**

The population for this study was a group of 18 students who participated in the “Ecuador: Immersed in Culture and Education” study abroad program and trip abroad. Students from throughout the university were recruited to apply for the program, including vis-à-vis email listservs to students in the School of Education and in various diversity-related leadership programs. We also advertised during the university-wide study abroad fair. A total of about 25
students applied for a possible 20 spots. Candidates were interviewed by myself and three other leaders in the program. A group of 20 students were chosen based on their discussion of the impact of the program on them personally and their career goals. Other factors such as getting a diverse representation of academic programs and ages were also taken into consideration. Several students who were originally selected did not accept their invitation to join the program. In one case, the student accepted another program. Other students were concerned about financing. Thus, due to the cost of the trip (about $2,500 on top of tuition and other fees), this likely impacted the types of students who considered applying or accepted their invitation to join. Nineteen students accepted their invitation to participate in the program. However, just before we left for Ecuador, one student had to drop out for family reasons. This lowered the population of students to 18.

**Recruitment and consent.** To recruit the students to participate in the study and gather their consent, I discussed the study after a class meeting before the trip to Ecuador. I discussed the purpose and goals for my research during this session. I told the students what types of data from the class would be collected and why. Several of the students asked questions, including why this research interested me and how I planned to use the research. I responded by discussing my own experiences with culture shock and study abroad programs as both a student and a leader. I shared that I intended for the research to inform the design of this (and other) programs in the future. Finally, I gave students information on how to opt out of the research and instructed them to not sign the consent form if they did not wish to participate in the study. Then all of the forms were collected from the students and kept separately from the rest of the data. See Appendices A and B for the recruitment and consent documents respectively.
Due to the potential for coercion to participate based on the teacher-student relationship and the teacher’s responsibility to give grades for the students’ work in the course, I did not grade the assignments affiliated with the research. I also did not share their participation status with the other program leaders who were part of the grading process. During the recruitment and information session, I asked that the primary instructor for the course to leave the room.

**Sampling and Participants**

My sample strategy was based on a “concurrent, identical sampling design” because the same sample was used for the collection of each data set (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao, 2007). Collecting data from the same sample for all three strands helped me to create “parallel databases” in order to best compare the results across the data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The sampling strategy used was “intensity sampling,” which uses “information-rich cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 234). This sampling strategy aligned with my overall research goal of creating a more complex picture of culture shock based on a variety of data.

Of the 18 students in the population for this study (i.e., in the program), 16 consented to participate in the research study. All but two students completed every data collection. These two students did not complete the interview, which meant that neither their third portraits, their interview data, nor their analysis on their data for the trip was collected. When the interviews were scheduled, one student said that they would not have time for the interview. The second student did not return my emails about scheduling an interview. I speculated that this was due to medical issues she face on the trip, which, according to her written reflection about her second self-portrait (collected during the trip to Ecuador), was “overwhelming.” She also wrote in the open response item in the quantitative survey that her answers were skewed by this experience, such as her relatively high score for culture shock experienced. Therefore, I interpreted her lack...
of response to scheduling an interview as her trying to avoid reliving her experiences of the food allergy. Given the importance of the interview as a mechanism for data collection, analysis, and member checking, I chose not to include these two students who did not complete the interview in any of my analyses.

Participants. Among the 14 students who participated in the study, there were a variety of demographics represented. Table 3.1 displays each individual’s identities arranged alphabetically by their pseudonym. The group was evenly split between students of color and white students. Among the students of color, five identified as African American/Black and one identified as both African American/Black and White/Caucasian (Beth, who I grouped with students of color throughout the study). One student of color, Rachel, specifically asked to be identified as African American (not black) because she is an immigrant from an African country. There were 12 female identified students and two male, though among the females, four originally identified themselves as “heterosexual,” which was corrected during our interview. One student identified as lower/working class, one as upper class, and 12 identified as middle class. The participants also represented a range of majors including education, communication, and engineering, as well as a range of number of experiences abroad. There was also a range of graduation years.
Table 3.1. Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>African American/Black and White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brinae</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dakota</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lidia</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Upper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naiomi</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelby</td>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Lower/Working Class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Indicates those who originally wrote “heterosexual,” confusing gender and sexual orientation. These were corrected in the interview.
Research Design

This study utilized a concurrent mixed methods design. This type of design uses multiple forms of data collection and analysis, where all are collected at the same time but analyzed separately initially and then integrated and analyzed further (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). That all sets of data are collected at the same time and not influencing the other sets is what distinguishes this design from other mixed methods designs. Typical rationales for using this model are seeking complementarity, investigating divergences and triangulation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). I collected three types of data: arts-based, qualitative, and quantitative. I refer to these later as “strands,” to refer to the collection and analysis of each type of data.

The overall flow of the research plan is showcased in my research diagram, included as Appendix C. All three data sets—arts-based, qualitative, and quantitative—were collected at the same time from the same sample of students, all of whom were participants in the “Ecuador: Immersed in Culture and Education” study abroad program during Spring Semester, 2015. Next, I analyzed the data from the most inductive (arts-based) to the most deductive strand (quantitative). Then, I completed three integration analyses described below. In the following sections, I detail the data collection, analysis, and integration procedures for this research study.

Rationale for this research design. I initially chose this design for its feasibility. Given that the students involved were abroad only for 10 days, each of which were fully scheduled with activities, I wanted to be sensitive to overloading the students, though most of the data collection methods were embedded within their course requirements (except for interviews). I also chose this design for its applicability in research studies that seek to investigate convergences and divergences across data sets.
Data Collection

Since this was a concurrent design, I discuss the procedures for each of the three strands under each category, which is the typical organization for concurrent design discussions (e.g., Barnes, Camburn, Sanders, & Sebastian, 2010). Table 3.2 lists the data collection procedures in correspondence to the research question each addresses. Figure 3.1 displays the timeline for data collection for each data source.

Table 3.2: How Research Questions were Answered by Which Data Collection Procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Collection Strand</th>
<th>Form of Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does a student’s identity in terms of race, gender, and class relate to their experiences of culture shock in a study abroad program?</td>
<td>(All)</td>
<td>All data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do students visually depict their culture shock? What are the differences across race, gender, and class in how students visually represented themselves? How do they discuss these differences in terms of how they chose to portray themselves?</td>
<td>Arts-Based</td>
<td>Self-portraits; artist statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do students discuss their experiences of culture shock in relation to race, gender, and class? How are their narratives of salient moments coded by race, gender, and class?</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Journals; observation notes; interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a relationship between how students quantify the cultural distance between their own culture and Ecuadorian culture, their culture shock, and their own racial, gender, and class based identities?</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Revised Cultural Distance Index; survey responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a relationship between the frequency of race, gender, and class codes and the extent of cultural distance the students identified? In what ways do the three strands of data converge and diverge in revealing the relationships between experiences of culture shock and race, gender, and class identities?</td>
<td>Mixed Methods</td>
<td>Individual interviews; data triangulation; data transformation procedures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3.1. Data collection timeline.

- Start of class: January 5
- First self-portrait: March 25
- Second self-portrait: May 6
- RCDI Survey: May 9
- Interviews and third self-portraits: May 18 – July 8
- Observation notes: March 25 – May 12
- Trip to Ecuador: May 3-12
**Arts-based data.** This study included three sets of arts-based data, all centered on having the students draw self-portraits at different points during the program: before, during, and after the trip to Ecuador. Self-portraits are particularly important for this study on culture shock because they allow for the capture of data more in line with the “cognition” component of culture shock. Cognition refers to the mental process and identities of an individual related to their experiences of culture shock, and is often not observable (Ward et al., 2001). I included self-portraits in order to help the students think more holistically about themselves, their experiences, and their interactions with local people. This method has been used to help participants develop a deeper awareness of their emotions (Muri, 2007), expand beyond typical answers interviews and journals might produce (Bagnoli, 2009), and help communicate otherwise ineffable experiences (Weber, 2008). Since interviews with the students immediately upon completing each portrait was not possible due to the number of students and timing, I included a written component to understand students’ intentions in their drawings and highlight their own use of metaphor, visual cues, etc.

The procedures for each self-portrait were generally the same. First, I read the prompt for the portrait to the student(s). The prompts were designed to direct the focus of the student in terms of how to represent themselves, which allowed me to compare between individuals and across one individual’s portraits over time. I also offered the same materials for creating all three portraits: paper of varying sizes, colors, and patterns; a variety of colored markers and pencils; regular and patterned scissors; and glue sticks. Also, with each portrait the students were asked to reflect on what they drew and why. For the first and second portraits, these reflections were written and turned in with the portraits. All students verbally reflected on their third portrait, drawn during their interviews, with the exception of one student who chose to first write about it.
Since the portraits completed during the class were required as class activities, all students drew self-portraits. However, only those who consented in this study and provided all data sources are discussed here.

The self-portrait before the trip focused on students’ identities and experiences leading up to the trip. Specifically, I asked the students to draw how they saw themselves in general at that time (see Appendix D). This portrait drawing session took place at the end of one class. I gave students about 20 minutes to complete the portrait and accompanying reflection. I asked that students complete the portraits quietly, though some students chatted about unrelated topics while drawing.

The second self-portrait was assigned at the approximate mid-point of the trip to Ecuador. In the prompt, I asked the students to draw a self-portrait depicting their feelings at that time and how they saw themselves in Ecuador (see Appendix D). I announced after our morning activities that portraits were due by the evening to me. I left the materials and a written copy of the prompt on a table available to all of the students. Students then took the materials they needed worked on their portraits on their own time. Some students drew them together, talking about what they were drawing and why. Other students completed the portraits on their own.

Finally, the third self-portrait took place during the interviews with individual students after the trip. Technically this took place after the initial arts-based data analysis, so this data, and the resulting discussions with the student during the interview, were brought together during the integration stage. In this third self-portrait, I asked the students to consider their feelings upon returning to home, how they were adjusting, and how they saw themselves at that point. One student chose to write about their portrait before discussing it; the other 13 chose to verbally discuss it. This self-portrait helped to prompt more discussion with the students on their
development over time as well as reflections on their earlier portraits. By the end of the interviews, I had 3 self-portraits for all 14 participants. All of the portraits were scanned and Photoshopped to remove students’ names.

**Qualitative data.** For the qualitative strand, I collected data in two main forms: students’ reflections in response to their arts-based portraits and my own observation notes from class discussions and throughout our trip to Ecuador. These two methods of data collection relate to the literature on culture shock for their ability to capture the “affect” (or emotions) component (Ward et al., 2001). Additionally, these methods might showcase students operating in the role of storyteller and counter-storyteller from critical race theory (Nebeker, 1998). Conversely, these methods might indicate the kind of “White silence” typically adopted when White people are confronted with race issues (Nebeker, 1998, p. 38). This silence may be a symptom of not wanting to offend people (Nebeker, 1998), or not wanting to break bonds with friends who believe in White supremacy (Sleeter, 1995). Below, I discuss each data source and the procedures I used for each.

**Reflection journals.** Three reflection prompts were given to the students (found in Appendix D) throughout the program (i.e., before and during the program). These prompts provided the mechanism for all data collection affiliated with the course. The reflection journals were primarily based on open-ended questions written in conjunction with other data collection methods in order to allow the students to write about their reflections on the different activities. Since these prompts were required activities for the class, all students turned in handwritten reflections. However I only included here those students who consented and completed the study. The journals ranged from a few sentences to two pages in length. All journals were transcribed into Word documents and scrubbed for students’ names prior to analysis.
The first prompt before the trip encouraged some preemptive reflection, which may have eased their feelings of culture shock depending on the extent to which they critically reflected on their feelings. This prompt corresponded to the first self-portrait, which asked that students reflect on how they saw themselves at that time. These portraits were hand-written during class and turned in once completed. Approximately 20 minutes was given to students to complete the portrait and reflection.

The second prompt corresponded with the second self-portrait, which asked that students depict how they saw themselves in Ecuador, and generally how they were doing at that point in the trip. These reflections were also handwritten and turned in with their second self-portraits.

The third prompt corresponded with the quantitative survey used (which I discuss in further detail below). This prompt asked that the students reflect on the experiences that they considered while filling out the survey. This prompt was included at the end of the survey, which was distributed on paper to the students. The students were given approximately 30 minutes to complete the survey.

**Observation notes.** I took observation notes during relevant class discussions before the trip and during our time in Ecuador. Appendix E lists the types of prompts I considered while taking notes. These prompts included making notes regarding the emotions that students shared, how they interacted with each other and with Ecuadorians, and whether they mentioned experiencing culture shock directly. There were about 30 days worth of observational events, where single days included notes from the class discussion, cultural experiences, multiple students’ reflections (shared verbally each night to the whole group while in Ecuador), etc. I used a dual notation method with more factual based notes on the main portion of the page, and more subjective/reflective comments on those observations along the margins and/or in a different
color. In other research studies, this form of note-taking has allowed me the format to go back and add reflections later after I was able to more closely consider a situation.

I chose this type of data in particular help to better capture the “behavior” component of culture shock, which relates to social skills like communicating with host nationals (Ward et al., 2001). Additionally, I intended to use class discussions as a way to have participants work through their psychological adjustment to culture shock, which is greatly helped by improved relationships with co-nationals (Ward & Kennedy, 1994).

I took approximately 50 pages of handwritten observation notes in total. I then transcribed these notes and scrubbed for the students’ names before analysis.

**Quantitative data.** I collected the quantitative data based on a revised version of the Cultural Distance Index (RCDI) that I prepared for this study. In this section, I discuss this instrument, including its original form and how I specifically revised it, followed by the specific procedures I followed for collecting the quantitative data.

**Instrumentation.** Babiker, Cox and Miller (1980), in the field of psychiatry, originally created the Cultural Distance Index (CDI) to measure the distance between two cultures based on their social and physical components. Cultural distance has been found to have a predictive relationship with cross-cultural adaptation (Dunbar, 1994; Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Geeraert & Demoulin, 2013; Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward et al., 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 1999). The CDI was originally in the form of a questionnaire used as part of a structured interview. Babiker et al. (1980) identified 10 parameters based on concrete and objective aspects of daily living in a particular culture, as well as local customs and the physical environment. Differences based on morality and aesthetics for example were not included due to their difficulty in measuring.
The original parameters for the CDI were: climate, food, language, clothes, religion, educational level, material comfort, family structure and family life, courtship and marriage, and leisure activities. For each parameter, Babiker, Cox and Miller (1980) wrote a series of one to seven questions asking participants to compare a particular aspect of that parameter between their home and host culture. Then, for each response, interviewers rated the comments on a scale of one to three where one indicated high similarity between the cultures and three indicated no similarity. Babiker, Cox and Miller calculated average scores for each of the 10 parameters, resulting in a total possible CDI score of 30 (where 30 is the highest possible distance between cultures).

Mumford and Babiker (1998) revised the CDI to be a self-administered instrument. They narrowed the items down to two questions per parameter for 20 questions total. They also changed the answer format, providing a three-choice response format. They then scored the responses from zero to two, where zero indicated high similarity and two indicated no similarities. This resulted in possible total scores of 0-40. In their administration of this revised CDI to 380 British volunteers abroad, Mumford and Babiker determined that internal consistency, based on correlation coefficients and factor analysis, was appropriate. The correlation coefficients between the pairs of questions for each parameter were between 0.32-0.84, which were highly statistically significant. The scree plot strongly suggested a single factor solution for the ten parameters. External criterion validity was established by comparing the mean scores on the CDI to mean scores collected using the Culture Shock Questionnaire (Mumford & Babiker, 1998). Notably, they discussed a small but non-significant difference in female participants total scores compared to males (15.2 versus 13.2; t=1.92, p=0.056), but this became non-significant when accounting for the destination country (Gender as a main effect:
F=1.20, p=0.273). They concluded that the instrument is likely measuring aspects of cultural differences that are “not vulnerable to gender or other subjective bias” (p. 250-251).

Other instruments on cultural distance also exist. There are several indices for cultural distance (Kashima & Abu-Rayya, 2014) based on value dimensions such as intellectual autonomy (Hofstede, 1980) and individualism (Schwartz, 1994). However, these indices tend to be used in the business sector in order to smooth the transition of employees relocating internationally and other long-term cross-cultural business ventures. In other words, the nature of the cross-cultural contact—its goals, length of time and purpose—are fundamentally different from short-term study abroad programs. I would argue that being able to identify nuances in another culture’s value system in comparison to one’s own value system would require a level of knowledge about and interaction with that other culture that cannot be obtained through the study abroad program affiliated with this research study. Additionally, Hofstede’s set of dimensions to measure cultural distance—a frame that has been often used in the research (Ng, Lee & Soutar, 2007)—was found to not adequately measure perceptions of cultural distance (Suanet & Van de Vijvery, 2009), perhaps because of the points I have mentioned here. Additionally, the value-based indices by nature of their design are unable to capture the day-to-day experiences of sojourners and the extent to which these specific experiences influence the perceived cultural distance (Demes & Geeraert, 2014). The CDI also more closely measures cultural attributes associated with race, gender, and class such as material culture and gender roles. Since the purpose for this research was to identify how race, gender, and class relate to students’ experiences of culture shock, I selected the CDI as my quantitative instrument. Combining this instrument with a measure for students’ culture shock could then allow me to determine the
relationship between culture shock, cultural distance, and students’ demographics in terms of race, gender, and class.

I based my Revised Cultural Distance Index (Appendix F) largely on the more recent modification (Demes & Geeraert, 2014). Demes and Geeraert created a “Brief Perceived Cultural Distance Scale” using the original CDI and interviews with over 50 international staff members at the University of Essex. They then designed a 12-item scale where each item measured its own parameter of cultural distance: climate, natural environment, social environment, living, practicalities, food and eating, family life, social norms, values and beliefs, people, friends and language. They found that both sociocultural and psychological adaptation were both negatively correlated with cultural distance. The relationship between these types of adaptation and cultural distance seems to be logical: “Only those elements of the host culture that are different from the home culture will require adaptation. The larger the difference between two cultures, the greater the challenge to adapt” (p. 93).

To develop the Revised Cultural Distance Index (RCDI), I comparatively analyzed the parameters and affiliated prompts/examples provided by Mumford and Babiker’s (1998)’s CDI and Demes and Geeraert’s (2014) modified version. Table 3.3 displays a comparison between Demes and Geeraert’s CDI and my RCDI. I chose to display only these two versions of the CDI because my RCDI was largely based on the most recent version. Any changes that I made are noted in the table, and discussed further below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Item References</th>
<th>My Version of the RCDI</th>
<th>Response options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demes and Geeraert’s (2014) Instrument</td>
<td>My Version of the RCDI</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>The general attitudes toward foreigners are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>How friendly people are, how stressed or relaxed people are, attitudes toward foreigners</td>
<td>Social Environment</td>
<td>The pace of life (e.g. stressed, relaxed, etc.) is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Environment</td>
<td>Size of community, pace of life, noise</td>
<td>Social Norms</td>
<td>How to behave in public, style of clothes, what people think is funny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Norms</td>
<td>How to behave in public, style of clothes, what people think is funny</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>The main language is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Learning the language, understanding people, making yourself understood</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>English is spoken by</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.3 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food and Eating</td>
<td>What food is eaten, how food is eaten, time of meals</td>
<td>Similar to my culture, Somewhat different, Very different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values and Beliefs</td>
<td>What people think about religion and politics, what people think is right or wrong</td>
<td>Largely Christian, Mixed, Not Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material Culture</td>
<td>The role that religion plays in most people’s lives is</td>
<td>Similar to my culture, Somewhat greater/less, Affects all/no aspects of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do most people have electric appliances (e.g. TV, fridge, vacuum) at home?</td>
<td>Yes many, Yes some, No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making friends, amount of social interaction, what people do to have fun and relax</td>
<td>Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Life</td>
<td>How close family members are, how much time family spend together</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I added this parameter since cultural norms around courtship and marriage are based in gender. Mumford and Babiker’s (1998) CDI included both of these items.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Courtship and Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>Temperature, rainfall, humidity</td>
<td>Natural Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living</td>
<td>Hygiene, sleeping practices, how safe you feel</td>
<td>(I removed these items because our lodging was located in a Western style hotel.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicalities</td>
<td>Getting around, using public transport, shopping</td>
<td>(I removed these items because students were not required to complete these activities on their own while in Ecuador.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Between the two versions of the CDI by Mumford and Babiker (1998) and Demes and Geeraert (2014), there were a few unique parameters not represented in the other version. Mumford and Babiker (1998) included parameters for education, material culture, and courtship/marriage. In Demes and Geeraert’s (2014) modified version, the unique parameters were natural and social environments, living, practicalities, and people. All other parameters were repeated in both versions of the instrument: social norms, language, food and eating, values and beliefs, friends, and family life.

For my RCDI, I decided to eliminate the climate, natural environment, and practicalities parameters because they measured either sociocultural skills (e.g., getting around) or aspects that did not seem culturally based (e.g., climate). I also included the parameters for education, material culture, and courtship/marriage from Mumford and Babiker (1998). I included these parameters in my instrument because they are aspects of culture that relate to culturally based experiences of class (for education and material culture) and gender (courtship/marriage).

Next, I condensed the items from Demes and Geeraert’s (2014) instrument to two items per parameter, which was the original approach in the instrument by Mumford and Babiker (1998). Notably, I changed the phrasing of the baseline comparison from “US American culture” to “my culture.” Mumford and Babiker (1998) pointed out that changes might be necessary to make their UK version of the CDI prompts more relevant to the intended usage. However, beyond specifying the US American context, I decided to use the phrasing “my culture” in recognition of the cultural differences within the USA, particularly racially based differences. For example, religion plays a much larger roles in the lives of some racial minorities like African Americans and Asian Americans than it generally does in white people’s lives. The same can apply for respect for elders, which is a prompt embedded in the “family” parameter in the RCDI.
I also added an item to my RCDI to measure students’ self-rating of culture shock. This summative question asked students to quantify their overall feelings of culture shock on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is no culture shock at all and 5 is extremely high levels of culture shock. I provided a definition of culture shock to establish a consistent frame when students responded to this question: “Culture shock refers to anxiety, confusion, mental and emotional shock, and overall disorientation.” This question was added to get a general sense from students on how they would quantify their culture shock, since an item on this concept was not originally part of the CDI, and analyze the relationship between the self-rating of culture shock, the cultural distance identified, and the students’ demographics.

Finally, I added a set of demographic questions to the RCDI. I asked for the student’s name in order to help track who completed the assignment. These names were replaced with the pseudonyms after they turned in the instrument. Next, I asked for the student’s major, year of graduation, and whether they have traveled abroad before this trip (and how many times). I also added questions to measure students’ self-identification in terms of race, gender, and class. The question on race allowed for multiple answers for students who might identify as bi- or multiracial. I wrote the question about gender to allow for students to write their own gender identity in case students identified with a gender beyond the male-female binary. Then I provided three options for students’ class identification: lower/working, middle, and upper.

Quantitative collection procedures. I had originally planned both an electronic version of the instrument and a paper copy. The electronic version was hosted on Google Forms, which would have allowed me to easily transfer the data into SPSS since Google would have automatically populated the responses into a Google Excel document. I also prepared a paper version of the instrument. I copied the prompts from the Google Form into a Word document,
and brought copies with me to Ecuador. I intended for the paper version to be a backup in case the internet was unreliable in Ecuador, which is what happened. I ultimately decided to give the students the paper version of the survey because I was concerned about the slow internet speeds causing malfunctions while the students took the survey.

During some free time after morning activities, I passed out the survey to all of the students in the program. Since this survey was incorporated as a class activity, all students in the program were required to take it. Only those surveys that corresponded to participants in this study were used in the analyses. I instructed the students to fill out the survey using pens or pencils. Some of the students talked amongst themselves about some of the items. I then collected the surveys and later shared them with the other leadership in the program. Upon returning to the USA, I transferred the students’ responses to SPSS and later did a random check of the data to ensure accuracy. See Appendix F for the final version of the RCDI instrument with the additional culture shock self-rating prompt and demographic questions.

**Analysis Procedures**

In the following sections, I detail the procedures that I used in my two major stages of analysis, both of which included several analysis procedures. The “initial analyses” stage refers to the analyses I completed for each strand of data collected, i.e. arts-based, qualitative, and quantitative. The “integration analyses” refers to the analyses completed during the integration stage when the results from the previous analysis stage were combined in different ways.

**Initial analyses.** After I collected the data sets and prepared them for analysis (as I discussed above), I analyzed the data from the most inductive of approaches to the most deductive of approaches. In other words, I started with analyzing the arts-based data, followed by qualitative data, and finished with the quantitative data. This was an intentional ordering to try to
limit the impact of the analysis of one form of data on another. I intended to identify findings from each data set first before I investigated how the data sets converged or diverged, which was the primary purpose of my integration analyses. Still, I anticipated some influence across, plus the influence of my own frames, so for these reasons I kept memos throughout the whole research process. These memos were documented either in my handwritten research journal or in memos in NVivo, which was used for the qualitative and integration analyses. Before analyzing any of the data, I assigned pseudonyms to all of the students’ work who consented, and kept a table of this correspondence separate from the rest of the data.

**Arts-based analysis.** My analysis of the students’ self-portraits was initially guided by three research questions:

- How do students visually depict their culture shock?
- What visual components of race, gender, and class are present in students’ self-portraits?
- How do they discuss these components?

However, after discussing the portraits with the students during their individual interviews, I became more interested in how the students represented themselves differently across their identities of race, gender, and class, rather than specifically how these identities were represented in the portraits. This shifting in my focus was the result of noticing differences in how students portrayed themselves, particularly across race and class. My research questions then changed to the following:

- How do students visually depict themselves and their culture shock?
- What are the differences across race, gender, and class in how students visually represented themselves?
- How do they discuss these differences and how they chose to portray themselves?
These questions were then addressed using both the visual data (each of the self-portraits for the students) and the text-based data (students’ self-reflections turned in with their portraits and any further elaborations on the portraits given during their interview). Table 3.4 presents which research questions correspond to which data source and who analyzed the data to answer that question.

### Table 3.4 How the Arts-Based Research Questions Were Answered by Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Form of Data</th>
<th>Source of Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do students visually depict themselves and their culture shock?</td>
<td>Self-portraits</td>
<td>My hand coding†; students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the differences across race, gender, and class in how students visually represented themselves?</td>
<td>Self-portraits</td>
<td>My hand coding†; students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do they discuss these differences and how do they choose to portray themselves?</td>
<td>Self-reflections for the portraits; student interviews</td>
<td>My hand coding†; students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†In the case where I analyzed the self-portraits by hand, my interpretations were verified using the students’ self-reflections as well as during the interviews with the students. This was to ensure I accurately identified what the students were representing and potential rationales.

In my analysis of the arts-based data, I used a critical visual methodology (Guillemin & Westall, 2008; Rose, 2001). This method of analysis is based on three principles. First, the researcher must take the images seriously, not as a “distraction” from “real science” (Prosser,
1998, p. 98). Second, the researcher should discuss the images in terms of their social environment because “visual representations both depend on and produce social inclusions and exclusions” (Rose, 2001, p. 16). Third, the analyses of the images must be situated within the context of the analyzer(s). In other words, the analysis needs to be discussed in the context of how the subjectivity of the analyzer influenced it.

Guillemin and Westall (2008) modified Rose’s original set of questions to guide the critical visual analysis. Their questions are presented below.

- What is being shown? What are the components of the image? How are they arranged?
- What relationships are established between the components of the image?
- What use is made of color? What colors are used? What is the significance to the drawer of the colors used?
- What do the different components of the image signify? What is being represented?
- What knowledges are being deployed?
- Whose knowledges are excluded from this representation? (p. 125)

Using these questions, I analyzed the self-portraits for themes, powerful imagery, and to help identify basic elements in the portraits that might be of interest. Then, using the CRT perspective, I considered how these elements might relate to race, gender and/or class. For example, in the pilot study, which used this same analysis framework, I noted one African American student portrayed the amazed responses of Ecuadorian children to her hair, wanting to come up and touch it. According to my colleagues of color, such reactions regarding black hair are experienced by black women regularly. I also anticipated seeing more examples of white privilege operates while abroad, such as how students “put on” cultural signs and symbols. This was demonstrated in the pilot study through students’ portrayal of themselves in local styled clothing and hair styles even though they did not necessarily get the opportunity to actually wear the clothing.
After I analyzed the self-portraits on their own, I reread the images with the students’ reflections. I originally identified these two steps as separate to allow for my own initial reading of the visual data and then a reading grounded in the original intentions and meanings from the students. I expected that students’ own discussions of their work might contradict my own analyses. In these cases, I utilized my dialectic paradigmatic approach to discuss why there might be such contradictions and attest to them appropriately. Also, I discussed these varying interpretations of the portraits in the student interviews. I used this strategy both as a member check as well as a method for prompting further discussion.

Finally, while I do have some background in arts history and visual analysis, I shared some of the portraits with others. For example, I shared the portraits with the other leaders on the trip within the context of the portraits as examples of students’ work. During these discussions, the leaders offered their own interpretations for what they saw. We also discussed some of my interpretations. I also shared a smaller number of portraits with colleagues in communication and arts education. In these instances, I removed any identifying information from the portraits. I shared some portraits with these people who were external to the program as a method of independent analysis and to verify some of my findings from the visual analyses. The findings from these discussions are discussed in the findings chapter.

**Qualitative analysis.** Next, I analyzed the text-based qualitative data, i.e., my observation notes and the students’ reflections on their self-portraits. (I discuss the procedures for the interviews in the integration section below.) The research questions that guided my analysis of the qualitative data were:

- How do students discuss their experiences of culture shock in relation to race, gender, and class?
• How are their narratives of salient moments coded by race, gender, and class?

The goal for this analysis was to identify particular nuances to the students’ experiences that related to race, gender, and class. This analysis was based primarily on my own coding of the qualitative data using NVivo. I also included analyses from the students on their own experiences, which I discuss further in the interview section.

I used a general, interpretive based approach, with open coding (Hatch, 2002). This open coding utilized a “contextualizing” strategy, i.e. ensuring that codes are grounded in their original contexts (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 253). The purpose of an interpretivist analysis is to describe a sense of “the whole” of the phenomenon. This process entails journaling on impressions gleaned from reading and rereading the data and research journals (Hatch, 2002). This strategy was chosen based on my intention to ground this research in a realist paradigmatic approach which emphasizes contexts. This also related to the emphasis of the context and impact of the research in arts-based research. Given the diverse identities and experiences abroad among the participants in this study, I speculated that their individual contexts may greatly influence their experiences of culture shock. Therefore, I anticipated that in some cases it will be necessary for me to discuss the essence of culture shock at the individual level as well as the group level.

Recognizing my own skill in working by hand, I printed out the journals per person and read through those and my observation notes first, making notes directly on the paper copies. Then, I used NVivo to help manage the data and coding tracking, coming up with major thematic descriptions regarding how students explicitly and implicitly discussed race, gender and class in relation to their experiences with culture shock. Qualitative research in general has been argued as informing CRT in how colorblindness operates (Parker, 1998). In terms of this research, I anticipated my use of CRT to highlight colorblindness in students’ experiences of culture shock.
In other words, I anticipated students would discuss and write about comparisons they see between k-12 students and peers from home and the same from Ecuador. Additionally, I anticipated finding discussions that reveal students’ beliefs in meritocracy through their journals. Meritocracy is the belief that through hard work, a person can overcome any obstacle, such as living in poverty or facing racial or gender-based discrimination, if they work hard enough.

**Quantitative analysis.** Then, I analyzed the quantitative data. To do this, I copied students’ responses from the paper version of the survey into SPSS. To ensure accuracy, I randomly checked the data were checked later myself by comparing the paper survey to the responses I recorded into SPSS. The quantitative data analysis was guided by the following research questions:

- Is there a relationship between how students quantify the cultural distance between their own culture and Ecuadorian culture, their culture shock, and their own racial, gender, and class based identities?
- Is there a relationship between how students quantify their culture shock and their own racial, gender, and class-based identities?

The purpose then for my quantitative analyses was to identify any relationship between the specific identities of the students and how they quantified their culture shock and/or the total cultural distance they felt between their own culture and Ecuadorian culture.

It is important to mention that three students had to retake some portions of the quantitative instrument. This took place during the interview, and therefore sometime after the students had already returned from Ecuador. In one case, the student accidentally skipped a page of responses. In the other two cases, the students revealed in the interview that they responded to the survey by comparing American mainstream culture to Ecuadorian culture. As discussed in
above, I intentionally gave instructions for the students to compare Ecuadorian culture to their own culture (worded as “my culture” in the instrument). The original instrument was phrased as “American” culture. I chose to use “my culture” instead in recognition that mainstream national culture does not generally represent the cultural values of non-dominant groups, such as lower/working class people and non-white people. In the case of the two students who retook the survey during the interview, their total RCDI scores decreased.

I calculated the maximum, minimum, mean, and median score values for each item and parameter, as well as looked at measures of variability such as standard deviation. This method of analysis is consistent with other research that has used previous versions of the CDI (e.g. Mumford & Babiker, 1998). I investigated for any relationships between students’ responses and their identity-based demographics by grouping the scores by demographics. For example, I reviewed students’ responses to particular items based on their identification as working class or upper class to see if there were any class-based differences.

Integration analysis. I define “integration” as the intentional mixing of arts-based, qualitative, and quantitative research approaches (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutman, & Hanson, 2008). In my research design, I integrated my research approaches at the “data analysis” and “interpretation” stages (Creswell et al., 2008, p. 173).

My primary emphasis of this research study was to create a more complex and rich conceptualization of culture shock in relation to race, gender, and class out of the convergences and divergences in the different data sets used. The research questions that guided my integration analyses of the data were the following:

• Is there a relationship between the frequency of race, gender, and class codes and the extent of cultural distance the students identified?
In what ways do the three strands of data converge and diverge in revealing the relationships between experiences of culture shock and race, gender, and class identities? Therefore, since my goal for this research was largely based in the results from the integration stage, I used multiple strategies for bringing the data together in a kind of dialectic dialogue in order to reach the most complex meta-inferences. I used three integrative strategies: interviews with students, data transformation, and triangulating the themes from each data set to identify convergences and divergences. Due to the timing of the data collection coming close to the end of the semester and therefore near the summer break, I completed the interviews first in order to catch the students before we went too far into the summer term, which would have made it more difficult to coordinate times with them. Then, I continued on with the data transformation and finally the data matrix. Throughout these integration strategies, I considered the potential for intersectionality, or how race, gender and class relate/influence one another. In the subsections below, I discuss these strategies in more detail. By the end of my integration analyses, I found three major categories of findings: a rich picture of the student participants’ experiences of culture shock, how the students intentionally crafted their self-images in their portraits and how they carried themselves in Ecuador, and the impact of students’ interactions with one another and with Ecuadorians. I discuss these categories in more detail in the findings chapter.

**Interviews with students.** The first integration strategy I utilized was through interviews with the students. I conducted the interviews between one week and 2 months after returning from Ecuador. I had originally planned to complete the interviews within a few weeks of returning, but I encountered difficulties managing students’ schedules since several had returned home for the summer.
I scheduled each interview with the students individually. I coordinated most of the interview times with the student participants before we left for Ecuador (though the interviews would take place after the trip) to ensure that I had enough participants through the entire study. The interviews lasted approximately 1-1.5 hours. I first began by asking the students how they were doing, if they talked about Ecuador often, and what kinds of questions they were often asked. Then, I gave students the prompt for the final portrait. Once the student was done with the portrait, I asked them to elaborate on it. I then showed the student their other two portraits and their quantitative survey responses. I asked the students what they saw in the portraits, which prompted discussions on how the portraits compared as well as elaborations on why students portrayed certain things. I also prepared questions for member checking during my initial analysis that I shared during this time. Finally, I asked the students a series of questions geared toward having them analyze their experiences on the trip connecting race, gender, and class to culture shock. For example, I asked the students how they saw race operating on the trip, or influencing their experiences. I then offered time for the students to ask me questions or talk about anything else they felt was important for my research. I concluded the interview with telling them about the next steps (e.g., analyzing, writing), and told them I would be inviting them to the dissertation defense. Finally, due to my short timeline between finishing the interviews and writing this dissertation, I hired two people to transcribe the interviews.

These interviews with the students served three purposes. First, they provided the space for me to check in with the students to see how they were adjusting to being back home. Second, I used the interviews to collect the third self-portrait, as discussed in the arts-based data collection section above. Third, I used the interviews as an opportunity to have the students analyze their own self-portraits and experiences on the trip.
In general, having the students analyze their own data served as a mode of member checking. I asked, for instance, if students agreed with some of the codes or themes I found in my initial analyses. Thus, these interviews then served as a method of validation with the participant community.

I asked the students to analyze their own experiences and self-portraits in order to include their voices in my findings. It was important for me as a feminist to return to the students for their input on their experiences, which is also a value shared by researchers who use a transformative-emancipatory paradigm (Mertens, 2003; Shannon-Baker, 2015b). I saw this approach to analyzing the data as a way to honor the relationships I built with the students and honor their contributions to my research.

**Data transformation.** For this second integration strategy, I “quantitized” the qualitative results, which is a process of transforming the qualitative data into numbers for statistical analysis (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 27). I used this approach to statistically measure if there is a relationship between the frequency of codes in the qualitative data (e.g., Miles & Huberman, 1994) and the extent of cultural distanced identified by the students. In other words, this integration strategy was designed to answer the first mixed methods research question.

For example, in NVivo, I ran a matrix query to quantitize the qualitative data in order to see which students wrote about or discussed how they crafted their own self-portraits (which is a finding I discuss in the next chapter). In other words, I was interested in which students mentioned in our interview or in their reflections how their self-portrait was influenced by what others might see of them. During my initial round of analyses, I termed this phenomenon “mediated images” because students’ images seemed to be filtered through what they thought others saw of them. During this analysis, I asked: Which students, for example, talked about
being concerned about how others’ thought of them, or chose to look a certain way to influence how others would interpret them? Specifically, I ran this query to see the difference based on race (grouping students either as white or students of color) and used my codes for “mediated images,” “small,” “self and their mediated images” and “people.” I ran similar queries in NVivo, which I discuss in my findings chapter.

**Data triangulation.** I define triangulation within a mixed methods research design as intentionally converging the data or results of different data collection methods in order to identify either corroboration between the data/results or divergence (which would require further analysis) (Greene, 2007; Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989). I used triangulation in this study as an integration strategy to analyze across the arts-based, qualitative, and quantitative data sets and results from the initial analyses. This integration strategy gave me the opportunity to clearly identify potential convergences and divergences between the data sets, which strengthened the validity of my research (Greene, 2007). As a result, I used this integration strategy to answer the second mixed methods research question. To visualize these comparisons across the data sets, I created data matrices. Table 3.5 is an example of what I had anticipated a data matrix might look like. This table uses findings from my pilot study. Table 4.7 in the next chapter is an example of a data matrix that compared a significant finding from my qualitative data to students’ quantitative data.
**Table 3.5.** Example of a Data Matrix (Shannon-Baker, 2015a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arts-Based Data</th>
<th>Qualitative Data</th>
<th>Quantitative Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Contrasts”</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparing city and town</td>
<td>Pace in Quito was “too fast” (mentioned by a few students)</td>
<td>64.7% felt very to extremely competent in adapting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(not in self-portraits)</td>
<td>Comparing Ecuador to coming home – had a large impact on reverse culture shock</td>
<td>(not in survey)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicates the origin of the key finding or theme that the cross-comparison was based upon.

**Addressing Validity Concerns**

I used Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) notion of *trustworthiness* as a frame for establishing validity throughout this research process. According to Lincoln and Guba, trustworthiness of a study is based on four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. *Credibility* refers to how confident a reader can be in the “truth” of a study. My study is credible because I had extended, close contact with the students during the semester-long course and the 9-day trip to Ecuador. I carried my research journal with me during all activities to record my observations as the program progressed. I also shared my initial findings with the students themselves during our interviews as a mechanism for member-checking. This entailed sharing my interpretations of their self-portraits, sharing some of the quantitative results around what groups of students had the most/least culture shock, and highlighting key words that seemed to be repeated throughout the qualitative data. Upon sharing these results, I asked the student participants for their interpretation and reactions. Additionally, I discussed specific pieces of data with the program leaders and several of my colleagues for varying perspectives on the
interpretation of some data. Further, my use of an established quantitative instrument, the Cultural Distance Index, lent this study credibility in terms of the quantitative methods.

**Transferability.** *Transferability* refers to the ability of the findings to be applied to other contexts. Given the somewhat exploratory nature of analyzing students’ experiences of culture shock across race, gender, and class (I could find no other studies that used this approach), I paid particular attention to how I discussed the findings and conclusions. I sought out the ways in which these identities could influence experiences of culture shock as a mechanism to encourage further research into this area. The specific demographics of a group and the nature of the program may influence the manifestations and strategies enacted in response to students’ culture shock.

**Dependability.** *Dependability* refers to whether a study has reliability, and can be repeated in another context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I paid particular attention throughout the research inquiry on the procedures I used, my rationales for how/why I chose certain approaches, and documented my process throughout in my research journal.

**Confirmability.** Finally, *confirmability* refers to the researcher’s ability to avoid bias in the interpretation of the data and results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used the interviews with the students as a strategy to confirm my findings and interpretation with the students, especially for the students’ self-portraits. I also used these interviews as a way to incorporate their analysis on their own data and experiences into my findings. I intentionally included this strategy to honor my feminist perspective on this research because feminist research values the input of participants’ voices regarding their own data (Hatch, 2002). I also used triangulation methods of analysis as a strategy to strengthen this study’s confirmability (Greene, 2007).
Mixed methods validity. Although Lincoln and Guba (1985) provided me with specific qualities of valid research, mixed methods research designs also have specific considerations for validity that are important for me to discuss here.

This study addressed three types of legitimation for mixed methods: inside-outside, sample integration and multiple validities (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). Inside-outside legitimation refers to the balance of the researcher’s insider status within a group or community while also utilizing an outsider perspective (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). For the inside-outside legitimation, my status as somewhat an insider in the group—someone who has been with the group throughout the program, involved in discussions and known to the students—provided me with access to an insider status. At the same time, I utilized an outsider’s perspective through an externally designed survey instrument in the quantitative strand. Additionally, the arts-based graduate students that analyzed the images provided a further outsider’s lens on the data. The sample integration approach to legitimation for mixed methods research refers to the quality of meta-inferences available as a result of the sample designs used in the data collection strategies (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). In considering this issue of sample integration, I used the same sample for both the qualitative and quantitative strands. Finally, I addressed multiple validities, or the use of all forms of data to substantiate one’s meta-inferences (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006), by utilizing multiple integration strategies that relied on the use of all of the forms of data I collected, i.e., arts-based, qualitative, and quantitative.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) also offer considerations for validity when merging data at various stages in the research. In this research study, I specifically addressed three concerns that they raise. First, they raise the issue of inadequately converging the data. To address this
concern for validity, I utilized many approaches and considerations while integrating the data as discussed above. Integrating the data in several ways was important in order to appropriately demonstrate the convergences and divergences of the data, which is at the heart of this research study. Second, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) discuss the importance of discussing and “resolving” divergent findings in the final write up of research. I see this as a crux of this research study since I was as interested in the divergences in the data as I was with the convergences, as well as how the data converged/diverged with the literature as a whole.

Third, a general issue related to validity worth discussion here is that of missing data. As I discussed earlier in the section about sampling, I removed the students who consented but did not complete the study. I had two students in this case. One student told me that they did not have any time to complete the post-program interview. The other student did not respond to my email inquiries about scheduling an interview. Given the importance of the interview to the data set and analysis, I chose to not include these two students. In the case of the second student, I speculated that her decision to not respond was at least in part influenced by the particularly difficult experience she had with a newly discovered allergy to Ecuadorian fruit. In her reflection on her quantitative responses, in which she gave her culture shock a score of 4 out of 5, she said that her experience of the allergy was “overwhelming” and highly influenced her responses. Although analyzing her experiences would have added an important physical dimension to the study of culture shock (since she self-identified that her heightened experiences of culture shock related to medical issues she experienced in Ecuador), it was more important for me to honor her decision not to follow up with our final interview.
Chapter 4: Findings

The findings I discuss in this chapter reflect both my own analyses and the analyses provided by the students during their interviews. I grouped the findings into three major categories, each with subcategories of themes: a rich picture of culture shock, intentionally crafted self-images, and interactions with others. The category of a rich picture of culture shock refers to my overall findings for how the student participants represented their culture shock in the three sets of data. In this category, I discuss how the students quantified a range of amounts of culture shock that related to their identity across race and class in particular. The student participants’ portraits showed how their culture shock manifested differently across race and class through differing facial expressions. I found that some white students discussed themselves as “feeling small,” representing their first experiences as a minority.

The second major category of my findings was based on how the student participants intentionally crafted their self-images, both on paper and in their daily lives within Ecuador. The students’ first self-portraits portrayed how they would introduce themselves to others, whereas their later portraits represented more race-based distinctions in self-representation. For example, I found that while students of color discussed intentionally representing themselves in a certain way in several of the data sources from the beginning, the white students did not start addressing this until after we arrived in Ecuador. These race-based distinctions can also be seen in the visual tropes present in the student participants’ self-portraits. This category of intentional image crafting also refers to another finding regarding how two of the female participants intentionally performed their gender while in Ecuador in order to assimilate better to Ecuadorian values.

The third major category refers to how the student participants represented and reflected on their interactions with others in relation to their experiences with culture shock. I separated
this major category into two sections: interactions with their peers in the study and interactions with Ecuadorians. I discuss how the student participants’ relationships with their peers impacted their experiences of culture shock in two important ways. The manifestation of culture shock in the form of frequent complaints by some students forced the students of color and the working class students to self-segregate. This then prompted the students to find comfort in their peers, thereby alleviating their own culture shock. How the student participants represented Ecuador and Ecuadorians, and their interactions with them, reflected how they well they adjusted to their culture shock both in-country and upon returning home. For example, their third self-portraits represented a range of experiences with reverse culture shock as seen in how well they integrated representations of Ecuador/Ecuadorians in their portrait.

**A Rich and Complex Picture of Culture Shock**

The overall purpose of this research was to create a more complex and rich picture of culture shock that specifically addresses the influence of race, gender, and class on students’ experiences. I found that the student participants’ culture shock: varied widely in terms of how they quantified it; was represented and manifested in various ways and in response to various factors; and was far more connected to their relationships with their peers in the program than is represented in the literature on culture shock overall (e.g., Paola & Lemmer, 2013; Ward et al., 2001). I discuss these in further detail in the subsections below.

It is important to first discuss that some of the student participants had difficulty with the term “culture shock.” Some of the students were reluctant to use the term due to their inability to fully understand the concept or see how parts of their experience were examples of it. However, the students who did have a nuanced understanding of culture shock were able to provide support to their peers. For example, during our last evening in Otavalo, one of the students started crying.
Two of the other students sitting by her comforted her by saying that it was OK to cry; that she was just experiencing “culture shock.” In this instance, students were able to identify the signs of culture shock—in this case, seemingly spontaneous crying during a meal—and help their peers feel both validated in their experience of culture shock and supported by their peers. Thus, the student participants’ understandings of culture shock, and thereby their ability to self-report on it in the three sets of data, should be interpreted carefully. In some cases, as the example above highlights, students came to a more nuanced understanding of culture shock by talking with one another about it. I suspected the same to apply to students’ conversations with me about my research. Still, they were able to represent their experiences of it and observations of others’ culture shock in the data.

**Quantifying students’ culture shock.** The quantitative instrument used, the Revised Cultural Distance Index (RCDI), allowed me to analyze three sets of data: demographics, an overall score for students’ self-identified culture shock experienced, and a composite score for the RCDI (or the total cultural distance they identified between their own culture and Ecuadorian culture). A reliability analysis of the items pertaining to the RCDI portion of the instrument revealed a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.765, which shows that the instrument had good internal consistency. To identify if specific questions could be removed from analysis to achieve a higher level of internal consistency, I analyzed corrected item-total correlations. Most corrected item-total correlations ranged from 0.237-0.701. Negative corrected item-total correlations were found for main language (-0.204) and main religion (-0.063). Other low item-total correlations were found for the items pertaining to women’s clothing (0.125) and whether free education was available (0.188). Although these items would have slightly improved the total instrument’s internal consistency, I opted for including them in my final analysis of the quantitative data since
the other sets of data pointed to the importance of the language difference for some participants’ experiences of culture shock. Cultural differences in terms of dress based on gender norms was also important to two students (discussed later in the chapter).

Table 4.1 presents the descriptive statistics for the student participants’ culture shock and total RCDI scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total RCDI Score†</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>37.75</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture Shock Score*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Possible scores ranged from 18-54, where a higher score indicates greater cultural distance. *Possible scores ranged from 1-5, where a higher score indicates higher levels of culture shock.

Pearson correlation coefficient analysis revealed that the students’ total RCDI score was positively correlated to their culture shock score ($r=0.701$, $p=.002$). In other words, as a participant identified more cultural distance between their own culture and Ecuadorian culture, the more culture shock they were likely to experience. This relationship is consistent with previous research (e.g., Demes & Geeraert, 2014).

Responses by race. My analysis of the quantitative data by race suggested a relationship between a student’s race identification, their total RCDI score and amount of culture shock they experienced (Table 4.2).
Table 4.2. Comparing Race to Overall Culture Shock and Total RCDI Score, by Total RCDI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>TOTAL RCDI†</th>
<th>Culture Shock††</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lidia</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dakota</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brinae</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Lower/ Working Class</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naiomi</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelby</td>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>32*</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>31*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Possible scores ranged from 18-54.
††Possible scores ranged from 1-5.
*These were students who had to retake some or all of the RCDI portion of the survey because they originally answered based on American mainstream culture instead of their own culture.

Table 4.2 shows that most students of color scored in the lower half of the total RCDI scores collected for the group. This means that students of color tended to identify less cultural difference between their own culture and Ecuadorian culture compared to white students.
Although at the time of the interviews I could not definitively provide this finding to the students (since some had to retake the survey), several of the students of color said that they anticipated this finding based on their expectations that they would empathize with Ecuadorians based on shared experiences of race- and ethnic-based discrimination. The one white student whose RCDI score fell in the lower half of the group, Naiomi, said during her interview that much of her experiences of intense culture shock happened at the beginning of the trip. This was the first trip she had ever taken on a plane and the first significant time she had been away from her family. She said that over time in Ecuador, these feelings of culture shock decreased.

**Responses by class.** Twelve out of 14 of the students self-identified as middle class. One student identified as lower/working class, and one student identified as upper class. I could not make any determination on whether there was a relationship between a participant’s class and their culture shock or RCDI score because there was only one lower/working class and one upper class participant in this study. I examined these two participants’ individual responses to particular items on the survey, and found some differences in their responses for certain parameters (Table 4.3). These differences were analyzed by comparing scores between the students who identified as upper \( (n = 1) \) and lower/working class \( (n = 1) \). Given that there was only one student in each of these categories, these analyses would need to be replicated in a future study to determine if these responses were due to other individual factors or to class directly.

First, the student who identified as lower/working class identified that Ecuadorians had a similar amount of respect for the elderly their own culture \( (score = 1) \). Notably, only students of color answered in this same way (though not all). The upper class student, on the other hand, identified the level of respect for elderly Ecuadorians as much different \( (score = 3) \) to her own
culture. Similar results were also found for considering the amount family closeness, or time spent together. The working class student identified that family closeness in Ecuador was similar to her own culture. With one exception, all of the other students who answered similarly were students of color. Conversely, the upper class student identified that Ecuadorian family closeness was very different to her own culture. Responses regarding the standard of living also varied in terms of class and race. Only white students selected “much better or worse” (score = 3) in comparing Ecuadorians' material culture and standard of living with their own culture; the upper class student was one of these students. The one lower/working class student and one student of color identified Ecuadorian standard of living as similar to their own cultures (score = 2).

Table 4.3. Comparing Student Responses to Individual Items by Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Respect for Elderly†</th>
<th>Standard of Living†</th>
<th>Family Closeness†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Lower/Working Class</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lidia</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Possible scores were 1-3, where higher scores indicate greater cultural distance.

Expressing culture shock: Facial expressions and representing life and stressors at home. Whereas the quantitative results provided a quantifiable understanding of the student participants’ experiences of culture shock, the arts-based and qualitative data provided more depth in terms of understanding this phenomenon from the their perspectives. In the arts-based data, the range of emotions that the students experienced can be seen in their portrayal of facial expressions. My initial reaction to analyzing the second set of portraits (i.e. the portraits drawn during their time in Ecuador) was that there seemed to be a number of faceless people. One
student did not include any realistic representation of herself. Four other students included people with no faces or facial expressions. Teresa for example portrayed herself in front of a chalk board with no expression (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. Detail of Teresa’s second self-portrait.

Among the 13 students who did portray themselves, seven are smiling (including one with a half-smile) and six had no facial expressions. Margaret, who had health problems while on the trip, portrayed herself with a half-smile (Figure 4.2). The other half of her face had a frown in relation to how “small” she felt while in Ecuador. According to our interview together, Margaret felt that she did not “really have time to think” about her emotions on the trip, a point other participants also mentioned in reference to their portrayal of faceless people. I interpreted this to mean that they were unsure as to how to portray their emotions, and that they were still processing their experiences of culture shock.

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1 I confirmed the description of these expressions (e.g., “smiling”) with each student during our interview by asking, “How would you describe your facial expression here?”
In their third portraits, several students portrayed the various “stressors” as Alice put it, or directions they were being pulled in now that they were back home. Megan, for example, portrayed herself being pulled in several directions: toward home, friends, and her university life (Figure 4.3). The thought bubbles that surrounded Alice in her first two portraits are again represented in her third, where she is thinking about Ecuador, family and friends, and her future (Figure 4.4). Naiomi’s portrait shows her “past,” “present,” and “future” selves in relation to strips of paper (Figure 4.5). In the interview, she explained that her past was filled with anxiety, symbolized by the multiple colored strips of paper. As she approaches her future, she said that she is becoming more of “one color”; over time, she said the she comes to know herself better. In
these examples, the student participants’ depictions of a range of emotions—from half smiles to anxiety to no expressions—demonstrates how complex their feelings of culture shock were.

Figure 4.3. Megan’s third self-portrait portrays her mother in the top right saying, “Come back!”
Figure 4.4. Alice’s first, second, and third portraits. In her first portrait, her thought bubbles read from clockwise from the left bottom: 1) Soccer, RA, lazy, PHD?; 2) Autism Speaks; 3) Family, mom, dad; 4) what if…?; and question marks throughout. In the second portrait, there are faint question marks throughout the background. In the third portrait, her thought bubbles from the left clockwise: 1) other things that matter…; 2) family & friends; 3) Ecuador; and 4) school, life, grad school, major change, and several question marks.
“I feel small here, like a minority”: (White) Students’ use of words such as “small” to describe their second self-portraits. While reading their second self-portrait reflections, I was struck by the number of times a few of the students used the word “small” or similar words (i.e., “little” and “miniscule”). After analyzing the text in NVivo, I found that five students used some variation of this word. Margaret used this type of word five times; Dakota used it four times. Both students were the only ones among the five who described themselves as small. The others referred to their world, “perspective,” and “struggles” as small compared to what they saw or learned in Ecuador.

The race-based distinction between the students who used words like “small” in these portrait reflections is important. Four of the five students who used this language were white students. During our interview, Dakota elaborated on her second portrait and why she wrote that she felt “small” while in Ecuador. She said, “I felt so small and so - just different. I felt... we
obviously were the minority there but in my life I had never felt like a minority anywhere. And that's a strange feeling to have.” Margaret, in her second portrait reflection, wrote how the “small half” of her, which referred to the “emotional/mental” half, meant that she felt “small” in Ecuador, “like a minority.”

This “like a minority” feeling, experienced by several of the white students, prompted some very emotional responses. Dakota explicitly connected her experience of feeling small to culture shock. She said she felt “very anxious” going to new schools each day and continuously trying new things. “There was always a sense of anxiety because I didn't know. [...] And I was emotional a lot of the time and I couldn't explain.”

I found that this sense of anxiety and culture shock experienced acutely by these students who used “small” in their second self-portrait reflections was supported by the quantitative data. In Table 4.4, I related the RCDI and culture shock scores among the students who used “small” or similar language in their second self-portrait reflections. Among the five students who used this word, three are in the top four for identifying the most cultural distance between their own culture and Ecuadorian culture. It is worth noting here that the student who had the highest total cultural distance score, Lidia, wrote a 52-word reflection, which is about 1/3 of the length of the other three students. This is not to say that she would have certainly used “small” or similar words in her reflection had she written more. Instead, I argue that the length difference between her reflection and the other students in the top quadrant must be taken into consideration when interpreting this finding.
Table 4.4. Instances of “Small” and Synonyms in Students’ Second Self-Portrait Reflections Related to Their Quantitative Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of References</th>
<th>Example Quotes</th>
<th>Total RCDI Score†</th>
<th>Culture Shock††</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>“I feel small here, like a minority”</td>
<td>43*</td>
<td>4**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The small part of me doesn’t carry myself well”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I drew myself so small because since I’ve been here I’ve felt selfish”</td>
<td>45*</td>
<td>5**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“My perception of what little I know about the world”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dakota</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>“My perspective on life and the world I live in is so small compared to all of the other many countries and cultures of the world”</td>
<td>43*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brinae</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“My picture represents my ‘little bubble’ in [local city], OH”</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naiomi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“My struggles in my country are miniscule”</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“My perspective on life and the world I live in is so small compared to all of the other many countries and cultures of the world”</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Possible scores ranged from 18-54.
††Possible scores ranged from 1-5.
*These students scored in the top quadrant for total cultural distance score among the other students in the study.
**These students rated their culture shock at the highest among their peers in the study.

Among the students who used “small” or similar words in their second self-portrait reflections, two students (Dakota and Margaret) also listed their culture shock as either a 4 or 5 out of 5. Notably, these two students used this language throughout their reflections on their second portrait, whereas the other students only used it once. Dakota and Margaret were the only students in the study who quantified their culture shock this high.

At least with this particular group of students, use of the word “small” and other similar words in their second self-portraits seemed to correlate to their experiences of culture shock. The
students who used “small” or similar words more often were also the students who reported feeling greater culture shock compared to their peers. This phenomenon was especially acute for white students (who were four of the five students who used this language), who were experiencing this level of cross-cultural interaction for the first time.

**Through the Eyes of Others: How the Students Intentionally Crafted Their Self-Images**

The second major category of my findings related to how the student participants intentionally crafted their own self-images. Many of the themes from my arts-based analyses of the students’ self-portraits were based on how the students represented themselves—either intentionally or unintentionally. This analysis included what the students portrayed with themselves, what choices they made about how to portray themselves, and how they talked about their portraits in their reflections and during our interviews. I found that students often referred to watching others or being watched. For example, one of the black men, Jeremiah, centered his self-portrait on how he watched the race-based segregation become more and more prominent among the student participants as the trip continued on (Figure 4.6). He attributed watching others to his being “a lover of social psychology,” according to the second portrait reflection. I was particularly interested in this sense of watching others or being watched for its reference to “the gaze” of others (Foucault, 1999; Garland-Thompson, 2009; Mulvey, 1990), and especially how the students responded to my “gaze” as a researcher observing their experiences.
In another example, Teresa, a white female, drew several eyes watching her at the chalkboard (Figure 4.2). In our interview, she said that she “felt like all the eyes were on [her]” during the trip. She felt like the eyes of her peers were “on her” when she shared deeply personal stories about growing up during one of our nightly debriefings. She also felt like the students in the classes she taught in would watch her closely. The weight of this watching can be seen in the size comparison between the eyes and Teresa’s body in Figure 4.2 above. Each of the single eyes are nearly as large as if not larger than her own body.

In a third example, during a nightly debriefing, Rachel, a black female, spoke about how she watched the others on the trip as a learning strategy. Another student of color, Beth, then commented saying, “Don’t worry, so is Peggy,” as I sat in the back of the meeting space with my observation notebook. The students were conscious not only of how I was watching as part of my research, but also how they were being watched and watching others.

In response to the pressure of this watching, the students intentionally crafted their presentation of themselves, both on paper and in their daily lives. They did this with a focus on: “introducing” themselves in the first portrait, as students phrased it; crafting race in terms of
which students (white and students of color) talked about intentionally crafting their self-images and how this changed over time; placing themselves “in the world” as Lidia, a white student, described it, or the visual phenomenon of white students portraying symbols about Earth and the world while in Ecuador; and the performance of gender while in Ecuador.

Introducing themselves in the first portraits. The several students mentioned during their interviews that the first portraits tended to be more about how they would describe themselves as, or how they would “introduce” themselves as Brinae said. I confirmed this assertion by a word frequency report in NVivo based on the students’ reflections for the first self-portraits; words such as running, teaching, organized, yoga, cat, and planner were in the top 50 words used in these data. Running, yoga, and references to student organizations in their first self-portraits were examples of how they referred to their hobbies. Being organized was a trait several students mentioned (portrayed as a “planner in Figures 4.7 and 4.8). Starbucks cups and cats were other examples of things that the students liked that they included in their portraits (see Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7. Detail of Lidia’s first portrait showing a cat, a planner, and a Starbucks cup.
I noticed that this phenomenon of including symbols to represent their daily routines and hobbies seemed to primarily be represented in the white students’ self-portraits. Of the seven white students who participated in the study, six included these kinds of symbols around their faces/bodies and inside them. Only one student, Teresa who happened to be the only white student who identified as lower/working class, did not include any symbols with her self-portrait. During our interview, she commented on how most of the other students on the trip seemed to be more focused on “material things” than her, such as wanting to buy items from the market every day. I argue that the white students’ material focus manifested earlier in these initial portraits through the use of symbols.

The difference I noticed across race for how the students represented themselves in the first portraits was supported by their own analyses during the interviews. For example, Jeremiah pointed out that he saw “a lot of people were going into their favorite hobbies and all this other stuff and [he] was just like drawing a picture of [himself].” As a result of the pressure of time
and seeing what others were portraying, he decided to add words around his face that represented his strong interest in social justice and the communities of people he fights for in his work.

I interpreted Jeremiah’s last minute decision as an example of how he changed how he portrayed himself in order to fit in with the rest of the group. Even though these portraits were drawn after over 2 months of the students taking the study abroad course together, Jeremiah mentioned in his interview that he did not really feel close to members of the program until we were in Ecuador. Interpreted within the focus on culture shock, Jeremiah’s desire to fit in with the group in his portrayal of himself in the first portrait could be seen as a preemptive measure to establish relationships with his peers. Establishing such relationships might have been a strategy for him to make his adjustment in Ecuador easier by having others to relate to while experiencing culture shock.

Another student noticed the differences in how students were approaching their self-portraits. Heather, a student of color, reported during our interview what she saw while creating her portrait:

When I was watching other people do their portraits, I was watching them write at work, like teacher and like Ohio, and like things that I think outwardly describe you, kind of. Like what your major is, where you’re from, things like that. What you like to do, if you like to ride bikes or something and I don’t necessarily see that as things that define me as a person. I mean I enjoy those things, they are a part of me but I don’t think they define me necessarily.

For Heather, portraying symbols for what one likes to do or where they shop did not “define” her, and therefore did not seem relevant to her when making her self-portrait. Indeed, the original instructions that I gave to the students as they began their self-portraits was to portray the
following: “How do you see yourself here?” Heather’s portrait presented herself as an iconic silhouette with no other details (Figure 4.9). She chose this because she saw herself as a “blank canvas,” still trying to figure out who is the “real” Heather, according to her first portrait reflection.

![Figure 4.9. Detail of Heather’s first portrait.](image)

**Crafting race in their self-images: How students talked about their artistic choices in self representation.** I analyzed the coded instances when students spoke or wrote about intentionally crafting their images to determine if there were any race-based differences in terms of how frequent and in what ways the students described this filtering. For example, Heather, a female student of color, wrote in her reflection on her first portrait, “I chose to [portray] only my silhouette because of the air of mystery it gives. I am still in the process of finding myself and at this point I don’t fully understand what I am about.” I coded this as an example of her
intentionally depicting herself based on her intentional use of the word “chose” throughout her reflection. I interpreted this quote as her discussing her decision to visually represent how she internally sees herself. Table 4.5 shows my analysis of the number of instances of these codes for when the student participants explicated such choices on their self-representation. Individual portraits could have more than one coded instance if other information was included between the codes (e.g., a list of other components in the image).

**Table 4.5. By Race, Which Students Discussed How They Intentionally Created Their Images?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Coded Instances for White Students (number of students)†</th>
<th>Coded Instances for Students of Color (number of students)†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portrait 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8 (n = 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portrait 2</td>
<td>12 (n = 6)</td>
<td>11 (n = 6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†These codes were generated by hand by reading through the data several times.

When referring to the first self-portraits, the students who mentioned (either in the interviews or written reflections) that they intentionally crafted their self-images were exclusively the students of color (n = 5). For example, Alice wrote, “when I was younger, I used to think that if people saw more than my black skin, they’d see my purple soul.” In her interview, she talked about how she always imagined her soul as purple, but only portrayed this side of her during “creative” assignments like making these self-portraits. In Figure 4.4, she portrayed her body in purple in all three portraits, a choice she made intentionally while drawing each portrait even without seeing the previous portraits until after completing the third portrait during our interview. Thus, Alice took advantage of this creative assignment to share the side of herself she felt like she could not otherwise show in other mediums. This helped create some visual consistency among her three portraits even though the outside stressors and thoughts weighing
on her mind, which contributed to her experiences of culture shock, changed throughout the program.

Hair in particular was something that the students of color mentioned in reference to how they intentionally chose to represent themselves. One of the male students mentioned in his reflection for the first portrait how he grew out his facial hair in a certain way to show his maturity. Doing this, Paul said that he could “grow past whatever misconceptions people have about people who look like [him].” He reiterated his intentional crafting of his self-image as a black man during our interview. He told me about how he had to always wear a backpack while on campus to show others that he was a university student. Wearing something from his university also seemed to alleviate people’s anxieties about seeing him—a black man—walking toward them on the street.

Another student of color, Rachel, discussed in our interview how she always would get her hair relaxed when she was younger. As she got older, she said that she decided to start wearing it naturally. In her first portrait reflection, she said this was the “real” her “coming out after hiding it from the world” because of what people would say. In both Paul’s and Rachel’s cases, how they wore their hair while being students of color impacted how others viewed them: as mature or not, as their true selves or conforming to a mainstream conception of beauty.

The number of coded instances of students’ mediating their self-images, however, changes for the second portrait, which was drawn while the students were in Ecuador. In these portraits, the number of coded instances between white students and students of color is almost equal (12 each). Among the white students, six out of seven talked about how they purposefully represented themselves in their portraits or while in Ecuador. For example, Lidia mentioned in our interview how she specifically wanted to show herself “in the world” by drawing herself in a
globe so that I knew she was part of it. As I discussed earlier, a number of the white students intentionally portrayed themselves in their portraits as “small” in reference to how they felt “like a minority,” as Margaret, a white student, worded it in her second portrait reflection.

For the students of color, Jeremiah seemed to sum up their approach to crafting their self-images when he said in our interview, “I wouldn’t say always, but I guess recently when I got to college and after [a university racial awareness program], I tried to be more socially conscious and be aware of how I [fit] in with other people, how I come across to other people and being aware of myself.” Paul also wrote about taking others’ perspectives of one’s self into consideration in his second portrait reflection. However, his conclusion was that it was “best” to just “be yourself […] because people will feel a way about you regardless.” For Paul, the other man of color on the trip, much of his writing and our conversation during the interview focused on how he did not feel like he fit in with the other students of color, and was surprised to instead find that he was “more American than [he] thought.”

For Shelby, a woman of color, the trip to Ecuador provided a necessary space for her to separate herself from her life and the “stress of things” back home. She wrote in her second portrait reflection that she “felt so free and exposed at the same time” in Ecuador. During her analysis of all three of her portraits during our interview, she discussed how Ecuador was a transformative experience for her, especially spiritually. Her second portrait reflection explained that the beauty of the landscape and Ecuadorian’s connections to the land helped her to “cling closer” to God, while “also [giving her] the freedom to separate from others’ shadows and just live [her] life the way [she] was meant.” In her final portrait, she said she felt more confident about herself, career, and goals. I speculate that in Shelby’s case, her outstretched arms reflect
both her experience of being free in Ecuador as well as her desire to be free “from others’ shadows” when she returned home (Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10. Detail from Shelby’s second self-portrait.

**Visual tropes across race: Students of color were “thinking” and white students were “in the world” to “make sure you knew I was in there.”** I noticed a stark difference in the visual tropes comparing the second portraits across race. Whereas the students of color often portrayed some kind of talking or “thought bubble,” as they described it, the white students tended to portray more symbols for the world or the Ecuadorian landscape. For example, Rachel, a student of color, portrayed herself with a blank thought bubble because she “wasn’t sure what to say” sometimes while in Ecuador, according to her interview (Figure 4.11).

On the other hand, four students portrayed the Earth, all of whom were white students. Of the six students who portrayed Ecuadorian nature in some way (e.g., a tree and leaves in Megan’s portrait) and/or the landscape (e.g., the waterfall we visited is portrayed in Shelby’s portrait), three were students of color (e.g., Beth included a flower to show her newfound appreciation for nature after our hike) (Figure 4.12).
Figure 4.11. Detail of Rachel’s second portrait.

Figure 4.12. Examples of Ecuadorian nature and landscapes in the second self-portraits. From the left: the portraits of Megan, Shelby, and Beth.
During our interviews, I discussed the representation of the Earth in the student participants’ self-portraits. For example, I asked Lidia why she portrayed herself as faceless inside of a large Earth (Figure 4.13). She responded by saying, “I just drew me in the world to make sure that you knew I was there.” This image of herself “in the world,” with Ecuadorian children along the edge of it, is juxtaposed with a much smaller world, not completely colored in, with images of a Starbucks cup, phone and some Lysol wipes that were present in her original self-portrait. In other words, she was drawing the comparison of her own, separate world back home to a much larger world she was experiencing for the first time in Ecuador. Another student, Naiomi, similarly portrayed a “little bubble” of her world at home that was separate from the rest of the world.

Figure 4.13. Detail from Lidia’s second self-portrait.
I argue that these depictions of the Earth allude to the white participants’ culture shock with feeling like they are part of a larger world outside of their familiar surroundings. Suddenly feeling like a minority and recognizing that so much more is going on in the world beyond what they experienced before Ecuador was a jarring experience for some of the white students. I argue that the students of color did not manifest culture shock in this same way because they generally already have to operate between multiple cultures—their own and white mainstream culture. The students of color already daily experienced being a minority at home, so feeling this way as, say, US Americans while in Ecuador was not as acute as the white students’ experienced. Thus, their portraits did not use the same imagery, such as the Earth, because what caused their culture shock was not the same.

Performing gender while abroad: Unclear to some students while very intentional to others. During the interviews, I asked students how they felt gender operated on the trip. In other words, I asked them to analyze the trip and their experiences in relation to gender. While most students were able to answer this same question in relation to race and class—and sometimes with an ease and frankness that surprised me—talking about gender often required more prompting. Most students immediately went to the disparity in gender-based demographics in the whole program: we had only two men out of 18 students, plus four women leaders. Heather, a student of color, responded to my question by saying “What do you mean, like did the boys get a different experience?” In the quantitative instrument, I left the demographic question for gender blank in order to allow for people to identify their own gender-based label if they wanted. While most students wrote “female” or “male,” four of the 14 students wrote “heterosexual,” confusing sexual orientation with gender.
In order to elicit more discussion on gender, I often found myself describing the idea of “gender performance” to students during our interviews. I define gender performance as the intentional and unintentional daily choices we make about how to present ourselves to others in terms of clothing, demeanor, hair style, personality, how we speak, etc. Whereas analyzing their experiences in terms of race and class was relatively easy for the students, the students were largely unable to identify how gender influenced the trip, with the exception of two students.

One white student, Margaret, had several comments about how gender impacted her experiences in Ecuador. She had kept notes and a journal throughout her trip and after she returned home, she then shared with me during our interview. Margaret in particular spoke at length about how she intentionally decided not to wear makeup in Ecuador. She explained that it was a “battle” for her at first in Ecuador to decide whether to put it on each day. She said that she was impacted by how she perceived Ecuadorians as valuing “natural beauty” and handmade clothing. The questions she kept returning to in the conversation were “do I care” and “does it matter” whether she wore makeup.

After describing what gender performance was to Heather, a student of color, during our interview, she talked about how she had made the “conscious decision” to bring mostly dresses and skirts for our visits to the schools. Despite having worn skirts regularly while going to grade school, Heather told me that she did not wear them as often any more except for during our time in Ecuador. She said that she decided to present herself this way “as a kind of form of respect to [Ecuadorians].” She saw it as a way to be “respectful” and “mindful” of the fact that she was going into their schools.

When I asked if she felt like others on the trip had the same approach to how they dressed while we were in Ecuador, Heather shared that she heard some of the other students talking
about how they would not be bringing any “good shoes or good clothes.” While the others seemed to be worried about their clothing getting dirty, Heather said that she bought all new clothes and planned to clean them when she returned. She connected this discussion about keeping certain “good” clothes at home so that they do not get “dirty” while in Ecuador to both gender and class. This narrative of leaving good clothes at home or bringing clothes to Ecuador that one could just “leave there” was also something I wrote about in my observation notes from our semester class before leaving for Ecuador. A couple of leaders suggested that students do what they do: pack clothes they would just “throw away” and then donate them when we leave to make room in one’s bags for bringing back Ecuadorian purchases.

Although he did not himself connect this conversation to gender, Jeremiah did bring up another example of how gender manifested on the trip. During our interview when he discussed the various “complaints” he was hearing from people, Jeremiah told me that he heard that one of the students “purposefully [was not] going to carry their bags” while we were in Quito. One of the men in the group ended up helping her with her bags, and this student offered the helper “a tip and a cup of coffee.” I argue that this story represents another example of the interconnections between gender and class, in this case a woman relying on one of the only men in our group to carry her bags for her and then offering a tip as if he were a doorman.

Margaret and Heather, a white student and a student of color respectively, both discussed how they intentionally made choices about their gender performance while in Ecuador. In both cases, the students took into consideration Ecuadorian cultural norms about gender, in terms of beauty and gender performance. Both students decided to enact gender performances that emulated Ecuadorian gender norms. Interpreted within the context of culture shock, I argue that this finding demonstrates how these two students used their gender performance as a way to
better adapt to Ecuador. By enacting a gender performance that more closely matches Ecuadorian values, Heather and Margaret enacted the acculturation strategy of “assimilation” (Berry et al., 1987; Berry et al., 1989). I speculate that the students used this strategy of assimilating to Ecuadorian gender norms consciously or not to alleviate some culture shock. This might especially be the case for Margaret, who mentioned in several of her data sources how she already felt so different from Ecuadorians because of her blonde hair. Within this context then, enacting an Ecuadorian gender performance, which she interpreted as wearing less makeup, would help her fit in better within Ecuador.

**Interactions with Others**

Similar to the literature on culture (e.g., Chang et al., 2013; Pitts, 2009), I found that the student participants’ interactions with others impacted both their manifestations of culture shock and the strategies they enacted to mitigate their own (or others’) culture shock. Within this category, I identified two key groups of interactions: those interactions among the student participants, and their interactions with Ecuadorians. I discuss these two groups and their related subthemes.

**Interactions with their peers: How culture shock impacted students’ choices to self-segregate and find comfort among like-peers.** I found that the students’ interactions with their peers were particularly influential to their experiences of culture shock—a finding that is also supported by the literature on culture shock (e.g., Pitts, 2009). The impact of these interactions manifested in three important ways. First, according to my analyses of the students’ second portrait data (i.e., the actual portrait and the accompanying reflection about the portrait), the students of color were more likely to mention their interactions with their peers compared to the white students. Second, the students of color and students who identified as lower/working class...
chose to self-segregate away from the affluent and white students who were seen as complaining too much. Jeremiah, a black student, called these complaints “microaggressions” due to their subtly racist and classist connotations. Heather, a black student, speculated that these complaints were a manifestation of the students’ culture shock. My third finding in relation to students’ interactions with their peers was based on the impact of students self-segregating: they separated themselves to manage their own culture shock, both in terms of what they were experiencing in Ecuador in general and as a result of witnessing the other students’ complaints. I discuss these findings in further detail.

**Representations of their peers.** In my analyses of how students integrated discussions about other students or their interactions with them into their second portraits and accompanying reflection indicated some differences by race. Namely, the students of color were more likely to discuss their interactions with their peers, especially in relation to the racial and class-based segregation, than their white peers.

I compared the codes for “descriptions of university people” and “interactions with university people” across race, again separating the students as either white or students of color. As with the previous examples of quantifying the frequency of a particular code, multiple codes were listed in a student’s data if their discussion of a peer or peer group addressed other topics as well. For example, much of Jeremiah’s reflection on his second self-portrait was coded as both “interactions” and “representations” of other university people. His portrait (Figure 4.6) focused almost entirely on the racial segregations he saw among the participants while in Ecuador.

Table 4.6 represents the number of instances where these codes came up for students. There was only one instance where a white student discussed their interactions within the university group. In Teresa's reflection, she wrote about how she had “been getting a lot of praise
on [her] lesson […] and giving [her] reflection,” which was deeply personal. While this quote itself does not specify who Teresa is referring to, during the interview she clarified that this referred to all of us from the program. Two other white students did describe or mention other university individuals in their second portrait reflections, but Dakota’s was a comment to me saying “thanks.” The other student, Megan, said that she felt like she was immersing herself “more than others,” but attributed it to how much more Spanish she knew compared to other students. Therefore, even though there were more white students who described or discussed other university people, these instances were superficial and short.

**Table 4.6. Representations of Other People in the Second Portrait Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Coded Instances for White Students (number of students)</th>
<th>Coded Instances for Students of Color (number of students)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptions of other University People†</td>
<td>4 (<em>n</em> = 3)</td>
<td>4 (<em>n</em> = 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with University people†</td>
<td>5 (<em>n</em> = 1)</td>
<td>11 (<em>n</em> = 2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†These codes were generated by hand by reading through the data several times.
*These codes refer to instances when the students brought up their interactions without direct prompting from me. A direct prompt from me would include when I asked the students in their interviews about group dynamics in Ecuador.

Conversely, the two men of color spent most of their second portrait reflections writing about the racial segregation among the student participants. In Jeremiah's case, he connected this focus on the group's dynamic in his self-portrait (see Figure 4.6) to his love of “social psychology.” In other words, he seemed to say that had he not had that kind of intellectual interest, he might not have focused as much on it in his portrait and reflection. For Paul, he talked about how he had expected to “connect with” the other black people on the trip, but found
that they “assimilate” in a “completely different” way than he did. Instead, he found that he had “more in common” with the “white Americans” on the trip than he had “previously perceived.”

Since the students of color made conscious decisions about how they interacted with their peers while in Ecuador (which I discuss further), I was not surprised to find that these two students represented their peers in their portrait data more than the white students. As I had discussed in the previous chapter regarding my choice of wording the quantitative instrument to measure difference in culture according to the student’s own cultures (phrased as “my culture”), students of color have to operate in both the dominant, white culture as well as their own culture. W. E. B. DuBois (1903) called this phenomenon “double consciousness” since people of color must be able to see and decipher white cultural norms to live successfully in a white dominated culture but also must embody their own cultural norms to maintain their own sense of self. Therefore, that they were more conscious of what was happening among their white peers and how their white peers impacted their experiences in Ecuador was not surprising for me to find. Likewise, since white people do not need to know about the experiences of people of color to survive—at least not to the extent of the inverse—the white students on the trip did not need to be as conscious about what was happening with their peers of color. However, I did find that most of the students (students of color and white students) were very conscious of the race-based self-segregation that occurred on the trip.

The power of “complaining”: How “microaggressions” forced students of color and lower/working class students to self-segregate while abroad. During one of my interviews with a student, I made a note to code for “complaining” (and similar words) for later when I reached the qualitative data analysis stage. This phenomenon—complaining—was something that came up repeatedly during the interviews when I would ask students how they would reflect
upon and analyze the group dynamics during the trip. By considering the amount of coverage that my coding for “complaining” covered in the transcriptions of the interviews, the importance and time given to this issue during each interview becomes apparent. In Teresa's interview alone, which amounted to one hour of transcribed audio (with pauses in the conversation were taken out), this code covered nearly eight percent of the transcription or about five minutes. For Heather's interview, this code covered almost 4.5% or about two minutes.

While I noted in my observation notes a few times when students would say something that sounded like a complaint (e.g., “That’s different” [original emphasis]), the students had a lot to say about the complaining by other university individuals during the trip. For example, Beth, a student of color, shared during our interview that she heard people saying things such as “ew that smells” and “I just want McDonald’s.” According to her, one of the students said that their complaining was appropriate to voice because Ecuadorians “can’t understand us.” Teresa, a white student, noted in our interview how there was "a panic" when people "realized how few bathrooms there were" in our hostel in Quito. She also talked about how she received a “plethora of complaints” from one of the program leaders about her lesson plan on how she “worded things,” “should have been more outgoing,” and could do a better job taking over for the parts for a missing student. Heather, another student of color, told me she heard one student say “can’t we just go to a Hilton or something?” Dakota, a white student, even self-identified her own complaining during our interview, saying that she could “not believe” she ever complained about anything in her “life” when the people in Ecuador were so “humble.”

Heather said during our interview that she thought that the high level of complaining was a manifestation of culture shock. It is important to note that she came to this conclusion without prompting from me. The students who were complaining were often pointing out things that
were different from their own daily experiences or expectations for the trip (e.g., the lodging conditions). For this reason, I agree with Heather’s conclusion, that the students’ complaints were manifestations of their culture shock at seeing, smelling, hearing, and experiencing new and different things.

However, Jeremiah had a much stronger label for the complaints. He said that the complaints seemed more like “microaggressions” to him. Microaggressions are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). Comments like how one student was “tired of the ethnic food” and how Ecuadorians were “so stupid” for bartering over $2 were examples of these microaggressions, according to Jeremiah.

Both Shelby and Heather, women of color, reported in the interview that they segregated themselves at different points in the trip because of the complaining. Beth, another woman of color, offered a reason for this segregation. She said in our interview that the students of color tended to be “more positive” and that the complaining was “ruining the mood.” Alice, another woman of color, similarly said that she did not want to be around the “negative vibes.” Heather reported in the interview that the students splitting apart, especially by racial groups, had to do with culture shock. “It’s like the little things that really wouldn’t bother you at home [that] kind of bothered you there,” she said in our interview. I took this to mean that while the students of color might be used to white students complaining about particular things at home, they could not tolerate it as well in Ecuador with the other stressors (i.e. culture shock experiences) happening simultaneously.
Thus, to relieve some of that stress, the students of color segregated themselves. Jeremiah even mentioned in his interview how he bonded with some of the other students of color by sharing their responses to the complaints they were hearing. During our interview, Teresa, a white working class student, had a similar aversion to hearing complaints upon returning home. She concluded that this aversion was a manifestation of her own reverse culture shock in how she “just could not” bear to hear another complaint. She said she felt even “less tolerable of people who complain about the little petty things” when she came back.

Not only did the students of color identify that complaining was a particular issue that forced them to separate themselves from the white students, but Teresa also connected the complaining to how class operated on the trip. While talking about how it was easier to identify with people from another culture if you have similar class backgrounds, I asked Teresa if she felt that this translated into how she interacted with the other student participants during the trip. Right away she said,

Yes definitely. I would lean more towards talking to people that self-identified as lower [class] just because it was easier for me. I was not there to hear someone complain, especially when it was something that was so materialistic and just not needed.

Teresa went on to clarify that she did not “have a problem” with the other university people who were complaining. She said that the “majority of their conversation” was based on how they “didn't have something” such as the food or drink they wanted. In contrast, Teresa said that the majority of her conversations were about how she wanted to stay in Ecuador. In my interview with Rachel, a student of color, she echoed this class-based distinction for the students who were complaining. She said that she tended to hear it more from “affluent” students.
As an observer who is particularly attuned to noticing how race operates, I was struck by the race-based segregation even from the beginning of the semester-long course. The students were randomly put into small groups to work on lesson plans they would then teach in Ecuadorian schools. Once these groups were finalized, I made note of how the groups were not racially mixed: four of the five people in my group were white, whereas four of five students in another group were people of color. The other leaders decided not to rearrange the groups, but this set up a pattern of race-based segregation in my opinion. These small groups in the beginning provided important early relationship building that the students relied upon once we arrived in Ecuador.

“We are the closest thing we have to home”: Finding “comfort” among peers to alleviate culture shock. The students of color and those who identified as lower/working class tended to segregate themselves away from the students seen as “complaining.” This segregation was noticed by most of the students at some point during the trip, according to their post-trip interviews. I discovered this during the interview phase because the students either brought it up themselves or the racial segregation in particular came up when I prompted the students to talk about how they felt the group dynamics were on the trip.

The students attributed this segregation to several factors. Several of the students for example said it was caused by how racially segregated the small, lesson plan groups were. Indeed, although the groups were randomly assigned, two of the four groups had six of the seven students of color.\(^2\) Students said that since they had been with their lesson plan group peers for most of the semester prior to the trip, it was easy for them to stay together in Ecuador since they were never required to intermingle (e.g. during meal time or field trips). Jeremiah said during his

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\(^2\) These numbers are based on those who participated in this study, and not the demographic breakdown of the total program since not all students in the program participated in this study.
interview that these small groups “naturally” created friend circles, “like we had almost been best friends and were talking the whole semester.” Conversely, Megan, a white student, said in her interview that she was thankful she was able to room with someone who was not in her lesson plan group. She was thankful because this gave her the opportunity to build a relationship with another student, in this case another white person. It is important to note that Megan also talked about how she did not feel particularly connected to the rest of her small group, who were all students of color. I speculate that her being the only white person in the group, and her not taking any observable initiative to bond with the students of color, created a need for her to actively seek out a student like herself to room with since students were allowed to choose their own roommates in Ecuador.

The other rationale for why students self-segregated on the trip according to their own analyses was to find “comfort” among their “peers” as they put it. Heather concluded in her interview that the student participants stayed with their peers of similar backgrounds and “split up” from people who were complaining because of culture shock. She said, “Well, you’re usually more comfortable with people that look like you.” Margaret, a white student, echoed this in her own interview saying that the segregation was about “comfort” and that people did not want to “break out” of their routine of being with people of similar backgrounds. Jeremiah said in his interview, “being in a place that is unfamiliar to me, I found comfort in the company of my fellow black peers.”

While this kind of race-based segregation is typical in college life (c.f., Tatum’s book, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*, 2003) and in the USA in general, this phenomenon is especially important in the context of culture shock. I argue that the students of color and the working class student stating that they needed to find “comfort” from their peers
was at least in part due to their culture shock. These students were already managing their own culture shock internally in addition to trying to manage how to respond to hearing microaggressions based on class and race from their peers. Rather than confronting each other when they heard such comments, the students of color and working class student intentionally decided to remove themselves from the environment. As this continued over the course of the trip, the segregation became more and more visible. By the last dinner we had in Ecuador, I remarked how all of the white students were sitting together and so were all of the students of color (one of whom left the white table shortly after sitting down). Only Paul, one of the male participants of color, stayed at the white table. I suspect this was because of his difficulty in connecting with the other students of color because of his class background; whereas his family grew up working class (though he personally did not identify this way), the other students of color were middle class (some I would characterize as upper middle class).

I also saw this phenomenon of staying with one’s like-peers as connected to a powerful statement that Paul said early on in the trip that resonated with the others: “We are the closest thing we have to home.” Several students made reference to it in their reflections during the trip and even during some of the interviews after the trip. For Margaret, this quote meant “hanging out” with people on the trip who were like “people at home” because it was “comfortable,” according to her interview. This quote, “we are the closest thing we have to home,” was a perfect example of the impact of co-national interactions for students’ adjustment to culture shock experienced while abroad. As Ward and Kennedy (1994) found, co-national relationships have a significant impact on an individual’s psychological wellbeing. Thus, having strong peer relationships, even if it meant to segregate oneself from others in the group, was a necessary strategy for students to ensure their emotional and mental adjustment while in Ecuador.
Representing Ecuador(ians): Insights into how connected the students felt to the country and people. Another interesting visual trend I noticed while analyzing the students’ portraits was how they represented themselves in relation to Ecuadorians and with the world/nature/landscape. Five of the students included representations of people other than themselves in their portraits. For example, Beth included faceless others, who were much smaller in size compared to her body (see Beth’s portrait above as part of Figure 4.12). Jeremiah was the only one who portrayed others from the university group. The other six showed Ecuadorians. Also, while analyzing the second and third portraits, I made note of the size of how the student participants portrayed themselves on the page, especially in relation to other people or objects (e.g., taking up about 30% of the page, being twice as large as the other people). I speculated that their might be a size difference for those students who seemed more self-focused (i.e., larger self) or more afraid (i.e., smaller to other objects in the portrait). Comparing these descriptions across race revealed no significant difference in size of the body or self-representation.

Based on students' reflections, the representation of landscapes and nature often stood for Ecuador as a country, so I was curious to see how students portrayed how close they felt to Ecuador based on visual distance. Two students portrayed themselves closely together with Ecuadorians and the Ecuadorian landscape. Shelby drew herself inside the water at the Paguche waterfall we visited (see Shelby’s portrait above as part of Figure 4.12), which we happened to have hiked earlier on the same day that the students drew their self-portraits. Megan portrayed herself holding hands with Ecuadorian children (see Megan’s portrait above as part of Figure 4.12).

One student drew a visual separation between part of herself and Ecuador. Brinae drew her face below an Ecuadorian mountain range (Figure 4.14). When I asked her about this during
our interview, I said that visually there seemed to be a “separation between the mountains” and her. She said that she first drew herself and then the mountains. She said that while drawing the portrait, she was thinking both about “how beautiful” Ecuador was but also the things she “didn't want to be thinking about” from home which were her “least concerns” in the immediate moment being in Ecuador.

Figure 4.14. Brinae’s second self-portrait. The words in the mountain range read: unconditional love, Kichwa (the local indigenous language), indigenous, fruit, relationships, waterfalls, students, education/bilingual. The words in her head clockwise from the top read friends, school, family, summer job, cohort.
Finally, five students had both clear separations between themselves and Ecuadorians/Ecuador as well as noticeable size differences. In Naiomi's case, who did not directly represent herself, she drew her “little bubble” as both much smaller than the world, but also separate from it (Figure 4.15).

Figure 4.15. Naiomi’s second self-portrait.

In contrast, while Lidia drew her faceless self “in the center of the world,” she is much larger than the small faceless people standing on the edge of the world (see Figure 4.13). Dakota drew herself as much smaller than the large flower that takes up most of the page (Figure 4.16).
Indeed, much of her reflection for this portrait referred to how “small” she felt while in Ecuador, as I address in the previous major thematic category discussion.

Figure 4.16. Dakota’s second self-portrait.

While visually there did not appear to be any differences across the students’ identities in terms of how they represented themselves in relation to Ecuadorians/Ecuadorian nature or landscape, quantitizing the qualitative data did reveal a race-based difference. I ran a matrix query in NVivo to determine the frequency of the codes for “descriptions of Ecuadorians” and “interactions with Ecuadorians” in the qualitative data. I parsed these coded instances across race, again separating the students by white or students of color. The resulting matrix query can be seen in Table 4.7.
Table 4.7. Representations of Ecuadorians in the Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Title</th>
<th>Coded Instances for White Students (number of students)</th>
<th>Coded Instances for Students of Color (number of students)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptions of Ecuadorians†</td>
<td>18 ($n = 5$)</td>
<td>6 ($n = 3$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with Ecuadorians†</td>
<td>14 ($n = 5$)</td>
<td>6 ($n = 4$)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†These codes were generated by hand by reading through the data several times.
*Based on the students’ second and third self-portrait reflections and elaborations on these portraits provided by the students during our interview.

Table 4.7 represents the number of instances where codes for “descriptions of Ecuadorians” and “interactions with Ecuadorians” were present in the student participants’ data. It is important to note that none of the students referred to Ecuadorians specifically in their first self-portraits. Although several of the students did portray their aspirations and goals, such as career goals, Megan was the only student with an indirect reference to Ecuador; she wrote “Español” on her portrait in reference to her academic studies, according to her reflection. I suspect that none of the students explicitly referred to Ecuador/Ecuadorians in their first self-portraits because the prompt asked them to consider how they saw themselves at their home institution and at that point in time (which was in March, two months prior to traveling to Ecuador). Therefore, the coded instances in Table 4.7 were based on the students’ self-reflections for the second and third portraits and their discussion about these portraits during our interview. I discuss my interpretation of the findings presented in Table 4.7 below.

**Descriptions of Ecuadorians: White students were “humbled” and students of color empathized with discrimination in Ecuador.** According to my analysis, white students tended to focus more on Ecuadorians and their interactions with them than the students of color. For example, Megan, Dakota, and Brinae (all white students) wrote about how Ecuadorians were
“very welcoming,” “incredibly humble,” and made them “appreciate” what they had growing up, respectively. Teresa portrayed eyes or faces of Ecuadorians watching her (see Figure 4.2 above). The 18 coded instances of descriptions or mentions of Ecuadorians in the data are split up among five of the seven white students. For the students of color, only three of the seven discussed Ecuadorians.

While the white students discussed how the Ecuadorians’ way of life made them appreciate their upbringing, the students of color focused on other descriptions \((n = 3)\). In his second portrait, Paul wrote about how he related to indigenous Ecuadorians’ “struggle with identity problems […] and being forced to learn a language to survive even in your own country.” Heather, in our interview, said that she “liked” their sense of pride in their heritage, and found them to be “very accepting and open.” In other words, I found that whereas the white students focused on sympathetic responses to seeing the “humble” standard of living for Ecuadorians, the students of color focused more on relating their experiences with discrimination with the discrimination that indigenous Ecuadorians face.

**How students represented their interactions with Ecuadorians by race.** For the white students \((n = 5)\), their written and verbal discussions of their interactions with Ecuadorians centered largely around the language barrier and, for most students, the inability to communicate. Margaret discussed at length in her interview how she felt like the children in the market were trying to pretend like they did not understand why she could not speak Spanish. In her second portrait reflection, she wrote that this made her feel like they were not trying to “connect with [her] back,” and that the children would just “laugh and take [her] money.” She depicted her reaction to this in her self-portrait as the “small” “emotional/mental” part of her frowning (Figure 4.17).
Three students of color focused on themselves in relation to their interactions with Ecuadorians. In her second self-portrait reflection, Rachel wrote about how she was “proud” of herself for being able to successfully communicate with Ecuadorians despite knowing little Spanish. Heather “hated” her limited ability to speak Spanish, saying during our interview that it “stifle[d] her interactions, but still allow[ed] her to experience this in its pure form.” Beth reflected on how her prior expectations and beliefs changed as a result of interacting with Ecuadorians. She wrote in her self-reflection for the second portrait about how the trip proved to her that she could be “good” with kids, contrary to her previous beliefs.

Jeremiah, another student of color, discussed in our interview how he was surprised with how some of the university students interacted with an Ecuadorian who took us to a local waterfall that was considered sacred. Jeremiah was surprised that people got into the water without asking if it was appropriate first. The other coded instance in his interview was him describing how he heard another university student tell the story about how she bartered with and Ecuadorian at the market. He said that she “basically question[ed the Ecuadorian’s] intelligence”
that they insisted she pay $2 more than she was willing to pay. He said the interaction “rubbed [him] the wrong way” because it was “an attack on the intelligence of some of the native people.”

Thus, I found that when analyzing how the students discussed their interactions with Ecuadorians, white students tended to put more focus on their difficulty with understanding the language whereas students of color tended to focus on either how their own beliefs or expectations changed as a result of their interactions or on the interactions they saw between Ecuadorians and other university students. While the white students to an extent also discussed how they were changed by their interactions with Ecuadorians (e.g., Dakota discussed how she could not legitimate complaining at home given how “humble” Ecuadorians lived), their narratives tended to conform to beliefs based in colorblindness and meritocracy. In other words, they were moved by how Ecuadorians could live in such poverty and yet be so “happy.” In contrast, I found that the students of color who discussed Ecuadorians in some way were more reflective on the impact of the experience on themselves and the Ecuadorians.

Representing reverse culture shock: Negotiating how to incorporate Ecuador into their lives and self-images. I characterize the third portraits as visual representation for how the students were managing their experiences of reverse culture shock upon returning home from Ecuador. Specifically, 11 drew some kind of reference back to Ecuador—either the word “Ecuador” like Alice did, two worlds like Lidia, or thinking about a particular experience in an Ecuadorian classroom like Teresa’s portrait (see these combined in Figure 4.18).
Figure 4.18. Example references to Ecuador in the third self-portraits. Clockwise from the top left: Lidia’s portrait, Teresa’s portrait, and a detail from Alice’s portrait.

Three students’ portraits portrayed more specifically how they were trying to negotiate their experiences and emotions from Ecuador with their home life. Lidia, one of the white students who portrayed her home life as a separate “world” from Ecuador (see her portrait in Figure 4.18 above), drew herself holding up two worlds: her home world with a cellphone, Starbucks, and other images from her first portrait, and a world about half of the size with coffee and several Ecuadorian children. She explained that she remembered what she drew in the first two portraits (though I had kept them separately from the students until the interview). She said that her face shows her as confused; she does not know which world she “likes more.”
The portrait that Dakota (a white student) drew shows several smiling faces, connected by hearts, standing underneath both a storm cloud and a big sun (Figure 4.19). She said that as a result of the trip, she felt more connected to the people she went on the trip with. The storms symbolized how she had “anxieties” and “fear” about going on the trip, but she and the others faced them. Her portrait and her discussion about it then focused more on the impact of the peer relationships she developed while in Ecuador, as opposed to the impact of Ecuador itself.

Finally, Brinae, a white student participant, portrayed herself as a large red and blue yin yang. The red half of her face shows her smiling, while the blue half shows her sad and frowning. The yin yang was to show that half of her is “really happy” that she was home, whereas the other half is “really sad” that she was home. She said that the experience “balanced [her] as a person.” She said that she was struck by how “happy” the Ecuadorians were despite
how little they had in “material things,” especially how she felt that she was raised as an American “always wanting more.” Brinae explained that she could relate to Ecuadoreans in how they “bonded” over food as a family. However, she also talked about how she was not able to see parts of her family because of how far away they live.

![Figure 4.20. Brinae’s second and third self-portraits.](image)

When comparing this third portrait to Brinae’s second portrait, the second seems to have more of a visual separation between her and her thoughts, which she wrote into her head, and her thoughts about Ecuador, which she wrote into a range of the Ecuadorean mountains. I mentioned this distinction to her when she was analyzing all of her portraits together to see if she agreed. She said that she was thinking about both “what [she] didn’t want to think about,” or the stress
from home, at the same time as thinking about how “beautiful” Ecuador was. She said that she was learning new things every day while in Ecuador, and was trying to process everything.

I found that students were still trying to figure out how to incorporate what they experienced in Ecuador with their home lives. I was not surprised to find that they did not seem to have any definitive “answers” on how to do this given most of their interviews were completed within a month of returning. Both Dakota and Brinae’s third self-portraits show that they were actively considering both the positive and negative experiences and emotions as having impacted them.

**Conclusions**

The findings presented here created a rich and complex picture of how students experienced culture shock across race, gender, and class. Students quantified varying levels of culture shock and cultural difference between their own and Ecuadorian culture. My deep analyses of the arts-based and qualitative data however revealed important nuances in how culture shock manifested among the students, as well as the strategies they enacted in response to their own and others’ culture shock. For example, most of the students paid particular attention to how they represented themselves in their self-portraits. From introducing themselves in the first portraits, to considering their place within and among Ecuadorians in the second portraits, and negotiating how to incorporate the experience abroad into their lives at home, the three portraits combined demonstrated how students’ self-images shifted over time. These changes were the result of the experience itself, the culture shock they experienced and witnessed in others, and their interactions with their peers and Ecuadorians.

I also found specific nuances to their experiences of and responses to culture shock when comparing the students by race, gender, and class. The white students seemed more focused on
seeing the experience as a way to place themselves within a multicultural world, though they did feel some distance between themselves and Ecuadorian culture. Although the white students did notice the race-based segregation amongst the group, they attributed it to colorblind-based reasons, such as the original makeup of the small groups. The white students also became more cognizant of how they represented themselves after we were in Ecuador, though there seemed to be little critical self-reflection on their “complaints” seen as “microaggressions” by their peers. Finally, for the white students whose experiences of culture shock were particularly acute, this manifested in all of their data forms including high score for their culture shock and total cultural distance, extensive use of the word “small” in their second self-portraits, and even some difficulty with incorporating their experience with their daily life upon returning home.

The students of color were more outwardly cognizant of the racial segregation among the student participants, even intentionally segregating themselves from the manifestations of culture shock from the white students in order to maintain their more “positive” outlook on the experience. Perhaps because of their double consciousness as a result of being in a racial minority, these students were largely more aware of how they represented themselves visually and in their gender performance throughout the trip. The students of color were also more likely to show their internalizing of the Ecuadorian experience through the representation of thought and talking bubbles in their second portraits. Being to some extent used to the experience of race-based experiences in the USA, the students of color tended to empathize with Ecuadorians’ experience of ethnic discrimination. Finally, while students of color did find comfort in interacting with other students of color in their strategies to mitigate their own experiences of culture shock, class difference negatively impacted one student’s ability to feel a part of this community.
Although most of the students identified as middle class (12 out of 14), I still found observable differences in the experiences of responses to culture shock based on class. Similarly to the students of color, the one student, Teresa, who self-identified as working class also self-segregated as a strategy to alleviate her experiences of culture shock in witnessing more affluent students’ complaints. Although Paul identified as middle class in the quantitative instrument, he revealed in our interview that he grew up and felt very connected to the working class. His class-based experiences influenced the difficulty he had with bonding with the rest of students of color, who were all middle class (several of whom I would further label as upper middle class). The working class students (both Teresa and Paul) had difficulty connecting with their peers who were more affluent because they were seen as more focused on the material aspects of the experience, whereas they were more interested in the emotional and social experience of being in Ecuador.

Finally, gender proved to be a more difficult identity to analyze the data for than I had originally anticipated. Asking the students to analyze their experiences in terms of gender required more elaboration from me on how gender is performed in our daily dress, mannerisms, personality, and interactions with others. For two female students, they made intentional choices about their gender performance in Ecuador as a way to mitigate their culture shock (either preemptively as a decision made prior to the trip or during the trip itself).

In my final chapter, I discuss the implications of these findings for the literature on culture shock and for international programs.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

In this chapter, I discuss the conclusions I have drawn from this research. First, I answer my overall research question. Second, I reflect on my positionality in this research. Specifically, I discuss my positionality in relation to class, race, and gender. In this discussion, I focus on how my own experiences of culture shock in these areas impacted my positionality throughout this research process, and how my identities within this category impacted my position as a teacher-researcher within the Ecuador program. I also reflect upon the choices I made as a researcher in this work, including my struggles with identifying information in the data. By providing this section, I intend to share insights into how I thought about my position and influence throughout the research process, as well as what I learned in relation to race, gender, class, and my identity as a researcher. Additionally, I envision this documentation my learning process as a resource for other researchers who may find themselves in similar circumstances or with similar dilemmas.

Third, I discuss the implications that this research has for the literature on culture shock, methods used in studying culture shock and mixed methods designs in general, and for international programs. These implications take into consideration my findings as well as what I learned through reflecting on my positionality. These implications include the need for an expanded conceptualization of culture shock, careful consideration in the use of quantitative instruments to measure culture shock if students do not fully understand it, training students to understand and identify culture shock to help themselves and their peers, and critically engaging with race, gender, and class in both the program content and logistical implementation.

I conclude this chapter by discussing the limitations of this research and my suggestions for future research.
Answering My Research Question

In this section, I discuss my findings as they relate to my overall research question: *How does a student’s identity in terms of race, gender, and class relate to how they manifest and respond to culture shock in a study abroad program?*

As discussed in Chapter 4, across the arts-based, qualitative, and quantitative data, I found that the students experienced a range of culture shock, that culture shock manifested in different ways for the students, and that they enacted various strategies to manage their culture shock. I detail the conclusions regarding the extent of culture shock experienced, how it manifested, and the strategies the students enacted in response below.

**Salient narratives about their culture shock from the data.** Two of the findings I discussed in the previous chapter stemmed directly from the salient narratives of the students’ experiences of culture shock. These themes were based on the students’ narratives about the proliferation of complaining, particularly from the white, affluent students in the trip, and how two students in particular reflected upon their performance of gender while on the trip. In my experience as both a student and a leader on study abroad trips, hearing complaints from students about what they are seeing, hearing, smelling, and eating has almost become commonplace. I found these comments to be uncensored insights into how students process the experience, thereby revealing with which aspects of another culture they are experiencing culture shock. However, as common as comments about different food and cooking smells might be, these complaints negatively impacted students’ cross-cultural relationships within the university group. As a result of hearing these complaints, the students of color and from working class backgrounds segregated themselves from others.
Although most of the students needed further elaboration on gender to analyze how it operated on the trip, I found that gender performance was particularly salient for only two students. I was surprised to find that most participants in the study had difficulty with analyzing their experiences in terms of gender. When I asked them how they thought gender operated on the trip, most of the student participants could not elaborate on this until I elaborated a more complex notion of gender to include gender performance. Comparatively, the student participants discussed race and class much more easily.

As white Americans, we have very specific expectations about what other cultures look like in the daily lives of their people at the same time that we also somehow believe that other cultures should be similar to us. I see this as a manifestation of both American exceptionalism—the belief that American culture is superior to other cultures—and the superiority of white culture in particular. These both feed into white people’s prior knowledge and expectations about others, which set the foundation upon which our culture shock develops.

The students of color in this study already knew that; they were not surprised to hear that the students of color identified less cultural distance and generally less culture shock than their white peers. Although the students of color could identify and describe American exceptionalism and white cultural superiority, they did not necessarily buy into it in the same way that their white peers did. The students of color could also empathize with experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination that indigenous Ecuadorians experience. The white students knew about this discrimination based on their education in the culture from the class we had prior to the program. However, speaking from personal experience, reading about discrimination from a text, and even talking about it, does not on its own create a reference for this experience from which to draw empathy. As a member of the dominant class, in this case based on race, it requires constant
education and vigilance to counteract the racist messages we receive daily (Shannon-Baker, Black, & Selzer, in review). Thus, I wondered if a more in-depth and personal understanding about how race, gender, and class impacts our culturally based lived experiences may better prepare students for the cultural differences they will experience on programs like this one in Ecuador. Then, with better preparation, they may experience less severe culture shock internally. However, they may experience more culture shock in having to deal with others’ culture shock, as I found in this study.

Within the group of participants, the students of color tended to identify lower culture shock and less cultural distance than their white peers. When comparing specific responses to items on the Revised Cultural Distance Index between the upper class student and working class student, I found that the working class students tended to score these cultural norms as closer between own and Ecuadorian culture. Although I could not definitively say that class or race would correlate to less cultural distance and culture shock in other programs, the students and I both suspect this to be an anticipated result if analyzed with more participants in future studies.

**How the data converged and diverged regarding culture shock.** One of the primary reasons for using a mixed methods research design approach with arts-based methods for this research was to be able to interact with the phenomenon of culture shock using varying methods—arts-based self-portraiture, discussion and written reflections, and quantifiable instruments. What was most interesting to me was how the data supported and added depth in some cases and diverged in others.

For example, those students who identified less culture shock in the quantitative instrument generally seemed to adjust back to home life better, whereas students with higher culture shock in Ecuador represented themselves in their portraits as still trying to balance or
blend the experience into their lives. I speculate that this was due to the student having to process more intense emotions and reactions to the experience as a result of having more culture shock.

I also found that although the students of color tended to quantify their culture shock at a lower value compared to their white peers, this did not mean that they qualitatively had less to say about their own culture shock. Instead, I found that these students had much more to say about the culture shock they saw manifested in their white peers (e.g., through “complaining”) and how they responded to it (e.g., self-segregation). Perhaps due to the need for people of color to have communities that are racially supportive in the face of daily microaggressions, the students of color actively chose to interact more with the other students of color. This was then a strategy they used to “find comfort” both in response to hearing daily microaggressions from their peers, but also to have a safe space to process their own culture shock.

Transforming my qualitative and arts-based codes into quantitative data provided with deeper insight into differences in the data across race and class in particular. For example, by transforming my qualitative and arts-based codes regarding how the students discussed/wrote about intentionally crafting their self-images, I found that white students’ rhetoric in this area largely began after arriving in Ecuador. The white students did not talk about how they intentionally chose to represent themselves until they were in an environment where they were minority. Students of color, however, discussed this from the first self-portrait.

Finally, comparing my findings across the data sets provided interesting insight into another way of describing the experience of culture shock, particularly for white students. In this instance, I found that among the students who repeated used words such as “small,” “little,” and “miniscule,” those who used it tended to be white students describing their experiences of being a minority for the first time. I also found that those students who used it the most (four to five
times in their second portrait reflection), also tended to identify the greatest culture shock among the entire group.

**Reflecting upon My Positionality**

This research has been a deeply personal experience for me as well as for the students. This topic grew out of my own experiences with culture shock from my various experiences abroad, both as a student and as a program leader. I often shared with people when talking about my topic that I still experience culture shock, whether it is in my cross-cultural interactions here at home or abroad. For me, these moments of shock highlight the limits of my cultural awareness and my bias and assumptions about others. Thus, bearing witness to and being a part of the students’ experiences of culture shock was difficult because, to an extent, I could empathize with the difficulty, the uncomfortability of being faced with our limits, biases, and assumptions about other cultures.

**Reflecting on class.** I particularly identified with the students who were connected to the working class (either through self-identification or based on how they were raised). When I went to Cameroon in 2008 as a student with seven others to work on a water development project, the class differences I felt between myself and the other students, most of whom I would externally identify as upper middle class, made my experiences of culture shock even more poignant. For example, there were several times when we needed to use our own funds to purchase food or were taken shopping for clothing to be made by a local seamstress. These activities not only took up a significant portion of our “down” or “fun” time, but they were also offered as opportunities for us to participate in the local culture. However, I did not have access to the same amount of capital and did not regularly spend as much money at home. As a result, I could not participate in
these activities to the same extent as my peers. In such a small group, and with the expectation that I could participate in the same way as my peers, this experience was very difficult for me.

I have since used this experience in my leadership of study abroad programs. For example, I make concerted efforts to incorporate all of the food and basic expenses as part of the costs of the trip that are advertised from the beginning. I also actively investigate ways of helping students offset the costs of these trips, which often require some amount of capital that students do not necessarily have readily available. When I recruit students to join, I will often offer to meet with them individually to talk about my experiences raising funds, the strategies I and other students have used, and tips for who and how to ask for help. This kind of assistance would have been especially helpful for me since growing up asking for help, especially financial help, was not socially acceptable. I believe that this is a shared experience among working class people, so first offering such help—rather than waiting for them to ask—is an important strategy I use.

Reflecting on race and culture. One of my more complex experiences of being a teacher-researcher in this program was seeing myself in the students who were identified as “complaining.” I could remember hearing myself say the things I heard them say during my own trips abroad or even when interacting cross-culturally here in the USA. When Jeremiah identified these complaints as “microaggressions,” I felt an immediate sense of both complete agreement and guilt. Based on the racial consciousness I have since developed, I could completely agree with him in finding comments about the “ethnic” food as racial microaggressions. I also saw comments based on classist microaggressions, such as wanting to stay at a Hilton, similarly jarring. I also recognized, however, that I am not so far removed from making these same microaggressions myself. Witnessing these microaggressions was difficult because I could hear
myself saying them in other contexts in the past but also in my cross-cultural interactions in the near future. I see these microaggressions as a manifestation of ignorance about the culture and culture shock in response to unmet expectations and being faced with our own biases.

**Reflecting on gender.** As I have mentioned above, the varied ease that the students had with talking about race and class compared to gender was somewhat surprising to me. I had expected students to more easily talk about gender than race and class since both are considered somewhat taboo subjects in (white) American mainstream culture in my opinion. However, in my master’s training, doctoral coursework, and activism, I have had extensive training in the multifaceted nature of gender. Gender performance is one aspect I take into consideration regularly. For example, I make intentional decisions on how I dress at the beginning of a semester when the new round of classes to teach starts. This is based on personal experience of how students interact with me differently based on how much authority they see me as having in the classroom as a young female teacher. How I dress contributes to how seriously students will take me, how much knowledge and confidence I have in the subject matter, and even my belief systems.

Our gender performances communicate information about our identities to others in terms of class, nationality, race, among others. One of my first experiences of culture shock abroad was in how easily I could be identified as American while studying in Ireland. Once while standing on the side of the street waiting to have lunch with a friend, an older Irish man walked up to me and simply asked if I was American. My expectation, based on what I was often told by American friends and family, was that I would fit in while in Ireland; I looked Irish by American standards. However, my gender performance in terms of what I wore, how I carried
myself, and how I interacted with others gave away immediately to Irish people that I was American.

We also have conceptions as Americans about how other cultures dress. These assumptions are often tied to expectations about developing nations being full of people living in poverty or Middle Eastern women to always be covered up, as a few examples. While there may be such examples, these are at least stereotypes if not assumptions based in discrimination in terms of class, gender, race, and nationality. The rhetoric of not bringing “nice” clothing while abroad in developing countries is something I take great offense to and see it as based on an interplay of gender performance, class, and race.

Prior to traveling to Ecuador, I stressed to the students that how we dress communicates both how we respect ourselves and how we respect others. Although I do believe that this is true to an extent in (white) American mainstream culture, this has been even more so the case in other countries abroad that I have visited. Thus, bringing clothes that one would otherwise throw away at home, and then leaving them in the destination country—a practice I have seen advocated by various program leaders—is incredibly problematic. Leaving clothes behind has often been advised as a strategy to make room in one’s suitcase to buy more souvenirs, further connecting gender performance to class. Therefore, this act of bringing clothes one would just throw away at home communicates a classed and raced gender performance that demonstrates a view of the destination culture as a trash bin for things unwanted.

**Reflecting on the research process.** It is important for me as an anti-racist feminist researcher to attest to one particular struggle I have had during this research process in addition to what I have discussed above. While writing up the findings, I particularly struggled with including information that I saw as directly identifying the students who participated in the
study. For example, several of the portraits, in my opinion, if taken as literal representations of the students, would clearly identify who participated in the study. Elaborating on the race, gender, and class for each pseudonym also would identify who participated since very small numbers of students identified as male, upper class, or working class. Retrospectively, I also critiqued whether my consent and recruiting documents adequately forewarned the students about the potential identifying nature of the information they later chose to share with me. Although these documents were approved by my local Institutional Review Board, this issue of identifying data did not arise to the same extent in this phase of my study as it did in my pilot study when the participants were more spread over identities and did not share data that was personal.

I did, however, warn the student participants that I could not protect them from members in the group sharing if they overheard something. I also shared with the students both during recruitment and during our interviews that I might share their portraits and other data during presentations or in publications. In preparation for my dissertation defense, I also emailed the students details about what I had planned to discuss and what my findings were. Although none of the participants came to my presentation, several followed up with me about their interest in my findings. After considering how I gave these repeated reminders about my use of their data, along with my explicit discussion of my role as a researcher throughout the program, I felt more confident that I had provided the students with enough information to make an informed choice about whether to be in the study, and thereby allow me to use their data.

Second, I wanted to honor the personal relationships I intentionally built with each of the students. These relationships were built upon a sense of trust in my use of their data. Indeed, in their interviews, a few of the participants seemed hesitant around sharing, for example, what
kinds of microaggressions they overheard. I identified this hesitancy based on their pausing or using filler words like “uh” and “um.” In these cases, I reminded the student participants that they did not need to say who said what, but that I was curious what was said. Therefore, I saw not explicitly identifying the students as a strategy to maintain this trustworthiness I had built with the students as both a confidant and a researcher. This issue of trustworthiness is further complicated by the strained relationship and “distrust” (Shavers-Hornaday, et al., 1997, p. 31) for research in some minority communities based on research abuse in the past. I did not want to perpetuate this mistrust in research, and instead sought to embody rigorous research that still honored the individual and their wishes.

My initial strategy was to not include the portraits that I saw as examples that would identify the students, either by nature of the seemingly realistic depiction they chose or by the details in the portrait which were particular to the individual student (e.g. getting sick in a particular way). I also originally wanted to use the gender neutral pronouns of they/them/their and more gender and race neutral names. However, these initial decisions began to problematize the findings in terms of validity and trustworthiness. Additionally, APA formatting and writing style does not support the use of gender neutral pronouns—an issue I have also had with publishing in journals that use APA when I was uncomfortable with assigning a gender to a researcher based on their name and not knowing how they personally identified.

Taking these issues and the concerns of my committee into consideration, I chose to use the gendered pronouns and identifications that the students chose for themselves. I made this decision in discussion with my mentors about the students’ original understandings of the recruitment and consent procedures, and the member checking that I did with each student during our individual interviews. I settled on this strategy as a way to manage both the
expectations for this research and my values as a researcher. I saw these decisions as suitable strategies for maintaining trustworthiness with the students while still maintaining the depth and complexity that I sought for this research. Thus, in this process, I learned the importance of having specific conversations about identifiable data—what it means and what it looks like—with the students throughout the research process. This was particularly an issue since this research entailed the use of self-portraiture as data, which is not as easy to aggregate.

**Implications of this Research**

I discuss the implications of this research in three capacities: expanding the conceptualization of culture shock that currently exists in the literature; regarding the use of arts-based methods within a mixed methods research design, especially in the study of culture shock; and for the planning and implementation of international education programs.

**Expanding the conceptualization of culture shock.** Recent research on culture shock has already called for a revision or expansion of the conceptualization of culture shock (e.g., Moufakkir, 2013). My research supports this assertion, but specifically calls for further investigation into the various manifestations of and responses to culture shock enacted by people across race, gender, and class. For example, my research demonstrates the need for this literature to address the culture shock that students experience in response to being in diverse groups. Specifically, the students of color and working class students were forced to deal with the highly visible and audible daily manifestations of the white, affluent students’ culture shock. In my literature review, I did not find any research that spoke about the culture shock that students experienced amongst one another while in an international context, despite the fact that the literature on culture shock also supports the notion that culture shock can be experienced in-country and when traveling outside of the country (e.g., Ward et al., 2001).
Whereas the literature on culture shock tends to define culture shock using words such as anxious (Oberg, 1960), chaotic (Gaw, 2000), and helplessness (Adler, 1975), interpreting the experiences of culture shock within a race-based framework highlights the impact of feeling like a minority. This experience was particular to white students’ experiences of culture shock in this study. This feeling of being a minority for the first time was described as feeling “small.” In this context, our definition of culture shock needs to also take into consideration how feeling like a minority for the first time was a particularly powerful experience for some white students, thereby dramatically impacting the amount of culture shock they experience.

My research also demonstrates that culture shock is as much about how much the students are internally feeling culture shock as well as how much they are intentionally (and unintentionally) allowing others to see. My analysis of the students’ self-portraits and how they talked/wrote about them demonstrated that students paid particular attention to how they portrayed themselves as well as how others portrayed themselves. This particular finding supports a finding from my pilot study, where students “wanted to appear happy” despite feeling much more than happiness (Shannon-Baker, 2015a). For the pilot study students, it was important to appear happy, both in their self-portraits and in their daily life, as a way to show appreciation to the leaders and Ecuadorians for being on the trip. I suspect that this was also a strategy for trying to manage their experiences of culture shock.

**Methodological implications.** This study also has important methodological implications, both for the study of culture shock in particular and the use of mixed methods study designs in general. That students were cognizant of how others were portraying themselves in their portraits and considering how others might view them based on how they respond to various prompts, carry themselves around a researcher, or draw themselves in a portrait is not a
new consideration methodologically. The impact of wanting to give a “right” answer or portray one’s self appropriately around peers or people with authority is an important consideration when choosing methods. This phenomenon was especially the case in this study, which asked students to think about how they visually represent themselves vis-à-vis the self-portrait. I was intrigued by the fact that students tended to focus on how others’ perceived them when they created their self-portraits, especially considering how I specifically suggested in my instructions that they focus on how they saw themselves at that particular moment. It would be interesting to compare multiple portraits: how students see themselves, how their peers see them, and how Ecuadorians see them. This might provide an important introspective exercise, particularly for the white students who were complaining since most of them were unable to identify this as a reason for why the students of color were segregating themselves.

There was a hesitancy among the students in this study around the term “culture shock,” which presented an important problem in asking them to then report on their own culture shock. Even though I provided a baseline definition for culture shock in the quantitative instrument and talked about it regularly with the students, many of them pointed out in the interview that they still did not quite understand what it meant. I noticed that several of the students seemed to focus on the “shock” part of culture shock, saying they never felt “shock.” I would then respond by explaining that culture shock could be more subtle, such as an unexplained irritation with something that ordinarily would not be an issue at home. With this explanation, the students seemed to equate more of their experiences and observations of the others with culture shock. In light of this quantifying culture shock, even with a definition, may still not capture on its own all of the nuances of culture shock that students experience abroad. Thus, collecting multiple forms
of data can provide more in-depth insight into the types and magnitude of culture shock experienced.

Methodologically, this study demonstrated the affordances of including arts-based research methods in mixed methods research designs. My reasoning for including arts-based approaches was to uncover portions of students’ experiences of culture shock that qualitative and quantitative measures could not. Even with this intention, however, there were still several key issues I had to consider in my research design. I had to consider the centrality of the artistic methods as researchers argue is a key component of arts-based research, whereas arts-informed research has artistic influences that are not central to the research (Cole & Knowles, 2008). I designated this research “arts-based” in my decision to make the arts-strand of data collection and analysis of equal importance to the qualitative and quantitative strands. As I discussed in my methods, I did this with the intention of giving equal priority to all of the research procedures. I saw this decision of giving the arts-based research its own strand, instead of embedding it within the qualitative work, as an importance decision in highlighting the weight I placed on the student participants’ self-portraits. These data provided valuable insights in my findings about culture shock. I would therefore recommend that mixed methods researchers considering arts-based methods similarly ask the extent to which they will use and rely upon their arts-based approaches. Researchers may also seek out arts-based researchers to join their team to bring a level of expertise about art, though, in the case of this study, arts-based research does not need to be done by artists only. Also, as with other methods of data collection, the selection of which artistic method(s) to use must align with the goals and design of the research. In the case of this study, I chose the self-portrait for its potential insight into how the participants saw themselves and how their identity might have changed over time.
Implications for programs. Finally, this research has important implications for international programs. First, my findings about the segregation practices revealed that these international experiences are not just about the shock of a new culture, but being confronted with one’s own cultural beliefs and practices. It is as if the trip, their interactions with Ecuadorians, and learning about the cultures of Ecuador provided a space removed from home that let some of the students begin to realize things that happen at home, such as students interacting primarily with like-peers. However, this kind of comparative analysis with home may need to be directed by the program’s leader(s). For example, when an indigenous Ecuadorian told the group about how she experienced less discrimination when she dressed in more Spanish or Western clothing, I asked the students if the same discrimination based on cultural dress happened in the USA. The immediate response was no. I believe that this negative response is a symptom of American exceptionalism, though people from other countries or cultural contexts might respond in a similar way when asked if their community discriminates. This is then a critical entry point for a program leader. Leaving the conversation here perpetuates the belief that discrimination happens elsewhere (Shannon-Baker, Black & Selzer, in review). Instead, I asked if students would perceive me differently as a teacher if I had shown up in sweats versus wearing a suit. I then discussed studies that have been done analyzing how recruiters and business people in charge of hiring respond differently to resumes that have “black” sounding names versus “white” sounding names (Berman, 2014). Thus, this kind of discussion is critical in order to promote both a complex perception of American life but also life in the destination country.

This research also demonstrates that the experience of going abroad is more powerful than simply being “life changing,” which is a phrase I have found to be overused in rhetoric about study abroad programs. Indeed, prior to traveling, the program leaders and I, as well as
several of our guest speakers, reiterated how doing work abroad has a significant personal impact on the traveler. We would say things such as, “You will learn more about yourself than what you leave behind in Ecuador.” However, simply saying this does not adequately communicate the impact of the experience. Within the context of culture shock, sometimes these experiences abroad might be too intense for students to want to relive. I argue that saying a trip can be life changing downplays in what ways it changes a person and the impact that has. Instead, I would encourage leaders to have real and frank conversations with students about the kinds of changes they have experienced themselves and seen in others. These kinds of pre-trip discussions are then what help shape students’ expectations for the trip, which then impact their experiences of culture shock.

As discussed in my findings, I found that some of the student participants expressed some hesitancy with immediately assigning parts of their experience as “culture shock.” However, those who had a nuanced understanding of it were able to help their peers by identifying when they saw them experiencing culture shock, and then helping them through it. Thus, training students to understand what culture shock is and how to identify it can help prepare them to adapt to their own experiences of culture shock. It can also aid them in helping their peers when they have heightened experiences of culture shock.

Lastly, this research supports the critical importance of addressing race, gender, and class within a program’s pre-departure orientation or affiliated class. As I discussed above, the students had a particular problem understanding how gender operated on the trip, especially compared to the ease that they discussed race and class. Although this could be attributed to the small number of men on the trip compared to women, there was similarly a small number of working class participants ($n = 1$), yet this did not seem to inhibit the participants’ discussions of
class. This finding suggests that students are at least cognizant if not better trained in identifying the impact of race and class on their lives than gender. The implication of this finding is that more complex notions of gender, especially around the performance of gender and gender non-conforming identities, need to be covered. In international programs in particular, leaders can discuss culturally specific notions of beauty, social roles, and dress. Similarly, the white participants were largely unable to identify how their own microaggressions attributed to the racial and class-based segregation during the trip. I interpreted this as a lack of critical self-reflection on their own raced and classed behavior. The program, therefore, could have more explicitly addressed issues of race, gender, and class. Additionally, the program leaders—myself included—should have made more of an effort to call out such microaggressions early on to show how they were affecting others. Such responses might have encouraged critical self-reflection.

Another possible inference I made in terms of analyzing why race seemed to be a much easier topic to discuss was that the racial segregation on the trip was so visibly obvious at times. This may be perhaps due in part to the fact that the whole group was evenly split between white and students of color, whereas the females in the research outnumbered the males six to one (or more if the leaders and local partners in Ecuador are counted). Therefore, having a more racially diverse group, especially given that the participants interacted within racial groups, may have contributed to the ease with which some students could identify how race operated. This does not, however, suggest that having a racially diverse program would necessarily promote race consciousness. Instead, I speculate that having conversations about the racial segregation, in the context of this program, with leaders aided such analysis from the students about their experiences abroad.
Critically addressing race, gender, and class should not only be a focus of the content of a program’s pre-departure training but also the execution of it. I found that students noticed the racial disparity among the small groups early on. As I discussed in my findings, this then became an easy rationale for the white students to point to regarding why students segregated by race during the trip; the white participants were not able to identify their own actions as also contributing to this segregation. The implications of this rationale point to the important role of the program leaders in diversifying the groups from the beginning. The students also suggested in their interviews that requiring students to sit with new people during meals or assigning who students should room with would also help build new relationships.

I would argue that neither the focus on content nor program implementation (or classroom management depending on if the program is embedded within a class) can be the sole approach for incorporating race, gender, and class into an international program. Our program addressed this well in terms of content, but not intentionally enough in terms of implementation. These both need to be strategies for creating critically minded international programs. Not only should students learn about how race, gender, and class impact lives around the world, but we must embody this knowledge in how we run programs. Leaders can intentionally create groups, discussion prompts, cross-cultural activities, guest speaker opportunities, and logistics that represent a complex understanding of how race, gender, and class impact students’ experiences abroad.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this research that necessitate discussion here. First, with regards to the arts-based methods, this research used a particular set of materials for the student participants’ self-portraits. As discussed in chapter three, these materials included plain and
patterned paper of various sizes, permanent markers, colored pencils, scissors, and glue sticks. Providing other materials, such as painting supplies or video cameras, would have allowed the participants to create different kinds of self-portraits. I chose these materials based on the assumption that many students would feel more comfortable using them as opposed to other materials (e.g., oil paints). I also wanted to ensure I had the same materials throughout the research to ensure the most consistency possible in the portraits to allow for easier comparisons. I had hoped that using the same materials throughout would also help ease some of the student participants’ aversion to drawing and making art. Still, students expressed some apprehension about their drawing skills—a point I have not focused on here. Thus, when using arts-based measures, it is still a serious consideration regarding how the participants interpret art, the making of it, and who can make it.

The participants’ understanding of culture shock is another limitation in this research. In my review of the literature, I did not find much discussion regarding how participants’ understanding of this phenomenon impacted the measure of it in self-reported data collection procedures. However, this issue is critical in terms of understanding how the participants’ reported on their experiences in my data. For example, although the quantitative survey provided a baseline definition of culture shock for the prompt related to this variable, I am unsure if the students specifically and only used that definition of culture shock or their own understanding to quantify the amount of culture shock they experienced. During the interviews, some of the student participants expressed that they did not feel culture shock. However, upon further explaining how I conceptualized culture shock, and the types of experiences that could fall within the phenomenon, some expanded their notion of culture shock to include more examples from their experiences. In other words, where the student participants may have quantified less
culture shock, this quantification might have been based on a limited view of what could be considered “culture shock.”

Although none of the student participants retook the quantitative survey in response to a more expanded and nuanced understanding of culture shock, three students did retake the instrument during our interviews after the trip to Ecuador. In one student’s case, she accidentally skipped a page of questions. The other two participants, who were students of color, took the RCDI portion of the survey again because they completed it making comparisons to white, mainstream US American culture as opposed to their own individual culture, which was the original instruction. Thus, in these three examples, their data were likely influenced by experiences that took place after the original implementation of the survey, which might have skewed their responses. Additionally, having students compare Ecuadorian culture to “their own culture” as opposed to US American culture for example means that the frames of comparison were specific to each individual, making comparisons of the results among individuals more complicated. I chose this wording in the instrument to understand the individual participants’ experiences with culture shock.

**Future Research**

In terms of my own plans for future research, I intend to revisit some of the data from this study for another round of analysis. My initial plans for this study included an analysis of not only studying the data in terms of how different types of students experienced culture shock (which is what I discussed above), but also how race, gender, and class were represented in the data. This direction of study would entail using theoretical frameworks for these three cultural identities to identify how they are present (or not) in the arts-based and qualitative data.
I am also interested in completing more rounds of data collection using the same methods to determine if any of my results here apply to other groups of students. This may also include data collected from other programs in addition to other iterations of the same Ecuador program. I also envision conducting further research on students’ experiences of culture shock in order to identify a better way to either phrase this phenomenon or define culture shock in particular. This research could then be used to train both program leaders and students in this phenomenon, the impact it has on students’ experiences abroad, and how it can be managed.

I am especially interested in continuing to study how students use what they have learned and experienced abroad after they return. I see this as starting with how students manage their reverse culture shock and their decision to travel again.

In terms of the field of culture shock in general, this research study emphasizes the critical importance of recognizing how culture—including experiences and interactions with it—is impacted by race, gender, and class. My findings that experiences of culture shock were manifested and responded to differently across race and class present a new direction in the study of this phenomenon. In particular, how does one identity across multiple facets impact their experiences of culture shock? Such an analysis would likely require an intersectional or dialectic approach to understanding the impact of one’s race, gender, and/or class on their daily life.

The research on culture shock also needs to take more seriously how this phenomenon is part of a larger process, i.e. acculturation (see Figure 2.1). Although studying particular aspects of this process might help in identifying specific nuances that take place, only focusing on portions of this process fails to consider that experiences of culture shock do not take place in a vacuum. Prior experiences and knowledge, program/travel specifications, strategies enacted in response, repeated exposure to new cultures, and long-term changes in identity all contribute to
the experience of culture shock. Using the frame for acculturation I have articulated here would thereby ground research on culture shock in a specific theory of the experience, which would then address how this field of research tends to lack a strong theoretical backing.

Additionally, research on culture shock needs to utilize more mixed methods and arts-based designs. My findings about the impact of others’ gaze on the student participants’ portrayal of themselves were likely the result of using an arts-based method that asked the participants to consider how they “saw” themselves at various points during the trip. In other words, the nature of arts-based research uncovered an element to the experience of culture shock not commonly addressed in strictly qualitative or strictly quantitative research. By utilizing multiple approaches to data collection and analysis, I found a richer picture of culture shock.

Finally, further research is needed into the impact of these programs on local host communities. Studies can be done on their culture shock, and the community and individuals have been affected by an influx of foreigners.

Conclusions and Significance

In particular, this research contributes several unique findings to the literature on culture shock. First, I found that students of color and working class students tended to quantify less cultural distance and culture shock than their affluent white peers. These students also manifested and responded to culture shock in unique ways compared to their affluent white peers. I found that race, gender, and class were interwoven in students’ experiences, ideas about themselves, and interactions with others. I also found that students processed their experiences in Ecuador differently across race, as demonstrated by the differences in their self-portraits and qualitative data. Given the differences in manifestation and responses to culture shock across these three cultural identities, it is imperative that research on culture shock carefully consider
the impact of race, gender, and class. Therefore, this research supports the importance of delineating one’s data on culture shock between different cultural identities.

Second, this research supported the importance of analyzing the students’ interactions with both co-nationals (i.e., their peers) on their program as well as with host nationals. This significant inference relates to my finding concerning how students of color and working class students self-segregated away from their white affluent peers’ complaints about the trip. Whereas research relating culture shock and strategies to alleviate it tends to focus on either co-national interactions (e.g., Pitts, 2009) or host national interactions (e.g., Chang et al., 2013), my research demonstrated that these interactions influenced the student participants’ simultaneously.

Third, through the use of arts-based self-portraits, I was able to capture how the student participants were negotiating how to incorporate their experiences in Ecuador with their lives at home. Current research addresses how these experiences of reverse culture shock influence, for example, students’ use of support services upon return (Gaw, 2000). However, this research demonstrated that reverse culture shock, while connected to one’s initial culture shock experienced while abroad, is influenced by a unique set of circumstances, i.e. having to find a way to fit in one’s experiences with their home life. Thus, this research supports the further investigation into the uniqueness of reverse culture shock from culture shock.

Finally, this research demonstrates the value of using a theoretically grounded mixed methods design in the study of culture shock. Using a mixed methods research design with arts-based, qualitative, and quantitative approaches allowed me to collect a wealth of data on the student participants’ experiences of culture shock. Each data set contributed a unique set of findings that supplemented, extended, and even complicated the other data sets. Additionally, the more open nature of my research questions as well as how I framed the interviews with the
students as a space for them to analyze their own experiences allowed the student participants and me to identify what qualified as experiences of culture shock. Had I approached this research in a more deductive manner by analyzing for the presence of culture shock using a restrictive definition of it, I would not have found the specific and individual nuances of students’ experiences and understandings of culture shock. This result was not part of my original rationale for using these methods, but it supports the importance of dialogue with participants regarding their own conceptualizations of a phenomenon. My research, therefore, demonstrates the critical importance of mixed methods research designs for research on culture shock.

Ultimately, this research was a transformative experience for me—as a practitioner of study abroad programs, as a researcher, and as an individual who has experienced culture shock (and will likely experience it again in the future). It is my hope that this research will further impact others in the design and implementation of study abroad programs as well as in how we research culture shock.
References


Appendix A: Recruitment Script

Information and Recruitment Script
University of Cincinnati
Department: Educational Studies
Principal Investigator: Peggy Shannon-Baker
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Holly Johnson

Hello everyone,

As you know, my name is Peggy Shannon-Baker. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Cincinnati. I am conducting a research study on how culture shock experienced while abroad might relate to race, gender, and class. This could be based on your own race, gender, and class identities or in the differences you see and experience in relation to the people we meet abroad. This research is guided by my research advisor, Dr. Holly Johnson. I am here today to discuss this research study with you and invite you to participate.

If you agree to participate, this study will be based on some of your course assignments, class discussions and activities, and an interview after the trip abroad. These include your reflection paper submitted at the end, class discussions about cultural identities, and our discussions/activities while we are abroad. These will include written components and drawing self-portraits about your feelings, how you are adjusting and any relevant experiences. There will also be a survey asking you to measure the differences you see comparing your culture and that of the people in Ecuador. The interviews will then be used to check in to see how you’re adjusting, ask you to draw another self-portrait on how you feel about being back and have you analyze and reflect on your writing and portraits. These interviews will be scheduled individually at your convenience and will take about an hour and a half. They and will also be used to get your feedback on some of the information collected and get your thoughts on the experience overall.

Here is how the study will work: once we are done discussing the research study today, I will ask you to review the research study consent form and sign if you are willing to participate. I will then take all of the consent forms and keep them in a sealed envelope and will then lock them in a cabinet in my office. Your grading instructor for this course will not know who agrees to participate. I ask that you not disclose this to her at any point to maintain confidentiality. This will ensure that whether or not you agree to participate will not impact your grades in this course.

Only those students who agree to participate will have their course requirements or discussion comments used in the study. I will change any identifying information to a pseudonym, and this data will be analyzed for the research. I may ask others to analyze or look at the data with me. In this case, only pseudonyms will be shared with these people.

You do not have to be in this study. While participation in the course is required, you can choose not to have your course requirements included in the study. Your decision to be in any study is
totally voluntary. Your grade in this course will not be impacted by whether you choose to participate or not.

Do you have any questions?

I want to assure you that I will keep your information confidential. Your information will not be shared outside of this study team except to those groups inside and outside of UC who are responsible for making sure studies are conducted correctly and ethically. However, if your comments in the research data relate to your safety or the safety of others, these may be shared with my research adviser, Holly Johnson, and/or others in the School of Education. Similarly, we ask that all students keep the class discussions, comments and assignments confidential, but some may talk about them anyway.

If you decide to participate in this study now, but decide later to stop, you need to know that the information already collected will continue to be used if you consented originally unless you request otherwise by communicating with me.

Do you have any more questions?

If you would like to ask questions about the research study at any point, you can contact me via email at shannopy@mail.uc.edu. Write email on the board. You can also contact my research adviser if you have any questions or concerns about this research. Their email is holly.johnson@uc.edu. Write email on the board.

When there are no further questions: Here is the consent form for the research study. Please read through it carefully before signing. I am giving you an extra copy of the consent form for your records. Pass out two copies to each student. Each of the consent forms will already have been signed by the recruiter as a witness.

Are there any questions about the consent form?

When there are no questions about the consent form: You may now sign the consent form if you wish to participate. If you do not wish to participate, you can leave the form blank. Once you have finished, please place your consent form in this envelope. Envelope should be placed on a desk or table in front of the room.

I will stay here until everyone has placed a form in the envelope. If you want to ask a question privately, you may do so. Wait until everyone has put their consent form in the envelope. Answer any questions.
Appendix B: Adult Consent Form

Adult Consent Form for Student Participants in Research (Phase 2)
University of Cincinnati
Department: Educational Studies
Principal Investigator: Peggy Shannon-Baker
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Holly Johnson

Title of Study: Investigating Race, Gender and Class in Undergraduate Students’ Culture Shock in Study Abroad Programs: A Mixed Methods Study

Introduction:
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Please read this paper carefully and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Who is doing this research study?
The person in charge of this research study is Peggy Shannon-Baker of the University of Cincinnati (UC) Department of Educational Studies. She is being guided in this research by Dr. Holly Johnson, her research advisor. There may be other people on the research team helping at different times during the study.

What is the purpose of this research study?
The purpose of this research study is to investigate how race, gender and class relates to the culture shock experienced by students during the study abroad experience for the affiliated courses. This could be based on your own race, gender and class identities or in the differences you see and experience in relation to the people we meet abroad.

Who will be in this research study?
You may be in this study if you are registered for the affiliated courses AND will be going abroad.

What will you be asked to do in this research study, and how long will it take?
This study will be based on your class assignments, discussions, and activities, and an interview after you return from abroad. The course requirements that will be used for this research study are: relevant papers, and discussions and activities during class. Class discussions will take place in our assigned class room on campus or during our trip abroad. All other course requirements that will be used for this research study will take place at your own leisure and location. The interview will take about 1.5 hours and will be scheduled at your convenience.

Are there any risks to being in this research study?
It is not expected that you will be exposed to any risk by participating in this research study. You may choose not to participate in the research study at any time. You will need to complete all course requirements whether or not you choose to participate in this research study. The interview is not considered required for the course. The primary instructor for [the affiliated courses] will not know who is participating in the research study until all grades are submitted.
Are there any benefits from being in this research study?
You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this research study. However, your participation may help improve this and future study abroad programs.

What will you get because of being in this research study?
You will not be paid to take part in this research study.

Do you have choices about taking part in this research study?
If you do not want to take part in this research study you may leave this form blank. You will still need to fulfill the requirements for the course, but in this case your assignments and discussions will not used, collected and/or a part of the research study. You will not be treated any differently if you choose not to take part in this research study, nor will your grades be impacted should you choose to participate or not to participate.

How will your research information be kept confidential?
Since most of the data collected here are for the course (i.e journals and participation in discussions), both the Instructor for the course and Peggy will have access to this data. Information about you will be kept private by keeping paper copies of research data in a locked area (i.e. in a locked room while abroad or a locked cabinet in my office). Electronic copies of research data will be kept in a password protected electronic area (i.e. Blackboard or Google Forms). All identifying information (i.e. names) will be changed to pseudonyms. All data will be stored for five years after the end of this research study and then destroyed by shredding or deleting. The data from the research study may be published. In this event, your pseudonym will be used.

Agents of the University of Cincinnati may inspect research study records for audit or quality assurance purposes.

The researcher will ask students in the class discussions to keep the discussions confidential, but they might talk about it anyway. Similarly, all statements and comments will be held confidential unless and until the comments relate to the safety of a student or others.

What are your legal rights in this research study?
Nothing in this consent form waives any legal rights you may have. This consent form also does not release the investigator, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

What if you have questions about this research study?
If you have any questions, please direct them to Peggy (shannopy@mail.uc.edu) or her research adviser, Holly Johnson (holly.johnson@uc.edu).

The UC Institutional Review Board reviews all research projects that involve human participants to be sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or complaints about the study, you may
contact the UC IRB at (513) 558-5259. Or, you may call the UC Research Compliance Hotline at (800) 889-1547, or write to the IRB, 300 University Hall, ML 0567, 51 Goodman Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0567, or email the IRB office at irb@ucmail.uc.edu.

**Do you HAVE to take part in this research study?**

No one has to be in this research study. Your course grade will not be affected by participation or non-participation in this research study. You may choose not to participate or you may quit participating AT ANY TIME by communicating this via email to Peggy (shannopy@mail.uc.edu). If you decide to withdraw from the research study, partial data will be used for the research study unless you request otherwise by communicating with Peggy.

**Agreement:**
I have read this information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I give my consent to participate in this research study. I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participant Name (please print) ____________________________________________

Participant Signature ____________________________ Date ________

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent ____________________________ Date ________
Appendix C: Research Diagram

DATA COLLECTION

ARTS-BASED
- Self-portraits
- Artist statements

QUAL
- Students’ journals
- Observation notes

QUAN
- CDI scores
- Culture Shock scores
- Demographics

DATA ANALYSES

ARTS-BASED
Critical Visual Methodology

QUAL
Inductive coding analysis of journals

QUAN
Correlations: min/max, SD, means

INTEGRATION ANALYSES

STUDENT INTERVIEWS
Individual interviews: check-in, clarify meanings, have students complete side-by-side analysis

TRANSFORM DATA
Turn QUAL codes into quantitative data; analyze with descriptive statistics

TRIANGULATION
Triangulate themes and findings across the data

Lenses for race, gender, and class

RESEARCH PRODUCTS
Research findings; researcher’s reflection on positionality; curriculum recommendations
Appendix D: Journal Prompts

The prompts below indicate the kind of prompts that will be given during class time that ask students to write and/or draw about their experiences. Since these instructions will largely be given verbally, the exact wording may change. However, the prompts listed below indicate the nature and direction of the prompts that will be given.

Before travelling arts-based prompt: As preparation for your final writing paper for the class (the “reflection essay”) and to combine with our discussions on cultural identities, I would like for us to draw a self-portrait. If you had to visually represent who you are in this moment, how would you do it? How do you see yourself here at [the university]? Use the self-portrait to tell about who you are and how you see yourself as a student at [the university]. Then, on a separate piece of paper write about what you decided to include in the self-portrait. What did you choose to depict and why? How did you represent it? You may use different colors and symbols to help portray yourself.

Mid-point of the trip arts-based prompt: Using the materials available to you, please draw a self-portrait. This portrait should depict the range of feelings, emotions and experiences you have had thus far. Consider the following: How have you felt while interacting with the local culture and people? How do you feel about being in this country? You can also address other things that are important to you. Then, with your drawing, include a reflection detailing what you drew and why. Analyze your self-portrait. What can be seen in it and what did you intend to portray? You will have the opportunity to share to the group once everyone is done if you would like to share.
**Final two days of the trip, quantitative prompt:** To see the extent of the differences between your culture and what you have experienced from Ecuadorian culture, you are being asked to take a short survey. [Depending on technology in-country, this will either be provided online through a Google Documents survey or a paper survey.] Then write a reflection on your answers. What experiences particularly influenced your responses? What else did you think about while filling in the survey?
Appendix E: Example Observation Prompts

Observation notes will be taken during course debriefings each night and while the students are observing in the international schools and on course-relevant outings in country (e.g. going to the market). The purpose of the observation notes is to document casual conversations and body language that is relevant to the study. The prompts below indicate the kinds of topics and questions in mind that will guide the observation notes. Since this form of data collection is more open-ended, it will be very context specific and depend on what the students say, their body language and interactions with others in terms of what may be recorded as observation notes.

- When the students “check in” concerning their feelings and how the day went, what do they discuss?
  - What do they share? Do I know of anything that happened that they did not share?
  - What emotions do they share?
  - What does their body language look like (e.g. lots of movement, crouched down, etc.)?
  - How have their check-ins changed over the course of the trip?
  - How do they react to others in the group?
  - How do they talk about the host nationals?

- Do the students interact with one another freely or do they discuss in a way that answers the prompts from the teacher?

- What stories do they share during the day’s debriefings?
  - How do they feel about them?

- Do they display any visible signs of culture shock (e.g. anxiety, frustration, disorientation, etc.)?
  - Do they explicitly mention feeling culture shock?
  - Do they discuss potential reverse culture shock?

- Do race, gender and/or class come up in their conversations?
  - How or in what ways?
  - Based on the stories shared, should they have discussed race/gender/class but did not explicitly?
Appendix F: Revised Cultural Distance Index and Additional Questions

Revised Cultural Distance Index (2015)

By this time, you should have some understanding of the culture in Ecuador. This survey is designed to measure the extent of the differences between your own culture and Ecuadorian culture. This is referred to as "cultural distance." Understanding the extent of the differences you feel between your own and Ecuadorian culture will help to pinpoint what cultural differences stand out to you. This survey will also help to determine which cultural nuances are particularly important for work in Ecuador.

This survey contains 3 sections and should take about 10-15 minutes at most. One section lists a series of questions asking you to gauge the differences between your own culture and Ecuadorian culture related to particular parameters, such as family life and food. The second section includes a question about culture shock and an open-ended response that allows you to write about any of the answers you gave. For example, were you thinking of a particular experience while responding to a question? Did a question stand out to you? The third section contains demographic questions that will help with tracking responses.

[This survey corresponds to a study approved by the University of Cincinnati Institutional Review Board, study 2014-0358, approved 03/30/2015 to 03/09/2016. If you have any questions, please contact Peggy Shannon-Baker at shannopy@mail.uc.edu or her research adviser Holly Johnson at holly.johnson@uc.edu.]
Revised Cultural Distance Index questions

For these questions, please compare your own culture ("my culture") to the cultural beliefs, practices, and values of Ecuadorian culture. You can imagine each question starting with "Among Ecuadorians..." or "In Ecuador..."

Please circle one answer. If you are unsure, make your best guess.  
* Required

The respect that is shown to elderly people is...  *
  o  Similar to my culture
  o  A little more or less
  o  Much more or less

Do most people have electric appliance (e.g. TV, refrigerator, vacuum) at home?  
  o  Yes many
  o  Yes some
  o  No

The main language is...  *
  o  English
  o  Another European language
  o  A non-European or indigenous language

What do women usually wear?  *
  o  Western clothing
  o  Modified Western clothing (i.e. mix between Western and traditional)
  o  Traditional clothing

What role do most Ecuadorian women fill?  *
  o  Go to work if they wish or have to
  o  Mostly look after the home and children
  o  Rigidly housebound

In terms of material culture, the standard of living is...  *
  o  Similar to my culture
  o  A little better or worse
  o  Much better or worse

The food that most people eat daily is...  *
  o  Similar to my culture
  o  Somewhat different
  o  Very different
The leisure activities (e.g. sports, music, drama) are... *
- Similar to my culture
- Somewhat different
- Very different

Is education free? *
- Free to secondary
- Free to primary
- Not free

The main religion of the people is... *
- Largely Christian
- Mixed
- Not Christian

What do men usually wear? *
- Western clothing
- Modified Western clothing (i.e. mix between Western and traditional)
- Traditional clothing

The general attitudes toward foreigners are... *
- Similar to my culture
- Somewhat different
- Very different

The family closeness (e.g. time spent together) is... *
- Similar to my culture
- A little more or less
- Much more or less

The eating practices (e.g. when and how to eat) are... *
- Similar to my culture
- Somewhat different
- Very different

Can young people date or meet romantically in Ecuador? *
- At parties, social occasions, etc.
- Only through family
- No

What level of education do most people attain here? *
- Beyond secondary
- Secondary
- Primary
The role that religion plays in most people's lives is... *
  o Similar to my culture
  o Somewhat more or less
  o Much more or less

Social interactions (e.g. informal visits, greetings) are... *
  o Similar to my culture
  o Somewhat different
  o Very different

Quantify your overall feelings of culture shock at this time. (1 - no culture shock; 5 = extremely high levels of culture shock) *
Culture shock refers to anxiety, confusion, mental and emotional shock, and overall disorientation.

1 2 3 4 5

What experiences particularly influenced your responses? What else did you think about while filling in the survey? *
For example, were you thinking of a particular experience while responding to a question? Did a question stand out to you?
Demographic Questions

What is your name? *
This will only be used to track who has completed this assignment.

What is your major? *

When do you plan to graduate? *
- 2015
- 2016
- 2017
- 2018 or later

What do you consider yourself? *
Circle one
- Lower or working class
- Middle class
- Upper class

What do you consider yourself? *
Circle all that apply
- African American/Black
- American Indian/Alaskan Native/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Asian American/Asian
- Mexican American/Chicana/o
- Puerto Rican
- Other Latina/o
- White/Caucasian
- Other: ______________________

What is your gender identity? *

Before this trip, had you traveled outside of the country before? *
- No
- Once
- Twice
- 3 or more times
Appendix G: Interview Prompts

The purpose of these interviews is three-fold: to check-in with the students on their adjustment to being back [home], to have them draw the last self-portrait about this adjustment, and to analyze their own data from the trip. Below are the types of prompts that I might use during this interview, but the wording may be changed or questions added depending on the nature of our discussions.

1. How are you doing now that we are back? How are your classes going?
2. Have you talked much about being away? What do people say or ask you about?
3. I’d like to have you draw one last self-portrait, but with this one focus on how you’re feeling now that we’re back. How do you see yourself here? Have you changed at all? How do you see yourself?
4. (Have them discuss what they drew and why, and then make comparisons to their previous self-portraits. What do they think now seeing them all together? What do they see? Highlight any changes I see. What themes/codes did I note during the analysis? I may prompt discussions about codes of race, gender and/or class if they do not on their own.)
5. (Draw connections to their other data. Ask them to consider some of their responses to the Revised Cultural Distance Index. Do they have other interpretations of this information seeing it all together? How do they feel about it all? Highlight any points from my analysis they didn’t address.)
6. (Ask them for their final thoughts. How did they like the program? How did it impact them? How do they envision using their learning and experiences in the future? What else would they like to talk about?)
Appendix H: The Students’ First Self-Portraits

Alice
Beth
Brinae
Dakota
I chose to do myself portrait as a silhouette. Me as and my signature high bun. I chose to do only my silhouette because of the air of mystery it gives. I am still in the process of finding myself and at this point I don’t fully understand what I am about. I know what seems to define me but I am unsure unsure of the real me. So I left it a blank canvas.

Heather
Jeremiah
Lidia (university and name references were blocked out)
Megan
Naiomi
The Muslim
المسالم
The truth = الحق
المستاجر
The traveler
الفكر
The thinker
الفقير
The poor
المواطن
The citizen
الحياة
The life
Shelby
Teresa
Appendix I: The Students’ Second Self-Portraits

Alice
Beth
Brinae
Dakota
At the start of this trip I was so excited to gain a travel experience outside of my family. Outside of the scenery, children in our group’s dynamic. Early on in the trip, I noticed that many of the students of color interacted with each other more frequently than outside of their race. Even as a lover of social psychology and someone who considers themselves to be socially conscious, I find myself falling into the same pattern. Being in a place that is unfamiliar to me I found comfort in the company of my fellow black peers. In my portrait I wanted to show the separation I have noticed so far within the group.

Jeremiah
Margaret
Megan
Paul

Rachel
Es muy importante que...
Appendix J: The Students’ Third Self-Portraits

Alice
Beth
Brinae
Dakota
Heather
Jeremiah
Lidia
Megan
Naiomi
Still Muslim

Still going to die

But happy and anxious to see what my future has in store for me.

Now realize that the world has problems and cannot fix all.

Wondering about how the kids are in Ecuador.

Paul
Rachel
Shelby
Teresa

"How else could I explain this?"