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**‘Travelling Tales’: American (re)Constructions of
South Africa and Africa
through Study Abroad in Cape Town**

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for the award of the degree of

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Travelling Tales: American (re)Constructions of South Africa and Africa
through Study Abroad in Cape Town

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Signature:

Signed by candidate

Date: 16 February 2009

DEDICATION

To the twins and to the struggle –

University of Cape Town

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First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the students and programme coordinators who participated in this project, for their insights and stories, for the way they trusted me, surprised me and took me deeper into the experience of what it means to cross and re-cross borders...

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To my family and friends in the United States and in South Africa, for laughing and crying with me...

I give great thanks to my Creator for carrying me the whole way and for being the reason why I do what I do and have hope for a more just future...

To Mpho, most of all, for loving me, for listening to me, for believing in me and just for being who you are... this is for you!

ABSTRACT

Postcolonial theory has been critiqued for essentializing the North and being too theoretical. Yet it has also been described as essential for the ongoing decolonization of our world. Scholars in a range of disciplines have therefore suggested the need to ‘examine specific practices and devises in particular times and places’ in order to expose and challenge the ways that certain forms of discourse function to maintain imperialist interests and misrepresentations of Africa in the ‘West.’

To these ends, this study looks at the construction of early European/American travelers’ tales and the experience of study abroad in South Africa as two particular practices that are relevant to the concerns of postcolonialism. While much has been written about each of these phenomena on their own, little has been done to bring them into a conversation with each other. To fill this gap, this dissertation draws on narrative analysis, symbolic convergence theory, discourse analysis and postcolonial theory to explore the dominant narratives that emerge in the pre-trip, embodied trip and post-trip tellings of both types of tales.

In order to discover the meaning-making processes of these narratives, qualitative methods were used. Firstly, an extensive literature review was undertaken of early travelers’ tales (written between 1600 and 1900), images of Africa in the United States, travel and tourism theory and study abroad literature. Eight focus groups and six one-on-one interviews were then conducted with a total of 36 American students, who were either directly enrolled at the University of Cape Town or participants in the School for International Training (SIT) in Cape Town. These interviews were then followed up with email correspondence once the students had returned home.

This study found that while study abroad narratives have enormous potential to challenge the negative and inaccurate stereotypes about Africa in the United States, many strains still exist that mirror the rhetoric of early travelers’ tales and promote notions of Africa as ‘wild’, ‘dangerous’ and ‘underdeveloped’ and South Africa as the ‘light’ version of Africa. However, in contrast to the writers of early travelers’ tales, the students who participated in this study demonstrated many more instances of critical self-reflection and desire for change.

EPIGRAPH

Home is a foreign land
That hurls the might of its confusion around the world
Strangers believe they know my bruises
The smallness of boxes they call eyes
And woo them into a false comfort

I will not live in boxes
They are not my home
Home is laughter
Home is rounded figures
Home is a sharpened mental weapon
To be wielded against foreigners of the spirit

I am tired of being different
My feet burn from the fires of those
Who have been anointed
With the certainty of origins

I will wonder the earth
In search of my tribe
Or build it from the shreds of boxes
With my own hands.

Insider outsider, by Lebogang Mashile, 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS.....	4
Chapter 1: An Introduction	7
Personal Motivation	10
Rationale.....	12
Limits of this Study	14
Overview of Chapters.....	15
Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework.....	16
Conceptualizing the Sample: Why Study Abroad Students?	16
Theorizing Cross-Cultural Encounters & Identity Formation.....	18
Moving Forward.....	20
Narrative Analysis: It's in the Stories	21
Symbolic Convergence Theory: Bonding Time.....	23
Discourse Analysis: Getting Political.....	24
Postcolonial Theory: Questioning 'Euro/Western-centrism'	26
Defending a Multi-disciplinary Approach.....	28
Towards Afrocentricity	29
Chapter 3: Research Methods.....	32
Researcher & Audience.....	32
Ethical Considerations.....	33
Sample Selection.....	34
Designing the Questions to Aid Interpretation.....	36
Data Collection & Transcription	39
Coding and Data Analysis.....	40
Verification Strategies.....	42
Chapter 4: Literature Review	43
Early Travelers' Tales	43
Images of Africa in the United States	47

Literature on Travel, Tourism and the ‘Tourist Gaze’	52
The Characteristics and Implications of Study Abroad for American Students.....	57
Chapter 5: Pre-trip Narratives	68
Early Travelers’ Tales: Influenced by Context and Discourse.....	69
Study Abroad Stories: Influenced by Context and Discourse	71
Pre-trip Narratives: A Conversation between Stories Then and Stories Now.....	85
Chapter 6: Disjunctures for ‘Embodied’ Narratives	87
Early Travelers’ Tales: Disjunctures.....	88
Study Abroad Stories: Disjunctures	92
Disjunctures: A Conversation between Stories Then and Stories Now	105
Chapter 7: The Tales that Travel Home	107
Early Travelers’ Tales: Narratives Told and Received	109
Study Abroad Stories: Narratives Told and Received.....	111
Post-trip Narratives: A Conversation between Stories Then and Stories Now	121
Chapter 8: Speaking ‘True Words’	123
BIBLIOGRAPHY	127
APPENDIX 1: SUPPLEMENTARY LITERATURE.....	139
The Relationship between South Africa and the United States.....	139
The Impact of American ‘Cultural Compulsions’ on Travel Abroad	146
Materials Produced by Study Abroad Programmes	155
APPENDIX II: RESPONDENT PROFILES.....	160
APPENDIX III: CONSENT FORM.....	164
University of Cape Town	164
APPENDIX IV: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE.....	165
APPENDIX V: EMAIL FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS.....	167

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Pyramid Model for Question Design.....	38
Figure 2: "Heroes" (Advertising leaflet, 1889). See n. 88 below for explanation.	47
Figure 3: Kellogg's (an advertisement)	49
Figure 4: 'Latuko' (A Film produced by the American Museum of Natural History).	50
Figure 5: Around the World (an advertisement).....	53
Figure 6: The Narrative Cycle of Traveling Tales.....	107

University of Cape Town

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

To aid the discussion and analysis on the following pages, I have compiled some key terms and possible definitions that relate to my topic. This is not a comprehensive list by any means and I am aware that many of these terms are highly contested. Thus, these definitions serve simply to open up the dialogue and suggest where this text locates itself.

‘Critical’

“Basically, ‘critical’ is to be understood as having distance from the data, embedding the data in the social, taking a political stance explicitly, and a focus on self-reflection as scholars doing research” (Wodak, 2001: 9).

‘Ideologies’

“Ideologies feature the basic principles that organize the attitudes shared by the members of that group. [For example], a racist ideology may organize attitudes about immigration, education or the labour market” (van Dijk, 2001: 115).

‘Power and Language’

“Power is about relations of difference, and particularly about the effects of differences in social structures... Power does not derive from language, but language can be used to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power in the short and long term” (Wodak, 2001: 11).

‘American’

“To live in the United States is to participate in a unique historical process that has solidified into a set of laws, customs, habits and rules for behaviour and the interpretation of behaviour – that is, into what we call a “culture,” *American culture*” (Varenne, 1986:4).

‘African’

“The postmodernist would begin by saying that there is no such thing as ‘Africans’ because there are many different types of Africans [but]... to be African is to be a part of a community, in contemporary terms, that was historically enslaved, exploited, and colonized because of skin color” (Asante, 2007:16).

‘Race’

Race is “an unstable and ‘decentred’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle... a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” (Omi & Winant, 1994: 55).

‘Culture’

“The shared meanings of culture are not ‘out there’ waiting for us to grasp them. Rather, they are the product of signifying practices, most notably those of language...To understand culture is to explore how meaning is produced symbolically through the signifying practices of language within material and institutional contexts” (Barker & Galasinski, 2001: 3).

‘Discourse’

“A system of options from which language users make their ‘choices’. The construction of any representation of reality is necessarily selective, entailing decisions as to which aspects of that reality to include and how to arrange them. Each selection carries its share of socially ingrained values” (Barker & Galasinski, 2001: 65).

‘Colonialism, Imperialism and Neo-colonialism’

“Whereas colonialism involves the actual physical conquest, occupation, and administration of a territory of one country by another, imperialism is an exercise of economic and political power by one country over another that may or may not involve direct occupation... Neocolonialism is a term that refers to such continuation of Western colonialism by nontraditional means... having not only economic and political dimensions, but a dimension of Western cultural control as well” (Prasad, 2003: 5-6).

‘Social change’

“Social change becomes possible through rethinking and re-describing the social order and the possibilities for the future. Rethinking ourselves, which emerges through social practice and, more often than not, through social contradiction and conflict, brings new political subjects and practices into being” (Barker & Galasinski, 2001: 56).

Chapter 1: An Introduction

I saw a picture of a girl on an elephant, looking at something with binoculars and it just hit me – I have to go to Africa ... this place that's considered the last wild place on earth... [for] an experience of a lifetime ... faced with things that are totally different than you would see in the United States (Resp. 2, FG 1: SIT).

Whether in search of adventure, a learning experience or just something entirely different from home, it is becoming increasingly popular for university students from the United States to study abroad. In the past decade, the number of American¹ students studying abroad increased by 150 percent from fewer than 90,000 in 1995/1996 to 223,534 in 2005/2006.² Although Open Doors 2007 also notes an “increasing interest in studying in more diverse destinations,” out of the 2005/2006 group, only 3.8 percent (8,459 students) went to universities in Africa.³ According to Mathers (2003, citing Pires, 2000a), “The relatively low number of students going to Africa appears to be due largely to the perception, amongst parents especially, that the continent is dangerous.” This perception, as well as others held by Americans about Africa, will be explored in the following pages through the stories of a few students who *do* come to Africa. They are part of a small but growing trend, with many claiming that coming to Africa makes them “*different*” or “*more adventurous*” than their peers.⁴

To explore this trend, this dissertation focuses on American study abroad students in South Africa in 2007 who were either enrolled at the University of Cape Town (UCT) or were part of the School for International Training (SIT).⁵ Although this dissertation will concentrate more on these students’ stories than on statistics, it is important to note that the number of study abroad students at the University of Cape Town alone has increased from 282 study

¹ Please see the glossary for a discussion of the term ‘American’ and other key concepts.

² <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org>, 12 Nov 2007. “American Students Studying Abroad at Record Levels: Up 8.5%”.

³ However, there is steady growth from 1995/1996, when only 2.3 percent of U.S. study abroad students went to Africa. “Report on International Educational Exchange”, Table 20.

⁴ This was mentioned by Respondent 35, Respondent 4 and others.

⁵ SIT is an independent study abroad programme with no affiliation to UCT.

abroad students in 2001 to 876 in 2008.⁶ One programme coordinator at UCT attributes this dramatic increase to the fact that the programme “provides students with what they want... opportunities to volunteer, go on a home stay... we do some fun stuff with them as well, take them out river rafting or sea kayaking or wine tasting... we take care of them... we really do pamper them quite a lot” (UCT Coordinator, 28 March 2007). United States government initiatives are also trying to make it easier to study abroad. The Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act was passed by Congress in 2007 with the goal of sending one million American students abroad annually in ten years time, claiming the country “can no longer afford to be complacent about our lack of knowledge about the world.”⁷ This statement, among other reasons and perceptions driving study abroad programmes, will be analysed in this dissertation.

Drawing on the ‘traveling tales’ of 36 students who participated in focus groups and one-on-one interviews, as well as my own experiences as an American living in South Africa, I will discuss the ‘knowledge’ about Africa and South Africa that exists in the United States and the role study abroad students play in challenging or reinforcing current perceptions. According to Mathers (2003: 3),

Travel is certainly a form of learning experience but, like all learning, is built on the scaffolding of prior knowledge and expectations. In some cases travel can affirm assumptions and even cement them with the authority obtained through the ‘real-life’ experience offered by having ‘been there’.

Although outbound travel in general is increasing in the United States, the approximate 64 million Americans who traveled abroad in 2007⁸ still account for only one fifth of the total American population, which was estimated at just over 301 million in 2007.⁹ In addition, although 55 percent of college bound students said in a national survey in 2007 that they are

⁶ These figures are reliable estimates but subject to correction. The 2001 figure is based on a report published on the IAPO website (<http://www.uct.ac.za/print/about/iapo/overview/statistics>) “International student statistics”. The 2008 figure was provided to me over email by one of the IAPO administrators.

⁷ www.nafsa.org/publicpolicy, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, October 2007, “Preparing Globally Educated Americans”.

⁸ <http://tinet.ita.doc.gov>, 30 June 2008, “U.S. Sets New Records for Travel Abroad in 2007”.

⁹ Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau (estimate based on population data from the 2000 Census).

“certain or fairly certain they will participate in study abroad,”¹⁰ only one percent of U.S. college students actually study abroad each year.¹¹ As a result, the small percentage of American university students who *do* study abroad are even more likely to be considered ‘expert witnesses’ by their families, friends and co-workers when they return home. The stories these students tell about the countries they visited, the experiences they had and the people they met contribute to the ‘truth’ about the world for their fellow Americans.

Taking this into consideration, the growing number of American students studying abroad is not a neutral phenomenon, particularly when they visit countries like South Africa that have a long history with the United States and that are attempting to undo the damaging effects of colonialism and imperialism. Although there are many counter-hegemonic possibilities in study abroad, American students carry the baggage of ‘the West’ with them whether they are aware of it or not. Historically and currently, images, stories and representations “directly influence the way the West defines its relationships with ‘others’” and have a very real impact “on development, aid and foreign policies” (Mathers, 2003: 2). In the not too distant past, travelers’ tales by Europeans and Americans played a large role in establishing the ideology of white superiority that still has an impact today. It is therefore important to look at the phenomenon of study abroad through a critical and historical lens.

This dissertation argues that study abroad stories are modern day travelers’ tales that have the potential to either disrupt or reaffirm ideologies of superiority – both in terms of ‘America being better than the rest of the world’ (and in particular Africa) and in terms of ‘white being better than black’. Many of my participants were aware of the power of their stories to influence perceptions. For example, one said: “*Stories are extremely powerful... this [maybe] idealistic, but the idea of even... breaking down one stereotype, I think is change, that’s progress.*” (Resp. 20, FG 8: SIT). To these ends, I will attempt to bring the students’ stories into a conversation with early European and American travelers’ tales, in order to identify

¹⁰ <http://www.acenet.edu>, American Council on Education, 25 Feb 2008, “In Spite of Global Uncertainties, Student Interest in Study Abroad and International Learning Ranks High”

¹¹ www.nafsa.org/publicpolicy, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, October 2007, “Preparing Globally Educated Americans”

narrative typologies of ‘us’ and ‘them’¹² and examine the changing manifestations of imperial discourse over the past few hundred years.

Fundamentally, this dissertation is about the creation of knowledge (about ‘other’ and about ‘self’) – the construction of Africans that didn’t end when colonialism ended, as well as the construction of identity for a young generation of Americans, many of whom, through international travel, are wrestling with what it means to encounter their ‘privilege’, their nationality and their ‘race’ for the first time. My research utilizes a map identified in theoretical literature on historical and contemporary travel and tourism (Bruner, 2005; Urry, 2002; Strain, 2003), early travelers’ tales (Khair, 2006; Pratt, 2008; Merians, 2001) and study abroad (Mathers 2003). As these theorists do, I work with a three-stage understanding of travel, which includes the process of 1) leaving a home base; 2) taking up temporary residence at a new location; and 3) returning home. Using this map as a framework, this dissertation examines 1) the perceptions about Africa and South Africa that study abroad students bring with them from their home base; 2) the narratives they co-construct while they are here; and 3) the stories they tell when they return home. Through this process, my analysis begins to unravel the way discourse protects the status quo but also reveals the roots of change through responsible story telling.

Personal Motivation

The idea for this dissertation emerged partly from my own story, which begins in 1987 when I left the United States for the first time, a somewhat anxious seven-year old whose primary identity would be “missionary kid” for the next eleven years of my life. I was reassured by the fact that it wasn’t my parents first time to Asia (my mom was an exchange student in Thailand in the 70’s and my dad had served with the U.S. Navy in Taiwan). When I left the Philippines in 1998, after growing up abroad, I chose my university in the States based on how many study abroad programmes it offered. Although I never did go on an ‘official’ semester programme, I tried just about every type of short-term trip that I could, including a visit to South Africa in 2002.¹³ Each trip varied hugely, but the common thread that ran

¹² ‘Americans’ and ‘South Africans’ (as well as ‘white’, ‘African American’, ‘Asian American’, ‘coloured’ and ‘African’). All of which are contested terms.

¹³ I went to Mexico on a volunteer service project in 1999. I went to England, Ireland and France as a tourist in 2000 and 2002. I went to the Netherlands as a student journalist for a conference in 2001 and I came to South Africa for the first time in 2002 as a sociology student.

through all of them was that my experiences abroad prompted questions about my own identity and my perceptions of ‘others’, as well as my ability to translate these experiences for my friends and family back home.

When I returned to South Africa in 2006 to begin my honours at the University of Cape Town, several critical questions were still stirring in my mind. What are my cultural influences and how do they influence the things I see and the way in which I interpret my surroundings? What does it mean to be born in one of the world’s ‘super powers’ and what responsibility must I take for the accompanying privileges and baggage? What stereotypes and perceptions of ‘others’ are a result of my socialization and how do I dismantle these? What do I need to learn from the rest of the world, and particularly Africa?

When I returned home for a visit in November 2006, I was surprised by some of the stereotypes thrown at me, particularly by supposedly well-educated friends – questions about whether people actually do live in huts, and how dark their skin is. One unexpected conversation that particularly disturbed me was with a woman who suggested that the reason why AIDS is such a problem in Africa is that Africans haven’t “evolved” enough to be properly educated about the disease. The racist implications of such a viewpoint were undeniable, and I sat there trying to think of just the right words to prove her wrong. I had valuable, first-hand knowledge that I had gained by meeting and talking with South Africans, but at the moment of confrontation, I was suddenly at a loss for words. It was then that I became convinced of the importance of systematically examining my own experience and the study abroad experience with the hope that study abroad students can be better equipped to be more responsible ‘truth-tellers’ in the world.¹⁴

¹⁴ Months later, this self-reflexive approach was challenged when I was asked by the Head of the Sociology Department how I would keep my own story separate from the voices of my respondents. Autoethnographic methodology provided me with a response, even though it is not part of my stated methodology. “A personal text” does not have to be self-obliging naval-gazing but can be a “critical intervention in social, political and cultural life” (Jones, 2005: 763). In other words, “looking at the world from a specific, perspectival and limited vantage point can tell, teach, and put people in action” (Jones, 2005: 763). Conversely, a researcher is actually more in danger of conflating his or her own story with the respondents’ story if he or she remains invisible.¹⁴ However, it is still essential to respect the voices of one’s respondents and therefore I try throughout this dissertation to be as transparent as possible about where my story intersects with theirs and where it diverges, as well as report both the moments where their stories confirm my theoretical position *and* challenge it. Here I am following the lead of other autoethnographers who say: “Use your texts to ‘stage arguments, to embody knowledge and politics, to open a community to itself and the world in ways that are dangerous, visceral, compelling and moving’” (Jones, 2005: 784, citing Dolan, 2001a).

Rationale

This dissertation attempts to contribute to the existing literature in four areas: 1) personal reflexivity, 2) methodology, 3) relevance to context, and 4) purpose & application. First, by personal reflexivity I refer to the fact that I have chosen a very personal topic. All the questions I ask of my participants I could also ask of myself because I am also an American studying in South Africa. This comes with the dilemmas of self-disclosure, subjectivity and vulnerability. However, it also provides me with a different perspective than the ones found in more positivist approaches. In line with critical methodologies, my research doesn't claim objectivity, but instead attempts to be transparent about the way my own story influences and intersects with the research (Foucault, 1990; Steyn, 2001; Freire, 2000; Mudimbe, 1994; Agger, 2006).¹⁵ Transparency and reflexivity in qualitative methods does not diminish the rigour or credibility of the research but can actually allow for greater insight (O'Leary, 2005; de Wet and Erasmus, 2005).

Second, this dissertation offers a more qualitative approach than most of the existing literature on study abroad. The few qualitative studies that exist emphasise anthropological methods, rather than discourse analysis. For example, Mathers' (2003) *American Travellers and the South African Looking Glass: Learning to Belong in America* asks similar research questions to my own. However, the author relies on first-person ethnographic methods. According to Riessman (1993, citing Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992), traditional ethnographies focus on realistic descriptions of events and informants, rather than the stories informants construct. As such, "Language is viewed as a transparent medium, unambiguously reflecting stable, singular meanings" (1993: 4). In contrast, I am interested in the stories – and the discourses the stories support or contest. According to Riessman (1993), "Informants' stories do not mirror a world 'out there.' They are constructed, creatively authored, rhetorical, replete with assumptions, and interpretive" (4). Thus interpretation (rather than description) is vital because narratives are essentially interpretive.¹⁶

¹⁵ According to Reinharz (1992: 34), "Researchers who self-disclose are reformulating the researcher's role in a way that maximizes engagement of the self but also increases the researcher's vulnerability to criticism, both for what is revealed and for the very act of self-disclosure." By risking criticism, this vulnerability allows for greater dialogue and accountability (Steyn, 2001).

¹⁶ Stories do not "speak for themselves" (Personal Narratives Group, 1989: 264). However, ethnographic reports on study abroad (like Mathers, 2003) appear to believe that they do. This type of study

Third, this project is uniquely situated to provide both a historical perspective on study abroad, as well as link this phenomenon to our current moment in history. In the socio-political arena, 2007 to 2009 have been full of questions about identity, representation and ideology in both South Africa and the United States. The 2008 xenophobic attacks in South Africa have raised questions about the representations of ‘other Africans’ in South Africa, and which foreigners are welcome here (Joubert, 2008). In the United States, President Barack Obama had to contend with America’s racial prejudices again and again during his campaign (Gasper, 2008). Meanwhile, the Bush administration continued to push its weight around internationally, unwilling to admit its mistakes in Iraq but condemning President Thabo Mbeki for his approach to the crisis in Zimbabwe (The Herald, 2008). The global economic crisis raises questions about the interconnectedness of the world and the consequences of one nation’s choices on another (Bobb, 2008). Yet the election of Obama raised great hopes around the world. In a context where Americans may still view American students abroad as “one of the nation’s most valuable public diplomacy tools,”¹⁷ this study thus speaks to the power of discourse and current contestations of identity and representation.

Fourth, my aim is for this dissertation to be relevant in terms of application, for study abroad students, programme coordinators, educators or other Americans living abroad, to engage with the misperceptions about South Africa and Africa that we encounter in ourselves and in the world around us. This is rooted in the desire to find greater personal freedom by uprooting the imperialist mindsets that interfere with our interactions with ‘others’ and ‘self’. Although we are in a post-colonial era, we have a long way to go before we are free of colonialism’s damaging effects. As noted by Nandy (1983) and Prasad (2003), colonialism and neo-colonialism are psychologically destructive both for the colonized, as well as for the colonizers themselves. Thus, resistance to colonialism’s lingering ideologies becomes a project to save all of us. It is for this liberation that I strive,¹⁸ with the desire not to reduce any

includes direct quotes of stories that travelers or study abroad students tell, without interpreting these stories or unpacking the actual language that is being used. As a result, the ideologies or meanings that are being drawn on and created are left unexamined. In contrast, I have chosen to attempt to begin to interpret my participant’s stories using methods like narrative and discourse analysis.

¹⁷ www.nafsa.org/publicpolicy, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, October 2007, “Preparing Globally Educated Americans”

¹⁸ I find inspiration and direction from Freire (2000): “The radical, committed to human liberation, does not become the prisoner of a ‘circle of certainty’ within which reality is also imprisoned. On the contrary,

of my respondents to generalities or expose them to unwarranted criticism but rather to use the openness of their narratives to awaken anyone who is willing to take up the challenge of living a more conscious life, aware of the political within the personal.¹⁹

Limits of this Study

This study will not attempt to evaluate or compare the UCT or SIT programmes²⁰ or review the entire range of activities that study abroad students are engaged in, nor will I provide an analysis of the perceptions of South Africans towards these students, although this is an important perspective to pursue in follow up studies. Instead, this dissertation is mainly interested in constructions of the West and Africa through American eyes. It does this while remaining aware of the fact that: “All forms of representation of experience are limited portraits... Although the goal may be to tell the whole truth, our narratives about others’ narratives are our worldly creations” (Riessman, 1993:15). This being the case, the only claim I can resonate is that: “The constructions I identify are my stories about my respondents’ stories... and my attempt to explain how these are tied into the larger social story” (Steyn, 2001: xxxviii).²¹

As the findings will demonstrate, the methodology I chose is both liberating and limited in scope. My choice to research Americans allowed my respondents to speak quite freely with me. As an ‘insider’, I was able to pick up on subtle cues and figures of speech that are part of American speech codes. However, the danger lies in the possibility that, “Unconsciously, the researcher may reproduce the same assumptions in theoretical discourse that respondents produce in their common sense discourse” (Steyn, 2001: xxxvi). To raise my awareness of

the more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can transform it. The individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled... This person does not consider himself or herself the proprietor of history or of all people, or the liberator of the oppressed; but he or she does commit to himself or herself, within history, to fight at their side.”

¹⁹ In the words of Wendy Luhabe (2002), “If I can help one person see how we regularly participate, perhaps unconsciously, in maintaining the status quo, this book will have achieved a great objective. That in itself begins to plant the seeds for the process of re-awakening and re-claiming our personal power and dignity so that we can live our lives with a conscience and a purpose” (6).

²⁰ I have rather used both in order to tap into a wider range of study abroad experiences in South Africa.

²¹ This is true of the discipline I identify with as well. As noted by Coffey & Atkinson (1996), citing the work of Davis (1974), they state, “[S]ociologists tell stories. Like any other storytellers, they construct narratives of tragedy, irony and humor.”

these cultural assumptions, I conducted a background study in 2007 to examine what constitutes “American-ness” and how this influences what we see and how we interpret what we see. My findings from that study greatly inform this study and are summarized in the appendix.²² However, I was also constrained by the strict page limits set by the faculty, as well as limitations in terms of the original sources that were available at UCT’s library.

Overview of Chapters

In this chapter, I have described the topic of my dissertation, as well as my personal motivation, rationale and limitations. **Chapter 2** discusses the theoretical and conceptual framework that forms the foundation of this study. **Chapter 3** provides a discussion of my research methods. **Chapter 4** explores the relevant literature. **Chapter 5** begins my analysis of the dominant narrative typologies within early travellers’ tales and my respondents’ *pre-trip stories*. **Chapter 6** identifies ‘disjunctures’ through analysing their ‘*embodied narratives*’. **Chapter 7** looks at the *post-trip stories* of study abroad students and early travellers’ tales. **Chapter 8** synthesizes these findings and concludes with the implications of this research, as well as suggestions for further study. The **Appendix** contains a brief history of the relationship between South Africa and the United States, as well as an overview of ‘American’ cultural characteristics and a review of pertinent study abroad programme materials.²³

²² My reflection on “American-ness” raised another important limitation, which is highlighted in Said’s (1978) classic *Orientalism*. He writes, “Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly? By surviving the consequences humanly, I mean to ask whether there is any way of avoiding the hostility expressed by the division, say, of men into “us” (Westerners) and “they” (Orientals). For such divisions are generalities whose use historically and actually has been to press the importance of the distinction between some men and some other men, usually towards not especially admirable ends. When one uses categories like Oriental and Western as both the starting and end points of analysis, research, public policy... the result is usually to polarize the distinction – the Oriental becomes more Oriental, the Westerner more Western – and limit the human encounter between different cultures, traditions and societies” (Said, 1978:46). Like Said, I have also wrestled with the categories that I have had to use in this study – America/Africa, Western/African, black/white. By using these, I don’t wish to contribute to the polarization Said mentions, but rather am limited to the categories of popular discourse in order to raise awareness of the binaries that exist in our constructions of the world.

²³ The appendix also includes background profiles of my participants, as well as my consent form, interview questions and follow-up email questionnaire.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

To take seriously the idea that knowledge of the world is constituted and transformed through the processes of language, discourse, and narrative is to take up the challenge of understanding the struggle between experience and the telling of it, and between the telling and the story told (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004: 1).

The conceptual framework for this dissertation arose through interaction with existing literature, as well as part of the dialogical process between the themes that emerged from my participants and the theoretical leanings embedded in my original research questions.²⁴

Conceptualizing the Sample: Why Study Abroad Students?

The first three conceptual questions that present themselves in this study are: Why study abroad students? Why American study abroad students specifically? And why South Africa? Although these questions were touched on briefly in the introduction from a statistical perspective, a theoretical perspective is also helpful. First, according to Mahler (2000, cited by Mathers, 2003:5), “[T]here is much to be learned from neocolonial projects by researching mobile groups not traditionally viewed as migrants but who nonetheless move across borders and undergo transformations abroad.” Study abroad students fit this description quite closely. They are very mobile, very eager to explore and often return home with stories of transformation, as well as written and visual material about their trip.

In addition, unlike traveling academics whose research must be subjected to peer review, all the written and visual material produced by study abroad students enters society with little screening. This was true of a group letter I wrote after my first trip to South Africa in 2002. Not one of my friends or relatives questioned the validity of my story, even though I have since learned that some of the claims I made, like a statement that the townships I saw were “populated solely by black South Africans,” are not actually true. This raises further questions:

²⁴ According to Neiswiadomy (1998), cited by Seibold (2002: 3), a theoretical framework is “a broad, general explanation of the relationship between the concepts of interest generally based on one theory”, where as a conceptual framework is the linking of “concepts selected from several theories, or from previous research, or from the researcher’s own experience.” The latter fits more closely with my approach, and Seibold’s description of “theory/concept generating research”. Of this approach, she writes, “While previous theories are acknowledged in analysis of qualitative data, the final discussion, rather than being an exposition of the way in which the findings support the theory, is ‘a critical dialogue between the data, the emergent theoretical positions and relevant theoretical/conceptual frameworks’” (Seibold, 2002: 5, citing Grebich, 1999: 30).

How for instance, does one distinguish fact from fiction, either as writer or as reader, in the case of unverifiable records of private experience taking place in profoundly unfamiliar surroundings? How do the pressures of audience expectation and the writer's predispositions transform the language and content of such records? (Campbell, 1988: 2).

Among my participants, I found that several of them wrestled with the question of representation and how to tell their stories accurately.²⁵ Thus, the challenges and contradictions faced by study abroad students make them an important group to document.²⁶

To theorize the question 'why *American* students', it is first of all in response to the sheer number of American students traveling the globe. Perhaps even more significantly, however, Americans are important to analyze because the United States is one of the leading knowledge producers in the world, yet often not examined for its potential bias or negative influence on the rest of the world. One finds "an enduring assumption that the American struggle for independence from British colonialism makes U.S. culture inherently anti-imperialist" (Kaplan, 1993: 12). Challenging this view, Kaplan suggests:

The absence of the United States in the postcolonial study of culture and imperialism curiously reproduces American exceptionalism from without. Either the United States is absorbed into a general notion of "the West," represented by Europe, or it stands for a monolithic West. United States continental expansion is often treated as an entirely separate phenomenon from European colonialism of the nineteenth century, rather than as an interrelated form of imperial expansion. The divorce between these two histories mirrors the American historiographical tradition of viewing empire as a twentieth-century aberration, rather than as part of an expansionist continuum (1993: 17).

²⁵ For example, one woman wrote the following to me upon returning home: "Any memories that I would categorize as more 'negative' experiences I find myself having difficulties knowing how, exactly, to discuss. Sometimes I'm afraid to talk about anything because I don't want any of the negative portions (which are few, but memorable) of my time abroad to influence already biased, Westernized perspective to develop a certain view of what South Africa is. Sometimes I'm afraid I'm remembering all the wrong things" (Resp. 30, email: SIT). Another young woman told me that although her trip to South Africa opened her eyes to a lot of complexities, she was only planning to tell her family back home what they expected to hear by showing them pictures of the animals she had seen at Kruger National Park (Resp. 33, one-on-one: UCT).

²⁶ Additionally, many study abroad students are within what is argued to be a particularly significant age bracket. According to Bellamy & Weinberg (2008:64), "There are key moments when people are most likely to be influenced in ways that effect long-term change. From an educator's perspective, those moments take place between the ages of 15 and 25." Falling in this bracket, all of my participants were 20 to 23 years old. On a national scale, 85.4 percent of study abroad students in 2005/2006 were undergraduate students (Open Doors 2007), which in the United States would mean 17 to 24 years old on average and thus, within this particularly malleable time of life. These individuals, often coming from some of the top universities, are the key decision makers and power brokers of the future. Thus, it is worth documenting and examining the shaping factors on their lives and worldviews.

Likewise, it is my position that the involvement of the United States abroad cannot be treated as a separate phenomenon from European colonialism and neo-colonialism, and particularly European constructions of Africa, as related specifically to South Africa. Historically, South Africa (and especially Cape Town) is an important context to examine in terms of North/South interactions, because “the literature on the Cape Colony was an influential one in forming European paradigms for scientific travel and travel writing” (Pratt, 2008: 87). Additionally, South Africa is at the top of the list in terms of study abroad locations in Africa,²⁷ and is often viewed as one of the only ‘safe options’ in Africa.²⁸

Theorizing Cross-Cultural Encounters & Identity Formation

Since the 1980’s, multiculturalism has often been the framework of choice for many educationalists who optimistically seek to ‘celebrate difference’ (Foster, 1999). From this vantage point, cross-cultural exchanges or study abroad programmes are seen as positive opportunities for students to gain a greater understanding of ‘different’ people and places by learning the facts about them. Programmes that emphasise immersion often rely on the ‘contact hypothesis,’ which suggests that contact between ‘races’ and ‘cultures’ decreases prejudice and counteracts negative stereotypes (Pettigrew, 1998, cited by Dixon & Durkheim, 2003). However, both multiculturalism and contact theory rely on the prejudice theory of racism, which locates negative attitudes in individuals, believing that “if individuals could unlearn their ignorance, irrational fears and rigid defenses through contact with other cultures, by learning the proper facts about other cultures, then prejudice, the problem would be overcome” (Foster, 1999: x).

Foster (1999) is quick to point out that there are several problems with this approach. First of all, prejudice is often *not* based on ignorance. In very ‘informed’ ways, people frequently relate news reports, statistics, academic articles and ‘having been there’ to back up the negative views they hold of certain groups of people. They may be knowledgeable about “the other”, yet still hold racist and stereotypical views. According to Foster (1999: x), “There is also little evidence that learning about or contact with other cultures necessarily challenges

²⁷ Based on the “opendoors 2007 Fast Facts” report, South Africa was the only African country in 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 to make it onto the top 20 list for “Leading Destinations.” It ranked number 18, based on number of students to the total (2,512 students for 2005/2006 out of the total of 223,534).

²⁸ This comment was made by many of my respondents and will be discussed further in the analysis chapters.

prejudice; under particular circumstances it could equally reinforce it.” Additionally, the multicultural approach “tends to reify cultures, painting an oversimplified and static view of cultural forms” and in the process ignores institutionalized racism, gender inequality and other forms of oppression (Foster, 1999: x). This challenges the assumption behind many study abroad programmes that “students who live and learn in countries and cultures other than their own gain important global competencies and cross-cultural sensitivities that enable them to acclimate to a global climate of constant change” (NAFSA, 2007).²⁹

This is not to say that study abroad programmes do not have the potential for enormous impact on the participants. However, in contrast to the starry-eyed optimism of multiculturalism and the contact hypothesis, Erikson’s theory of autonomous psychosocial identity development, as explicated by Hoare (1994), provides a more complex view of cross-cultural interaction and prejudice reduction. Briefly, Hoare (citing Crapanzano, 1980) suggests that cross cultural or cross racial encounters often result in “epistemological vertigo”, which is the confusion felt when one’s own ‘race’ or culture is no longer unifying for the self, but appears as a distortion due to the realization that it is only one reality of many. Drawing on a study by Bushkoff (1992), Hoare suggests that the development of an authentic self, which is defined by the larger group or culture, has a direct affect on levels of prejudice.³⁰ For Erikson, the very definition of identity was “leeway for others who may be very different from the self” (Hoare, 1994: 30). However, this is not easy in the West where the idea of the self is “defined, ego-oriented, autonomous” (Hoare, 1994: 30).

Western academia often exacerbates the ‘us’/‘them’ dichotomy through the widely accepted theoretical position of objectivism. This stance masks the cultural subjectivity of many middle-class Americans to a point where many accept the idea that ‘they’ have culture and ‘we’ do not. According to Rosaldo (1989: 202),

²⁹ Similarly, Dixon & Durkheim (2003:2) critique the contact hypothesis, pointing out that the ideal conditions necessary for immersion to ‘work’ are rarely found in “everyday life.” Instead, they suggest “that ‘optimal contact exists primarily in the form of laboratory approximations or as a phenomenon wistfully imagined in the pages of social psychology journals. Naturally occurring interaction between groups is generally more infrequent and superficial than the idea type recommended by successive generations of contact researchers” (Dixon & Durkheim, 2003:2). This is confirmed by Wilkinson (2000), who did a study of American study abroad students in France who were supposedly ‘immersed’ in French language and culture through living with host families, and yet found that they did not advance in terms of language acquisition and cultural integration.

³⁰ In a study by Bushkoff (1992), cited by Hoare (1994), increased prejudice was found among students with lower levels of identity development.

The temptation to dress one's own 'local knowledge' of either the folk or professional variety in garb at once 'universal' and 'culturally invisible' to itself seems to be overwhelming. In practice the emphasis on difference results in a peculiar ratio: as the 'other' becomes more culturally visible, the 'self' becomes correspondingly less so.

Rosaldo (1989) suggests that the dark underside of this unbalanced ratio is that institutionalized power dynamics between cultures are not examined. Thus, from a theoretical standpoint, the problem embedded in the topic of study abroad is one both of identity, and of how one conceptualizes culture. While multiculturalism and contact hypothesis are correct that greater understanding cannot happen without actually learning about other cultures and coming in contact with people different from the self, I would rather adopt a conception of culture and identity that is more fluid, internally contested and shaped by history and politics.³¹ As stated by Johnson (2003: 185), "Cultures, then, are not "pure" but, rather, are the product and creation of human contact between and across both groups and time."³² Furthermore, people who share a culture may display a wide range of personal differences, and seemingly contrasting cultures may display similarities due to their contact with one another and mutual influence (Johnson, 2003).

Moving Forward

In order to examine the assumptions about African 'others' that are rooted in the experience of being American and carrying that cultural baggage abroad, I have chosen to draw on a combination of theories that provide both analytical tools, as well as conceptual insights, to explore Western discourse and narrative typologies. Johnstone (2008: 10) suggests that a good heuristic, or "set of discovery procedures for systematic application", must draw on multiple theories rather than just one. Thus, I have found that narrative analysis, symbolic convergence theory, discourse analysis, postcolonial theory and Afrocentricity all prove useful in examining the perceptions of South Africa contained in the American study abroad experience.

³¹ "Self and other are not stable, unitary categories, but shifting and sometimes contradictory constructs" (Hallam & Street, 2000: 5).

³² As also stated by Barker & Galasinski (2001: 3), "The shared meanings of culture are not 'out there' waiting for us to grasp them. Rather, they are the product of signifying practices, most notably those of language...To understand culture is to explore how meaning is produced symbolically through the signifying practices of language within material and institutional contexts."

Before applying these methodologies in the critical analysis of my respondents' narratives, I will first apply them to myself – thus, providing practical examples throughout the remainder of this chapter, as well as actively engaging in self-reflexivity. I will use the following excerpt from a letter I wrote after my first trip to South Africa, as a 21-year-old undergraduate student:

Dear friends and family,

...After a long plane ride and 12-hour layover in Germany, the seventeen of us were relieved and excited to finally touchdown in Capetown. Talking to my trip mates months later, that first drive from the airport into the middle of the city stuck sharp and clear in our minds. First and farthest from the city centre, we passed block after block of dusty townships lining each side of the highway. Even though apartheid has been dismantled, these areas are still populated solely by black South Africans. I wasn't so much shocked by the poverty – the scrap wood and metal shacks were much like I'd seen in Asia – as I was struck by the organization of the neighborhoods by race... (09 June 2002)

Reading that letter now seven years later, I am a bit embarrassed – first by the fact that I didn't even spell Cape Town correctly, but more significantly by the authoritative tone I adopted and the adjectives I chose (“dusty townships”). However, the letter demonstrates my first faltering steps at trying to pass on what I had learned from my trip. For better or for worse, it is part of my story, and provides a text to examine in illustrating the usefulness of the theoretical approaches that I have chosen for this study.

Narrative Analysis: It's in the Stories

As my starting point and ‘unit of analysis,’³³ stories are fundamentally how “we make sense of the world and our place in it, and thus constitute our sense of reality” (Steyn, 2001: xxxviii). According to Varenne (1986), “Nothing is more human, perhaps, than telling each other what happened yesterday, what happened in our absence, and then placing these

³³ See Coffey & Atkinson (1996:112) for a discussion of how one decides the ‘unit of analysis’. In line with their chapter on narratives and stories, I have also chosen, as they do, to use the terms ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ interchangeably (1996:54).

descriptions in broader mythical, religious, or ideological frameworks” (7).³⁴ Narrative analysis is therefore the first “mode of inquiry” I will discuss in relation to my conceptual tools. It emerged from literary studies, but is not bound to a particular scholarly field (Riessman, 1993). Narrative analysis is based on the belief that human development is by its very nature storied (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004; Personal Narratives Group, 1989). Narrative analysis views “narrating as an active process” (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004: x). In other words, it treats research respondents as active participants in the research process, rather than objects to be examined. Additionally, narrative analysis attempts to look at phenomena holistically,³⁵ which gives the researcher a greater degree of compassion for the contradictions, idiosyncrasies and surprises that arise during interviews.³⁶

Practically, narrative analysis looks for the elementary units of narrative structure, asking questions about content, orientation, complications, evaluation and results, as well as the functions of different types of narrative forms (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Riessman (1993) suggests looking for the narrative and linguistic features that give order to the story:³⁷ Thus, if I were to apply this approach to my 2002 letter, one of the literary devices a narrative analyst might focus on is the comparisons I made: *“I wasn’t so much shocked by the poverty – the scrap wood and metal shacks were much like I’d seen in Asia – as I was struck by the organization of the neighborhoods by race.”* By comparing how this place was similar or different to other places where I had lived, I was attempting to bring narrative order to what I was seeing. While referencing a larger narrative about poverty, I implied that it was not the

³⁴ Giddens (1991), cited by Siebold (2002), describes the “reflexive project of self” as one in which “self identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives.” In other words, identity is not a collection of traits, but how someone orders, constructs and understands their own biography.

³⁵ According to Daiute & Lightfoot (2004), “Narrative analysis is appealing because its interpretive tools are designed to examine phenomena, issues and people’s lives holistically. In contrast to survey data methods, for example, which ask participants to give coded or short responses to brief predetermined questions, narrative analysis seeks complex patterns and descriptions of identity, knowledge, and social relations from specific cultural points of view. For this reason, narrative analysts work with natural language” (xii).

³⁶ Riessman (1993: 2) reminds us that, “Human agency and imagination determine what gets included and excluded in narrativization, how events are plotted and what they are supposed to mean.” In other words, through personal narratives, individuals are actively constructing past events and future actions to construct their lives and own certain identities. Coffey & Atkinson (1996: 55) suggest that this process involves both “highly structured (and) formal ways of transmitting information”, as well as “distinctive, creative, artful genres”.

³⁷ “Narrative analysis takes as its object of investigation the story itself. I limit discussion here to first-person accounts by respondents of their experiences, putting aside other kinds of accounts...The purpose is to see how respondents in interviews impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives. The methodological approach examines the informant’s story and analyzes how it is put together, the linguistic and cultural resources it draws on, and how it persuades a listener of authenticity” (Riessman, 1993: 1-2).

poverty that makes South African townships different, but rather the racial segregation. I used narrative devices like ‘what I’d seen in Asia’ to establish my authority for the reader, suggesting that I knew what poverty looks like. But was I really that much of an expert? What I left out was any reference or comparison to how what I was seeing might be similar to the way neighborhoods are often still segregated by race in the United States.

My participants used many comparisons in their narratives as well. Narrative analysis alerts me to the possible reasons and meanings behind this literary device, as well as many others. Due to the fact that the ‘traveling tales’ of my participants are the unit of analysis in this study, I am not looking at every individual narrative. Instead, I will identify some of the recurring narratives and what they tell us about the context and the meaning making with American discourse.

Symbolic Convergence Theory: Bonding Time

Like narrative analysts, symbolic convergence theorists also believe that humans make sense of the world through stories passed down from generation to generation or created spontaneously in a circle of close friends. However, beyond individual meaning making, this approach, which emerged from communication theory, offers insight into the way narratives unite *groups* around perceptions of reality, definitions of values and motivations towards specific actions (Griffin, 2000; Young, 1998). As such, it provides an additional insight to the following excerpt from my letter: “*Talking to my trip mates months later, that first drive from the airport into the middle of the city stuck sharp and clear in our minds.*” In reconstructing my experience, I drew on our collective memory and identification processes rather than my own individual experience. Similarly, my participants also spent quite a bit of time talking about the effect of their American groups on their experience of South Africa:

... on the one hand we’re here in South Africa as individuals but like we’re Americans and like our identity is... being shaped by being here as students but like by our group too. Our group is so... important to like who we are and like how we’re changing and stuff, or how we’re not (Resp. 31, FG 8: SIT).

This woman noted that her group was ‘important to who we are’ and ‘how we’re changing or how we’re not’. Symbolic convergence theory suggests that it is the co-construction of meaning in group story-telling that makes groups so powerful in influencing ‘us’/‘them’

dichotomies. 'Who we are' is often accompanied by a hidden, or sometimes obvious, 'who *they* are'.

This awareness was conceptualized by Ernest Bormann who found striking connections between the dramatic imagery shared among group members and the level of their group consciousness and solidarity (Griffin, 2000). Seemingly small and often chaotic interpersonal interactions translated into much more significant social implications as individuals united around stories, jokes, metaphors and figurative language that put a spin on events, people and possibilities. Bormann described this symbolic convergence as a "fantasy chain reaction", which he defines as "the creative and imaginative interpretation of events that fulfills a psychological or rhetorical need" by creating an immediate experience of excitement, energy and unity (Griffin, 2000: 21).³⁸ In the nature of any drama, fantasy themes revolve around bad and good characters, and thus can reveal perceptions of 'the other',³⁹ which are particularly relevant for the purposes of this study. Additionally, symbolic convergence theory suggests that the "graphic digressions and boisterous talk" that usually seem like interruptions or verbal tangents are the keys to unlocking the group consciousness (Griffin, 2000: 23) and should thus be used as clues when analyzing a transcript.

Discourse Analysis: Getting Political

While social convergence theory provides a compelling perspective on how groups bond around certain themes, the stories need to be taken a step further in terms of critically examining how figures of speech, choices of words and narrative structure actually do the

³⁸ Fantasies that create this increased energy become themes that frequently influence a group's narratives, conversation and decision-making. As a group builds their sense of community around shared themes, "references to *I*, *me* and *mine* give way to pronouns that assume a joint venture – *we*, *us* and *ours*:" (Griffin, 2000: 22). Solidarity continues to grow beyond the confines of one small group when the same set of fantasy themes is voiced in many groups. Bormann describes the resulting view of social reality, often found throughout entire nations, as a "rhetorical vision"³⁸ (22). Elaborating on this, Griffin (2000) states, "most rhetorical visions employ one of three competing master analogues – a righteous vision, a social vision or a pragmatic vision" (26). A righteous vision interprets the world through ideals, a social vision through relationships and a pragmatic vision through practicality. By analyzing the vision within a group's fantasies, theorists and social critics can use symbolic convergence to unmask a group's underlying values and motivations to action. According to Bormann, "The rhetorical vision of a group of people contains their drives to action" (1995: 251). In application to my topic, this would mean that motives for study abroad or as a result of study abroad are found not in direct communication, but rather arise in the expressions generated from the experience itself.

³⁹ "The content consists of characters, real or fictitious, playing out a dramatic situation in a setting removed in time and space from the here-and-now transactions of the group" (Bormann, 1995: 242).

work of transforming or maintaining the status quo. According to Barker & Galasinski (2001), critical discourse analysis (CDA) provides the understanding and skills to do this – “the... tools by which we can demonstrate the place of language in the construction, constitution and regulation of the social world” (1). Wodak (2001) describes this as the analysis of “structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (2).⁴⁰

As Gee (1999, 2005), Wodak (2001) and Johnstone (2008) suggest, critical discourse analysis is alert to the features of language that reproduce unequal power relationships, as well as creative methods of resistance.⁴¹ For this dissertation, narrative analysis, used in conjunction with discourse analysis, proves useful in defining the parameters of my analysis. Narrative analysis defines the narrative (the ‘traveling tale’) as my unit of analysis, while discourse analysis allows me to dig deeper into the structural influences on these stories. Johnstone (2008:9) suggests using a “set of discovery procedures for systematic application or a set of topics for systematic consideration” to dig deeper.⁴² Other discourse analysis methodologists (Gee, 1999, 2005; Barker & Galasinski, 2001) suggest a set of questions to explore how language is operating in a particular time and place.⁴³

⁴⁰ This method is political because discourse analysis “must have a point”, to quote Gee (1999: 8), “We are not interested in simply describing data so that we can admire the intricacy of language... Rather, we are interested, beyond description, in two things: illuminating and gaining evidence for... a theory that helps to explain how and why language works the way it does when it is put into action; and contributing, in terms of understanding and intervention.” By using heuristics (Johnstone, 2008) that ask questions of each text to reveal underlying patterns, “CDA makes it possible to analyse pressures from above and possibilities of resistance to unequal power relationships that appear as societal conventions. According to this view, dominant structures stabilize conventions and naturalize them, that is, the effects of power and ideology in the production of meaning are obscured and acquire stable and natural forms: they are taken as ‘given’. Resistance is then seen as the breaking of conventions, of stable discursive practices, in acts of ‘creativity’” (Wodak, 2001: 3).

⁴¹ Since language manifests in many different types of text, discourse analysts often choose a medium to focus on – whether advertisements, news headlines, public speeches or song lyrics, just to name a few.

⁴² She notes six topics that should be considered in analyzing discourse: 1) how discourse is shaped by the **world**, and how discourse shapes the world; 2) how discourse is shaped by **language**, and how discourse shapes language; 3) how discourse is shaped by **participants**, and how discourse shapes participants; 4) how discourse is shaped by **prior discourse**, and how discourse shapes the possibilities for future discourse; 5) how discourse is shaped by the **medium**, and how discourse shapes the possibilities of its medium; and 6) how discourse is shaped by **purpose**, and how discourse shapes possible purposes (Johnstone, 2008: 10).

⁴³ Gee (1999: 93) asks 18 sets of questions arranged under six themes: semiotic building, world building, activity building, socioculturally-situated identity and relationship building, political building and connection building. He suggests that an “ideal” discourse analysis would apply *all* the questions to a particular text. However, for my purposes I’ve pulled out a few that are particularly relevant. For example, “What **institutions** and/or Discourses are being re-produced in this situation and how are they being stabilized or transformed in the act? What **relationships and identities** (roles, positions), with their concomitant personal, social, and cultural knowledge and beliefs (cognition), feelings (affect), and values, seem to be relevant in the situation? And how are these relationships and identities stabilized or transformed in the situation? What **social**

Johnstone's (2008) themes and Gee's (1999; 2005) questions provide very useful insights when applied to a text like my 2002 letter. Take for example one of the sentences I mentioned earlier: *"I wasn't so much shocked by the poverty – the scrap wood and metal shacks were much like I'd seen in Asia – as I was struck by the organization of the neighbourhoods by race."* Analysing the language I used and the social goods that were relevant (my academic voice, 'world traveller' & middle class status), discourse analysis reveals that in this sentence I actually normalized poverty and relegated it to the background, while drawing my reader's attention instead to the issue of race.⁴⁴ In doing so, I removed myself from any critical reflection on how my and my Western audience's wealth and position of privilege were closely linked to others' poverty.⁴⁵ Similarly, the social goods, relationships and connections invoked by particular words chosen by my participants reveal a lot about the influences of power and ideology on their constructions of Africa and South Africa.

Postcolonial Theory: Questioning 'Euro/Western-centrism'

Using tools like discourse analysis, postcolonial theory helps elaborate on the ways in which white and Western ways of being and doing (historically and currently) have made many of us "morally complicit with harm and injustice" (Gee, 1999: 8). According to Bell (2002), "Postcolonial perspectives seek to de-center the North by exploring the complexities of colonial domination and by analyzing and resisting its legacies." Prasad (2003) reminds us that "colonialism and imperialism are highly debated concepts with multiple and shifting meanings" (5). Thus, postcolonialism is "not a narrowly systematized and unitary theory" but draws from "a range of scholarly fields" to bring about "decolonization at political, economic and cultural levels", including the decolonization of the mind (Prasad, 2003: 7, with reference

goods (e.g. status, power, aspects of gender, race, and class...) are relevant (and irrelevant) in this situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant) and in what ways? What sorts of **connections** are made to previous or future interactions, to other people, ideas, texts, things, institutions, and Discourses outside the current situation? (Gee, 1999: 94)"

⁴⁴ Gee (1999:3) describes this use of English grammar as "backgrounding-foregrounding" in order to make some information "the main or focal point". He reminds us that in this way grammar is used to "create a perspective with implications", which is often a "political" perspective.

⁴⁵ This oversight might have been innocent enough, but according to Gee, "[L]anguage has meaning only in and through practices, practices which often leave us morally complicit with harm and injustice unless we attempt to transform them" (Gee, 1999:8).

to Thiong'O, 1981). Prasad (2003) suggests that postcolonial theory is not attempting something new but is rather building on the work of "earlier thinkers, freedom fighters and anticolonial activists" like Fanon and Gandhi, among many others (7).

Eurocentrism, Prasad (2002) suggests, was built on an elaborate system of hierarchical dichotomies that placed the West in "ontological superiority" over everything it perceived as 'non-West'.⁴⁶ To challenge this orientation, postcolonial theory seeks to turn the gaze onto the 'centers of power' to "expose the constructions emanating from positions of domination, constructions which by their nature attempt to elude detection" (Steyn, 2001: xxviii). As such, postcolonial theory is more than just a research methodology. It is a day-to-day orientation to the world system and an ongoing process of untangling the effects and ideologies of colonialism and imperialism. According to Quayson (2000: 11), "The process of postcolonializing, then, would mean the critical process by which to relate modern-day phenomena to their explicit, implicit or even potential relations to this fraught heritage." Bell (2002) adds that one of the critiques of postcolonial theory is that it essentialises the North and usually remains too theoretical. Therefore, "there is value in examining specific practices and devises associated with particular times and places (Bell, 2002: 508).

Thus to "postcolonialize" my 2002 letter I would need to interrogate how the phenomenon of a group of college-age Americans spending a week in South Africa is linked to the history and ongoing processes of colonization and imperialism. For example, this would mean asking questions like – How is it possible that I so easily entered South Africa (I didn't even have to apply for a visa beforehand) where as if a South African wants to go to the United States even as a tourist, they must undergo a long and drawn out application process? What does it mean that dollars give me so much buying power here? How did my country get to be so wealthy and at who's expense? These aren't pleasant questions, but they need to be asked of myself and of other study abroad students.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ As a result, many 'Westerners'⁴⁶ other the 'non-West' in ways that reinforce particular stereotypes, as well as reconfirm to themselves all the positive characteristics they possess in contrast to these 'others'. The hierarchy of white and Western superiority is still being strategically acted out today, whether individuals realize that they are supporting this status quo or not. Even humanitarian efforts to help 'the oppressed' can reinforce this ideology if it is not interrogated, with 'the other' always framed as needing help (Prasad, 2002).

⁴⁷ I would suggest that the process of postcolonializing described by Quayson (2000) needs to be taken a step further by being aware of how world powers are *still* exercising colonialist or imperialist strategies for economic and identity purposes without actually taking over countries by force (although even as I type this, I'm thinking of the U.S. occupation of Iraq). Are we really in a *post*-colonial era?

Defending a Multi-disciplinary Approach

Having looked at narrative analysis, symbolic convergence theory, critical discourse analysis and postcolonial theory as the backbone of my research, I must consider whether in fact these approaches are compatible with each other. According to van Dijk (2001), “Without being eclectic, good scholarship, and especially good CDA, should integrate the best work of many people, famous or not, from different disciplines, countries, cultures and directions of research” (95). Supporting this multi-disciplinary approach, my heuristic thus far uses narrative analysis to identify the unit of analysis; social convergence theory to identify the way stories are co-constructed and used for group identification; discourse analysis to examine the power dynamics within the stories and postcolonial theory to set all of this in historical context. But what are the basic ontological assumptions made by each of these? Do they in any way contradict each other? Or do they complement each other and actually strengthen my position?

The main differences in their ontological assumptions can be summarized as follows. Narrative analysis is rooted in a constructivist paradigm, which “assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: 24). In other words, reality is only known through the stories people tell. There is no external reality beyond the narrative. In contrast, social convergence theorists appear to be operating from a positivist framework, even though there is a good deal of ambiguity due to the fact that interpretivist possibilities emerge out of it (Young, 1998). Yet, symbolic convergence theory still appears to originate from within a realist ontology and objective epistemology, due to the fact that many communication theorists rely on “experimental, quasi-experimental, survey, and rigorously defined qualitative methodologies” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: 24).⁴⁸

Critical discourse analysis is rooted in Marxist models, which are grounded in “a materialist-realist ontology; that is, the real world makes a material difference in terms of race, class and

⁴⁸ For example, this is evident in the roots of the theory, which go back to communication theorist Ernest Bormann who started studying the communication dynamics within small groups as an experimental device for rhetorical criticism (Griffin, 2000).

gender” and “subjectivist epistemologies” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: 24). Within this framework, “empirical materials and theoretical arguments are evaluated in terms of their emancipatory implications” (2005: 24). Unlike narrative analysis, this paradigm is concerned with the way reality is shaped by the influence of the base on the super-structure. However, narrative analysis and critical discourse analysis, as well as symbolic convergence theory, have elements of post-structural theory in them and are thus compatible in terms of their focus on meaning and the way that language constructs reality. (In the case of critical discourse analysis, the compatibility simply requires more of a focus on the super-structure for the time being). Similarly, post-colonial theory, although it actually covers a wide range of positions, also has strains of post-structural thought and is thus compatible as well.⁴⁹

While my strongest leanings tend to be materialist-realist, the constructivist nature of narrative analysis reminds me to watch for personal agency and multiple constructions of reality in the stories of my respondents. Social convergence theory also provides another layer by reminding me to pay attention to the group dynamics and unexpected ‘digressions’. Under the umbrella of a critical lens, these theories help balance each other out.

Towards Afrocentricity

Although a multi-disciplinary approach might help ensure some degree of balance, one of the problems that remain is that all these theories have emerged out of Western academic disciplines. To truly interrogate Eurocentric and Americentric ways of thinking as is necessary for my analysis of study abroad stories, it is not enough to just use critical theories. As Pratt (2008) notes,

⁴⁹ Once this compatibility is recognized, it is possible to look in more detail at the ways in which these four theories can complement each other due to the following commonalities. First of all, they are all interested in the way language and narrative works in societies and individuals. They would all agree with the view that “language is a social phenomenon; not only individuals, but also institutions and social groupings have specific meanings and values, that are expressed in language in systematic ways; texts are the relevant units of language in communication; readers/hearers are not passive recipients in their relationships to texts” (Wodak, 2001: 6). Secondly, all these positions are relevant to the complexities of today. According to Daiute & Lightfoot, “Researchers who have adopted narrative methods have found them particularly useful for addressing the unmet challenge of integrating culture, person, and change – a challenge that has become especially acute in the last quarter century. Facilitated by advances in medicine, technology, communication, and transportation, the texture of modern life is increasingly defined by weaving together separate generations, life stages, cultures and social and political ideologies” (2004: viii). Additionally, narrative analysis, social convergence theory, discourse analysis and postcolonial theory are all action oriented due to their relevance and exploration of the mechanisms of daily life. “... understanding these life systems, in all their complexity and diversity, is essential to such daily affairs as educating our children, caring for our elderly, designing equitable intervention and assessment programmes, and formulating policies bent on nurturing the development and well-being across diverse contexts” (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004: viii).

If one studies only what the Europeans saw and said, one reproduces the monopoly on knowledge and interpretation that the imperial enterprise sought. This is a huge distortion because of course that monopoly did not exist. People on the receiving end of European imperialism did their own knowing and interpreting...while subjugated peoples cannot readily control what the dominant culture visits upon them, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own, how they use it and what they make it mean (7).

In line with Steve Biko's black consciousness movement, Asante (2007), Mazama (2003) and others advocate for a renewed commitment to Afrocentricity, which "emerged as a process of political consciousness for a people who existed on the edge of education, art, science, economics, communication, and technology as defined by Eurocentrists" (Asante, 2007: 32). According to Asante, "Afrocentricity is therefore a consciousness, quality of thought, mode of analysis, and an actionable perspective where Africans seek, from agency, to assert subject place within the context of African history" (Asante, 2007: 16).

One might then ask how Afrocentricity relates to the theoretical and methodological position of a white Euro-American like myself. In other words, can I align myself to this position even though I am not African? In response, Asante suggests that while Afrocentricity is very much about finding one's African⁵⁰ identity, "[I]t is also the quality of seeking in every situation involving Africans the appropriate centrality of the African person" (2007: 16). Thus, I believe Afrocentricity plays a critical role in a dissertation about Africans and Americans – both as a critique of the unexamined centers I operate from as researcher, but also as a call to look for the presence (or absence) of "the subject place" and "centrality of the African person" in my stories and the stories of my respondents.⁵¹

According to Asante, "The Afrocentrist is concerned with discovering in every place and in all circumstances the subject position⁵² of the African person. This is particularly true in cases where the issues of significance, that is, the themes, topics, and concerns are of African

⁵⁰ See Appendix 1 for a definition of 'African' in this context.

⁵¹ By adopting Afrocentric methods, it doesn't mean that I can claim to see things from 'an African perspective'. By no means. Rather it makes me look for the ways I and other Westerners position African in our stories. Are they at the centre of these stories, or are they relegated to the margins? Are Africans represented as subjects with full agency or as objects for discussion?

⁵² "An agent [or subject], in our terms, must mean a human being who is capable of acting independently in his or her own best interest" (Asante, 2007: 40).

ideas and activities” (Asante, 2007: 42). He describes Afrocentricity not as data, but as “orientation to data”, a way of approaching phenomena (49). Thus it is possible and necessary for me to also ask questions of my writing and the stories of my respondents through an Afrocentric lens.⁵³ The Afrocentric paradigm suggests that, “The mental/conceptual aspect of colonization has never stopped.” (Mazama, 2003: 4). According to Mazama, “The challenge is monumental: our liberation, Afrocentricity contends, rests upon our ability to systematically displace European ways of thinking, being, feeling, etc., and consciously replace them with ways that are germane to our own African cultural experience” (2003: 5). Although as a non-African I don’t claim to stand in these shoes, I want to examine my own work from this standpoint, much like a male researcher could critique his thoughts and work through a feminist lens.

⁵³ For example, I looked at this excerpt from my 2002 letter: “First and farthest from the city centre, we passed block after block of dusty townships lining each side of the highway. Even though apartheid has been dismantled, these areas are still populated solely by black South Africans.” The first thing I notice about this excerpt is the way I have positioned the “dusty townships” in contrast to the “city centre” – they are the “farthest” (i.e. on the margins) away from the centre. But who established this “centre” and who defines the perimeter? Would I also have written so dramatically that the northern suburbs are also “far” from the city centre? My description also misses the fact for a majority of people in Cape Town life does centre around the townships and not in the official “city centre”. Making a similar oversight in the next sentence, I have not positioned ‘black South Africans’ as active agents (grammatically, they don’t even hold the subject position in the sentence), but instead they are still represented as the passive recipients of the areas established under apartheid. In this description, I didn’t intentionally set out to push Africans to the margins. However, this example reveals how frighteningly second nature it is for the Western eye and pen to miss the subject position of Africans even when visiting Africa.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world and with each other (Freire, 2000: 72).

In order to translate my multidisciplinary approach into practice, I had to be flexible and creative in the tools I used, without sacrificing credibility or rigour. As noted by van Dijk (2001: 96), it is precisely because of its “combined scholarly and social responsibilities”, that critical discourse analysis and related methods must be “rigorous scholarship”, in order to account for the “complexities in the relationships between discourse structures and social structures”. She advises that without “explicit and systematic methods, no socially useful as well as scholarly reliable observations and descriptions can be produced” (van Dijk, 2001: 96). Aiming for as much transparency in my methods as possible, I will outline the systematic steps I took, while also describing some of the ‘trial-and-error’ occasions that illustrate Johnstone’s (2008) definition of a good ‘heuristic.’⁵⁴

Researcher & Audience

From the very beginning of this project, I had to carefully consider questions of identity – both in terms of my role as researcher and my audience. Open University states that, “In framing research questions, selecting cases, gathering and interpreting data, the researcher constantly has an audience, indeed perhaps several audiences in mind” (Open University, 1993:7). This is also supported by Coffey & Atkinson (1996). For this study, my audience is firstly my supervisors, my external examiners and other academics in a variety of disciplines. Secondly, and perhaps even more importantly, my audience is my participants themselves, many of whom have expressed interest in reading my findings, as well as other ‘lay people’ with an interest in the complexities of study abroad, cross-cultural interactions, travel and representations of Africa.

⁵⁴ “A heuristic is not a mechanical set of steps, and there is no guarantee that using it will result in a single definitive explanation. A heuristic can be compared to a set of exercises that constitute a whole-body physical workout, or to a set of tools for thinking with... about how discourse is shaped by ideologies that circulate power in society... about how discourse is shaped by people’s memories of previous discourse, along with other sources of creativity and constraint” (Johnstone, 2008: 10).

In gaining access to study abroad students, I made use of my identity as a ‘fellow American’ – from baking chocolate chip cookies (in lieu of a monetary stipend) to chatting with students about our common experiences of culture shock. However, I had to be careful that ethically I was still up front with them about my research intentions. I also had to maintain enough distance from the responses, while being aware that my positioning can’t remain completely invisible. My relationship with my participants could best be described by Wengraf (2001) in his summary of Massarik’s (1981) typology of interview relations: “In the Depth-interview, interviewer and interviewee, in substantial balance meet as Peers, their humanities expressed in circumscribed terms but with continuing emphasis on the specific goals of response content” (Wengraf, 2001: 153).⁵⁵

Ethical Considerations

First and foremost, while writing my interview schedules, planning my recruitment strategies and choosing the times and locations for my interviews, I tried to always keep in mind the moral guideline I was raised with – treat others as you yourself would like to be treated (echoed in Oakley, 1998). I chose either neutral locations for the interviews or offered to come to my respondents’ residences so the interview setting would be an atmosphere where they felt comfortable. Before each interview, I explained my research intentions and gave my respondents a chance to ask me any questions. I then gained signed consent to conduct the interview (and gave them a copy of the consent form with my contact details on it), told them that they could stop at any time or skip any question and assured them that their identities would be kept confidential.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Throughout the scope of my interactions with my participants, it was also important to remember that interviews “are not asocial, ahistorical events. You do not leave behind your anxieties, your hopes, your blindspots, your prejudices, your class, race or gender, your location in global social structure, your age and historical positions, your emotions, etc.” (Wengraf, 2001: 4).

⁵⁶ To ensure confidentiality, I have used pseudonyms throughout this report. Any connections between the names I have chosen and real people are purely accidental. In terms of ethics, it is also important to mention that throughout this research it was important for me to trust my respondents, just as much as I expected them to trust me. According to Wengraf (2001: 105), “At a very basic level, the informant needs to be trusted to turn up. He or she needs to be trusted to try to tell the truth.” The fact that most of my focus group participants already knew each other actually created an unplanned monitoring mechanism in which they appeared to hold each other accountable for telling their stories as they really happened.

Sample Selection

In line with Wengraf's (2001) description of snowball sampling and stratified purposive sampling for qualitative methods, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured focus groups and one-on-one interviews with 36 study abroad students who were either direct enrolled at UCT or part of SIT. Wengraf (2001: 102) draws on Patton's (1990) description of "information-rich samples" when he describes stratified purposive sampling as a method that "illustrates the characteristics of particular subgroups of interest" in order to "facilitate comparisons."⁵⁷ Snowball or chain sampling "identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich; that is, good examples for study, good interview subjects" (Wengraf, 2001: 102).⁵⁸ I also wanted to ensure that I had enough variety of voices to provide what Wengraf (2001: 105) calls "a form of triangulation." He suggests that by using "contrasting informants and hypotheses about the socially conditioned partiality of all the viewpoints expressed" one ensures a useful sample and one that enable you to "place and give the correct weight to the necessarily partial informant" (Wengraf, 2001: 105).⁵⁹

Upon reaching a good degree of saturation,⁶⁰ my sample consisted of 7 men (19.4 percent) and 29 women (80.6 percent), which although unbalanced in terms of gender, mirrors overall

⁵⁷ It is important to note that the qualitative understanding of stratified sampling differs from a quantitative understanding of the term.

⁵⁸ My sample was stratified in the sense that I was only looking at American semester study abroad students in Cape Town, but at the same time drawing my respondents from two subgroups (two different programmes) and from two different semesters in order to facilitate comparisons. I simultaneously used snowball sampling to seek out respondents who would be willing participants and who would have a lot to share about their experiences. I did this by liaising with key contacts at UCT's International Academic Programmes Office (IAPO), with tutors who had Americans in their classes, and with programme coordinators. These key contacts are often referred to as "gatekeepers" by methodologists like Kitzinger & Barbour (1999).

⁵⁹ In order to achieve this type of triangulation, I did not set target percentages or a target number of respondents, but rather used the concept of 'saturation', meaning the point "where further interviews yield little new knowledge" (Kvale, 1996:102; also used by Kruger, 1997:24), to determine when I had conducted enough interviews.

⁶⁰ According to Kvale (1996:102), current interview studies suggest that the number of interviews to achieve saturation is usually around 15 +/- 10. This supports my experience that it took 8 focus groups and 10 one-on-ones (so 18 interviews total) to reach a good degree of saturation. (Although by using the concept of saturation I am not ruling out the possibility of the existence of additional narratives that were not represented in my sample. Thus, as Kvale (1996:102) also points out, saturation and the number of interviews are taken into consideration with the "time and resources available for the investigation.")

American study abroad statistics.⁶¹ In terms of the “racial/ethnic” mix, my sample was also similar to American trends, with Anglo-Americans in the vast majority. Twenty-eight of my respondents (77.8 percent) were Anglo-Americans, six (16.7 percent) were African-American, and two (5 percent) were Asian-American. Similarly, in 2005/2006, 83 percent of American study abroad students were Anglo-Americans. Only 3.5 percent were African-American and Asian-Americans constituted 6.3 percent.⁶² Again, although I didn’t set out to match these percentages, I wanted to ensure that all the perspectives had a voice in my research.

In the first semester (February to May, 2007), I conducted four focus groups:⁶³ three groups with UCT students, and one with SIT students, as well as three one-on-ones interviews: two with UCT students and one with an SIT student. During the same semester, I also conducted four one-on-ones with programme coordinators. In the second semester (August to November, 2007), I conducted four more focus groups:⁶⁴ two with UCT students and two with SIT students. I also conducted three more one-on-one interviews: two with UCT students and one with an SIT student. These interviews ranged in length from one and a half hours to two and a half hours. I combined the focus groups with one-on-one interviewing so that both the individual experience and the collective story telling could speak to each other.⁶⁵ In addition, I also emailed follow-up questions to all 36 participants several months after they returned to the United States.⁶⁶

⁶¹ According to Open Doors 2007, in 2005/2006, the majority (65.5 percent) of American study abroad students were women. (<http://opendoors.iienetwork.org>, Open Doors 2007, “Report on International Educational Exchange, Table 24)

⁶² <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org>, Open Doors 2007, “Report on International Educational Exchange, Table 24

⁶³ These focus groups had three, four, eight and four participants respectively.

⁶⁴ For one of these focus groups, only two people showed up. However, the three other groups were composed of three, four and three participants respectively. Kitzinger & Barbour (1999) support small focus groups of three to six participants for sociological studies, in contrast to market research literature that sets the ideal focus group composition at eight to twelve. I also found that smaller groups resulted in much richer data, due to the time and willingness of participants to go deeper than in larger groups.

⁶⁵ Kitzinger & Barbour clarify the difference between one-on-one interviews and focus groups, suggesting that one-on-one interviews are “more effective for tapping into individual biographies”, while focus groups are extremely valuable for “examining how knowledge, ideas, story-telling, self-presentation and linguistic exchanges operate within a given cultural context” (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999: 5).

⁶⁶ I sent 10 questions (see Appendix) in two ‘installments’. Thirteen students responded in total – eight responded to all ten questions, five responded to the first set only.

Designing the Questions to Aid Interpretation

As I tightened up the linkages between my interview questions, my theoretical interests and my central research question, I found myself in the early stages of this project alternating between a hypothetico-inductivist⁶⁷ model and a hypothetico-deductivist⁶⁸ model. Worried that I was being methodologically schizophrenic, I found great assurance in Wengraf's suggestion that "both are appropriate as descriptions of what researchers experience as happening at different moments in the research cycle" (Wengraf, 2001:2). In contrast, Coffey & Atkinson (1996:155) are much more critical of these "polar opposites,"⁶⁹ and reject them in favour of "abductive reasoning" (citing Peirce, 1979). The concept of abductive reasoning became useful at a later stage of my analysis (as I will explain in a moment) but I still found Wengraf's distinction between the deductivist and inductivist models helpful. They enabled me to identify the different stages my questions had to go through to remain both in touch with my participants' world (inductive), as well as relevant to the bodies of academic literature to which I wanted to contribute (deductive).

At the outset, I began deductively with several key principles and theoretical questions in mind. However, I soon realized that I had to visualize the actual interviews and what "informant questions" would be interesting to my prospective respondents. Thus, Wengraf (2001: 73) would categorize my starting point as what he calls "the muddle in the middle, with a number of unsorted questions" that still need to be sorted into a "logically tight and workable package" of central research questions (CRQs), theory questions (TQs), and interview questions (IQs).

⁶⁷ The hypothetico-inductivist model is described by Wengraf (2001:2) as an approach in which the researcher "collects all the relevant facts and then examines them to see what theory is suggested by this set of 'all the relevant facts'." This is closely linked with the 'grounded theory' tradition (Wengraf, 2001, cites Glaser & Strauss, 1968).

⁶⁸ According to Wengraf (2001:2), the hypothetico-deductivist model is based on the belief that "research must always start with a body of prior knowledge, if only to decide which set of 'collectable facts' should be collected or generated. It is this prior body of knowledge from which the researcher generates a particular hypothesis whose truth or falsity could be 'tested' by a particular selection of 'hypothesis-relevant' facts." Miles & Huberman (1994:58) also recommend starting with a "provisional 'start list' of codes prior to fieldwork" that is drawn from "the conceptual framework, list of research questions, hypotheses, problem areas, and/or key variables that the researcher brings to the study" (but with the freedom to later revise these codes).

⁶⁹ Coffey & Atkinson (1996:155) suggest that inductivism encourages "unremarkable and undistinguished descriptions of social worlds" and that strict adherence to deductivism "confines the role of research to the context of testing existing ideas" and provides "little or no basis... for the generation of new theories".

Using Wengraf's (2001: 63) CRQ-TQ-IQ(II) Algorithm or Pyramid model, I sorted my questions into these three categories (as illustrated on the next page). This model emphasizes "primacy of the research question" and the research purpose and makes the distinction between "theory-language" and "interview-language" (Wengraf, 2001:63), thus equipping me to start thinking analytically even while emerged in the process of data collection.

A final dimension of designing my questions was to refer back to my unit of analysis – the narrative or travelers' tale. Although people are naturally inclined to tell stories, I wanted to encourage the story-telling dimension of the interviews by intentionally asking questions that were designed to illicit stories of specific incidents or encounters, rather than participants' thoughts or philosophy on particular topics. The process of refining my questions to illicit story-telling coincided with my on-going analysis of the emerging data. At this stage, the process began falling in line with Coffey & Atkinson's (1996) abductive model.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ "Abductive reasoning or inference implies that we start from the particular. We identify a particular phenomenon – a surprising or anomalous finding, perhaps. We then try to account for that phenomenon by relating it to broader concepts. We do so by inspecting our own experience, our stock of knowledge of similar, comparable phenomena, and the equivalent stock of ideas that can be included from within our disciplines... in other words, abductive inferences seek to go beyond the data themselves, to locate them in explanatory or interpretive frameworks... not content to try to slot them into existing ideas... to come up with new configurations of ideas" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996:156).

Research Purpose (RP)

1. To determine the way American exchange students in Cape Town are influenced by perceptions / misperceptions of Africa in the United States and in turn create their own perceptions and stories of Africa and South Africa which they take home with them
2. To compare these to earlier traveler's tales constructions of Africa



Central Research Questions (CRQs)

What are the travelers' tales that American exchange students carry with them and co-create to understand their experience in Africa?			In historical perspective, how are these stories similar or different from the early travelers' tales of missionaries, explorers and European settlers?
What stories do they arrive with?	What happens to these stories while they are here?	What happens to these stories when they return home?	
↓	↓	↓	↓

Theory Question (TQ) 1

TQ 2

TQ 3

TQ4

What do the stories reported by American exchange students tell us about –			Do American exchange students who have had 'post-colonial contact' with Africa challenge the 'imperial' discourse about Africa in the United States?
Dominant discourse in America about Africa; constructions of 'us' and 'them'	The impact of short term 'exchanges' on their perceptions and expectations	The stories/ perceptions of Africa that students are likely to promote when they return home	
↓	↓	↓	↓

Interview Q's A

IQ B

IQ C

Analysis

(Refers to specific questions on interview schedules)

P.Coord. #4-11 Student #3-9	P.Coord. #12-19 Student #10-22	P.Coord. #20 - 24 Student #23-29	A comparison of the analysis of transcripts & literature
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Figure 1: Pyramid Model for Question Design

Data Collection & Transcription

Compared to the process of identifying my sample, recruiting my participants was much more difficult. I initially tried a “top-down” approach – contacting the coordinators both at UCT and SIT to send out a blanket invitation to all their students. However, this resulted in very few respondents. I then tried going door-to-door inviting students personally with a flyer. This garnered interest at the door, but none chose to follow through. At this point, I changed my strategy and began using the snowballing strategy I described earlier. While I was concerned about the possible bias of friends inviting like-minded friends, I found that even within groups of friends there was a wide variety of perceptions about South Africa and experiences of study abroad.⁷¹ I also found that it worked best if my respondents lived together or were friends, which is supported by Kitzinger & Barbour (1999: 8) who state that many social science researchers actually prefer to work with “pre-existing groups” or people who already know each other through living, working or hanging out together.⁷²

To make the conversations as natural as possible, I recorded all the interviews with a digital recording device rather than taking notes. I also chose to transcribe all the recordings myself to stay closely tuned not just to the words but to the way the stories were told. Wengraf (2001: 209) refers to this process of getting a “holistic sense of the whole.” Furthermore, as noted by Riessman (1993: 20), it is crucially important for interpretation to take cues from the narrators themselves.⁷³ Rather than separating the transcription process from the process of writing this paper, the transcribing and writing processes occurred simultaneously. As a

⁷¹ It is still quite possible that my sample is biased in favour of students who were already somewhat reflexive about their experience. Others, like the hard partiers that some of them referred to, wouldn't be interested in a focus group and would more likely be spending every spare minute on Long Street, for example.

⁷² “These are, after all, the networks in which people might normally discuss (or evade) the sorts of issues likely to be raised in the research session and the ‘naturally-occurring’ group is one of the most important contexts in which ideas are formed and decisions made” (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999: 8). This was further confirmed by recurring moments in my focus groups when participants would exclaim: “We were just talking about that the other night!” Given the fact that my aim is to capture the types of stories students would naturally tell outside of the interview context, their comments and enthusiasm confirmed that my questions were on the right track. Although my questions were prepared in advance, their semi-structured nature produced sessions “in which most of the informant's responses [couldn't] be predicted in advance” and where I had to improvise a great deal (Wengraf, 2001: 5).

⁷³ “Narrators indicate the terms on which they request to be interpreted by the styles of telling they choose. Something said in a whisper, after a long pause, has a different import than the same words said loudly, without a pause. Tellers use elongated vowels, emphasis, pitch, repetition, and other devices to indicate what is important” (Riessman, 1993: 20).

result, the actual voices, not just the typed words, remained in my mind throughout the entire text – theory, methodology and literature, in addition to the actual ‘analytical chapters’. I was continually reminded of the real people behind these narratives and the fact that my transcriptions are really just one small snapshot into those lives, just as my write-up is a ‘story about stories’.

Coding and Data Analysis

To analyse my data, I began by reading through the transcripts several times. This method was first suggested to me by Zimitri Erasmus in a course on focus groups. She recommended that we carry the texts with us wherever we went, sitting with them, getting to know them. In an article that she co-authored with de Wet (2005: 7) about their research on ‘race’ and racism at a medical school, they note that, “The first analytical step, before coding, involved a close reading of the transcripts... an opportunity to listen to respondents’ voices rather than simply hearing ‘chords.’ It gave her a sense of the ‘spirit of the text’ before imposing codes on it.” During these read-throughs, I made notes in the margins, which would later translate into first level free coding. I paid attention to details and nuances, not just how the questions were answered. I loosely followed Miles & Huberman’s suggestion for having a start-list of codes (Fielding & Lee, 1998: 42).⁷⁴

Once my free coding was completed, I read through each transcript again and began comparing them to each other, and to the early travelers’ tales in my literature review – grouping codes according to the relationships between them. This helped me begin to piece together another, more theoretical and analytical story. As Miles & Huberman (1994: 63) state, “An operative coding scheme is not a catalogue of disjointed descriptors or a set of logically related units and subunits, but rather a conceptual web, including large meanings and their constitutive characteristics.”⁷⁵ Based on my literature review and conceptual framework, the main categories I was looking for were narratives related to:

⁷⁴ This approach is also in line with Open University (1993: 15): “At the beginning, researchers seek to generate as many categories as possible, not worrying what the relevance of those categories might be to their intended goal. This reflects the creative, exploratory character of the process.”

⁷⁵ This system of coding linked closely with van Dijk’s (2001) suggestions for critical discourse analysis. Because “there is no such thing as a ‘complete’ discourse analysis”, the first step is to be selective in identifying the “structures for closer analysis” that are most relevant for the particular study at hand (2001:99). This identification of structures became useful once I started filtering out which codes were most relevant from my transcripts.

- Expectations/preconceptions prior to arrival in South Africa
- Narrative types (which include orientations to ‘me’ and ‘them’)
- Disjunctures (points where the ordering nature of the dominant narratives was disrupted)
- Returning home narratives

Rather than focusing on stress and intonation, or word order and semantics, I chose to analyse the ‘content’ of the stories, which van Dijk (2001: 99) describes as the “choice of topics, propositions and lexical items” with the reason being that “such forms of meaning seem more directly related to the beliefs and hence the attitudes and ideologies”.

Once my main categories and conceptual codes were identified, I took the analysis to the next level by conducting “a study of local meanings, such as the meaning of words... the structures of propositions, and coherence and other relations between propositions” (van Dijk, 2001: 103). For example, word choices like ‘hut’, ‘exotic’, ‘wild’, etc. According to van Dijk, the local meanings of words and propositions reflect “mental models” and “general, socially shared beliefs” (2001: 103). I paid particular attention to local meanings that appeared rooted in “ideologically biased discourses” that “polarize the representation of us (ingroups) and them (outgroups)” (2001: 103).⁷⁶ However, I was equally interested in looking for counter-hegemonic instances where my participants used language and mental models that seemed to break down the ideologies of ‘us’ and ‘them’.⁷⁷

The coded narratives and disjunctures that emerged from my data were then brought into a conversation with the literature, while taking into consideration the differences between

⁷⁶ van Dijk suggests that “Both at the level of global and local meaning, we thus often witness an overall strategy of ‘positive self-presentation and negative other presentation’, in which our good things and their bad things are emphasized, and our bad things and their good things are de-emphasized” (2001: 103).

⁷⁷ At this stage, while looking for the local meanings, I also paid attention to “implicit or indirect meanings, such as implications, presuppositions, allusions, vagueness” which are rooted in “underlying beliefs” (van Dijk, 2001: 104), as well as the things that are actively left out of the story. This is a relevant property of discourse only when “it can be shown that the omitted information is part of the mental model” (2001: 106). Paying attention to these more subtle dynamics in the stories was intended to keep me from being too quick to jump to conclusions, remembering that: “... texts are often sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance” (Wodak, 2001: 11).

interview texts and literary texts (and in my case the difference between my respondents' narratives and early travelers' tales). As Bruner (2005) notes, "The problem in ethnographic narrative analysis is to sort out the interdependencies between life as lived, as experienced and as told. In literary analysis, on the other hand, there is no life as lived, but only text" (19). As such, spoken narratives and written narratives cannot be directly compared.⁷⁸ However, I was still able to find many parallels in terms of the deeper meanings and implications that emerged from both types of texts; thus, creating a conversation about similarities and differences, convergences and divergences, in the hope that the tales of different eras could provide illumination and challenge to each other.

Verification Strategies

Finally, it is important to mention the strategies I used to verify⁷⁹ my interpretations. As suggested by Morse et al. (2002), I attempted to build my verification strategies into the various stages of my research, rather than simply applying a post hoc evaluation tool at the end of the project.⁸⁰ These strategies included investigator responsiveness, methodological coherence (in terms of a dialogical process between the research questions and the methods), appropriate sampling (in terms of saturation and seeking negative cases), collecting and analyzing data concurrently (as previously mentioned) and "thinking theoretically" throughout the whole process (Morse et al., 2002: 13).

⁷⁸ This is confirmed by Kvale, who states that in contrast to finished texts, "a research interview involves both the generation and interpretation of a text. The interviewers are co-creators of the texts they interpret, and they may negotiate their interpretations of their subjects. The interview text is thus not a pre-given literary text, but emerges in the same process as its interpretations" (Kvale, 1996:50). Furthermore, while literary texts "contain well-articulated and highly condensed expressions of meaning" (1996:51), "The transcribed interviews are often vague, repetitious, and have many digressions containing much "noise". An extended process of clarification and condensation may be necessary to arrive at the meanings intended by the interviewee. On the other hand, what appears to be "noise" from the standpoint of a "pure" meaning interpretation may yield important information through the deeper psychological interpretation of non-intended meanings as a form of "depth hermeneutics" (Kvale, 1996:51).

⁷⁹ According to Morse et al. (2002), "Verification is the process of checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain. In qualitative research, verification refers to the mechanisms used during the process of research to incrementally contribute to ensuring reliability and validity and, thus, the rigor of a study."

⁸⁰ In contrast to current methods for evaluating qualitative research, Morse et al. (2002) suggest that "rigor does not rely on special procedures external to the research process itself."

Chapter 4: Literature Review

Thinking historically is a process of locating oneself in space and time. And a location...is an itinerary rather than a bounded site – a series of encounters and translations (Clifford, 1997: 11).

To provide a context for my empirical findings, this chapter reviews the literature on historic representations of Africa in ‘the West’ by starting with some of the earliest European travelers’ tales about Africa and then moving on to a discussion of images of Africa in the United States. I will then discuss key texts on travel and tourism, followed with a review of the existing literature about American students studying abroad.⁸¹

Early Travelers’ Tales

I have chosen to limit my focus to some of the earliest travelers’ tales about Africa (1600-1900),⁸² because my intent is to get back to the roots of the first constructions of Africa by Europeans (many of whom could be traced as the distant forefathers of many modern-day ‘Americans’). Thus, although my central research question is concerned with ‘American’ stories about ‘Africa and ‘Africans’, the master narrative begins long before the United States signed its Declaration of Independence from England. The narrative begins with the way European explorers, merchants, missionaries and military men first began constructing Africa and Africans over four hundred years ago.

According to some scholars, Asia (much more than Africa) originally served the construction of identities in the Middle Ages in Europe. Campbell (1988) suggests,

There is no continuous corpus of travel accounts during the Middle Ages that take on Black Africa as an experienced and witnessed other... Asia was both sufficiently “known” (witnessed, experienced) and unknown (Other) to provide the ground for dynamic struggles between the powers of language and the facts of life (3).

⁸¹ As a supplement to this material, I have also included a discussion of the historic relationship between South Africa and the United States in the appendix, as well as an exploration of the characteristics of American culture that influence travel and perceptions of ‘self’ and ‘other’.

⁸² Rather than more recent ones written in the 1900’s.

Indeed it was this gaze on Asia that formed the basis of Said's (1978) seminal work *Orientalism*, which describes the way Asia, or 'the Orient', was constructed by Europe and continues to be constructed in the West. According to Said, "The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (1978: 1).⁸³ However, though his focus is on 'the Orient', Said includes Africa in his scope as well. He notes, "From 1815 to 1914 European direct colonial dominion expanded from about 35 percent of the earth's surface to about 85 percent of it. Every continent was affected, none more so than Africa and Asia" (1978: 41).⁸⁴ Nevertheless, this doesn't mean that there wasn't any resistance to the expansion, as noted by Pratt (2008), Merians (2001) and Thompson (1995).

The first Europeans travelers' tales about Africa began emerging in the fifteenth century when there was "renewed direct European contact with Africa" (Steyn, 2001: 4). While most early travelers' tales contain disturbing descriptions about the inferiority of African people, not all early tales were like this. According to Steyn (2001), before Europeans began to impose political and economic domination systematically, there were instances of "mutual discovery" and even partnership between Africans and Europeans.⁸⁵ However, instances like

⁸³ Said is concerned with the way Orientalism developed over time and emerged in academic disciplines as a kind of "intellectual power" (1978:41). He describes the way, "poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions" (1978:7).

⁸⁴ Thus rather than get into a historian's debate about whether Africa or Asia was 'othered' first, one can safely say that both were 'othered' by Europe during the same era, and used to support "the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" (7). It is also important not to separate Orientalism from South African history. Africans and Asians have been linked for generations as Asian slaves were brought here. (Some of my Asian American respondents noted feeling more 'orientalized' here than anywhere else they've been, which is supported by Baderoon (2003:315) who states, "Discussions of Orientalism often assume a European or American gaze, with the Middle East or Asia as object. In fact, Orientalist images are elaborated in varied contexts throughout the world...I draw attention to Orientalist images in South Africa and their intersection with similar international discourses.") The issue of forced access is also comparable in both regions. According to Said, "The scientist, the scholar, the missionary, the trader, or the soldier was in, or thought about it, the Orient, because he *could be there*, or could think about it, with very little resistance on the Orient's part" (1978:7). The long lasting implications of this forced access can still be seen in what Western scholars, soldiers and travelers may currently experience or perceive as little resistance (for example, the ease of getting a visa if you are American, or "the friendliness of black people here" as one of my visiting friends put it). Access (physical and psychological) came at a price all those years ago.

⁸⁵ Steyn (2001:4) describes "memoirs of early European travellers in Portuguese, Dutch and English" whose encounters "were cast in terms of different but not inferiority." She cites Davidson (1994) who described part of the content of these memoirs as follows: "[T]hey found much to astonish them in custom and belief: that king, and even citizens, could have the possession of many wives; that shrines were raised to ancestors who were revered as gods; that human sacrifice could be practiced on certain though few occasions of ritual solemnity; and much else besides. Essentially, however... [they] found what appeared to them neither strange

these became fewer and fewer as the slave trade began to flourish. “By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, discourses of blackness had set into images of condescension and denigration” (Steyn, 2001: 5). Tale after tale created more and more demonized versions of Africa and Africans. By the time Van Riebeeck arrived with his crew in Table Bay in 1652, he was writing in his diary that the people of the Cape were “black stinking dogs,” “dull, stupid and odorous,” and “people living without a conscience” (Merians, 2001: 17, citing Sparks’ *The Mind of South Africa*, 1990).⁸⁶

In her book *Envisioning the Worst: Representations of Hottentots in Early-Modern England*, Merians (2001: 13) confirms the way the Cape Khoikhoi became demonized as “Hottentots...the world’s most beastly people.” She notes that by the end of the seventeenth century, “authors and editors were quick to realize how the negative depictions of the Cape Khoikhoi could work in provocative and politically useful ways” (Merians, 2001: 13). As she rightly points out, these descriptions didn’t come about by accident. They served strategic purposes for the identity of the Empire and its material interests. “English constructions of the ‘Hottentots’ became a crucial component of early-modern England’s definition of itself as the world’s most superior society. In short, those who imagined themselves as humanity’s best found it equally necessary to envision humanity’s worst” (Merians, 2001: 13). This system of binaries grew into the foundations for institutionalized racism and 19th century “race-science” (Foster, 1991).⁸⁷

Like Merians (2001) and Foster (1991), many other scholars (Pratt, 2008; Hulme & McDougall, 2007; Daunton & Halpern, 1999; Bivona, 1998) have analysed early travelers’ tales to reveal how the binaries were constructed and how particular travelers (famous explorers, scientists, politicians, etc.) represented certain places and peoples. Most of these commentaries were compiled through textual analysis of literature, letters and diaries from

nor perverse, but natural and even familiar. They found polities whose concern for trade appeared much the same as their own, whose laws were seen to be generally respected, and whose sense of independence, as well as their will and ability to defend that independence, were never in serious doubt. They found kings who were held to be divine – sanctioned that is, by spiritual as well as temporal authority – in much the same meaning of degree as their own kings in Europe” (Davidson, 1994, cited by Steyn, 2001: 4).

⁸⁶ Another example is “An Adventure at the Cape of Good Hope, December 1672, by Jan Pietersz: Cortemunde”, which contains a deeply racist chapter titled “The Natives of This Country.”

⁸⁷ “While travelers’ accounts were initially not all negative, nor were others necessarily represented in a homogenous manner, there was a gradual transformation in which evaluative terms such as “barbarous”, “savage”, “heathen” and “cannibal” were woven into descriptions such as skin colour and nakedness” (Foster, 1991: 58, with reference to Miles, 1989).

the era of colonial expansion. I will explore a few examples in more depth in my analysis chapters. However, while they provide valuable insights, one shortcoming is that they don't examine the way these stories were *told*, not just read. I was not able to find any work examining the orality of *early* travelers' tales.

However, I did find in Merians (2001) some reference to tales of resistance that were written during the same era (1600-1850) to challenge popular derogatory constructions of Africa. In contrast, Pratt (2008) is much quicker to conclude that what looks like challenges to negative constructions were actually forms of what she calls "anti-conquest" (i.e. a European presence dressed up as passive yet still serving imperial interests). In *1500 Years of African and Asian Travel Writing*, we are reminded of an even greater challenge to the status quo of the expansionist era – the fact that Africans and Asians have been traveling the globe for centuries and writing their own travel tales.⁸⁸ However, Khair (2006) suggests that very few people, including scholars, are aware that such narratives exist.⁸⁹

While Khair (2006) provides an important foil for early European travelers' tales, there is no discussion in his volume (or in many of the other commentaries mentioned) of whether these narratives continue to have an impact on popular discourse generations later. A rare exception, Steyn (2001) provides such linkages in *Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used To Be: White Identity in a Changing South Africa*. After recounting the development of a 'master narrative of whiteness', she links this early history to South Africa and the way "European settlers... gave the master narrative a particular spin that still influences relations within the country as it renegotiates social identities in the process of reconstruction after Apartheid" (Steyn, 2001: 22). As European settlers became more settled in places like South Africa and America and relied heavily on the slave trade (Magubane, 2000), their representations of 'others' became more than just travelers' tales, they became the physical boundaries and ritualized beliefs undergirding the social relations at each location. Once institutionalized, the

⁸⁸ Pratt (2008: 88) also acknowledges this when she states, "[A]n imperial tendency to see European culture emanating out to the colonial periphery from a self-generating centre has obscured the constant movement of people and ideas in the other direction, particularly during the periods of the Enlightenment and Romanticism."

⁸⁹ This is in large part due to the fact that "they didn't have Empire as their PR system" as noted by Melissa Steyn in a personal conversation. The 'Enlightenment' period for Europe was built on the backs of the slaves (Pratt, 2008; Magubane, 2000), which effectively suppressed much of these writings. The lack of awareness of these texts is also an indictment on academia's Western bias. "The kind of 'general knowledge' that enfold the travels of Columbus or Cook or Marco Polo never extends to Asian and African travel narratives" (Khair et al., 2006: 7).

narrative of imperialism could be easily passed on from one generation of settlers to the next to continue justifying white superiority. Said found the same to be true in his analysis.

During the early years of the twentieth century, men like Balfour and Cromer could say what they said, in the way they did, because a still earlier tradition of Orientalism than the nineteenth century one provided them with a vocabulary, imagery, rhetoric, and figures with which to say it (Said, 1978: 41).

Thus, it is likely that this same 'vocabulary, imagery and rhetoric' is still driving much of today's travel writing and popular images of Africa in the West. Before moving on to a discussion of travel and tourism, I will look more specifically at literature on the development of images of Africa in the United States.

Images of Africa in the United States

According to Haynes (1958), Africa did not receive much attention from Americans until after World War II, except from African Americans, even though the famous American journalist Henry M. Stanley had already popularized the notion of "the Dark Continent" by the late 1800's to promote European and American exploitation in Africa.⁹⁰ While Haynes (1958) provides a helpful overview of images of Africa, his statement that African Americans had by 1958 been interested in Africa "for more than 50 years" is quite misleading. The first slaves in the Americas would have been deeply interested long before that, but their voices have been silenced by other forms of discourse about Africa.⁹¹



Figure 2: "Heroes" (Advertising leaflet, 1889). See n. 88 below for explanation.

⁹⁰ According to Strain (2003: 40) "The marketing of Henry Morton Stanley and the capitalisation of his image by producers with goods with an exoticized origin - such as coffee, tea, and tobacco - was a mini-industry unto itself." (Advertising leaflet, 1889. Courtesy of the Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library, Emergence of Advertising in America.)

⁹¹ According to Foucault (1990: 27), silence can also protect dominant discourse. "Silence itself - the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers - is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies."

This silence highlights one of the biggest gaps in discussions of images of Africa in the United States – the historic roots of American images of ‘the other’ in slavery,⁹² the genocide of Native Americans,⁹³ the eugenics movement and scientific racism, anthropology’s roles in ‘othering’ and white superiority (particularly as seen during the eras of segregation and “racial dictatorship”⁹⁴ of politics in the United States).⁹⁵ Negative images of Africa are often naturalized as if they came out of nowhere or are simply the result of the distance between the United States and Africa.⁹⁶ Literature on images of Africa appears to focus more on the mediums or people carrying the images (TV, textbooks, advertisements)⁹⁷ rather than the origins or ‘meta-narratives’ (Bruner, 2005) behind the images.⁹⁸

⁹² In their book *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960's to 1990's*, Omi & Winant (1994: 62) note, “The organization of the African slave trade – not to mention the practice of outright extermination – all presupposed a worldview which distinguished Europeans, as children of God, full-fledged human beings, etc., from ‘Others’.”

⁹³ Omi & Winant (1994: 182n.17) quote Marx’s less-famous lines from *Capital*, “The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement, and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of blackskins, signalized the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production” (1967). Additionally, they cite David E. Stannard’s text *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World*, which “argues that the wholesale slaughter perpetuated upon the native peoples of the Western hemisphere is unequalled in history” (Omi & Winant, 1994: 182n.17).

⁹⁴ To use Omi & Winant’s (1994:65) term.

⁹⁵ Thandeka’s (2000) *Learning To Be White* provides a very helpful discussion of the historic development of class and race in the United States.

⁹⁶ Haynes (1958) quotes Derwent Whittlesey, a geographer, who wrote in 1955, “It is natural that to the general public of far-off America, Africa should long have been a vague composite picture of stampeding herds, of big game and densely forested jungle... inhabited by pygmies and also the tallest men on earth.”

⁹⁷ For example, Roberts (1987) article “Africa on Film to 1940” and Kern-Foxworth’s (1985) article “The Effects of Advertising Stimuli on American Perceptions of Africa”. Kern-Foxworth conducts a study in which color slides with images selected from travel brochures are shown to 126 students. Over one fifth couldn’t identify an outline of the African continent. The article concludes that there are “too many pictures of African wildlife... the promotion of safaris, and not enough information on metropolitan lifestyles and contemporary buildings” (1985: 167).

⁹⁸ According to Bruner (2005), “Meta-narratives are the largest conceptual frame within which tourism operates. They are not attached to any locality or to any particular tour, and they are usually taken for granted, not brought to consciousness.” For example, one meta narrative is of “privileged Westerners viewing the wildlife and peoples of Africa. Tourists see themselves as elite members of the civilized world who have the resources, leisure time, adventurous spirit, and discriminating taste to travel to see less developed, more primitive populations... To participate in such a tour to the Third World is to buy into and reinforce a story of unequal power relations, neocolonialism, and elitism. A subtext is that of the disappearing savage, the idea that authentic primitive cultures are being eroded by the forces of modernization” (2005: 21).

Skipping past slavery, Haynes (1958) picks up the story in the mid-1900's with a review of what politicians, diplomats, geographers, military leaders and journalists were saying about Africa. For example, he quotes Col. Glaska, of the U.S. Army, who stated in the New York Times (1953), "Africa is the continent of the future. Africa is a storehouse of strategic materials."⁹⁹ Haynes (1958) also references Cartwright (1956), a teacher/journalist who asked 258 children to write compositions about Africa. Only four wrote that they knew nothing. One typical response was: "Africans are black people who live in the Congo and are called natives. They don't wear clothes... They live in huts and sleep on the floor. The white men taught them to read" (Cartwright, 1956, cited by Haynes, 1958: 99).



Figure 3: Kellogg's (From an advertisement in Century magazine, November 1909)

Almost 50 years later, Traoré (2004) examines a school in Philadelphia and finds that these colonial images are not only persisting but making life very difficult for the African immigrant students who study there. These students reported a lack of information about Africa, a lack of interest from both students and teachers, and a lack of respect directed toward them personally.¹⁰⁰ "Their African American peers reported hearing that Africa is 'a jungle' and Africans are 'savage'" (2004:348).¹⁰¹ Traoré notes that even though more accurate information about Africa has been available

⁹⁹ This shift away from blatantly negative images was a result of the growing economic interests in the United States to find new places to exploit for raw materials to feed America's capitalism (95). As can be seen in Figure 3, advertising agencies and companies like Kellogg's began using cartoon-like representations of trade in Africa to market products.

¹⁰⁰ For example, the fact that many of them could speak multiple languages and were less individualist was viewed as a deficiency (Traoré, 2004).

¹⁰¹ The most commonly cited sources of information about Africa were "Roots", "Amistad", "National Geographic", the Discovery Channel and Tarzan cartoons.

since the 1960's and the civil rights movement, textbooks produced as late as 1995 still misrepresent events and experiences of Africa and people of African decent.¹⁰²

Unfortunately, this isn't surprising considering some of the other things that have been written about Africa in the past forty years. In 1968, Rosenthal re-published a book titled *Stars and Stripes in Africa* (with a forward from the original 1938 edition written by "General the Right Honourable J.C. Smuts). Rosenthal's (1968) "history of American Achievements in Africa" white-washes South African/American history and renders the indigenous population of South Africa virtually invisible, except for a few outdated and stereotypical references to "wily Hindus" and "Hottentots" (6). Written many years later, Chabal's (1996) article *The African Crisis* claims to critically examine ideas of Africa in the West. However, the number of times Chabal uses the word "failure" in relation to Africa tells a different story.¹⁰³

Walker & Rasamimanana (1993) provide a much more authentically critical discussion in *Tarzan in the Classroom: How "Educational" Films Mythologize Africa and Miseducate Americans*. They discuss the link between portrayals of Africa and portrayals of all people of African ancestry and after a review of the materials available at a model public school, conclude that American schools are still using visual resources about Africa that are "inaccurate, misleading and pejorative" (1993: 7). Instead, the "White is best" message comes through loud and clear again and again (15).¹⁰⁴



Figure 4: 'Latuko' (A Film produced by the American Museum of Natural History).

¹⁰² "The history of the continent of Africa told from an African perspective is not part of our school curricula and remains a story shrouded in the distortions generated by colonialism" (Traoré, 2004: 351).

¹⁰³ For example, Chabal (1996) writes, "... the failures of Africa are well-known and need hardly to be rehearsed. Africa is not just a continent of great political instability, it is also a continent where incompetence, greed and the lust for power have unleashed on ordinary men and women... It is true that we are (rightly) repelled by the atrocities currently perpetuated in Africa in the name of politics" (Chabal, 1996: 31). This reconfirms the notion of Africa as "a homogenous block with violence, helplessness, human rights abuses and lack of democracy as its main characteristics (Brookes, 1995: 465).

¹⁰⁴ As can be seen in Figure 4, Strain (2003) provides an example of the type of films that have been distributed in the United States over the past century. "The film *Latuko*, produced by the American Museum of

Popular articles are also revealing of the images of Africa held by Americans; for example, a recent article published in a University of California publication about a nonprofit group that organizes service trips to Tanzania (Patringenaru, 2006). The article quotes a volunteer who said, "There were a lot of things I wanted from Africa. So I wanted to give back in return" (Patringenaru, 2006). The assumption in this article is that visitors are right to *want* things from Africa, as well as feel justified that they have something to offer that Africa *needs*.¹⁰⁵ The article concludes that, "Africa is the last frontier that no one really understands" (Patringenaru, 2006). But who does the volunteer mean by "no one"? In this statement, the entire continent of residents is again rendered invisible and knowledge-less. This supports the discourse that Africa is still waiting to be discovered and until then, it doesn't really exist.

In *Doing Africa: Travelers, Adventurers and American Conquest of Africa*, Mathers (2006: 197) argues, "America's Africa is the definitive site of adventure. An examination of travel to Africa by Americans shows both a frantic yearning for adventure and a frequent reiteration of love and desire for Africa." She suggests that "this hunger for adventure" represents a shift in imperial relationships away from "the gaze" and towards "modes of action." Mathers (2006: 197) writes, "This shift from the imperial eye/I to an embodied penetration of Africa by Americans pushes the American adventurer to realize a self more suited to emerging forms of empire... how Americans forcibly pull the world into themselves."

Natural History, was distributed as ethnographic entertainment, with the superior quality of the technological delivery standing in for the power of 'being there'" (Strain, 2003: 20)

¹⁰⁵ The article goes into more detail about one volunteer's experience in Tanzania: "Keeler taught English to about 20 students in a tiny classroom. 'A brick hole with no electricity and one leaning blackboard' is how she described it in an email. Her students' age and level of ability varied widely. A handful could carry on a conversation and always contributed in class. But others were completely lost. One 15-year-old girl always answered 'yes', no matter what the question. A young boy couldn't read Swahili, let alone English. Keeler did her best to work with all of them..." (Patringenaru, 2006). The implication of this description is that Africa is as bad as you think; both materially as well as in terms of the educational abilities of Africans. The suggestion is that Africans are silly [answering yes to everything] and even stupid [can't even read his own language, let alone English]. Then there is the suggestion that despite all these challenges the long-suffering teacher tries in vain, which echoes the discourse of the "white man's burden". However, before the readers get too depressed by the state of the conditions 'in Africa', the article quickly changes tone: "Tanzania is breath-taking. Keeler said. Banana trees and coffee bushes dot a tropical landscape. 'If the Lion King was a true story, it would have happened in Tanzania'... Like many students, Keeler visited the Serengeti National Park, where she saw two black rhinos, elephants, lions, cheetahs, monkeys, hippos and many, many birds. The whole experience left her wanting more" (Patringenaru, 2006). The added implication is thus: 'Don't worry, after all your do-gooding, there's still room for fun. What the local people lack is made up for in the beauty of the landscape.' And of course there are the animals too, which always get the final mention in discourse about Africa. All of this feeds the colonial desire for *more*.

While Mathers' (2006) argument resonates with some of the comments by American study abroad students, she too sweepingly essentializes Americans, and in the process seems to suggest that Africans are passively accepting this "penetration". In contrast, Rassool & Witz (1996) provide insight into the way tourism and study abroad is a two-sided process. Using the example of South Africa, they note that the SA Tourism Board has been strategically marketing things like "firsthand experiences in the townships" and the "natural attractions" of South Africa since the country's political transition in 1994 (340). Then, on the side Mathers (2006) is most concerned about, they also note that South Africa has been absorbed into the "world wide image-manufacturing network" and "swamped" by North American networks like CNN and Sky (Rassool & Witz, 1996: 336).

Like Rassool & Witz (1996), Campbell (2000) also highlight the complexity of the relationship between South Africa and the United States by reminding us of the agency of South Africans who have simultaneously resisted Americanization, while at the same time seeking out American goods, ideas and images.¹⁰⁶ An important follow up to this section would therefore be an examination of images of the United States within South Africa, as well as a review of literature by Africans who are working to correct the myths and misrepresentations (for example, Mudimbe, 1994; Nangoli, 2002). For the time being, however, allow me to turn to a brief exploration of literature on travel, tourism and the 'tourist gaze'.

Literature on Travel, Tourism and the 'Tourist Gaze'

One could argue that study abroad is essentially tourism with an element of study. Many might disagree. However, the very controversy stirred by this statement suggests that it is important to review literature on travel and the 'tourist gaze' to gain another angle on study abroad and traveling tales.

¹⁰⁶ According to Campbell (2000: 35), "While the vast differences in national size and power have often made it difficult for South Africans to resist American penetration, it would be misleading to portray them as helpless victims of American imperialism. In many cases, they have sought out American goods, ideas and images, grafting them into their own experiences to produce new ways of understanding and acting upon their worlds. One of the chief challenges of an inquiry... is to do justice to these myriad moments of appropriation and refashioning without succumbing to the simplifications of 'cultural imperialism' on one hand or unfettered agency on the other."

Most travel scholars suggest that travel is an essential part of the human experience.¹⁰⁷ Campbell (1988) also relates travel to the quest for status that is tied up in the *experience* of having 'been there'.¹⁰⁸ Linked to the concept of authority or status, some have also referred to travel as a rite of passage, linked to class and gender in particular times and places. For example, Grewal (1996), cited by Khair (2006), notes that the dominant rhetoric and discourse of European travel began as an eighteenth-century construct that was centered around "the Grand Tour" – an experience of travel which "young men of the English aristocracy undertook as part of their education, a mode of travel that was central to class and gender formation" (9).

This linkage between class formation, education and travel can be seen in the United States as well; first, in the way travel was (and still is to some degree) marketed as a luxury reserved for the lucky few (Strain, 2003), but also more recently as an essential part of one's education, which is reflected in the curriculums of many American universities and the rise in study abroad (Wilkinson, 2000). While I didn't find any literature on travel as a rite of passage through the recruitment of young men and women into the military, much has been written on travel as a form of pilgrimage (Khair et al., 2006; Urry, 2002), a way of life or a type of cultural marker (Banks & Banks, 1995).¹⁰⁹



Figure 5: Around the World (From an advertisement in *Mentor*, August 1923; Strain (2003: 22).

¹⁰⁷ For example, Campbell (1988) even links travel to the Creation story. She states, "Soon after the Fall, human beings took their first journey – in this case, into exile from Paradise. We are, all of us, a displaced people. The movement of travel, whether it redeems or merely repeats that original displacement, belongs in the circle of elemental experience with 'birth, copulation and death,' as Eliot the expatriate should have known" (Campbell, 1988:1).

¹⁰⁸ "Neither power nor talent gives a travel writer his or her authority, which comes only and crucially from experience" (Campbell, 1988: 3).

¹⁰⁹ In their article *Cultural identity, resistance, and "good theory": Implications for intercultural communication theory from Gypsy culture*, Banks and Banks (1995) note that Gypsies "see traveling as a positive aspect of their culture. Traveling is a social imperative and is integrated into *Romania* – a set of moral codes and rules of behavior, and the highest authority of Gypsies." Travel is linked to health, as well as political and economic reasons.

In his much-cited text *The Tourist Gaze*, Urry (2002) suggests that modern tourism, one of the most common forms of travel, is about consumption and “the gaze” rather than about original displacement or spirituality, as suggested by Khair (2006).¹¹⁰ He reviews the history of travel and tourism and discusses at length the possible consequences of tourism and “the tourist gaze” for the places that are made to be the objects of the gaze. He states, “Rather than being a trivial subject, tourism is significant in its ability to reveal aspects of normal practices which might otherwise remain opaque.” (2002: 2)

Urry suggests that there is no single tourist gaze, but that the gaze varies depending on society, social group and historical period. The common feature, however, is that the gaze is constructed through difference.

The gaze in any historical period is constructed in relationship to its opposite, to non-tourist forms of social experience and consciousness... The gaze therefore presupposes a system of social activities and signs which locate the particular tourist practices, not in terms of some intrinsic characteristics, but through the contrasts implied with non-tourist social practices, particularly those based within the home and paid work (Urry, 2002: 1).¹¹¹

Urry also enables us to look globally at the impact of travel, tourism and therefore, study abroad as well.¹¹² Although he notes that the effects of tourism are complex and

¹¹⁰ Urry (2002) is interested in “...how and why for short periods people leave their normal place of work and residence. It is about consuming goods and services, which are in some sense unnecessary. They are consumed because they supposedly generate pleasurable experiences, which are different from those typically encountered in everyday life. And yet at least part of that experience is to gaze upon or view a set of different scenes, of landscapes or townscape which are out of the ordinary” (2002: 1).

¹¹¹ This description poses an interesting problem when one considers that study abroad is meant to include both non-touristic social practices (university study), with tourist practices (site-seeing, buying souvenirs, etc.) and might help explain why many study abroad students express surprise when they realize that foreign universities (like UCT) are more demanding academically than they expected. One might ask whether these expectations are linked to their view of Africa or to their view of what study abroad (or should it be called ‘study tourism’) should actually involve. Study abroad students are also quite critical of the universities that they visit. If one looks at them as a form of tourist, Urry’s insights could again prove useful. “People are looking for the extraordinary and hence will be exceptionally critical of services provided that appear to undermine such a quality” (Urry, 2002: 38).

¹¹² Urry (2002) suggests that the consequences are unequally spread even though it is a global phenomenon. “There is more or less no country in the world that is not a significant receiver of visitors. However, the flows of such visitors originate very unequally, with the 45 countries that have ‘high’ human development accounting for three-quarters of international tourism departures. Such mobilities are enormously costly for the environment with transport account for around one-third of all CO2 emissions” (Urry, 2002: 5, citing UNDP, 1999). In addition to the effect on the environment, Urry (2006: 50) notes broad economic, social

contradictory, he is particularly critical of the growth of tourism in developing countries, noting that its economic benefits are usually less than anticipated and that one should ask “development for *whom?*” since “many of the facilities that result from tourism (airports, golf courses, luxury hotels, and so on) will be of little benefit to the mass of the indigenous population” (Urry, 2002: 57).

While Urry provides seminal insights into the nature of tourism, Strain (2003) critiques his work for the fact that it “never moves beyond tourism itself to study the gaze’s social organisation in other institutions” (2003: 15). Instead, she aligns herself with Friedberg’s concept of the “mobilized virtual gaze” which has closer ties to technological and capitalist development and “suggests a larger cultural source, a ‘tutoring’ of the tourist gaze that takes place in other cultural forms and may long precede any actual immersion within a foreign landscape” (Strain, 2003: 15). However, Strain agrees with Urry that this type of gaze is “trained for consumerism” (2003: 15). She attributes the rise of tourism to the rise of the capitalist worldview at the turn of the 20th century, which viewed the world “as a reservoir of products, raw materials, and experiential pleasures melded with scientific understandings of the universe and a technological confidence on the part of the West” (2003: 39).¹¹³

Linking tourism to the rise of film and the cinema, Strain emphasises the way “travel to foreign lands has been mythologized as a cleansing process that renews perception” (Strain, 2003: 3). In her chapter *The Filtering Eye of the Tourist*, she elaborates,

[The] promise of renewed perception suggests that the travel experience can strip away one’s own cultural baggage and the sensorially deadening effects of familiarity... the myth of authenticity as suggested by Eisner and Crichton situates travel to foreign lands as demediating – cutting through layers of expectation and language to deliver raw and authentic experience (5).¹¹⁴

and cultural impacts – for example, “the observation of the private lives of host groups”, “the ‘trinketisation’ of local crafts”, and pushing out local shops or accommodations to make room for hotels.

¹¹³ Strain further notes that the marketing of “touristic pleasures” coincided with other late-nineteenth century developments, including “the professionalisation and popularization of anthropology, improved transportation, the consolidation of capitalism and the cultural ascendancy of the mechanically produced image” (2003: 39).

¹¹⁴ Strain suggests that the differentiation between ‘travelers’ and ‘tourists’ is part of this myth – “the illusion of demediation casts doubt on the possibility of differentiating tourist from traveler or distinguishing authenticity from inauthenticity.” (2003: 5).

This notion of ‘demediation’ will be picked up again in my analysis when examining a recurring comment from my participants that they came to South African “without any expectations.”

In *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*, Bruner (2005) is less concerned with the demediation debate and more interested in viewing “tourism as improvisational theater with the stage located in the borderzone, where both tourists and locals are actors” (18). However, after 20 years as an anthropologist, he is also quite critical of tourism, noting that it can often replicate the colonial experience in a way that “is conservative and even reactionary, frequently retelling outmoded stories, reproducing stereotypes, replicating fantasy, or simulating a discarded historical vision” (Bruner, 2005: 21). He also notes the dichotomy in the fact that tourists often want the destination to be “wild, exotic, and different from everyday life, but... their hotels, food, lodging and service be first-class” (14).¹¹⁵

Since tourism often connotes “something commercial, tacky, and superficial” (7), Bruner notes that many tour groups (and I would add study abroad programmes) use strategies to try to distance themselves from tourism. One common strategies is to associate with academia. For example, one of Bruner’s tour groups was proud they had their own anthropologist as a tour guide, which was “a differentiating status symbol” (7). However, even though some streams of anthropology (and academia) have become more self-reflexive under postmodernism’s influence, the travel industry often exerts a counter-force, “still chasing anthropology’s discarded discourse, presenting cultures as functionally integrated homogenous entities outside of time, space and history (Bruner, 2005: 4).

Bruner (2005) calls for us to move beyond “such limiting binaries as authentic-inauthentic, true-false, real-show, back-front”, and instead to view tourist productions for what they are in themselves – “authentic tourist productions” (4). This perspective could prove quite instructive when looking at aspects of the study abroad experience. For example, when looking at home stays one should not ask whether they are a *real* cultural experience or not.

¹¹⁵ Additionally, Bruner observes that conversations among travelers tend to be less about the host country and more about the travelers themselves, about their accommodations, food, and other travels, which is essentially about status and the tourists’ authenticity as “experienced travelers” (2005: 16). As a result, “Tourists, then, experience home while away, a home created by the tourism industry in the accommodations and modes of travel, and a home constructed by the tourists themselves in their conversations. Home consists of the familiar, of expected comforts, and of interactions with persons like oneself. Where then, for these foreign tourists, is the away part...?” (Bruner, 2005: 17)

but rather to examine them for what they actually might be –an economic arrangement, a site of intense interpersonal interaction, a borderland of cultural curiosity, etc.

Although his work is more dated than Urry (2002), Strain (2003) or Bruner (2005), Clifford (1997) is far ahead of his time and moves beyond traditional discussions of anthropology, ethnography and travel to take a more complicated view of travel in the context of a complex modernity – one in which the world and its cultures don't stand still but are still influenced by institutional forces that continue to try to discipline unconventional encounters. In another essay, he reflects on the wide variety of push and pull factors governing travellers:

[T]ravellers move about under strong cultural, political, and economic compulsions and ... certain travelers are materially privileged, others oppressed. These different circumstances are crucial determinations of the travel at issue – movements in specific colonial, neo-colonial, and postcolonial circuits, different diasporas, borderlands, exiles, detours and returns. Travel, in this view, denotes a range of material, spatial practices that produce knowledges, stories, traditions, comportments, musics, books, diaries, and other cultural expressions (Clifford, 1992; cited by Beauregard, 1999: 86).

Thus, as I move on to an examination of a specific kind of travel (study abroad), I recognize the importance of recognizing the 'cultural, political and economic compulsions' that are involved.¹¹⁶

The Characteristics and Implications of Study Abroad for American Students

Most scholars agree that the phenomenon of study abroad in the United States arose in the "early postwar period" following World War I to promote cross-cultural understanding and knowledge of 'the other' (Kochonek, 1996; Teichler & Steube, 1991: 326). As to an exact year, Kochanek (1996) suggests that 1921 marked the launch of America's first study abroad programme at the University of Delaware.¹¹⁷ Since those early years, study abroad has taken on many different forms and has shared the space with many other options for Americans to

¹¹⁶ As noted in my introduction, a discussion of 'American' cultural characteristics can be found in the Appendix.

¹¹⁷ According to Kochanek, "Prof. Raymond W. Kirkbride, an instructor in the Modern Languages Department and a World War I veteran, had seen firsthand what disagreements between nations could do; he had seen smoldering ruins and burned-out buildings across the French countryside. But, he had also met and greatly enjoyed the French, and he understood the potential that travel and study had for promoting cross-cultural understanding. And now, in 1921, he was home in Newark, standing before the desk of University President Walter S. Hullihen, pitching his idea to send students to France for their junior year" (1996: x).

travel abroad, including the Peace Corps, volunteering, church mission trips, and ‘pure’ tourism.

As early as the 1930’s, scholars like Holden (1934) were already discussing the merits of study abroad, particularly in terms of language acquisition. In her article *Ten Years of Undergraduate Study Abroad*, Holden reviews the activities of the alumni of the first University of Delaware programmes and concludes that the biggest contribution of the “Junior Year Plan” is to the field of language teaching. However, she notes that there is great versatility in terms of how graduates of study abroad programmes apply what they learned and that across the board alumni praised their foreign experience for the way it deepened their “personal powers and interests” and “mental maturity” (1934: 119).

About 25 years later, Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1958) wrote *American Objectives in Study Abroad* for The Journal of Higher Education. In their article, they note the rapid increase in study abroad programmes and compare the objectives of the sending institutions with the goals of the study abroad students. They note that at that time there was a gap in published material discussing the motivations prompting young Americans to study abroad.¹¹⁸ Through interviews and questionnaires with 600 American study abroad students who had studied in France, Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1958) identified the top eleven motivations driving students of that era to study abroad.¹¹⁹ They also highlight some of the top motivations of universities that sponsor exchanges, including: “To develop friends and supporters for the United States by giving persons in other countries a better understanding of life and culture of the United States” (369).

This mirrors the institutional discourse on the diplomatic/ambassadorial role of study abroad students still found today. However, it was not one of the top priorities in Gullahorn &

¹¹⁸ At that time, the number of American students traveling abroad (9,887 in 1955/56) was relatively low compared to the number of international students studying in the United States, which was approximately 40,000 in 1957 (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1958: 369). More recently, the numbers have leveled off slightly, although there is still half the number of American study abroad students as international students in the United States. For example, in 2005/06, there were 564,766 international students studying in the United States, and 223,534 American students studying abroad (Open Doors, 2007 Fast Facts).

¹¹⁹ They listed these in order of importance (1 being highest, 11 being lowest): 1) “To gain professional development; 2) To acquire an understanding of French culture; 3) To become “at home” in the French language; 4) To have adventure; 5) To study under top men in one’s field; 6) To experience the freedom to be oneself which can be found in France; 7) To work for better Franco-American relations; 8) To use outstanding French libraries; 9) To cut down educational expenses; 10) To gain recognition at home; 11) To escape problems at home” (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1958: 373).

Gullahorn's sample.¹²⁰ Instead, "most of them thought that international exchange of students provided an excellent means of improving the accuracy of one's knowledge of other peoples and giving them, in turn, an opportunity to learn what young America is like (1958: 373). The persistence of stereotypes about "other peoples" all these years later might challenge this perception. However, in interviews with the French hosts, Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1958) did find that some of the study abroad interactions were mutually beneficial since the study abroad students offered their hosts something different from French contact with American soldiers and tourists.¹²¹

Nash (1976), writing almost 20 years later, ignores the cross-cultural possibilities of study abroad and focuses on the effect of study abroad on the self-realization of American study abroad students. He suggests that in the 70's study abroad programmes were primarily aiming to produce "a liberal-international version of a typically modern individual" (191).¹²² He doesn't at any point question the fact that this idea of 'modern' could be a cultural construct of Western values and a Western way of looking at the world. Instead, he suggests:

The nature of the overseas situation is such as to provide the quintessence of the modern experience in a complex, changing world. Thus, the student who successfully completes a year of study abroad ought to become even more modernized than his colleagues at home and thus freer of parochial ties and the constraints of tradition and more reliant on the autonomous self (Nash, 1978: 193).

To test these characteristics, Nash (1976) does a 'before' and 'after' study using an experimental (overseas) group and a control (home) group. While he notes several challenges in the research methodology,¹²³ his findings confirmed that study abroad does contribute to

¹²⁰ "Few American students believed that as individuals they could make a significant contribution toward improved international understanding or co-operation" (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1958: 373).

¹²¹ According to Gullahorn & Gullahorn, "Interviews with French citizens... indicated that the fact that Americans came to "learn from France", were serious in their studies, and were spontaneous and outgoing in their associations formed the basis for deeper and more enduring relationships between the French citizens and the young Americans (1958: 374).

¹²² He notes that while many study abroad students cited their main accomplishment abroad to be improved competence in French, they also cited "personal developments such as self-understanding, personal growth, increased tolerance, independence, sophistication and greater openness or receptivity" (192). Nash (1978) links these 'achievements' to what he sees as "an historic trend towards individuation" that is part of the process of modernization, noting that this type of self-realization is found in "industrialized... better educated, more urbanized" locations and populations.

¹²³ For example, finding a test to measure 'objectivity'; or accounting for factors that affect autonomy like the reality that "most of the problems of living are resolved by a director and assistances" (Nash, 1976: 197).

“increased autonomy” and “expansion and differentiation of the self” but did not confirm the hypotheses related to “increased tolerance and flexibility” and “increased self assurance and confidence” (Nash, 1976: 197). In fact, he notes that the self-confidence of many of his respondents appeared to decline as a result of a year abroad.¹²⁴ In the ‘after’ stage of the study he also notes that many of the positive changes in terms of self-realization didn’t last and suggests that very few changes can actually be attributed to the overseas experience. What is notably missing in Nash’s analysis and conclusion is any reference to the host country or the hosts themselves, or any space for different models of self realization, like the concept of *ubuntu* found in South Africa, which attributes self development to participation in the experience of the collective.¹²⁵

Fifteen years after Nash (1976), Teichler & Steube (1991) take another angle on study abroad in *The Logics of Study Abroad Programmes and Their Impacts*. From their perspective as German scholars, they emphasize the pragmatic fact that study abroad programmes are a negotiated arrangement between two or more institutions of higher education in two or more countries.¹²⁶ As such, they note the great diversity found in different models and approaches.¹²⁷ They then argue that the model or approach adopted by study abroad programmes shapes the “goals, attitudes of participants, experiences abroad and the outcomes of the programmes”, with the exception of students who opt for contrasting educational experiences to the ones emphasized by their programmes or students who experience substantial problems despite strong administrative and academic support (325). Building on

¹²⁴ Although he suggests later that this could be more as a result of being separated from loved ones than as a result of anything one encounters in the host country.

¹²⁵ “I am because you are”, rather than “I think therefore I am” as made popular by Descartes.

¹²⁶ “Study abroad programmes are characterized, in contrast to individual mobility of students across borders, by a particular set of established arrangements for foreign study between institutions of higher education, namely an ongoing, regular exchange of students; an organisational and educational infrastructure which supports the study experience; and provisions that successful study for some period abroad is at least partially recognized as a substitute for study at the home institution” (Teichler & Steube, 1991: 325).

¹²⁷ I have summarized these differences as follows: 1) Programmes organized at university level versus departmental level; 2) Programmes offering a single field of study versus various or all fields; 3) Students offered optional versus compulsory participation in courses; 4) Universities having unilateral versus reciprocal arrangements in terms of exchange of students; 5) Programmes operating for different periods/lengths of time; 6) Programmes offering only study versus work placement abroad; 7) Fellowships offered versus waiver of tuition fees; 8) Courses specifically offered for foreign students versus alongside students on the host institution; 9) Freedom to choose courses versus pre-determined curriculum; 10) Focus on academic issues versus a broader scope that could include foreign language proficiency, understanding host country, cultural enrichment, personality development (Teichler & Steube, 1991).

“The Study Abroad Evaluation Project” (a research initiative in the 1980’s that evaluated 82 programmes to promote mobility between the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Sweden and the USA), Teichler & Steube (1991) compare the differing impacts for students of these countries in relation to the differing study abroad models promoted by each country.¹²⁸ While woefully limited in terms of its scope of countries, Teichler & Steube’s (1991) comparison provides the important reminder that study abroad students’ experiences are greatly influenced, not only by their own cultural baggage or ‘self realization’, but by the decision-makers at their universities that seek out relationships with particular universities and particular countries and emphasize certain interests/concerns over others.

Language learning is a typical concern raised in articles like Allen and Herron’s (2003) *A Mixed-Methodology Investigation of the Linguistic and Affective Outcomes of Summer Study Abroad*. Additionally, this article reveals that current scholars are still fixated on study abroad programmes in European locations.¹²⁹ Allen & Herron (2003) look at the linguistic (oral and listening) and affective (integrative motivation and language anxiety) outcomes of summer study abroad for 25 American students studying French. By integrative motivation, they draw on Gardner (1985) to mean the willingness of students “not only to acquire a new set of verbal habits, but also to adopt appropriate features of behavior that characterize members of another linguistic community” (Allen & Herron, 2003:372). Through their investigation they conclude that study abroad does improve linguistic skills and help with language anxiety, but

¹²⁸ For example, U.S. programmes put a much stronger emphasis on cultural enrichment and much less emphasis on academic goals than their German and Swedish counterparts. Teichler & Steube (1991) also suggest that the stronger emphasis on foreign language learning in U.S. programmes could be an attempt to compensate for the lack of foreign language training in secondary education in the United States. They also noted there was less interest comparatively in U.S. programmes in getting to know different teaching and learning methods abroad, but a greater interest in travel, perhaps due to limited prior travel opportunities. They observed that more U.S. programme directors reported social adaptation problems for their students, than their European counterparts. They also noted that the less academic goals were emphasized, the more problems were reported. Thus, they remind their readers that even programmes that put little emphasis on academic goals cannot avoid academic issues. They found that U.S. students expect more communication with academic staff outside the classroom and therefore reported the most problems with lack or quality of academic guidance during programmes in Germany and France where there is a different mode of student/professor interaction. However, American students did take more advantage of the opportunity to travel than their European counterparts and reported the highest increase of knowledge about the host country (in line with the programmes’ emphases).

¹²⁹ Although some might say this is simply due to the fact that more American students (approximately 60 percent) still go to European countries, it signals a gap in terms of research into the remaining 40 percent of study abroad locations. For 2004/5 and 2005/6, 58.3 percent of study abroad students went to Europe, 15.2 percent went to Latin America, 9.3 percent went to Asia, 6.3 percent went to Oceania, 3.8 percent went to Africa, 1.2 percent went to the Middle East, 0.5 percent went to Canada and the remaining 5.5 percent went to Multiple Locations (Opendoors, 2007 FastFacts).

that integrative motivation remains unchanged even after study abroad. This finding runs counter to other studies (here they cite Clement, 1978, and Shapson et al., 1981) that find that immersion improves attitudes towards the host country or “target language community” (Allen & Herron, 2003: 382).

However, Wilkinson (2000) confirms the problematic nature of immersion. Although she again uses a French case study, she takes a qualitative approach, limiting her case study to the experiences of seven American study abroad students. She starts by defending her methodology:

If we pose questions that allow for multiple, complex, individualized responses, we may not find complete answers, but we will be more apt to honor the reality of the study-abroad experience as unique and dynamic, shaped through myriad personal backgrounds, opportunities, and choices. This line of inquiry may also prompt us to develop models of study abroad that build in flexibility and careful advising for diverse individual styles, experiences, and goals (Wilkinson, 2000: xx).

Through examining cultural misunderstandings, interactions with the host families and language learning, Wilkinson (2000: xx) concludes that there is “a stark mismatch between the promises implied in the program literature and the actual experiences of the participants overseas.”¹³⁰ Thus, Wilkinson suggests there is a need to rethink the relation between programme theory and students’ lived experiences.

¹³⁰ First, in contrast to the programme’s claim that students will develop an understanding of and appreciation for a new culture, she notes, “[C]ultural misunderstandings were actually a daily occurrence for many program participants, plaguing even the most basic exchanges and leading to negative stereotyping... without a native French perspective on their experiences, it seems that the participants could only interpret their encounters through American eyes (Wilkinson, 2000: xx). Second, in contrast to the programme’s assurance of “housing in carefully selected families”, one of her participants said the host family had failed to pick her up when she arrived and rarely spoke to her. “I always feel very uncomfortable in the house,” she told Wilkinson (2000:xx). Drawing on De Ley’s (1975, cited by Wilkinson, 2000) discussion of stranger anxiety, Wilkinson suggests that host families can actually complicate, rather than ease, cultural adjustment because they are sites of “enforced”, “intimate contact” (xx). Third, in contrast to the claim by study abroad programmes that living abroad is the fastest way to become fluent in another language, her participants expressed surprise that they could live in France for months and get by with rarely speaking French. Wilkinson (2000) notes that this is in part due to the phenomenon of American students seeking each other out for friendship in a foreign context, but should not be attributed to mere laziness on their part to integrate with the host population. Instead, she suggests, “This tendency to congregate with American peers and speak English is what prompts many study-abroad administrators to share Rouben Cholakian’s view that programs should “put the emphasis on keeping American students apart,” since, in so doing, “the well-motivated and resourceful student soon understands the value of conversing with the natives and avoiding compatriots”. De Ley cautions against this strategy, however, arguing that the social networks among American students overseas are ironically an essential component of host culture integration. In the face of potentially threatening cultural and linguistic differences, compatriot association allows for what Dennison Nash calls a sort of “adaptive division of labour, [. . .] mak[ing] the

Martin et al. (1995) pick up on Wilkinson's theme of expectations and situate their analysis of study abroad in a larger body of sojourning literature that is closely linked to the field of intercultural communication. To examine the notion of expectancy, they conducted a longitudinal survey with 248 "student sojourners" on predeparture expectations of 13 aspects of overseas living in England, France and Italy. Upon returning home, the students filled out a survey to assess whether these expectations were met or violated.¹³¹ The first significant finding was that the majority of students reported that their expectations were met or positively violated (meaning when things turn out better than expected). The second major finding was that the fulfilment or violation of expectations appeared to be related to location and gender, but not prior intercultural experience.¹³² Martin et al. (1995) conclude that more qualitative work needs to be done to determine "how sojourners reframe their experiences to bring them in line with their expectations" (105).¹³³

Tusting et al. (2002) also explore the phenomenon of reframing and representation in *'I know, 'cos I was there': how residence abroad students use personal experience to legitimate cultural generalizations*. They note that "although students demonstrate an awareness of the negative cultural evaluation of stereotyping through the use of mitigation strategies" students still seem prone to "produce generalizations under the right discursive conditions, particularly when permission is given by the other participants in the interaction and when they are able to produce evidence to legitimate the generalization in some way (2002: 651).

In *What's the Subject of Study Abroad?: Race, Gender, and "Living Culture,"* Talburt &

problem of individual adaptation less difficult" (Wilkinson, 2000, citing Cholakian, 1992, De Ley, 1975 and Nash, in De Ley).

¹³¹ This study was based on the premise that longitudinal investigations need to replace theoretical speculation in order to test the following hypothesis: "[S]ojourners enter the overseas experience with expectations about interactions with host country individuals and expectations about other aspects of the sojourn, which are then either met or not met. The fulfillment or violation of these expectations influences the sojourners' evaluation of the sojourn and ultimately their cultural adaptations" (Martin et al., 1995: 88).

¹³² For example, they note, "U.S. sojourners often report that their expectations that England will be very similar to the United States are often violated – that it is in fact a very different cultural experience, including differences in language. This calls into question an assumption in the literature that the more similar the host and native culture, the less difficulty experienced by sojourners" (Martin et al., 1995: 103). See Martin et al. (1995) for discussion of gender differences in terms of expectations.

¹³³ As I noted in an earlier chapter, this is a gap that this dissertation attempts to speak to in terms of the narratives and stories that study abroad students use to frame and interpret their experiences.

Stewart (1999) also discuss cultural generalizations with a focus on students' in- and out-of-class cultural learning during a five-week study abroad program in Spain. Through ethnographic observations, they analyze the processes of teaching and learning in a Spanish culture and civilization class, and pay particular attention to the experiences of the only African-American student in the programme. This student reported on the ways racism impinged on her actions and interactions, as well as the way she felt overtly sexualized by Spanish men. Many of her white peers had a hard time relating to her experience.¹³⁴ In trying to seek out insight in this area, Talburt & Stewart found a relative silence (as I have also found) on the topic of race and gender influences on study abroad. "We found that research has tended to generalize students' experiences abroad, giving scant attention to the specificities that can shape their interactions and cultural learning" (1999: 164).¹³⁵ As one way to fill this gap, Talburt & Stewart suggest that "study abroad curricula incorporate sustained discussion of students' socio-cultural differences and resulting particularities in their experiences in the host culture" (1999: 163). This includes looking seriously at white privilege, which is often kept invisible when white students are in the majority.

In *Taking a Critical Pedagogical Look at Travel-Study Abroad: "A Classroom with a View" in Cusco, Peru*,¹³⁶ Fobes (2005) looks at the possibilities for a critical approach to teaching sociology that is maximized in a non-English speaking context.¹³⁷ Presenting a case study of her three-week course, Fobes (2005) draws on Kaufman's (2002) four-point model of critical pedagogy to try to help students understand, reflect, analyze, and engage in social action. In contrast to the uncritical view held by Nash (1976) and others that programmes are open sites for any type of self-realization, Fobes' approach is based on the belief that schools and

¹³⁴ They note, "In contrast to the shared construction of cultural knowledge that characterized the class, discussion of race and gender was limited in its complexity, despite signs of new understandings among students" (Talburt & Stewart, 1999: 163).

¹³⁵ This silence is very concerning considering the fact that currently "less than 9 percent [of study abroad students] are black or Hispanic." Currently, national initiatives have emphasized that study abroad should be representative of the diversity of American universities (Bellamy & Weinberg, 2008: 61). However, attempting to increase representivity without looking at the very real experiences of minority students who have studied abroad (or at the factors keeping them from studying abroad) would be a disservice to these students.

¹³⁶ One of the rare pieces I've found that reflects on study abroad experiences outside of Europe.

¹³⁷ Fobes argues, "The importance of preparing students for citizenship in a global society is well recognized in teaching sociology. Although options have emerged to facilitate such pedagogical experiences, few concentrate on maximizing students' experiences in non-English-speaking nations. How can we help sociology students get the most out of an experience in a foreign language society if they do not speak the language?" (2005: 181)

educational programmes are “central sites for the reproduction of the dominant ideology, its forms of knowledge, and the circulation of skills needed to reproduce the social division of labor and class” (2005:182). However, while I admire the fact that Fobes aligns herself with critical Freirian pedagogy, her description of her programme sounds more like traditional anthropology than critical sociology.¹³⁸

Thus, I would venture to say that this overview of study abroad literature suggests an urgent need for more critical discussions regarding the cultural and socio-economic dimensions of the American subject position in study abroad, in order to engage with this phenomenon in a broader, historical framework that can shed greater light on questions regarding expectation and impact. It is also urgent for more to be written about study abroad programmes in locations beyond the much written about European experience.

Even after doing many searches online and in academic journals, articles specifically about study abroad to African countries were hard to come by. In fact, three of the main articles I found were all published in a special issue of the same *African Issues* journal. In *Study Abroad in Africa: A Survey*, Pires et al. (2000) establish a database of current or discontinued study abroad programmes in Africa as part of the National Consortium for Study in Africa’s (NCSA) commitment to promote “high-quality study-abroad programs in Africa for American students and faculty” (4). They identify 107 programmes, sponsored by 68 institutions in 23 African countries. At the time of the survey, the five countries with the most study abroad programmes were Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, Zimbabwe and Tanzania (in that order).¹³⁹

Pires et al. (2000) note several reasons why study abroad in Africa is a challenge, including political instability, unfamiliarity with non-European languages and lack of services.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ The three-week course was centered on a sociology of gender but the main emphasis and assignments were on how and why gender practices were socially constructed and enacted in everyday Peruvian life. The only mention of critical self-reflexivity was one mention of students’ awareness of their white privilege in comparison to Peruvians. Otherwise, all the examples supported notions of “studying another’s world” (2005:191) and there was little reflection on what difference this made to the students’ engagement with social action upon returning home.

¹³⁹ They found that Anglophone countries dominate, with only six French-speaking countries out of 20 African countries with study abroad programmes. They note four countries that had to close down their study abroad programmes due to political or social reasons – Cote d’Ivoire, Malawi, Nigeria and Liberia.

¹⁴⁰ Higher international travel costs (in some cases), limited educational resources at host institutions, and

Additionally, they suggest that stereotypes of Africa have a significant influence on the number of American students who enroll in African programmes, noting that “parental concerns reflect the sometimes unreasonable fears induced by the Western media’s portrayal of an Africa of strife, corruption and decay” (Pires et al., 2000:11). Unfortunately, while noting many of the benefits of American study abroad to the host institutions, Pires et al. (2000) provide no discussion of how American students might benefit or learn from Africa. Instead, they paint the picture of American benevolence and African need:¹⁴¹

As many individuals and organizations sympathetic to *Africa’s plight* have argued, one of the most important things Americans can give to Africa is an American population that is more informed and enlightened about African affairs, which in turn could lobby its elected officials for a fairer, more responsive, and equitable foreign policy toward Africa (Pires et al., 2000: 11, italics added).

Taking this egocentric perspective even further, Buschman’s (2000) *Study Abroad in Africa: A Personal Memoir* centers around a year he spent in Nigeria in 1964 and 1965 but provides no significant learnings from Africa or Africans. All the advice he offers to other would-be study abroad students revolves around their personal development. For example, “You can learn a lot about yourself and your home country” (132). Buschman (2000) also expresses regret over spending too much time with the “expat crowd” and not enough time with locals. However, rather than suggesting how these regrets can be avoided, he reverts into very self-focused nostalgia, suggesting that he has always wanted to go back to Nigeria in order to ‘find himself’ and ‘complete the cycle’.¹⁴²

In *Study Abroad in Tanzania*, Grosz-Ngaté et al. (2000) also take a very personalised approach to discussing a study abroad programme between the University of Florida and the

lack of official contact between institutions of high education in the United States and the developing world were also on the list.

¹⁴¹ The benefits noted include: Stipends to African guest lecturers and program personnel; funds for scholarships and faculty exchanges to the U.S.; funds for books, journal subscriptions and library materials; opportunities to “expand cultural awareness” through interactions with American students; exposure to American teaching methodology (Pires et al., 2000).

¹⁴² Buschman may be right about the benefit of re-visiting old study abroad locations to complete the cycle of learning, but I think he has too fully bought into Nash’s (1976) paradigm that the main purpose of study abroad is self-realization, and that the people and the places visited aren’t really that important. I would argue that this kind of thinking actually robs study abroad student from really experiencing something life-changing, which is connection with ‘the other’, or again to cite *ubuntu* philosophy – finding out that ‘I am because you are’.

University of Dar es Salaam that has been running since 1989. Although Grosz-Ngaté (as academic coordinator of the programme) provides a brief introduction that highlights some their perceptions of the challenges and strategies of study abroad in Tanzania, the bulk of the article is made up of two essays written by student alumni of the programme, which take on a very similar nostalgic tone to Buschman (2000). While firsthand accounts like these are valuable in and of themselves, I am concerned by the lack of theory and critical discussion in articles about study abroad in African countries, but that seems present in the long tradition of writing about study abroad in Europe.

Following on from her 2003 doctoral dissertation, Mathers (2004) has written several other articles about travel between South Africa and the United States. In *Reimagining Africa: What American Students Learn in South Africa*, she again uses ethnographic methods to discuss what American students learn while they are studying abroad in South Africa. She concludes that “the students' image of Africa is disturbed by the combination of their cosmopolitan experiences in South Africa and this unsettling of their preconceptions about poverty” (Mathers, 2004: abstract).

Taking a more comparative approach, Salla Atkins (2002) did a broad quantitative study of international students at the University of Cape Town. She found that there was a tendency for African students to enjoy their stay less than non-African students, possibly because it's exciting and new for non-Africans and they are less likely to experience discrimination in South Africa. While helpful in establishing American students in the broader context of international students in South Africa, this quantitative study also proves the need for qualitative work that gets at the way students attribute meaning to their experience and define their interaction with South Africans and the South African context.

The fact that I was able to find so few articles about study abroad in African locations, as well as few approaches that explore discourse in students' study abroad stories or set these stories in a historical context, suggests that the following analysis could be a useful contribution to the field.

Chapter 5: Pre-trip Narratives

There are no naïve travelers. Tourists¹⁴³ begin each trip with some preconceptions about the destination – a pre-tour narrative. The tourists then reshape and personalize the pre-tour narrative in terms of their lived experience on the tour. Upon returning home, tourists further alter their stories about the journey into what is usually a more coherent narrative (Bruner, 2005: 22).

In this first chapter of my analysis, I will look at what Bruner (2005: 22) refers to as the “pre-tour narrative.” Many of my participants said that they came to South Africa with “no expectations.”¹⁴⁴ However, when probed on why they had chosen to come to the continent of Africa or what people had said to them before they came, many of their answers echoed larger narratives and prior discourse about Africa and Africans (‘the other’) and about the United States and Americans (‘the self’). These narratives are critical to consider before moving on to the embodied stories of my participants’ experiences in South Africa (Chapter 6), as well as their post-trip narratives (Chapter 7).

In this chapter, I will first look at some examples of the way historical context and societal discourse (pre-tour narratives) influenced early European travelers’ tales. I will then explore the main themes in my participants’ stories that reveal the similar influence of historical, cultural and contextual factors on 21st century travelers. It becomes evident that carrying a pre-trip narrative is not a choice on the part of the study abroad students, just as it is actually not possible to decide to have “no expectations.” Even if one is rebelling against prior discourse (Eisenstadt, 1992), one’s ‘gaze’ is still greatly informed by historic factors¹⁴⁵ and can take many different narrative forms.¹⁴⁶ It is therefore important to “locate and interpret its sources and to pinpoint the particular form that is adapted” (Personal Narratives Group, 1989:99).

¹⁴³ And study abroad students.

¹⁴⁴ For example, Resp. 6, FG 2: UCT; Resp. 23, FG 6: UCT; and Resp. 18, FG 4: UCT.

¹⁴⁵ As noted by Urry (2002:1) in reference to Foucault, “this gaze is as socially organized and systematized as is the gaze of the medic.”

¹⁴⁶ The Personal Narratives Group suggests that “a narrative might be viewed as fluid rather than fixed in the variety of shapes that it can assume”(1989:99).

Early Travelers' Tales: Influenced by Context and Discourse

Imperial Eyes explores three narrative forms (survivalist, naturalist and sentimentalist) that illustrate the way early European travelers' tales were directly influenced by the historical context and societal discourse in which the tellers of the tales were situated. According to Pratt (2008: 15), there were two major events in Europe at the beginning of the 1700's that deeply influenced the way "European elites" understood themselves and viewed their relationship to the rest of the world, and particularly South America, Africa and Asia. The first was the launch of "Europe's first major international scientific expedition" to definitively determine the shape of the earth. The second was the publication of *Systema Naturae* (*The System of Nature*) by Carl Linné (Linnaeus).¹⁴⁷ Pratt (2008) suggests that the "new planetary consciousness" that came about with these two events – "an orientation toward interior exploration and the construction of global-scale meaning" – was also a "basic element in constructing modern Eurocentrism" (15). The travelers' tales that emerged during this period were directly influenced by this orientation.

Firstly, international expeditions to determine the world's shape encouraged the popularity of survival narratives, which in the name of scientific progress positioned the explorer in dangerous but romantic confrontation with an unknown world, and provided new ways for "encoding Europe's imperial ambitions" (Pratt, 2008: 23). According to Pratt, "Alongside navigation, survival literature's two great themes are hardship and danger on the one hand, and marvels and curiosities on the other" (2008: 20).¹⁴⁸ Thus, Africa as a 'dangerous but exotic' place was popularized through this type of tale.

Secondly, Linné's classification system and the era's emphasis on natural history encouraged the 'naturalist' form of travel writing.¹⁴⁹ This orientation produced writing that was

¹⁴⁷ A Swedish naturalist who designed a classificatory system to categorize all the known and unknown plants in the world.

¹⁴⁸ Along with written works, Pratt identifies oral stories from this period, like the Amazonian tale of Mme. Godin, which left an enduring impact on the European imagination. This further confirms the relevance of looking at spoken travelers' tales, like the ones told in my interviews.

¹⁴⁹ According to Pratt, "Specimen gathering, the building up of collections, the naming of new species, the recognition of known ones, became standard themes in travel and travel books. Alongside the frontier figures of the seafarer, the conqueror, the captive, the diplomat, there began to appear everywhere the benign, decidedly literate figure of the "herborizer", armed with nothing more than a collector's bag, a notebook, some specimen bottles, desiring nothing more than a few peaceful hours alone with the bugs and flowers" (2008:26).

characterized by detailed descriptions of the landscape, with “strongly visual and analytic” language but no reference to human presence (2008: 50). “[P]eople seem to disappear from the garden as Adam approaches – which, of course, is why he can walk around as he please and name things after himself and his friends back home” (2008: 5). Africa as wild, sparsely inhabited and rich in resources was popularized through this master narrative. Not surprisingly, “the systematization of nature coincide[d] with the height of the slave trade, the plantation system, colonial genocide in North America and South Africa, [and] slave rebellions in the Andes, the Caribbean, North American” despite the projected innocence of the ‘objective’ naturalist (Pratt, 2008: 35).¹⁵⁰

Thirdly, the ‘sentimental’ narrative emerged as a variation to ‘survivalist’ and ‘naturalist’ forms during the crises in Euro-imperialism revolving around the slavery debate.¹⁵¹ Indigenous resistance, in addition to the growth of democratic ideologies after the French Revolution, challenged the legitimacy of imperialism. Yet the demands of capital were still as strong as ever, so European powers had to create new legitimating ideologies, namely, “the civilizing mission, scientific racism and technology-based paradigms of progress and development” (Pratt, 2008: 72). Thus, through a protagonist who is constructed as non-interventionist, “European expansionism is... sanitized and mystified in the literature of sentiment... Things happen to him and he endures and survives” (Pratt, 2008: 77). The revised story about Africans is that they are capable of reciprocity and agency, but more often greed and other vices. This move strategically promotes a false sense of egalitarianism, while

¹⁵⁰ Pratt (2008:26) notes that the growth of naturalist writing is on one hand, the story of “urbanizing, industrializing Europeans fanning out in search of non-exploitive relations to nature, even as they were destroying such relations in their own centres of power.” On the other hand, it is a narrative of the way the naturalist “naturalizes the bourgeois European’s own global presence and authority” (2008:26). It also laid the groundwork for scientific racism as Linné’s classification system grew to include *homo sapiens*, which he divided into six varieties. In contrast to the description of “European”, which includes “fair...gentle, acute, inventive... governed by laws”, his description of “African” includes the adjectives “black...crafty, indolent, negligent...governed by caprice.” This naming of categories, colour and characteristics places the white European in a position of authority, and makes a decisive statement about its self – “a Utopian image of a European bourgeois subject simultaneously innocent and imperial, asserting a harmless hegemonic vision that installs no apparatus of domination” (Pratt, 2008:33).

¹⁵¹ According to Pratt (2008:69), “[T]he reimagining of the African interior in the late eighteenth century coincided with the extraordinary acceleration of the antislavery movement after 1770 and the reconception of Africans as a market rather than a commodity.”

simultaneously suggesting that the obstacles to free trade and capitalism are not European but African (Pratt, 2008: 83).¹⁵²

Thus, in each of these three examples, it can be seen that early European travelers' tales never emerged in a vacuum, but were directly linked to historic shifts, as well as political, economic, and social agendas. These factors contributed to a corpus of narratives, which continue to influence pre-trip narratives about Africa.

Study Abroad Stories: Influenced by Context and Discourse

In conversations with my participants, their pre-tour narratives about themselves and their destination emerged through answers to questions about their own expectations, as well as the perceptions of their families and friends. My participants frequently provided examples of the 'tutoring' (Strain, 2003) of their gaze and the way their study abroad choices had been prescribed for them.¹⁵³ For some students, their introduction to the master narratives about Africa and South Africa began from an early age.

My dad has always been really interested in Africa and he's on the board of the African Wildlife Foundation, so like growing up, I'd always be watching nature shows (Resp. 21, FG 5: UCT).

We've been getting National Geographic for over ten years so there's like hundreds on Africa. I read so many articles... originally I really wanted to go to Tanzania because it's considered much more wild than South Africa (Resp. 2, FG 1: SIT).

Other students noted a complete lack of prior knowledge about Africa, despite the fact that as Bruner (2005) notes, Western pop culture is full of images of "the African primitive, the

¹⁵² Rather than narrating observations of nature, the sentimentalist orientation is one of "personal experience and adventure" with the traveler as the "sentimental hero" and "central figure" of the story (Pratt, 2008: 73). The stories are filled with "human activity, interactions among the travelers themselves or with people they encounter" (2008: 74). Whereas authority for the naturalist/scientific narrator lies in detachment and objectivism, the authority for the sentimental story-teller lies in "the authenticity of somebody's felt experience" (2008: 74), which as Pratt points out is a thin cover for white European narcissism and the legitimization of private enterprise. The antagonists in the stories are always Africans, who need to be enlightened or civilized.

¹⁵³ According to 'Laura', a pre-law student studying at Villanova, her choice of study abroad was limited to where her university would let her go. "And between travel warnings and everything else, it was pretty much Cape Town was my only option in Africa" (Resp. 4, FG 2: UCT). This supports Teichler & Staube's (1991) findings, as discussed in the literature review, that study abroad programmes are very much pre-determined by the universities. According to Alison, an International Studies major at McAlister, "My mentor told me that like UCT is the best programme [in Africa]" (Resp. 17, FG 4: UCT).

Balinese island paradise, Egypt as the land of pharaohs” (22). Most respondents said they had not done much research before coming in order to “avoid coming with expectations.”¹⁵⁴ However, while I sympathize with the desire to travel without biases, their comments suggest that “the myth of demediation”¹⁵⁵ (Strain, 2003: 5) is still exerting a powerful influence. In the following pages, I will discuss the typology of pre-trip narratives that emerged from their stories and then bring these narratives into a conversation with the discourse of the early travelers’ tales discussed in the previous section.

The ‘Sad Continent’ Narrative

The first pre-trip narrative that emerges from the transcripts is the idea of Africa as homogenous, underdeveloped and needing help. Even though many of my respondents were quite conscious that too many Americans still think of Africa as a country instead of as a diverse continent, they themselves frequently conflated Africa and South Africa.¹⁵⁶ As noted by Walker & Rasamimanana (1993), this is the result of rhetorical habits and representations in the media and a systemic deficiency on the part of the American school system.¹⁵⁷

In my education, I feel like Africa is sort of a big question mark (Resp. 1, FG 1: SIT).

The only history we ever get is about the slave trade or you read ‘Heart of Darkness’ by Joseph Conrad and that’s what Africa is. Or it’s like the flies on the kid’s face in the media (Resp. 30, FG 8: SIT).

As a result, many of my respondents’ first expectation was to see a lot of poverty.

¹⁵⁴ The SIT students did have required reading. However, this was met with mixed feelings as evident in the following dialogue from my first focus group: Elise: Well, we had to read Nelson Mandela’s “Long Walk to Freedom” and “My Traitor’s Heart” also. // Ina: I didn’t do very much research otherwise though. // Melanie: I really didn’t want to. // Elise: Yeah. // Melanie: I really didn’t want to come with preconceived notions. Even after reading both of those I already felt like I had a biased perspective. // Jennie: In what way? // Melanie: I hated Afrikaners. ... I was just like ‘wow, the white South Africans, they suck.’ That was my opinion. So um, yeah, I’m glad I didn’t do too much more reading because my opinions have shifted since I’ve been here... and being here has shaped what I really think, not what I thought before (FG 1: SIT).

¹⁵⁵ The myth of demediation suggests that travel to foreign lands can cut through layers of expectation and deliver “raw and authentic experience” (Strain, 2003).

¹⁵⁶ Jennie: What were you most looking forward to for when you got here? // Melanie: Being in Africa (FG 1: SIT)

¹⁵⁷ One of my respondents became an American when she was in sixth grade. Originally from Nigeria, she describes how she struggled with the perceptions of Africa held by her teachers and classmates. She said, “They thought that everybody lived in huts, you know, that type of thing you see on TV” (Resp. 34, one-on-one: UCT).

I had this sort of idea that I would see a lot of shacks (Resp. 8, FG 3: UCT).

Such notions of poverty were coupled with a broader expectation of Africa's underdevelopment and inferiority, as emphasised by the health centre at Ellen's home university.

They thought that [condoms] were of a worse quality in all of Africa, that [Africans] were incapable of making proper condoms on the continent of Africa, so that they better give me the good American condoms before I left (Resp. 12, FG 3: UCT).

These expectations of underdevelopment and inferiority have deep roots in modernization theory, which suggests that Third World countries are "less evolved" and held back by the "shackles of tradition" (Graaff, 2001: 15).¹⁵⁸ Although academics have critiqued modernization theory, one of my respondents reiterated it so closely that it appears to still have a strong influence on ideas about Africa.

It seems like such a sad continent in a way, because it really has not grown very much over the years in terms of economic growth... [] so many problems, so many difficulties... [African] countries seem to keep relapsing into this sort of unfortunate stagnation... [] in other parts of the world it seems like there have been a lot of instances of success... Southeast Asia has grown tremendously... they've been able to leap out of the poverty that they found themselves in... not the case with Africa (Resp. 35, one-on-one: UCT).

Within this narrative framework, poverty is not connected to exploitation or colonialism, but constructed as a result of the 'fact' that Africa 'just can't get it right.' Westerners are positioned as problem-solvers and saviors.¹⁵⁹ As a result, many respondents suggested that Africa was a place where they could get in touch with their "compassionate" side (Resp. 2, FG 1: SIT) and "catch up" on their "community service" (Resp. 4, FG 2: UCT). Taken a step further, the perception of a struggling, imperfect continent was even romanticized by some respondents.

¹⁵⁸ Modernization theory is "a quite explicit attempt to construct a justification for the Western, capitalist way of life" (Graaff, 2001: 14). Interestingly, the theory became popular right after World War II, which was right around the same time that study abroad really took off.

¹⁵⁹ According to Dan, a 21-year-old Sociology student from Missouri, "There's a kind of overall feeling that Africa is as a whole uncivilized almost, like this bush image... it's just very primitive, it hasn't modernized on the curve up to the standards of everyone else. Kind of in need of saving from the first world... I think the agency of Africans... is discounted largely by the world... if we don't save them, nothing's going to happen... we're going to have to teach them how to do everything 'cause they can't do it for themselves."

Everything [in the United States] operates to a certain level. There are standards for everything... nothing goes unchecked, unnoticed or uncounted... I wanted to go somewhere that was going to be... just kind of like less perfect, more real and colorful... my parents hate it when I use the word 'dangerous', but like sort of dangerous... like you need to be aware and alert so you stay alive (Resp. 20, FG 5, UCT).

Thus, the pre-tour narrative of an underdeveloped Africa is closely linked to another narrative – the notion of Africa as a dangerous place. For many study abroad students, that ‘danger’ appears to be part of the allure, as well as something they and their parents fear.

The ‘Don’t Get AIDS’ Narrative

Along with notions of underdevelopment, the idea of Africa as a dangerous place was also one of the most frequently occurring pre-trip narrative in my interviews, coming up again and again in the warning the students received before leaving home:

‘Be careful. It’s Africa. It’s so dangerous’ (Resp. 21, FG 5: UCT).

‘Don’t have sex in Africa. You’re going to get AIDS.’ (Resp. 12, FG 3: UCT).

‘Have you been reading the news? Do you know how dangerous it is over there?’ (Resp. 22, FG 6: UCT).

‘Don’t get shot and don’t get AIDS.’ (Resp. 25, FG 6: UCT).

‘Don’t get mugged.’ (Resp. 24, FG 6: UCT).

Many of my respondents reported these pre-tour warnings lightly and usually dismissed them with the general lack of knowledge among Americans about Africa and South Africa.

They have no clue at all about anything in South Africa (Resp. 10, FG 3: UCT).

They had no idea what they were talking about (Resp. 12, FG 3: UCT).

However, many students had serious concerns about safety:

I was actually afraid of being mugged. I actually ran through my mind what I was going to say to the mugger that I was expecting to meet on the street (Resp. 35, one-on-one: UCT).

South Africa is the rape capital of the world (Resp. 8, FG 3: UCT).

Some students picked up these anxieties through statistics they had heard. Others through talking to South African ex-pats in the United States:

I knew a lot of kids growing up who were from South Africa... They would all say that they, you know, missed it, but that the crime was just terrible. And they would have horror stories about that (Resp. 9, FG 3, UCT).¹⁶⁰

Bringing these concerns into context, Godzich (2006) suggests there is a general anxiety in the United States about the outside world. He argues that even five years after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, life in the United States is still characterized by fear, which has endured not by accident but through the rhetoric of the Bush administration (2000-2008) and the media. The influence of visual images was confirmed by one of my focus groups, as they referenced recent films like *Blood Diamond*, *Hotel Rwanda* and *Last King of Scotland*:

Melissa: ... a lot of people I talked to didn't really know a lot about South Africa. They just went to the images in their minds that you see on TV of Africa and like third world countries and like wars and violence... []

Ellen: Projected over the entire continent.

Molly: And disability. Unhappy, insecure people. And like... starving people.

Melissa: Corruption.

John: It seems like everyone's... trying to say like Africa needs to be saved from itself (FG 3: UCT).

In this dialogue, my respondents suggest that the pre-tour narrative of a dangerous continent includes physical dangers (disease, crime, war, starvation), as well as emotional instability and moral hazards (corruption). Like the previous narrative of an underdeveloped Africa, this positions the United States in a relationship of either staying far away or coming to save.¹⁶¹ For some, as noted by Mathers (2006), it even generates a sense of excitement and adventure:

¹⁶⁰ Another student said, "I met a white South African who [told me]... to make sure that the bolts on the outside of my house were irreversible because people take the bolts out from the outside and then can get in that way. You know, these kind of things that were pretty extreme... and obviously that made me very worried. It was like – ok, he lived there so he should know" (Resp. 3, FG 1: SIT).

¹⁶¹ John noted that this narrative generated very different emotions depending on the audience. When he told friends and family he was coming to Africa, the older ones "freaked out", while younger people were "so excited" (Resp. 10, FG 3: UCT).

My friend who went to Namibia actually told me – ‘You should get mugged just to have the experience. It’s the Africa experience’. ... He’s like – ‘Get mugged. It’s a good experience’ (Resp. 30, FG 8: SIT).¹⁶²

This notion of a dangerous adventure as an essentially ‘African’ experience is closely linked to the next dominant narrative that emerged from my respondents’ stories – the ‘Last Wild Place on Earth’ narrative.

The ‘Last Wild Place on Earth’ Narrative

Like the ‘Sad Continent’ and ‘Don’t Get AIDS’ narratives, the ‘Last Wild Place on Earth’ narrative also promotes a notion of Africa as a homogenous whole with little variation. However, rather than emphasising negative images of Africa, this pre-tour narrative promotes ideas of “exotic” differences, “amazing” sights and a “wild continent” that is “stuck in time”.¹⁶³

I’ve always wanted to come to Africa... you know, that image of it being so exotic... I’ve always heard amazing things so I think that just continued my fascination (Resp. 27, FG 7: SIT).

Like going on safari, carriers of this narrative view themselves as ‘just passing through’ or as ‘getting away’ from their normal lives.

Leave life for six months and go off to Africa. ... just move for six months to something completely new and different and try it and just see what it’s like, see what happens (Resp. 25, FG 6: UCT).

Travel becomes a commodity, and the more a location is perceived as wild and different, the more awe it inspires. According to many of my respondents, ‘going to Africa’ won them a lot of attention before they even left home.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Unfortunately, Katrina and four of her friends did get mugged and it wasn’t a good experience. However, the danger narrative is so powerful that one of the other girls on her programme admitted to Katrina that she was “kind of jealous” that they had been mugged and she hadn’t (Resp. 30, FG 8: SIT).

¹⁶³ “Africa was this sort of strange place that was sort of stuck in time... it was this place where things were different” (Resp. 35, one-on-one: UCT). Note that this respondent even uses past tense to refer to Africa.

¹⁶⁴ There was one exception. Katrina reported that at her university going to Africa is no big deal. “It’s so normalized [at] my university. So many people go to Africa... so I always find it really interesting when people get like such extreme reactions because I didn’t experience that at all” (Resp. 30, FG 8: 2007). Notice,

A lot of people were really impressed (Resp. 2, FG 1: SIT).

Like – ‘Wow, you’re doing something so unique! ... You’re taking a risk, versus going somewhere in Europe (Resp. 32, FG 8: SIT).

For other students, their trip was as much about making a point to themselves, as it was to earn the badge of having ‘been there’.

I think it was just to prove that I could do it... like nobody believed that I was coming here... it was like something so out of my element (Resp. 4, FG2: UCT).

It really is about independence. It’s about coming over and finding out who you are and like doing something, like doing something big (Resp. 31, FG 8: SIT).

These comments echo the notions of travel as a rite of passage and Nash’s (1978) self-realisation, but require a site of extreme difference for the independence of the “modern individual”. The pre-tour narrative of difference and adventure is thus closely linked to the growth of travel to *developing* countries in the past few decades, and the move away from mass tourism.¹⁶⁵

According to Urry (2002: 57), the increase in travel to developing countries, “such as ‘game tourism’ in Kenya, ‘ethnic tourism’ in Mexico, and ‘sports tourism’ in Gambia”, is not simply the result of internal factors in these and other countries. Rather, the rise in such travel results from many external developments and conditions, including technological change, developments in capital and desires for isolation (Urry, 2002).¹⁶⁶ An interesting consequence

however, that the reference is still to Africa as a homogenous location, rather than references to the specific countries visited.

¹⁶⁵ As noted by Sara, a 20-year-old Cultural Geography student from New York, the travel options available to her generation are very different than they were 30 years ago: “We’re 20, 21, I don’t know, people want to do something... for a lot of us that’s what this is about, like going out and doing something. Like when you think of my parents’ generation, like at this time, like they were traveling out to California... and that was huge. For us, it’s like, you know, we’re flying... and going places” (Resp. 31, FG 8: SIT).

¹⁶⁶ More specifically, these include: “Technological changes such as cheap air travel and computerized booking systems; developments in capital including the growth of worldwide hotel groups (Ramada), travel agencies (Thomas Cook), and personal finance organizations (American Express); the widespread pervasion of the ‘romantic’ gaze so that more and more people wish to isolate themselves from the existing patterns of mass tourism; the increased fascination of the developed world with the cultural practices of less developed societies; the development of the tourist as essentially a ‘collector’ of places often gazed upon and experienced on the surface; the emergence of a powerful metropolitan lobby concerned to promote the view that tourism has a major development potential” (Urry, 2002: 57).

of the ‘romantic’ notion of isolation is that many students perceive study abroad as one of the few ways that they can come to Africa safely, since it is “*such as ordeal to get here*” (Resp. 20, FG 5: UCT). Many suggested it will most likely be their one and only time in Africa.¹⁶⁷

Although in other contexts the world is perceived as getting smaller and smaller due to globalization, this narrative (supported by the material interests of the tourism industry) relies on the notion of extreme distance, remoteness and total difference from Western trappings.¹⁶⁸ Thus, while many of my respondents were aware that Cape Town is a large, modern city, the pre-tour narrative of Africa as “wild” and “uncivilized” still came up frequently.

I had a friend who kind of laughed about it, he joked, he said – Yeah, you should find yourself a nice tribal woman there (Resp. 35, one-on-one: UCT).

Wild animals running around everywhere (Resp. 3, FG 1: SIT).

What I expected was when my sister was in South America, she was like – none of the girls on the programme wear make-up... it's outdoorsy clothes, that's the way the country works (Resp. 30, FG 8: SIT).

While many students continue to rely on the outdated images of the ‘Last Wild Place on Earth’ narrative, others carry with them a different pre-trip narrative in resistance to being viewed as a tourist.¹⁶⁹ The ‘Roots of Humanity’ narrative conjures images of Africa as an anthropological site, with the students playing the roles of ethnographers, journalists and documentarians.

¹⁶⁷ I had thought about going to a Spanish speaking country... but then I kind of figured that I might end up going to one of those countries like as a vacation sometime and I didn't know if I would ever come to Africa on my own later (Resp. 19, FG 4: UCT).

¹⁶⁸ The expectations around this idea of Africa are so strong that many of my respondents expressed great disappointment that Cape Town wasn't ‘African’ enough. “I was actually really, really surprised by Cape Town when I got here... It was a lot more Western and I felt like I was in Europe almost or like I could still be in America. I was a little disappointed to be honest... because it didn't seem like that African or like different, you know” (Resp. 13, FG 3: 2007).

¹⁶⁹ One or two respondents were also critical of their own buy-in to the “Last Wild Place on Earth” narrative: “I wonder how much of my mentality was a very colonial mentality. Like this mentality that um, Africa was backwards” (Resp. 32, FG 8: SIT).

The 'Roots of Humanity' Narrative

Although there are still references to a homogenous Africa in the 'Roots of Humanity' narrative, adherents to this narrative take pride in their fascination and knowledge of a particular country or feature of Africa. Similar to the previous narrative, they are also looking for difference but often in the areas of politics, culture or history. Rather than arriving in search of adventure, students claimed to be in search of a first-hand experience, a place to experience the culture and a chance to study it for themselves.

Michael: Africa was always the continent I wanted to visit just because there's a lot of culture there. ...

Jennie: Did you have like a particular goal in mind for yourself in coming?

Michael: Just to separate myself from tourist stuff, tourist attractions. I mean I don't mind doing it, but I just really want to focus on like assimilating to the culture (Resp. 23, FG 6: UCT).

Frequently using the word 'always', carriers of this narrative rhetorically establish their authority over tourists, as if this is a timeless interest that does not need to be examined for its origins, motives or expectations.¹⁷⁰ Many noted their previous travels to other countries as additional credentials, and positioned themselves as objective witnesses, traveling to "random", off-the-beaten-track places without the common Western baggage.¹⁷¹

I've always been very interested in Africa as a continent... as like the roots of so many things, the roots of humanity, the roots of all kinds of dance... I just wanted to go and be there, as like the starting point or whatever (Resp. 1, FG 1: SIT).

South Africa is seen as an exceptional case within the 'Roots of Humanity' narrative.¹⁷² Its differences from the United States were also emphasized.

¹⁷⁰ I've always had such a draw to Africa and I really can't tell you exactly why. Mainly because it's kind of this big dark area that I just never knew anything about (Resp. 3, FG 1: SIT).

¹⁷¹ "I knew I wanted to come to Africa. I was like dead set on that... I've been to England and it was not at all the cultural push that I wanted... I hadn't been to Africa yet, and I was just fascinated by the culture and wanted to know a lot more about it, rather than just take as a fact like the Western representation of Africa... People were not that surprised that I was going to Africa... like somehow I've gotten a reputation for wanting to go to random places" (Resp. 6, FG 2: UCT).

¹⁷² According to Ina, she chose "South Africa in particular because I'm an anthropology major and really interested in this whole post-apartheid era and this whole transformation that is happening here that has never happened anywhere else in the whole world and probably never will and I was just fascinated by that... I

It's just so much more interesting and complicated and rich I'd say than the United States, where you know like there was a time when we pretty much had a make it or break it history but it seems so long ago (Resp. 20, FG 5, UCT).

I had my professors referring to it as like the motherland (Resp. 7, FG 2: UCT).

'Rainbow Nation', like this idea of like perfection, this was something that I perceived about South Africa (Resp. 30, FG 8: SIT).

While some respondents spoke as if they were already experts on South Africa, others acknowledged that their interest is a direct result of the lack of information in the United States about South Africa and Africa.¹⁷³ Thus, the increasing number of American students coming to South Africa with the pre-tour orientation of ethnographer and academic could be related to the increased pressure at universities to generate students who are globally knowledgeable (NAFSA, 2007; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1958).¹⁷⁴

While no one can deny the importance of encouraging cross-cultural sensitivity, only one or two of my respondents reflected critically on the subtext – the protection of American power, wealth and security through knowledge of ‘the other’:

We've pushed Americans out into the world to supposedly understand other countries and like benefit somewhat, but who's benefiting and how's it affecting where? (Resp. 30, FG 8: SIT).

wanted to witness that” (Resp. 3, FG 1: SIT). According to Dan, “This is such a unique social situation in the world... I wanted to get in here. Access as a student in South Africa is very different than access as like a tourist, you know, accessing the culture and the people... I'm making a documentary and there's so many stories to tell in South Africa (Resp. 7, FG 2: UCT).

¹⁷³ “Even like pre-’94, I know I was only like five or six years old, but I never remember my family talking about the whole apartheid situation, Nelson Mandela... I was just kind of surprised about that because it was like such a huge international issue with the sanctions and everything like that... I guess there isn't usually a lot of press on Africa in general in the U.S. so it shouldn't be so surprising” (Resp. 17, FG 4: UCT).

¹⁷⁴ “The challenges we face as a nation today are undeniably global in nature. We can no longer afford to be complacent about our lack of knowledge of the world,” states NAFSA, The Association of International Educators (2007). As noted in the introduction of this dissertation, NAFSA is behind a national initiative to send one million American students abroad every year. This appears to be based on old study abroad theories (like Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1958), which promote the idea that: “Students who live and learn in countries and cultures other than their own gain important global competencies and cross-cultural sensitivities that enable them to acclimate in a global climate of constant change... [acquiring] global knowledge that we will need as a nation to exercise responsible global leadership, and to remain prosperous and secure” (NAFSA, 2007).

The fact that the United States has become a culture of consumers (Schor, 2004) makes this question even more troubling, especially when study abroad locations begin being defined in consumer terms as emerged in another pre-tour narrative – ‘Africa Light’.

The ‘Africa Light’ Narrative – ‘It’s Everything You Want’

While the previous four pre-trip narratives dealt with images of Africa broadly, with a few references to South Africa, the “Africa Light”¹⁷⁵ narrative focuses specifically on the idea of South Africa as being different from the rest of Africa. Notably, this idea does not dislodge all the other perceptions of Africa, but rather reinforces them, since South Africa is seen as the ‘safe’ version of Africa. It also re-centers the West and whiteness as superior, since South Africa’s safety is perceived to lie in the fact that it is “more Western” and has “more white people” than other African countries.¹⁷⁶

In addition, the rhetoric of “picking a place” positions the Western self as a consumer in relation to the rest of the world, and is encouraged by invitations to: “Choose from 35 countries and over 40 subject areas” (<http://www.ciee.org>). According to my respondent Darren:

Studying abroad is definitely seen as going off and having a good time by a lot of people... you can do stuff that isn’t that expensive but still live really well, and the world kind of is your playground... for us, Cape Town is one geographic choice among many... everything outside of the United States is an option (Resp. 25, one-on-one: UCT).

Farley (1996) suggests that economic opportunities (a shift away from rural America and towards city living) and the search for amenities (newer, more spacious homes and coastal living in warmer regions) have been two of the biggest factors influencing where Americans choose to live in the last few decades. It is likely that these have an influence on study abroad

¹⁷⁵ This was coined by one of my respondents (Resp. 29, FG 7: SIT) as a play on words alluding to Coke Light, the de-cafeinated version of Coke, which many Americans would say is not real Coke.

¹⁷⁶ This perception exists among African-Americans as well, as recounted to me by Shana, a 21-year old Political Science major from Chicago, who described her home city as “probably the most segregated city” in the United States. “My friend Elaine goes – Um, aren’t you scared to go to South Africa? I’m like – ‘No.’ And then she was like – ‘Yeah, you’re right. There are white people there, so you shouldn’t be scared’” (Resp. 28, FG 7: SIT). As another example, Kelly received the following counsel: “Pick a place that’s Western enough that you feel comfortable but also has enough of its own culture that you’re getting a very different experience from other students that study abroad” (Resp. 29, FG 7: SIT).

choices as well. As the epitome of ‘Africa Light’, Cape Town is seen as offering the best of both worlds.¹⁷⁷

They said it was amazing. That you could get anything you want here (Resp. 7, FG 2: UCT).

Cape Town was a good compromise towards... doing something a little more adventurous than going to London for example, but at the same time giving me a country full of English speakers and a certain level of creature comforts (Resp. 25, FG 6: UCT).¹⁷⁸

While many of my respondents were upfront about their desire for comfort, some were concerned about being viewed as taking the easy way out. This reveals what happens when different pre-tour narratives clash with each other, for example, comfort (‘Africa Light’) clashing with hardship (‘The Sad Continent’) or ethnography (‘The Roots of Humanity’).

One of the reasons that I actually didn’t want to come to South Africa is ‘cause I really wanted to be exposed to like the poverty and whatnot and I thought that I wouldn’t get that here (Resp. 17, FG 4: UCT).

I felt guilty kind of for going to South Africa when I could have gone to like a less developed country (Resp. 26, FG 7: SIT).

You get the reaction where it’s like South Africa is not real Africa (Resp. 27, FG 7: SIT).

One student resolved this conflict by viewing his time in South Africa as a much-deserved respite from his time volunteering in other more ‘challenging’ places.

I enjoy going to less privileged, developing nations, but I was like – Well, I’ve been in India for three months. To me, South Africa was kind of like a... well, it’s not as big a challenge because I knew that it was more developed, so I was like – Well, I’ve been someplace that’s less wealthy for three months, I can treat myself to being someplace that won’t be as demanding or as different (Resp. 36, one-on-one: SIT).

¹⁷⁷ “I knew that [South Africa] had parts that were real kind of wild and then other parts that were like Cape Town. Obviously it’s more Westernized and modern” (Resp. 22, FG 6: UCT).

¹⁷⁸ A surprising number of my respondents reported choosing South Africa because they would be able to speak English. Apparently their motivations for coming are again quite different from NAFSA’s vision that, “Through their experiences abroad, students also hone essential foreign-language skills through cultural immersion unavailable in their campus classrooms” (2007).

But what characterizes difference and sameness? Who determines authenticity or what is 'real'? The 'Africa Light' narrative highlights the clash going on for students between their habits as comfort-seeking consumers and the need to prove that they've 'been there, done that'.¹⁷⁹

The 'Coming Home' Narrative

In contrast to the 'Africa Light' narrative, the 'Coming Home' narrative tells a very different story about Africa and its visitors. Africa is a familiar place, rather than being sad, dangerous or exotic. This narrative was not one of the dominant ones in my transcripts, but just as important to mention because of its contrast to the others.

For Leya, a Nigerian who moved to the United States when she was 13 years old, Africa is a place of familiarity and studying in Cape Town was a home-coming to the continent.

I just couldn't wait to come back... and honestly, as soon as I got here I felt at home... I felt like – This is me. ... I don't know how to explain it, but that comfort, the people... you know, you can easily relate to (Resp. 34, one-on-one: UCT).

Similarly, Ruby had been to South Africa before to do work at the Cradle of Humankind. She came back with the desire to help a professor at UCT who was working on a big research project.¹⁸⁰ Joy's grandmother and mother were born in South Africa. Although her mother had never been back, Joy said:

... it had always been like something just kind of cool and different about my mom... like people would say something about South Africa and I would be like – 'Oh yeah, you know, my mom...' but I didn't really know anything about it. I had never taken a class on African history (Resp. 26, FG 7: SIT).

¹⁷⁹ Bruner (2005), a postmodern anthropologist who shies away from binaries, also appears to be caught in this clash as he unknowingly defends the binary of 'hard' versus 'soft' experience. He writes, "I have done hard ethnography – living in villages without electricity, running water, or sanitary facilities; speaking a foreign language; confronting political turmoil; suffering tropical diseases – but as I get older, I become more appreciative of upscale travel and of making ethnographic observations from a more comfortable setting" (Bruner, 2005:29). However, if "hard ethnography" involves lack of facilities, speaking a foreign language and suffering hardships, as Bruner suggests, then it removes 'peaceful', 'developed', 'first world' countries as possible ethnographic sites. This binary re-establishes the West as the centre and contradicts Bruner's rather naïve suggestion that "tourist" and "native" can change locations.

¹⁸⁰ Several months after Ruby returned to the United States, she contacted me to tell me that she was applying to do her postgraduate work at UCT. She followed through her plan and was also reunited with her South African boyfriend upon moving back in July, 2008.

However, despite her lack of prior knowledge, Joy found an unexpected sense of homecoming in South Africa and reported being particularly touched by the hospitality she experienced. In contrast to her experience, and the broader ‘Coming Home’ narrative, many of my other respondents had clear expectations of belonging or not belonging in South Africa due to the final pre-trip narrative that I will discuss – the ‘Race’ narrative.

The ‘Race’ Narrative

There were several different sub-narratives about ‘race’ that emerged in my transcripts. Despite the fact that each one contains different ideas about race in Africa and South Africa, they share some of the same assumptions, particularly in terms of the reliance on discrete categories Foster (1991) mentions.

For Sherri, a 21-year-old Sociology and Africana Studies major from Washington, coming to South Africa meant a chance to be in the majority for a little while. However, the perception of Africa as being all ‘black’ was challenged when she arrived in Cape Town.

For me the intention was to be around black people, so I wanted to go somewhere where I was in the majority for a little bit... [but] Cape Town is a lot more not [black] than I thought. I guess the problem was that I had just gotten back from Ghana, so I was taking my experience of Ghana and like what that meant to be in Africa... and I thought it would be somewhat similar to coming here (Resp. 11, FG 3: UCT).

While it is still quite common for people to equate ‘black’ people with Africa, some of my ‘white’ respondents had the opposite expectation of South Africa.

I was very naïve to a lot of things about South Africa, mainly demographics... we’re driving in Johannesburg when we first get there... and I’m like – ‘Everyone is black, like I’m actually a minority here’ ... I had this idea that there were lots of white people in South Africa (Resp. 30, FG 8: SIT).

Mia, a 21-year-old Chinese-American from Kansas, was also surprised by the demographics.

I was very surprised by the amount of the Indian population or Asian population here... coming here and recognizing – wow, this isn’t as isolated as a place as I had assumed it to be (Resp. 32, FG 8: SIT).

Her comment reveals a common assumption within this pre-tour narrative – that isolation equals not finding people who match your demographic. Another student admitted she had been counting on her ‘whiteness’ to attract the attention of ‘white’ South African guys.

I kind of for some reason thought that I'd come here and since essentially like I look the same as all the white South Africans, I thought that [it] would be like... you know, like freshman year all over again, kind of like getting hit on by all these older guys on campus (Resp. 20, FG 5: UCT).

Thus, just as early European travelers’ tales were constructed around notions of ‘race’, Sherri, Mia and Andrea’s expectations reveal the persistence of this sub-narrative within the current narratives about Africa, South Africa and the United States.

Pre-trip Narratives: A Conversation between Stories Then and Stories Now

To summarize, I first looked at three types of master narratives identified by Pratt (2008) in early European travelers’ tales of the 1500’s to 1800’s:

- The Survivalist narrative;
- The Naturalist narrative;
- The Sentimentalist narrative.

I then looked at seven pre-trip narratives that emerged in my interviews with study abroad students in 2007:

- The ‘Sad Continent’ narrative;
- The ‘Don’t Get AIDS’ narrative;
- The ‘Last Wild Place on Earth’ narrative;
- The ‘Roots of Humanity’ narrative;
- The ‘Africa Light’ narrative;
- The ‘Coming Home’ narrative;
- The ‘Race’ narrative.

For the sake of space, I will not be able to compare these at length. However, there are some key similarities and differences that I want to point out.

First, the survivalist narrative's concentration on hardship, danger and 'the exotic' finds a striking parallel with the 'Last Wild Place on Earth' (adventure) narrative and the 'Don't Get AIDS' (danger) narrative. However, where as the 16th century explorers truly were exploring regions completely unknown to them, most of the adventure and danger anticipated by study abroad students is constructed by the media and the tourism industry. Even though they would still like to tell stories of survival, this clashes with the 'Africa Light' narrative, which suggests that they can have the best of both worlds (adventure and comfort) but at a price. Apparently, only particular types of experiences will be judged by audiences back home as truly authentic and 'real'.

Second, the naturalist narrative's analytical, objective approach shares some similarities with the "Roots of Humanity" (anthropologist) narrative. While the 17th century naturalist may have been collecting plant specimens, the study abroad students are collecting stories, photographs and cultural experiences. They are somewhat less detached than the naturalist from the presence of people in the environment, but still take on an objective tone to re-assert their authority. In the eyes of NAFSA, study abroad students are also playing the role of knowledge-collectors for their nation, just as naturalists were supporting the wealth and power of their home countries by categorizing and supplying information about far off lands. The 'Coming Back' narrative challenges this orientation by asserting a variety of subjective relationships with Africa and South Africa that don't attempt categorization but simply enter into the familiarity of everyday life.

Third, the sentimentalist narrative, with its motives to protect the status quo of Western superiority while appearing egalitarian, finds commonalities with the 'Sad Continent' narrative. Both support the notion that the only thing standing in Africa's way is its own stubbornness or stagnation. The innocent Westerner comes only to help and find reciprocity. The reliance of the sentimentalist on scientific racism mirrors the 'Race' narrative as well, where racial categories are still firmly in place. However, these assumptions appear to be called into question more quickly for study abroad students than they were in Europe in the 18th century. It is these disjunctures, the moments when expectations are challenged and pre-tour narratives unsettled, that I will now turn to in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Disjunctures for ‘Embodied’ Narratives

Given the authority of the pre-tour narratives as constructed by the tourism industry and embedded in Western discourse, what can tourists¹⁸¹ learn on a tour that is new, and what are their responses to the master narratives? (Bruner, 2005: 23)

I didn't realize what expectations I was bringing in... until they were broken (Resp. 26, FG 7: SIT).

As discussed in Chapter 5, all travelers and study abroad students carry with them expectations and master narratives about themselves and about their destinations. However, as observed in the comment above, sometimes they only become aware of the existence and nature of these pre-trip narratives when these are challenged during the lived experience of the trip. This often results in a crisis of meaning, since as Bruner (2005) points out, “Narratives make meaning... in itself experience is inchoate without an ordering narrative, for it is the story, the telling, that makes sense of it all, and the story is how people interpret their journey and their lives” (20).

When ordering narratives are disrupted, it can open up the door for a re-awakening to new possibilities or it can cause a traveler to retreat back into the pre-trip narrative even more convinced that this prior interpretation of the world is the ‘truest’. Thus, it is important to explore what these disjunctures¹⁸² look like (and what effect they can have) by examining the travelers’ ‘embodied narratives’ – the trip as lived, the stories told in ‘real-time’, the experience as it is happening.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ And study abroad students or any travelers.

¹⁸² By ‘disjunctures’ I mean the moments where there is a separation or disconnect in meaning. ‘Disjuncture’ is a variation of the word ‘disjunction’, which means “a difference between two things that you would expect to be in agreement with each other” according to the Oxford Dictionary. It is a disruption or dislocation of the “discursive order” of someone’s tale (Pratt, 2008: 65) or a moment of “epistemological vertigo” (Hoare, 1994). In focus groups, where fantasy chain reactions are what often energize and unite the group, disjunctures often cause disagreement or moments of uncertainty. They are moments that result in questions, when it becomes apparent to the discourse analyst (and sometimes to the teller) that certain types of narratives are not neutral but do have political, relational and ethical implications.

¹⁸³ To tap into these stories, I asked my respondents about key moments during their study abroad experience – the story of their first day in Cape Town, the story of their most memorable day, the stories of where they lived and who they met. With transcripts full of stories, I then chose some of the most telling moments, where the ‘disjunctures’ are most clear, while I still remained aware that these were but glimpses into much longer and more complicated narratives. I have tried to use longer excerpts in this chapter to capture more of the context and character of the story-tellers. Yet even so I am very aware that even these aren’t able to tell their whole stories. Bruner (2005) provides some reassurance that this is actually unavoidable. “Among scholars

Like any sensory experience, the trip as lived and told is an act of cultural production and performance (Bruner, 2005).¹⁸⁴ Thus, the embodied narratives that emerge may “embellish, privatize and transform the master narrative” simply because of “the sheer materiality of being there” (2005: 24). Additionally, from the moment a traveler arrives, this production and performance is already linked to visions of post-trip tellings. As noted by Bruner, “The quest for stories changes the experience of the tour, for the tourists are not just living in the moment, but are directing their actions toward encounters that will form the basis of future stories” (2005: 24).

Chapter 7 will explore the nature of post-trip stories. However, for the remainder of Chapter 6, I will first look at a few of the disjunctures experienced by the writers of early European travelers’ tales. I will then explore particular stories told by my study abroad respondents which reveal the moments when they are forced to challenge or re-affirm the pre-trip narratives through interpretations of their lived experience in South Africa.

Early Travelers’ Tales: Disjunctures

In the midst of the tightly crafted construction of ‘certain kinds of imperial selves’ in early travelers’ tales (Bivona, 1998; Pratt, 2008), there came moments when the ordering narratives of the travelers’ tales broke down in their ability to provide coherent meaning. Whereas I discussed broad types of narratives in the previous chapter, I will look here at specific stories within these narrative types – moments when particular European and American explorers and travelers embodied the narratives and negotiated experiences of disjuncture.

The first disjuncture that rose strikingly out of an early traveler’s tale was a moment in time where the unsavory implications of ‘naturalist’ writing were exposed through an intrusion into the private lives of the local inhabitants of the Cape Colony.¹⁸⁵ John Barrow came to the

of narrativity, there is wide agreement that no story could possibly encompass the entire trip as lived or experienced as there are always omissions, distortions, and condensations, and in any case, to tell the entire story would take as long as the trip” (2005: 20).

¹⁸⁴ “To perform the site is to inscribe the pre-tour narrative within the body of the tourist...to transform a pre-existing tourist tale from an abstract text into an embodied narrative, a somatic experience” (Bruner, 2005: 24).

¹⁸⁵ As we are reminded by Pratt (2008): “The conspicuous innocence of the naturalist... acquires meaning in relation to an assumed guilt of conquest, a guilt the naturalist figure eternally tries to escape, and

Cape in 1797 to “establish a sense of the British presence among both Afrikaner and indigenous populations, and to document the ‘face of the country’” (Pratt, 2008: 57).¹⁸⁶ However, in one striking departure from the naturalist’s removed style, Barrow is overcome by a desire to see the !Kung in their “uncolonized ‘natural’ state” (Pratt, 2008: 65).¹⁸⁷ “In the name of seeing,” Barrow hires some Afrikaner farmers to descend on a !Kung village at night, armed with guns and horses but “on Barrow’s condition that no one fire unless fired upon” (65). However, the commandant fires upon the kraal and Barrow’s resulting narration reveals the disjuncture.

Our ears were shocked by a horrid scream... the shrieking of women and the cries of women proceeded from every side... I certainly had seen neither arrows nor people, but had heard enough to pierce the hardest heart (Barrow, 1806: 228).

The differences between this excerpt and Barrow’s usual commentary are numerous. It is the only recording of direct dialogue, the only time Barrow describes himself as a participant, the only “outburst of emotion,”¹⁸⁸ the only time he documents violence and “one of the few scenes where people and place coincide” (Pratt, 2008: 65). In that profound moment, “the ideology that construes seeing as inherently passive and curiosity as innocent cannot be sustained, and Barrow’s discursive order breaks down” (Pratt, 2008: 65).¹⁸⁹

eternally invokes, if only to distance himself from it once again. Even though the travelers were witnessing the daily realities of the contact zone, even though the institutions of expansionism made their travels possible, the *discourse* of travel that natural history produces, and is produced by, turns on a great longing: for a way of taking possession without subjugation and violence” (56).

¹⁸⁶ Carrying out this last point in true naturalist fashion, Barrow’s narrative is made up almost completely of descriptions of the landscape and natural features of the region, with hardly any reference to human presence or “the history that motivates [his] presence and determines his itinerary” (Pratt, 2008: 58).

¹⁸⁷ The !Kung (better known by their colonial label – “Bushmen”) had been persecuted so greatly by the colonists that they had retreated to more and more remote regions. Thus, the only way to make contact with them was to actually invade their communities (Pratt, 2008).

¹⁸⁸ Barrow winds up in a confessional mode: “Nothing,” he later says, “could be more unwarrantable, because cruel and unjust, than the attack made by our party upon the kraal” (Pratt, 2008: 65, citing Barrow, 1801).

¹⁸⁹ After such a dramatic encounter, one might expect that this disjuncture would fundamentally change Barrow’s orientation to the world around him. However, as suggested by Pratt, “a confessional mode” does not necessarily indicate transformation. “Barrow’s loss of innocence produces no new self, no new relations of speech. His descent into colonial hell would be repeated many times by writers to follow” (Pratt, 2008: 66). However, the fact that he does include this story in his narration reveals to the conscientious reader that there are fault lines in the pre-trip narrative. “Only through the guilty act of conquest (invasion) can the innocent act of the anti-conquest (seeing) be carried out” (Pratt, 2008: 65).

Secondly, Falconbridge's *Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone* (1794)¹⁹⁰ and Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796)¹⁹¹ illustrate disjunctures in the sentimental paradigm.¹⁹² Falconbridge's disjuncture occurs when she unexpectedly witnesses abuse at a slave-yard and among disillusioned colonists, despite the supposed influence of local abolitionists.¹⁹³ "Her gaze reveals not the Utopias of the anti-conquest but dystopias of exploitation and neglect, the more disturbing because they are the results of humanitarianism" (Pratt, 2008: 102). Sadly, but perhaps not surprisingly, her overall conclusion is in favour of slavery, as a better alternative to the hypocrisy she witnessed among abolitionists. Thus, although Falconbridge's disjunctures challenged the narrative norms they didn't completely displace the pre-trip narrative.

In Stedman's account, we also find the typical features of a sentimentalist plot, as well as the moments of contradiction. Two aspects of his writing caused a sensation back in Europe; firstly, his "disparaging descriptions of Dutch plantation owners, idle, sadistic, and overfed", and secondly, his "idealized romance *and marriage* with the mulatta slave Joanna" (Pratt, 2008: 90). The most striking disjunctures appear around the latter. Although the descriptions of their passionate love appear idyllic, the disjuncture appears when Stedman confesses the fact that his relationship with Joanna is actually one of formal concubinage.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Falconbridge's text is unique first of all because, according to Pratt (2008), it is one of the few European travel tales about Africa written by a woman before 1850. Secondly, unlike her peers, Anna Maria Falconbridge uncovers and documents the dark underside of the 'humanitarian' endeavor, even though she also writes a story of "trials and tribulations, drawing on older traditions of survival narratives" (Pratt, 2008: 101). Accompanying her husband, a recognized abolitionist, Falconbridge arrived in West Africa in 1791 and later had to make a new life for herself when her husband died on their second voyage.

¹⁹¹ John Stedman, a Scotsman who was an officer in the Scots Brigade of the Dutch Army, went to Surinam in 1773 to volunteer in a military expedition intended to address the fact that slaves were escaping in large numbers from the colonial plantations.

¹⁹² The sentimentalist narrative, as described in Chapter 5, arose out of the abolitionist movement and promoted the innocence of European involvement in Africa and South America through the language of reciprocity.

¹⁹³ She writes, "Involuntarily I strolled to one of the windows a little before dinner, without the smallest suspicion of what I was to see – judge then what my astonishment and feelings were, at the sight of between two and three hundred victims, chained and parceled out in circles" (Falconbridge, 1794: 23).

¹⁹⁴ His confession casts doubt on the notion of the "nurturing native", which the sentimentalist model portrays as the "beneficent female figure" who is attracted to the European out of "pity, spontaneous kindness or erotic passion" (Pratt, 2008: 94). Similarly, the "dehumanizing side of [Stedman's] egalitarian and humanitarian proposal" (94) is highlighted by the fact that Joanna would rather "be one of her own class in America, than a reflection or burthen" in Europe (Stedman, 1976; cited by Pratt, 2008:94). The ability of a transracial love story to imagine worlds beyond slavery ("cultural harmony" achieved through romance) is broken down. The ideals of reciprocity and egalitarianism can't survive the material realities of eighteenth-century European imperialism. "Whether love turns out to be requited or not, whether the colonized lover is female or male, outcomes appear to

Lastly, Bivona (1998) illustrates a disjuncture for the survivalist narrative, which re-emerged with Henry M. Stanley, an Anglo-American journalist/explorer who constructs an Africa in need of “economic modernization and political centralization.”¹⁹⁵ This construction is challenged when he travels through Uganda and finds it rich in resources (Bivona, 1998). Since Europe and America’s trade agenda depends on proof of *need* in Africa, finding a “land of abundance” constitutes a disjuncture for the master narrative. However, rather than questioning the original construction, or the agenda behind it, Stanley reframes the definition of need to continue to suit Western interests.¹⁹⁶ Uganda’s abundance is framed as a hindrance to its ‘development’, because it “blinds Ugandans to the necessity of setting up extensive trading contacts with the outside world. In short, Uganda’s greatest need is to be convinced that it needs” (Bivona, 1998: 63).¹⁹⁷

Thus, from Barrow to Stanley it is evident that there were many different reactions to disjunctures for early European and American travelers. Some reacted in sincere dismay but did not challenge the system (Barrow). Others protested against the system but came to conclusions that still involve the oppression of others (Falconbridge). Others tried to romance-away the master narrative but were still products of their day (Stedman). And still others strategically revised the master narrative because there was too much materially at stake (Stanley).

be roughly the same: the lovers are separated, the European is reabsorbed by Europe, and the non-European dies an early death” (Pratt, 2008: 95).

¹⁹⁵ Stanley’s 1871 tale of his journey across Central Africa in search of Livingstone constructs “a certain kind of imperial self”, solidifies the notion of “the ownership of experience” and promotes “an Africa populated by natives given to amazed exclamations about this ‘white man’s’ (Stanley’s) practical wisdom” (Bivona, 1998: 43; with reference to Youngs, 1990). Although Stanley goes out in search of Livingstone, Bivona (1998) suggests that his difference from Livingstone marks a historic shift. “Stanley forecasts a larger historical change in Britain’s mission in Central Africa in the nineteenth century: a change from a limited commercial and missionary penetration, justified largely in moral terms during the age of “humanitarianism”... to a more aggressive exploration and search for economic opportunities prefatory to the official beginning of the “Scramble” instigated by the Congress of Berlin in 1885” (Bivona, 1998: 43).

¹⁹⁶ Stanley promoted the notion that “Africa lacks much of what Europe has: railroads, navigable rivers, the telegraph, in short the infrastructure of the modern industrial state” (Bivona, 1998: 62).

¹⁹⁷ This rhetoric seems to have had great strength. More than 80 years after Stanley, Haynes (1958) cites Gunther (1955), who wrote, “Africans want out education and techniques, mode of life and standard of living, but not our domination and exploitation... this fabulous and challenging continent is vital to the Western world not merely because it is important strategically and is packed with raw material but because it is our last frontier.”

Study Abroad Stories: Disjunctures

As with these early explorers, study abroad students also experience moments when the meaning making provided by each dominant pre-tour narratives is called into question. While the consequences may not be as closely linked to imperialist interests as some of the examples above, each disjuncture is still historically situated in a particular time and context. Some of my respondents appeared very aware of the larger implications of what their disjunctures meant, while for others these moments either raised a fleeting question mark or were explained away. In all cases, however, these moments of connection or disconnection reveal the complex process of embodying a narrative.

Disjunctures for the 'Sad Continent' Narrative

As discussed in Chapter 5, the 'Sad Continent' narrative has been influenced by modernization theory (Graaff, 2001) and the sentimentalist paradigm (Pratt, 2008). As a result, many American students come to Africa expecting poverty, but have little awareness of the historic imbalances and exploitation that brought this about. Africa is conceptualized as a needy, inferior place that is only capable of reciprocity when offered a helping hand (Pires et al., 2000).

I noticed a key disjuncture for this narrative in Joy's story about her host mother's love for Langa. In this story, Joy demonstrates how her expectations about Langa were "positively violated", or turned out better than she expected (Martin et al., 1995).

I don't think I was expecting people to want to live in the townships, you know, like I didn't really understand the idea of a township, I think maybe in my head they were all shacks... [but] the family that I stayed with in Langa definitely really showed me they loved it there (Resp. 26, FG 7: SIT).

For Joy, this disjuncture disproved the master narrative's claim that poor communities in Africa, particularly townships, are sad places with miserable people. Instead, she found contentment and a sense of community.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ However, this can be contrasted against other students' first impressions of Langa. Take Elise's story for example: "I hadn't seen pictures of townships or anything like that and I was very surprised when we went to Langa, which was our first home-stay. I just, I mean I didn't know what to expect, I didn't really know what a township really meant and so... we're driving through and we like pull off the exit and there are no white

At first glance, the glowing stories told by many SIT students about their stay in a rural village in the Eastern Cape also seem to also be functioning to disprove the ‘Sad Continent’ narrative.¹⁹⁹ However, in this case, the differences in culture, income, access to amenities, etc. – factors that could be experienced as serious disjunctures – are glossed over with overly romanticized references to their experience there, interspersed with jokes about how much they ate and slept.²⁰⁰

In a rare exception, one SIT student shared the story of a conversation she had with her host ‘sister’ during their rural home stay. In this disjuncture, Sara is forced to confront her privilege in the face of the very real challenges her ‘sister’ faces.

She wanted to know about what we do on our programme... [and so] I was showing them pictures of Cape Point and telling them how we're going to Durban and all these places... [but] she's never been outside her village, you know... talking about like how I had these opportunities to see all these places in her country that she's never even seen (Resp. 31, FG 8: SIT).

Similarly, Darren recounted an eye-opening experience in which he realized the disconnection between his numbness to stories about health crises in the news and the fact that real people are struggling with a real epidemic.

people to be seen and that I expected, just like kids running around no shoes, while there is like trash in the streets and broken glass, you know like noses running and you know what I mean, stuff like that. I was definitely sort of shocked by that. ... I mean I didn't have any particular expectations but that and also like the informal settlements were pretty surprising to me. ... I mean I expected to see a first world and a third world country all in one, which is like one of the reasons I wanted to come here but I didn't know I would be confronted on it with such close parameters” (Resp. 1, FG 1: SIT).

¹⁹⁹ Kelly: There were some students that were literally, **literally** fed seven times a day... // Joy: I've never seen so much food on a plate in my life. // Kelly: I didn't finish it... it was just like so much food. ... coffee was served pretty much continuously. // Elli: I would say a good ten times a day. // Kelly: Like [staying there] was amazing, like I loved it... I think when I go back home and think of my experience here, for some reason and I can't quite put my finger on it, but I think that week will stand out the most, just in terms of how welcoming and happy the family was to have us there, like they were just so excited... // Elli: We slept so much there too... // Kelly: Oh my god, there was so much sleeping... (FG 7: SIT)

²⁰⁰ Although there were also references to the fact that it was “a troublesome week just in terms of logistics” (referring to the lack of indoor plumbing), there was very little reference to the extent of poverty that does exist in the Eastern Cape or what sacrifices the host families were making to host and feed them. As noted by Rosaldo (1989), this lack of awareness could in part be due to the relative invisibility and dominance of middle class (white) American culture, which makes many Americans unaware of what makes them different from people who face marginalization.

We were watching a video on the HIV/AIDS epidemic and I don't know... [] It just never really seems real, maybe just because we see like so many of those videos. But after the lights came on I noticed that two people sitting a couple rows up from me were holding each other and the guy looked like he was kind of crying onto the girl's shoulder... it just... struck me (Resp. 25, FG 6: UCT).²⁰¹

This shift from a 'sad continent' to 'real people' doesn't happen for all students. In fact, many of my respondents turned the focus groups into forums for complaining about inefficiency, and as with the over-romanticisation described earlier, were missing the real disjunctures that could have proved eye-opening and educational.²⁰²

Disjunctures for the 'Don't Get AIDS' Narrative

While many study abroad students do experience heightened concerns about crime in South Africa (often noting surprise at the high walls and barbed wire 'everywhere'), they also shared moments with me when their notions about 'Africa as a dangerous place' were shaken up. For Dan, the experience of living in one of UCT's residence halls challenged the subconscious conditioning of *who* Americans are trying to keep out.

Another advantage of living in the 'res' is just the way that... we conceptualize South Africans when we're in our home, like they're living there with us as

²⁰¹ During a one-on-one, Darren talked to me for a long time about his plan to help address the high illiteracy rates in South Africa. However, the implementation of his plan was also full of disjunctures. "I tried to start a library. Am still trying to start a library at a primary school in Langa, um... which has not been easy in the slightest, um... and... (pause) has been very, very, very, very, very difficult" (Resp. 25, one-on-one, UCT). Operating from a 'problem orientated', individualist paradigm (Carbaugh, 1990), students are often under the impression that they can come in and do something big in just six months. When they are confronted by a different approach to these social concerns, they may leave feeling quite disillusioned. In another example, Lucy told me she was experiencing disconnection due to the degree of homelessness she was witnessing and becoming hardened (in contrast to the hopes of her classmates that they would learn how to be compassionate in Africa²⁰¹). "There's a lot more homeless people here than I've ever seen... they're everywhere. It's not just like in certain places... [] It's kind of hard being here, because I feel like I've become very hardened, because it's like they're always asking you for money, and it's gotten to the point where I don't even acknowledge that there's a person there" (Resp. 24, FG 6: UCT).

²⁰² For example, when I asked April to describe what differences she had observed between South Africa and the United States, she replied: "Computer's not going to work... printer's going to screw up... you're going to stand in line for an hour and a half... [] then the overall like total disorganization of the courses... [] I feel like the professors here, a lot of them are lazy... [] just the whole system, I have been frustrated. I feel like maybe it's my own arrogance, being like, you know, 'well I'm from the States and everything works good there' but on the other hand, I think if I had grown up here and this is all I knew, fine. but like our system's back home are **so** different" (Resp. 22, FG 6: UCT). There is a glimmer of an awareness on April's part that her broad judgments could be the result of ethnocentric arrogance but she doesn't dwell there long. In the end, her comments support the 'Sad Continent' narrative – 'it's true, things don't work in Africa'.

opposed to we're trying to keep them out... I have friends who live in houses and I mean they lock their gates to keep out everyone that's not American (Resp. 7, FG 2: UCT).

Katrina's moment of disjuncture was quite different. Rather than feeling safer than she expected, a mugging did happen. In the following excerpt, she wrestles with the disjuncture of ignoring her cues versus trying not to stereotype people. In addition, she realizes that in contrast to the notion that crime is just a 'normal' part of life 'in Africa', it can never be normalized.

I was ignoring all of my cues... I watched these two groups of young guys walk in front of us, look at each other, kind of these looks, not speaking... and then keep walking, and I was like – 'Katrina, you're stereotyping people, you're pegging people, quit doing it.' [] Then about five minutes later... all these things happened all at once...

[Later] I had like a panic attack... and when I went in to the doctor, 'cause I didn't know what was up, I mentioned a variety of factors... but the thing that the doctor brought up was the mugging incident and she said – 'in South Africa, it's normalized but it's not normal, it's not right and people just brush it off, but it really affects people' (Resp. 30, FG 8: SIT).

Reflecting on the paranoia around HIV/AIDS, Amy shared the disjuncture she saw between people's fear of catching an STD in South Africa, and the fact that the same risks apply in the United States.

There's a double standard that exists that I think is very silly and ridiculous... somebody comes here and all of sudden... like in terms of having safe sex or STD's or anything like that, people all of a sudden get worried about it here... [but] it is still a big problem in the U.S. (Resp. 6, FG 2: UCT).

In contrast to Amy's broadened perspective, Melanie's disjuncture led her to conclusions about 'South African' denialism based on one conversation with a teenager from Soweto

I thought that there was just no education on it... [but] after staying here I've realized... [] most people just don't really choose to use condoms, they just don't really care (Resp. 2, FG 1: SIT).

Similarly, April conflated one man's morals with all 'township culture'.

I was participating in... AIDS education and we went into townships... and this one guy, like dead serious, was like – 'Oh, I would go spread it around as

much as I could.' ... [] And I was just really surprised that... [] the township culture was very, very different from the UCT culture (Resp. 22, FG 6: UCT).

In contrast to the first three disjunctures described by Dan, Katrina and Amy, which begin to relativize and personalize the sensationalized 'danger' of Africa, the last two narratives revert back to the pre-trip notion of Africa as backwards, where danger is a result of denialism and irresponsibility is essentialized as a cultural characteristic.

Disjunctures for the 'Last Wild Place on Earth' Narrative

Even though some scholars, like Barna (1994), have argued that Americans are prone to assuming that the rest of the world is very similar to the United States, the following disjunctures for the 'Last Wild Place on Earth' narrative reveal that there are still high expectations among Americans that they will encounter something 'different' and exotic when they travel abroad (which confirms Mathers, 2006).²⁰³

I didn't expect it to be quite so American... like especially the first month when we were coming into Rondebosch every day, going to class, and then like hopping over and getting some lattes and going to the internet café (Resp. 29, FG 7: SIT).

They drove all 400 of us around on these big buses within our first week... basically took us to all the wealthy beautiful places... it felt like southern California and I was getting a little bit pissed off because I wanted to see something in Africa, like if they had just driven past a township or something (Resp. 12, FG 3: UCT).²⁰⁴

Rather than integrating these sights into a new idea of Africa, my respondents appeared to view these disjunctures as exceptions, while they still held onto notions of 'another Africa' out there. When various sites confirmed this 'real' Africa, it generated quite a bit of excitement.

²⁰³ Interestingly, however, these crises of meaning also confirm Barna (1994) in the sense that many of my respondents went no further than the material façade, the "Western trappings" of South Africa, before they were convinced by the "illusion of similarity" (338).

²⁰⁴ The references to California were quite frequent. Another student said, "I remember to me it was like California. I was like – Where am I? I'm in California. This isn't Africa. I was a little frustrated but I was like – It's ok. This is just Jo'burg" (Resp. 2, FG 1: SIT).

I remember when we were driving in Soweto we saw women walking with things on their heads and I was like – ‘Hell, yes, I’m in Africa.’ I was like – ‘This is awesome! I love this right now!’ (Resp. 1, FG 1: SIT).²⁰⁵

Many students went in search of the ‘real’ Africa outside of South Africa. For example, leaving his experiences of disjuncture behind, Darren momentarily embraced his identity as a tourist:

*From Johannesburg, two long days of driving... into Botswana... did a little bit of camping outside, then into the Okavango Delta... we ended up finishing at Livingstone in Zambia at Victoria Falls... It was getting more into **real** Africa... the pretty animals... passing by little villages... nothing around for miles and miles (Resp. 25, One-on-One: UCT).*

Due to the continued strength of safari images of Africa and the notion that you can step in and out of tourist ‘shoes’, the ‘Last Wild Place on Earth’ narrative still appears to have a big influence on the collective imagination of study abroad students despite the disjunctures they experience in South Africa.²⁰⁶

Disjunctures for the ‘Roots of Humanity’ Narrative

Students who carry with them the ‘Roots of Humanity’ narrative come to South Africa with the expectation of an anthropological experience in which they can seek knowledge ‘of the natives’ or ‘witness the transition’ first hand. Wanting to “consume the inner mysteries of all things” (Kwenda, 2003), but trained to do this from a secular, objectivist stance (Said, 1978) there is already a disjuncture present in this orientation before the students actually embody the narrative. For some, this disjuncture becomes very apparent when they can no longer remain objective. For others, the disjunctures are objectified as oddities they observe, rather than internal crises of meaning.

One of the most striking disjunctures that arose from the transcripts was what Elise classified as her most memorable moment in South Africa. In an ironic reversal for the ‘Roots of

²⁰⁵ Another student gave an example from Langa: “We were driving through [Langa] and we saw a butcher... he was there chopping off animals in the street. Right in the street! [] ... never really seen anybody grill up some sheep heads before... not a very common custom on the west side of Los Angeles” (Resp. 25, One-on-One: UCT).

²⁰⁶ This is also noted by Walker & Rasamimanana (1993) who write about the persistence of exotic images of Africa despite many attempts to re-educate Americans. And they were noticing that 15 years ago!

Humanity' narrative, she and her fellow SIT students were scrutinized for the knowledge *they* had to offer while visiting the Eastern Cape, which forced them out of their comfortable roles as observers and knowledge seekers.

*We were in this classroom with a bunch of the community members and [the home stay coordinator] looked at us and said – 'Ok, so can you guys just say something to the community here?' And we were like – 'Uh what are we supposed to say?' He's like – 'You know some motivational words or something.' And we're like – 'What? We're just students, like we don't know anything.'*²⁰⁷

What perhaps these students didn't realize is that this disjuncture could actually be the logical outcome of the official discourse of many American institutions about study abroad in Africa. As I discussed in relation to the list of benefits of study abroad provided by Pires et al's survey (2000), there is no discussion at the institutions about how American students might benefit or learn from Africa. Instead, many American universities project a superiority complex onto the rest of the world, with the notion that Americans know everything.

On another occasion, Elise's SIT group was challenged by a group of South African students who wanted to know what they were doing to stop the war in Iraq. According to Melanie,

*Our status as young Americans has been contested numerous times... when we were in Jo'burg we met with a bunch of um – they were black, right? Black students from the SRC from the University of KwaZulu Natal and they were angry with us. They were angry we weren't protesting against Bush. They were angry that we were like just using our money to study in South Africa (Resp. 2, FG 1: SIT).*²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Elise continued the story: "Some people sort of like stood up and said what we like thought was best to say which was just basically like you know 'support from your family is very important and concentrating on your studies is also very important' and like etcetera, etcetera, which was quickly sort of rebutted by – 'Well we don't really have the resources to concentrate on our studies. We don't have textbooks. We don't have ways to learn about politics.' Things like that... [] So it was a very memorable experience for sure... [] since we've been here we've sort of been looked at a lot as American students, as sort of having the answers and people will literally come up to us and say – 'I want to start a business. What should I do and what should I call it?' And we're like – 'Uh, I don't know.'" (Resp. 1, FG 1: SIT).

²⁰⁸ She stresses the point that these students were black without even realizing she's doing it.

Melanie said she struggled with the way she and the other students were subjected to a ‘gaze’ that they weren’t prepared for.²⁰⁹ Her word choice (“they were black, right?”) suggests there may have been race dynamics involved as well.

Most of my respondents didn’t mention this counter gaze. Instead, their awareness of disjunctures was limited to what they perceived as surprising cultural differences; such as, “*the big trend in the townships is karaoke*” (Resp. 20, FG 5: UCT), “*they love the bones*” (Resp. 1, FG 1: SIT), and “*people don’t walk here*”²¹⁰ (Resp. 20, FG 5: UCT). In these examples, they make use of all the rhetorical tools provided by the master anthropological narrative – broad statements about ‘them’ with attempts to both accentuate the difference but also normalize the observation (Wilson, 1994).

Beyond broad generalizations like these, however, some respondents were shaken up when they did actually experience things firsthand that were much deeper than they expected. In these moments of disjuncture, the supposed objectivity is stripped away, as well as any romanticized ideas of what a ‘nation in transition’ actually involves.

When I was staying in Stellenbosch... playing games with our home stay brother... [] he makes just this like really racist comment... [] I just asked him like what he meant by it... about actually killing black people... [] We ended up getting into a two hour conversation... which was hands down the most intense two hour conversation I’ve ever had in my entire life... about how he’s racist... and he’s open with it... [] because his dad had been murdered, like less than two years ago... and he had been murdered by a black man he said... [] I think it was the first time I had encountered like someone sitting in front of me being like – ‘I hate black people... [] I was so upset, because I had never encountered that before (Resp. 27, FG 7: SIT).

In the same focus group, another respondent shared an equally emotive disjuncture, although in this case it was extremely positive rather than negative. Joy told the story of the weekend

²⁰⁹ “I’m just sick of people staring at me. Everywhere we go people stare at me... because I do a lot of things... like stuff that black South Africans do and like the white Afrikaners don’t do” (Resp. 2, FG 1: SIT). It’s one thing to be the one doing the gazing (Urry, 2006) but it’s quite another to be on the receiving end of the gaze.

²¹⁰ No one walks here?? Or just not many white people walk here? Even when this respondent does acknowledge that her mother was referring to white people only, she says ‘people like you’ (meaning me the researcher) rather than identifying with her own whiteness as well.

she and some other SIT students returned to Langa and learned about a much more open sense of hospitality than they were used to in the United States.²¹¹

Disjunctures for the 'Africa Light' Narrative

The discourse of the 'Africa Light' narrative frames South Africa as a place where study abroad students can have 'the best of both worlds' – comfort and adventure, first world and third world (Rassool & Witz, 1996). As with the 'Roots of Humanity' narrative, this in and of itself is a disjuncture. Yet some students see this contradiction as the whole 'point of the programme.'

That whole week of going from this extreme of bathing in three inches of water in a basin to learning to surf to going to a big fancy mall, this is totally what SIT does one hundred percent on purpose (Resp. 1, FG 1: SIT).

This disjuncture could simply reinforce the idea that American students have the privilege of mobility and can move from extreme to extreme without commitment or consequence.

From looking at my respondents' transcripts, however, it appears that there is one unintended consequence (if not more) of this privilege and mobility, as well as the assumption that they can have everything they want in a study abroad programme. The one thing that money can't buy and that a programme can't promise is local friends. Many of my respondents noted disappointment in this area.

I thought I'd be hanging out with all these South Africans, who [would] like want to hang out with me (Resp. 21, FG 5: UCT).²¹²

All of our home stay families were wonderful... but as far as our experience around Rondebosch and Observatory, I just don't feel welcome. I feel like [the UCT students] want nothing to do with us (Resp. 2, FG 1: SIT).²¹³

²¹¹ Joy said, "Do you ever get really, really happy and your heart kind of feels like it's bursting? ... That's how I felt... [] In the morning, we were talking to 'Tony's' 'mom', just like thanking her excessively for hosting us... she was just talking about how much it's so much a part of her culture. She's like 'You know, Tony asked me how many friends he could bring. Should he bring one or could he bring three?' And she was like – 'Bring as many as you want... In our culture, like if you're here, like if you just come in, we'll feed you, we'll take care of you... that's just what we do. We're not going to turn someone away.' ... And that's exactly what I experienced" (Resp. 26, FG 7: SIT).

²¹² Another student agreed, "We're always like – 'Hey, be our friends because we don't really have any here and we want to talk to you and want to like find out more about you.' ... Kind of surprised about that, thought they'd be more interested" (Resp. 3, FG 1: SIT).

However, beneath these frustrations, many of my respondents were also aware that they were using other American students and their luxurious accommodations as a comfort zone.

I love our house... but yeah, it definitely is a comfort zone without a doubt... I personally don't meet that many South African people... people in our programme hang out with people in programme. You know we're kind of like a little cult of 60 or 70. [] It's really nice but then you know at times... you wonder like 'Am I getting a full experience?' (Resp. 4, FG 2: UCT).²¹⁴

Wilkinson (2000: xx) suggests that “social networks among American students abroad” are an “essential component of host culture integration” and that the lack of local friends shouldn’t be attributed to laziness. However, Allen & Herron (2003) point out that a lack of “integrative motivation” was quite common among the American study abroad students they interviewed and so integration is also dependent on the students’ willingness to adapt. Wilkinson (2000) also notes that many host family experiences do not prove to be as positive as study abroad programmes promises. This could also cause some disillusionment with the joint promises of adventure and comfort offered by the ‘Africa Light’ narrative.²¹⁵

For some of my respondents, these disjunctures created a more critical perspective on the expectations of Americans.²¹⁶ For others, the disjunctures pushed them into a stronger appreciation and commitment to all things American.²¹⁷

²¹³ Disjuncture between people paid to host them and people who they expected to be just naturally interested in them.

²¹⁴ We got here the first day and it was summer and it was so nice and so hot... [] it smelled really good because of the pomegranate trees in front of our house... we had like this really Malibu-looking pink house, with a pool... I think it had ten bedrooms and a cottage. My room had a fireplace, like – yay, Cape Town! (Resp. 14, FG 3: UCT).

²¹⁵ In one focus group, Melanie described how her expectations were challenged by her host family in Langa: “I had an 11-year-old brother and an 8-year-old sister and it was like a realistic brother/sister relationship where we like antagonized one another and I really was frustrated with them most of the time and they were very irritating... [] the other thing that was challenging was sort of my relationship with my parents... [] it was just like a little bit awkward... [] so that was kind of hard. It’s just like adjusting to living in a house with stranger basically and they’re supposed to be your family” (Resp. 2, FG 1: SIT).

²¹⁶ “Americans are pretty spoiled. We’re very used to having a certain amount of like choices and efficiency available to us whenever we want it... so I think that that’s been something to adjust to, ‘cause you know things don’t happen here in the same time span. It’s just different, you know. It’s nice actually that it’s like that” (Resp. 6, FG 2: UCT).

²¹⁷ My identity as an American has been more cemented I think that it ever was... [I’m] just glad I’m American and glad that I have these opportunities to go all these places (Resp. 29, FG 7: SIT).

Disjunctures for the 'Coming Home' Narrative

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the 'Coming Home' narrative is quite different from the other six narratives. For the stories I mentioned in Chapter 5, it spoke of coming back to a place that they were familiar with. For the stories I will mention here, it speaks of finding the familiar when one is expecting to feel like an outsider.²¹⁸

As mentioned in Chapter 5, Sherri was surprised when she found Cape Town to be quite different from Ghana demographically. A pleasant disjuncture happened when, despite her unmet expectations, she found moments of unexpected connection:

We went to Mzoli's for the first time on Sunday. That's where people who either live in the community or come to visit go to hang out on Sunday... It's very non-tourist... everybody was having a good time... you didn't feel like an outsider... I enjoyed myself a lot.... it just felt like... even though you were not from here, you [were] a part of everything that was going on (Resp. 11, FG 3: UCT).

For Mia, the unexpected connection came when she experienced a personal link between the history of District Six in Cape Town and the history of Japanese internment camps in the United States.

I remember specifically going to the District Six memorial and we had a really long discussion about the removal, forced removal of the District Six communities, and for some reason, I don't remember why, but that was just really hard for me to deal with... [] I went to um... the Manzanar, which was a Japanese internment camp... every year they have a pilgrimage or a ritual for all the uh...Japanese internees or the people who are still surviving and they go... as a remembrance... so my school funded a group of students to go to Manzanar last summer and I went with them and it was just really, the same feeling of silence and the same feeling of guilt... [] like I felt exactly that same feeling here....I don't know if it was a valid connection or not [but] I think that was when I started really appreciating the experience here and the resources and the people that I was engaging with in conversations... (Resp. 32, FG 8: SIT).

Reflecting on stories like these from the transcripts, the 'Coming Home' narrative is more about connections than disjunctures. It is about bringing things together. This is quite

²¹⁸ This narrative itself provides a dislocation from the other more dominant narratives and reminded me that study abroad students are often looking for something more than what all the other narratives offer. These longings often only emerge in the stories of when students caught a glimpse or tasted the flavor of that intangible sense of 'coming home.'

different than the other narratives. Thus, the main disjuncture for the 'Coming Home' narrative is that it highlights even more the incongruities and shortcomings of the other narratives.

Disjunctures for the 'Race' Narrative

Chapter 5 highlighted the fact for many American students the dominant narrative about race is still trained in the discrete categories of 'black', 'white' and 'Asian'. When I probed them more on their experiences of race in South Africa, many of my 'white' respondents began talking immediately about 'coloured' identity, rather than discussing the experience of whiteness. This suggests that the main disjuncture for them in their encounters with the demographics of South Africa, in comparison with how they were racially socialized in the United States, was this group of people that didn't fit into the boxes they were used to.²¹⁹

Other 'white' respondents were much more explicit about the way they were wrestling with 'whiteness' ever since arriving in South Africa.

I have not thought about race ever in my lifetime combined as much as I have the last two months here and I can't stop thinking about it and I really hope that doesn't continue when I go home... it factors into every conversation and everything you think and that's incredibly overwhelming to me (Resp. 29, FG 7: SIT).

²¹⁹ We had this one 'soul mate' [the term used during their orientation to refer to the South African students who show them around the city and campus] who we became friends with, like we would hang out with her, she's very cool, and she's blonde, and blue-eyed, like kind of like charcoal eyes, so we were sitting there one night, just she and I... and she was like – 'you can't tell a coloured girl what to do.' Like talking to me and I was like... 'what?' Like... looking around thinking 'who's this coloured girl?' And so like we keep like talking, everything keeps going on, and then she was like – 'shit, like blah, blah, blah.' Like – 'I'm just a coloured girl, leave me alone.' Like joking around. And I was like – 'Wait, wait, wait. You're coloured?' Like... 'Really?' So she was like – 'Yeah, you didn't know that?' I was like – 'Honestly, no, I thought you were white. I mean you have blonde hair and light eyes.' I mean I've got dark eyes and I'm definitely white. It was just like totally weird for me. And so we got along so well... [] she was just someone who I assumed from my upbringing that like that was just a given, she was white, she has light eyes, she's got light hair, that's the way it is. And she was like – 'Anyone from here would know that I'm coloured, anyone.' Actually it was funny, because a couple weeks before, maybe a week before, [talking to] this boy in our programme, I was like – 'oh, do you think Karen's hot?' And he was like – 'Yeah.' So we were talking about it. And he was like – 'Have you ever thought that like maybe she might be coloured or like not white?' And I was like – 'No, no, she's got blonde hair, like, no, definitely not.' And he was like – 'Ok.' I mean he was completely right. Her features... once you think about. She was like – 'I've been coloured back and back for generations.' So it's just interesting to see how you come somewhere you've got all these assumptions about like white, black, like coloured, you know, whatever, like in between, but... in the States like you either fit in more with one side or more with the other... and here it's like there's this whole in between group called coloured and it's fine to like be there, like it's just sort of like you hold yourself in between, and you stay there and it's ok (Resp. 20, FG 5: UCT).

For Shana, one of the first disjunctures related to race was finding out from the other students in her programme that white Americans don't talk much about race.

It was actually quite shocking like learning that discourse in white America is never really about race, just because... in minority communities race is a big part of like who we are... I don't know, it's hard for me to wrap my brain around like – White people don't talk about being white? Like (laughs) it's just so weird (Resp. 28, FG 7: SIT).

Shana said she was originally dismayed to find herself the only 'black' American in her SIT group. Although she tried to adjust, another disjuncture occurred for her when South Africans would relate differently to her than to her 'white' classmates.²²⁰

As an Asian-American, Mia also wrestled with South Africans' assumptions about her ethnic identity and whether she was an 'American' or not.

*When I'm in the States, I feel more comfortable in asserting my um... my Chinese identity, or like my origins, my ancestry... but when I'm here I find it really difficult for people to see the complexities within my identity, like they only just see... China. They see a foreign person, but they have no context to relate it to and I think that's what's really difficult (Resp. 32, FG 8: SIT).*²²¹

Disjunctures like Mia's reveal that the racialized aspects of each student's identity are often heightened through the experience of study abroad in South Africa. As Talburt & Stewart (1999: 164) rightly suggest, more attention needs to be paid in research on study abroad to the "specificities that can shape their interactions and cultural learning."

²²⁰ "When I'm with a group of people, I feel like... people will perceive me as just being a South African with a group of Americans... [] sometimes I get kind of frustrated because it's like – 'ok, I'm not South African, you know what I mean, I'm American.' But then when people, like I don't know, think I'm American, then I get upset too, like I don't know, it's really interesting because it's just like – I don't want to be South African but I don't want you to think I'm American either. ... [] I always encounter people, and so for instance, they'll think I'm Xhosa, or Zulu or coloured or whatever they think I am, and then once they hear my American accent, then their... their perception of me totally changes and that kind of makes me really angry because I feel like then it's like... I don't know, it's like fake or something, like you perceive me as one way but then once you hear my accent, that makes you want to know me more, or makes you want to treat me differently or something like that... I don't know... I just assumed like coming here people were just going to automatically know I'm American (Resp. 28, FG 7: SIT).

²²¹ One of Mia's classmates then asked her the question: "So do you want people to see you as like American? Or you want people to understand that you're American?" (Resp. 31, FG 8: SIT) Mia replied, "But not in the same sense as a person, an American in the sense that I... um... that I have every right to be an American, that, that right was not, that was excluded, and that was taken away for some time, but that it was through struggles and through like my parents, through history and it had, it has, it has a story behind it... a long history, and it's not just something that was given... I guess that's the uncomfortable part of privilege, is that I do recognize that as an American I do have this privilege but privilege, but there... (sighs) I don't know how to explain it. It just comes with a lot of um... pain and a lot of family history" (Resp. 32, FG 8: SIT).

Disjunctures: A Conversation between Stories Then and Stories Now

While disjunctures for early European travelers and disjunctures for study abroad students can hardly be compared due to the huge differences in historical context and cultural influences, there are some interesting parallels and digressions when the two are brought into conversation with each other. Again, I will only be able to look at these briefly due to space constraints, but I will highlight the most significant.

Firstly, Barrow's naturalist orientation was shocked by a disjuncture, which revealed that looking is not such an innocent activity. However, despite his uncharacteristic outburst of emotion and his confessional mode the event doesn't appear to fundamentally change his approach. He continues on for hundreds more pages in the same detached, analytical mode, categorizing and casting judgement on the things he observes and often outright lying (while claiming scientific objectivity).²²² Thankfully, I didn't come across any such outrageous fabrications by study abroad students. In fact, the disjuncture that relates most closely to this notion of 'seeing' is actually quite the opposite. Several students were disturbed and disoriented by the way *they* were subjected to 'the gaze' – being asked questions and being challenged for their role as Americans. However, like Barrow, it does appear that in many of their narratives my respondents revert into 'observer' mode to deal with disjunctures; for example, complaining about inefficiencies or focusing on 'coloured' identity.

Secondly, when one looks at the disjunctures for the sentimentalist narrative, Falconbridge's narrative exposes what she sees as the hypocrisy of much 'humanitarian' discourse. She chooses to report the negative things she sees, unlike most naturalist writing. Stedman's romantic discourse is broken down in the disjuncture of his departure from Surinam and the fact that reciprocity with Joanna was not actually all that equal. I see parallels here with the way that many of my respondents romanticized their experience in the Eastern Cape, but were occasionally challenged by conversations with their hosts about the lack of equal access and mobility. Many of my respondents also had their notions of reciprocity challenged when they discovered that many South African students weren't all that interested in being their friends. Like Falconbridge, many of the students got quite close and personal with their

²²² For example, Barrow's disturbing 'analysis' and description of the 'unusual' characteristics of "Hottentot" women's sex organs (Barrow, 1806: 235).

stories (unlike the naturalist's objectivity) and also reported the negative things they saw. However, some also came to problematic conclusions; for example, that one man's irresponsibility with HIV was a characteristic of 'township culture'.

Thirdly, Stanley's emphasis on Africa's need despite the abundance he found reveals a disjuncture that he was all too eager to gloss over in the interest of American and European trade with Africa. Furthermore, by taking on the survivalist tone, he suggests that he was really at the mercy of the Africans he met, rather than in a position of power with a particular agenda. When I listened for parallels in the study abroad disjunctures, I heard many different voices. Some students praised the lifestyle and 'culture' they found in South Africa. Others were aware for the first time of what strategic underdevelopment actually means (i.e. they were finally seeing behind Stanley's façade). Others were still convinced that things work better in the United States, which subtly supports the notion that Africa still needs to meet the standards set by the West. Still others were shocked that South Africa was 'so American', an ironic reversal, which reveals the invisibility of Stanley's agenda to promote Western hegemony.

Overall, the trend that emerged from the early travelers' tales was that disjunctures are profound but are often not strong enough to dislodge or displace pre-trip narratives. In contrast, the disjunctures students experienced within the 'Coming Home' narrative and 'Race' narrative reveal a much greater degree of contestation. The potential to act as a catalyst for change will be picked up in the next chapter where I will look at what happens when the stories reach home. Why is it so hard to challenge and change the master narratives? What role do the recipients of the stories play? Is it possible to create new narratives out of the old ones?

Chapter 7: The Tales that Travel Home

Post tour narratives have no ending. They are never finished, for with each retelling the circumstances, the audience and the situation of the narrator changes, providing the opportunity for novel understandings and new narratives to arise. Travel tales, told and retold throughout the life course, have a synchronic dimension as they construct and deconstruct the self as well as the memory of the actual experience (Bruner, 2005: 27).

As noted by many scholars (Bruner, 2005; Mathers, 2003; Merians, 2001; etc.) and illustrated below, any discussion of travelers' tales and study abroad stories is incomplete without an analysis of "post-tour" or post-trip narratives. Post-trip narratives are the places where pre-trip narratives and identities are reworked alongside the connections and disjunctures of each traveler's embodied experience.

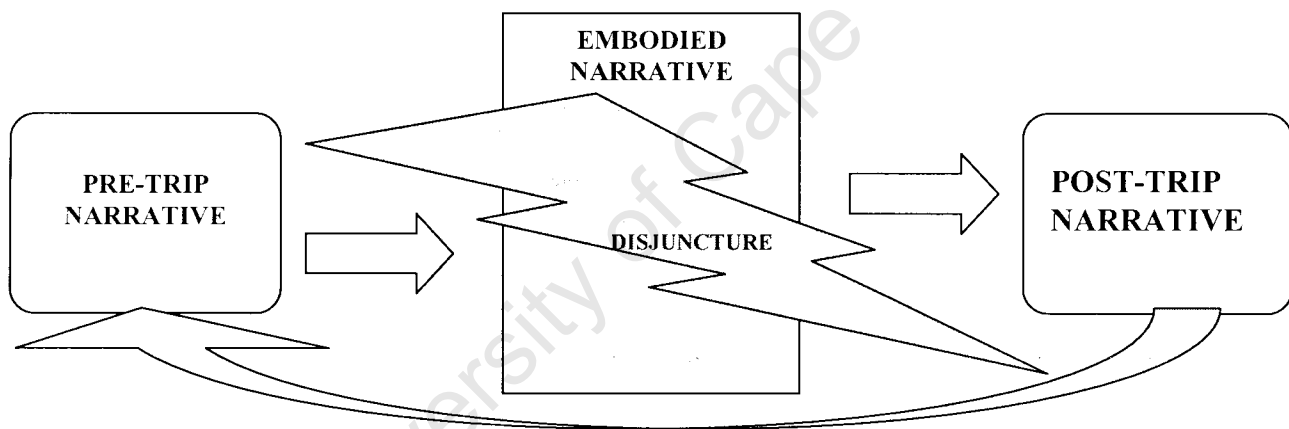


Figure 6: The Narrative Cycle of Traveling Tales

Therefore, the telling of tales once a traveler has returned home reveals something very profound about the selective processes of memory, as well as the impact of stories to transform or to maintain the status quo of a community beyond the individual. Bruner (2005) suggests that because of the "re-ordering" of memory, it is actually the post trip "retellings" that have real power to create and establish systems of meaning.

Experience as consciousness is often fleeting, unmarked, and inchoate, requiring a period of "working through," to use Freud's psychoanalytic phrase... When articulation happens, it changes the recollection of the trip as lived and reorders the experience so that the tour comes to be both told and remembered differently... It is not the first telling but the subsequent retellings that are truly constitutive (Bruner, 2005: 27).

One of my respondents described this process of ‘working through’ in an email he sent to me several months after his return to the United States:

The more I tell a story, the more that memory is reinforced and readily available in my mind... Talking helps me to sort my thoughts out, and also allows me to feel as though I have the opportunity to disseminate what knowledge I think I gained from being abroad (Resp. 36, one-on-one: SIT).

As this student suggests, it is important to look at the stories and perceptions that American study abroad promote *when they return home* in order to find out what knowledge about Africa and South Africa is being disseminated.²²³ As suggested at the end of Chapter 6, I found that the post-trip tellings were often already in mind long before the students returned home. During the interviews, many of my participants expressed a desire to “*dispel myths and stereotypes*” (Resp. 28, FG 7: SIT) and “*engage in serious change*” (Resp. 32, FG 8: SIT) when they returned home. Some were worried about telling a “*romanticized version*” (Resp. 7, FG 2: UCT) or “*overdoing it, sensationalizing it*” (Resp. 6, FG 2: UCT).²²⁴

As I read through the transcripts, I became very aware of the dialectical challenge of ‘responsible’ or ‘educational’ story telling. While a student may have all the best intentions, the reception must also be conducive for them to be able to tell a story with all its complexities. Many students expressed similar concerns as they imagined what it would be like to communicate their experience to friends and family back home.

The only thing people know how to do is sort of like generalize and they come up with these big statements like – ‘Africans are this way’ (Resp. 1, FG 1: SIT).

²²³ Recalling my earlier theory question: Are American study abroad students who have ‘post-colonial’ contact with Africa *challenging* the imperial discourse about Africa in early travelers’ tales and in popular images of Africa in the United States or are they *reconfirming* the dominant narratives? To explore possible answers to this question, I asked my respondents several questions during the interviews about what stories they had already sent home, as well as what stories they expected to tell when they returned home and what questions they expected to be asked. I then emailed the students several months after they had returned to the United States with a series of questions about their strongest memories, the reaction of people to their stories, what stories they found themselves telling the most frequently and whether there were any stories that they had intentionally chosen not to share.

²²⁴ Others were very aware of the potential impact of their stories, as Shana was when recalling the story of her mugging, “Hopefully I’ll have another memorable moment that can top that one because that is honestly not the one that I want to go back and tell people at my school... they’ll be like – ‘Ok, that’s it, we’re not doing any more South Africa programmes’” (Resp. 28, FG 7: SIT). Still others didn’t worry about their role at all: “I don’t feel like there’s anything that I need to go back and prove” (Resp. 27, FG 7: SIT).

People will ask you but they don't really want to know (Resp. 1, FG 1: SIT).

They all use the same question (Resp. 22, FG 6: UCT).

Many of these challenges were confirmed in our follow-up email correspondence.²²⁵ Thus, in the following pages, I will highlight some of the most notable post-trip narratives that emerged in both my transcripts and the emails with my participants. But first, as with the previous chapters, I will begin by looking at early European travelers' tales for examples of the orientation of the travelers to their prospective audiences back home.

Early Travelers' Tales: Narratives Told and Received

Before ever embarking on their journeys, most early European travelers had a sponsor, a patron, or at least a home community that they were accountable too, which influenced the goals of the trip, the way it would be written up and whether they challenged the norms or not. According to Pratt (2008) and Merians (2001), Peter Kolb, the author of *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope* (1731), was one of the few early travelers who wrote about the indigenous inhabitants of southern Africa in a more generous and dialogic way.²²⁶ However, this didn't change the discourse of the day, due to limited circulation, how far Kolb went with his descriptions, what the recipients did with his stories, and how crucial 'Hottentot' images were for "the process of the self and national definition taking place in England during the eighteenth century" (Merians, 2001).²²⁷

²²⁵ For example, April's comment that "People's attention eventually fades out" (Resp. 22, email: UCT).

²²⁶ Kolb was a German mathematician who was sent to the Cape in 1706 by a Prussian patron to conduct astronomical and meteorological research. According to Pratt (2008), "Kolb was writing before narrative paradigms for interior travel and exploration emerged in the last decades of the century. In 1719 navigational paradigms still prevailed... the trip is told as a survival story..." (Pratt, 2008: 42). However, she notes that, "Though his mission was scientific, Kolb's account... was not" (Pratt, 2008:40). Instead, taking an ethnographic approach, Kolb's writing is full of vivid descriptions. While not all his descriptions are necessarily accurate, he presents "Hottentots" as capable of culture, religion, science, etc., which is much more magnanimous than other accounts of that era.

²²⁷ "At the time of its publication in London, English readers did not concern themselves at all with questions about the accuracy or reliability of Kolb's work – they were captivated by it... Although Kolb attacks the reliability of many of the previously printed accounts of 'Hottentots', he does not provide much in the way of original or new material" (Merians, 2001: 155). Instead of correcting people's notions, readers latched onto parts of his description that they then reused. "For example, the descriptions Kolb gives of 'Hottentot' priests urinating on the participants of initiation, marriage and funeral ceremonies almost instantly found their way into popular discourse" (Merians, 2001: 155). Pratt (2008) also suggests that the momentum of history was just too strong for Kolb's alternative approach to really make a difference. "By the end of the eighteenth century, as modern racist categories emerged, as European interventionism became increasingly militant, and as Khoikhoi

As introduced in Chapter 6, Barrow was officially traveling “in the name of the Euro-colonial territorial enterprise” in contrast to Kolb (Pratt, 2008: 57). Barrow’s naturalist rhetoric, which makes only the slightest references to the “military and diplomatic sides” of his mission, skimpily hides the fact that his entire rhetoric is aimed at legitimating the British take-over of the Cape (Pratt, 2008). However, this agenda is very obvious when one reads the dedication and table of contents of his two-volume work.²²⁸

Unlike both Kolb and Barrow, Falconbridge ended up in Africa not of her own accord but to accompany her husband, who she wasn’t even that fond of. In her dedication, she claims to present her readers with “a faithful and just account of two voyages to the inhospitable Coast of Africa – chequered throughout with such a complication of disasters as I may venture to affirm have never yet attended any of my dear Country Women, and such as I sincerely hope they never may experience” (Falconbridge, 1794: i). Although she sounds relieved to be home, there is almost a similarity between her tone and the sensationalism that some tourists or study abroad students use to compete for whose story is the most dramatic. However, after appealing to the sympathetic ear of her reader, Falconbridge states, “I will not undertake to promise you either elegant or modish diction; and all I shall advance in my favour, is rigid adherence to truth” (Falconbridge, 1794: i). Although Falconbridge also advances a staunch attack on the “authority of Europe’s mastering discourses” (Pratt, 2008: 102), I didn’t come across any recorded information on the impact of her writing on her readers.

As we can see by looking at the orientations of three early travelers, their relationship with the recipients of their stories did have an impact on how they structured these tales into a polished post-trip format. While the study abroad stories I have recorded are still in oral and email format, they can still tell us a lot about the ‘traveling tales’ about Africa and South Africa that are currently getting disseminated and popularized in the United States.

society was broken up and indentured by colonists, Kolb’s humanist stance disappeared as a discursive possibility” (Pratt, 2008: 44).

²²⁸ Barrow’s dedication: “To the Lord Viscount Melville, Lord Privy Seal of Scotland, under whose auspices, the extensive and important colony of the Cape of Good Hope was acquired and annexed to the British Empire, by which our political and commercial interests in the East-Indies were effectually secured and promoted”; Table of Contents: “Statistical Sketch of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope; Importance of the Cape of Good Hope, considered as a Military Station; Importance of the Cape of Good Hope, considered as a Naval Station; Importance of the Cape of Good Hope, considered in a commercial Point of View, and a Depot for the Southern Whale Fishery” (Barrow, 1806).

Study Abroad Stories: Narratives Told and Received

In the following section, I will look at the post-trip themes that emerged from my transcripts and emails as they relate back to the pre-trip narratives and embodied disjunctures. Do these stories challenge or reconfirm the pre-trip narratives? What pressures exist in terms of the expectations of the receivers?

Coming back from the ‘Sad Continent’

According to my participants, there were a lot of assumptions among the receivers of their stories that fall in line with the discourse of the ‘Sad Continent’ narrative.

I’ve heard a few blanket statements like ‘Africa is just so sad’ or ‘screwed-up’ ... and I usually try to respond with something to the effect of: ‘Well, I was only in one country in Africa, so I can’t speak for the whole continent, but I don’t think everything is sad/screwed-up. Yes, the violence and inequalities are sad, but South Africa is only 14 years out of apartheid, of course they still have a ways to go towards righting the decades of racist laws’ (Resp. 26, email: SIT).²²⁹

Many of my respondents gave examples of moments when they tried to counteract the negative assumptions about Africa that they encountered. However, many students also noted stories that they have told that reinforce the notion of a sad, underdeveloped Africa and a superior quality of life in the United States.

I talk about how I do not take what I have for granted and that there is much to be thankful for in the US, at least in terms of material wealth (Resp. 35, email: UCT).²³⁰

²²⁹ Additional comments included: “Probably the worst question I was asked was – ‘So how are the people in South Africa, other than starving?’” (Resp. 1, email: SIT). “People seemed to be surprised that there was ‘infrastructure’” (Resp. 5, email: UCT). “I find that people don’t ask as many questions as I thought about the poverty in South Africa, maybe people don’t realize or maybe they aren’t interested, but I don’t think they understand the slums that I saw all over the country” (Resp. 2, email: SIT).

²³⁰ This respondent also reconfirmed the image of benevolent Western visitors and needy locals. “I’d probably tell them about the people. I remember driving down the road and there were so many little children who would run along the car and they would all wave and they would hold their hands out, in like these cup shapes because I think people would give them candy or throw them maybe toys or something” (Resp. 35, one-on-one: UCT). However, he noted that he finds it hard to talk about poverty. “It is hard for me to talk about the poverty that exists in South Africa. I remember many times being begged by poor people for money and I often gave them small sums of money. But it is difficult for me to talk about the hopelessness in the eyes of many of them or how desperately many of them tried to sell me small trinkets to provide for their families. It is difficult to communicate the more personal side of poverty” (Resp. 35, email: UCT).

I frequently talk about... the way (based on my upbringing in America) nothing seemed to work and when it did work, it took way too long to work. Perhaps not the most positive thing to say, but nonetheless that is what I talk about the most (Resp. 25, email: UCT).²³¹

Other students more actively tried to provide a counter-narrative to the ‘Sad Continent’ story:

I remember being in Stellenbosch and buying these postcards of like beautiful vineyards and being like – ‘We’re sending these home because no one will expect South Africa is like this (Resp. 31, FG 8: SIT).

I will always remember the very smart high school students that I tutored in Khayelitsha. I couldn’t believe how dedicated they were to their homework and studies, despite the fact that most lived in corrugated iron shacks in a very dangerous township (Resp. 5, email: UCT).

Through stories like these, it appears that some study abroad students are attempting to show the great beauty and intelligence in Africa, despite the co-existence of poverty and danger.

Coming back to the ‘Don’t Get AIDS’ narrative

Many of my respondents said that the first thing they wrote home about was that they were ok,²³² which is natural for any long trip, but had added significance considering the perceptions of crime and danger associated with Africa and South Africa. Contrary to suggestions that all Americans travel to collect adventure stories (Mathers, 2006), some of my respondents actively chose not to share stories of her mugging too frequently.²³³

²³¹ This respondent also shared his thoughts on talking about poverty. “There are definitely perceptions about Africa, but if the perception is that there is poverty, what am I going to say? There’s not poverty? There’s definitely poverty... shocking poverty that you can’t really comprehend within the United States” (Resp. 25, one-on-one: UCT).

²³² For example, Dan said that he wrote home “that I was here, that I was safe” (Resp. 7, FG 2: UCT).

²³³ Ruby also expressed a similar hesitation in telling of the time she and a friend were mugged: “One day when I was walking home from campus to Rondebosch with a friend of mine that had visited from the U.S. we were mugged on a residential street. [] I don’t really want to share this story with my family, especially my grandmother and mother, because I’m afraid they will worry too much each time I go back to Cape Town to visit my boyfriend. They are aware of crime in South Africa, but I don’t want them to know I was actually a victim to it. I don’t think they’d be able to sleep at night” (Resp. 5, email: UCT). John also said he felt guilty when these stories came up: “The stories people ask you about... [are] stories of injustice or crime that people associate with South Africa/Africa in general. For me, driving on a small road late at night on the Wild Coast and having people run out of the dark and try to stop the car. Then going to a film screening in Langa on a Friday night... and being stopped at a police checkpoint where they took my fingerprints and told me I had to go with them because I didn’t have a South African license... The girl who I was working with spoke some

I'm reluctant to tell people that I have been mugged. When I have, the first thing they ask is if the muggers were black, which pisses me off! Then I have to go into the history of why SA has such a high crime rate and the social setting young black men, like the ones that mugged me, live in (Resp. 28, email: SIT).

Before he left South Africa, Andrew described the way he intended to try to educate people through the story of his own changing perceptions regarding danger in South Africa.

I'd probably start off with my first impressions and then talk about my deeper understanding after being here for a longer time. I'd say my general first impressions were that it's sort of a scary place where there's probably a lot of crime and it's not a place where, you know, white people want to go... [] I think though as time has passed, I've come to learn a little bit more about townships... it's not as dangerous as it might seem, although it is nonetheless dangerous if you're not careful (Resp. 35, one-on-one: UCT).²³⁴

Many of my participants said that the stories of their muggings or other dangerous encounters were among the first stories that they would tell back home.

I think I'll talk about crime, 'cause [of] my mugging and just how overarching it is (Resp. 34, one-on-one: SIT).

I talked about the attempted mugging that my friend and I avoided at the main Cape Town taxi rank... [] People always ask me about the safety, or did I get mugged, so this story comes up frequently (Resp. 26, email: SIT).

For many students, their "favorite peril stories" (Resp. 12, email: UCT) end up being reframed in terms of adventure and exoticism (i.e. how 'strange and unique' they are).

I find myself repeating two of the most strange and unique experiences that occurred to me in South Africa: being robbed at gunpoint for my cell phone in the township and witnessing the slaughter and brai (sp?) of a cow (Resp. 36, email: SIT).

Xhosa and told me they were saying 'Let's fuck with whitey.' But when I'm asked to tell those stories, I feel guilty and try to balance them with something else" (Resp. 10, email: UCT).

²³⁴ However, Andrew noted in his email that he still reverted back to telling a crime story when he returned home. "I finally told me parents after I returned home about a UCT law professor who was murdered at 6 pm in the evening only a few blocks from where I lived. Of course, I did not want to worry my parents any more than I had to while I was in South Africa so I waited until I returned home to tell them. They were surprised that this horrible crime occurred and were very thankful that I had safely returned" (Resp. 35, email: UCT).

In contrast to all the stories about crime and ‘peril’, there were very few post-trip references to the “don’t get AIDS” comments of the pre-trip narrative. The following comment is a rare exception, which reveals the reluctance of one student to try to challenge this narrative with a firsthand example:

I didn’t tell many about a brief and meaningless hookup with a guy I met at a bar. Family and friends would worry irrationally about AIDS, even after I was tested and came out clean (Resp. 12, email: UCT).

By sticking mainly to stories of near escapes from muggings, it appears that most students found it easier to re-order their danger narratives in terms of adventure, perhaps feeling the pressure of the expectations of the ‘Last Wild Place on Earth’ narrative.

Coming back from the ‘Last Wild Place on Earth’

According to my respondents, the ‘Last Wild Place on Earth’ narrative still captures the imagination of many family and friends back home and generates a lot of anticipation for such stories upon their return.

You always hear these incredible stories from people coming back from abroad (Resp. 36, one-on-one: SIT).

They think it’s a completely different world (Resp. 4, FG 2: UCT).

I think people really thought we were going to be, you know, out in the bush or something, eating zebra (Resp. 22, FG 6: UCT)

My sister’s going to be like – ‘Did you bring me a fertility stick back?’ ... I already know it’s going to be like – ‘So you were wrestling with lions, weren’t you?’ Or just dumb stuff... ‘Do Africans use deoderant?’ (Resp. 28, FG 7: SIT).

Many students react to these expectations by telling stories about “all the stuff that everyone wanted to hear” (Resp. 14, FG 3: UCT).

I might tell them about my spring break and how I, in addition to going bungee jumping and learning to surf, I visited the Eastern Cape and I’d probably tell them about the one room thatched roof huts that populated the landscape and how that was so incredibly different from anything I’d ever seen in my life before... I’ve never felt so disconnected from the quote-unquote civilized world ever in my life (Resp. 35, one-on-one: UCT)

In contrast, one or two students specifically expressed the desire to tell about their everyday life in Cape Town, rather than just the unique or sensational stories.

I can just explain to them, you know; at first I went out and I went to all the clubs that were recommended. I hiked Table Mountain. I went to the beach, but then after a while, life really settled down and it's not too much different than my life back home (Resp. 5, FG 2: UCT).

Another student wrote home about how she was surprised by how “modern and similar” her family in Langa was (Resp. 2, FG 1: SIT). However in the process she also describes them as the exception.²³⁵ Thus, it appears that although a few students are trying to normalize life in South Africa, the notion of an ‘exotic’ and ‘different’ Africa is still very strong in the post-trip tellings.

Coming back from the ‘Roots of Humanity’

As with the perceptions about the ‘wildness’ of Africa, many of my participants were also preparing for (or engaging with) the general lack of knowledge about South African history, culture, traditions and beliefs among many people in the United States.

So many people I know probably don't really know what apartheid is (Resp. 2, FG 1: SIT).

They were all very receptive to hearing about my experiences... [but] it did begin to grate on my nerves when I was asked ignorant questions about the customs, traditions, and beliefs of South Africans (Resp. 5, email: UCT).

²³⁵ She said, “I was very surprised with how modern and similar my family in Langa was to an American family. I think they were exceptional to the families in Langa... but they choose to live in Langa because of the township lifestyle... but there's three young children and the mother and father both work and it's like a hectic life and they watch TV and they talk and they scream at each other, and it's just the same, like the kids take baths... it could be a family in the United States minus like the language thing and the fact that Table Mountain is in the background... so I was really surprised about that and I told my family” (Resp. 2, FG 1: SIT) Sara also said she planned to talk about their host families: “We can explain like the wonderful types of families we've stayed with... just the fact that I've stayed with a Muslim family, like no matter where they were... that would be like an experience that like people would want to hear about” (Resp. 31, FG 8: SIT). This comment suggests that in some contexts the mere fact of staying with a Muslim family will be interpreted by the listeners as ‘exotic’ or ‘different’ no matter how much the student tries to normalize it in her story.

In response to this lack of knowledge, many participants were already forming a post-trip identity shaped around the idea that they “*know the inside of South Africa*” (Resp. 2, FG 1: SIT)²³⁶ and can confidently say “*this is South Africa*” (Resp. 3, FG 1: SIT).

In keeping with the ethnographic/anthropological framework of the ‘Roots of Humanity’ narrative, many students shared ‘favorite stories to tell’ that revolved around a connection with the local people, an experience of culture or some deeper insight into more than what tourists see.

The rural village experience. That’s my go-to story (Resp. 1, email: SIT).

I want to bring back what I learned to the States and talk about the personalization of the AIDS pandemic (Resp. 7, FG 2: UCT).

I definitely talk about the food I had to eat during my home stays the most, as well as inquiries about the dynamic between blacks and whites in South Africa (Resp. 2, email: SIT).

In all of these stories, the tellers play center roles in the scene they are describing, placing themselves in the centre of the action – which also plays the role of reaffirming their authority of having ‘been there’.

Coming back with the ‘Africa Light’ narrative

Confronting echoes of the ‘Africa Light’ narrative, several students encountered assumptions back in the United States that South Africa doesn’t experience the same problems found in other parts of Africa and that a semester abroad is always everything you want it to be.

The only thing that surprised me was how so many people thought the country was fine and great since Apartheid was over (Resp. 25, email: SIT).

In the States, there is this expectation that when you study abroad you will have the time of your life and it will be something you will love and remember forever (Resp. 25, email: SIT).

²³⁶ Melanie elaborated further: We’ve lived here for three months... I almost get pissed off like when people treat me like a tourist... I mean I still don’t know a lot about it... but I almost want to be like – ‘I lived for a month in Langa.’ Like that automatically gives me some sort of like right to not be a tourist anymore (Resp. 27, FG 7: SIT).

Many of my respondents also told stories that confirmed these perceptions of a semester in Cape Town.²³⁷

I wrote about how beautiful it was. I think my first email was... just about how gorgeous the city was and how beautiful Table Mountain is... and how happy I was to be in such a pretty place (Resp. 6, FG 2: UCT).

In correspondence back home, students like April expressed the disillusionment caused by their own belief in the ‘Africa Light’ narrative (that even though they are in a different place everything should function like they are used to).

My first email was like – ‘I love it here. I could see myself moving here someday. It’s so beautiful. ... [] Now my emails consist of – ‘I hate UCT... and it’s not even because UCT is hard... it’s more the disorganization, the bureaucratic crap... (Resp. 22, FG 6: UCT).

As noted in the previous chapter, one of the other biggest complaints that emerged in the context of this narrative was the frustration of many students when it came to making South African friends. What I found, however, was that as the post-trip narratives were formulated there was much less mention of the lack of South African friends to people back home and much more discussion about the dynamics with the other American study abroad students. There was so much said along these lines that I decided to add a new narrative – the ‘Real World Cape Town’ narrative.

The ‘Real World Cape Town’ Post-trip Narrative²³⁸

In Cape Town, many of the American study abroad students are housed together off campus due to the shortage of space in the campus residence halls. Thus, in one of my focus groups, Ellen referred to the house she shared with nine other American students as ‘Real World Cape Town.’ This term seems to fit the experience of many of my respondents as shared in the post-trip stories.

²³⁷ A few also tried to communicate the notion of ‘Africa Light’ or first and third world Africa. “I would talk about the differences in development, like how Cape Town is so beautiful and such a nice city, but like how the Eastern Cape is like very beautiful still but just so different” (Resp. 36, one-on-one: SIT). “South Africa is like first world Africa or Cape Town or at least parts of it, and I think that’s a very legitimate thing to say having gone out and seen a lot of other parts of Africa²³⁷ (Resp. 25, FG 6: UCT)

²³⁸ ‘Real World’ is the name of a reality television show in which a group of strangers are put in a house together and then filmed day in and day out to capture and broadcast their interactions.

I'll also talk a lot about the 20 other students, like I feel as though that is what surprised me, like how big a role these 20 other students play in our time here (Resp. 36, one-on-one: SIT).

Living in the house has been more of a culture shock for me than being in South Africa... I come from a majority black community, I don't really associate too much ... you know with like white Americans (Resp. 11, FG 3: UCT).²³⁹

It's like pretty shocking like how different like all of us are even though we're all American. Like we've talked about how probably none of us would be friends at school at home... I've never been around people that aren't from the Midwest before (Resp. 13, FG 3: UCT).

Adjusting to South Africa when I got here was not much of a problem to me, it was adjusting to our group... that's one of first things I remember talking to my family about. I got here and I said – 'None of these people are like me... because I'm not a partier.' ... [] I thought I would be getting with a group of social justice hippies basically (Resp. 30, FG 8: SIT).

These inter-group dynamics highlight an area that could use further exploration in the research on study abroad experiences, particularly in light of the comments made by students like Sherri whose experience of being a minority in the United States is heightened in groups of predominantly 'white' American study abroad students.

Coming back from 'Coming Home'

Unlike some of the sensationalism found in the expectations of other post-trip narratives, a few students were able to express to their family and friends their experience of familiarity in South Africa. This was aided by family members who asked questions about the everyday aspects of life and were already knowledgeable about certain aspects of South Africa. According to Sherri,

My mom wanted to know like – 'What are the stores like around you?' You know – 'Who are your friends?' She was really curious what I do... day to day and I told her I have friends from different parts, different countries, so she

²³⁹ Sherri added that she spent a lot of time just listening to the conversations of the other students in her house: "One thing I did notice is like the conversations of most Americans when we first got here about the injustices people face... I felt like they were very similar to the United States, just like instead of like the poor people that are living in shacks, they're living in you know, poor living conditions in terms of neighborhoods... so it's just like interesting to hear people's perceptions and how like knowledgeable and in tune with like all the injustices in South Africa... 'cause we're not home it's easy to feel different and new" (Resp. 11, FG 3: UCT).

wanted to know like the ethnic groups they came from, because she knows a little bit about that (Resp. 14, FG 3: UCT).

Students like Joy and Leya enjoyed telling about ‘random’ moments that left a particular impact on them, but the key element seems to be the feeling of warmth and connection that was experienced.

I also talk a lot about how much fun I had with my Langa family, and other totally random experiences I had with friends from my program (Resp. 26, email: SIT).

I'll tell them [about] when I went to get my hair braided... the hospitality I got as well from them, like they didn't know me or anything... but I felt like I was one of their daughters (Resp. 34, one-on-one: UCT).

In contrast, there were also stories about the lack of familiarity experienced in South Africa. For Shana, coming to South Africa was not the homecoming she expected.

Before going to SA, I thought that going to SA would be like a homecoming for me. I've been told all my life that I am an AFRICAN American, which I always assumed made me an African living in America. However, going there made me realize that I am not African nor am I perceived as an African. Therefore, Africa is not my home, America is (Resp. 28, email: SIT).

Although this was a difficult experience, she describes it as one of her best memories of South Africa:

My strongest memory of South Africa is the discomfort I felt. That discomfort made me appreciate SA so much! A lot of that discomfort came from the fact that I didn't have anyone to truly identify with during my 3 1/2 months there. I'm African American and I was the only African American in my group. Despite the fact that SA is predominately Black, the fact that I'm not Xhosa, Venda, Zulu, etc... caused me to feel as though I had no one to relate to. Some of the blacks I encountered thought I was Coloured, which made me feel as though I had to prove my blackness. I felt like my identity was being challenged constantly. South Africa definitely made me think critically about my identity, which, at many time, made me feel uncomfortable. However, it is my greatest and strongest memory of South Africa (Resp. 28, email: SIT).

However, unlike Joy and Leya's stories, which they readily shared with their families, Shana described her difficulties in conveying her experience to people back home.

I really don't like to talk about my experiences because I feel like my friends and family only want to have a superficial conversation about it. Some of them

know about the issues in SA but the majority don't. It disgusts me how ignorant Americans are about the world, especially when it comes to Africa. I get frustrated talking to my friends and family about my experience... so I tell them that it was a 'great experience'... [] I'm a person who absolutely loves talking about issues revolving around race, gender, religion and class. In South Africa, I talked about those four issues all the time. Here it feels like I have to gag myself because there are so many Americans who don't like to talk about those issues (Resp. 28, email: SIT).

Shana drives home the fact that students often have to retreat back into packaged answers (“it was a great experience”) even if they have had a powerful and transformative experience. Her comments also bring us back to the ‘race’ narrative as well.

Coming back to the ‘Race’ narrative

As noted in the previous chapters, the discourse of discrete racial categories (with clearly identifiable characteristics) is still a strong undercurrent that runs through all the study abroad narratives. Both Shana and Katrina described instances of confronting the ‘race’ narrative with people back home:

I remember this one girl who spent time here, and she was just like saying how uncomfortable she felt in South Africa and she was like – ‘Oh, but they’ll love you, ‘cause you’re black.’ And she kept saying that over and over again. And I was just like – ‘What the hell does that mean?’ (Resp. 28, FG 7: SIT).

I talked to a family friend on the phone who said, rather brashly, ‘So are you with black people or white people now?’ And also wanted to know why my Muslim home stay family would want to host ‘a white girl from America.’ At the time, I did my best to diffuse the situation but mostly changed the subject (Resp. 30, email: SIT).

Other students also mentioned discussions they had had with family and friends about their experience of race in South Africa:

I did write to my friends about how I could see certain parts of apartheid like still in existence and it really bothered me (Resp. 22, FG 6: UCT).

People were very surprised by the racism that still exists when I would describe some of the things you see in everyday life (Resp. 22, email: UCT).

People are surprised when I tell them that white South Africans were somewhat opposed to meeting us and befriending us (Resp. 2, email: SIT).

While in these instances, ‘racism’ and ‘race’ is attributed to issues or people external to the storyteller, Mia (like Shana) described how her experience in South Africa created the need for a new post-trip narrative about her identity.

I never experienced such a yearning or such a desperation to like find or to talk about my experience because I think I've noticed it so much here, this Orientalizing... people would literally, verbally, tell you – ‘You are China.’ Or – ‘You are different. You look, you know, different.’ Not even black or white. You just look different. Like almost as a non-human, as if you're an alien (Resp. 32, FG 8: SIT).

Thus, it is evident that while there are certain trends in the narratives that dominate study abroad stories there is great diversity as well in terms of how students go about processing and re-ordering their stories.

Post-trip Narratives: A Conversation between Stories Then and Stories Now

As most communication theorists would agree, both senders and receivers are necessary for successful communication. Looking at the post-trip narratives of both early travelers’ tales and study abroad students further confirms the importance of the receivers of the stories in terms of what stories are told and how they are framed. Furthermore, Bormann’s fantasy chain analysis (1995) suggests that there must be a common fantasy for groups to bond around. This suggests that if travelers return with stories that just don’t fit or make sense in their communities back home these stories will hardly stick.

Much more so than my participants, most early European travelers appear to have had clear objectives in mind for their story telling. Most told stories that were directly contributing to colonialist and imperialist expansionary agendas (Barrow, Stanley, etc.), even though they may have been traveling in the name of science, mission work or pure adventure. There were a few (Kolb, Falconbridge) who told tales that challenged the accepted norms of their day. However, even these were very clearly bound to the limitations of the discourse (particularly, scientific racism) and worldviews of their day. In contrast, many study abroad students do appear to be wrestling much more with the impact and meaning of their stories.

However, even for these students and others, there still appear to be powerful pressures to conform to the pre-trip narratives and master discourses. There appears to be a disconnect for

study abroad students between what their parents and friends believe about South Africa and Africa, what their study abroad programmes promise and what they actually experience. If they tell the complications of these disjunctures, there is likely to be no fantasy chain reaction, which means the student will feel alone and unconnected. Instead, it appears many latch onto the strongest point of connection, which is still the danger and adventure narrative. This is not surprising considering the popularity of reality TV shows like survivor and 24-hour news channels that emphasize the bad news about Africa. This emphasis on danger and adventure mirrors the way many early travelers' tales of various genres and eras often resorted back to survivalist discourse techniques, as seen in Stanley's writing (in the previous chapter), as well as Falconbridge's and Kolb's. Because of the strategic and social purposes these discourses serve, it is therefore not enough to just provide firsthand accounts about the 'truth' of Africa and South Africa in order to challenge the stereotypes that have existed for generations.

Chapter 8: Speaking ‘True Words’

To speak a true word is to transform the world (Freire, 2000: 87).

Story is extremely powerful (Resp. 30, FG 8: SIT).

Is it possible to locate oneself historically, to tell a coherent global story, when historical reality is understood to be an unfinished series of encounters? What attitudes of tact, receptivity, and self-irony are conducive to nonreductive understandings? What are the conditions for serious translation between different routes in an interconnected but not homogenous modernity? (Clifford, 1997: 13).

In conclusion, it has been noted that there are high expectations attached to study abroad, particularly for American students who are travelling in greater and greater numbers to Africa and other regions that have only recently started receiving more study abroad visitors. According to Stagl, “Real or imaginary travelling is...frequently connected with extraordinary states of consciousness, for example initiation, the quest for visions, ecstasy, shamanism and pilgrimages” (Stagl in *A History of Curiosity*, cited by Khair, 2006: 2). Thus, Khair (2006) suggests that the home-comer from such a journey is expected to have changed, but in the process may actually end up disrupting the norms of his or her group (or his or her own expectations).

Emphasising this disruption, Robertson et al. (1994) state, “The travelling narrative is always a narrative of space and difference. It may not always broaden the mind but it prods at it. It provokes new concepts, new ways of seeing and being, or at the very least, when the old ways of seeing and being have been stubbornly imported into foreign territory, subjects them to strain and fatigue” (2). By analysing the pre-trip narratives, the disjunctures and the post-trip narratives of 36 study abroad students in South Africa, I have attempted to find out if this is happening. Are American study abroad students challenging the notions of Africa and South Africa that have dominated imperial Euro-American discourse for centuries?

In my analysis, the conversations between early travellers’ tales and study abroad stories revealed that, like these early tales, there are still particular forms of narratives that dominate the imagination and rhetoric of Western travellers. Many of the pre-trip narratives today still have close ties with the images of old. However, it appears that study abroad students are frequently not aware of these narratives, believing that they can travel with no expectations or

biases. This results in hugely varied reactions to the moments of disjuncture. While the imperialist agenda may not feel as present as it was for early European travellers, many of my respondents reverted back to the pre-trip narratives due to the influence of pressures that seek to maintain the status quo.²⁴⁰ However, a few students were provoked to ‘new ways of seeing.’

Consequently, both early travellers’ tales and study abroad stories demonstrate the difficulties in breaking beyond the master narratives and images. However, the two sets of tales do differ greatly when it comes to the post-trip narratives. Although both show the strong influence of their stories’ recipients, my respondents appeared much more concerned about correcting misperceptions than early travellers and explorers. The challenge when they return home is therefore whether they are able to put these desires into action. As noted by Freire:

When a word is deprived of its dimension of action, reflection automatically suffers as well; and the word is changed into idle chatter, into verbalism, into an alienated and alienating ‘blah.’ It becomes an empty word, one which cannot denounce the world, for denunciation is impossible without a commitment to transform, and there is no transformation without action (Freire, 2000: 87).

According to Bruner, this challenge is tied up in the fact that “the trip as lived, as experienced, and as told are never exact replicas of one another, and there is no precise mimetic correspondence” (19). As noted earlier, he suggests this takes some working through. Several of my participants provided their own conclusions to the overall narrative of their experience. Some were quite ambivalent:

Sometimes I’m afraid I’m remembering all the ‘wrong’ things. There are days when the more difficult parts of my trip are all I can seem to remember and then I don’t even want to talk about it, because I’m so tired of Africa being lumped together as one big continent, and additionally, all the Africans (again, lumped together) as either being the Other or as victims. The stories we tell can greatly influence the perspectives of the people we relate them to. So that’s been the most difficult thing: struggling to frame my experiences in the most constructive manner, while simultaneously not forgetting my experiences or de-personalizing them (Resp. 30, email: SIT).

²⁴⁰ For example, in South Africa specifically, “The predominant set of codes through which South Africa has been represented and imaged is through variants of a dichotomy between the conditions of ‘modernity’ and ‘primitiveness’ (Rassool & Witz, 1996: 364). This comes out clearly in the ‘Africa Light’ narrative.

While I certainly learned a lot in South Africa, because it was a difficult time for me, I don't like to think about it that often... [] I have largely moved on with my life much as it was before I left. I think that represents the difficulty I have in fitting my time there into a larger picture of my life, but perhaps that will become easier with time (Resp. 25, email: UCT).

Others were much more positive, noting a sense of renewed direction from their travels:

SA has had a major impact on my life, especially when I think about my identity. I must admit that it has made me think about race and gender a lot more than I ever have, which has made me feel like I no longer live in this fantasy world where everything is great. It made me want to become a stronger black woman because I realized how disempowered many black women in not only the US and SA are, but black women all over the world. So, I guess SA helped me find some sort of direction I want to take my life in (Resp. 28, email: SIT).

My time in South Africa at UCT... was an amazing, life-changing experience that I will not forget. I was introduced to development economics and I was able to see what was happening 'on the ground'... the experience has even made me consider a career in the field of development economics (Resp. 35, email: UCT).

Needless to say, scholars throughout the ages have agreed that for better or for worse travel does change one's life. But does it help one live more responsibly in the world? Is it possible to speak 'true words' about one's experiences, words that are aware of the influences of discourse and politics?

According to Pratt (2008):

The present state of the world hardly affirms the success of this enterprise. Imperial thinking continues to renew itself and mutate with great resilience. Today's imperial eyes look out on "less developed" spaces and see sites for industrial outsourcing, plantations for genetically modified monocrops, dumping grounds for toxic waste. Scripts replay unrevised. When George W. Bush early in 2003 told the U.S. army he was sending to Iraq "not to conquer anybody, but to liberate people," he was ventriloquizing British General Sir Stanley Maude when he arrived to occupy Baghdad in March 1917. "Our armies," said Maude, "do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators." The British withdrew in 1958, when Bush was 12 years old... As I write these words, the American occupation of Iraq will soon enter its fourth year (2008: xiii).

However, as I write these words a year later, the United States has just elected a president who represents hope and a commitment to end the occupation in Iraq. President Obama's election is

just one example of the fact that change is possible and that new narratives can be told. Yet, it also reconfirms the importance of continuing to examine imperial discourse and activities, from the level of master narratives and all the way down to specific words choices (Asante, 2007).²⁴¹

Sometimes this may mean being aware of the moments and locations that aren't easily "storyable" (Bruner, 2005). At other moments we may need to be ready to promote new ways of imagining our 'selves' and 'others' by "practicing non-absolutist forms of citizenship" (Clifford, 1997: 9). Whatever the case, the main danger today is that we ignore the ways that the same type of discourse that encouraged the colonizing of Africa is still lurking in our schoolbooks, newspapers and corporate boardrooms.

The need to 'civilise' Africans has been the theme that ran through the colonization process even in post-colonial Africa. However, in post-colonial Africa, the discourse has changed from that of civilization to that of development... modernization theory, has, since the 1950's, not only misrepresented economies in Africa and their colonial destabilization, but also silenced the different voices within the African continent" (Matshediso, 2005: 4).

Thus, the next step for a project like this is to call for more African voices on this topic. What do the home stay families, taxi drivers, South African students and community members experience when American study abroad students arrive? Do they challenge the dominant narratives as well? Notions that Africa needs the West or needs to be like the West will keep reinventing themselves to keep American and European interests central and protected unless they are challenged. Therefore, American study abroad students, who are under the influence of historic, economic and rhetorical forces, need to be challenged and encouraged to continue to examine their discourse on Africa, to speak 'true words' and to discard old images in favour of powerful narratives for change.

²⁴¹ Asante's (2007) approach to Afrocentricity is also concerned with the examination of rhetoric and being responsible about the specific words one chooses: "Typically the Afrocentrist wants to know that the language used in a text is based upon the idea of Africans as subjects. This means that the person who creates the text must have some understanding of the nature of the African reality. For example, when the American or English person calls the African house a "hut", he or she is misrepresenting reality. The Afrocentrist approaches the question of the living space of Africans from the standpoint of African reality. The idea of a house in the English language leads one to assume a building with kitchen, bedrooms, bathrooms, and recreational spaces, but in the African concept one has a different representation. Thus, the house must be conceived of as a compound of structures where there is one for sleeping, one for storage, and another for guest. The cooking and recreational areas are typically outside the sleeping space. Therefore it is important that any person considering African cultural ideas to pay close attention to the type of language that is used. In the case of the domicile of Africans, one must first of all ask what do Africans call the place where they sleep? This is the only way to prevent the use of negative terminology such as "hut" when referring to African living places" (Asante, 2007: 43).

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LIST OF UNPUBLISHED INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS AND EMAILS

- Focus Group 1. 2007. SIT students (Respondents 1, 2 and 3), interviewed and transcribed by Jennie Hutchinson (25 April 2007). Cape Town. (Unpublished).
- Focus Group 2. 2007. UCT students (Respondents 4, 5, 6 and 7), interviewed and transcribed by Jennie Hutchinson (05 May 2007). Cape Town. (Unpublished).
- Focus Group 3. 2007. UCT students (Respondents 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15), interviewed and transcribed by Jennie Hutchinson (10 May 2007). Cape Town. (Unpublished).
- Focus Group 4. 2007. UCT students (Respondents 16, 17, 18 and 19), interviewed and transcribed by Jennie Hutchinson (date). Cape Town. (Unpublished).

Focus Group 5. 2007. UCT students (Respondents 20 and 21), interviewed and transcribed by Jennie Hutchinson (17 September 2007). Cape Town. (Unpublished).

Focus Group 6. 2007. UCT students (Respondents 22, 23, 24 and 25), interviewed and transcribed by Jennie Hutchinson (07 October 2007). Cape Town. (Unpublished).

Focus Group 7. 2007. SIT students (Respondents 26, 27, 28 and 29), interviewed and transcribed by Jennie Hutchinson (13 November 2007). Cape Town. (Unpublished).

Focus Group 8. 2007. SIT students (Respondents 30, 31 and 32), interviewed and transcribed by Jennie Hutchinson (14 November 2007). Cape Town. (Unpublished).

One-on-one Interview 1. 2007. SIT student (Respondent 1), interviewed and transcribed by Jennie Hutchinson (27 April 2007). Cape Town. (Unpublished).

One-on-one Interview 2. 2007. UCT student (Respondent 25), interviewed and transcribed by Jennie Hutchinson (07 May 2007). Cape Town. (Unpublished).

One-on-one Interview 3. 2007. UCT student (Respondent 33), interviewed and transcribed by Jennie Hutchinson (26 September 2007). Cape Town. (Unpublished).

One-on-one Interview 4. 2007. UCT student (Respondent 34), interviewed and transcribed by Jennie Hutchinson (15 October 2007). Cape Town. (Unpublished).

One-on-one Interview 5. 2007. UCT student (Respondent 35), interviewed and transcribed by Jennie Hutchinson (16 November 2007). Cape Town. (Unpublished).

One-on-one Interview 6. 2007. SIT student (Respondent 36), interviewed and transcribed by Jennie Hutchinson (26 November 2007). Cape Town. (Unpublished).

One-on-one Interview 7. 2007. Programme coordinator (CIEE), interviewed by Jennie Hutchinson (28 March 2007). Cape Town. (Unpublished).

One-on-one Interview 8. 2007. Programme coordinator (SIT), interviewed by Jennie Hutchinson. Cape Town. (Unpublished).

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Personal emails. 2008. Correspondence with Respondent 1 (28 March 2008 & 01 April 2008).

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Personal email. 2008. Correspondence with Respondent 4 (27 March 2008).

Personal emails. 2008. Correspondence with Respondent 5 (26 March 2008 & 01 April 2008).

Personal emails. 2008. Correspondence with Respondent 10 (26 March 2008 & 28 March 2008).

Personal emails. 2008. Correspondence with Respondent 12 (26 March 2008 & 28 March 2008).

Personal email. 2008. Correspondence with Respondent 22 (27 March 2008).

Personal emails. 2008. Correspondence with Respondent 25 (06 May 2008 & 14 May 2008).

Personal email. 2008. Correspondence with Respondent 26 (29 May 2008).

Personal emails. 2008. Correspondence with Respondent 28 (28 March 2008 & 02 April 2008).

Personal email. 2008. Correspondence with Respondent 30 (27 March 2008).

Personal emails. 2008. Correspondence with Respondent 35 (22 April 2008 & 20 May 2008).

Personal emails. 2008. Correspondence with Respondent 36 (27 March 2008 & 31 March 2008).

Personal email. 2008. Correspondence with IAPO coordinator regarding statistics of study abroad students at UCT (8 July 2008).

APPENDIX 1: SUPPLEMENTARY LITERATURE

The Relationship between South Africa and the United States

The relationship between South Africa and the United States (and South Africans and Americans) is part of a complex web of relationships between what has been called ‘the West and the rest’, the ‘North and the South, the ‘developed and developing worlds’. However, rather than relying on such binaries, the following discussion aims to explore the more nuanced and complex dynamics of this relationship. As Magubane (2000) points out,

Among South Africa, Britain, the United States, West Germany, France and Portugal there exists a complex network of horizontal and vertical economic, political, diplomatic, and military relations of considerable importance. These networks themselves change in form and emphasis over time as the fortunes of particular imperialist countries fluctuate with wars, depressions, financial resources, and the contest for world supremacy between capitalism and socialism (85).

Literature reviews traditionally rely on academic books and journals. However, in this case, an article in Cape Town’s *Mail & Guardian* provides a useful starting point.²⁴² It was written by an American study abroad student studying at the University of Cape Town in 2007.²⁴³ Though not representative of the views of all American study abroad students, it provides a published opinion from which to begin an analysis of some of the types of things that have been written about the relationship between South Africa and the United States. He writes:

Chalk it up to naivety, perhaps, but when I left my university bubble in Boston College in the United States to spend a semester studying here at the University of Cape Town, I was expecting a break from Oprah, apple pie and Wal-Mart. As American study-abroad clichés go, it was my time to discover the rest of the world. But now that I’m here, *all I see, hear and eat is tinged with red, white and blue*. I live closer to a KFC in South Africa than I do at home, and walk by a Ford car dealership on my way to campus every day... I came abroad to experience something new – a new place, a new culture, a new world. And though South Africa has given me many incredible experiences, *it is often all too easy to fall back into enjoying all things American* (Wiedeman, 2007, italics added).

²⁴² This is supported by Coffey & Atkinson’s (1996) approach: “[R]eading need not be confined to the work of other social scientists. There are many genres in which authors explore social worlds, both fiction and nonfiction. Many... use diverse sources to develop fruitful and productive ideas” (110).

²⁴³ Unfortunately, this student was not one of my participants. I would have liked to have interviewed him as well, but was not able to get in touch with him.

This student writes, as if it is a fact, that South Africa is essentially not much different than the United States. He seems to suggest that it is *inevitable* that a visitor to Cape Town will end up “enjoying all things American.” Yet nowhere in the article does he explore how his own socialization into a consumer culture at home might condition him to experience South Africa in terms of labels and brands. Nor does one find any mention of the historic circumstances that allowed American businesses to thrive in South Africa.

Wiedeman’s article was the first I’ve seen published by an American student in a South African newspaper. However, many study abroad students write articles for university publications and regional newspapers when they return home, or publish their experiences informally on blogs and web pages.²⁴⁴ This body of informal ‘literature’ is very influential in shaping Americans’ views of themselves in relation to South Africa. However, this type of writing, usually very experientially-based, can often leave out key parts of the larger story. For example, in contrast to Wiedeman’s conclusion that South Africa is “so American”, Campbell’s (2000) piece titled *The Americanization of South Africa* provides a much more complex analysis of the relationship between South Africa and the United States by placing the interaction in historical perspective. He suggests that while South Africa might seem very familiar to Americans, there is more to the relationship between our two countries than Coca-Cola and Kentucky Fried Chicken. Although there is no denying the impact of Americanization, the influence of the United States has been unevenly spread along regional, racial and generational lines; and Americanization has been both contested and accepted (Campbell, 2000).

Lest white Americans take a holier-than-thou attitude towards the white colonizers in South Africa, Campbell (2000) reviews the historical facts. In the earlier part of this past century, American engineers were directly involved with the development of the diamond and gold industries in South Africa and the creation of a consumer society. Campbell (2000) quotes the U.S. consul in Cape Town in 1921 who said, “There are splendid openings here for energetic men with sufficient capital to finance the undertaking and employ the large forces of cheap native labour found in most parts” (2000: 41). Skirting the fact that exploitative labour

²⁴⁴ After my first trip to South Africa in 2002, I also wrote an article for my university magazine reflecting on the things I had learned in Cape Town. It was called “Seed Planting: returning with songs” and was published in Gordon College Stillpoint, Spring 2003. One can also find such articles at www.transitions.abroad.com, a website dedicated to covering the wide range of educational opportunities abroad.

practices severely reduced the buying power of most South Africans, U.S. corporations continued to prosper by persuading the wealthy white minority to consume American products. Meanwhile, the architects of apartheid were drawing on American segregationist laws for ideas.

In the first half of the century, there were other interactions taking place as well, besides just business, trade and exchange of white ideologies. For example, *An African American in South Africa; The Travel Notes of Ralph J. Bunche 28 September 1937 to 1 January 1938*, compiled by Edgar (1992), provides a glimpse into the experience of an African American academic visiting South Africa. His detailed journaling is very different from other travel writing of that time. According to Edgar, “Outsider accounts of South African segregation rarely reveal its human side, but Bunche’s material adds considerable insight into how black people went about constructing their daily lives in the face of considerable barriers” (1992: 28). His writing also reveals the process of an American working through the similarities and differences between the United States and South Africa, particularly in terms of racial classifications.

Bunche was at a loss to understand why some Coloureds were so antagonistic towards Africans until he gained insight into the cultural and linguistic differences between many Coloureds and Africans and how South Africa’s racial hierarchy was structured. Coloureds (and Indians) constituted an intermediate caste between Europeans and Africans. By the late nineteenth century a Coloured identity began to crystallize as white authorities offered Coloureds slightly better education and employment opportunities and exemptions from pass laws so they would not ally themselves with Africans.

...

At the same time as South African segregation was driving a wedge between Coloureds and Africans, American segregation was moving in a different direction – bringing light-skinned and dark-skinned blacks closer together. This was due to the “one-drop rule,” which gained currency around 1915. The rule categorized as black any person with a “fatal drop” or a small percentage of black blood. Fine distinctions were not made between African Americans on the basis of skin color and culture; and anyone defined as black was discriminated against with the same intensity (Edgar, 1992: 29).

As will be illustrated in the findings, many Americans who come to South Africa today are still puzzling over ‘coloured’ identity and often not making the link back to how our two societies developed differently. Bunche’s experience is useful in illuminating this point, as well as illustrating the way African Americans were perceived differently from black South

Africans. To black South Africans, African Americans seemed to have achieved “racial progress and success in a white-dominated society” (Edgar, 1992: 23). To the white South Africans Bunche met, “Europeans had educated, Westernized and civilized African Americans over centuries of contact, while their African ancestors remained mired in savagery and backwardness” (Edgar, 1992: 19). As such, white South Africans assumed Bunche would share their perception. However, in contrast to white perspectives and other literature on the topic, Bunche’s journal entries approach the complexity of the interactions between South Africans and Americans from a much more nuanced and critical angle.

Returning to Campbell (2000) and moving on to the 1950’s, one finds that “the United States used its considerable influence in the United Nations to shield South Africa from international censure, by forestalling and, on occasion, vetoing anti-apartheid resolutions” (Campbell 2000: 53). Investments continued during the ‘60’s, which was, as Campbell (2000: 55) points out, ironically at the same time as “the United States began tentatively to confront the problem of [its own] racial inequality.” According to Thompson, in *A History of South Africa*, “By 1978, the United States has surpassed Britain as South Africa’s principal trading partner” (1995: 217). This consisted of direct investment by American companies such as Ford, General Motors, Mobil and Caltex Oil, as well as indirect investments such as American bank loans and shares in South African gold mining and other stocks (Thompson, 1995: 217).

During this time, many black American leaders of the civil rights movement “began to identify with black South Africans and to lobby against apartheid” even though few Americans had South African origins (Thompson, 1995: 217). Despite the anti-apartheid movement, however, American presidents, Eisenhower (1953-61) and Nixon (1969-77) “continued to treat South Africa as an ally” and opposed sanctions due to American economic interests in the region (1995: 219). Although Kennedy (1961-69) and Carter (1977-81) were slightly more critical of apartheid, Regan’s administration (1981-1989) again opposed sanctions, believing in an earlier memorandum²⁴⁵, which suggested that: “the only way for meaningful change to come about in South Africa was through the Whites” (Thompson, 1995: 232). Even though approximately 6,000 Americans, including 18 members of Congress, were arrested between 1984 and 1986 for picketing the South African

²⁴⁵ National Security Study Memorandum 39, established under Nixon.

embassy and consulate, Regan remained “ill-informed about the situation in South Africa and prejudiced in favor of the white population. ‘South Africa’, he said in 1985, has ‘eliminated the segregation we once had in our own country.’ (Thompson, 1995: 234). Fortunately, the American anti-apartheid movement was more educated about the South African situation than Regan and in October 1986, Congress finally passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act over the president’s veto.

In post-apartheid years, new ironies have emerged, such as the SABC airing more African American sitcoms “to shed its reputation as a bastion of ‘white’ South Africa”, but this, combined with pop music and movies depicting ghetto life, has given rise to Afro-American-style gang cultures in the Cape Flats and other township areas” (Campbell, 2000: 57). In the past 14 years since South Africa’s first democratic elections, there have been many other ambiguous interactions between the two countries. Here are some examples that have made the headlines in the past two years:

- Obama visits South Africa in 2006 and receives huge support by South Africans during the 2008 election (“An encounter with Obama”, *The Times*, 8 July 2008; “The US slays its demons”, *Mail & Guardian*, 7-13 November 2008).
- South Africans sell armored vehicles to the United States Army (“Surge in SA’s army sales to US”, *Mail&Guardian*, 3-9 October 2008).
- U.S. navy carriers visit Cape Town to “strengthen partnerships with South Africa” (“Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Group to Visit Cape Town”, <http://southafrica.usembassy.gov>, 01 October 2008).
- American press criticizes South Africa on xenophobic attacks (“SA gets a battering in the foreign media”, *The Times*, 22 July 2008).
- US critical of South African judge being nominated as the new UN Human Rights Commissioner because of Mbeki’s stance on Zimbabwe and a 2001 Durban conference on racism, which Washington found controversial (“SA judge accepts Human Rights post nomination: US ‘concern’ at UN announcement”, *Cape Argus*, 22 July 2008).
- South Africa sends an investment promotion and trade mission to the US to work on expanding the economic relations between South Africa and the US (“SA to grow its economic links in US”, *The Times*, 16 July 2008).

- Bush takes Mandela and other South African leaders off the US terror watch list, a restriction that has been an embarrassment to many people (“Mandela taken off US terror list”, *BBC.com*, 01 July 2008).
- Mbeki tells Bush that the political situation in Zimbabwe is none of America’s business (“Zimbabwe: Stop meddling in Zim, Mbeki tells Bush”, *The Herald (Harare)*, 30 May 2008).
- American celebrities make ridiculous comments while visiting South Africa (“Paris just loves West Africa...she thinks it’s a great country! Heiress blunders her way through our continent”, *The Times*, 25 March 2008).
- Mbeki expresses concern over South Africans taking multinationals to U.S. court over apartheid involvement (“US courts are acting judicially imperialist, says Mbeki”, *Business Report*, 9 November 2007)
- Bush ignorantly refers to Mandela’s death in a speech on his foreign policy (“Mandela death gaffe ‘out there’”, *News.com*, 21 September 2007).
- Oprah opens a private girls’ school in South Africa, which is quickly surrounded by controversies (“Oprah’s school ‘too strict’”, *Rapport*, 11 March 2007).
- University of Cape Town hosts debate with American ambassador (“Lively debate on US-SA relations”, *UCT Monday Paper*, 26 February 2007).

These are just a few examples. A full list would be much, much longer. However, they illustrate that South Africa is much more than just a nice study abroad spot for Americans, and the United States is much more than just a sending country to South Africa. Along with Campbell (2000), these examples also remind us of the agency of South Africans who have simultaneously resisted Americanization, while at the same time seeking out American goods, ideas and images. American students who come to South Africa may often find themselves in the middle of this paradox; for example, noticing the way some South African professors criticize the United States, while in the same breath using American ideas and innovations as benchmarks for progress.

For American academics, South Africa’s troubled racial history is often used as a foil for American historians and sociologists who are seeking another angle on the equally troubled race relations in the United States. For example, in *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*, Bonilla-Silva

(2006:179) refers to South Africa's category of 'honorary whites' (used during apartheid) to help explain the shift he sees happening in the United States away from a "biracial order" and towards a "complex and loosely organized tri-racial stratification system" composed of 'whites', 'honorary whites' and the 'collective black'. However, his comments and those of others about South Africa (like Omi and Winant, 1994) are quite brief and seem to assume prior knowledge. In contrast, Frederickson's (1981) seminal book *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American & South African History* goes into great detail to compare the similarities, differences and intersections of the racialised histories of South Africa and the United States.

This gaze is well illustrated by books like *Women to Women: Young Americans in South Africa*, a compilation of feature-article style stories written by a group of female American college students who came to South Africa in 2005. The book is organised under such headings as "Rebuilding a Nation", "Confronting Domestic Violence", "Saving the Children", "Dealing (or not) with HIV/AIDS" and "Facing an Uncertain Future". What strikes me is how the students write with such authority (and have already been published) even though they were in South Africa for a very short time. The back cover states that this book represents "a remarkable conversation among South African and American women about race, class and gender", but there are very few points where the writers place themselves in the stories. Instead, like many American academics, they remain invisible – the centre that gazes at the unusual and the unique, while leaving out the fact that they are cultural actors in these stories as well.

In contrast, *Melting Pots & Rainbow Nations* positions the identities of the writers' at the heart of the text. Written by "two middle-aged women who live eight thousand miles apart", they are self-admittedly "an unlikely couple – one, a New York Jewish intellectual... and the other, a spoiled white middle-class South African academic", who together are trying to "connect [their] contrasting identities and contexts" in discussions about "difference" and "disadvantage" in their respective societies (Bernstein & Cock, 2002:2). While they are both critical and hopeful about both societies, it is interesting to note the authors' particular optimism around the South African metaphor of the "rainbow nation" – a metaphor that I still found among a few of my participants, but one that most people living in South Africa have become disillusioned with, now six years after Bernstein & Cock wrote their book.

The Impact of American ‘Cultural Compulsions’ on Travel Abroad

Like Clifford (1992), Said (1978) suggests that travel and imperial movement were and still are motivated and deeply informed by culture. He writes, “My idea is that European and then American interest in the Orient²⁴⁶ was political according to some of the obvious historical accounts of it that I have given here, but that it was the culture that created that interest, that acted dynamically along with brute political, economic and military rationales” (Said, 1978: 12). Therefore, it is important to consider the specific characteristics and complexities of ‘American culture’ that might give rise to an interest in traveling abroad.

As noted in my glossary of key terms, ‘culture’ itself is a fraught term, and all the more complicated to discuss in the context of ‘multi-cultural’ societies like the United States and South Africa. However, as noted by Moon (1996, citing Shuter, 1990), “Without a sense of how communication is patterned within groups, we can have little understanding of how that communication differs from or resembles communication between groups” (76). Therefore, in order to understand the encounters between American study abroad students and South Africans, as well as the expectations American students bring with them, it is important to understand the cultural orientation many Americans are carrying with them.²⁴⁷

According to Varenne (1986), discussions about “American” culture have always been controversial. Before the 1960’s, the dominant paradigm in the United States assumed holism. This shifted to assumptions about radical heterogeneity and multiple cultures. Then by the late seventies, American Studies was reconstructed around “local analyses of regional processes” (1986: 6). However, Varenne and his colleagues suggest an alternative view to these developments:

People who live in the United States do speak in many voices that are easily identifiable. Methodists do not speak like Catholics, males like females, second-generation Italians from New York like tenth-generation Boston Brahmins. Each voice, however, has its place in the chorus. Indeed, the signs that help identify the voice, and *the system of connotations each carries, are controlled by the other voices and ultimately by the chorus itself*: ethnicity, religion, and

²⁴⁶ And I would add ‘all non-European people’ to this description.

²⁴⁷ The cultural characteristics of South Africans are too broad to cover in this paper and thus, unfortunately, must be saved for a follow up study.

any of the other qualities in terms of which people can be distinguished in the United States, are not simply produced by internal processes. Rather they are developed in interaction: Italian ethnicity is controlled by the political forces that have granted Columbus Day, the Mafia, pizza and pasta to “Italians.” People who have migrated from Italy do not have the power to refuse to place themselves in relation to such signs – even if they deny their relevance (1986:6).

The experience of being controlled by “the other voices” rings true when writers like Cose (1993) remind us of the voices that aren’t often understood by the white majority in the United States. Speaking on behalf of the black middle class, he states that “even in this age of ‘diversity’ and multiculturalism”, black Americans often face rejection and are kept in a position of uncertainty in terms of their admittance into full acceptance. Yet most white Americans are unaware. Cose adds that, “...certain widespread and amiable assumptions held by whites – specifically about the black middle class but also about race relations in general – are utterly at odds with the reality many Americans confront daily” (Cose, 1993: 2). The recent election of Barack Obama has brought great hope in terms of the future of equality in the United States to people of all ‘races’, but also brought to the surface many of the racist assumptions and prejudices that are still held strongly by segments of the American population.

Houston (1994) reminds us of the ongoing barriers to communication between Americans with different experiences of ‘race’ in her article *When black women talk to white women: Why dialogues are difficult*. She states, “Although not every contemporary conversation between black and white women is stressful, uncomfortable or unpleasant, much talk between black and white women takes place against a backdrop of long-standing suspicion and distrust” (Houston, 1994: 134). In addition to this distrust, Houston suggests that black and white American women listen for and hear different things. “African American women concentrate on both their own and white women’s interpersonal skills, strategies and attributes...white women on the other hand concentrate their descriptions on language style – vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation” (Houston, 1994: 135). In addition, Rosaldo (1989) argues that many middle-class (white) Americans, because of the invisibility and dominance of their cultural roots, are quite unaware of what makes them different from others who face marginalization and intolerance. Although this might be shifting as whiteness is challenged (Gallagher, xxxx), there still appears to be a tendency among white Americans to view cultures outside the United States as similar to the West. According to Barna (1994),

As Western trappings permeate more and more of the world the illusion of similarity increases. A look-alike façade deceives representatives from contrasting cultures when each wears Western dress, speaks English, and uses similar greeting rituals... But without being alert to possible underlying differences and the need to learn new rules for functioning, persons going from one city to the other will be in immediate trouble (Barna, 1994: 338).

He suggests that people from the United States “seem to hold this assumption of similarity more strongly than some other cultures”, in contrast to the Japanese, for example, who believe that “they are distinctively different from the rest of the world” (Barna, 1994: 338). However, this is paradoxically coupled with strong persisting beliefs among Americans about the exotic nature of many foreign destinations.

Even though some would agree with literary critic Leslie Fielder that, “Americans have no real identity. We’re all... uprooted people who come from elsewhere” (source unknown), Varenne suggests,

To live in the United States is to participate in a unique historical process that has solidified into a set of laws, customs, habits and rules for behavior and the interpretation of behavior – that is, into what we call a “culture,” *American* culture. ...We are not simply returning to the old search for statements about the American “mind” (as in American studies) or the American “character” (as in culture or personality work). “America” here, is the pattern of terms of which human beings must construct their lives when they interact in the United States. American culture is whatever one cannot escape in the United States (1986: 4,6).

Thus for the time being, I will look briefly at what some writers say about the dominant trends in American culture that do exert a strong force on people living in the United States. both internally in terms of values and externally in terms of socially accepted actions.²⁴⁸

As a starting point, **individualism** is a widely documented characteristic of American culture. According to Hoare (1994), “Ego-centrality in the United States can also be seen in the need for separateness and control. Alan Roland (1988) observed that the emphasis on youth and on the individuated self in dominant United States culture is grounded in Western society’s tendency toward object mastery, in efforts to control and subdue the external environment”

²⁴⁸ Unfortunately, I won’t have space here to go into many of the subcultures that also have an influence, but I have drawn on a series of earlier interviews that I conducted with American postgraduate students for another study.

(30). This individualism can play out strongly when Americans leave the United States and are faced with more collective cultures or less individualistic ways of doing things.

In addition to the preoccupation with the “needs of the self” and the “long-standing adulation of youth” Hoare (1994) states:

We must add to these mainstream expressions of identity, the dominant United States societal belief that one must capture an identity through a **work-defined role**. In the United States, because there is no singular ethnic culture, identity cannot flow naturally from cultural infusion. Most citizens are transported conveyors of an ancestral ethnicity/culture/race/belief system from a distant time and place. There is a societal culture in the ethos that promulgates ideas of autonomous identity, but this provides only a limited, unconnected sense of self.

This fact highlights a key difference between social attributes of identity in this heterogeneous society compared to more homogenous cultures. Homogenous cultures permeate the self with penetrating sounds and visual symbols, ethnic foods with special tastes and aromas, and tactile associations. In the heterogeneity of the United States, *assimilation to a societal ideology* frequently substitutes for such cultural grounding. Therefore, identity seems more difficult to achieve. In the United States, hard-won, substantial individual work grounds the self and becomes the totality of identity in the mainstream, replacing those aspects of identity that might otherwise flow from cultural immersion (33).

A participant in one of my earlier projects described this assimilation to American societal ideologies:

... the American myth of individualism... and the myth of what the West used to be... the wild West... became the American fantasy, in part because it did reflect such independence, such an area of rugged individualism, but it's **the American Dream** also, the dream of what you can do as an independent person, you're not classified by your ethnicity, you're classified as only the individual and what you can make of yourself... I'm not saying this is how I see the objective reality of America, but this is the myth, this is the fantasy, this is what I see as the ideology (Participant 4, American Culture Project: 2007).

Peck (1994: 94) pushes the discussion of American individualism a step further by breaking it down into down into three dominant discursive frameworks – **liberalism** (“based on the belief in the primacy and autonomy of the individual”), **therapeutic** discourse (a mode of privileging “individual experience as the primary source of truth” and interpersonal communication as the way to solve any problem), and **Protestantism** (the “dominant

religious orientation in the United States”, which is formulated around individual salvation and a personal relationship with God”).

Carbaugh (1990) describes how this individualism influences **communication differences** between Americans and ‘others’ (in this case, Soviets) in terms of how much information is disclosed,

The American identity – speaking as it did, individually about “the problems with the system” – thus displayed its characteristic problem-orientation, self-focus, and individual base, at least in this context. The intercultural result, co-created by all – from these initial meetings – was a Soviet pattern unwilling to make known what most need to be known, and an American pattern eagerly disclosing what needed to be known the least (Carbaugh, 1990: 159).

Ebsworth et al. (1996) discuss **greeting styles** in American English and particularly focus on the “speedy greeting” which poses difficulties for many other cultures. “When Americans must choose between the competing obligations of greeting a friend or leaving the area to do something else, they are able to abbreviate their greeting... this short cut is understood by both parties and a slight is neither intended or, usually, felt.” In contrast, “Hispanics appear to find the speedy greeting next to impossible to perform. For them, friends in one’s presence take priority over other obligations” (Ebsworth et al., 1996: 99).

Writers like Schor (2004) shift our attention from the communicative elements of American culture to **consumerism**. In *Born to Buy*, she discusses the way children in the United States are being strategically targeted by “the architects of this culture – the companies that make, market, and advertise consumer products” (2004:9). Even the rituals of birth, she writes, are “centred on consumer choices” (2004: 11) and the entire experience of childhood is changing – more pressure to succeed, more homework, over-scheduling, greater materialism and a “lost connection to the outdoors” (2004: 12). This experience of growing up, though not wholly generalizable, no doubt contributes to the mindset and habits that young Americans bring with them when they study abroad. This was confirmed to me by an American postgraduate student visiting South Africa:

... there is certainly something uniquely American about the way we consume. So I think a large facet of American culture is very much instant gratification, like we are used to a certain level of things, this is almost true across class, in my experience... there are luxury items that span the scale of price, there are good chocolates, there are good jeans, there are also fancy cars, so it’s not just really expensive big ticket items that signal luxury, you

can get the \$5 latte instead of the \$2 latte. There is this consumerism, I only really became aware of after leaving the country, this willingness to sort of pay whatever [price] for a certain thing that you want... I see it in myself. You know, it's a personality trait that I've just decided to contend with, **I'm used to being able to get what I want**, I mean that in a – to go to a store and get the type of brand that I want. So I think that breeds a certain degree of entitlement (Participant 1, American Culture Project: 2007).

He elaborated further on the idea of entitlement:

There is this sense of **entitlement** that Americans have and it's sometimes entitlement to jobs, but it's mostly entitlement to space and people fight over it and I think there are folks who are safely within the rubric of what an American stereotypically is who spend a lot of time arbitrating over who doesn't look like them or behaves like them or who worships who they do (Participant 1, American Culture Project: 2007).

According to this respondent, the arbitrating he describes can also play out in competition over who is the most well-traveled. "There becomes this sort of jockeying for who's the most global, or who's more African, or who knows this place better – it's an eccentricity that is valued in America, to be well travelled, you can see it, it's currency among Americans" (Participant 1, American Culture Project: 2007). He noted that most Americans are socialized into thinking about travel in terms of vacation – which by definition is a time in which regular activities are suspended and rest and leisure activities are expected. "When most people think about travel, because so few people do it, we equate travel with vacation; so when people go abroad, they go abroad to vacation" (Participant 1, American Culture Project: 2007).

This stands in contrast to the Gypsy cultural framework, mentioned earlier, in which travel is viewed as a normal part of life, not as a tally of adventures to compete over (Banks & Banks, 1995). This sense of competition, consumerism and entitlement is deeply rooted, as pointed out by Kwenda (2003), and often turns into an "uninhibited desire to penetrate and consume the inner mysteries of all things." In his striking comparison of African and Western religious orientations, he suggests that:

[T]he global capitalist system, for its part, thrives on the doctrine of scarcity, one of its founding and sustaining myths being that there is not enough of the good life for everyone. Not everyone is guaranteed a place in the sun. There is not enough room. Little wonder, then, there is strife. Thus is born or reinforced the cultural and religious orientation of craving what is forever elusive (Kwenda, 2003:71).

Strangely, in the very search for what is elusive, Wilson (1994) identifies another key component of American culture as its **scientific orientation and secularization**, which often doesn't allow for non-scientific or 'sacred' worldviews. Describing his work with another anthropologist in Ecuador, in which they encountered different interpretations of something as 'simple' as the colour of leaves, he writes,

We carried around with us scientific explanations of natural phenomena that allowed us to 'normalize' observations, to bring observations that ran counter to the usual into conformity with the expected. I have no serious doubt that these particular 'scientific' explanations are essentially correct. But still, I am concerned with the fact that my vision is so 'normalized' that I could not see what was literally in front of my face (Wilson, 1994: 199).

As will be seen later in my findings, this intellectual or positivist framework common to American culture plays itself out in the things my participants *see* in South Africa.

This scientific, secular framework is further strengthened by a culture of **political correctness** and **academic 'objectivity'** in the United States. According to Said,

The determining impingement on most knowledge production produced in the contemporary West (and here I speak mainly about the United States) is that it be nonpolitical, that is, scholarly, academic, impartial, above partisan or small-minded doctrinal belief. One can have no quarrel with such an ambition in theory, perhaps, but in practice the reality is much more problematic. No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society (1978: 10).

Though objectivity has its strengths, as noted by Said, it is often much more problematic in practice. This could be particularly true when it misleads study abroad students into thinking that they are blank slates without any inherent biases.

Anthropologist Horace Miner (1956) provides another angle on the characteristics of American culture in his famous work, *Body Ritual among the Nacirema*.²⁴⁹ In this text, he makes American culture a strange thing, in contrast to his contemporaries who were busy studying 'exotic' cultures far from home. He writes,

²⁴⁹ 'Nacirema' is 'American' spelled backwards.

Nacirema culture is characterized by a **highly developed market economy**, which has evolved in a rich natural habitat. While much of the people's time is devoted to economic pursuits, a large part of the fruits of these labors and a considerable portion of the day are spent in ritual activity. The focus of this activity is the human body, the **appearance and health** of which loom as a dominant concern in the ethos of the people... The Nacirema have an almost pathological horror of and fascination with the mouth, the condition of which is believed to have a supernatural influence on all social relationships. Were it not for the rituals of the mouth, they believe that their teeth would fall out, their gums bleed, their jaws shrink, their friends desert them, and their lovers reject them (Miner, 1956).

Forty years after Miner wrote this, Farley (1996) reminds us that the highly developed economy he referred to came about through a series of historical and structural changes. He refers to Schor (1991) who wrote *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure*. Farley summarizes the changes as follows:

...the capitalist process of keeping wages as low as possible... in the 1970s and 1980s... unions lost their clout and governmental regulations and federal court rulings sided more with employers than with workers. As wages stagnated and then declined, Americans had to select one of two choices: accept lower standards of living or increase the amount of time spent in the office or in the shop. For the most part, Americans chose **more work**. Producers and their advertisers encourage us to consume more, so our expectations go up as we look for bigger homes, additional appliances, recreational vehicles, VCRs, and more recently, expensive personal computers. But maintaining or increasing a family's income comes at a great personal cost – the loss of the time men and women once spent with their families and the loss of leisure time (Farley, 1996: 15).

This sentiment was confirmed by one of my respondents in the previous project:

Our culture is in overdrive. I think there's so much emphasis on success, I mean I think it's true that Americans take less vacation time than just about anyone in the world, that we're a culture that values work ethic and "success". And getting ahead, we define ourselves by our careers maybe more than any other culture... (Participant 4, American Culture Project: 2007).

According to Eisenstadt (1992), "The very conditions that generate resources for broader complex institution building also tend to undermine the "simple," or "primitive," settings of potential trust as they exist within the family and kinship groups or in small communities" (71). When taken into consideration with the previous quotes, this prompts one to ask whether there are things that upper or middle class Americans may have lost as a result of

‘development’ and technology in the United States? Are there conditions within American culture that are actually pushing people to go away, to go on exchange in search of what they imagine to be the “simple” or the “primitive”? Or is ‘adventure-seeking’ in itself part of American culture, as Gallahorn & Gallahorn (1958: 372) suggest, “Historically a sense of adventure has been an important characteristic of the American people. It is not surprising, therefore, that seeking adventure should rank fourth in the objectives of young Americans traveling abroad.”

According to one of my respondents, there is a strange combination of belief in the superior advancement of the United States combined with a desire for something less restrictive:

[W]e are part of a self-help generation because people are constantly looking at their lives and figuring out how they can be better, you know, either making more money or psychologically or whatever, there’s an acknowledgement across the board also and this struck me coming to South Africa that we’ve got it almost figured out, it’s just us as individuals who must come to the table now, that we’ve got a great formula for how society should work and be ordered, how roads are built, how schools are run, how infrastructure is, we’ve got that figured out now it’s just us, if we could only be better, if we could only be more productive...

In coming to South Africa I felt such a relief in a sense, because I felt wow, there’s no one who’s living in this country who’s going to tell you that things are figured out here. Everyone will tell you this is a constant project, this is something that’s in transition, this is a place that’s changing all the time and willingly or unwillingly there’s a recognition that there’s change that’s needed and that we don’t have it all figured out, you know which is something that across the board in the United States I think people think we’ve got it all figured out (Participant 3, American Culture Project: 2007).

This respondent was right in pointing out something that can be found here in South Africa that is lacking in the United States. However, this admiration can also become just a cover for the belief that the United States is still the standard for development. Just as Strain (2003) debunked the myth of demediation, Said reminds us of the powerful influence of national identity and culture on one’s interaction with the rest of the world, whether aware of this influence or not.

[F]or a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of *his* actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second. And *to be a European or an American in such a situation is by no means an inert fact*. It meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the

earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer (Said, 1978: 11).

Said's words remind us that an American abroad is never an "inert fact". It is always connected to historic relationships involving contested dynamics of power.

Materials Produced by Study Abroad Programmes

I now turn to some of the material produced by study abroad providers that have programmes in South Africa. Rather than looking at all of the programmes, I chose three that were represented by students in my sample – Interstudy, CIEE and SIT – and explore some of the promises they make about study abroad generally, as well as how they 'market' South Africa specifically.

Interstudy is a British educational organization that was founded in 1980 and has offices in Boston, Bath and Cape Town. Adding to programmes in Ireland and Britain for North American students, Interstudy began running programmes in South Africa in 1996 and claims to be "the first to offer fully-integrated study abroad programmes in the Republic of South Africa" (<http://www.interstudy.org>). Interstudy makes the following statements on its website about what makes it unique from other study abroad programmes and what it promises students:

"A deliberately small staff and extensive computerization means we are there to help you with any question or problem you may have, large or small. You'll get to know us quickly and won't get lost in the shuffle."

"We exist to make sure you study abroad experience lives up to your expectations."

"We treat our students as adults and do not 'hold your hand' while you are overseas."

"We help make sure your credits transfer back to your home institution, your financial aid applies to your program, your housing is what you want, and you have all the opportunities, both in and out of the classroom to accomplish what you've set out to do: learn another culture by living there."

"We immerse our students in the culture and lifestyle of the country in which they choose to study."

“We don’t ‘export’ North American faculty teach you about the host country. You learn by living immersed in the culture, by doing and by traveling. Our open academic policy not only means that you have more interaction with host country students, but also that a wide range of courses are available to you.”

If you then follow the link on Interstudy’s website to the page title “South Africa as a destination” (which is a title that in itself needs unpacking) the following descriptions are found:

“An exhilarating, spectacular and complex country”

“South Africa... a world in a country”

“...experience many different landscapes in a day, from the arid and semidesert of the Karoo to the tropical beaches of Kwazulu-Natal; from the snow-capped Drakensburg mountains to the fertile wine country near Stellenbosch. One can go on safari in Kruger National Park, arguably Africa’s greatest game park, as well as study the Fynbos Floral Kingdom in the Western Cape, the world’s smallest biome.”

“... the beautiful cities of South Africa. Cape Town, in the shadow of the breathtaking 3,500 foot high Table Mountain, is a cosmopolitan city that still bears traces of the Dutch roots of its early settlers. Well up the eastern coast is Durban, long a British commercial center. ... The center of South Africa’s lucrative mining and manufacturing base, Johannesburg grew out of the country’s diamond and gold rush of the nineteenth century.”

“With eleven official languages, South Africa has embraced its own cultural diversity since apartheid ended in 1994. Dubbed “The Rainbow Nation,” South Africa is much more than just black and white. Afrikaners, Chinese, Indians, Zulu, Xhosa and Cape Malays are just a few of the cultural groups that call South Africa home.”

“All South African universities offer a full and balanced semester system virtually identical to North America.”

“The ‘new’ South Africa is one in transition, still coming to terms with democracy and legitimate majority rule. It is also evolving as a culture, with various groups opening up lines of communication that for so long were shut. It is an exciting time for South Africa, and being to be an observer to these changes first hand, is truly the chance of a lifetime” (<http://www.interstudy.org>).

I am struck by what great lengths this study abroad programme is going to in order to try to ‘sell’ South Africa. It suggests that, like tourism, study abroad is a lucrative business but this is one thing that is also overlooked in the literature. However, it needs to be looked at. The

big promises and romanticizing of the context not only hide the real people and issues, but also serve a strategic discursive purpose. For the study abroad provider, it may just be marketing, but what happens when this is the only frame that students are given to interpret their experience?

Moving on to CIEE, a company that offers 97 study abroad programmes in 35 countries, one finds even greater appeals to the touristic imagination. Their slogan – “What will your story be?” – taps into the way stories have become currency. The more daring and unusual the story, the more status and attention a student will receive with their friends and family back home. Below are some of the phrases from CIEE’s home page:

“Make the world give up its secrets.”

“Studying abroad is for more than language majors, it’s for anyone who wants to indulge in a passion, explore a fascination or challenge the status quo – of the wide world or their personal routine.”

“Make the world your laboratory.”

“Choose from 35 countries and over 40 subject areas.”

“Don’t speak a foreign language? Don’t let that scare you: 54 of our 97 study abroad programs don’t have a language pre-requisite.”

“CIEE has staff living abroad in all the places you’ll study. This will make all the difference when you want to resolve an issue quickly” (<http://www.ciee.org>).

The language here echoes with appeals to individual *wants* and ‘making’ the world serve those interests. The world is described as the playground or laboratory of the West. The descriptions of the Cape Town programmes also place the agency on the Western students, while in the choice of language don’t even attribute agency to powerful leaders like Mandela. Notice for example:

“Apartheid has finally ended, and leaders like Nelson Mandela have been transformed from political prisoners to presidents” (<http://www.ciee.org>).

Who did the transforming? And as with Interstudy’s description of Cape Town, the city is referred to first and foremost as a romanticized colonial destination.

“A stop for seafaring Europeans since Vasco de Gama opened the spice route in 1498, Cape Town has been shaped by the San Bushman, Xhosa, Dutch, Afrikaans, and British” (<http://www.ciee.org>).

As if they were all equal players.

Unlike Interstudy, CIEE does alert students to the fact that there are some differences between their home educational system and UCT’s system. It even breaks down the academic culture and grading system for prospective students. However, CIEE also reverts to the same big claims about guaranteed immersion:

“Study at the University of Cape Town and immerse yourself in South African culture.”

“Through integration in local communities, students become participants in, rather than mere observers of this dynamic and evolving environment. Through this process, students gain a comprehensive understanding of social relations within South Africa” (<http://www.ciee.org>).

Capitalizing on the concept of immersion, SIT, or the School for International Training, positions itself as a “pioneer in field-based, experiential programs.” In operation for 50 years. SIT has more than 80 programs and claims on its home page to “prepare students to be interculturally effective leaders, professionals and citizens” (<http://www.worldlearning.org>). It describes its unique offering in the following ways:

“We are committed to not only providing education for our students, but also to contributing to our host communities in meaningful ways.”

“SIT fosters a worldwide network of individuals and organizations committed to responsible engagement in the changing world.”

“SIT programs require students to interact every day with local communities, in both academic and personal ways, and these experiences translate into empathy, understanding, and a new perspective. Students develop an analytical and compassionate lens, and integrate themselves into the world community, becoming truly global citizens” (<http://www.worldlearning.org>).

All of the SIT participants I interviewed were part of SIT’s “Multiculturalism and Social Change” Programme. The SIT web page dedicated to this particular programme describes South Africa and the programme in some of the following ways:

“Focus on identity to explore the sociopolitical debates surrounding South Africa’s multicultural society as it strives for social reform and a sound economy. South Africa is truly a multicultural society, with 11 national languages and numerous ethnic groups. While South Africans have seen tremendous change since the first multiracial elections in 1994, they anticipate a long road before achieving the stated goal of equality.”

“Cape Town, the program base, was one of the first South African cities to voluntarily promote racial integration. In a typical semester, students complete four homestays, each providing the opportunity to meet and interact from South Africans from different geographic and ethnic backgrounds. The strong emphasis on the homestay as experiential learning complements lectures, discussions, field-based assignments, and excursions to provide a multidisciplinary analysis of the country.”

“The major fourteen-day excursion takes the group through the rural areas of Kwa-Zulu Natal and the Eastern Cape. This excursion traverses South Africa’s cultural tapestry, passing through regions historically associated with the Xhosa, Khoe, Zulu, Indian, Afrikaner and English cultures” (<http://www.worldlearning.org>).

As can be noted in these excerpts, the descriptions and emphasis offered by SIT differs quite a bit from the more adventure-oriented discourse of CIEE and Interstudy, in terms of its emphasis on homestays, integration and contribution to the local community. However, SIT also goes to lengths to paint the “experience” in the most appealing way possible, and appears to be very much using its edge on immersion as a marketing tool.

APPENDIX II: RESPONDENT PROFILES

To provide some background and context, the following information was provided by my respondents through post-interview questionnaires. However, their names have all been changed.

	Age	Home State	Majors	Countries Visited	Languages	Heritage
1. 'Elise'	20	New York	Sociology, Italian	Italy, Mexico, France, England, Switzerland, Ireland, a lot in the Caribbean	Italian, English, a little French, a very little Xhosa	German, Polish, Romanian, Jewish
2. 'Melanie'	20	New York	Political Science, Environmental Studies	Canada	English	Irish German
3. 'Ina'	21	Massachusetts	Anthropology	Morocco, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Canada, Mexico, Panama, Ireland, etc	Spanish, Xhosa	Irish/ Scottish
4. 'Laura'	20	Connecticut	Pre-law	Italy	English, Spanish, Sotho	Italian & French
5. 'Ruby'	22	North Dakota	Anthropology Archaeology	Canada, Mexico	English, a little Arabic	American
6. 'Amy'	20	New York	Psychology, Gender Studies	Thailand, Laos, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Belize, England	English, Studied Spanish, French, Latin, Hebrew	(blank)
7. 'Dan'	21	Missouri	Sociology	Canada, India	English, a little bit of French	Jewish
8. 'Jennifer'	20	Massachusetts	English, African Studies	South Africa, Ghana	English, Spanish	African American
9. 'Mark'	21	??	Geology, Environmental Studies	Australia, Mexico, England, France	English	"Polish-ish"
10. 'John'	21	Florida	English, Film	Canada, Mexico,	English, Spanish	Caucasian

				Dominican Republic, Barbados, Costa Rica, England, Holland, Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, Italy		
11. 'Sherri'	21	Washington	English, Sociology, Africana Studies	Canada, Ghana, Mexico	English, some French	African American
12. 'Ellen'	20	California	History	Western Europe	English	"White mongrol"
13. 'Melissa'	21	Illinois	Political Science	Spain, Austria, Slovakia	English, Arabic, Spanish	Polish, French
14. 'Molly'	21	Wisconsin	Geography, Environmental Studies	Lots of Western Europe, SA	English, bad French, bad Norwegian	Norwegian
15. 'Heather'	19	Maryland	History, Science, Zoology	Germany, Austria, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Hungary, Czech Republic, South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Namibia	English, some Spanish	Western European (esp. Ireland)
16. 'Becky'	21	Missouri	Political Science, Education	Ecuador, Canada, Scotland, Italy, South Africa, Namibia, Zambia	English	American
17. 'Alison'	20	Michigan	International Studies	England	English	Irish
18. 'Nadine'	20	Maryland	Biology, African & Africana Studies	India, Canada	English, Malayalam	Indian (parents immigrated to the US in 1977)
19. 'Lana'	21	Montana	International Studies, Biology,	USA, Canada	English, some	American

			Environmental Studies		Spanish	
20. 'Andrea'	21	New Jersey	Political Science, Business	Europe, Mexico, Islands	English, French	Irish (50%), Swedish (25%), German (25%)
21. 'Susan'	20	New York	English, Creative Writing, Art History	Kenya, Greece, Italy, England, Namibia, South Africa, Canada	French, Swahili (English)	Irish, English, Scottish, German
22. 'April'	23	Colorado (Grew up in Ecuador)	International Relations, Political Science	India, Thailand, Panama, Columbia, Venezuela, South Africa, Mozambique	Spanish	Caucasian
23. 'Michael'	20	California	Economics	Japan, Australia, England, Spain, France, Mexico, Canada, Italy, Greece	English, French	Black
24. 'Lucy'	20	Colorado	Health Sciences	Mexico, Canada, England, Bahamas, Jamaica, Virgin Islands, South Africa	English	Swedish, English
25. 'Darren'	20	California	Political Science, History	Ecuador, Peru, Tibet, China, England, France, Italy, Croatia, Sweden, Denmark, Mexico, Canada	English	Jewish/ Caucasian
26. 'Joy'	21	Minnesota	American Studies	Mexico, Canada, Spain, France, Holland, England, Scotland, South Africa!	English, some Spanish	British Hungarian
27. 'Elli'	20	California	Business	None (besides South Africa)	English, a little Spanish & Xhosa	Polish, Lebanese, Norwegian

28. 'Shana'	21	Illinois	Political Science	None	English, Spanish	Black American
29. 'Kelly'	22	Pennsylvania	Theater, Women & Gender Studies	Spain, Canada, Morocco	English, 'lil Spanish	Scotch-Irish, Hungarian, Croatian, Serbian, German, English, French
30. 'Katrina'	20	Montana	English writing, Women's Studies	Australia	English, French	American with 50% Swedish roots (4 th generation)
31. 'Sara'	20	New York	Cultural Geography	Canada	English	American
32. 'Mia'	21	Kansas	Anthropology, Sociology	China, South Africa	Cantonese, English	Chinese
33. 'Debra'	22	Massachusetts	??	Spain, England, Italy, Ghana, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe	Spanish, English	Black/White
34. 'Leya'	21	Illinois (but grew up in London and from Nigeria originally)	Sociology	London	Yoruba, English, some Spanish	Yoruba (Nigerian tribe)
35. 'Andrew'	22	Indiana	Economics, finance	Canada, South Africa	Small ability with German	German/Austrian
36. 'Rich'	20	Connecticut	Public Policy, Psychology	Kenya, India	A little Spanish	British, Dutch

APPENDIX III: CONSENT FORM

University of Cape Town

Diversity Studies Programme
Department of Sociology
Rondebosch, Cape Town

CONSENT FOR MASTERS RESEARCH

September/October 2007

I, Jennie Hutchinson, a masters student in the Diversity Studies Programme at UCT, request your permission to tape record and use the transcript from this interview in my masters dissertation. This, along with many other transcripts, will form a very important part of my study on the experiences and perceptions of American exchange students in South Africa. Although I may use direct quotes from your stories, I ensure complete anonymity in terms of name and any identifying characteristics.

I hope to use this research in future publications regarding cultural exchanges. Thus, I request that in signing this consent form, you also grant me permission to use the transcripts at my discretion while still maintaining your anonymity.

If at any time you wish to withdraw from this study, it is your right to do so. If you have any other questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at the numbers below. Once the final report is finished and accepted by UCT, a copy will be held in the university library and I would be very interested in your feedback.

Thank you very much for your participation in this research.
Sincerely,

Jennie Hutchinson ~ P.O. Box 13268, Mowbray 7705 ~ cell: 076-887-5363

I, _____, grant Jennie Hutchinson the permission to record, transcribe and use this interview in her masters dissertation and publications.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX IV: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Please introduce yourself with your name, where you are from and what you are studying.
2. Describe your favorite or most memorable day here so far.
3. What were your reasons for choosing the continent of Africa?
4. What were your reasons for choosing Cape Town (or South Africa) specifically?
5. What concerns or comments did people tell you about coming to Africa?
6. What were you most worried about before coming?
7. What were you most excited about before coming?
8. Was there anything that you read or did to prepare for your time here?
9. What was your main purpose or goal in coming on an exchange programme?
10. What was your first day in South Africa like? (what did you do / where did you go / who did you meet?)
11. Was South Africa what you expected?
12. What is your impression of South Africans?
13. What was the first thing you wrote home about?
14. Tell me about your home-stays. (What have your living situations been like?)
15. In Cape Town, where and when have you felt most comfortable and most uncomfortable?

16. Have you done any volunteer work? What was your most memorable moment?
17. Local residents in Cape Town are generally concerned about their safety. Has this been a concern for you?
18. Another major concern in South Africa is the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. Have you had any contact with someone who is HIV+? What were your perceptions of the disease before? Have they changed?
19. What is it like for you as a white or black American in South Africa?
20. Have you traveled outside of South Africa? What was it like? How did it compare?
21. Did you parents or anyone else visit you while you were here and what was that experience like?
22. Has your time here changed the way you view yourself as an American?
23. What is it like to talk to people back home about what you have experienced here?
24. What will you remember most about the people you met here?
25. What mementoes or souvenirs are you taking home with you?
26. What do you think will be different when you get home? Have you changed?
27. What are the dominant perceptions in America about Africa?
28. If you were talking to another American student considering coming to Cape Town, what advise would you give them? What story would you tell them?
29. If you were in my shoes, what questions would you ask other American exchange students?

APPENDIX V: EMAIL FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Part 1

1. What are one or two of your strongest memories of South Africa?
2. What was it like talking about your experiences with your family and friends?
3. In response to your pictures or stories, have people voiced any questions or ideas about South Africa (or Africa in general) that surprised or bothered you? How did you respond?
4. What stories/experiences did you find yourself talking about the most frequently?
5. Are there any stories/memories that you haven't shared or been able to share? If so, why not?

Part 2

1. What was it like returning to the United States after your semester in South Africa?
2. How is the United States different from South Africa? How is it similar?
3. How would you describe South Africans?
4. Would you ever choose to live in South Africa? Why or why not?
5. What purpose or role has your experience in South Africa played in your life? Has it had an impact on your life in any way?