

Chapter 2

Are We (Still) the World?

Service Learning and the Weird Slot in Student Narratives of Study Abroad

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On two occasions in 2017, the lead author attended orientation meetings for study-abroad programs—one at a college, and the other at a high school—at which the presenter opened with this inspiring quote from Mark Twain: “Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime” (Twain 1879:333).

This assertion reflects commonly shared assumptions concerning study abroad, what Celeste Kinginger (2010:225) calls the “professional folklore”—namely, that these international experiences have an “impact” on participants, evident to all, that leads to broadened minds, personal growth, and better career prospects, among other measurable “effects.” It asserts a cosmopolitan faith “that prejudice derives only from ignorance, that intimacy must breed amity” (Appiah 2007:8), and that putting students in other lands automatically leads to all sorts of personal transformations.

However, these presenters did not cite Twain’s German contemporary, the biologist and philosopher Ernst Haeckel, who had a different view of the natural and undeniable effect of travel. Writing eleven years before Twain, Haeckel noted that travelers who leave Europe cannot but come to the opinion that “if one must draw a sharp boundary between other primates and humans, it has to be drawn between the most highly developed and civilized man, on the one hand, and the rudest savages, on the other, and the latter have to be classed with the animals” (cited in Marks 2017:14).

The juxtaposition of these two quotes highlights the way that study-abroad ideology depends upon assumptions that masquerade as nature while simultaneously calling that naturalness into question and revealing its paradoxes. On the one hand, Mark Twain’s perspective promotes travel as a sure path

for creating enlightened global citizens, whose broad minds will overcome parochial narrow-mindedness. On the other hand, the “charitable view of men and things” that travelers possess depends upon dividing the world into two categories: unprejudiced cosmopolitan travelers and sedentary others, men and women who are little more than vegetables. Haeckel reminds us how dependent both of these perspectives are on the hierarchical organization of the human species based on race.

In 2000 and 2001, the lead author examined stories told by American college students about their study-abroad experiences. His guiding concept was that many of the positive assumptions promoted by professionals in the field were problematic (Feinberg 2002). Studies making these claims about the beneficial effects of study abroad rely on surveys conducted immediately after the experience and statistical analyses of students’ post-trip long-term paths. These studies tend to focus on the individual student as the sole subject and object of study abroad, and how the experience measurably *transforms* them in a way that aligns with the assessment-based models of education that are currently ascendant (Dwyer 2004). For example, one such study concludes that “preliminary results suggest that short-term programs can have a positive impact on the overall development of cross-cultural sensitivity” (Anderson, et al. 2006:257). These studies fail to address students’ stated motives for study abroad, their appreciation for local meanings of their interactions, and the ways in which they interpret their experiences in accordance with unexamined and often ethnocentric assumptions (Kinging 2010: 221).

Yet the meanings of these experiences are deeply shaped by students’ pre-trip expectations and pre-tour narratives (Bruner 2004), *and* developed through post-trip interactions with their peers. Through dialogues and storytelling events, returned students shape their experiences in ways which match their peers’ expectations for a good story, and also often align with the dominant paradigms of neoliberal capitalist globalization. As Robert Gordon (2009:7) notes, “the successful adventurer must also be a successful storyteller,” and while the ideologies of contemporary higher education brand storytelling as “reflection” that expresses the emergence and transformation of an authentic self through experience, the anthropological perspective recognizes that storytelling is more complex, and emphasizes the multiple interpenetrating contributions of context, genre, and audience to the creation of an adventure story. As Edward Bruner (2004:23) demonstrated in his study of high-end tourism, “the tourists’ objective is to hunt for experiences that will make prime stories in which the tourist is a main character, so as to dramatize and personalize the tour and claim the journey as their own.”

To test my assumptions, the lead author decided to entrust undergraduate research assistants with the task of collecting these stories through rambling, open-ended, meticulously transcribed conversations, in order to mimic as

closely as possible the natural context of informal youth discourse. While the students we interviewed between 1999 and 2001 had very positive feelings about their study-abroad experiences, and represented these in a variety of ways, some common themes emerged.

We found, for example, that students spent relatively little time describing the sights of their host countries or the lives and stories of foreign individuals, but lingered on the interpersonal dynamics of their peer group, the way they felt that others looked at them as foreigners, and the tracks they left. They felt more comfortable telling tales of personal transgression, self-discovery, and redemption, in which the host country serves as a passive foil for the construction of an active, American self, than they did stories of a cosmopolitan engagement with non-American people, meanings, or history.

These stories referenced the utopian themes of millennial capitalism, also expressed in a contemporaneous wave of television commercials and reality programs that depicted a world of exotic foreigners obsessively looking at “us”—revealing a counterintuitive knowledge of and engagement with globally circulating commodities. In one such commercial, a child runs across the desert from his Arab village, shouting at something racing by—which, the camera reveals, is a car driven by foreigners. Subtitles translate his excited yells: “Leather seats! Leather seats!” In another commercial, Polynesian men wearing face paint chanted as they rowed across the ocean in a long boat. At the end of the commercial, their destination came into view—McDonalds!

Commercials like these invert the tourist gaze and suggest that, despite the surface diversity of different languages and costumes, there is not anything left to learn by looking out; what really matters is how “they” look in, with rapturous desire or impressed shock, at “us.” On the reality program *The Amazing Race*¹ participants zipped through different foreign spaces to win challenges, dropping aggressive performances of a belligerent and self-confident American identity along the way for passive locals who could only stare. In one episode, an American woman, apparently in India, stripped down to a bikini decorated with an American flag before asking a bewildered native for directions. “Will I wear this if it helps me get home?” she asked the camera, “Hell yeah!”

Like Tarzan, this contestant embraced a “delusion of superiority, racial and otherwise, and that others relate to [her] only to serve [her] own self-centered interests, uniqueness, and arrogance” (Vivanco 2009:128). Just as the exuberant nature series *The Crocodile Hunter* (1996–2007)² silenced “natives” by trapping them in a fixed role as observers of the Australian star Steve Irwin’s “personal power and spectacle-inducing presence” (Vivanco 2009:141), millennial commercials and programs represent the spectacle of global (Western) capitalist performance as all that there is, and the actions of others as reduced to responses. In the “culturally flavored challenges” of

reality television, “the place is rendered scenery and the local people serve as extras in what is, effectively, a performance of self and speed on the part of the contestants” (Molz 2010:276). These extras’ responses can be harmless and appropriate—chasing the luxury car or staring at the spectacle—but they can also be dangerous, when delighted desire crosses over into envy. The figure of the post-9/11 terrorist has become a kind of anti-tourist, animated by an anti-gaze—staring at us from his dark cave or glancing at us sideways as we pass him on our streets, motivated not by local or regional grievances, but by a stark resentment of our performances of freedom.

And if the rest of the world is defined by the way it reacts to or looks at *us*, student travelers at the turn of this century effectively became the world, expanding into novel but well-trod places, rather than members of a particular group interacting with other groups. So, while official study-abroad discourse promises an experience that broadens or develops the American self and opens this to a more reflective, cosmopolitan understanding of difference, this same discourse overlaps with other circulating discourses about travel and identity which magically eliminate others or fix them in dichotomous, stereotyped roles. As students who go abroad on these programs reflect and narrate their experiences both while abroad and back home, they grapple to greater or lesser degrees with powerful and pervasive ways of representing the other and their American selves.

Much has changed in the study-abroad industry since we interviewed students in 2000 and 2001. Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, and other social media platforms did not exist at the beginning of this millennium, and students traveling in many countries did not even have access to regular internet service to connect with their friends and families back home. The easy access students now have to home allows them, if they wish, to “choose to screen out their local environment, and the people in it, in favor of extensive interactions through an electronic umbilical cord, with people they already know” (Kington 2010:223). In addition, travelers also feel more pressure to immediately process their experiences into words and images that communicate with their individualized domestic audiences in coherent and intelligible ways. Students respond to these pressures by developing media ideologies (Gershon 2010) about the use of social media, and how new forms of digital storytelling may transform the structures of representing intercultural interactions.

Secondly, more students expect study abroad to include a “service learning” component. This leads to the subject of this chapter—how framing the intercultural experience as “doing service” influences the ways students represent their interactions or highlight already present themes within study-abroad discourse. Service-learning narratives, which operate within a system of stock characters and places, must be examined within the broader context of study abroad, travel, and adventure discourse. While students cannot

escape this discourse, they do not necessarily passively accept it. Through their stories about service learning and other intercultural encounters, students both reproduce and struggle with assumptions about how they define and interact with others in the process of developing and refining a valued American self.

What has not changed in the study-abroad industry is the use of survey methods to produce self-congratulatory studies about the positive “impact” of study abroad in general (Cf. Savage 2014) and service learning in particular (Cf. Zahra and McIntosh 2007) on student selves. At the same time, scholars have begun to critique some of the assumptions of study abroad and service learning, pointing out that these reinforce stereotypes and dichotomies (Simpson 2004, Caton and Santos 2009) and ultimately cannot escape co-optation by “the hegemony of a neoliberal ethos . . . that it [service learning] is inimical to broadening cross-cultural understanding and global citizenry” (Lyons, et al. 2011:363). Harnng Luh Sin, who accompanied a group of Singaporean students studying abroad in South Africa, shows that they did not experience a single cosmopolitan motivation, meaning, or impact, but “differing notions are continuously performed and negotiated throughout the entire volunteer tourism experience” (2009:481).

This performance and negotiation do not end with the conclusion of a program. We argue that the significance of study abroad is negotiated after the fact as students process their experiences into meaningful stories in collaboration with their peers, in ways that make sense in terms of their understandings of the relationship between “us” and “them”—their models of culture and cultural difference. Consequently, in 2015 the lead author decided to revisit his earlier research, using the same methods. To do so, he enlisted the help of two undergraduate anthropology majors (Sarah Edwards and Bobby Trice) to conduct detailed, one to two hour interviews with twenty undergraduates who had returned from a variety of study-abroad programs arranged by four different colleges and organizations from 2015 to 2016. These programs included short-term (two to four week) courses, summer programs, and semester length experiences, in twelve different countries in Africa, Europe, Australia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia, as well as on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, United States.³ Although not all of these programs included a service-learning component, we believe that student learning narratives must be looked at in the context of a broader set of ways of talking about international experiences.

Kate Simpson argues that gap years produce “a ‘geography’ (a construction of the world where there are simplistic boundaries between two places that is, that of the north and south) that perpetuates a simplistic ideal of development” (2004: 682). In a similar vein, many of the narratives we collected describe student experiences through a meta-cultural model of dichotomous

cultural superiority and difference that creates firm borders between a mobile and modern cosmopolitan (assumed to be “western” or “northern”) traveler and “locals.” The latter is the label consistently used by our informants to describe people who (they assumed) are determined through and through by a static, often problematic “culture” they have inherited from the past. This model explains intercultural interactions as nothing more than the effects of these pre-determined identities. It also takes for granted the ability of American students to provide education and service to members of the host communities, who are represented through stock characters, such as the “child,” the “cute” or “sketchy” male, and “random” locals.

On the other hand, some students were troubled by this hegemonic model, and, while still influenced by it, told stories that emphasized the role played by the specific context of their intercultural interactions, not just as expressions of cultural difference, but as spaces that generate and define these identities. In these narratives, students critiqued the “weirdness” of service-learning interactions, and sometimes sought alternative forms of more individualized interaction. They represented these alternatives as ways of transcending the limits of programmed group activities, in the pursuit of what they saw as a more genuine cosmopolitanism that addresses and partially transcends differences in power and positioning rather than ignoring them.

GOOD AND BAD TRAVELERS AND RANDOM NATIVES

Virtually all of the students we spoke with articulated a kind of official ideology of study abroad, emphasizing an ethical cosmopolitanism and the value of interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds. Most talked about getting outside their “comfort zones” to be open to learning and sharing ideas and experiences. They repeatedly used phrases like “going with the flow” or “rolling with the punches” to describe a good traveler, and described bad travelers as too self-absorbed or rigid to interact in an empathetic way with people who are different from themselves or to leave their comfort zones.

The idealized “good traveler” who is flexible, adaptable, and “goes with the flow” represents a certain kind of indulgence—a recognition that at a time and in a place where rules are suspended, one must exert a certain amount of self-control to maintain this official, adventurous personality. The good traveler is not the “bad American” who, moving in a technological or cultural cocoon, wanders into a French café and, in the words of one student, “like Skyped her mom and was just like yelling into the iPad like in English and was completely unaware of the fact that people were like very obviously annoyed with her.” Good travelers are not the self-absorbed

(usually described as female) youth who “assume that they can do certain things without thinking about it [*sic*].” Instead, they are like the Victorian adventure traveler, author, and eugenicist Francis Galton, who wrote in his 1855 guide *The Art of Travel: Or, Shifts and Contrivances Available in Wild Countries* that “a successful traveler did not hurry, took a passionate interest in his work, had a good temprrre [*sic*] and knew how to deal with reluctant servants” (quoted in Gordon 2009:13). Marcus, who had studied abroad in Indonesia, echoed Galton by defining the ideal traveler as “somebody who’s very adaptable, somebody who knows something is gonna go wrong, and who is willing to accept it but who isn’t worried about it. Um, someone who prepares and who has everything they need on their person. I think someone who carries a fanny pack is a good traveler.” Like Galton, American students such as Marcus strove to adjust in a good-natured way to the inevitability of difference. This ability to adjust was often presented by our interviewees not as an aspect of the travelers’ ideology brought from home, but as a quality gained through experience and hardship while abroad. Indeed, for them this was the primary learning outcome of their adventure, and the quintessential, scripted answer to the question, “What did you learn about yourself?”

But the universality of our student informants’ repetition of this official study-abroad ideology of personal growth and intercultural understanding through immersion should not be taken as a reflection of an effect created by traveling, or as necessarily reflecting the way they framed their experiences in more informal storytelling genres. Study-abroad narratives operate within a field of expectations which privilege certain ways of representing the relationship between the mobile American self and the local Other that generate seemingly paradoxical lessons. For one, students not only claimed that they learned to be flexible, good travelers, they also reported learning self-reliance: that they could, with the aid of a fanny pack and a stoutly reliable inner compass, handle new situations and navigate unfamiliar territories. At the same time, they reported many experiences of dependence on helpful strangers. Jeremy combined a description of self-reliance with a celebration of having “learned the power of a smile and just asking a question because I did rely on random people a lot; ‘where the fuck am I; how do I get home?’” In situations like this, the “random” native is not characterized as an actor engaged in dialogue, but as part of the landscape, and these encounters reinforce the difference between the native and the American, for whom assistance from the other is incorporated into the autonomy of the self, as an outdoorsman might learn to use his knowledge of the landscape to orient himself. These celebrations of autonomy replicate the “central paradox of cosmopolitan tourism: cosmopolitan tourists require a (non-cosmopolitan) social space inhabited by non-cosmopolitans for a satisfyingly thick cultural experience” (Shepherd 2017).

While this narrative of empowerment and self-reliance dominates these student reflections, it is occasionally challenged by a counter-discourse. This was powerfully voiced by Trevor, who, when asked what he had learned during study abroad in Indonesia, emphasized his personal failures, both in terms of his health and his ability to connect across cultural borders:

I learned that I'm not ready to travel the world yet, that I have to do it bit by bit. Um, that I have a lot of—yeah I have some internalized xenophobia and even racism, definitely racism. Just like, I don't know—I don't understand how you're speaking therefore like I think like I'm superior to you or something. I discovered that I had some like weird hate inside of me that was just unexplained. When I got back to America and I started talking to my family and my mom, I was like oh! That's why I have this internalized racism, that's why I have this xenophobia because everyone's afraid of Mexican people taking their jobs, everyone's afraid of black people taking their jobs, and everyone is just afraid, and this fear. And I learned that I was scared, a lot, of the unknown.

Trevor's narrative illustrates how students negotiate their understanding of their American selves through study-abroad narratives in various ways, but generally in reference to a dominant narrative of an empowered, self-reliant, and adaptable self that uses travel to demonstrate his or her transcultural superiority. Usually, this model is reproduced, but on occasion, it is problematized in student accounts that highlight ambiguity, confusion, and an inability to overcome the incompleteness of intercultural communication. Stories of service learning are a privileged location for both of these versions.

SERVICE ZONES AND ANCIENT LANDS

Not all of the students we spoke with had experienced service learning as part of their study abroad. One student who had not, regretted this. Bridget, who had studied in Paris, told us, "I could have done like something very service-oriented that would've affected me in a very different way and instead I'm just like in this super privileged city with a whole bunch of white kids." She was self-conscious about choosing to study in France, which she considered a global "super culture" on the same level as the United States, and not a part of a geographically defined service zone, where she could have more authentic experiences, defined by their presumed effect on her. In fact, none of the students we interviewed who had studied in Europe or East Asia had been part of programs that included service learning as a component, while all of the students who had participated in programs in Southeast Asia, Africa, and Australia did (as had one student who studied on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota). Despite where they had studied, students in general

viewed service learning as an encounter between members of an unmarked and powerful global (and mobile) caste and less powerful localized cultures in non-Western countries.

Kathryn Mathers, who followed American students studying abroad in Africa, argues that Sub-Saharan Africa is increasingly represented “as the iconic place for Americans *to do good*” (2010: 2, emphasis in the original). This may be true, but the collective experiences of the students we talked with demonstrated the existence of a more broadly defined “service zone” that encompasses a broader “non-West.” For the most part, this “service zone” corresponds with, or at least overlaps with, geographic regions represented in study-abroad promotional literature through a particular sign: the “ancient.” Thus, for example, the study-abroad materials for the programs we examined describe Indonesia as “an ancient culture, steeped in tradition and rich in natural beauty” which offered students “the opportunities to explore the ancient roots of Javanese and Balinese art” (Warren Wilson College International Programs 2015). Like *National Geographic* magazine, these materials represent each action of a native of this zone “not as a particular historical event but as an instance of a pre-given custom or trait” (Lutz and Collins 1993:60). In this “Ancient World,” study-abroad programs represent time as a simple binary division between two great (a) historical periods—an unchanging “ancient” *before*, and a modern *now*, with the only significant transition happening in the very recent past. The relationship between these two co-occurring metahistorical concepts is then taken to be the primary object of academic engagement for study abroad in “ancient/modern” lands, such as China, where potential participants are told, “We will study and examine what has changed and what has not changed in this ancient country” (Warren Wilson College International Programs 2015).

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In contrast, destinations such as Italy, Ireland, France, and Germany often are described in terms of their relationship to politics, history, and historical processes, although they too can claim thousands of years of human habitation (Cf. Council on International Exchange 2016). The study-abroad literature draws on a meta-cultural perspective that distinguishes “us” from “them” while the tropes of the “ancient” and the “pristine” erase interconnections and mask the dynamism of visited countries. As Kelee Caton and Carla Santos point out, “If the rest of the world is pure, authentic, and unchanged . . . the slate is clean and the great exotic beyond is available to be ‘discovered’ all over again by a new generation of Western college students (2009: 200).” This “discovery” is a fundamentally different mode of interaction than conversation, evoking a distinction between the active discoverers and the passive discovered, a dichotomy that predisposes study-abroad programs to represent the people with whom travelers interact as unequal interactive partners, such as with children.

DOING SERVICE, DOING ASIA

The students who participated in service learning as part of their study-abroad programs told two contrasting stories. The first is exemplified by Ashley, who participated in a short-term course geared toward students with a background in outdoor adventure sports and recreation. Ashley described service learning as part of a checklist of things that her tight-knit cohort “did” in Armenia. They “did” mountains and “did” hikes (“anyway we hiked that mountain yeah we summited that mountain”), just as they “did” culture, homestays, reflections, and service. She states all of these in the same kind of direct declarative sentences, in which a collective “we” “does” a well-defined activity with no involvement by passive recipients. She even explained her choice of destination through a checklist—she had already “done” Europe and South America, and described Armenia, her host country, as “an untapped like gold mine for adventure tourism,” a resource “the locals” did not understand.

The use of the verb “to do” reflects the practice of outdoor adventure sports talk beyond the context of international travel or study abroad. For example, a student who competes in mountain bike races reported that mountain bikers commonly use phrases like “we raped that mountain” to describe particularly successful races or training runs. This language, transposed on study-abroad experiences, highlights the process of conquest and penetration by the active, American traveler, and submission by a passive, feminized, landscape. For young and adventurous travelers, as Kathryn Mathers argues in the context of Africa, the tourist location “is no longer conquered with a gaze, and it must be physically penetrated”—it must not just be looked at, but “done” (2010:25). “Doing” travel involves “getting into the bodies” of previous travelers, by “penetrating the desert with the truck, celebrating their summit of peaks, canoeing and rafting the Zambezi,” and, in general, using Africa as “the backdrop for the encounter with the self through adventure” (Mathers and Hubbard 2009:204). And these, precisely, are the images represented in Ashley’s photographs—not the disembodied tourist gaze of landmarks and natives, but active Americans in groups on mountain tops and in bars. “Doing service,” as Richard Handler (2015) has argued, is also part of the emergent hegemonic discourse of the neoliberal university, which defines “student-centered” learning as a series of objectified activities that students “do” and which makes the object of this action—the “content”—disappear.

Ashley’s group spent several days doing service, planting trees, and teaching students about conservation through interactive activities. In Ashley’s stories, service learning is an activity entirely generated by experts (which these students considered themselves to be) for people who have no reciprocal role. The passivity of the latter is highlighted by the fact that they are children, which complements a broader theme in Ashley’s interview: the only people

who she described as actual actors in Armenia are foreigners, such as the Peace Corps volunteers and other aid workers she met in “American-friendly bars,” and her peers. Armenians only appear in four guises: as children, as “random” natives, as people who provided her with food and service, or as gender-related threats. As a self-described expert in adventure education and outdoor sports, Ashley characterized Armenians as completely devoid of any understanding of these concepts, which she associated with civilization. Ashley said that, despite the incredible beauty and potential of their landscape, “the locals there don’t really realize sort of what they have and like adventure sports are not really a thing there, like they think it’s weird for like adults to ride a bike like, they’re like, ‘that’s for children’.” She then reported her own appalled inner speech in response: “What are you doing with your life?”

Outdoor adventure sports, environmental awareness, and, as discussed below, gender, are three privileged categories for representations of the taken-for-granted superiority of students’ cultural norms. Ashley described the students’ role as experts in “educating” their hosts’ children around these issues as routinized service activities they “did” in response to a native lack of “doing.” She explained, “we did some like environmental education because they don’t really have that; they don’t have very many like recycling programs or anything like that.” Like the “consummate eco-tourist” described by Gordon (2009:9), Ashley is “a cosmopolitan striving to live in harmony with nature, using appropriate technology, and helping the natives who are too dumb to solve their own problems.”

The actual service activities Ashley engaged in did not go smoothly. The American students in her group expected to be treated according to their own self-conceptions as authorities and respected, but they were not. Ashley described her frustration when she reported how she told the children, “I’m in charge. You look at me; I’m gonna give instructions and then you’re gonna do what I say.” But the children did not listen to her, a failure she blamed on their lack of discipline and a disordered and primitive form of gender socialization. She said that “the boys that we were working with in this very rural town were not used to being disciplined in any way . . . boys were just sort of allowed to do whatever they want and run wild.” She attributed this to their “ruralness or lack there, of civilization.”

The American students discovered that the children were uncomfortable with planned activity which required them to sit on the floor in a circle. But, “we didn’t know like in Armenia they’re not allowed to sit on the ground, so like when we say like ‘let’s all sit in a circle,’ like that’s a really normal thing to have kids do in America,” so the kids, as Mark, another student on the trip, reported, “were super awkward looking. We were like ‘what’s going on?’ They’re not sitting; they’re doing this like weird-like crouching thing.” Ashley never questioned the appropriateness of these planned activities, but

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ascribed the awkward outcome to the strange pre-cultural savagery of the native children.

According to Ashley, the list of activities that Armenians could not do because of their problematic “culture” and “their beliefs” was endless, and included managing time (“in their culture [they] have sort of a different idea about making plans; they’re not very good at it”), understanding extracurricular activities (“from what I can tell it seems like there’s a lot less emphasis on extracurricular activities; kids don’t seem to be encouraged that much to like play sports”), translating (“one of the facilitators would be trying to explain something to one of the kids and the translator’s like over here taking pictures on her phone”), having a work ethic (“and it’s like can you please just . . . do your job?”), or embracing modern gender norms (“it’s a very gendered society—very, very, very gendered, like women are not really allowed to like do things on their own”). Another, slightly more reflective student on the same trip noted that Armenians did not even have a concept for “camping” or for “nature.” Ultimately, the many supposed cultural deficiencies of the people they encountered created barriers for the service project and exhausted Ashley so much that she had to “just like recuperate [in American-friendly bars or hanging out all day in bed] because there was some like intense moments with the cultural aspect of it.”

During one of the educational games they shared with the children that involved blindfolds, one of the boys bumped his head into another boy and bled quite a bit. Ashley attributed this accident to the poor skills of the translator and the wildness of the children, who, she described, were willfully butting heads. Despite these incidents, Ashley felt that her service-learning experience was a success, although (unlike Bridget, who had studied abroad in Paris), she did not consider the possibility that the success involved an “effect” that goes both ways. Instead, for Ashley her experience was successful because it “taught them [Armenians] a little bit hopefully about the environment and taking care of the environment,” and “was like a really new thing for them culturally.” She felt she and her fellow students had made a “big impact,” as the Armenians “really had no experience at all with other cultures and I think it was really eye opening for a lot of them to see just how other people live.”⁴ “How other people live,” for Ashley, revolved around a particular set of personal and group norms connected to outdoor sports, structured group activities, and the enthusiastic, active, personalities of young Americans—the “extreme” outdoor sports dude (male or female) as the most recent incarnation of the ideal modern consumer (Frank 1997:235). The core value that Ashley felt that she needed to convey, and successfully did so as part of her service, was *play*, something that native children, somehow, lacked. “We went and played games with them,” she said, “and it was like a really new thing for

them culturally to be like we're playing a game and that's like what we're supposed to be doing."

Why play? Because the inability to "play" is the ultimate signifier of a failure to be modern. "Play," in the discourse of both American summer camps and Mountain Dew commercials, combines nature and culture; it is both scrupulously organized and relentlessly carefree. Play is portrayed as a spontaneous and universal capacity, while it takes the form, in the vast repertoire of team-building games, of a rule-bound activity structured through an array of culturally specific assumptions. The "games" that Ashley and her compatriots struggled to teach to reluctant Armenian children ritually reproduced the gulf between one group that defined itself as transcendently universal and another which the former characterized as fatally fixed in time and space. While the image of the Book functions as a privileged meta-cultural machine for cultural critique and the disambiguation of good and bad forms of intercultural mediation for many of the world's marginalized peoples, such as the Mazatec-speakers of southern Mexico (Feinberg 2003, Feinberg 1997, Munn 2000), "play" has a similar role for Ashley's compatriots. Randal Tillery argues that the rituals of play in American summer camps are ideologically geared to produce a community "governed by unique ties and attachments, allowing the campers to attain a 'closer' and 'more natural' relationship to themselves, other people, and the natural environment" (Tillery 1992: 377). But at the same time, this discourse problematizes children from poor and non-white backgrounds, who are seen by camp employees as too rigidly tied to their "culture" to free their "true self." "Ostensibly well-meaning counselors," Tillery writes, "never seem to wonder that the problem may be with the circle itself; that is, the seamless social circle of camp may not be the image of nature itself" (ibid, 385). The power of play and camp relies on the paradox found within liberal cosmopolitanism—its celebration of a world of "autonomous individuals unshackled from the boundaries of (exclusive) culture as the ideal human subjects" continues to problematize those subjects whose cultural behavior resists incorporation into the liberal frame (Shepherd, introduction).

Crucially, Ashley described the success of her service-learning activities in visual terms, through the inversion of the tourist gaze. Seeing Americans was "eye-opening" and "really interesting" for Armenians, she believed, "to just see how other people live." Just as Steve Irwin's *Crocodile Hunter* persona represented the "spectacle-inducing presence" of a performative, playful Western environmentalism as the "pinnacle of modernity," Ashley represents intercultural interaction as a performance by privileged American youth for a passive, silenced audience trapped in stubbornly backward rationalities (Vivanco 200:141).

From this perspective, the most logical way to deal with such a static culture is to teach children in clearly delineated “service learning” contexts. Yet such interactions were not just uncomfortable for these study-abroad participants, but unnatural and dangerous—and this danger was expressed in traditional gendered terms. Asked about her free time, she said:

So we went out to the bar a few times and that was fun. We were mostly there with like Peace Corps volunteers, other Americans; we were told that we probably should not go to bars that like Armenians went to. . . . Because the like women don’t really go to bars, first of all. . . . And if we went in as women then we would be disrespected by the men there and that if the men in our group tried to stand up for us then they would probably get punched in the face. . . . So we were just told like probably you should go to more American friendly bars. . . . So that’s what we did; we stuck to the beaten path.

Like Dutch settlers had done in colonial Indonesia, Ashley justified racial and ethnic solidarity in gendered terms because of a broad sense of danger, in which “all colonized men of color were potential aggressors,” that requires the maintenance of segregationist standards (Stoler, 1989:642).

Later in our interview, Ashley acknowledged that the adults they met were more interested in whether the Americans could help secure visas to the United States than in learning about nature games or American youth culture. But she dismissed their desires, saying, “And I was like I don’t know how you get a visa; like I just have my passport and I just hop on a plane like . . . like I have no idea how you get a visa.” For Ashley, informal, backstage conversations such as these were uncomfortable and beside the point. She had no interest in engaging in a dialogue in which her performed role as an expert was challenged. Travel was about the serious business of performing and teaching a playful, globe-trotting, nature-embracing and conquering identity, in a world in which local residents stayed in their proper places. She fantasized about returning to Armenia to work and hang out with the Americans she had met there who were employed by various international aid organizations. This international scene represented a utopian, Kantian version of cosmopolitanism limited to subjects who are freed from the constraints of the “illiberal local” (Calhoun 2003:532). It is a form of cosmopolitanism that depends upon denying politics and on making the “materiality of cosmopolitanism” (her visa, passport, and associated privileges) invisible and irrelevant (Shepherd, introduction). The Armenians were part of the scenery, and their intrusion into the world of history through their questions about migration disconcerted her so much that she immediately had to change the subject.

Ashley’s account of her abroad experiences is one conventional manner in which American students represent service learning and study abroad in

a way that reproduces an American self as separate and superior to others—those who, being local, are trapped in inferior, backward cultures (Mathers 2010, Kinginger 2010). Like other travelers, she referred to the people she encountered with generalizing labels and defined “culture” as a shared pathology that occurs in the specific boxes that students see as privileged indexes of modernity—workplace competence, child-rearing, environmental consciousness, and gender. Deficiencies in each of these areas marked natives, often glossed as “locals,” as people unable to interact with the modern world—a failure that is marked on their crouching, bleeding, uncivilized, and as another student on the same trip put it, “weird-like” bodies. Ashley takes no responsibility for the grotesque spectacle she evoked, though it did leave her with a fleeting sense of awkwardness and fatigue.

But while Ashley’s story represents one commonly invoked archetype of the cosmopolitan traveler, many of the narratives about study abroad and service learning we collected were more complex and reflective, and, while they referenced some of the same themes described in Ashley’s tale, they also challenged some of her assumptions. Rather than represent cultural difference as innate and borders as pre-ordained, these stories shift the responsibility for difficult encounters from the problematic characteristics of “cultures” to problematic, “weird” contexts of interaction, in which culture, at least in part, is emergent.

WEIRD SCENES OF SERVICE AND RITUAL

While some students found their encounters with the residents of the countries they visited to be uncomfortable and emphasized their encounters with other young foreigners in hostels and bars as their most genuine experiences, others described their encounters with “locals” in terms of a fairly consistent set of categories and stock characters. Older people with whom they had positive but not transformative encounters were often described as “cute” or “adorable,” whether in Europe or Southeast Asia. Most students had a story about a nocturnal “sketchy encounter” with young local men who made them uncomfortable and prompted them to leave the interaction. This language provides students with a vocabulary to demarcate safe and unsafe interactions with local men while confining them within a sphere that distinguishes them from the students’ fellow international travelers. “Cute” characters, like the “super sweet old man” one student met on a train in Ireland and who invited her home for tea, are desexualized, while “sketchy” men demonstrate the need to keep sexuality within a narrow and controlled arena. Beyond the “cute” and the “sketchy,” students mentioned a broad range of encounters with undifferentiated “random” people, which were largely positive or neutral, but not worthy of significant narrative elaboration.

In between these archetypes, students reported a range of interactions that they described as “weird,” a word which was used in almost every interview. “Weird” can have many meanings, but for the students we interviewed it usually referred to intercultural encounters in which difference had a heightened and awkward visibility. Students who had studied in Asian countries experienced situations in public places in which they were the object of aggressive curiosity, such as when strangers clustered around to take their photographs. Helga, who had studied in Indonesia, described one such incident:

[We were] followed around by people taking pictures of us and it got to the point where people weren’t asking. There was one time when I was sitting on the edge of a rock smoking a cigarette and this man came up and was like trying to communicate with me. I told him I didn’t speak Indonesian and he put his baby in my lap and started taking pictures.

Students whose appearances appeared to fulfill particular foreign archetypes were photographed more often. Josh had strangers grab his beard in Vietnam, an African American student had to use a white student as a shield in China, and Indonesians were fascinated by New Yorkers. These situations of heightened visibility were “weird,” but so were situations where natives were forced into objectified or touristic representations of their otherness, particularly in rural areas, whether in Ireland or Vietnam.

Lisa, who participated in a two week course in Ireland, described the time her group spent in a rural village as weird, because “it was just like so clearly just like locals and like tourists.” She elaborated saying, “I feel like it was such a weird experience, like walking into the tiny town, cause like people knew you were not from there.” She directly contrasted this limiting dualism with what was for her the authentic cosmopolitanism she experienced staying at a “fucking awesome” hostel in Dublin. She raved,

Like the hostel they were just like so many people from like Africa and people from, which is a continent I know, I don’t know which country specifically but there were like all these people from all these different countries like in the hostel and that was like super like whoa.

Like Ashley during her time in Armenia, Lisa felt uncomfortable being marked as foreign in a binary, pre-programmed system of “locals” and “tourists.” This contrasted with her desire to feel like a member of a more mobile, transnational, and individualized culture. Unlike Ashley, she did not blame this discomfort on the cultural deficiencies of Irish people but on a “phoniness” that structured the entire encounter. And, also unlike Ashley, who escaped what she referred to as “intense cultural moments” by hanging out in bars with other Americans, Lisa sought more genuine experiences by

identifying with a global youth culture explicitly marked as transnational and not uniformly white.

Jordan, who spent a semester in Australia, glossed weird as “contrived” in describing a three-day camping trip he participated in that was hosted by aboriginal men. While he described some of his experiences on this trip as “powerful,” he was left feeling ambivalent, especially after an exercise in which “the main elder like gave us each of us a name that like represented us like a forest name.” While Jordan craved more “downtime” hanging out with these indigenous men, he saw this official cultural activity as a forced reminder of his otherness, and he mumbled his answer when we questioned him about his “forest name”: “I forget, something about like a dingo because I’m alert and I pay like watch people but it was like very much like that was like kinda cool but it’s also like I don’t really need, like I don’t know, it’s a little . . . [What?] Like contrived.”

Service learning also fit into the “weird” slot. Typically, service learning was framed as a kind of exchange: students helped members of a rural community with some task and then became the audience for a staged presentation of local culture. The service was weird because it was forced. In Bali, Helga pointed out that people “were very hesitant to let us help” in their peanut fields, and that “they seemed they would rather be showing us their village and like showing us Gamelan performances and taking us to different trance dance performances rather than us spending three hours working on this house with them like they seemed like they had everything pretty much under control.” Doing service, rather than creating situations of intercultural dialogue, was experienced as separating students from their hosts.

Similarly, Josh described his service learning in Vietnam as part of a “weird” and “touristy” week trekking in a mountainous area inhabited by ethnic minorities. The service project, he said, “was just like a big group of American students sort of milling around and getting in the way of these Vietnamese people who are having to like slow down and like go out of their way to make these students like feel like they’re part of the service.” Josh recognized that the real economic interests of his hosts were in receiving money for homestays, remittances from relatives working in the cities, and developing skills that would help them in finance, not having foreigners help build a fence around a school garden. Unlike Ashley, this realization led him to question his role in the service project, rather than question his hosts’ priorities or understanding of the situation.

Josh, like Lisa and other students, found group experiences in rural areas to be more “touristy” than authentic. He recounted a group activity that involved trekking through “a big touristy hiker destination” that was a center for minority groups in northern Vietnam and, in his view, saturated in “weirdness,” ultimately culminating in a “touristy weird touristy thing we

did”—a visit with a family headed by a shaman. He described the interaction as follows:

We visited this family from a minority group called the red Dao and the patriarch of this family was a, I guess he'd be a shaman. And it was really weird he like, like our professor talked him into like showing us some of his fortune telling stuff and like what a traditional wedding among his culture looks like and so like it was really weird. He called his like daughter and his son-in-law in from the field where they were working and like made them like dress up like on their wedding and they were like really really awkward and like very clearly did not wanna be there right then.

Unlike Ashley, who blamed uncomfortable elements of the service-learning encounter on the innate characteristics of the people she encountered, Josh highlighted the power relations that surrounded this incident, from the professor who was able to convince the local man to perform, to the “patriarch” who could compel his daughter and son-in-law to stop working and model their wedding clothes for a group of foreign students. Josh contrasted this “weird” power-laden performance of an objectified culture represented through material objects and “traditional” customs with other, more “interesting” and positive intercultural encounters. Weird, then, functioned for him as an implicit critique of a way of reporting culture that marks different cultural groups as clearly distinct, while defining the content of that culture through a consistent set of universal categories—in this case the privileged “cultural” domains of marriage ceremonies and shamanic “stuff.” The positively valued “interesting” encounters, on the other hand, took place backstage in seemingly spontaneous ways in which Josh’s identity as a foreigner, if not replaced, was complemented by other modes of framing interaction. During the independent study portion of his course, Josh lived in a hostel, where “the like Vietnamese couple that ran the hostel ended up like sort of adopting me so I ended up living with them” and other residents “took me under their wing and adopting me and they were all Vietnamese so that was an interesting experience.” Josh uses the idiom of kinship to represent a form of interaction that he saw as transcending cultural difference without negating it, as opposed to the weird power-laden barriers imposed in group activities.

Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins (1993) point out that *National Geographic* has portrayed the non-Western world as “a world of ritual” in which “the non-Westerner comes to be portrayed as a ritual performer, embedded (perhaps some would read encrusted) in tradition and living in a sacred (some would say superstitious) world” (1993: 90). Very often, service learning in study-away programs consists of a ritual exchange in which symbolic student labor is reciprocated with a ritualized cultural performance by members of the host community. Many of the students we spoke with appreciated these

performances but recognized them as staged and ritualized reproductions of their own otherness. In Bali, following their “service” in a village, a cohort of thirteen American students sat in chairs while their hosts served them food and cigarettes. Helga said that the students

wanted to feel like they . . . were just blending in a little bit more and less that there was like a show being put on for them. I think some people felt weird just about the fact that they were like kind of getting honored in that way and then other people felt like it was less authentic because we were pushed up to the front and so then therefore whatever was happening on stage was for our benefit.

Helga and her peers were uncomfortably aware that they were not flies on the wall at an event that would occur without their presence, but that their presence was in fact the point of the event. Their awkward visibility heightened the economic and cultural gap between them and their hosts. Helga was made even more awkwardly visible, however, in a small Balinese village where the students were invited to witness an Odalan ritual performance (which celebrates the birthday of a particular temple in the 210 day Balinese calendar) that had not been arranged specifically for the group—in other words, an *authentic* cultural act. She and another student were taken aside before the event began and told that they could not enter, because they were menstruating. While their peers were treated to a four hour performance, they sat on a bench outside the gates, sometimes standing and straining to see over, while children and intoxicated men wandered by, watching them smoke, chat, and weirdly (that is, with a heightened visibility marking their embodied otherness) menstruate. At first the two students were angry about their exclusion, but this resentment was quickly replaced by uncertainty, as “it was kind of like a double gender experience of being unable to communicate and kind of vulnerable and not really sure of where we were what we were doing and we were in a pretty isolated place.” Helga described the event as triggering a series of reflective discussions, as she ultimately pondered the possibility that their exclusion was “less about telling a woman they can’t do something and more about the like power that women hold when they’re menstruating and the ways in which that can affect the deities that are being honored through performance.”

While for Ashley a local gaze at active foreign bodies affirmed Americans’ innate supremacy and projected the weirdness of the service event onto the Armenian children’s “primitive” culture and bodily failures, Helga’s story constructs the context of interaction as an opportunity for awkward, liminal reflection, in which any weirdness is, at least in part, absorbed by the travelers’ bodies themselves.

TRAINS, PLANES, BOATS, AND CIGARETTES

Students such as Helga, Josh, and Lisa rejected the narrative of American cultural superiority and expressed discomfort with service learning as an example of an awkward reproduction of too-marked cultural difference and rural exoticism that robbed them of their agency to become the protagonists in their own individualized stories. These students yearned to be away from staged performances—and even the staged backstage of their service encounters or homestays (MacCannell 1976). They contrasted these staged scenes with “real” encounters in which they portrayed themselves as able to escape being forced into fixed categories. These encounters often took place in liminal spaces such as buses, boats, and trains, where they experienced un-programmed connections with individuals rather than representatives of different countries or cultures.

Gwen found a “great” moment alone with a boat captain while everyone else was bleary from Dramamine crossing the Irish Sea. Similarly, Patricia, an African American student who felt continuously objectified during her stressful short-term study-abroad course in China, finally found identity-affirming pleasure in travel on her twelve-hour flight home, when she sat next to a Mongolian man, with whom she had a “real” conversation. Throughout her trip, Patricia had felt that she was “used” for “awkward” photo opportunities by Chinese people because “for some reason people take my picture a lot and I’m like Beyoncé a little bit,” but “they don’t expect you to talk to them.” On the plane, she talked:

I was kinda real with the Mongolian man on the plane back and that was the best conversation of it all he was telling me how he’s been mugged a couple times in Chicago and how he kinda has a fear of black men and so we got to have a conversation about how that’s a little problematic. . . . He was great. I love that man. I learned the names of his children and how they write their language and everything; it was great.

While public transportation can set up the possibilities for “sketchy encounters,” it also presents opportunities for students to represent themselves as agents who can move beyond the rigid limits of pre-set cultural identities to generate the meanings of their experiences by sharing stories about their individual experiences and struggles, impossible in group-based performances. Helga, who was banned from the Balinese ritual, found a similar offstage space as one of the two smokers in her group. Spending her time “smoking with the elders” allowed her a unique space.

[I could] get away from the group and it was a more intimate setting, interesting because women don’t smoke there so that was automatically kind of both

frowned upon and at the same time like I guess sort of made my status as like an honorary male almost instead of a female and, um, I ended up getting really close with a lot of the people who were in the trance dance and kind of like through smoking sitting and talking to them and figuring out back and forth like how we could communicate.

Ironically, what she perceived as cross-cultural intimacy was only achieved by violating a perceived cultural rule—women don't smoke. Trevor, another smoker on a different Indonesia course, also portrayed his transcendence of fixed roles through a gendered transgression, but in his case, this involved facilitating the transgression of their twenty-four-year-old female Indonesian guide, Aini. During a long trip to a post office by bicycle, taxi, and on foot, Trevor smoked continuously. Suddenly, the guide surprised him.

Aini's like, give me a cigarette. And I was like, okay. And you know, women aren't supposed to smoke in Indonesia, there's this huge taboo against it. But, like, she's like, give me your arm. So I gave her my arm. And then I was like, what are we doing? And she's like, this is so they think we're married. And I was like, ohhh okay. And I was thinking like, yeah, this like white guy with this Indonesian girl, it's like okay for her to smoke—no one else can. So, it made me really reflect a lot on gender and how we perceive culture. And also like me being a white person in this area. It's like I had some kind of like, you know, some kind of unspoken authority.

Unlike the students in Armenia, whose representation of fixed and gendered cultural differences led them to segregate themselves in all-foreigner spaces, the transgressions of Helga and Trevor placed them squarely in offstage spaces of reflection in which power imbalances are not ignored, but made visible, and where “conflict between local partialities and a universal morality—between being of the place . . . and a part of a broader human community” is visible (Appiah 2007:xviii). The valorization of these offstage moments of “realness” is hardly novel; Bruner (2004:23) argues that the most prized stories for tourists involve moments of spontaneity outside the formal activities of the tour schedule. And these smoking intimacies produce their own tensions and contradictions, as the perceived connection between people requires the assertion of inequalities and the students' privilege to define the appropriate behavior for the situation. But at the same time, these narratives contrast with the meta-cultural discourse of cultural superiority used by Ashley and other students. For Helga and Trevor, strangeness doesn't inhere in people, as in Ashley's stories, but in what they called “weird” contexts. Their response was that one can counter these through familiar forms of interaction—like smoking and talking together as “real people.”

When this evocation of transcendence is taken at face value, in the cosmopolitan sense, as the heroic ability of the cosmopolitan individual to overcome the constraints of difference to become citizens of the world, these stories reinscribe inequality, moved from people to forms of interaction. But if Helga and Trevor negotiated the meaning of their American selves through these smoking stories, they also produced a trace of a disquieting secondary meaning: that no interactions are free from the constraints produced by power. This is a conclusion their Indonesian interlocutors recognized and used as much as they did. No travel tale can ever be neatly wrapped up through a clichéd conclusion of heroic, individualist transcendence of fixed differences.

CONCLUSION

Liberal cosmopolitanism involves a balancing act between recognizing the world as made up of differences, and mandating that the cosmopolitan overcome these differences to enact their status as citizens of the world. Student narratives of study abroad and service learning resolve this paradox in two conventional ways. They can, as Ashley did, represent the cosmopolitan community as limited to people like themselves, walling off non-cosmopolitan “others” behind cultural labels and relegating them to the space of “locals.” Or they can claim to transcend these differences by escaping these mediators into an imaginary cosmopolitan space of individual interaction outside of particularistic identities.

While both of these options address the dilemmas of difference and sameness, they minimize the ways in which power and inequality structure all experiences and interactions. When students tell stories that make meaning out of their travel experiences, cosmopolitanism provides a ready-made set of interpretations that demonstrate their process of becoming self-reliant, mobile travelers in a world in which power is bracketed. But they find no such ready-made language to express the suspicions that some develop that this is a not-entirely accurate representation.

V.N. Volosinov (1986) provides another way of looking at this problem. In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, he distinguishes two categories of reported speech. In linear reported speech, the speaker incorporates the other’s utterance by constructing “clear-cut, external contours for reported speech, whose own internal individuality is minimized,” while pictorially reported speech obliterates precise borders between speakers, while maintaining individual stylistic peculiarities and differences (1986: 119). In examining student narratives about their study-abroad experiences, we can adapt Volosinov’s concepts to refer to linear and pictorial styles of reporting culture. In the linear style, cultural differences are absolute, and made to “speak” through a common language of “beliefs,” “rituals,” and traditions.

As in Ashley's long account of her trek to Armenia, "particular stories, objects, or beliefs are presented as tokens of a type, expressions of a particular bounded 'culture' with a 'tradition' that comes down to us from the time of beginnings" (Feinberg 2003:206). On the other hand, pictorially reported culture does not read individual utterances as mere instantiations of a prior, self-evident reported culture, and highlights the emergence of culture through processes of mediation and exchange.

The students we interviewed told tales that moved between these styles, and both have the potential to reinforce narratives that privilege the Western traveler—either as a member of a clearly marked superior group or as a heroic individual transcending phony barriers. But without falling into a romantic affirmation of study-abroad ideology, we suggest that a critique of the contexts of interactions rather than the contents of others' cultures as "weird," is, for privileged college students who may have never reflected on their privileges, beneficial. One outcome of our interviews is that the students who voiced this sort of doubt shared one characteristic, which students who embraced the heroic pose of the adventure tourist uniformly lacked. They had taken anthropology courses. So, the authors (a professor of anthropology and an anthropology graduate student) take this as a hopeful sign that education, in at least some ways, has the potential to shift the ways in which students make sense of their travel experiences.

NOTES

1. *The Amazing Race* is a reality program that has run on CBS from 2001 to the present (2017). The twenty-ninth season premiered in April, 2017. The episode cited here ("Leg 8") was broadcast in the first season in 2001.

2. *The Crocodile Hunter* was documentary series that ran between 1996 and 2007 and was hosted by zookeepers Steve and Terri Irwin. In the United States, it was broadcast in syndication by the Animal Planet network. The program's calling card was Steve Irwin's over-the-top enthusiasm as he interacted very closely with dangerous animals. Irwin died in 2006 after his chest was pierced by a sting ray as he was filming for his daughter's spin-off program.

3. Fourteen (70%) of the interviewees were female and six (30%) were male. Two (10%) were African American, one was (5%) Asian American, and the rest (85%) identified as white. Around 80 percent identified their background as suburban or rural, and 20 percent as urban.

4. Armenia was part of the multi-national and multicultural Soviet Union from 1922 to 1971, and many Armenians have worked or studied in other Soviet Republics. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians served in the Soviet military, and a majority of the population is bilingual in Russian and Armenian. Russian language newspapers and TV stations are widely available throughout and the country.

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