

Influence of Reflection and Immersion on Students' Views of Cultural Diversity

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The Culture of Agriculture Abroad

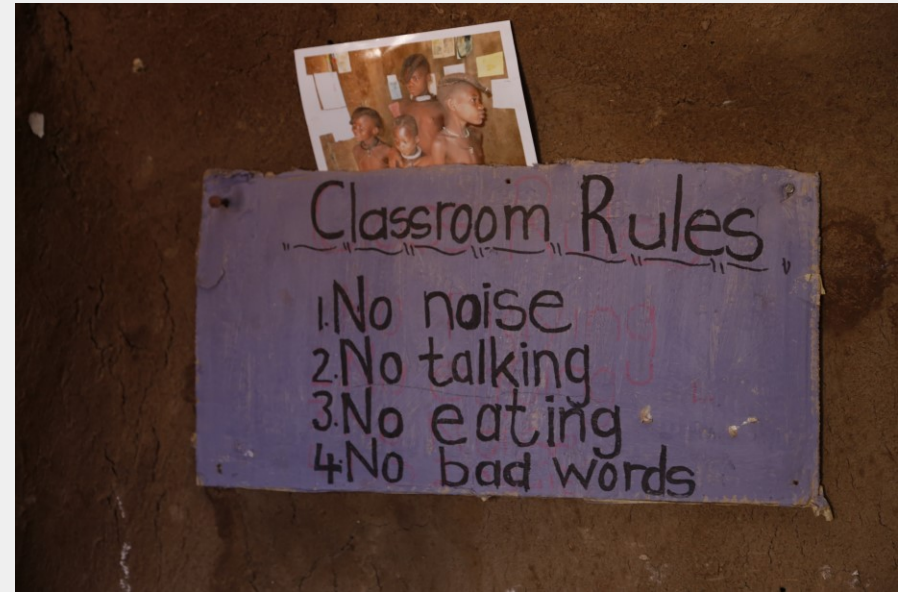
- Discovering cultural diversity at home
 - Pre-travel self-assessments of one's cultural origins (family records, interviews, stories, etc.)
 - *Origins (family name, ethnicity, etc.)*
 - *Identity (language, religion, SES)*
 - *Transition (native country to US/other)*
 - *Family norms (foods, values, holidays, etc.)*
 - *Cultural unknowns (three “wow” facts)*
 - Focused group discussion on families' similarities/differences

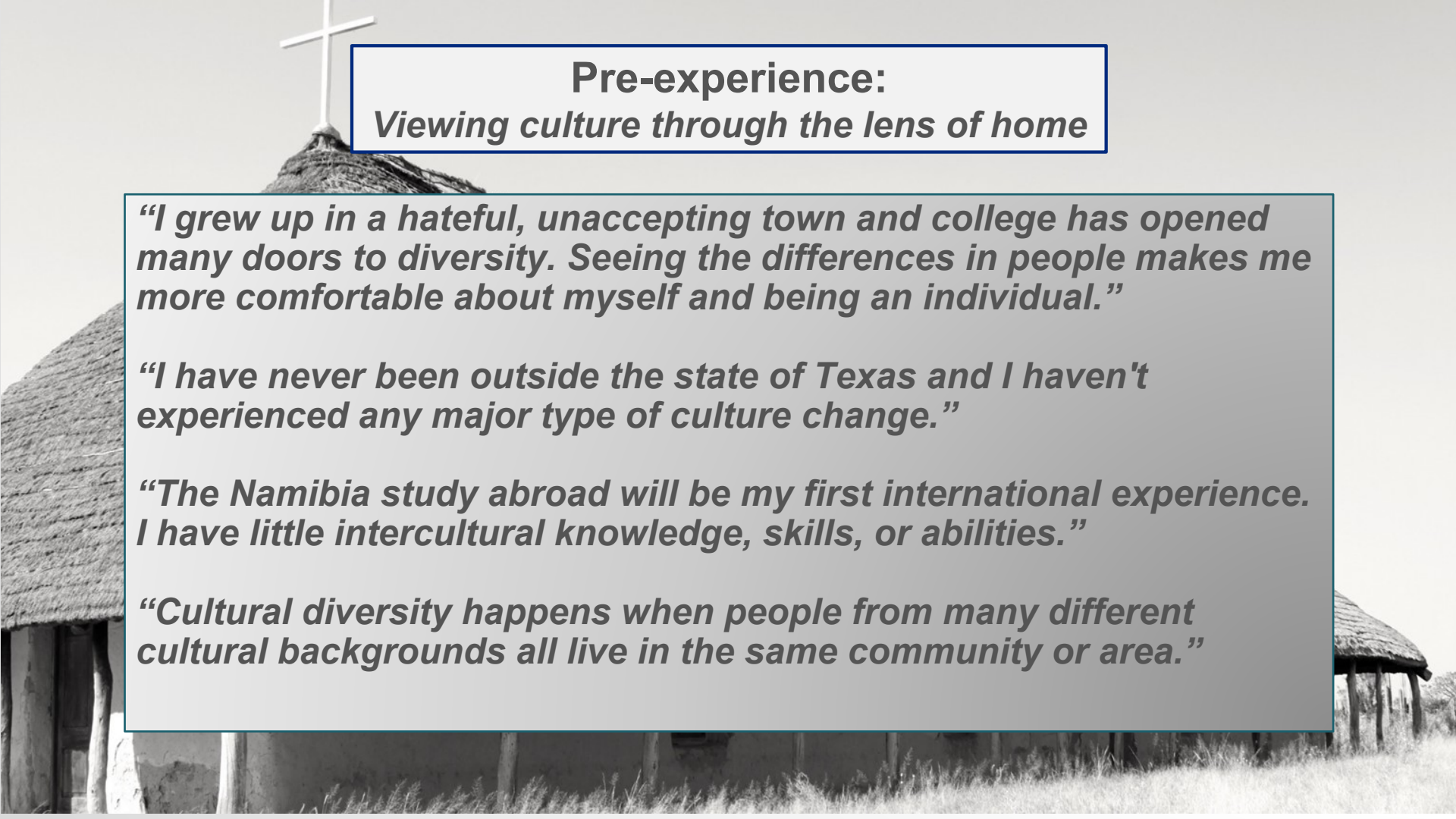
The Culture of Agriculture Abroad

- Power of Reflection
 - Group discussion leads to individual reflections
- Student-farmer interactions during travel
 - Daily instructor-led chats focus on host-country culture
 - Nightly student-led discussions recall family's cultural origins

Evaluating' cultural perceptions through written word

- Please describe your intercultural knowledge, skills, and abilities. What do those three concepts mean to you?
- Describe your understanding of cultural diversity. Specifically, what does it mean to you?





Pre-experience:
Viewing culture through the lens of home

“I grew up in a hateful, unaccepting town and college has opened many doors to diversity. Seeing the differences in people makes me more comfortable about myself and being an individual.”

“I have never been outside the state of Texas and I haven't experienced any major type of culture change.”

“The Namibia study abroad will be my first international experience. I have little intercultural knowledge, skills, or abilities.”

“Cultural diversity happens when people from many different cultural backgrounds all live in the same community or area.”

Pre-experience categories

- Culture is something *other* people have- $\frac{1}{3}$ of students
 - *“I grew up in a predominately white neighborhood”*
 - *“I have the ability to look at things without my western cultural lenses”*
- Superficial, textbook understanding- $\frac{2}{3}$ of students
 - *“Intercultural knowledge, skills and abilities involve general awareness of your surroundings.”*
 - *“Cultural diversity happens when people from many different cultural backgrounds all live in the same community or area.”*
- Advanced; prior experience- few (2-3) students

Post-experience: Exploring another culture to discover your own

“I have a much greater understanding of my own culture... I was able to recognize the unique aspects of our culture I didn't notice previously because I was able to make comparisons between my culture and the Namibian culture.”

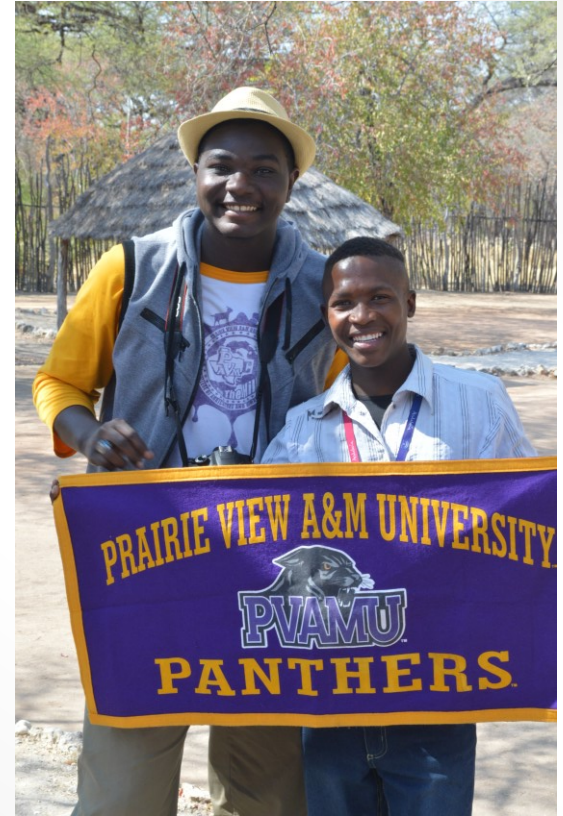
“I learned how to see these different cultures, and still operate as myself.”



Post-experience: Exploring another culture to discover your own

“Cultural diversity means knowing my own culture and going out into the world to experience cultures that are very different from my own.”

“I have increased knowledge of myself, my surroundings, the people and country of Namibia, as well as my peers and instructors”



Post-experience categories

- Increased knowledge of interpersonal variations within similar cultural groups
 - Shared birthplace does not indicate shared cultural heritage
 - Millennials born in 1980 are different than those born in 1995
 - Baby boomers share equal disparity in birth years (1946-1964)
 - Differences in cultural heritage and/or diversity are recognized
- Honest views of cultural diversity begins with reflection of own culture, before immersion into another
- Enhanced awareness of cultural diversity, internal and external, to one's cultural heritage

THANK YOU

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