

Alienation in College Students and Their Reasons for Travel

Submitted by

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Abstract

People travel all over the world for a variety of reasons. During a student's college experience, is a time for exploration and understanding one's identity and to a lesser extent discovering their historical roots amongst other college students. Some of these experiences allow students to study abroad, participate in class trips, and visit new destinations. However, limited research prevents the idea behind the reasons behind why college students yearn to travel to new destinations and if it plays a key role in solving identity issues. To fill this gap, this research will go into depth about the importance of identity among college students and why traveling to new destinations may pose a reason for clarity in understanding who they are. Cultural identity research amongst college students that live in America or students who have had family come to America overseas is an issue that is worth taking a look into in terms of young students and their ability to understand their cultural identity. This research will add to the questioning of identity in young adults and how it affects identity crisis in terms of travel. The benefits of this research may answer some of the questions that come with cultural identity issues among college students and how travel may come as a beneficial aspect in this department.

Current Research

Travel plays a huge role in self discovery and cultural explorations. With that being said, many college students begin to feel lost or alone between the times of entering college and exiting college and many seem to try to close this gap of being culturally unconnected by taking a break, or in other words, exploring another culture through travel. Many have yet to understand the link between college students and their love for traveling and the connection between “feeling lost.” Students return from these “breaks” feeling more at ease, refreshed, and less inclined to wanting to get back into the school routine. As an exiting college student who has frequently traveled throughout my college years with these exact thoughts, taking a look at how others feel before traveling can explain the reasons behind uprisings in moving out of one’s state and how a person's emotional state plays a big role in wanting to be a part of another’s culture other than their own.

With that being said, the lack of understanding of how travel and identity is connected is further compounded by the lack of research being done on identity culture structures within American and people who have had ancestors of immigrant descent. There has been an uprising in the number of immigrant students who have decided to travel back to their home countries along with many American students having a craving to leave the country. I will take a look at some of the various research conducted by scholars in understanding how identity plays a role in how students express their feelings and attitudes toward relocating. Many students choose colleges out of their hometown for reasons of “starting fresh.” The feeling of being a young adult in search of identity may be able to help close the gap of understanding this need for travel

among students. An article by Douglas R. Ewing and Chris T. Allen called, “Self-Congruence is Not Everything for a Brand: Initial Evidence Supporting the Relevance of Identity Cultivation in a College Student Role-Identity Context,” writes about the developing premise of specific aspects of self (role-identities) influencing brand preferences in college students. A quote reads, Role-identities can vary between persons due to factors such as the nature of social feedback received. An additional factor is motive differences that emerge while an identity is cultivated over time (Ewing and Allen, 2017). This article goes into depth about how role relations affect identity issues and how their motives are defined overtime because of these role identities. This will add to the findings of how role relations play a part in college student’s lives, and when they are missing can impact their future motives. This may shine light on whether travel could possibly shape this missing link.

Another article that can relate to this study by Mohammad Jamal Khan, Shankar Chelliah, and Sahrish Ahmed, details the effects of travel motivation, risks perceptions and travel constraints on the destination image and travel behavior in women. It reads, the results revealed that the travel motivation of young women has positive effects on the cognitive and affective image, whereas the dimensions of perceived travel risks and travel constraints have negative effects on cognitive and affective destination images (Khan, et al., 2017). This article addresses the benefits and detriments of travel in young women. While this research will not reflect males, this can show an inner glimpse on how travel has been beneficial in college women and whether it has shaped their identities as they grew older. Another study by Makarand Mody, Susan Gordon, Xinran Lehto, and Howard Adler called, “Study Abroad and The Development of College Students' Travel Venturesomeness," details the intercultural and

personal development benefits acquired during study abroad and how it has a significant mediating effect on student venturesomeness; i.e., students became more likely to pursue travel that facilitates immersion in and reflection on the host culture's way of life. This article can be beneficial in relation to reasons how travel has impacted previous students who have gone abroad. Learning about their outcomes can shine a light on their ideas for future students to travel and see if it has impacted their livelihood in replacing identity issues before they traveled. (Mody, et al., 2017) It is believed that students who have the opportunity to study abroad are more likely to develop the emotional and cultural intelligence needed to sustain the U.S.'s global leadership aspirations in an increasingly interconnected environment. This quote effectively shares how studying abroad increases the ideals of finding social identity outside of college through travel. That being said, research still needs to be done in terms of figuring out whether these travel explorations will fill this gap from students suffering from an identity crisis during their time in college. To further add to this research, articles relating to college students' behavior and reasons behind “wanderlust” along with motivations for travel amongst American students and students from other countries will add further depth behind closing the gap behind lost identities and dreams to travel in young adults. While each of these articles argue different things, together they can help close the gap between identity and college students.

Aims and Objectives

Introduction

People travel for a variety of reasons, yet there is a recurring link that occurs between identity questions and this desire to wander. Relocation or traveling plays a key role in understanding

identity. My goal is to conduct research about the concept of alienation and postmodernism in college students to determine the reason behind why feeling “lost” may create a reason why a person may feel to venture to a new place. Through my own experiences along with the experiences of many areas can provide key evidence in many students' cravings to travel, but the research I will conduct may answer the questions as to why. I plan to conduct this research by looking into a variety of scholarly essays and creating a research based project based upon students who feel lost in college along with many who have a desire to travel and their reasons for it. My additional project to add with my thesis will consist primarily of an ethnographic project in the form of a travel vlog/podcast based on my own experiences of travel to add depth into my project.

Aims

1. To understand the reasons behind why college students may feel alienated during school
2. Understand if feeling “lost” may lead to the connection of wanting to travel
3. Understand whether travel gives college students purpose or fulfillment because of travel and why/why not
4. To understand whether travel is a beneficial factor of understanding the feelings of identity

Objectives

1. Understanding the reasons college students feel alienated during school is useful as it may reveal what this lost feeling signifies to these students and will allow for an exploration of the

origin of these feelings. This will require researching what it means to feel unpurposed or feeling lost in identity and why this might be happening to young adults during this age of time.

2. Understanding the feeling of “lostness” and the connection of travel will help understand whether identity can lead to future students' improvements in their identity because of travel.

This can be conducted by researching students who have traveled to different out of state college and their purpose for doing so.

3. Understanding whether travel gives college students purpose or fulfillment can help understand how travel has impacted people's lives. This is to understand the connection between travel and the impact it has on one's feelings of lonesomeness versus wholesomeness.

4. Understanding whether travel is a beneficial factor can help create a clear conclusion for college students in solving an identity crisis.

Methodology

Understanding identity in college students may take a lot of extensive research. To complete this task, the first research that will be conducted will be research among college students and the feeling of emptiness. This research will provide evidence in terms of whether students are searching for purpose within college life. This can be found in research through articles relating to identity crisis issues seen in college students in previous years. The next research that would be conducted would be to understand the connection of whether there is a link to identity issues and relocation. This would consist of finding articles of students who have traveled previously and their reasons behind it, or articles about students who long to travel and their reasonings behind it. This also can be found in pre conducted surveys of college students and how many times they have traveled. How I plan on evaluating these student responses is by the basis of whether their initial thoughts of traveling had an impact on their afterthoughts of traveling. The research of whether these students felt alienated before they travel, and whether they still feel alienated after the traveling experience can provide a clear link to whether or not a connection can be found in the research. This would provide a link or a reason between the connection of the possibility of how identity issues can create a purpose for wanting to relocate. Lastly would be to conduct a conclusion of whether college students found purpose in traveling and whether it was a beneficial outcome for them.

IRB

This project does not involve human subject research and does not require IRB approval'

Outcomes

Research of identity in college students and why students may feel inclined to travel could result in a multitude of outcomes. A definite outcome to this research will be a conclusion to whether college students feel they are going through an identity crisis of some sort, but the reasoning behind it may vary. It's likely that there will be some determining factor as to whether students feel they are feeling "lost" or not. Also, an outcome may be that students do not feel alienated or are having identity issues for various reasons. Another variable could be that students do feel alienated, but the reasoning for why might not impact whether they feel inclined to participate in travel or relocation. It could also be that students do feel alienated in college which makes them want to travel or relocate to other places, but it may not be that it solves the problem of having identity issues. Another outcome may be that college students may feel alienated in college, but not in a sense that makes them feel as if they need to relocate. I personally felt the reasons for studying this topic started when I began to feel alienated in my hometown. This reasoning alone led me to pursue a life in traveling. Moving from place to place or even going on a trip every so often helped me understand my cultural identity and have more appreciation for my home country. A speculative outcome for this may be a future study that may come from this could focus on how the affects of travel relates to identity. I believe that many college students feel alienated within their hometowns because they haven't experienced the outside world. There are various reasons behind postmodernism and alienation in all different types of people, which I believe results in many people wanting to leave their hometowns and start fresh in a new society. While I cannot speak for all students, I believe that this research will shine a light on whether I am a rare case of college students, or whether others feel similar to me.

Link to video project:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zbYKYHwXez-F9nQy4955ul3t6Fd41sYP/view?usp=sharing>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bf91OxCB8_8

Biographical Note

My name is Nina Williams. I am currently a Communications major with a Japanese culture minor at Oakland University's Honors College. This project was created to better understand my experiences after traveling abroad to Japan. I originally went abroad to learn the Japanese language, but found myself feeling misunderstood and confused after returning home to America. Many people don't realize what a study abroad experience can do to a person and how those experiences of travel can impact who a person can become. I felt lost and confused because I thought I left a part of me in that country and was unsure how to communicate those feelings to the people around me. My views and opinions about my hometown shifted because I was unsure of how I could incorporate my learnings into my hometown, but I adapted and it changed my life. My goal in the future is to continue traveling and to push my career goals in helping others travel within the workforce. I want to share these publications with any and everyone who wants to travel and anyone who has traveled. Confusion and stress are common emotions after traveling and many don't understand them. With that being said, I know it's okay to have those feelings. The emotions and experiences one can learn from traveling the world shines a light on their future when returning back to their home country.

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