

A young woman with dark hair and glasses is smiling at the camera. She is wearing a dark-colored t-shirt. The background is a scenic view of a valley with a small town and rolling mountains under a clear sky. The image is framed by a thin white border, and there are red horizontal bars at the top and bottom edges.

Addressing Heritage Student Priorities

Session Panelists

Are



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Agenda

Overview: Defining “Heritage” & Its Significance in Study Abroad

Pre-Departure Advising: Best Practices, Tips & Takeaways

Program Development & On-Site Support

Expanding “Heritage” & Engaging Returnees

First Person: My Experience as a Heritage Student in Vietnam

Small Group Activity/Discussion

Q&A

Defining “Heritage Student”

Heritage student and heritage seeker

Heritage student and heritage speaker

Heritage seeker definitions:

“a student who is drawn to study abroad in a particular country and culture not because it is unfamiliar and new, but rather because it is somewhat familiar.” (IIE, 2003)

“selecting a study abroad venue because of family background—national, religious, cultural or ethnic. Choosing a venue because of some level of familiarity or resonance with less emphasis on the difference.” (Szekely, 1998)



Defining “Heritage Student”

What is unique about the heritage student experience?

Students’ Expectations

- Ease of assimilation
- Ease of communication (heritage speaker)
- Cultural Competencies (de-facto “expert”)

External Pressures

- Cultural dissonance (“neither here nor there”)
- Family expectations (immediate and extended)
- Inability to meet hosts’ expectations (“not real American”)

Reflection on Identity

- Opportunities to connect with heritage (racial/ethnic, religious, linguistic, etc.)
- Ethnicity vs. nationality



Defining “Heritage Student”

As education abroad professionals, why do we care whether heritage students go abroad?

1. Potency of the heritage student experience
2. Heritage student participation in study abroad not only diversifies **who** is studying abroad, but also **where** students are going abroad.



Heritage student narratives

Stephanie Jamilla (George Washington University):

“For once in my life I am part of the majority. I am constantly surrounded by people who look like me, who have similar features to mine. [Still], there’s the inherent fact that I’m American. This second nature part of my identity, that I somewhat ignore in the US since it’s a given, became front and center here. While a significant part of my college experience has involved exploring my Filipino side, by coming to Southeast Asia I’m instead faced with the second part of my hyphenated cultural label. In the States, I’m often confronted with the all-too-familiar, “Where are you from? No, where are you *really* from?” And it seems like this question will follow me wherever I go.”¹

Kim Rooney (University of Pittsburgh):

Mannerisms, expectations, habits—they may not be the entirety of a cultural identity, but when you have so little of each, it begins to feel as though you may not truly be able to claim that identity as your own.

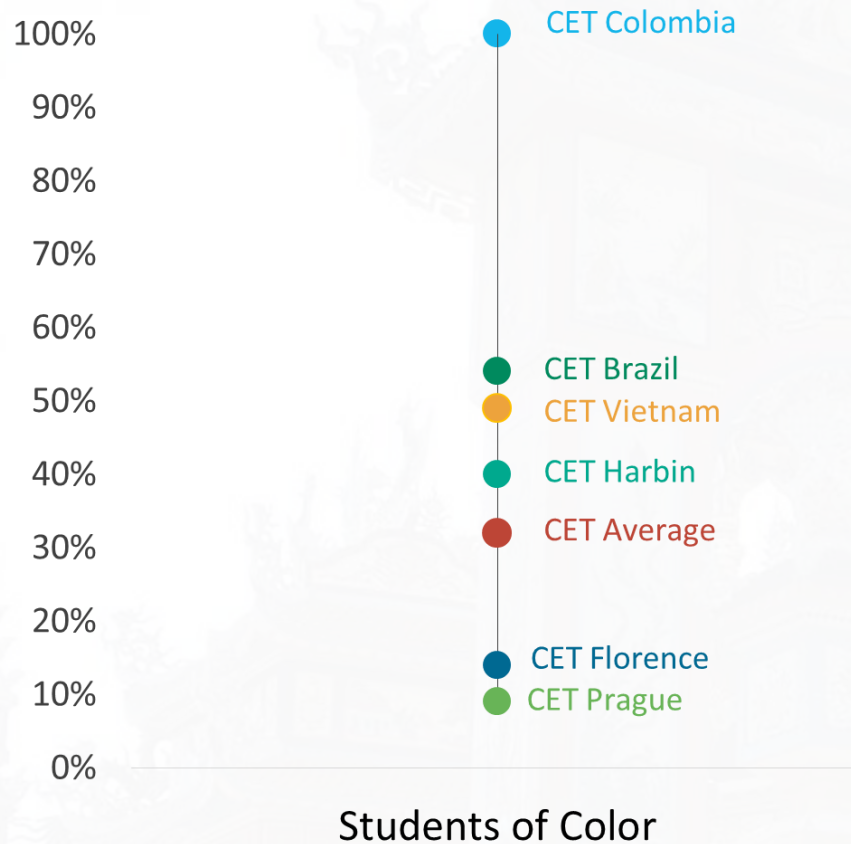
Coming back to China hasn’t resolved any of those complexities. I don’t think anything can. But it’s given me a new set of experiences to process as I move forward. For the first time, I blended in with the crowds on the street. No one stared at me because I was Chinese, no one looked at me suspiciously or leered at me because I was “exotic”—for once, I could be a person when I was a stranger rather than a caricature or stereotype. Then someone would say something to me, and I’d have to respond. Except I couldn’t. Not really, at least, or not in any meaningful way except to apologize for my inability to respond.²

Heritage engagement diversifies who studies abroad

Previous Studies

CET Programs (Data: 2016-2019)

Percentage of Students of Color by Program – Cumulative Data



- Carroll, A.V. (1996) - Black and Hispanic-identifying students were more interested in studying abroad “in a place which reflects their ethnic heritage” than were white students (30.1% vs. 10.3%)
- Neff (2001) -23% of participants studying abroad in Africa are African Americans even though only 3.4% of the total study abroad population ('01-02) were African American.
- Szekely (1998) - Of the roughly 200 U.S. students the International Division at Yonsei University receives each semester, approximately 65% to 75% of these students are of Korean heritage.



Pre-Departure Advising: Best Practices, Tips & Takeaways

Thúy Đoàn
University of Minnesota

Academic questions

- ☐ Academics/courses
- ☐ Application requirements
- ☐ GPA
- ☐ Language prerequisites
- ☐ Class standing
- ☐ Career implications

Financial questions

- ☐ Financial aid
- ☐ Scholarships
- ☐ Work while studying abroad

Logistical questions

- ☐ Application process
- ☐ Housing/meals abroad
- ☐ Passports/visas
- ☐ Student athlete status

Culture/Identity questions

- ☐ Multicultural considerations
- ☐ LGBTQIA considerations abroad
- ☐ Cultural norms in country
- ☐ Religion

Health/Accommodation questions

- ☐ Health care abroad
- ☐ Medications abroad
- ☐ Mental health abroad
- ☐ Disability considerations
- ☐ Dietary needs/restrictions

Family/Relationship questions

- ☐ Family commitments in the U.S.
- ☐ Relationships/dating abroad
- ☐ Spouse/child accompanying you

Advising Considerations for Heritage Students

- Provide opportunities to disclose identities & discuss/ask questions
- Identity Development Stage Awareness
 - Are they ready?
 - Train staff
- Share your personal experience and interest (connect)
- Prepare students how to address situations abroad
- Encourage students to reach out to program staff
- Understand your campus student populations

Questions for Heritage Students

- Why did you choose this location over others?
- What do your parents/family think about your plans to study abroad? Have you talked to them about it?
- How much do you plan on connecting with your relatives while abroad?
- What insights do you hope to gain about yourself and your identity as part of this experience? Are you interested in talking more about this now or later?
- What do you already know about how you might be perceived and received while abroad? Do you think you will be accepted by your host community? In what way? Are language barriers a factor?
- Do you want to talk to other students who have made this journey?



The Adoptee Experience

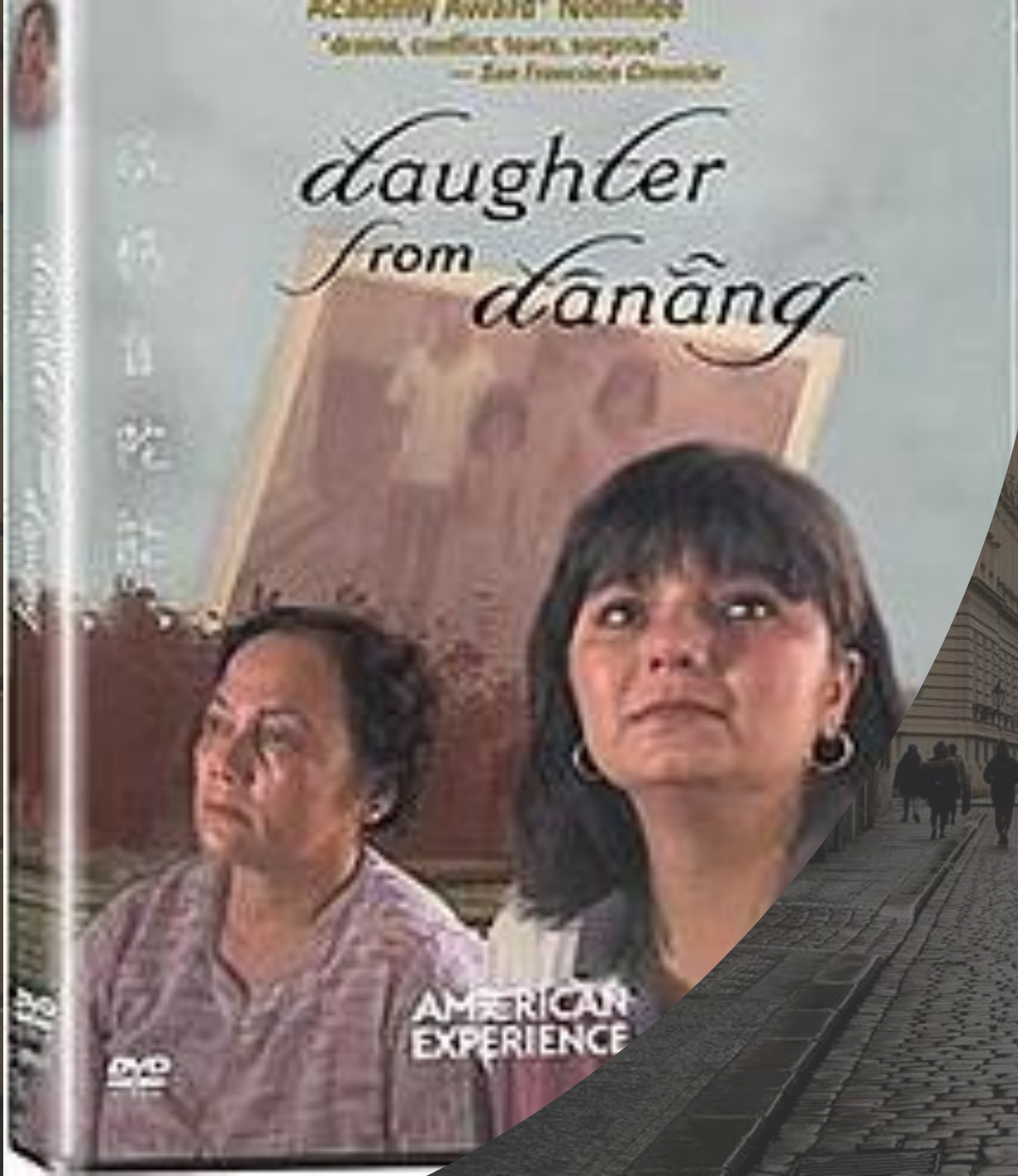
- Connecting with birth family
- Connecting with birth culture
- Asian American vs. American identity
- Guilt about their curiosity
- Orphanage visits (caution!)



Vietnamese Heritage Students



- Who is Vietnamese?
- Family Pressures
- Socio-economic: the myth of the Việt Kiều
- Political: the war is not over
- Trust
- Devaluation of study in VN
- Dialectal challenges and socio-linguistic attitudes



When
heritage
students go
abroad
unprepared...

Pre-Departure Resources for Heritage Students

- Students of Color pre-departure module
- Student experience abroad videos (Black Experience Abroad, Asian American Experience Abroad)
- Blogs: Adopted in China, CET blogs





Program Development & On-Site Support

Ben Pollok
CET Academic Programs

Providers & Heritage Student Advising

Providers can offer country-specific and program-specific information for applicants and campus advisers, critical in setting pre-arrival expectations.

Program
Specifics

Alumni
Perspectives

Country
Expertise

On-Site
Resources



Identity Abroad Support Network

- *Opt-in alumni database*
- *Students self-disclose the aspects of their identity about which they are interested in speaking*
- *Equips provider and advisers with transparent, direct contacts with returnees of diverse identities*

Student Voices

On Belonging: Studying Abroad in Asia as an Asian American/Heritage Learner



A Stranger at Home



From Minority to Majority: On Navigating My Identity Abroad



Program Provider Considerations

Pre-Arrival

- Are program staff and faculty equipped to navigate conversations of heritage student identity with students?
- Are staff aware of how to support students in potential interactions with local family members?
- Will the living situations be different for heritage students? Will homestay hosts or local roommates react differently to heritage students?
- How about local internship sites, partner organizations, local vendors, and so on? Will they hold heritage students to a different standard than other students?
- Are there unique visa or local registration requirements for first or second-generation heritage students?

During Program

- Are heritage perspectives included in Orientation?
- Are all students aware of the unique pressures faced by heritage students? How has this topic been broached?
- What degree of competency is realistic for program facilitators to possess with respect to conversations on ethnicity, nationality, and heritage identity?
- Will heritage students interpret program activities similarly or differently from other participants?
- What local resources exist to support heritage students during their time abroad?

Program Provider Considerations

Developing programs in locations which meet demand from heritage students

- Where does student diversity fit into cost-benefit analysis?
- What locations will fit these needs? What data exists that supports *perceived* needs?
- How are program providers and advisors communicating with students about heritage study abroad opportunities?

Developing program curricula which meet heritage student interests

- Tailored, flexible language instruction
- Field-based components (internships, community-based learning, independent research)
- Direct enroll
- Content courses that connect program academics with heritage identity

Vietnam: Diaspora Studies

Czech Republic: Jewish Studies course

Colombia: Race, Ethnicity, & Identity

Leveraging short-term, faculty-led programs to meet “niche” heritage student interest

- UMN Hmong Language & Cultural Immersion



Expanding “Heritage” and Engaging Returnees

Rachel Lopes-Almeida
Brown University

Expanding “Heritage”

- Expanding our understanding of what we consider a heritage student and their motivation for program selections – going beyond genealogical links.



Expanding “Heritage”

Language

Religion

GL

Portugal

Israel

Non-GL

Brazil

Morocco

Proficiency Levels

- Raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who understands or merely speaks the heritage language
- Bilingual to some degree in English and the heritage language
- Fluent in oral and written heritage language



Experiences Abroad

(Portugal and Brazil)

Learners with ancestral connections to the language of study often face higher expectations of language proficiency than those without these family ties. This can be a source of tension for lower proficiency learners as well as for those who speak stigmatized varieties of the language (Trentman, 2015, p.143).

Experiences Abroad

(Israel and Morocco)

“In addition to learning the subject matter of their study abroad program, students also hope to explore and deepen their own faith traditions while abroad” (Elliott & Romito, 2018, p. 5).

Engaging Returnees

Re-entry for some can be an emotionally bewildering experience. Students may encounter:

- Reverse Culture Shock
- Re-Acclimating to Being “in the Minority”
- Relationship Challenges with Family and Friends
- Redefining Identity



Techniques to Help Heritage Students Draw Meaning from and Articulate Their Experiences Abroad

- Ambassador
- Peer Advisors & Program Assistants
- Information/Pre-Departure Sessions
- Study Abroad and Me
 - LGBTQ
 - UFLI-Undocumented, First-Generation College and Low Income Student Center
 - Brown Center for Students of Color
 - Spirituality
- Return Student Reception
- Snapchat Takeover



Student Perspectives

“I think there were a lot of quite intangible things I gained from studying abroad that were pretty hard to explain to others. I found that I could much better explain how I felt and the connections I made by showing pictures” (Student D)

“I was lucky to be in classes like poetry that allowed me to think critically about how to share about my experience” (Student B).

“Being an ambassador for my program meant showing up at the study abroad fairs, but that was a perfect place for me to reflect and talk about pros, cons, etc. But in general, it was hard to explain to friends and even family what a transformative experience it was for me to go to my parent's home country. Sometimes, even now I tend only to talk about this experience to other Vietnamese Americans, or other people who have had a similar experience visiting their heritage country.” (Student T).

Strategies for Sustaining Heritage Students' Connections to Diaspora Communities

International Student Organizations

- BRASA ---Brownzilians
- Brown RISD/ Arab Society
- Brown Muslim Students' Association
- Vietnamese Student Association

Campus Departments

- Office of the Chaplain and Religious Life
 - Africana Studies
- School of Public Health
- Department of Music

The Swearer Center

- BRYTE (Brown Refugee Youth Tutoring & Enrichment)
- Jewish Community Day School of RI
- The Center for Reconciliation
- Clinica Esperanza
- English for Action
- City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism

A photograph of a busy street in Vietnam, likely Hanoi, showing a dense traffic of motorbikes and cars. The street is lined with colorful, multi-story buildings. The image is used as a background for the title and author information.

First Person: My Experience as a Heritage Student in Vietnam

Amanda Nguyễn
University of Minnesota

Discussion Questions

1. How do you interact with ethnic, religious, and linguistic minority students in your current role?
2. Does your office's current portfolio of programs meet the needs of your university's minority student populations? Do specific program locations see more heritage student interest than other locations?
3. Does the proportion of minority students who study abroad equal the percentage of minority students on campus? If not, which groups have lower representation in study abroad?
4. What resources does your office currently use to support heritage students abroad? What resources would be useful to develop for the future?
5. How are you engaging with returnee perspectives on your campus?

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