

Spring 2015

Developing National and Global Identities: Adolescent Identity Crisis Negotiation during a Two Week International Exchange

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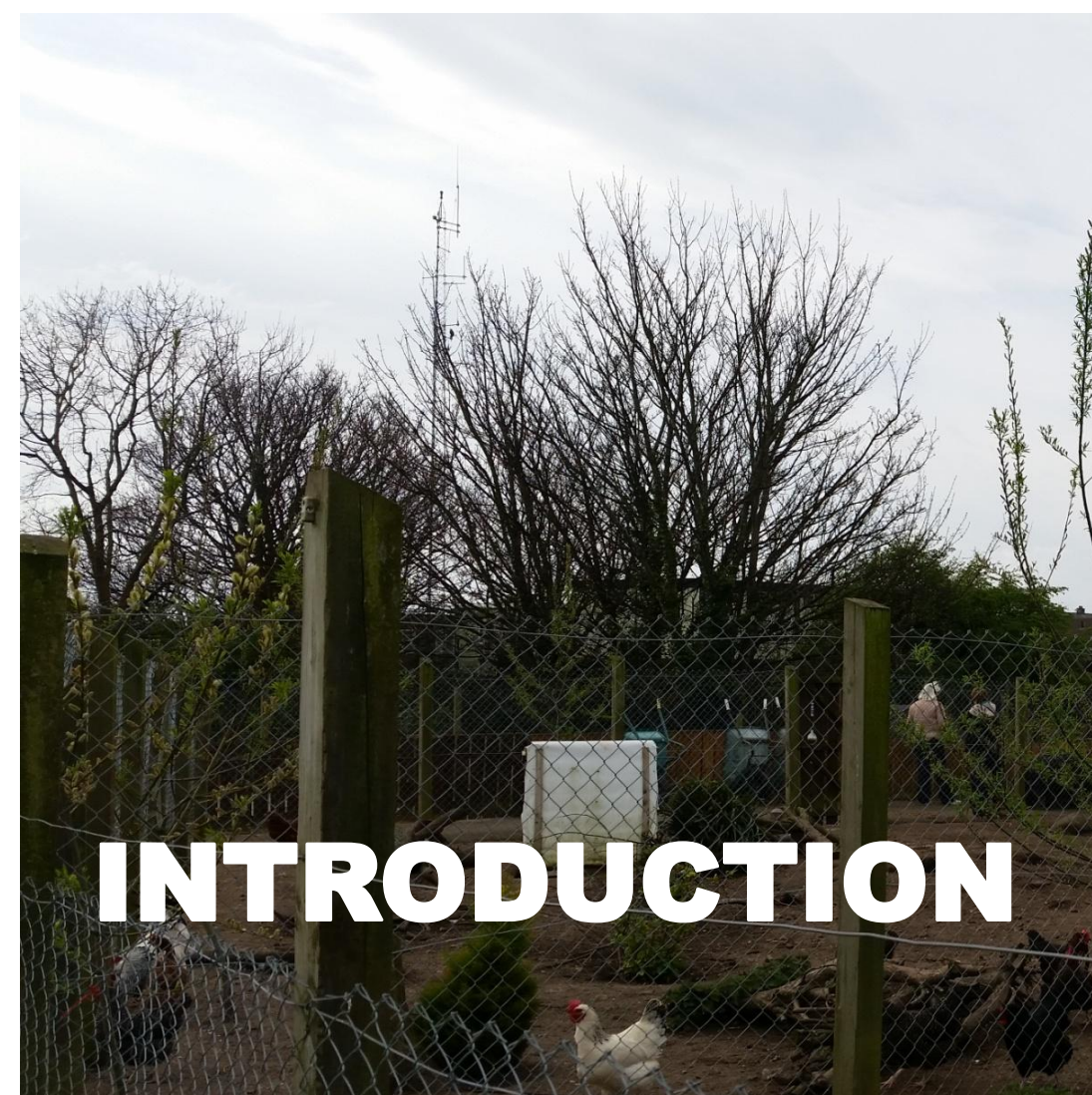
Recommended Citation

Stone, Garrett A.; Duffy, Lauren N.; and Bowers, Edmond P., "Developing National and Global Identities: Adolescent Identity Crisis Negotiation during a Two Week International Exchange" (2015). *Health, Education and Human Development Awards*. 15.
https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/hehd_awards/15

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Developing National and Global Identities...

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INTRODUCTION



METHOD



RESULTS



DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

PURPOSE

Travel and tourism scholarship largely neglects the adolescent travel experience, focusing instead on the perspective of the whole family unit or the experience of the older adult traveler.

The purpose of this study was to give voice to youth travelers by investigating the travel experiences of eight adolescents from the South Eastern United States. **This poster highlights findings from this study related to youth identity development.**

QUESTIONS

The youth participants were asked the following questions:

- What did you think of the trip?
- What did you think about the work you did at the farm?
- What did you think about the group?
- Can you describe to me what you think citizen diplomacy means?
- What do you think global citizenship means?
- What do you think you want to do for a job in the future?
- Do you believe you had an experience where you realized that your values, beliefs, opinions, or expectations had changed?

PROGRAM INFO

The Organization

Participants engaged in a **two week** Sister City International (SCI) exchange program in **Northern Ireland**.

Established by President Eisenhower in 1956, SCI is an organization focused on promoting global peace and diplomatic dealings that lead to cultural awareness and sensitivity.



The Program

The key components of the program were:

1. A community-based **service** project: Involved work on a farm, run by local members of the community who had mental disabilities.
2. Civic Engagement: Involved **“real” engagement** with the local youth council and visits to the city council chambers.
3. Tourism and cultural **exchange**.

SAMPLE

Participants (n = 8) were 15-17 years of age. Two of the participants were African American and the other six were White. Of the two male and six female participants, all had grown up in South Eastern United States.

Seven adult civic leaders (not the participant’s parents) also accompanied and interacted with the youth during this exchange.

APPROACH

Data Collection

The study employed a **qualitative** research methodology, utilizing interviews, field notes, and survey data to elicit youth perspectives about their experience.

Data Analysis

Data were recorded and transcribed, and then independently coded by three researchers. **Topics** were identified using in- text highlights and **themes** developed based on **patterns** identified among the topics, by the research team.

Trustworthiness

Triangulation of the data was achieved through the use of multiple data sources and field notes were used to guide a **reflexive** data collection and interpretation process.

THEMES

Identity Crises

The youth experienced crises as a result of cultural distance associated with novelty of foods, clothing, and activities, and the idea of “being there” or “elsewhere.”

Identity Negotiation

Youth negotiated their identity crises through “real” engagement with the local youth, support from a comfortable social network, involvement in service, and orienting to the familiar.

Identity Domains

The youth developed strong ties to their **American identity** as evidenced by a sense of gratitude for home and country.

They also began to develop a **Post-national identity** marked by awareness of global issues and an enhanced proclivity to travel.

Ego-Identity

Adolescents also self-initiated (via intrinsic travel motivations) and engaged in what Marcia (1994) described as exploration culminating in identity achievement, marked by healthy and adaptive commitments following a period of decision-making.

IMPLICATIONS

Travel may allow youth to **become more aware of and able to define specific, personal identity domains** which will facilitate successful identity transformation in the future.



FUTURE RESEARCH

Continued examination of the youth travel experience generally and travel-induced youth identity development specifically is imperative.

Longitudinal research could also explore the **long term impact of these experiences on personal, academic, and career identity**.

