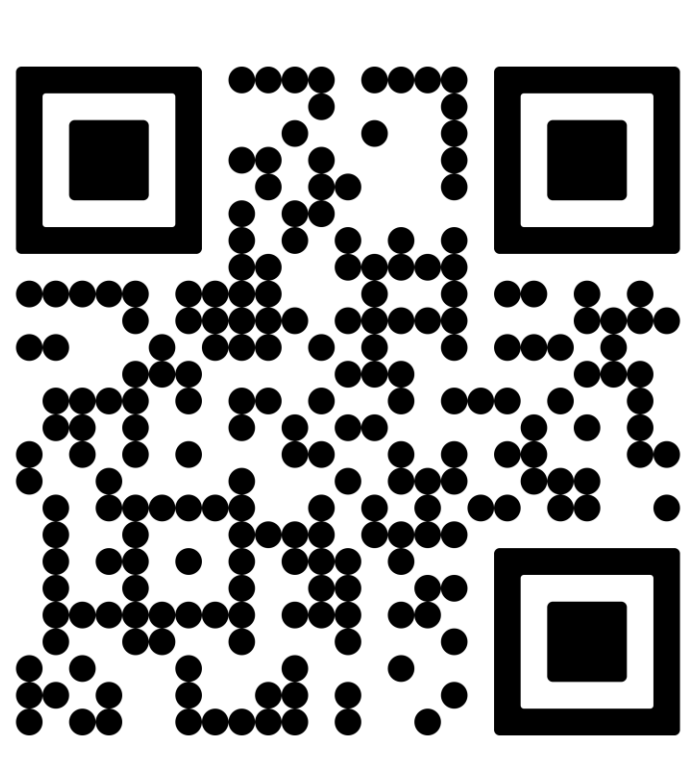




# How They See Us: Black Women Abroad

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to better comprehend the ways that our identities affect and transform the lives we live. This project focuses on how identity can be formed through interactions with other people and the importance of how people view or understand one another. The foundational theory for this project is Michael Omi and Howard Winant's theory of racial formation which we extended to all identities, not just race. Throughout this experience, we learned that there are still stereotypes towards the types of identities we hold but they are manifested in a curious light. Additionally, we realized that sharing similar identities with others was often not enough to create a true sense of community.

## Results and Conclusions

### *Before Arrival*

- Travel and COVID documents
- Leaving the United States
- Unfamiliarity of Black experience in Korea

### *Phase 1: Adjustment*

- Orientation and Representation (diversity quota)
- Language and re-learning how to be a foreigner
- Freedom and Safety on the streets

### *Phase 2: Coursework*

- Interactions with professors and classmates
- Classroom seating arrangements
- Womanhood in film class
- American-ness in Korean Music Class

### *Phase 3: City Life*

- Fast paced culture adjustment
- Lack of personal space
- Appearance and symbolism (clothing)
- See Black people in Seoul but not very many in Busan
- Being a woman and being stared at (body image)

### *Phase 4: Community*

- Purposefully tried to associate with people of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person of Color) identity
- Expectation of BIPOC alliance --> not the case
- Characterized as Black within study abroad program and in the city

### *Conclusions*

- Adhere strongly to the Black identity over the American identity
- Koreans see us as American first, then Black
- Gender identity and men
- Foreign-ness of body

## Methods and Assumptions

### *Assumptions*

- Identity is created by the people we are surrounded by.
- Our identities are unchangeable but can be perceived differently.
- This study is based off our own experiences and therefore unique to us.

### *Method of Analysis*

- Ethnographic study at South Korean study abroad program.
- The researchers, two Black women, documented everyday life experiences with their mobile phones.
- They conducted daily informal theoretical discussions about identity construction.



Given the time constraint and our primary focus on our identities as Black women, future research includes analyzing how the intersection of these identities differs in the United States from a homogeneous society like Korea. Additionally, the difference between the mindsets of the researchers as people from the United States and the mindsets of Koreans they encountered would have been vital information to have an account of. Since this study was conducted based off observation, future work could include some type of study in which perceptions of Black women could be analyzed.

## Future Work

- ### Theoretical Applications
- **Racial formation – Omi and Winant**
  - **Social Construct:** boundaries change over time - Humans are placed into categories so they know who to interact with and who not to
  - Race isn't real but has real consequences
  - **Judith Butler – Performativity**
  - All human beings participate in doing gender
  - **Kimberlé Crenshaw – Intersectionality**
  - Intersectionality shows how race, gender, age, class and other such attributes determine the level of power one possesses
  - **Symbolic Interactionalism**
  - Understanding the meanings behind human interactions
  - Understanding someone's language can enable you to enter their world

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