

The Fear You'll Be the Same Person When You Go Home and the Fear You Won't: First Generation in College Students' Experiences of the Benjamin A. Gilman



Scholarship

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Introduction:

FGCS Underrepresentation in Study Abroad Programs:

- Underrepresentation due to lack of information of opportunities, cost, financial aid restrictions, family and community expectations, concerns of graduating on time, not seeing peers from similar backgrounds attending these programs, racism, etc.
- Only 8% of first-generation college students (FGCSs) study abroad (Mason & Garcia, 2022)

Significance

- It will strengthen the understanding of potential impacts of study-abroad programs on FGCSs
- This research could help increase the number of FGCSs who participate in study-abroad programs and help ensure the continued meaningful engagement of these students following their experiences abroad

Purpose

- The aim is to better understand the experiences of FGCS Gilman Scholarship recipients, and the role played by the Gilman Scholarship in their post-graduation lives

Research Question

- How do first generation in college students reflect on their experiences with the Gilman Scholarship?
- How do these first generation in college students understand the impact of their Gilman Scholarship experience for their longer-term personal, social, academic, and professional goals and aspirations?

Literature Review:

Benefits of Study Abroad

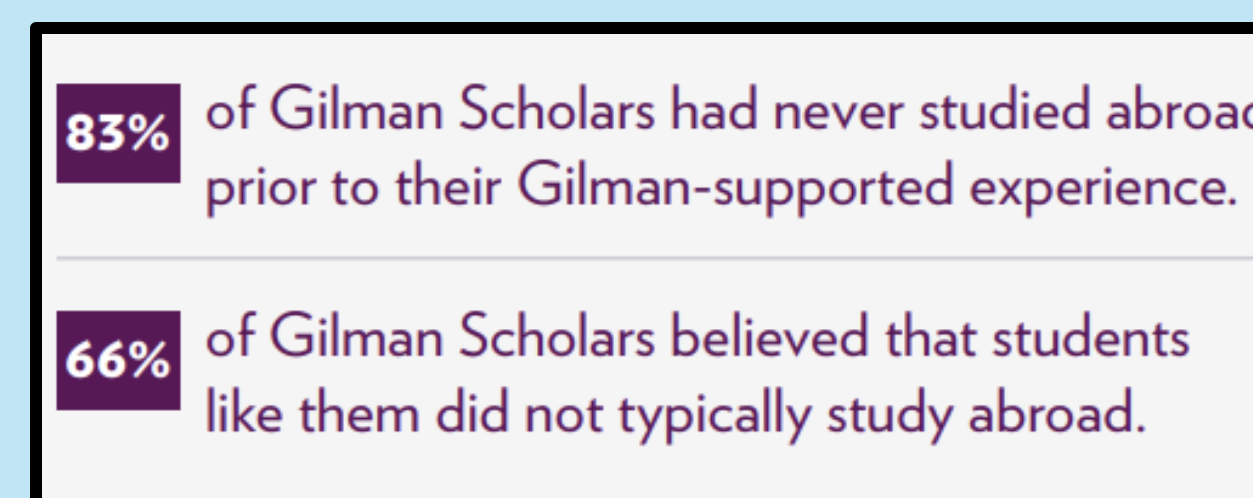
- It exposes students to diverse environments through interactions with other people who are different to what they are accustomed to
- Students learn to understand themselves in relation to the wider world
- Students can connect what they learn from classes abroad to real-life experiences
- It is found that study abroad leads to increased graduation rates, shorter time to their degree, and higher GPAs; this was even higher amongst FGCSs
- Positive benefits include **academic success, intercultural competency, self-efficacy, employability, civic responsibility, and social outcomes**; These positive benefits are amplified for FGCSs

First Generation in College Students (FGCS)

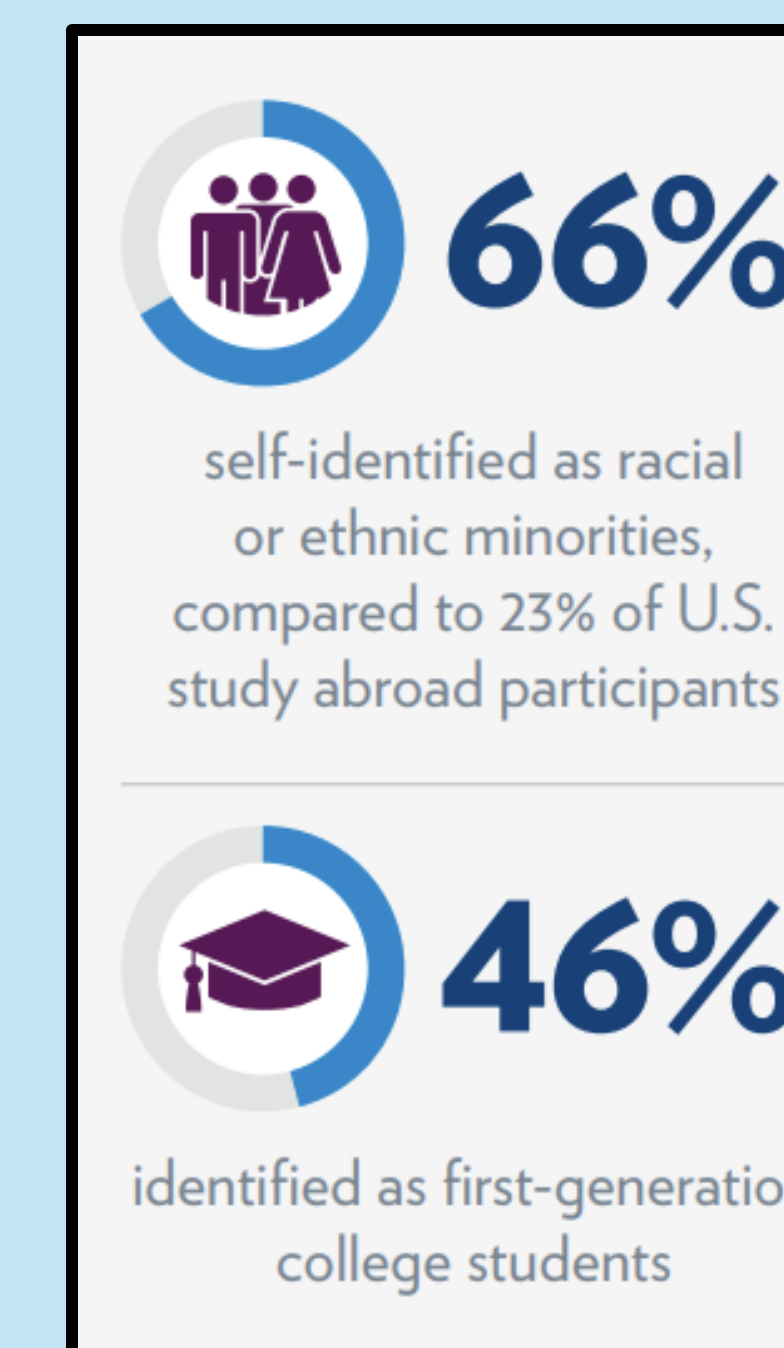
- An individual is considered a first-generation college student if they meet one of three criteria:
 - If neither parent has received a baccalaureate degree
 - If they, prior to being 18 years old, lived with and received support from only one parent, who did not receive a baccalaureate degree
 - If they, prior to being 18 years old, did not live with or receive support from any parental figure
- FGCSs make up around 54% of the undergraduate student population in the United States

Gilman Scholarship:

- Launched in 2001 as part of the International Academic Opportunity Act of 2000
- It provides support to those eligible for a Pell Grant with up to \$5000 toward study-abroad
- It has funded over 44,000 applicants from a total of 163,000 applications
- Focuses on different underrepresented populations (FGCS, disabled students, etc.)

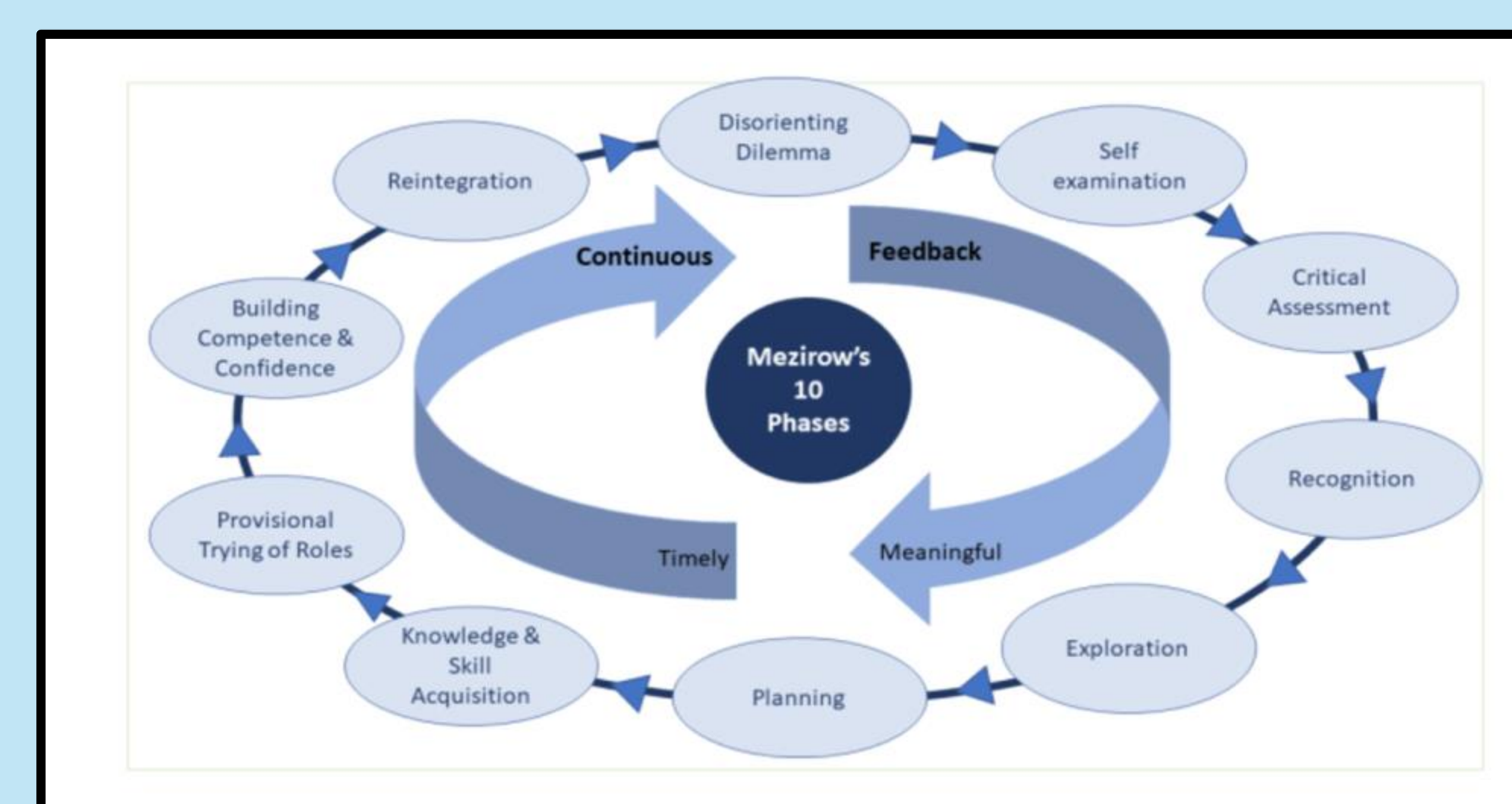


Valuy, E., Shao Y. (2021). A Legacy of Supporting Excellence and Opportunity in Study Abroad: 20-Year Impact Study (*1st Abr. ed*), pp 5, 14. Institute of International Education (IIE)



Transformative Learning Theory:

- It is a construct that provides an explanation for how people understand and derive meaning from events experienced in their lives.
- This is done through a critical self-reflection as well as rational discourse that allows people to view previously held perspectives in a different manner.
- It is a "form of metacognitive reasoning" that "transforms problematic frames of reference---sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets)---to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow, 2003).



Mezirow's 10 phases of Transformative Learning Theory

Methods:

Who are the Subjects?

- This research project directs its attention toward first-generation college students who are Florida State University alumni and recipients of the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship from the years of 2013 to 2019
- From the 99 Florida State University students who received the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship, 77 of them qualify as first-generation college students.

What are we Measuring?

- This research project wants to gain a better understanding of what these first-generation college students who received the Gilman scholarship experienced during their time abroad.
- Furthermore, this research project aims to see how these first-generation college students understand their personal experiences with the Gilman scholarship and how the program affected them in their post-graduation lives.
- In turn, this would allow for more awareness of the significance of the Gilman Scholarship as well as the importance of supporting underrepresented students when it comes to participating in study-abroad programs.

Next Steps:

- We have received IRB approval, and are currently in the process of sending out the survey questionnaire to all qualifying participants
- Then, we will proceed with the two focus groups (each containing 10 students) where we will discuss their experiences with the Gilman Scholarship as well with their time abroad
- Afterwards, once we narrow down the pool of participants to five, we will conduct creative reflection activities:
 - Cabinet of Curiosities
 - Timeline
 - Individual Interviews
- Lastly, we will transcribe and code the qualitative data gathered through the activities utilizing transformative learning theory and conduct a narrative analysis to arrive at a conclusion.

References:

