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Critical Reflective Assignment
What I learned in my study abroad experience
Globalization in India

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I. During this year's winter semester I left the U.S. to travel to India where I participated in the INTB course – Globalization in India. My time in India was a very valuable learning experience. I was able to learn a lot about life in a developing country, the culture of India, as well as the history. The trip consisted of a series of lectures as well as excursions. Most of the time spent with a group of Indian students from the college that was hosting us. Throughout the entire trip we were also working on a group presentation project in groups of 6-7 containing a mixture of Indian and American students. These presentations were given at the end of the trip on a topic of change involving India and America. The theme of the program was 'Winds of Change' and it was very fitting for the program and the journey that it was for all the students involved.

II. There were many aspects of living in India that helped my understanding of how diverse the cultures of the world are. One of these would obviously be the traffic on the roads. In India there is not nearly enough police force to enforce traffic laws, so they basically do not exist. The entire roadway is a giant free for all, where people just force their way along until they reach their destination. Oddly enough this creates a much safer traffic experience due to the decreased speeds it allows.

Another glimpse I had into the diversity of culture and their values was the difference in how Indian's treated people they see as in a higher social standing than themselves. In America we tend to treat everyone as equal as possible; however, in India a lot of respect and discipline is showed by those who believe themselves to be in a lower class of society as another. This was seen in how the students treated all of the professors found on campus.

III. There were many cultural differences as well as institutional differences between India and the U.S. One of these that helped expand my world view and knowledge was our very different views on the institute of marriage. The students there often looked up to American culture, admired it so to speak. Even still they were very comfortable and happier with their views on marriage.

Through talking with the students, I found out that marriage in India is much more of an adoption of sorts of an Indian women into a new household. Before this can happen however, both families must meet and agree upon the marriage. Also, for most men and women, these marriages are arranged. When I asked some of the students how they felt about this, many responded with the fact that it brought them comfort to know that if they did not find someone to marry, their parents would for them.

This very different view on marriage as more of a first step in a relationship is very alien to me. I am very used to the idea of getting to know someone as much as possible before considering marriage. Yet I grew to understand how they felt about their system. Rather than seeing a relationship as two people being destined to be together as Americans tend to fantasize a marriage to signify (trying to find that perfect someone), they view it as the first step to the process of making a life work and become happy and enjoyable with someone. A relationship is made with them from two motivated people, not from two people who happened to be so called perfect fits.

IV. There are many differences between America and India that have consequences on the other. One very clear example of this is India's decision to forgo competent pollution laws and restraints to help fuel economic and infrastructure development. The country consists of 1.25 billion people, many of which are young. It also lacks the level of development to accommodate these individuals as it attempts to enter the global stage as an important economy and influential country.

Making these decisions has very harmful effects on the environment. The immense pollution in India along with China make them the leaders in the global warming crisis coming. This affects Americans and every other country around the world. It is a truly hard problem to solve and it is difficult to fault them from not wanting to slow their progress, especially given the fact that other countries were allowed to in the past which is what has set them ahead of countries like India and China throughout the world.

V. It was slightly disorienting going to a country where the majority of the population is both vegetarian and anti-alcohol. This makes one question their assumptions about the mass amounts of both that we consume. This made me wonder if vegetarian lifestyle is prevalent throughout the world more than I had realized before.

I do not believe any of my disorienting experiences directly related to how our decisions have global impacts. There were many things that were obvious how decisions do have global impacts but they were not disorienting. I did previously address pollution and how that affects the world as a whole.

VI. My experience in India and witnessing all of the poverty I did there, reminded me that even though I grew up in a poverty community as a child, it paled in comparison to the economic struggles faced by other countries throughout the world. It gave me a heavy reminder that I need to live life in a manner that does not lose sight of that. I need to never take for granted the privilege I have and the responsibility that comes with.

I also was able to help cement my already existing attitude that one can never have enough of an open mind. There is no one answer to almost all things in life, and as long as a culture promotes fair treatment of humans and does not restrain their ability to live, dream, and pursue happiness than I should not pretend that my culture and preferences are any more right than theirs.

VII.

Ghandi Memorial



Rickshaw and Marketplace

