The PEACE Program in The Gambia: An Evaluation of Institutionalization, Sustainability, and Effects on SMCM Student Participants

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What is The PEACE Program?

- First study tour: Summer 1996
  - 10 undergraduate students
- Summer study programs in 1998, 2000, 2002
- Archaeology Field Component added in 2004
- Became Signature Program in 2006 (Now called St. Mary’s IN)
- 331* SMCM participants as of May 2012
- International coalition consisting of:
  - Students
  - Educators
  - Administrators
  - Employees
  - Institutions
  - and Friends
Vision:

To sustain educational and cultural exchange that promotes understanding and friendship as the basis for collaborative research, advocacy, and activism among individuals, organizations, communities and nations in the pursuit of peace and development of democracy.

Mission:

To expand the exchange of SMCM and other non-Gambian students, faculty and staff with the UTG and other educational institutions in The Gambia and Senegal as a means to increase understanding and enhance academic excellence among all partners.

From Praxis Application 2011
Research Goals

1. Evaluate the PEACE Program’s progress towards institutionalization and sustainability as it moves into the future?

2. Evaluate the effects of the PEACE Program on individual participants from SMCM. Particular emphasis on students’ life-aspirations and a change in attitudes and perspectives on their place in the world, as well as how their own worldview has been shaped by this experience.
Theoretical Perspectives

• **Evaluation Anthropology:**
  ▫ Use of anthropological techniques and social science theory
  ▫ Grounded Theory

• **Mike Agar’s “Rich Point”**
  ▫ “Instances when an outsider to a culture or language feels uncomfortable interacting within the culture and feels what we know as *culture shock*." (Agar 2006, emphasis added)
Methodology

- Interviews
  - In-person
  - Email
    - See response rate
- Student reflection papers
- Research papers by participants
- MAXQDA
  - Coding
  - Code Relationships
- Event Analysis
  - Process of Institutionalization
    - Positive Feedback Loop
  - Program Sustainability
### Response Rates of Email Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Initial Response</th>
<th>1st Series</th>
<th>2nd Series</th>
<th>3rd Series</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>% of Total</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

- **Responded to email**
- **Given all questions in first email**
- **Did not respond to email**

**Table 1.** Response Rates from Email Interviews: Conducted during the course of this research, these email interviews made up part of the qualitative data set used in analysis. Notice the two respondents that received all questions at once gave zero responses at all. Therefore I quickly adopted another method of disseminating questions through email and was for the most part successful. It seems that returning of the second series of questions back was the key deciding factor in if a respondent was going to finish the interview.
Research Motivations

- International Education office underwent external review
  - Supplement literature available when making program changes
- Collection of qualitative data for future research
  - Organized PEACE Program information into one location
  - Propose future potentially significant research areas

Courtesy of www.smcm.edu/Gambia
Levels of Analysis

Effects on the Individual:
- Unit of Analysis:
  - Individual level
- Identify patterns in qualitative data set
  - Coding data, hierarchal coding system
- Connections between patterns
  - Relations of codes

Tracking Institutionalization:
- Unit of Analysis:
  - Event level, meso-level
- Event Analysis
  - Critical events
  - If critical events do not occur: The Program never achieves sustainability.
  - Ex. MOU w/ UTG; Signature (St. Mary’s IN) Program designation

Both use qualitative data as base for analysis, although not exclusively
Coding System

- 29 Codes
- 228 Total coded segments
- 3 Code Groups:
  1. Changing Perspectives;
  2. Attitudes;
  3. Institutionalization.

- Code groups possess sub-codes, some of which possess another level of sub-codes...

- Color Coding System used throughout project:
  - Red (Orange)- Changing Perspectives
  - Green- Institutionalization
  - Blue- Attitudes
Lexical Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gambia</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1.45</td>
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<td>people</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>1.21</td>
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<td>time</td>
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<td>know</td>
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<td>them</td>
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<td>think</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0.52</td>
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</table>

- “gambia” & “people” also found frequently in ‘Changing Perspectives’ & ‘Attitudes’ type codes
- “program”; “family” and “experience” present in ‘Attitudes’ type codes
- “them” – ‘Structuralist’ central dichotomy?
  - However, no significant empirical indications
Changing Perspective and Attitudes

Changing Perspective:
• Participant self-reflection
• Life-changing experiences
  ▫ Scary; Fun; ’Annoying’; Interesting; *Incidental* (Younes & Asay 2003); Career choices
• Exemplifications of intercultural competency
  ▫ Comfortable in a unique situation
  ▫ Demonstrate a knowledge of culturally acceptable practices

Attitudes:
• Includes attitudes participant’s expressed about:
  ▫ Themselves
  ▫ Gambians
  ▫ Family
  ▫ Friends
  ▫ Motivations
  ▫ Research/Service Learning
|--------------------------------|-----------|-------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
Ex. “People in the Gambia are also extremely friendly; ... This is a stark contrast to social life in America.” – Anonymous Reflection Paper Fall ‘12

Coded as:

- **Attitudes/The Gambians**
- **Attitudes/The Americans/American Attitudes**
  - Includes participant reflectivity about American culture
- **Changing Perspectives/Changing Worldview/Gambian Worldview**
  - Participant speaks about Gambians taking their time to talk to everyone they see while walking “through the market.”

Colors represent coded segments that are simultaneously coded as another code;

Larger the square (red), more instances
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</table>
So what does this mean?

Facebook Post April 17th by Jane Brown Riff ’96:

“When you're placed in situations that are so far outside your "normal" reality, you come face-to-face with the only constant, you.”

Email Interview with 2002 participant:

“I think my worldview changed was that I realized how little it takes to be happy—truly happy. My (now) husband and I pride ourselves on living simply. We try to reuse or fix rather than buy new, out of respect for the earth but also because it's important to us.”
If This, Then That, Right?

**If:** The normative belief in the study abroad field is: It’s possible for an expansion of a participant’s worldview in a semester (Wells 2006:121)...

**And:** Students in “countries with greater differences in social and cultural norms... may have proportionally greater opportunities for learning and personal growth." (Wells 2006:121)....

**And:** Gambia is unquestionably a nontraditional study abroad destination....

**And:** The empirical data suggests a relationship between participant perspectives and attitudes particularly about their place in the context of the bigger world upon reflection of their experiences....

**Then:** It can be assumed participants in the PEACE Program commonly experience changes in their attitudes and perspectives as a direct result of their involvement in the program.
## Event Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event/Document</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second Study Tour</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Tubabs Two: From the Baobab to the Bantaba; Published by Kent Hall Press. This is the first opportunity a SMCM student has the chance to study for an entire semester. This is a massive step for the program, because after this event a SMCM student has been in The Gambia every year (or almost, but not every semester). This continuity has proven the positive prospects for program sustainability moving into the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jammeh gives Convocation at SMCM</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>3-4 weeks</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Professor Lisa Senghor studied the best school in 2004 and has continued to run it annually ever since. This has created a link between the history of the Gambian people, but his extreme social views have made him internationally known. Even the trip he made to SMCM divided the college community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First UTG Students study at SMCM</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>16 weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td>This is the beginning of a fruitful relationship between partner institutions. In hosting UTG students at SMCM, the PEACE Program planted a seed that has proven to enhance its prospects for sustainability. Future students from the UTG paths were paved to come and study at SMCM after this first successful semester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Archaeology Field School in The Gambia</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professor Lisa Senghor studied the best school in 2004 and has continued to run it annually ever since. This has created a link between the history of the Gambian people, but his extreme social views have made him internationally known. Even the trip he made to SMCM divided the college community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMCM Faculty Visit the UTG</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>This visit created a link between the history of the Gambian people, but his extreme social views have made him internationally known. Even the trip he made to SMCM divided the college community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding created between SMCM &amp; UTG</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>(X) Years</td>
<td></td>
<td>This not only provides experienced professors the opportunity to expand their pedagogical repertoire but it creates a cross-cultural learning environment, enriching both students and educators through immersion into a vastly different culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature Program Designation given by SMCM Int. Ed. Office</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>16 weeks</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>How called the St. Mary’s Reclaiming, there are only three left, the PEACE Program being one of them. This designation provided the institutional structures, financial, physical and the like which allowed the program to have a lasting influence. This event can be considered critical to the Program’s progress towards institutionalization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTG Delagation makes first visit to SMCM</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Every time SMCM and UTG sign another Memorandum of Understanding, they are taking another step towards program sustainability by acquired legal, binding documents that we created with the intention of promoting the success of both signees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revised Memorandum of Understanding</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>September</td>
<td></td>
<td>Revised Memorandum of Understanding is now to be signed. In 2008, the UTG and the SMCM signed a new memorandum of understanding, which included a provision that all future agreements be signed by both institutions. This revision was necessary to ensure that all future agreements were legally binding and to prevent misunderstandings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire First Full-time Program Coordinator</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This revision was necessary to ensure that all future agreements were legally binding and to prevent misunderstandings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Notes and Observations:

- The Gambia's economy is heavily dependent on tourism, and the program has helped to boost this industry.
- Jammeh's regime has been criticized for human rights abuses, including torture and the use of political prisoners.
- The PEACE program has been successful in attracting students from both the United States and The Gambia.
- The program has also resulted in the creation of new academic partnerships and the development of new curricula.
- The program has been influential in promoting peace and understanding between the United States and The Gambia.
- The Gambia has been recognized as a leader in sustainable tourism.
- The program has also been successful in attracting funding from external sources, including foundations and private donors.

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**Understanding and Evaluation**

The PEACE program has been successful in several key areas, including:

- Student recruitment and enrollment
- Academic partnerships
- Sustainable tourism
- Promotion of peace and understanding
- Funding and external support

The program has been influential in promoting sustainable tourism and has helped to boost the Gambian economy. However, there are also concerns about the regime's human rights abuses, which may have implications for the program's future.

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**Revised Memorandum of Understanding**

The revised memorandum of understanding provides a legal framework for the program's future success.

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**First Gambian to Attend HSMC**

The first Gambian to attend HSMC was a significant milestone, as it marked the beginning of a fruitful relationship between the institutions.

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**UTG Delagation makes first visit to SMCM**

The UTG delegation's visit to SMCM was a significant step towards program sustainability.

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**First Archaeology Field School in The Gambia**

The first archaeological field school in The Gambia was a significant milestone for the program, as it helped to establish a lasting link with the Gambia.

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**SMCM Faculty Visit the UTG**

The SMCM faculty's visit to the UTG was a significant step towards program sustainability.

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**Memorandum of Understanding created between SMCM & UTG**

The memorandum of understanding between SMCM and the UTG was a significant step towards program sustainability.

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**Signature Program Designation given by SMCM Int. Ed. Office**

The signature program designation given by SMCM's International Education Office was a significant step towards program sustainability.

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**Second Study Tour**

The second study tour was a significant milestone for the program, as it helped to establish a lasting link with the Gambia.

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**Jammeh gives Convocation at SMCM**

Jammeh's convocation speech at SMCM was a significant step towards program sustainability.

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**First UTG Students study at SMCM**

The first UTG students at SMCM were a significant milestone for the program, as it helped to establish a lasting link with the Gambia.

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**First Gambian to Attend HSMC**

The first Gambian to attend HSMC was a significant milestone for the program, as it marked the beginning of a fruitful relationship between the institutions.
The PEACE Program Critical Events

- Summer 1996- Summer Study Tour
- Summer 1998- First Gambian to attend HSMC Field School
- May 2004- Jammeh’s Convocation at SMCM
- Summer 2005 – SMCM Faculty/Staff Trip to The Gambia
- 2006- President O’Brien designates PEACE Program a SMCM Signature Program
- 2011/2012 Five-year MOU with Elizabethtown
Process of Institutionalization

- Positive Feedback Loop
- A PEACE Program event takes place...
  - Ex. Program designated Signature Program in 2006
- Positive outcome leads to...
- Program gaining credibility from...
  - Student population
  - Program’s ‘Home Institution’
- More credibility leads to more partnership opportunities
  - Causing more events to take place,
  - Meaning more partners,
  - Thus more opportunities for program expansion.
Program Sustainability

1. Broaden participant network
   • American participants are Program’s life-blood
2. Continue to hire full/part time faculty and staff
   • Yamai Secka-Jack
   • UTG liaisons
3. Create mutual interest in program
   • Program alumni network
4. Build partnerships, particularly with other American institutions
   • Elizabethtown (this year)
   • Students from Dartmouth, Bridgewater, etc.

“...looking to reach out to other institutions that are similarly minded, and have programs that would fit with what they do there.” – Mandy Reinig (2012)
Sources

- Roberts, Bill
  2011 Praxis Application.
- www.smcm.edu/Gambia
- http://www.facebook.com/groups/280407932033762/280407945367094/?comment_id=288689427872279&notif_t=like
- https://encrypted-tbn2.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTOoDml4tyJDDrNXm_KGfoSrR_fKurRQLbbrdm8mbstkgfEKZeuA

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