

BLACK HBCU STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF A SHORT-TERM HERITAGE-SEEKING IMMERSIVE STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM: JOURNEY TO THE FIRST BLACK REPUBLIC

by

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ABSTRACT

SABRINA M. BROWN. BLACK HBCU STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF A SHORT-TERM HERITAGE-SEEKING IMMERSIVE STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM: JOURNEY TO THE FIRST BLACK REPUBLIC. (Under the direction of DR. LISA R. MERRIWEATHER)

Study abroad is a high-impact practice in the college and university setting that can lead to increased student engagement and student success. While study-abroad participation has increased, it is not a common practice across ethnic demographics or minority-serving institutions. Heritage-seeking is a form of study abroad that allows students of the ethnic minority to learn more about themselves in the context of another country. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore Black HBCU students' perceptions of their heritage-seeking study-abroad experiences. This study also identified the aspects of heritage-seeking that are important to include in the experience to encourage student success.

This study interviewed six HBCU students who participated in a heritage-seeking experience in Haiti. At the conclusion of the interviews, it was found that heritage-seeking study abroad impacted the students in two ways; it nurtured their university relationships, and it instilled a greater sense of responsibility to the Black community. This study also found that there were three aspects of heritage-seeking instrumental to this type of study abroad program: creating opportunities for students to develop relationships, developing it as an immersive experience; and allowing students the space to self-reflect.

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My colleagues. Thank you for your words of encouragement and inspiration.

My HBCU scholars. You were and are my motivation. You are good enough, smart enough, and you deserve all the great things this world has to offer.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of my father, Rev. James T. Brown. No words seem grand enough to express how I feel in this moment of my life. I wish you were alive to experience this journey with me, but I know you are in heaven smiling and cheering me on. I love you always and forever. This one is for you, old man.

This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of my professor and committee member, Dr. Brenda McMahon. Thank you for helping me discover my passion. You are missed but your legacy will live forever.

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This dissertation is dedicated to the little brown boys and girls who have dreams that exceed anything their family and friends can comprehend. Don’t stop believing in yourself—you too can have, be, and do anything you set your mind to.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Black Americans remained as chattel slaves from 1619 until 1865. During the 246 years of slavery, it was a crime to teach Black Americans how to read and write (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). In 1866, the Civil Rights Act and the Fourteenth Amendment guaranteed Blacks protection for basic civil rights (Klarman, 1999). The Reconstruction Act of 1867 and the Fifteenth Amendment emancipated Black men for the first time in most of the nation (Klarman, 1999). Despite changes to the Constitution, more progress was necessary to improve the living conditions and rights of Black Americans.

My Travel Experience

Having this knowledge about Black people and their fight for freedom and, eventually, equal rights, has served as the precursor to my life. My parents were from a generation born in the 1940s, and their experience with equality and justice was very different from what I have seen and the liberties I have been afforded. One example of this difference is how we move about the country and the world.

My first international experience was in graduate school, when I spent two weeks in London on a higher education tour. I was one of two Black people among the group of 40 professionals and graduate students. After graduate school, I worked at a private, Predominantly White Institution (PWI) where 70% of their students traveled abroad. Both of those experiences empowered and intrigued me to see more of the world.

"I am so proud of you," my father said in 2011. "You are traveling and seeing the world. As a young, Black, college-educated woman, you are really doing it! There was a time when Black people couldn't travel for leisure or anything. We could barely travel around the U.S. and had to be in the military to be able to see the world." My dad's

understanding of how the world worked was influenced by growing up as a Black man born in the South in 1944. He also had global experience due to his short time in the military. He served in the Vietnam War. Exposed to Agent Orange and malaria, he was released from the army, never to travel internationally again. After the war, he faced many adversities as a Black man in America; yet, he remained hopeful. He was ecstatic to witness the changes and advances that Black Americans were making in America: More Black children graduating high school and going to college. Black people advancing in sports (he loved Venus and Serena Williams and watching them play tennis). Our first Black President, Barack Obama. After witnessing those miraculous firsts, he remained most proud of his youngest child, his only daughter, graduating from college and traveling the world—just for fun! The world was changing and I was able to witness it from my perspective, through the lens of my father, and vice versa.

Inspired by my father's account of Black peoples' travel in America, I delved more into the Black travelers' experience from a historical perspective. I tried to keep it positive and not to recap the trauma of sundown towns, which were White neighborhoods in which Blacks were not safe when the sun went down, or it was too dark to see if the environment was safe. I tried not to view images of Black people being lynched on trees or tied to pickup trucks and dragged around until their bodies were lifeless. I looked for the positive things that were happening to and for Blacks during the Jim Crow era. I discovered *The Negro Motorist Green-Book* written in 1936 by Victor H. Green. The idea of the *Green Book* was to

give the Motorist and Tourist a Guide not only of the hotels and tourist homes in all of the large cities but other classifications that will be found useful wherever

he may be. Also, facts and information that the Negro Motorists can use and depend upon. (Green, 1940, p.1)

While it was sad that a book of this nature was necessary, it also showed the resilience of the Black community and their commitment to helping each other travel and navigate their way around the United States. Blacks around the country were asked to submit names and address information for all businesses safe for "Negros." The deadline for submission was March 15, and all forms and advertisements had to be received by that time to be included in the *Green Book* Publication (Green, 1940). Patrons paid twenty-five cents per copy in order to subscribe to the book (Green, 1940). The 1940 *Green Book* held a "card of appreciation" which thanked the newspaper outlets and people around the country "who have contributed and worked to bring this travel guide before the public and up to date so that we as a race might have something authentic to travel by and to make traveling better for the Negro" (Green, 1940, p. 4).

Reading this book was both humbling and fascinating. Understanding the plight of Blacks in America and the challenges they faced to be free and then move freely about this country was inspirational. I wanted to travel more, both domestically and internationally because I believed I owed this experience to myself and my ancestors. The culmination of my new love for travel, my father's life journey, and relearning American history posed additional questions for me. One was why had I never traveled abroad prior to graduate school. Then I compared my HBCU undergraduate experience to the experience I was providing and observing of Black students who attended PWIs. I wondered if I was detached in college and just missed the chance to study abroad. I asked myself, did we have a study-abroad office that I was unaware of? If so, how did I miss

this? After a few Google searches and phone calls, I realized that I had not missed anything. This service was not provided at my undergraduate institution.

Given the knowledge that I had acquired as a working adult, I wondered if studying abroad could have been a conduit for my peers and me to connect with the world. I had already experienced Europe while I was thinking through this scenario, but I still had a few “what-ifs.” I wondered about traveling to a place where the people looked like me, in the company of peers who were Black like me. I took the opportunity to travel more, and I even created opportunities for Black students at a PWI to travel with other Black students, giving them an experience that I never had. Many years after graduate school I landed a position creating study-abroad experiences at an HBCU. Serving in that role allowed me the opportunity to offer an international perspective to my scholars. Creating these opportunities would not be an easy feat as there was no blueprint for how to construct these experiences, specifically at HBCUs for Black students. I also learned that Black students had other issues around travel that were not university-related but ingrained into their psyche from years of lessons on what it meant to be Black in America.

Background of the Problem

The fact of Black people not traveling abroad had implications greater than Black people not having an “experience.” There were also implications of economic impact.

When referencing the current workplace environment, Barak (2016) said that

although more organizations are benefitting from the richness of ideas and talents that are introduced by a more diverse workforce, they operate in social

environments that are increasingly more suspicious and even hostile to people who look and behave differently from the mainstream." (p. xvi)

Barak also gathered that "both globally and locally, diversity and intergroup relations are as tumultuous as ever before" (p. xvi), noting that "most large corporations in today's global economy are international or multinational" (Barak, 2016, p. 2), which requires a particular skill set or level of competencies. How then can Black people compete in a society where they do not have equal access to opportunities to develop intercultural competencies?

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (2007) surveyed over 300 executives of U.S. corporations. They reported that 72% of the executives said they desired to have colleges place more emphasis on students dealing with "global issues and developments and their implications for the future" (p. 12). This line of thinking and understanding of globalization was changing the way the world worked, and the characteristics employers were seeking in employees. Jean Francois (2016) claimed that, for college students who develop these international competencies and skills, "they may experience intrinsic motivation that leads to continued enrollment in school until graduation" (p. 44).

Simultaneously, on a local level, Black Americans were discussing the fact that education from an HBCU was not preparing Black students for the real world. The argument was that being in a homogenous environment was not reflective of the real world and that Black HBCU students would not be as functional or successful as Black PWI students in the working world because they lacked exposure. Although not necessarily related, this idea that a homogenous environment was not good was also

reflected in research. Braskamp et al. (2009) wrote that students need "to think and act in terms of living in a world in which they meet, work, and live with others with very different cultural backgrounds, habits, perspectives, customs, religious beliefs, and aspirations" (p. 101). While interesting to read, not all research is inclusive of or a representation of the Black experience.

While access to higher education had increased over the years (NCES, 2011), graduation rates among U.S. undergraduate students had not changed much since the 1970s (Horn et al., 2006). America was still behind the curve in global education and Black student success in general presented an even more urgent issue (Cokley & Chapman, 2008). What could be done about these growing concerns? A global or international education can be achieved in various ways. In 2005, Sylvester reintroduced the six categories to achieve an international education that Leestma identified in 1969. They included (1) the study of other lands, (2) the interdisciplinary study of world affairs, (3) comparative and cross-cultural studies, (4) educational exchange and study abroad, (5) technical assistance to educational development in other countries, and (6) international cooperation in intellection cooperation.

While all aspects of international education were important, there had been an increase in participation in study-abroad programming at the collegiate level (IIE, 2009). Some attributed this increase to the U.S. Department of State establishing initiatives such as the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship and the Fulbright Scholarship, which allowed students of color, first-generation students, or students without financial resources to participate in study abroad. Others attributed this increase to U.S. college campuses adding international education and global competencies into their core educational

mission (IIE, 2009). During the 2016-2017 academic year, 332,727 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit, which was an increase of 2.3% from 2015/2016 (IIE, 2022). Of those studying in 2016-2017, 70.8% were White, 10.2% were Hispanic or Latino(a), 8.2% were Asian or Pacific Islander, 6.1% were Black or African American, 4.3% were multiracial, and less than 1% were American Indian or Alaska Native (IIE, 2022). As these numbers illustrate, students of color were and are consistently participating in study-abroad experiences at lower rates than their White peers (Salisbury et al., 2010).

Despite the numerous studies on the benefits of studying abroad, and vast growth of participants among American college students, parents and faculty alike have questioned the relevance of study-abroad programs and were concerned about the academic value of study-abroad programs and the risk of delaying on-time graduation (Bollag, 2004; Booker, 2001; Marcum & Roochnik, 2001). Jean Francois (2016) reminds us that success in college involves more than just attaining the degree: "Access without success is a failure for both the society and the student" (p. 64). What Jean Francois was saying is that students should do more than survive in college; they should thrive. And all students should have access to the same experiences, regardless of the type of institution, HBCU or PWI, their socioeconomic status, their first-generation or legacy status, or their racial/ethnic identity.

Astin (1985) theorized that students could thrive, allowing universities the desired outcomes of graduation, if three things were in alignment—input, environment, and outcome. A student's "input" includes their demographics, background, and any previous experiences. The student's "environment" accounts for all the experiences a student would have during college. "Outcome" covers the student's characteristics,

knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and values that exist after graduating from college. Student involvement in co-curricular activities such as student organizations, leadership positions, and activity in campus residence halls has a positive correlation with retention and academics (Pike & Kuh, 2005). Arroyo and Gasman (2014) concluded that "the optimal educational approach for Black students places a premium on qualitatively rich interaction between real people where human individuality, freedom, and high context interaction are practiced as a lived holistic philosophy" (p. 74).

Studying abroad is loosely defined as completing part of a college degree program in a country other than one's homeland. This program can last an entire year, and is referred to as long-term study abroad. It can also last for a semester or, at 1-3 weeks, is referred to as short-term study abroad. Short-term study abroad opportunities can serve as the experience Astin (1985) and Pike and Kuh (2005) write about as it relates to student involvement and university-desired outcomes. This understanding can serve as an impetus for institutions to seek strategies to increase student involvement, which in turn may increase the rates at which students complete their degrees. Given the lack of parity between Black student retention and graduation in higher education and that of their White counterparts, this begs the following questions: (1) What can be done do to help Black students cross the finish line while having meaningful and robust experiences in college? And (2), How might I leverage my personal experience of study abroad and its impacts on other students to promote it as a vehicle to bridge desired outcomes for students?

Problem Statement

In 2010, the Institute of International Education (IIE) noted that the majority of U.S. study-abroad students are choosing to participate in short-term programs rather than semester- and year-long immersion programs. For students who are in the ethnic minority, one short program that can allow for an enriched experience is a heritage-seeking study-abroad program. Szekely (1998) defined heritage-seeking in study abroad as the selection of a study-abroad venue because of family background—national, religious, cultural, or ethnic. Szekely (1998) distinguishes that heritage-seeking allows one to select a venue because of some level of familiarity or resonance rather than because of difference. In other words, Szekely is saying that instead of having an intention to study abroad out of curiosity about the unknown, the intent of heritage-seeking is to deepen one’s understanding through the lens of what is already known. Another definition of a heritage seeker includes students who travel to countries of their family's origin, with the hope of learning more about themselves “Tips for Heritage Seekers” (2019). Since heritage-seeking programs can influence Black students’ decisions to study abroad, it is important for administrators who design these international opportunities to incorporate relevant [features? content? data?] in an effort to increase the chances for students to have a meaningful experience.

Unfortunately, as a consequence of slavery, many Black Americans do not know their ancestry. One example of this consequence is Black Americans’ inability to discover their ancestry through family history DNA, which is becoming a widespread practice in American culture. Weise (2018) noted that approximately 30 % of Americans have ancestors who do not come from Europe, and their lineage data may not be as accurate as that of White Americans. One article cites the significance of Genetic

Reference Panels (GRFs), which assist in identifying exactly where ancestry originated by identifying genes underlying common and complex traits (Hou, et al., 2017). Smaller "panels" result in smaller sample sizes, which makes it more difficult for Blacks or any non-Europeans, to pinpoint their country of origin. In 2015, Ancestry.com had just 18 Polynesian people in its genetic reference panel, compared to France, which had 1,407 (Weise, 2018). In November of that year, the Germanic Europe panel included 2,072 people, while there were just 65 from Western and Central India and 41 from Northern Africa (Weise, 2018). Despite this element of the unknown, many Blacks view Africa as their motherland and country of origin (Ellis, 2021), thus the term "African diaspora" has been used to refer to all descendants of Africa (Migiro, 2018). The largest populations of the African diaspora reside in Brazil, the United States, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Colombia (Migiro, 2018).

In 2002, Brown wrote in *Black Issues of Higher Education* that "International study abroad programs are not new, but they are beginning to take off at historically Black colleges and universities" (p. 28). Brown noted that "the challenge for these institutions is to make such programs appealing and affordable to attract more African American students" (p. 28). According to Gasman (2013) 42% of HBCUs do not offer study abroad. This deficiency may be due to lack of resources for student scholarship, lack of professional staff to create opportunities, or possibly a lack of interest on behalf of the students. One could also posit that HBCUs have yet to realize the impact study abroad can have on academic success as defined by retention, persistence, and on-time graduation. Heritage-seeking opportunities can promote international travel for students

of color. Studying abroad via heritage-seeking opportunities can be a tool that HBCUs in particular can employ to aid in retention, persistence, and educational attainment.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore Black HBCU students' perceptions of their heritage-seeking study-abroad experiences.

Research Questions

The answers to the following research questions were used to gain a better understanding:

1. What are the benefits of heritage-seeking study abroad for Black HBCU students?
2. Based on Black HBCU students' perceptions of the heritage-seeking study-abroad program, what were impactful aspects of the program?

Significance of Study

Little is known about heritage-seeking study-abroad opportunities for Black students, especially at HBCUs. The IIE provides a list of universities and colleges that produce the most Black/African American study-abroad participants. Of the top 20 institutions, no HBCUs were listed. Despite the noted benefit of traveling to African and Caribbean countries for students of color, popular destination countries continue to be in Europe (IIE, 2017). However, the lack of representation of Black students in study abroad limits the number of Black people in international careers and leadership positions and robs society of opportunities for Black people to fulfill their role in telling Black America's story, according to Tensley (2015). Thus, a more in-depth look into heritage-seeking as a motivation for study abroad may encourage more Black students to study in

countries where the African diaspora is represented, increasing the number of students learn ingmore about themselves, developing their identity, and strengthening their outcomes, which Astin (1999) recommends for university success.

Black students who strongly identify with their cultural heritage experience an increase in their self-esteem, self-efficacy, and academic motivation and success. For example, a benefit for Black students studying in African and Caribbean countries is the development of self and exploration of their own identity (Neff, 2001; Tsantir, 2005). Yet, while heritage-seeking is a benefit for Black students to study abroad, programming has not been designed to engage students in these experiences. The results of this study can be used by practitioners who design study-abroad opportunities for their universities, which can be beneficial to HBCUs that struggle with retention, persistence, degree attainment, and global thinkers.

Overview of Methodology

Qualitative research is used to explore topics where little information is available about a group or a phenomenon (Gay & Arisian, 2003). Patton (2002) suggests that this methodology requires in-depth interviews with people to gather data as to how they perceive, describe, feel about, judge, make sense of, and talk about their lived experiences. This qualitative descriptive study utilized interviewing to explore Black students' experience of studying abroad as heritage-seekers.

The targeted population for this study is Black, HBCU undergraduate students, who participated in study-abroad programming designed for heritage-seeking. Students were interviewed to identify how the program impacted them as students from an HBCU;

what experiences proved to be the most impactful while on their journeys; and what impact the experience had on their success.

Theoretical Framework

In 2014, due to the alarming struggles that Black students faced at the time and that prohibited and still prohibit college completion, Arroyo and Gasman created the HBCU-based educational approach for Black college student success. The HBCU-based educational approach has three areas of focus. The first area is the Black student experience, which includes equitable access to college (Posselt et al., 2012), learning, overall development during college (Kimbrough & Harper, 2006; Museus et al., 2011), and graduation from college (Knapp et al., 2011). The second centers the institution; Arroyo and Gasman (2014) noted that "other approaches reinforce rather than reduce deficit stereotypes (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012), perpetuating a view of Blacks as substandard learners who are failing the institutions when the reverse might be true: the institutions are failing them" (p. 60). The last area is the term "HBCU-Based." Neither HBCUs nor the HBCU experience is generalizable; however, they share definite similarities that contribute to a foundational theory. In other words, each university owns its students' experience. While HCBUs share similarities, a student can have a very different experience from one campus to the next. The similarities among HBCUs include:

a collective historical journey of struggle and victory (Allen & Jewell 2002; Brown & Davis 2001), a general mission of racial uplift (Gasman & Bowman 2011; Hirt et al. 2006), the provision of social capital to traditionally marginalized persons (Gasman & Jennings 2006), and an uncommon student experience that is

particularly meaningful to Blacks (Jett 2013; Outcalt & Skewes-Cox 2002; Thompson, 2008). (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014, p. 63).

Limitations

This study was conducted with the following limitations. First, it was conducted at one HBCU in the Midwest. As such, the findings may not be translatable to other HBCUs or other Black students. Second, since as the researcher, I worked at the university, organized this experience, and had a relationship with the student participants, my being the primary source for data collection and analysis could constitute a researcher-bias limitation. I am also an HBCU alumna and strongly believe in the importance of study-abroad work, so my views are not neutral. The last limitation is that I framed this study and interview questions from a positive perspective. This does not mean that there were not negative interactions or memories from this experience; however, I decided to not to inquire about them to provide a positive, non-comparison study.

Delimitations

Given the definition of delimitations in a research study as those attributes that create boundaries and limit scope (Simon, 2011), the delimitations for this study are centered on its participants: (1) all students came from one university; (2) not all students who traveled on this experience were Black, but only the Black students were asked to participate.

Assumptions

As a study-abroad professional who coordinates and leads these experiences, I assumed that students were willing to share their experiences with me. I also assumed

that they would be honest in the retelling and sharing of their experiences. Lastly, while this program was designed as a heritage-seeking opportunity, students could have chosen to participate in this experience for other unknown reasons.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore Black HBCU students' perceptions of their heritage-seeking study-abroad experiences. This chapter gave a brief background of the topic, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, significance, theoretical framework, methodology, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. Chapter 2 will examine the history of Black Americans and higher education and the benefits and struggles of HBCUs. It looks at study-abroad benefits as well as the benefits and constraints for Black student participation. Last, I will discuss the HBCU-based education approach and holistic success.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Black college students and study abroad experiences are accessible. Studies that discuss the benefits, barriers, and the impact study abroad has on identity development have increased within the past decade. What we have not seen is research that includes students who attend HBCUs and the role or impact of heritage-seeking. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand the experience of Black HBCU students who participate in heritage-seeking study abroad programs. In this literature review, I aim to narrate the historical path that explains Black peoples' relationship with higher-education and with travel. I find it necessary to examine the history of travel for Blacks in America, higher education and travel for Blacks. Then I discuss study abroad in the context of Black students. Lastly, I discuss holistic success at HBCUs.

Black Americans and Higher Education

The 1866 Civil Rights Act and the Fourteenth Amendment guaranteed Blacks protection for basic civil rights (Klarman, 1999). The Reconstruction Act of 1867 and the Fifteenth Amendment emancipated Blacks for the first time and redistricted in the South (Klarman, 1999). While flawed in execution, these were positive steps forward. Initially, education was considered the avenue to achieve equality, to achieve financially and advance socially. New schools were constructed as part of the Reconstruction Act of 1867, but Black students soon found they did not have access to the breadth of education White students had. Most schools were restricted to freedmen's texts, books that were racist, and posited that Blacks were inferior and uneducable (Bronson, 2016).

Years before the inception of the *Green Book* in 1896, the courts ruled in *Homer A. Plessy v Ferguson* that "separate but equal" facilities were acceptable (Rubio, 2001). This ruling meant that although segregation was not legally discriminatory, as it related to the quality of facilities, it was discriminatory in a practical sense. This discrimination was not only real in public conveyances and other public locations, but it was also true in terms of educational opportunities. Public schools, k-12, and higher education relied on this ruling to support decisions to have separate schools based on race. Even the Truman Commission suggested that the mere physical existence of schools does not achieve equality of educational opportunity; it also involves the quality of teaching and learning that takes place in them (Zook, 1947). Unfortunately, the schools maintained for the Blacks were commonly inferior to those for Whites. Schools attended by Blacks then called "Negro schools," were cheaper, housed in inadequate buildings, and many of the teachers were not adequately educated (Hofstader & Smith, 1961). Segregation affected the quality of education for White students, too. Having to maintain separate Black schools and White schools with access to the same curriculum and books, took away from the resources and opportunities for all students; whereas if that money, resources, and opportunities were channeled into integrated facilities, there would have been better schools for Blacks and Whites together (Hofstader & Smith, 1961).

Seeing a need to help newly freed Black Americans, philanthropic organizations (usually run by Whites), such as the American Baptist Home Mission Society, wanted to foster education by helping to found Black colleges in southern states. These initially were supposed to train Black teachers to teach in Black communities. Also, in support of educating Blacks was W. E. B. DuBois. As a sociologist, historian, civil rights activist,

Pan-Africanist, writer, an editor, and educator, DuBois believed that one in ten Black men would become leaders of their race through education, involvement in social change, and related cultural productions such as writing books (DuBois, 1903). This gifted class of men he referred to as the Talented Tenth, as noted in the collection of essays titled *Souls of Black Folk*.

No Black colleges existed before the Civil War, and most Blacks were forbidden to attend White institutions. The United States established its first institution of higher learning, Harvard University, in Massachusetts in 1636 (Rudolph, 1990); two hundred years later, Cheney University, its first Black college was founded (Cheney, 2017).

Through the bequest of Richard Humphreys, Cheney University was established on February 25, 1837, making it the first institution of higher learning for Blacks (Cheney University, 2019). At its founding the University was named the African Institute (Cheney University, 2019). Lincoln University followed in 1854, and then Wilberforce University in 1856. These institutions, however, were not true colleges or universities (as we know them present day), but rather mere remedial schools for teaching Black adults who had no previous education (Historically Black Colleges, 1991). As a result of inadequate preparation, as late as the 1930s, Black leaders were suggesting that Black colleges were graduating students who were unable to read and write (Rudolph, 1968). Institutions like Hampton, Fisk, and Talladega were concerned and began to focus heavily on reading, writing, and basic mathematics (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997).

The conditions which predicated low academic achievement were changed in part by the 1954 Supreme Court ruling, *Brown v the Board the Education of Topeka*. The Court unanimously voted that segregated educational facilities were unequal and,

therefore, violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution, and mandated desegregation of all public schools in the country (Garrison-Wade & Lewis, 2004). Despite this, the history of underfunding education for Blacks continued and was evident in Reconstruction when White southern lawmakers controlled funding for schools, often channeling 30 times more money for White students than for Blacks (Butchart, 2010). This practice also occurred in the North through such practices as redlining, a process whereby insurance companies, banks, and businesses drew lines on city maps, cutting of investments in neighborhoods considered to be “risky.” These areas were usually in inner-city and heavily populated by Black Americans (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Redlining Black neighborhoods meant that elementary and high school students were often ill-prepared for college. In spite of the substandard conditions and prospects, HBCUs and concerned educators, politicians, and philanthropists would press forward, endeavoring to combat the ills of illiteracy and under education/schooling that plagued much of Black America at that time. However, across time and through history, HBCUs would prove themselves worthy and formidably capable institutions for higher education and transformative for the life-worlds of the formerly enslaved in American society.

The Benefit of HBCUs

HBCUs are defined, in part, according to federal law, as “any historical Black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans” (Wolfe, 2015, p. 7). HBCUs were established solely to educate Black Americans (Wiggin & Scott, 2015). There were a few hundred HBCUs founded, primarily in the south; but, today, there remains only nearly 100

HBCUs, both private and public, that offer associate, bachelor, and graduate degrees (Wiggin & Scott, 2015).

HBCUs across the country have similarities that unify them and create a standardized mission. These universities commonly include a historical journey of struggle and victory (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Brown & Davis, 2001). Consequently, HBCUs share a mission of racial uplift (Gasman & Bowman, 2011; Hirt et al., 2006), and tend to welcome diverse applicants, “including students from a range of experiences and backgrounds, through relatively accessible tuition and admissions policies” (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014, p. 66). Arroyo and Gasman (2014) also noted that HBCUs often give students a better chance. They state, “some applicants are highly talented and affluent and could succeed anywhere, others are decidedly underprepared, are from disadvantaged backgrounds, and have few other opportunities” (p. 66). In general, HBCUs retain comparatively open accessibility (Kim, 2002). Prior to the 1960s, 90% of Black college students were enrolled in an HBCU but due to the push for desegregation, those numbers declined to 17% (Kim & Conrad, 2006).

Black students attending HBCUs have reportedly higher levels of academic involvement and more satisfaction with the ethnic/racial diversity of the faculty and the sense of community on their campuses than their peers attending PWIs (Outcalt & Skewes Cox, 2002). Reeder and Schmitt (2013) supported the findings that HBCUs provide nurturing environments that lead to successful outcomes for students. Some researchers (e.g., Boykin, 1983; Watkins, 2005) contend that HBCUs are different in the teaching process and have culturally relevant pedagogy. Also noted is that HBCUs incorporate traditional interventions for learning. HBCU students have noted more

interaction with faculty and experience cultural and social learning that is not confined to the classroom (Brown, 2013). Cross and Strauss (1998) suggested that Black students at PWIs develop behaviors that help them cope in an environment where Black culture is not prominent and how this impacts their academic confidence and racial identity. Therefore, attending an HBCU campus may provide Black students with a supportive environment that may help buffer the effects of initial depressive symptomatology on academic performance and college persistence (Outcalt & Skewes Cox, 2002).

Ample research suggests that HBCUs, as a group, contribute to the success of black students in unique ways (Gasman et al., 2010). Although HBCUs represent a small portion of the colleges in the United States, they award one-third of the bachelor's degrees earned by Blacks (Strayhorn, 2014). According to the National Science Foundation, the top eight institutions from 2002 to 2011, where African American Ph.D.s in science and engineering earned their bachelor's degrees, were all HBCUs. The United States Commission on Civil Rights documented that 40% of all African Americans with bachelor's degrees in the physical sciences and 38% who majored in math or biological sciences attended HBCUs (USCCR, 2010). Due to this overwhelming success, HBCUs have been deemed responsible for creating the Black middle class (Drewry & Doermann, 2001).

The struggles of HBCUs

While HBCUs have noteworthy benefits, some HBCUs have deficiencies and may not meet all of their students' expectations. Differences include funding levels (Palmer et al., 2011) and unstable financial solvency compared to predominate White schools. Although this is partially due to their historical legacy of marginalization and the

predominant socioeconomic demographics of their students (Coupet & Barnum, 2010; June, 2003), it presents a challenge for students. These challenges can come in the form of limited scholarships or outdated facilities, to name a few. Hurd (2000) found that students enrolled in HBCUs often express extreme dissatisfaction with institutional organization, financial aid, staff "with attitudes," and institutional bureaucracy. For the students who can persevere through those challenges, HBCUs can create experiences that are particularly meaningful to Black students (Jett, 2013; Outcalt and Skewes-cox, 2002; Thompson, 2008) by promoting a familial environment providing Black faculty in the classrooms and mentors on campus; however, for some students these challenges prevail.

Study Abroad

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) provided a cluster of educational experiences that would enrich students' lives: (1) having serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than one's own, (2) having serious conversations with students with different religious beliefs, political opinions, and values, (3) using electronic technology to discuss or complete assignments, (4) participating in internships or field experiences, foreign language study, study abroad, community service, independent study, or a culminating senior experience, (5) participating in co-curricular activities, and (6) having an institutional climate that encourages contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds (Kuh et al., 2010). Enriching educational experiences such as internships, community service, and capstone courses are examples given by Kuh et al. (2010) that allow students to synthesize, integrate, and apply knowledge. These enriching educational experiences are equal learning opportunities and "complementary learning

opportunities inside and outside classrooms augment academic programs" (Kuh et al., 2010, p. 219). Study abroad as a form of engagement encompasses each of the aforementioned enriching experiences that students should have while in college.

Study Abroad in the United States emerged between 1918 and 1939, between the two world wars, as an extension of the European Grand Tour (Twombly et al., 2012). The visit to Europe, known as the Grand Tour, was a coming of age event for elite White males, later extended to White females, which allowed them to study art, culture, and the roots of Western Civilization (Gross, 2008). In 1919, the Institute of International Education was created. After its creation, the number of institutions providing study abroad opportunities, the types of programs, and the number of student participants began to expand (Twombly et al., 2012).

The University of Delaware asserts to have the first study-abroad program (Kochanek, 2008). Named "Junior Year Abroad", the program was intended to make students "better-rounded", preparing future teachers of foreign language, and offering experience for students interested in pursuing international careers (Kochanek, 2008). Lincoln University of Pennsylvania states they are the first international HBCU with students traveling as early as 1859 (Study abroad, n.d.).

There are different models of study abroad programs in the U.S. including short-term travel abroad, short-term study abroad, on-site classes, student teaching, long-term study abroad (Lozano, 2008) and heritage-seeking (Neff, 2001). Short-term travel abroad includes students attending conferences, gathering information in foreign countries and gaining knowledge from international experts, practitioners and colleagues (Grayet al., 2002). Short-term study abroad programs usually take place in the summer or spring

break for approximately 1 to 6 weeks, organized in connection with university departmental initiatives (Lozano, 2008). A student who wants a cultural immersion and first-hand academic experience may engage in on-site classes. Participation in on-site classes can be utilized by any academic discipline but participants tend to lean towards the sciences (Lozano, 2008). Student teaching provides students an opportunity to gain teaching experience at educational institutions abroad (Gray et al., 2002). Long-term study abroad includes academic credit at a foreign college or university for a semester or a year and the specifics of housing, fees and credits tend to be designed specific to the student (Lozano, 2008). Heritage-Seeking as a study abroad model, is less common and attracts a specific student, providing great benefits. The purpose of heritage-seeking is for the student to be able to learn about their own ethnicity (Neff, 2001).

We know that universities have varying missions, resources, and student populations. Schools with large numbers of first-generation college students who might be less familiar with the advantages of cross-cultural study or for whom long-term foreign study may be too expensive provide abbreviated international experiences (Kuh et al., 2010). These experiences are particularly valuable within institutions where many students have never left their home state, much less visited another country. Shorter programs such as a few weeks in the summer or during a school break can be more appealing and affordable than a semester-long or year-long commitment to living in a foreign country (Morris, 2017). Students participating in study abroad programs experience lasting effects in person and social growth (Dwyer, 2004; Hoof & Hubert, 2006; Younes & Asay, 2003). Study abroad has shown to improve participants' self-confidence and self-efficacy (Younes & Asay, 2003). McMillan and Opem (2002) found

that no matter where students study abroad or how long they study abroad, students benefit from increased knowledge of their own cultural values and biases as well as a desire to further their education after college. In 1997, Matz found that these students acquire a broader perspective about the human condition in the world and are challenged with a new sense of history, a widening of horizons, and an appreciation of other cultures as “not right or wrong, but simply different” (pp. 120-121). Study abroad participants exhibit an expanded vision of the world and become more tolerant in their approach to issues (Carlson & Burn, 1989; Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Deutsch, 1970; Lambert, 1989; Leonard, 1959; Sell & Craig, 1983). Many students who study abroad show a reduced sense of ethnocentrism and nationalism (Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Leonard, 1959). Students also become more competitive in an increasingly global job market once a study abroad experience is added to their résumé (LaFranchi, 2003).

Constraints for Black Students to Study Abroad

While the benefits of studying abroad are numerous, students in the ethnic minority and for the sake of this study, Black students, face many obstacles. A major hindrance for Black students to study abroad is information about opportunities (Brown, 2002). Brown’s (2002) article recommended that study abroad educators market programs and articulate the benefits of study abroad instead of using clichés like “its global” or “it’s a new millennium” (p. 31). Sweeney (2014) reiterates that Black students who do not study abroad miss out on valuable opportunities for growth and transformation. The Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) has hosted conferences to address the constraints that prohibit Black students from studying abroad. As a result of the conferences, CIEE has two extensive analyses. The first provides a list

of constraints including finances, curriculum requirements, lack of support of faculty, and marketing practices (Council on International Educational Exchange [CIEE], 1991). The Council's 1993 analysis expanded the list of constraints to include concern about cultural differences and fear of discrimination on the part of underrepresented students.

According to Fels (1993, as cited in Murray Brux & Fry, 2010), "many African Americans, based on experiences with racism in the United States, harbor apprehensions about racism they will encounter traveling abroad" (p. 514) This could be a result of the tensions expressed from family members who have stories of travel inside the US during the times it was unsafe for Blacks to travel. History tells us that Black people may be seen hanging on trees if they were in the wrong communities or unwanted spaces. Not to position that domestic travel is entirely safe current day as Black people still have difficulty or deadly experiences with domestic travel. Sandra Bland, a 28-year-old Black activist, was arrested during a traffic stop as she traveled from Illinois to Texas (Hassan, 2019). Ms. Bland was booked and placed in a housing area for women in Jail. Days later, a guard found her hanging in her 15-by-20-foot cell, and authorities ruled her death a suicide (Hassan, 2019). This case, still open, has garnered international attention. Murray Brux and Fry (2010) found that multicultural students, especially Asian American and African American, were interested in "studying in parts of the world corresponding to their heritage" and interested in topics relating to their "ethnic or national roots" (p. 523), maybe this makes them feel safer than being in places where concerns of racism and unfair justice can prevail without question or reproach.

These restraints to studying abroad are reflected in a study by the CIEE and the Penn Center for Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) that found that while 20% of

minority students attend MSIs, only 3.6% of them have participated in study abroad programs (CIEE, 2016). Moreover, the Association of International Educators reports that only 27% of all students of color studying abroad in 2015 (NASFA, 2015).

Typically, students travel abroad during their junior and sophomore years (American Council on Education, 2005). Traditionally participants tend to be White, female, juniors majoring in the social sciences majors (Open Doors, 2009). Some colleges and universities are trying to overcome this disparity by trying to reach students of color through talks and in-person visits with students about studying abroad. This intentional recruitment strategy puts information about foreign study in front of students who may not be aware of these opportunities and how they could be a part of them.

Benefits for Black Students to Study Abroad

So why is it important for Black students to have this experience? Day-Vineset al. (1998) investigated the impact of a study abroad program in Ghana on 18 African American students. Their study concluded via student essays that the program enabled students to (a) reject stereotypes, distortions, and omissions related to education about Africa and to substitute more accurate representations; (b) experience the emotional link to their slave history; (c) examine American cultural values critically and analytically; (d) experience growth in terms of ethnic identity, racial identity, and intercultural sensitivity; and (e) experience enhanced achievement and motivation.

The benefits of studying abroad are not limited to the Black student who travels. Talburt and Stewart (1999) wrote that having Black students on a study abroad program benefited the White students in the program because they were able to couple the young Black woman's experiences with racism with their similar feelings of being different and

being an outsider. Jackson (2005) found that the host country benefited from multicultural student participation because residents of the host country observe a broader American perspective that is often ignored or portrayed negatively in the media.

Cressy (2005) suggested that "through interactions between and among diverse groups of US Americans, students can help one another progress in their various stages of identity development" (p. 1). Cressy (2005) also noted that students separated from their usual environment would ask new or more profound questions about themselves and their societies. Neff (2001) found that African American students represented a much larger share of students in African programs than in other locations as well as in the Caribbean. Consequently, Neff gave heritage-seeking as a purpose for studying abroad—to be able to learn about one's ethnicity. Research shows that students use study abroad as an avenue of exploration to their own identities, and although most (a considerable majority) study abroad students expect to be challenged by the culture, heritage-seekers often expect to feel a sense of homecoming and acceptance (Tsantir, 2005). Neff (2001) acknowledged that it is often "more difficult to find a special bond of ethnicity with people in another country than students would like" (p. 38), but that "the experience of not finding one's heritage abroad can be just as enlightening as finding it" (p. 38).

Morgan et al. (2002) focused their research on African Americans in various West African countries. They found, via testimony, that programs like theirs can "help bring women of African descent together to reclaim their heritage, explore their identities, question and redefine what sisterhood and womanhood mean to them, and empower them to take action and make changes in their communities" (p. 351).

Rose and Bylander (2007) described and assessed a program that brought together students of a predominantly White college and some from historically Black colleges to study within the United States and Cameroon. This study found that students were able to “look both at and beyond the personal element and examine the cultural values, social forces, structural conditions, and institutional practices that have perpetrated racism, classism, and sexism” (p. 260).

One study explored the African American student's involvement in study abroad programs (Holmes, 2008). Holmes used narrative inquiry and an Afro-centric approach to explore and analyze student involvement, benefit, and impact of their study abroad experience. Ten undergraduate and graduate students who participated in study abroad programs were interviewed. Two of the students studied abroad prior. The results of the study revealed that African American students had positive study abroad experiences and that faculty and other students influenced their study abroad decision (Holmes, 2008). Funding the trip, pre-departure and orientation experience, recruitment, receiving academic credit, language acquisition, host families, global perspective, and connection to history were important in making their experience positive (Holmes, 2008). This exploratory study laid a solid foundation for further research on Blacks' participation in study abroad programs (Holmes, 2008).

Cheppel (2012) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study designed to explore the intentions and reasons why students choose their study abroad programs and better understand what persuaded them to study abroad. Twenty Black students who studied abroad within the past five years participated in the open-ended interviews. The theoretical framework was the "approach to decision making" and utilized multiple

theories as a guide. Participants from this study were in various countries: Argentina, Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Egypt, France, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, South Africa, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Their duration of abroad participation varied from short term to a year program. From this study, twelve common themes were constructed as it pertains to intentions and reasons for studying abroad: (1) "Important concerns/consideration for going to study abroad" were graduating on-time and being away from family and friends. (2) "Most Influential Messengers" were family members and other people of color who studied abroad. (3) "Assumptions about study abroad" showed that students varied in assumptions about the experience. Ultimately, all of the students decided to participate, but being able to anticipate assumptions and address them could encourage more participation. (4) The most important information needed for participation in study abroad. (5) Best ways of seeking/providing information about study abroad resulted in students talking about using freshman seminar classes and student organizations to share information. (6) Reasons for participation in study abroad; (7) Sources of Funding study abroad; (8) Perception of the amount of academic emphasis on producing globally competent citizens; (9) Study broad office involvement; (10) Suggestions on how to improve participation in study abroad; (11) Outcomes of study abroad/benefits; and (12) study abroad experience feedback.

Rahyns (2018) studied how Black Students made meaning of multi-country study abroad experiences. Using interpretive phenomenological analysis through Mezirow's Transformative learning theory (1993), Rayhns was able to gain an understanding of how participants reflected on their multi-country study abroad experiences and how they made sense of these experiences. In this study, seven Black students traveled in Africa, Asia,

Europe, and South America. Three themes were constructed on how the students reflected. The first reflection was on the role of racial identity and how racial identity informed participants' meanings about study abroad experiences. Students discussed how the experience was pertinent to their race, regardless of where they were in their Black identity development. The second theme reflected was on activism and how the students would commit to their communities as it relates to racial identity and international travel. Lastly, the students reflected on inter global competence and how they were able to navigate multiple cultural spaces successfully.

Brown (2002) acknowledged that it is important to send students to areas where they will have the best cultural and psychological experiences. Often the countries where students will feel most comfortable do not have formal programs designed nor do they have the resources to provide for students once they arrive (Brown, 2002). Research on Black students and study abroad is limited. The research that has been conducted pertains to identity, motivation, and a comparison between student participants. The aforementioned research, while instrumental, does not look at HBCU students' participation in heritage-seeking opportunities.

Heritage-seeking programs can be based in countries from which many Black students' ancestors came from, either through slavery or more recent immigration. It is posited that heritage-seeking experiences can develop a Black student's racial identity and broaden their world view, both contributing to their holistic success. The presented studies have examined study abroad issues; however, none of them explored in-depth Black HBCU students, and heritage-seeking. A significant gap exists in heritage-seeking and HBCU literature that addresses the design and implementation of programs that

could impact holistic success. Heritage-seeking programs should be complex and beneficial for all participants. It should include HBCU students and be clear in its focus and design. It is for this reason that this study was pursued.

Heritage-Seeking

Little research is prevalent on heritage-seeking within the context of study abroad among Black college students. While there is a growing body of literature related to minority students studying abroad, much remains to be investigated (Comp, 2008). One dissertation (Dufour, 2020) on heritage-seeking used a qualitative interpretive approach to look at American education abroad alumni spanning 1976 to 2018, to assess similarities and differences in how these individuals described the meaning of their education abroad experience. This study was conducted at a University that was founded by Swedish people and shares that an estimated 600 Americans have participated in this program and many of the participants traced their ancestry to Sweden (Dufour, 2020). Similar to my study, the institution and the heritage-seeking location were directly connected. This study showed that that self-reflection and openness were long-term impacts on these students regardless of their age or time elapsed between their experience and the time they interviewed (Durfour, 2020).

Comp's (2008) study on heritage-seeking in Western Europe talks about ethnic minorities abroad and the community they provide for students of color who wish to heritage-seek in Europe. Comp states that "the methodological approach to this study was to review existing statistics related to the race and ethnicity of U.S. students studying abroad and compare them with population demographic data of several Western European countries to determine the potential of Western Europe as a heritage destination

for U.S. minority students” (p. 33). This study discussed the benefits and challenges for students of color to study abroad and the benefit of heritage-seeking. While this study does provide an opportunity for students of the ethnic minority to participate in heritage-seeking, the location of this study remains to be in Europe and does not take into account the need for economic stimulation and awareness to garner interest or dismantle stereotypes for non-European, largely African populated countries. This is where this study differs. Again, necessitating the need for this study of Black heritage-seekers from within a HBCU and going to a country where the Black diaspora has representation.

Another article entitled, “Baltic Identity via German Heritage? Seeking Baltic German Art in the Nineteenth Century” was written by Joekald in 2014. The purpose of this article was to understand the “motherland” of Germany and the varying ethnicities that have been contributing to Germanic art. The author wants the reader to understand the Baltic culture through learning more about the artistic contributions of the people who identify as Baltic throughout the history of Germany. This study shows how learning about ones heritage and understanding ones identity in the context or positioned in a country is important

HBCU-Based Educational Approach

Arroyo and Gasman's (2014) HBCU-Based Educational Approach is a concept built with an institutional focus (Appendix A). It is a non-Eurocentric theoretical framework of Black college student success and is the first HBCU-based theoretical model to appear in academic literature. This approach considers the challenges students endure to get into college as well as the effectiveness of the in-class learning environment. Arroyo and Gasman describe the supportive environment by focusing on

achievement, identity formation, and values cultivation in a cooperative setting (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014). The HBCU-based educational approach has three areas of focus (1) prioritizes the experiences HBCUs provide known as an institutional entry point; (2) the environment known as the supportive environment; and (3) the need to learn more about the self in context with student success known as holistic success. This model talks about success using the term "holistic success," which includes graduation, career attainment, and civic contribution.

Institutional Entry Point

Some of the institutional structures within schools that impede college access for Black students are nationally consistent. One example is that Black students typically do not perform well on standardized tests when compared to their White counterparts (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Hoffman and Lowitzki (2005) noted that "despite the differences in test performance between Black and White students, colleges and universities continually employ such measures to determine college admission, even though research suggests that standardized tests are a weak measure of academic success for minority students" (p. 55). While academic entrance requirements have tightened for many HBCUs over the years, they generally retain comparatively open accessibility (Kim, 2002), giving Black students an opportunity at college who may not have had any other options. While accessibility does open a debate about institutional inferiority, as we have seen the top producing HBCUs ranked relatively low in comparison to other PWIs; we also know that the "best school" for a particular student is not necessarily the highest-ranked school but the school that represents the ideal personal fit (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014). Arroyo and Gasman conclude by saying HBCUs accessibility remains easier for

students and that the relationship between policy and supportive environment continues their connection to the university.

Supportive Environment

The second aspect of this model is a supportive environment. HBCU students often have similar racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. These similarities create a supportive environment that brings about feelings of safety and comfort for their same-race peers. Fleming's (1984) study deemed HBCUs a supportive environment when: (a) students have many opportunities for friendship with peers, faculty, staff, and counselors beyond the classroom; (b) students are free to engage in extracurricular campus life, including satisfying positive power motives and holding leadership positions; and (c) students feel a climate of academic development so that 'an individual can achieve feelings of progress' (p.19).

Arroyo and Gasman (2014) theorize ultimate achievement is a product of identity formation and the cultivation of values. HBCUs emphasize the formation of student identity, or self-concept, on three levels: racial or ethnic, intellectual, and leadership. Comparative studies (e.g., Adames et al., 2016; Klimstra et al., 2017; Oswald et al., 2004) have found that HBCU students have greater confidence than PWI students. This confidence is attributed to more Black instructors and Black guest speakers who "help students feel more comfortable in their own skin and improve as intellectuals" (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014, p. 69).

HBCUs are known for "attempting to cultivate a set of traditional African American moral principles and norms with the goal of developing citizens of competence and character" (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014, p. 69). These values are both progressive and

conservative. While PWIs emphasize research and scholarship, HBCUs typically focus on social change (Sydnor et al., 2010). Along the same lines of progress, Patterson et al. (2011) note that HBCUs continue to progress due to the tradition of social change and creative programming through service-learning.

A supportive environment is inclusive of students, faculty, and staff. Contrary to the studies on HBCUs being a supportive environment, Kimbrough and Harper (2006) interviewed Black Males, and several studies identified Black LGBT students among the groups who expressed their HBCU did not provide adequate support. Those studies also note that despite expressing the lack of institutional support, those same students say that overall, the environment is supportive. Arroyo and Gasman (2014) note that students provide strength and encouragement for their peers who often fill the void that the institution or faculty/staff neglect. Unique to HBCUs, the responsibility of support is shared across the university.

Holistic Success

Holistic success at an HBCU is not just about academics; it is about the trajectory and outcome of the student after spending any time on campus. Holistic success is about "the development of moral persons and engaged citizens" (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014, p. 71). Holistic success at an HBCU, as Arroyo and Gasman (2014) posit, is an interactive process and the outcome of student achievement, identity formation and the cultivation of values. These areas do not operate independently and the relationship among these areas is what makes up holistic success.

Research on student achievement varies when it comes to Black HBCU students. Specifically research looks at how well Black students perform in comparison to PWIs.

Achievement research shows evidence that HBCUs offer competitive learning opportunities (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014). Research also suggests that some HBCUs have programs that could be reproduced on other campuses while some have creative partnerships that allows students' similar opportunities as their PWI peers (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014). Gallien and Peterson (2005) contend that HBCUs are different in the teaching process itself, by incorporating traditional interventions for learning along with culturally relevant pedagogy (Boykin, 1983; Watkins, 2005). These varying thoughts are why it is important to recognize that academic success in college is not the only form of success that is important.

HBCU studies on identity formation place emphasis on formation of student identity, or self-concept, on racial/ ethnic, intellectual, and leadership. Some HBCUs accomplish this by providing positive images and role-models that protect students against negative stereotypes, including but limited to, bringing in guest lecturers (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014). Researchers thought these images showed students' examples of intellectuals, making them feel more comfortable in their own skin. This was also true for leadership. Wenglinsky (1996) found that Black students overall have higher leadership aspirations than White students. Further research provided evidence that Black HBCU students register higher educational aspirations, better graduate school preparation, and a higher likelihood of being professionals than their PWI peers (Kim, 2011; Wenglinsky, 1996).

HBCUs are known for attempting to cultivate a set of traditional African American moral principles and norms with the goal of developing citizens of competence and character. This is not easily achieved as we know that Black people, like other ethnic

groups, are not monolithic or all-inclusive of subgroups. This means that traditions may differ depending on various factors. With that in mind, the HBCU-based approach talks about varying traditions and values in terms of progressive and conservative thought. On the progressive side, HBCUs put emphasis on social justice and societal change and on the conservative side, restrictions on sexuality or self-expression and antigay treatment (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014). Research and concern as to the impact of these values are limited but growing. Again, just the idea that HBCUs find the importance of shared values is a difference in the PWI and HBCU space.

Toward these ends, Arroyo and Gasman (2014) ultimately mean to inspire place-based measures (institution-centric, HBCU specific), defining the contemporary HBCU campus as “beneficial environments,” that allow for various modes of reciprocation between the college/university and the successfully educated Black student. In essence the HBCU then becomes a critical temporal location for student enrichment for a brief time in place. Thus, between the students’ starting-point (enrollment) and end-point (graduation), the university has to meet the demands of the “student’s baseline expectations” (Bowden et al., 2021, p. 1207). The HBCU, then, as a place, has to employ a number of ways to influence and ultimately gain the confidence of the students that they might in turn invest emotionally. This can only happen through student engagement. Bowden et al. (2021) asserted that education cannot be separated from the holistic experience and noted that student engagement is a definitive variable in college success.

Summary

Chapter 2 included a historical overview of Black people and American education, and the creation of HBCUs, their benefits and struggles. The chapter discussed

study abroad and heritage-seeking as a new model for HBCU students to engage and explained the theoretical HBCU-based educational approach. Chapter 3 contains information regarding the research method and design appropriateness. Chapter 3 will also include the desired participant population, data collection procedures, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology that was used in this study. This chapter restates the purpose of the study, identifies the research questions, and gives details about the research design. Also discussed are the participants, how they were selected, and how the data was collected and analyzed.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand heritage-seeking study abroad program experiences of Black HBCU students. The answer to the following research questions were used to gain a better understanding:

1. What are the benefits of heritage-seeking study abroad for Black HBCU students?
2. Based on Black HBCU students' perceptions of the heritage seeking study abroad program, what were impactful aspects of the program?

Research Design

This study was conducted using a qualitative descriptive design. Qualitative research can facilitate the description and interpretation of complex phenomena, especially those that cannot be quantified by mathematical analysis (Ramm & Kane, 2011), by focusing on an individual's perceived experiences in greater depth (Creswell, 2007). Patton (2002) explained that qualitative methods facilitate the study of issues in "depth and detail" that "typically produces a wealth of information about a smaller number of people" (p.14). The instrument is the researcher and their interview skills (Patton, 2002). In qualitative descriptive studies, language is a vehicle of communication (Sandelowski, 2000). Qualitative descriptive research has the goal of providing

comprehensive summaries of events in the everyday terms of those events and is used when the straight descriptions of phenomena are desired (Sandelowski, 2000).

Participants

As described by Patton (1990), purposive sampling is the selection of subjects based on some characteristics such as age, gender, or race. Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). The goal of “purposive sampling is to obtain cases deemed information-rich for the purposes of the study” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338.)

Eligibility for students to participate in this study was as follows: Students should identify as Black and have participated in a study abroad program that was designed as a heritage-seeking opportunity in Haiti offered by a small HBCU in the Midwest in 2018. A list of eligible students was identified, and all students were emailed and asked to participate in the study. If students did not respond within 48 hours, they were called and contacted via WhatsApp. WhatsApp, described via their website, is a free multiplatform cell phone application that allows users to send text messages and voice messages, make voice and video calls, and share images, documents, user locations, and other content. This app was an additional way this group of students communicated with each other prior to, during, and post the study abroad experience. Therefore it was an effective way to reach and recruit potential participants. Groenewald (2014) indicates between two to ten participants are sufficient to reach saturation. The list of eligible participants consisted of fifteen students. After multiple attempts to contact participants, six student participants were recruited.

All participants identified as Black, attended an HBCU in the Midwest, and participated in the Spring Break in Haiti heritage-seeking program their university offered. The researcher assigned a pseudonym to each of the participants to protect their identity. A brief description of each student participant is included.

Table 1. Participants’ information

Name	Home State	Gender Identity	Major	Class Year	Age
Dwayne Wayne	Illinois	Male	Finance	Freshman	19
Dorian Heywood	Missouri	Male	Mathematics	Junior	22
Kimberly Reece	Kansas	Female	Sociology	Sophomore	20
Lena James	Michigan	Female	Communications	Sophomore	19
Ron Johnson	Michigan	Male	Biology	Sophomore	19
Denise Huxtable	Michigan	Female	Communications	Sophomore	19

Participant 1 (Dwayne Wayne)

Dwayne is a first-generation college student from Illinois. Dwayne was raised in a single-parent home and is the eldest of 7 siblings. As a student, Dwayne was involved in sports and community organizations. Dwayne’s mother developed an illness that required him to take on more responsibility to assist the family. After high school, Dwayne worked at a local restaurant. He quickly rose to a management position, supervising people both younger and older than he was. Dwayne observed the success of a classmate who went to college which inspired and motivated him to apply to college. Dwayne

wanted to attend an HBCU because he wanted to "learn Black history that was untampered with."

Participant 2 (Dorian Heywood)

Dorian was reared in Missouri alongside his older brother by their single mom. His mother instilled the importance of education at an early age. Dorian cannot recall what degree his mother had, but he thinks it was an associate degree. After high school, Dorian attended a university in Illinois until his tuition price increased and his grade point average decreased. Not having the financial means to continue in Illinois, Dorian returned to his hometown and worked at a grocery store until he could afford tuition. Dorian was active in his community and often volunteered, which led him to meet the Director of Admissions of an HBCU. Learning about their Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programming, Dorian became intrigued. He was accepted into the university, and double majored in engineering and mathematics.

Participant 3 (Kimberly Reece)

Kimberly was raised in Kansas by her grandmother, where she was often recognized for honor roll and perfect attendance. Kimberly was trained in ballet, tap, jazz and began praise dancing in her church. Kimberly was content, attending a university was not on her radar. She moved with her parents in high school. Before graduation, it appeared her parents would be divorcing. Knowing that her family dynamics were changing again, Kimberly applied to a university at the request of her friend and was accepted into the university. Unfortunately for both Kimberly and her friend, her friend was not accepted. Kimberly recalled, "it was like last minute. It was like just before

orientation, I was like, okay, mom. I'm like, I gotta go.” Kimberly came to her HBCU alone, where she was very quiet and stayed to herself.

Participant 4 (Lena James)

Lena grew up in Michigan with a large family consisting of her mom, dad, grandparents, five siblings, aunts, and cousins. Her family instilled into her that she was going to college from birth. Active but hesitant to serve in leadership roles within her high school, Lena began working at a local restaurant and was promoted three times within a short timeframe. She acknowledged that she did not take her high school time very seriously and applying to this HBCU was a last-minute decision. Lena’s cousin was in the process of moving to a new city and invited her to apply to the local HBCU. Lena raised her voice and confidently stated, “It ended up working out cause I'm now here. I'm a senior getting ready to graduate with less than \$30,000 in debt.”

Participant 5 (Ron Johnson)

Ron, a first-generation college student, was raised by a single mom in Michigan. Ron was the eldest of the five kids living in their mom’s home. Ron often wondered about what was next after high school. He learned of a community organization that used sports to emphasize the skillset necessary to succeed in college. Ron ran track at school, but in the evenings, he worked at a local restaurant and participated in the community college prep program. Participation in this program is what led him to attend college instead of going into the Navy. Ron recalls that an HBCU president spoke to the students about college and attending his college during one session. Ron said this was the only HBCU he applied to attend. Ron took a moment to recognize the impact his decision to attend college has had on his family. Now a senior, Ron's younger brother is currently a

first-year student at the same HBCU. He also has a cousin who is attending college somewhere else. Ron said, "Like, I'm really trying to get my younger siblings and my little cousins to realize like, this is our only way out, you know? And we all grew up the same way, like without a father figure. So, it's like, you know, for me, I felt like I might be that father figure in a sense."

Participant 6 (Denise Huxtable)

Denise was raised by her mom and dad in Michigan. She shared her two-parent home with her three older brothers and younger sister. A friendly kid, Denise liked to dance and spend time with her friends. She began working at the local grocery store at 14 and worked until she graduated high school. Denise was involved in a community program that introduced her to colleges. Denise was set on staying at home and attending community college, but the staff in the community program encouraged her to consider moving out of state. Denise chose to attend an HBCU because she felt people in that environment would look out for her and alleviate some of her college fears.

Heritage-seeking program: Journey to the First Black Republic

The Haitian Revolution ended in 1804 and Haitian people ultimately won independence from France becoming the first country to be founded by former slaves. With that knowledge and pride, the Spring Break in Haiti organization was created by a first-generation Haitian American. The organization leads curated experiences for students to experience Haiti. Their Spring Break in Haiti website boasts that they primarily "target Historically Black Universities for their experience due to the rich history of Haiti and the impact it can have on Black people" And as such qualifies as a heritage-seeking study abroad opportunity. Students who participated in this experience

went through a selection process and were then required to participate in myriad of experiences as part of a class prior to the week-long Haitian experience. The class lasted for one semester.

All students at this Midwest HBCU sponsoring the heritage-seeking program had the opportunity to attend an open interest meeting to learn more about the opportunity to travel to Haiti. The interest meeting explained the selection process, more about the trip and the expectations for the participants. Students were allowed to ask questions and then receive an application. When students submitted the application, they signed up for a 1 on 1 interview with the study abroad staff. The interview was designed to gauge students' interest in study abroad, their ability to work towards achieving their goal to raise the money and commit time to being prepared. There was not a minimum GPA to participate.

After the interview and being selected to participate, students went through a class that was designed to prepare them for travel, provide context for the experience, fundraise, and begin to develop as a team. The group was selected in October and began to meet weekly in November until departure in March. During the class time, students applied for their passport, learned the history of Haiti, took an introductory lesson to Creole, and prepared for cultural norms, to name a few things, all as a part of their pre-departure process. The pre-departure process was the first part of the heritage-seeking study abroad experience.

The actual Haiti trip was scheduled for the week of Spring Break and consisted of immersive experiences. During their eight days stay in Haiti, students visited the cities of Port-au-Prince and Jacmel. They were able to visit and volunteer at orphanages, explore museums, shadow a dentist at a mobile dentistry, tour schools, volunteer at Saklak Wel

Earthship project, hike the mountainside and swim in the Bassin Bleu waterfall. Upon returning to campus, students organized a presentation for the campus community to learn about their experience in Haiti.

Data Collection

“Data collection in qualitative descriptive studies is typically directed at discovering the who, what, and where of events” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338.) Data collection techniques can include “minimally to a moderately structured open-ended individual or group interviews” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338). In this study, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted. A set of questions were used as a guide for the interviews. Each interview question was designed to elicit detailed descriptions. The question guide is available in Appendix B.

Seidman's approach of using a series of three interviews, consisting of 60 minutes each was followed and yielded many points of data. During each interview, the researcher introduced the concepts the study was exploring. Seidman (2013) describes the researcher's perspective and why this technique is valuable:

Because we seek to come as close as possible to a participant's lived experience, as we select participants for our study, we choose to interview participants if at all possible, who are currently engaged in those experiences that are relevant to the study. Because we are interested in understanding and presenting participants' subjective experience, we are careful about the choice between using first person and third person voice when sharing their words. Because we understand that meaning is best achieved in context, we take the time to establish a contextual history for the participants' current experience. (p. 20)

The first round of interviews gathered the students' demographics and base understandings of their path to college. This interview also led participants to discuss why they chose higher education and their decision to attend an HBCU. The second interview centered on the experience in Haiti, where did they go, what did they do, and which aspects were essential to the experience. The third interview focused on the reflections and impact the experience had on the students' after returning from the trip. All interviews took place after the immersive section of the study abroad experience approximately six months after the experience. Interview one was transcribed before interview two. Interview two was transcribed before interview three. The third set of interviews was transcribed immediately after those interviews were complete. The interviews were conducted 2 weeks apart. The researcher conducted 18 interviews - a total of 6 students participating in 3 interviews each.

While listening to and transcribing data, field notes were written to offer context. The recordings and transcribed data were then placed in a database. The recordings and transcriptions were kept on a secured google drive provided by UNC-Charlotte. After the study, recordings were deleted.

Each participant received and signed a letter of consent before participating in each of the three 60-minute interviews. Each session was recorded and all participants were assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion

(Creswell, 2007). For a qualitative descriptive study, according to Sandelowski (2000), qualitative content analysis is the recommended analysis strategy. Content analysis as a research method is a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Krippendorff, 1980; Sandelowski, 1995). Qualitative content analysis differentiates from quantitative content analysis in that in addition to collecting the number of responses, it provides a description of the patterns in the data (Sandelowski, 2000.) The expected outcome of qualitative descriptive analysis is a “descriptive summary of the informational contents of data organized in a way that best fits the data” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 339).

Trustworthiness

To increase the trustworthiness of the study, I provided a rich description of my process to ensure that best practices for data collection and data analysis were used. This increased the dependability of the findings. I also engaged in bracketing throughout the study to reduce bias and consciously understand the perspectives of the participants and the phenomenon that was studied. Finally, member checks were conducted by sending each student a copy of the text to validate that it reflected their perspectives and points garnered from the interview about the phenomenon being studied. After the study, a summary of the findings was available to all participants.

Ethical Considerations

Permissions from universities Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained because the study used human participants and can be found in Appendix D and E. A description of the study was submitted to the HBCUs review board, where the students attended to ensure it was safe and reasonable to interview student participants. Every

attempt was made to ensure the confidentiality and safety of the participants. There was little risk to the participants as they are interviewed. No individuals from a vulnerable population such as minors, individuals that are incarcerated, or those suffering from mental health challenges were asked to participate. Any risks were identified, and any benefits were explained. All participants were asked to sign a form that explained the study and asked for their consent to participate (Appendix B).

Each participating student was given a pseudonym. All interviews were numbered to ensure confidentiality, and all traces of identification were removed from the transcriptions. The recordings and transcriptions were kept on a university-provided google internal drive. A secondary copy was placed on an external hard drive that was deleted after the analysis was complete. Students were not notified of their pseudonyms to ensure that information remained safe.

Summary

This qualitative study explored the impact heritage-seeking study abroad had on holistic success for Black HBCU students. This study also explored which aspects of heritage-seeking should be included to encourage student holistic success. The volume of information their transcribed interviews generated were analyzed for themes present in all or a majority of the respondents.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter presents findings from data gathered from six Black HBCU students. The purpose of this descriptive study was to understand heritage-seeking study abroad program experience of Black HBCU students. The answer to the following research questions were used to gain a better understanding:

1. What are the benefits of heritage-seeking study abroad for Black HBCU students?
2. Based on Black HBCU students' perceptions of the heritage seeking study abroad program, what were impactful aspects of the program?

Themes

The first research question was what are the benefits of heritage-seeking study abroad for Black HBCU students? The following themes were constructed from the data: 1) Nurtured university relationships and 2) Instilled a sense of responsibility to impact the greater Black community.

Nurtured University Relationships

Each student identified how their university relationships were nurtured due to their heritage-seeking study abroad experience. Nurtured university relationships describe how the study abroad program to Haiti changed the student participants' relationships with their peers, improved their connection to the university, and increased their HBCU pride. Pre-departure meetings, the experience in Haiti, and reflective activities were the catalysts for strengthening the students' relationships.

Relationships with peers. Heritage-seeking study abroad experiences nurtured relationships among peers. This category, relationship with peers, speaks to how interactions with fellow students were strengthened and expanded. Students described how their peer-to-peer relationships improved by participating in the heritage-seeking experience. The students in this study described how they developed community by supporting each other and developing bonds while simultaneously learning how to trust one another.

This group did not start out as a strong community. Contrary to popular belief, just being Black did not make them instant friends. Further there is a misunderstanding that HBCUs lack diversity, assuming all Black people share the same upbringing, experiences, religion, or belief system and their skin color should automatically make them friends, which is not the case. This group was diverse. The students were from different states, had different majors, and some commuted while others lived on-campus. Some students entered the process as friends, some acquaintances, and other strangers. Regardless of their initial relationship status, the travel abroad experience proved to be an opportunity to establish new relationships or strengthen the relationships that already existed. The Haiti Study Abroad program nurtured peer relationships, leading to a sense of community that extended beyond the study abroad trip. Community began to be established prior to leaving the country as the students recognized that they needed to support each other.

A course was designed for the students who were traveling, the “Haiti crew”, to prepare them for travel. The objectives of the course were to provide a rich background of the study abroad location and navigational strategies needed once we arrived at our

destination. The group met every week and the course meeting topics included fundraising strategies, historical presentations, and reviewing the agenda for the upcoming trip. For example, in one meeting, students had an introductory lesson of the Creole language. With limited people on campus to practice the language with, students had to rely on each other to communicate and study what they learned, providing pivotal support in preparation for their journey.

Students not only supported each other in their acquisition of the Creole language, but they also provided more material support. Students spent time together outside of class. While some aspects of organizing the group were advisor initiated, there were times that students managed their own processes. One example of the material support was evidenced as the students were figuring out how to travel to their advisor's home to watch a Haitian documentary as a cultural learning activity. Because everyone did not own a car, the students organized a carpool to ensure that none of their peers missed out on the opportunity to learn. Not only did carpooling provide necessary transportation but sharing personal space in that way provided an opportunity to share personal stories. For example, students said things like " I never learned to drive" or " excuse the car, my little brother made a mess when I took him to school," giving insight into their personal lives that they would not have access to if only in the classroom environment.

Students also needed support in other areas such as financial and emotional support. The expanded network of support they developed became a reservoir for resources that helped the students reach their goals. Fundraisers were imperative to the Haiti program as none of the students had extra money to independently pay for their experience. Each student had individual financial goals, but they shared a common goal

of traveling together. Because of this, they learned how to work together to ensure that each member of the Haiti crew could participate in the study abroad experience. The students spent time organizing and working various fundraising events such as the donut sale that was a recurring event anticipated by the campus community. The students sold donuts in the atrium and delivered donuts that had been pre-ordered to various departments on campus. Organizing deliveries, seemingly a small exchange, allowed the students to learn more about their peers and who their friends were outside of the Haiti crew. During this process they learned about their peers' relationships with campus members—finding similarities and commonalities among each other contributed to building trust.

Emotional support was also garnered among peers during this experience. One occasion there was a scheduled meeting for participants only. Dorian arrived with his girlfriend. The group silently whispered behind Dorian's back that he was not himself that day, withdrawn, not talking much, or engaging with the group. Ron and Dwayne pulled him aside and asked him if he was okay, and he alluded to relationship problems. Dwayne and Ron told him they understood and were able to share their relationship experiences, normalizing what Dorian was going through. After this brief exchange, Dorian had a mood change and began behaving differently. Dorian received emotional support from his peers and this exchange contributed to a stronger connection prior to leaving the country.

The seeds of community building were being established through these interactions, but the students were compelled to provide for future study abroad participants. The students raised the money required for each of them to cover their

expenses, exceeding their financial goals. After meeting their goals, they continued to fundraise so future participants would not have to fundraise or experience anxiety around not meeting financial goals. This gesture shows that the relationship developed among students did not just happen with those who were traveling with them but also included students who would have this experience later.

A central characteristic of communities is the bonds shared within the communities. Through the nurturing of the peer relationships, the study abroad students developed unique and unanticipated bonds. In one instance, Dwayne and Kim referenced the pre-departure meetings as a time to get to know each other. This allowed them to fully engage in the culture once they were in Haiti because they developed trust and respect prior to leaving America.

Another example of a bond created through this experience was exhibited by Dorian, Ron, and Dwayne. Even though they were active in a large organization designed to develop and cultivate Black male unity, the men did not have personal relationships with each other. These young men ran in different social circles and were majoring in different subjects, but they still shared one common interest: promoting Black male excellence. The various activities and time they spent together learning about the culture and working side by side in Haiti was the impetus for their bonding experience. The men were seen together on campus often as they prepared for the trip and after they returned. This visual of three Black male leaders with seemingly little in common, set an example of brotherhood and togetherness for the other students. The Haiti experience was able to supplement, cultivate, and transcend the goal of the Black male campus organization by

demonstrating that Black male excellence and togetherness can be achieved regardless of your background.

Dorian shared a story about a secret handshake the three of them shared and discussed the impact their closeness had on campus. He recalls the following story:

So, there were two other gentlemen who went on the trip, and we got closer. They were Ron Johnson and Dwayne Wayne. So from Haiti, we developed a handshake because, uh, I think his name was Toussaint Louverture. There was one painting in the museum where he always had this hand inside of his jacket. And that was to signify that you never know. It's like, what's in his other hand is hanging out, but you never know what's inside the jacket. And to me, that meant there's always a surprise coming. Like keep people on their toes and always keep coming with more, or even if you don't have more, always keep people on their toes. So that handshake was developed from that. And those two gentlemen, every time we see each other, that is our handshake. And we speak in Creole. So the first thing we say is "Sak passe" and the other person, "Nah boule", then we'll do our handshake. It got to the point where other people have seen that and wanted to join in. We've had to stop them many times like I'm sorry, you can't. Like this isn't, this isn't a public handshake, unfortunately.

Through this experience, Dwayne and Ron learned that they had other things in common being the desire to join a fraternal organization. Dwayne and Ron joined that fraternity together. In his interview, Ron said he speaks to Dwayne every day, "He's my backbone. He is my brother." Ron said his experience in Haiti was life changing. He

spoke about developing friendships that will last forever and not believing every rumor you hear about a place, like Haiti.

Another aspect of support came through learning to trust their support network. An example of learning to trust was expressed by Kim. Usually shy, Kim, spoke about the pre-departure meetings as something she valued, and thought was imperative to the experience. Kim did not connect as quickly with the other students but as she spent more time working in group settings her personality began to shine through. She was smart and intuitive, but one had to ask her to participate or inquire about her thoughts before she opened and shared. This intentional inclusion became a practice for everyone when interacting with Kim. It became common for others to ask Kim, "what do you think?". Over time, we saw Kim needed less invitations to converse and her ability to insert herself into the conversations improved. She pushed herself to be a part of the team because she trusted them. She became more daring and challenged herself to say and do things she would not customarily do on her own.

While in Haiti, there was a time at Bassin Bleu, a water hole with waterfalls and large mountains to climb, when Kim was afraid to get in the water. She physically became upset, crying and even trembling because she wanted to overcome her fear but was not ready. Her peers gathered around her and told her it was okay. They encouraged her to get in the smaller, more contained part of the water where she could still be with them but not be afraid. The students still operated as a team, focusing on accomplishing a goal, like what they experienced while fundraising, but these types of experiences also were the grounds of establishing trust within their support network. Kim was eventually able to get in the water of Bassin Bleu to swim close to her peers. The development of

those relationships gave her the desire to be with the group in the water hole. Having a supportive community encouraged her to take advantage of the opportunity and tailor it to her comfort level without fear of embarrassment.

Improved their connection to the University and prompted HBCU Pride.

Another aspect of nurturing university relationships was evidenced by students having better connections to the university and increased pride in attending a HBCU.

Involvement and connection to the university are paramount in student success, retention, completion and graduation. HBCUs pride themselves on creating a familial environment. Heritage-seeking can serve as a tool to support connecting students to their academic and social environment. Heritage-seeking study abroad experiences improved the students' connection to the university and prompted HBCU pride that for some students did not exist prior to their experience abroad. Students were motivated by various reasons to attend an HBCU. Some students noted that attending an HBCU was the goal, while others attended out of necessity and accessibility. Some students were relatively new to the university and were still navigating this new environment. As newer students, they were seeking ways to become members of the HBCU family. Being affirmed as a member of the university community and demonstrating gratitude were associated with stronger connections and desire to be a member of the HBCU family.

As first-generation college students, navigating a new space with little family support can be discouraging. Being affirmed through their university experiences boosted their sense of belonging, creating authentic connections to the university. After the experience in Haiti, students noted feeling more comfortable in their classes because they

were being acknowledged by their faculty in a different way, affirming their presence and giving them the desired HBCU experience.

One example of affirmation and connection to the university was seen by Lena. Lena talked about the struggle she had in getting her family to support her participation in the Haiti program. Her immediate family had never been outside of the country. They were especially concerned because of the propaganda around the country of Haiti. Because she lacked that support, Lena relied heavily on her relationship with her advisor during this process. Her advisor encouraged her participation and provided resources for her family to read as well as information for people they could contact for more information. Lena began to explain,

at first I was like really scared, cause you know, you got family in your ear and they have never been out of the country. So having all the advisors that have already, you know, been in study abroad positions and already had the privilege to study abroad, you know, I think that was the most helpful in my case.

Lena's advisor was able to normalize this experience as a first-generation college student who was attempting to do things outside of the family norms, resulting in Lena feeling seen and understood. Strengthening her relationship with her advisor also increased her feelings of being connected to the university.

Dwayne's affirmation came in a more subtle way. Dwayne, also a first-generation college student, took a gap year out of high school and worked to support his family. His mom had a disability that limited her ability to work, and as the eldest of 7 children, he had to help. Dwayne told a story about how he had his days mixed up and almost missed his opportunity to come to college. He said he was the last student to check-in at his new

student orientation. His demeanor changed as he recalled how the university staff knew his name and said they were waiting for him to arrive. He smiled, retelling the story, "they called me by my name." Dwayne recalling this story revealed his desire to have a more meaningful connection with university. This exchange laid the foundation for more meaningful university relationships that were enhanced during the heritage-seeking opportunity.

As a second semester freshman, Dwayne was also looking to find his place and people within the university. During his time in Haiti, Dwayne began developing a deeper relationship with his advisor. In the interview, Dwayne revisited a conversation that occurred between him and his advisor. He said, "we were in the back of the bus in Haiti. I wanted to create a scholarship, and my advisor walked me through the process and the stuff I needed to do. Now any time in between classes, I go into her office. My advisor is always there." He continued, "the close relationships we develop with staff is important. They are like our aunties, and we are their nephews." This relationship kindled in Haiti nurtured his connection to the university and his peers. Dwayne began thinking about how he could help other students have the opportunity to share in this experience and decided he would add this expense to his financial goals so he could provide HBCU study abroad scholarships in the future.

School pride is a pivotal aspect of the HBCU experience. HBCUs have a goal that their holistic experience is inclusive and affirming, connecting students to the university. When students experience this, it enhances their sense of gratitude, justifying their HBCU pride. Recognizing and acknowledging this experience began as they matriculated

throughout their studies and was accelerated as a result of their heritage-seeking experience.

During their interviews, each student was able to talk about their college journey and how they selected an HBCU as their college of choice. Each student's narrative was different, but they all believed that the heritage-seeking opportunity their HBCU afforded them was instrumental in their success causing students to exhibit HBCU pride.

Kim did not know what a HBCU was as HBCUs in the Midwest are sparse. Kim initially planned to attend the HBCU with a friend but when Kim's friend did not get accepted., Kim decided to attend college alone. She was aware that the university was historically Black but was not privy to HBCU culture and unsure what that entailed. After heritage-seeking, Kim was appreciative of the opportunities that pushed her to grow and mature, and expressed that her HBCU goes the extra mile to offer opportunities for their students. She said, " You just gotta grab hold of those opportunities. I think I came in like a little girl. Like immature and stuff like that. As years went by and the opportunities were presented to me, and as you know, life hits you. It just made me into the woman I am today. Like I was independent, and now I'm interdependent."

Attending an HBCU was not Lena's first choice. She acknowledged that leaving her home state and coming to an HBCU was life changing. She discussed the difficulties she had in high school and the distrust she shared of other Black people, "of course coming from where I come from, people are always, you know, fighting each other. That's kind of how you gain status in high school and middle school, like, you know, always being negative to one another and not uplifting to one another." She went on to express that attending an HBCU put her in uncomfortable situations and challenged her

mindset to try and do different things such as studying abroad, "staying at home I probably wouldn't have done half the stuff that I do or that I did. I accomplished a lot here at my HBCU." Lena reiterated her cousin's thoughts about finding herself while in college. Lena said that self-discovery was also important to her. Lena, like Kim, expressed that she was able to learn about herself on campus and in Haiti. She said that Haiti helped her identify even more as a Black person, which was a common theme amongst the "Haiti Crew". Lena was grateful that her HBCU afforded her this opportunity to challenge her perceptions about Black people.

Another example is Dorian who transferred into his HBCU. Dorian was already grateful for the second chance he was given to obtain his college degree, but he indicated that his college experience gave him something more important than receiving a degree. Even though Dorian knew he was Black before coming to a Black college, it was the HBCU heritage-seeking study abroad experience that expanded what that really meant for him.

So I knew there was a time like I was uncomfortable with how dark I am. There were people here darker than me, but like I was uncomfortable because I thought lighter was better. Like, it wasn't even conscious, like deep down, I was like lighter, light skin people are better. Then there was the vice president's office [at his HBCU], and he had tribal African masks on the wall. He had a traditional like kente cloth and stuff like that on the wall. And I was then speaking to Professor Ray about how he travels the world. He's writing books, and he has BSM, the black specular art movement. I mean, I am seeing this while in college. And then there was Haiti. But just seeing like an entire country of Black people. Who, I

mean, who, I mean, they are all going through a struggle together. And just seeing how unified they were. Like that was, that was nice. It just helped me appreciate who I am. Genetically. And culturally.

The culmination of experiencing unapologetically Black university administrators, meeting faculty who were researching topics specific to Black people, and ultimately experiencing the First Black republic created a narrative for Dorian that made him appreciate his identity. After being taught about an HBCU and experiencing it, Dorian became an HBCU advocate.

Denise and Ron were from the same hometown. They both were introduced to their HBCU through a high school college prep program. They visited other campuses, but they fell in love with this one. Both Denise and Ron were excited about attending an HBCU and their families were supportive, however, the Haiti experience reaffirmed their decision to attend an HBCU was the right one. Denise said,

I learned so much information [during the study abroad experience] that I probably wouldn't have learned at a PWI or anywhere else. It's a lot of information that I know I wouldn't have got somewhere else. And a lot of the information I learned [about Blackness] growing up - changed.

This sentiment was also expressed by Ron who had heard negative things about HBCUs. Ron exclaimed,

This 'Journey to the First Black Republic' program should be included in every HBCU curriculum. Going to Haiti and being around, mingling with, bargaining with the people, and walking freely around the country changed my view. We literally got out and explored the country with little supervision. Because of this

experience, I am more prideful, more thankful to be at an HBCU. I am thankful for my HBCU. Don't go off rumors. I don't go off rumors. Especially if you love your HBCU and Black culture in general.”

Ron and Denise became even more excited and committed to the value of their HBCU education. This heritage-seeking opportunity nurtured university relationships through strengthening peer relationships and promoting a greater sense of pride in their university.

Sense of Responsibility to impact the greater Black Community

The second theme constructed from the data was named sense of responsibility to impact the greater Black community. As Maya Angelou said, “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” Throughout their heritage-seeking experience, their sense of responsibility increased their desire to educate, inform, and assist.

The students’ sense of responsibility was ignited by a growing awareness of life outside of their lived experiences and backgrounds. Two components of the Haiti Study Abroad program were paramount to increasing awareness. One component was the pre-departure classroom meetings. In these meetings, the students learned about the Haitian revolution and how Haiti became the first Black republic. They were exposed to this rich history that was new to them and caused them to question the education they received during their primary and secondary school education. During their time in Haiti, the students were exposed to multiple aspects of the country. They visited the United States Embassy, toured museums, and learned about different community organizations such as

schools, geriatric facilities, and orphanages. The history and community learning were eye opening for the students.

The second component was the immersive experiences. Immersive experiences provide opportunities for experiential learning. It was the more hands-on and personal experiences that heightened their understanding, impacting them on a deeper level. Their knowing became more intimate as they interacted and worked with and for the Haitian residents. As a result of these cultural immersive experiences, they witnessed the limited resources in Haiti and concurrently thought about the limited resources available to Black people in America. Despite being grateful to see how the Haitians lived, they expressed discontent with the quality of life they saw many Haitians endure. A few of them acknowledged that even while in what we call “despair” or under-served areas, the Haitian people: college students, the school-age children, the women who walked to sell products on the street each morning, were resilient and did not complain. Observing this shifted their mindsets about their circumstances and made them appreciative of the opportunities they had been given.

They also learned more about responsibility when they learned about the Haitian school system. Among the many stops, the school visit was impactful. The children's grade levels ranged from beginner to the equivalent of American 12th grade or senior year. The students visited the smaller children first and were excited to see the little kids in the classroom after observing them walk to school in their uniforms for a few days. When visiting the middle-aged children, the classroom instructor asked one of the “Haiti crew” to talk to the children about Dr. Martin Luther King. Dorian was excited to share his knowledge on the topic and taught a brief lesson on King’s dream and legacy.

The last stop on this tour was the older children, who were equivalent to high school age students. The Haiti crew was instructed to enter the room and remain quiet as the students were testing. Observing the students' test was interesting as the level of math they were completing was surprisingly difficult and the students completed the work without a calculator. After the test, the teacher allowed the children to ask the Haiti Crew questions about American college as he translated the answers. When the Haitian children asked the American college students how hard college was in America, the college students gasped. Dorian responded that if they made it to an American college, they would excel. He continued that they were already completing difficult math equations without calculators while sitting in classrooms where some students shared desks.

Having American college students visit the students in school was not unheard of or new. What was new and different was the fact that these students were Black and attended a Black university. The teachers told the group that they were excited to see them as the visitors were usually White college students. The teacher stated that having Black college students in this space was just as meaningful for the Haitian kids because it gave them goals and introduced them to new ways of thinking. For the college students, hearing this emphasized the importance of reciprocity and built on their understanding of community, initiating their desire to impact the greater Black community. This conversation left an impression on the college students and became a recurring theme throughout the rest of the experience. This budding commitment was witnessed in the personal and professional goals the students established because of their heritage-seeking experience. Each student talked about how the journey to the first Black republic opened

them to see the privileges they were afforded in America and encouraged them to maximize their opportunities. These goals included family plans, expectations to travel again, new career aspirations and preempted one to change their major.

One impact of the heritage-seeking study abroad was personal development. Kim challenged herself to be more open and expressive with her feelings. When reflecting on her experience, Kim stated that, “It [heritage-seeking] changed me as a person. I was so hard body. It [Haiti] softened me up a lot. It softened me up a whole lot.” As a Black person, caring for the Black community starts with caring for yourself. Kim’s ability to reflect on herself emotionally and socially allowed her to open her mind to other possibilities that would propel her personally, professionally thus impacting and serving the Black community. If the goal of heritage-seeking is to learn about oneself by studying another culture, Kim's reflection was one example of how the goal was accomplished. Kim said, “I will say it was very impactful. When I came back, I was just on cloud nine from just from the experience as a whole.”

Kim’s career aspirations also were impacted. While visiting the orphanage, the program director also expressed that they often had visitors but not many who were Black people. The orphanage experience left an impact on Kim. The children at the orphanage were engaging, interactive, and made the college students feel wanted and needed. Still on her road to self-discovery, Kim was challenged to think introspectively about how she saw her future self. After spending time at the orphanage in Haiti, Kim expressed her newest desire, which was to become a mother. She never wanted kids but became open to the experience after hearing stories about children separated from their parents, some by life choices and others by death. Kim felt wanted and needed and that this was another

way she could contribute to the Black community. Kim expressed that she felt a strong connection to the kids at the orphanage and established two new goals, “I want to adopt a kid. I want to go over there and work in that orphanage.” What seemed to have been a short interaction, left a lasting impression on her. The second goal related to her college major and career. Kim stated,

The trip to the first Black republic impacted my academics because it just made me want to go harder. And not just for my major, but especially for what I wanted to do after college... My major was biology/Pre-med. The whole nursing thing, that's still my dream. Nurse, doctor just to help people in general, um, in the medical field. But my major now is sociology! I'm going to start my own nonprofit organization. So just seeing the help that they need over there and the lack of resources, it's like, okay, that is something I could help with.... It was just like if I get myself together, like get my grades together, then it would happen. With me experiencing what I experienced, it was like, there would be nothing that could stand in my way for me to get to that point.

This experience changed Kim’s goals both personally and professionally.

The parallels between Haiti and his hometown were too clear for Dwayne. Dwayne comes from an environment where 33% of the population lives below the poverty line. In one of his interviews, Dwayne talked about his personal experience with poverty and growing up in a community with abandoned homes that were boarded up. He talked about walking past vacant homes and how it can leave one uninspired or how it can make a person lose hope. Dwayne said,

If you don't have hope, then you resort to violence. That was my biggest takeaway. I'm starting in to like residential development. The two properties that I purchased was like scholarships or creative financing. I am just trying to redevelop them [the houses] in like urban communities. So, you don't have to drive past boarded up buildings or vacancies. {pause} Yeah, I started to have hope again in my community. I got inspired after I came back from Haiti. I actually wanted to buy a property in Haiti, but I didn't know the logistics. Well not yet.

Dwayne said the Haiti experience inspired him to do more in his local and global community. While in Haiti, Dwayne began discussing scholarships and his desire to create a scholarship for other students to study abroad. He wanted to give that feeling and experiences that impacted him so deeply to someone else. The heritage-seeking tour gave him confirmation and hope that his life was on the right trajectory. Dwayne had hope and inspiration after his experience in Haiti. He was able to take what he learned from that experience and apply it to his life at home. He set a new goal for himself that impacted his community.

The Haiti experience impacted the students personally and professionally and served as their wake-up call to contribute more to the Black community. The students were challenged to think more intently about their role in society, their privileges afforded to them and how to maximize their potential. A quote by Mary Church Terrell best summarizes this notion and the impact left on the Haiti crew, “And so, lifting as we climb, onward and upward we go, struggling and striving, and hoping that the buds and blossoms of our desires will burst into glorious fruition ere long” (Terrell, 1898, p. 15).

The second research question was what aspects of heritage-seeking should be included to increase impact. The following themes were constructed from the data: 1) Opportunity develop relationships, 2) an immersive experience and 3) guided reflection.

Opportunity to create relationships

The opportunity to create relationships was described by the students in different ways however, they were consistent in that having the opportunity to engage prior to departure made it an easier transition abroad. A few students talked about their pre-departure experience and how they got to know the students who would be traveling alongside them, and some talked about engaging with students on campus who did not travel with them, post trip.

In Ron's interview, he talked about language learning, watching the documentary, and gathering toiletry donations with his peers as engaging activities that helped him prepare for the trip. He said knowing the students in advance helped him prepare for the culture shock. Dwayne also talked about his pre-departure experience and said that having this pre-departure time prepared him to have "more thoughtful questions" while he was in Haiti and that everything they did prior to the trip brought them "closer together as a group versus going together as strangers and then having to learn about all of this stuff and then learn each other."

While in Haiti, students expressed interest in engaging with other students to dismantle stereotypes and share how much they experienced to increase student interest and participation in the Haiti experience. Kim talked about her desire to get her peers aware of and educated about Haiti. She felt that more students should have this experience and even though she typically was not that social or interested in engaging

with others, she wanted to take the lead on this when she returned to campus. And she did, after the trip, Kim participated in presentations about her journey to the First Black Republic and how the experience made her feel.

Immersive Experience

Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines an immersion as experience is defined as “absorbing involvement” or “instruction based on extensive exposure to surroundings or conditions that are native or pertinent to the object of study”. Students were instructed that the Haiti trip would be a mix of service learning, engaging with community partners, learning history, and having fun. They visited museums and heard from government officials. They volunteered alongside community organizations and heard from not-for-profit organizational leaders. They spent time in large stores and shopped in the streets among the locals.

Students were given a tentative agenda prior to leaving for Haiti. The expectation to immerse into the culture was articulated prior to the trip. Ron said it was when they were gathering supplies, two days before the trip, that the expectation became a reality. Ron said, “When I realized we were taking supplies, I was like oh, we’re not just going for enjoyment.” Kim surprised herself with how immersed she became in the community. She talked about her desire to return to Haiti, “I want this to be an ongoing thing, I want to be back and forth.... I’m interacting with people, and it made me want to be more involved cause first I wasn’t involved.”

Denise talked about her experience with exchanging money and making grocery store purchases. She thought originally that she would be “ripped off or shorted” while making purchases but then the employees rallied around to assist her. She recognized that

“while I was confused, I am sure this was just as frustrating for them too. They didn’t really understand us either! But it was fun.” She also talked about visiting an elementary school where the students “looked engaged”. During the interview, I followed up on what does it mean to “look engaged”. She was asked, “how did you know that the students were engaged?” She went on to share her experience of speaking with the children in the classroom. The Haitian students were able to practice their English and ask questions about being in college and living in the states. While the American college students were able to ask questions about their level of understanding and even congratulated the students on the complexities of their work and their ability to do more with less (for example, complicated math equations without a calculator). This exchange, again, was instrumental in the students feeling less like spectators but partners in the experience. They were able to steer conversations and inquire about complex issues on their own.

Guided Reflection

Also important to heritage-seeking is allowing students time to reflect on their experience. This group shared how they reflected in the midst of heritage-seeking and when they returned back to their campus. Each day in Haiti, the students participated in an exercise where they identified a good or high moment and a sad or low moment from the previous day. The experience at the orphanage resonated with each student as they interviewed and they all talked the group discussion they had the day after the orphanage visit. They all noted this day as a day that engaged them and challenged them mentally and emotionally. This shows that the guided reflections do not have to be led by an advisor, students can guide each other as well.

During his interview, Dorian spoke about feeling confident in his ability to work overseas after traveling to heritage-seeking. He said that he realized, after reflecting, that he had something to contribute to the people of Haiti. He ended this line of thinking by saying, “There was a lot of those, uh, a lot of reflecting, done” while in Haiti. Lena also stated that after returning home she had to think before her presentations, and it allowed her time to reflect on the experience. She also talked about sharing her pictures on social media and looking at the images the other students shared. The university had social media handles and encouraged students to use a hashtag to connect with the photos from the entire group. This engagement online was also another opportunity for students to reflect. Lena said she often looked through the picture memories and reflected on what she learned with her peers.

After returning to campus, another way to engage was student participation in interest sessions. These sessions were open to the campus community and was attended by faculty, staff and their peers in order to hear what the students learned and to promote participation for future experiences. Being able to speak about what they witnessed, participated in and experienced allowed the Haiti crew the opportunity to think back on the trip. During the sessions they also left time for attendees to ask questions. This is when the real meaning-making happened. By reliving these memories, students had to address feelings and emotions that were ignited while in Haiti. With each presentation, students thought more intently and provided more meaningful answers.

Summary

The students who participated in this heritage-seeking experience expressed several ways they were impacted after the Haiti experience. They established a more

meaningful connection to their university by creating bonds and trust among their peers. They felt accepted and affirmed by their university family thus increasing their pride in being an HBCU student. Second, the students discussed an increased sense of responsibility to impact the Black community. This increased responsibility was exhibited in their career goals, community involvement, and it broadened the students' sphere of impact to include Blacks outside of their immediate community.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to gain an understanding about the heritage-seeking study abroad experience of Black HBCU students. This chapter includes a discussion, implications, recommendations, limitations, and a conclusion.

In this section, I will discuss how these findings - nurturing university relationships and increased sense of responsibility to the greater Black community - answers the first research question.

1. What is the impact heritage-seeking study abroad had on Black HBCU students?

Research Question One

The heritage-seeking study abroad program impacted Black HBCU students in two ways. The first impact was on the students' relationships within the university. This impact consisted of improved relationships with peers and faculty and increased pride in their HBCU. The second impact heritage-seeking programs had on Black, HBCU students was that it instilled a sense of responsibility for the students to contribute to the greater Black community. This commitment was shown in their personal and professional goals and their understanding of how they commit to caring for themselves.

Impact 1: Nurtured University Relationships

After participating in the heritage-seeking experience, students identified a greater connection with their peers and faculty by providing examples of how they were affirmed on campus after their experience. They noted that their peers wanted to learn more about

their experiences, making them “goals,” examples, mentors, and even role models for other students who wanted to have this dynamic experience. Participating students noted that their interactions with their faculty were improved because they felt more visible in the classroom. They gave examples of faculty asking them to contribute to conversations using knowledge they learned during their international experience. The students expressed newfound gratitude for their HBCU for providing them with the opportunity to participate in a program that challenged them and expanded their horizons to such a great extent. Students felt that they belonged in this space upon their return to campus because they felt seen and connected. This affirmation made the students feel closer to their university, which led to an increase in their HBCU Pride.

Increased HBCU pride. While interviewing, students were asked to share their story of how they arrived at this HBCU. Regardless of their intentions or motivations to attend this university, it was concluded that their current experience was similar and they were excited and grateful to be a part of their HBCU community. HBCUs pride themselves on being a family. The HBCU family means that students have a safe and familiar place, they feel connected and supported and can then focus on other areas of their lives socially, emotionally, and academically. This study found that heritage-seeking study abroad was another way to increase HBCU Pride, creating a stronger connection with them and their university. Students identified being affirmed by faculty and staff as well as an admiration and gratefulness towards their HBCU for providing them this opportunity. Bean and Eaton (2000) discussed that when faculty interactions are positive or rewarding it leads to increased confidence in the university. This was exhibited in the study as we saw students’ pride in their HBCU begin to increase.

Faculty and Peer Relationships. Research on student relationships with faculty, staff and peers all show that those relationships are instrumental in students learning. Braxton et. al (2004) noted that student interaction with faculty, staff, and administrators shapes the student's perceptions of the university's commitment to student welfare. These positive interactions with faculty and staff enhance self-efficacy among students (Bean & Eaton, 2000). Braxton et al., (2004) also noted that students with higher self-efficacy were more engaged and invested more psychological energy which increased social integration among peers. Heritage-seeking study abroad reiterated these ideas and offers the HBCU space an opportunity to create programming that enhances the student experience. In concurrence with this finding, various studies exist on informal (out-of-class) and formal (in-class) faculty-student relationships and the impacts that exist. Kim (2009) restates the five categories that Pascarella identified in the 1980's as the impacts student-faculty relationships have on college outcomes. The five categories were (1) career plans and educational aspirations, (2) satisfaction with college, (3) intellectual and personal development, (4) academic achievement, and (5) college persistence (Kim, 2009). At the conclusion of this study, all of the participants have completed their coursework at their HBCU.

Impact 2: Instilled a sense of responsibility to the Black community

The second impact heritage-seeking had on Black HBCU students was a greater sense of responsibility to impact the Black community. This impact was constructed from the themes of caring for self and the goals created from this experience both personally and professionally. After the experience in Haiti, students talked about their values changing and being more grateful for the things they have at home. They thought more

deeply about their relationships with their families and the priorities they will set for the families they aspire to have one day. Students had the opportunity to take an introspective look at themselves and identify how they could be better people, better community members, and better Black people in general. Students talked about adopting kids after spending time at the orphanage. A student wanted to start businesses in their hometown that addressed an issue they learned about in Haiti thinking about homelessness and communities with vacant homes. For these students, they were able to critically think and draw inferences from other situations and apply them to their reality. This happened because students saw themselves reflected in the community. They saw Black people, they did not see Haitians from Haiti. This is the gift of heritage-seeking— It allows students to see themselves within the community they are in and creates a more meaningful experience. Black students cannot get this experience in Europe and that is where most study abroad programs are taking place.

In a study by Brooks et al. (2019) that involved Black students studying abroad they found that Black students who were in their counseling program had deeper learning experiences while they were abroad. While the intent for this program was to develop counseling skills, students were able to craft an opportunity to speak to and from their Black experience. Brooks et al. (2019) noted that these scholars had “unique dialogue regarding Black issues from a Black perspective” (p. 46). Having unique dialogue regarding Black issues was also true for the Haiti crew. Students were able to have an introspective view of their experience in the states and find parallels among the Black experience in Haiti. They questioned inequities and thought deeply about the quality of life and the idea of being grateful. They learned the true definition of the African diaspora

and toyed with the notion of the African philosophy of “Ubuntu” which is “I am because we are”, giving them a better understanding of Black identity. Students identified caring for themselves, and they reflected on their personal and career goals.

Caring for themselves. Students recognized the healing that needed to occur within themselves to be better people, community members, and future providers. They talked about their values prior to the experience and the values they hoped to implore post the experience. They talked about the importance of taking care of each other, their family and strengthening relationships. Each student spoke about what they valued prior to the trip and what they valued after the trip. They spoke about family and the responsibility it is for one to care for their community. This opportunity to reflect on these lessons learned, helped the students actualize things about themselves that one could argue makes them better academically.

- fundraising
- sponsors
- incorporate into the university budget as a university offered program

Personal and professional goals. During his interview, Dwayne talked about the furthest distance he traveled prior to Haiti. He talked about visiting a mall that was less than 1 hour away from his hometown. He never considered traveling outside of the country. His first time on an airplane was on the trip to Haiti. The idea of studying abroad was new for him. After traveling abroad, making that dream a reality, ignited other dreams and goals. He, along with his peers, shared their desire to go back to Haiti. They wanted to contribute to the Haitian community with their resources, time, and ideas. They also wanted to assist in their home community. It was as if this experience was the

precursor for more things to come. They wanted to start businesses in Haiti and America. After meeting the mobile dentist who was an ex-pat from the states, Kim was inspired to return to Haiti to volunteer.

Research Question Two

The second research question in this study asked what aspects of heritage-seeking should be included in the experience to increase impact. Below are three aspects found to be helpful for the students in this study. This section will also discuss how these findings – opportunity to develop relationship, an immersive experience, and reflection – answers the following question.

Aspect 1: Opportunity to develop relationships

Pre-departure orientations are a common practice for study abroad experiences. On their website, IGI Global (n.d.) says pre-departure orientations could address “everything from practical concerns with passports and student visas, health and safety, and academics to cultural adjustment, intercultural learning, and diversity awareness”. This study found that for heritage-seeking students, the pre-departure experience needs to include the opportunity for students to develop relationships among their peers. This study found that by students developing relationships prior to the experience, they were able to fully immerse themselves in the overall travel experience. This finding was consistent with the work of Goldini (2013) in their work around immersive experiences in study abroad. Goldini (2013, p. 372) refers to this as “personal preparation” and it includes “time to better understand students’ personality traits, proficiency levels, expectations, and future plans”. Goldini (2013) further posits that using this knowledge helps students better understand their experiences abroad.

Aspect 2: An Immersive Experience

The second aspect important to include in the heritage-seeking experience is providing students with an immersive experience. Heritage-seeking should not be an opportunity for students to tour and serve the role of a spectator. Students need to engage with the community, speak with the natives, work beside the people and be able to fully see themselves in the community. While not specific to Black, HBCU, heritage-seeking students, Goldini (2013) did find similarities in their language learning study abroad experience. Goldini (2013) found that their students who studied abroad with the intent of learning the language and immersed themselves into the experience with their host family, learned more language and established lasting relationships with their host families. This also highlights intentionality and the importance of expressing the intentions of the experience prior to departure.

Aspect 3: Guided Reflection

Another aspect to include in the heritage-seeking experience is to create opportunities for students to reflect on what they have learned. Students must have the opportunity to own and make meaning of their heritage-seeking experience. This notion was also supported by Braskamp et al. (2009) as they suggest that through self-reflection, intercultural interactions provide an opportunity for students to move beyond comfort zones and develop multiple perspectives of the world. This was also support by in Convertini as cited by Fuchs et al. (2019) that only through intentionality and reflection, does study abroad become transformative learning, changing how students view themselves and the world.

Implications

Noted previously, heritage-seeking could be a strategy that HBCUs could utilize more to connect students with faculty and staff. This is not a new concept. Theorists have told us for years that high-impact programming, intentional relationships with faculty and staff, and connecting with other students are all predictors of a student's success in college. Unfortunately, this high-impact practice is costly, and obtaining or solidifying funding tends to be an issue for HBCUs whose primary population is first-generation college students and/or Pell eligible/financial aid recipients. Students at HBCUs often do not have the resources to afford an experience that is not included in their tuition nor does the university.

HBCUs can include a short-term heritage-seeking experience into the university curriculum or a part of the HBCU experience. This could be through a freshman seminar course, First-year experience, or sophomore year experience program. This way the fees would either be included in tuition or the university would find money to support this initiative with university funds. While the students participating in fundraising did have its benefits in connecting the students and making them more invested in the program, it could also send the message that this experience is not as important as some other opportunities that are free on campus and/or it shows that this experience is not for those students who cannot afford it. HBCUs can set the expectation early, that as an HBCU student, it is expected that you participate in a heritage-seeking experience. They could offer several heritage-seeking opportunities and allow students to decide which path is feasible and enjoyable for them. Fundamentally HBCUs can start by designating a study

abroad director or point person who can design, assist and execute programming of this magnitude. Students simply cannot participate in things that are not being offered.

Research on Black HBCU students participating in heritage-seeking opportunities is limited. So, there is not a blueprint that exists or a study that aligns with this research. This experience was unique to this school and this experience because it was designed with this intentionality. However, this study should be replicated at another HBCU with the same goal to ensure that these results can be supported. Further research is needed to look at the actual impact this experience can have on HBCUs in general.

Recommendations

The first step in applying this research is to increase awareness of the benefits of heritage-seeking for Black, HBCU students. HBCUs have to realize and acknowledge that this and other similar experiences, which may be costly, have great reward. Based on this research, student persistence increases and they are more inclined to give back to the university as an alum because they have had meaningful student experiences. Since this study is only one example of the potential impact of heritage-seeking study abroad on Black, HBCU students, I would recommend more research to support this notion so HBCUs have data to reference and feel more comfortable prioritizing, finding, and allocating the money for these opportunities.

My second recommendation is that HBCUs invest in establishing an international services or study-abroad department so that students have access to mentors who have studied abroad as well as to finances. Although HBCUs were created to educate Black students, the overwhelming majority of these students are first-generation and low-income, so they do not have access to a network of people who have traveled or studied

abroad nor do they have the discretionary funds to afford these opportunities without university support. Dedicated full-time professionals on staff can aid these students in their decision to study abroad and develop programs for their specific population. They can identify external funding for students and assist them with completing their applications for programs such as those sponsored by IIE. University-sponsored scholarships and grants can also support student participation. After building awareness, HBCUs should prioritize providing institutional support in the way of funding.

HBCUs were created to educate Black people, yet their design and curriculum were borrowed from that of their White peer institutions, apart from study abroad. The last recommendation is that HBCUs update and incorporate more opportunities for students to discover and learn about their Black identities into their curriculum. Study abroad, specifically, heritage-seeking, has mutual benefits for the participant and the institution. There are PWIs that promote the fact that 30% of their students have studied abroad. Imagine HBCUs being able to share a similar statistic. Now imagine if these students participated in heritage-seeking and the impacts from this study remained true. An HBCU with more students with deep connections to their peers, faculty and staff, and with a stronger will to support the Black community would impact the campus and neighborhoods where these students live and beyond.

Limitations

In this section, I will discuss the limitations of this study—lack of previous research, and the limited number of participant institutions—and offer recommendations for further study.

Research on heritage-seeking in study abroad was limited; thus, additional studies need to be conducted on the possible impacts and aspects that could be included to increase student success. This study focused on Black HBCU students, and there is an opportunity to expand this topic to include other cultural identities and create experiences in countries that represent their diaspora.

Lastly, this study was designed as a pilot program for one HBCU in the Midwest; as such, the findings of this study are specific to this program and institution. Further research needs to be conducted to see if the same findings would be true to other HBCUs with heritage-seeking programs. Additional research could also be designed to compare the experience of Black PWI students participating in heritage-seeking at their institutions.

Conclusion

Covington (2017) suggested that the role HBCUs have in increasing Black student engagement in study abroad be explored. Through the theoretical lens of Schlossberg's (1989) marginality and mattering, Covington (2017) made four recommendations that HBCUs should explore: (1) gearing students for success in a globalized world, (2) including race and identity outcomes as learning objectives of study-abroad trips, (3) including Black faculty in study abroad, and lastly, (4) advertise developing countries (Covington, 2017). This study supports Covington's (2017) recommendations and suggests that heritage-seeking study-abroad programs should be implemented at HBCUs in order to increase participation and create impact that benefits both the student participants and the university.

There must be an intentionality that goes into creating and planning heritage-seeking opportunities. It is not enough to send Black students to Black countries and assume their experience will yield the heritage-seeking results as defined in this study. For example, this same HBCU sent students to Africa with a PWI. The intention behind that experience was for students to learn and develop their research skills and practice their language skills but not for the purpose of heritage-seeking. As a result of the Africa experience, the HBCU students did not return to their campus with benefits identified from the heritage-seeking experience. Specifically, they did not feel closer to their faculty, and they did not show an increase in HBCU pride.

There are also aspects of studying in another country that the planner cannot control. While these students had a positive experience, others could participate in heritage-seeking and have things happen beyond the scope of the intended experience. They could witness crimes, learn history that is alarming, feel threatened, or have an experience that makes them feel less confident or care less about themselves. This could lead to negative feelings or disposition for the students, creating disdain for their HBCU. Intentionality, planning, and communication are therefore key in creating positive experiences for students.

In conclusion, heritage-seeking study abroad does have an impact on Black HBCU students. Students who participated in this study identified several benefits: They have nurtured their university relationships with peers and increased the feeling of pride they had in their HBCU. Students also noted that they desired to impact the greater Black community by caring for themselves and taking more consideration of the Black community in their personal and professional goals. Students also helped identify what

aspects of heritage-seeking should be included to increase the chances of having the aforementioned impacts. It was found that the heritage-seeking experience should include the following aspects: creating opportunities for students to establish relationships, having an immersive experience, and guiding them through a reflective process.

Rourke and Kanuka (2012) write: “Intellectual development includes higher order, reflective, and integrative thinking. Psychosocial development includes personal and social growth, practical competence, and general education” (p. 3). The findings of this study directly coincide with the information provided by Rourke and Kanuka and show that heritage-seeking is a means by which Black HBCU students can deepen their engagement. The examples given by Rourke and Kanuka clearly align with the findings of this study in that heritage-seeking can help students both intellectually and psychosocially.

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APPENDIX A: Consent Letter

Department of Educational Leadership
9201 University City Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001
t/ 704-687-8858
www.edld.uncc.edu

Informed Consent for Heritage Seeking and Its Impact on Academic Success for Black HBCU Students

Project Title and Purpose:

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled Heritage Seeking and its impact on Academic Success for Black HBCU Students. This is a study to see what, if any, aspects of your study-abroad experience has had in impact on your academic success.

Investigator(s):

This study is being conducted by Sabrina M. Brown, doctoral student.

Description of Participation:

You will be asked to participate in interviews. The interviews will be recorded and the data used in the final report. You will be given the opportunity to read the transcripts of the interviews once they are completed.

Length of Participation:

Your participation in this project will last a period of 3 weeks, in 3 different interviews that will last 60 minutes each. If you decide to participate, you will be one of 9 subjects in this study.

Risks and Benefits of Participation:

A potential risk in participating in this study is psychosocial. If at any time you recall a harmful memory, the interview will halt and counseling will be consulted and/or recommended immediately. The benefits of participation in this study are a chance to contribute to the body of research on Black students and study abroad, as well as give you, the participant, a chance to reflect on your experience of studying abroad.

Alternatives:

If your schedule does allow you to meet with the researcher, a recorded videoed interview can be an alternate way for you to participate.

Volunteer Statement:

You are a volunteer. The decision to participate in this study is completely up to you. If you decide to be in the study, you may stop at any time. You will not be treated any differently if you decide not to participate or if you stop once you have started.

Confidentiality:

Any information about your participation, including your identity will be kept confidential to the extent possible. The following steps will be taken to ensure this confidentiality: You will be given a pseudonym; and data will be password-protected once retrieved and coded.

Fair Treatment and Respect:

UNC Charlotte wants to make sure that you are treated in a fair and respectful manner. Contact the University’s Research Compliance Office (XXX.XXX.XXXX) if you have any questions about how you are treated as a study participant. If you have any questions about the project, please contact Sabrina Brown (XXX-XXX-XXXX) or Dr. Lisa Merriweather (XXX.XXX.XXXX).

This form was approved for use on _____, 2019 for a period of one (1) year.

Participant Consent

I have read the information in this consent form. I have had the chance to ask questions about this study, and those questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am at least 18 years of age, and I agree to participate in this research project. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form after it has been signed by me and the Principal Investigator.

_____	_____
Participant Name (PRINT)	DATE
_____	_____
Participant Signature	DATE
_____	_____
Investigator Signature	DATE

APPENDIX B: Interview Questions

As you know, I am Sabrina Brown and I am conducting research for my dissertation. Thank you for agreeing to participate. As I've mentioned previously, I want to discuss your experience as an HBCU student who participated in a heritage-seeking study-abroad experience. These interviews will take place in a set of 3 interviews, conducted 1 week apart, and each interview will last approximately 60 minutes. With your permission I would like to record (either audio or video) and later transcribe our discussion for the purpose of capturing the details of our conversation. You will be given a pseudonym during your interview and only your pseudonym will be shared in the final report. This research has been approved by the UNC-Charlotte Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions or concerns about how you were treated during this process, please contact the University's Research Compliance Office at the following telephone number: XXX.XXX.XXXX.

Did you have any questions about anything before we begin?

Interview 1

Establishing personal history & learning about your HBCU journey

1. Where are you from?
2. Who did you grow up with?
3. How important was your culture growing up?
4. What cultural activities did you grow up participating in?
5. What does your support system look like?
6. When did you know that you were going to college?
7. How important was going to college in your family?
8. Tell me about your college application process?
9. How did you select an HBCU?
10. What activities are you involved in at your HBCU?
 - a. How did you select these activities?
 - b. What if/anything, has your involvement taught you about your culture?

Interview 2

Heritage-Seeking

1. Why did you choose to study abroad?
2. How did you select this specific program?
3. What activities did you participate in leading to your trip to Haiti?
 - a. What did you do?
 - b. What did you learn?
 - c. How did you feel?
4. Walk me through each day in Haiti. What activities did you participate in while in Haiti?
 - a. What did you do?
 - b. How did you feel?
 - c. What if anything did you learn?

Interview 3

Meaning Making

1. Have you thought about your experience since our last interview?
2. What are the things you will remember most about this experience in Haiti?
3. What did you learn about yourself during these activities?
4. What did you learn about your culture?
5. What lessons can you share that were taught by participating in this experience?
6. Have things changed in your life post this experience? If so, what are those changes and how did this experience contribute?
7. What activities are you involved in at your HBCU?
 - a. How did you select these activities?
8. What do you plan to do post-graduation? Has the Haiti experience contributed to your decision to embark upon this journey? If yes, please explain.
9. What would you tell other HBCU students about heritage-seeking study-abroad opportunities?
10. Are there any final thoughts you would like to share about this experience?

APPENDIX C: Participant Information

Table 1. Participants' information

Name	Home State	Gender Identity	Major	Class Year	Age
Dwayne Wayne	Illinois	Male	Finance	Freshman	19
Dorian Heywood	Missouri	Male	Mathematics	Junior	22
Kimberly Reece	Kansas	Female	Sociology	Sophomore	20
Lena James	Michigan	Female	Communications	Sophomore	19
Ron Johnson	Michigan	Male	Biology	Sophomore	19
Denise Huxtable	Michigan	Female	Communications	Sophomore	19