

THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL BLACK WOMEN IN THE
UNITED STATES: A CARIBBEAN PERSPECTIVE

by

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ABSTRACT

SHEIKIA T. TALLEY MATTHEWS. The college experiences of international Black women in the United States: A Caribbean perspective (Under the direction of DR. CHANCE W. LEWIS)

Institutions of higher education in the United States enroll the largest number of international students in the world each year (Bain & Cummings, 2005). In 2014-2015, the United States hosted 974,926 international students from around the globe (Open Doors, 2016). The number of students attending college in the United States from Latin America and the Caribbean increased by 19 percent from 2013-2014, making it the fastest growing region for sending international students (Open Doors, 2015). This phenomenological research study explored the perceptions and lived experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) in the southeastern U.S. The experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female students have often been homogenized in the literature as generalizable among international students or African American students. The study was guided by three research questions. The data was collected from, in-depth interviews with eight Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending PWIs throughout the southeastern U.S. The findings indicate that Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students navigate multiple academic and campus-based challenges associated with race, gender and international status while attending PWIs in southeastern U.S.

Keywords: Afro-Caribbean, international students, phenomenology

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. To my husband Tovarish Charon, you have added so much to my life thank you for your love, encouragement, prayers, and your support. To my three sons Isaiah, Zechariah, and Josiah, I share this accomplishment with you. It is your faces and thoughts of your futures that push me. Mommy loves you.

This work is dedicated to my first teacher Karen Talley, mommy your examples of strength, perseverance, sacrifice and endless love are the blueprint of my life. To my siblings Justin, Alvin, and Indonesia, I encourage you to follow the outlined blueprint as well; I'm proud of all your successes. To my spiritual parents Drs. Rayvon and Robin Matthews; my uncles, aunts, cousins and sister-friends thanks for your prayers and support. Finally, in memory of my late grandmother Grosalean Hill-Talley your legacy lives on.

“I am because we are”

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I am a Jamaican and I'm proud to say, I'll be a Jamaican for the rest of my days. When you look at me you see success let me tell you that I'm highly blessed I've been to Harvard, Howard and Yale Getting a GPA at the highest scale (Valentine, 2014).

Institutions of higher education in the United States enroll the largest number of international students in the world each year (Bain & Cummings, 2005). In 2014-2015, the United States hosted 974,926 international students from around the globe (Open Doors, 2016). The number of students attending college in the United States from Latin America and the Caribbean increased by 19 percent from 2013-2014, making it the fastest growing region for sending international students (Open Doors, 2015). The Caribbean islands stretch from the tip of Florida to the coast of South America in the body of water known as the Caribbean Sea (Waters, 1999). The Caribbean islands are divided into the Greater and Lesser Antilles based on size and geographic location. The Greater Antilles, are the large northern islands. They include including Cuba, Hispaniola (the island that is half Dominican Republic and half Haiti), Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. The smaller, eastern islands and called the Lesser Antilles which include Saint Kitts, Nevis, Antigua, Guadeloupe, Dominica, Martinique, Saint Lucia, Barbados, Saint Vincent, Grenada, and Trinidad and Tobago (Waters, 1999). The languages spoken throughout the Caribbean are English, Spanish, or French, however these distinctions do not clearly reflect colonial histories. The history of colonization in the Caribbean

involves multiple colonizers throughout the region; at some point in time the British ruled on most of the islands. Therefore, this study will focus on Afro-Caribbean international women who received their secondary education in former British colonies before coming to the United States for college.

The education systems in the Caribbean are modeled after the British design. Many local churches that are present in the region sponsor various schools throughout the Caribbean. In places like Jamaica, there is a comprehensive early childhood program that has been operating since 1999 (UNESCO 2000). At the primary level standardized testing has not always been the norm, teachers use to have more autonomy over students learning and assessments. In more recent years first grade students have began taking readiness inventory at the beginning of the academic year. More formal testing is administered at third grade, with reading and math assessments. In fourth grade a literacy test is given to students in the Caribbean region (Ministry of Education, Youth & Information, 2016).

At the middle and high school levels testing is quite competitive. Students used to be recruited into secondary school by taking The Common Entrance Examination, now that test has been replaced by the Grade Six Achievement Tests (GSAT). For those who matriculate through high school use to take the General Certificate of Education Examination, Ordinary Level, (GCE O-level). The exam was published by the Cambridge or London University Examination syndicates or by the Caribbean Examinations council. Also students who enroll for an additional two advanced years of high school were required to take The General Certificate of Education Examination, Advanced Level, (GCE A-levels). Now both set of tests have been replaced by the CXC, Caribbean

Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) and Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination CAPE examinations (George, 2015).

In the Caribbean islands there are two main regional universities, the University of the West Indies (UWI), with its secondary campuses, and schools of the University of Guyana. The other two educational institutions present in the Caribbean are The College of Arts, Science, and Technology (CAST) in Jamaica, and the University College of Belize (World Bank, 1993). The limited number of colleges and universities in the Caribbean have increased the push of its students to seek higher education options overseas.

Afro-Caribbean women are not the traditional image of the foreign students that study within the borders of the United States. To date, the majority of foreign students come from Asian nations. For this reason the research on international students tends to focus on students' experiences primarily from the continents of Asia and Europe (Altbach, 2004; Bevis, 2002; Open Doors, 2008, 2014, 2015; Lee & Rice, 2007; Lee, 2010). International students' experiences vary depending on country of origin, physical appearances, gender and religion that are distinctly opposite of the majority population in host countries (Altbach, 1998, 2004; Bevis, 2002; Lee & Rice, 2007; Lee, 2010; Wilton & Constantine, 2003). Given that developing nations around the world have begun working to improve the access to education of women and girls around the globe, it is time to acknowledge the different groups who are making educational gains (United Nations, 2000).

Afro-Caribbean international women have attended and succeeded in colleges and universities in the United States throughout the 21st century (Beoku-Betts, 2004;

Constantine, Anderson, Berkel, Caldwell, & Utsey, 2005; Obiakor & Grant, 2005). However, the literature focusing on Afro-Caribbean international women's postsecondary experiences outside of their home countries is limited at the onset of "the international decade for the people of African descent" (United Nations, 2013). Global policymakers stress initiatives concentrating on educational access for women and girls from developing countries around the world (UNGEI, 2008; United Nations, 2000). However, preferences in research tend to highlight certain regions and populations of women and girls from Asian nations while overlooking the contributions of others such as international Black women more particularly Afro-Caribbean women who successfully attend colleges and universities in the United States.

Nations all around the globe have been dominated by Hegemonic colonialism, patriarchy, and racism, which have impacted access to education (King, 2005). These factors have shaped the formal and informal educational experiences of many groups including people of African descent, particularly women. The education of Black women around the globe is a two-fold discussion centered on race and gender; however, this study seeks to focus on Afro-Caribbean international women pursuing graduate degrees at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) in the United States. Primarily, this study seeks to examine the position of race in an American context by centering the discussion on how culture and ethnicity shape college experiences of Afro-Caribbean international women pursuing graduate degrees at PWIs in the United States. Secondly, it explores gender and the second-class citizenship status associated with women throughout the world.

Access to education for women during the colonial era at one time was viewed secondary to that of men; White men, Native American, and early enslaved Black men were among the first to be educated in the North American colonies (present day United States) to spread European Christian indoctrination during the early years of colonialism (Rury, 2012). During the 1700s, Dame schools were introduced in the United States for White women. The colonists' believed that providing formal educational opportunities to women served the interest of men by educating their female family members. Though, formal education of Blacks were not permitted until the reconstruction era (1865-1877), some Blacks including women obtained college degrees prior to the civil war (Evans, 2007).

The history of Black women's education around the world is intertwined with European colonialism. Black people around the world as a group have endured centuries of countless acts of inhumanity including, but not limited to colonial indoctrination, discrimination, oppression, rape, abuse, and death, all of which have resulted in permanent internal and external scars on the group (Anderson, 1988; Dubois, 1932; Rury, 2012; Woodson, 1933; Wilder, 2010). Historical oppression has shaped the worldview of many Black people internationally, while each nation has unique stories there are commonalities related to education (Anderson, 1988). Freeman (2005) asserts that colonial indoctrination devaluates the Black culture, and currently still hinders educational experiences of Blacks around the globe.

The experiences of Afro- Caribbean international women are as diverse as the countries they represent. Therefore, a generic 'one size fits all' model of students' college experiences is not adequate in regards to understanding racial, ethnic, and gender

differences that exist among students attending PWIs. In the literature on international students studying in the United States, research on subgroups of Asian women populations have emerged to improve their recruitment and retention (Carr, Koyama, & Thaiagarajan, 2003; Constantine, Okazaki, Gainor, & Baden, 2005; Lee, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007); however, studies particularly focusing on Afro-Caribbean international college females are virtually nonexistent. The limited research on Afro-Caribbean international females college experiences at PWIs is similar to that of African American women's college experiences in the United States prior to the 1980s, when Black female scholars inserted themselves into the academic literature, now the same must be done for Afro-Caribbean international women.

Untold Stories of Afro-Caribbean International College Females in the U.S.

Marie-Elena John was born in Antigua in 1963. She is a published novelist who made history as the first Black woman valedictorian of New York City College in 1986. Ms. John also received her Masters degree from Columbia University before she began her work at the United Nations as an adviser on gender issues. There are several examples of successful Black international woman in the United States (United Nation, 2016). Dr. Elizabeth Nunez emigrated to the U.S. from Trinidad after completing high school. She received a PhD in English from New York University and is a Distinguished Professor at Hunter College, the City University of New York (Reyes, 2014). Also, the famous writer Jamaica Kincaid, a native of Antigua, came to the United States as an au pair, but left her domestic occupation to attend the New School of Social Research in New York city and Franconia College which was in New Hampshire but closed in 1978 (Lichtenstein, 1999). The names and the college experiences of the above successful

Afro- Caribbean international females are infrequent in the higher education literature, while many others like them are not well documented in the multitude of scholarly research on international students in the United States.

It can be argued that there are unique nuances particular to Afro-Caribbean international females college experiences at PWIs due to the intersectionality of race, gender, and international status. There is a need to know more about the higher education experiences of Afro-Caribbean international women in the United States, for a lack of data will make it difficult to recruit, educate, and support this particular group of students. The present study focusing on Afro-Caribbean international females attending PWIs seeks to increase the knowledge of university academic stakeholders about marginalized, diverse groups on United States campuses. The study also provides a space for Afro-Caribbean international females to reflect on their college experiences at PWIs in the United States. Situated as a minority subgroup amongst international students in the United States, their perspectives are worth additional investigation. The goal is to examine the lived experiences of Afro-Caribbean international females attending PWIs in United States.

The current qualitative study focuses on the college experiences of Afro-Caribbean international females at PWIs in the United States. In the investigation of the lived college experiences of the participants, they expose the realities of being international, Afro-Caribbean, and female on campuses of PWIs higher education in the United States. Chapter 1 contains the background of the problem, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the significance of the study. This chapter also contains the

research questions, terms/definitions, assumptions, limitations/delimitations of the study, nature of the study and an overall research plan.

Statement of the Problem

The literature on international students in the United States has primarily focused on Asian and European college experiences as the frame of reference for all foreign students (Altbach, 1998, 2004; Bevis, 2002; Constantine, et al., 2004; Lee & Rice, 2007; Lee, 2010; Open Doors, 2008, 2014). Though Afro-Caribbean international students make up a small portion of the foreign student population, they have an extremely unique experience given the resemblance to the most racially oppressed group in United States history, African Americans (Constantine et al., 2005; Obiakor & Grant, 2005). There is a gap in the literature that focuses solely on the Afro-Caribbean international female college students' experiences in the United States (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Smith, 2015). This group is often clustered together with that of African American, African, and other Black immigrant women populations in the United States (Allen, 2010; Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenberg, Klukken, Pollio, Thomas, & Thompson, 2004; Waters, 1996) or that of their male counterparts (Constantine et al., 2005). The college experiences of this group are extremely valuable to the scholarship of international higher education, women studies, and government policies.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study sought to explore the college experiences of Afro-Caribbean international females graduate students attending PWIs in the southeastern United States. In addition, the purpose of this study is to help fill a gap in the literature on racial and gendered experiences of international students, particularly Afro-Caribbean

students studying abroad in the United States. Ultimately, the goal of this dissertation was to provide an alternative lens to the traditional narrative about whose experiences are worthy of exploration by sharing the college experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending PWIs in the southeastern United States. The college experiences of this group are extremely valuable to the scholarship of higher education, colleges, and universities, as well as the international community. Furthermore, a description of the college experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending PWIs in the southeastern United States helps to provide an important reference from which to evaluate an effective educational policy and practices that will benefitting these students leading to a greater number of academic success stories.

Research Questions

This study examines the college experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending PWIs in the United States. The study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the campus-based experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States?
2. What are the academic experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States?
3. What unique factors have shaped Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students experiences while attending graduate school a predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study focuses on Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending PWIs in the southeastern United States. Presently, international Black women as a whole are underrepresented as a subgroup within the United States international college student population when compared to their White and Asian counterparts; however, this study focuses solely of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending PWIs in the United States. With an increasing number of international students coming to the U.S. each year from various countries around the globe, it is important to understand the racial, ethnic, and gender differences of this heterogeneous group within the United States context. Though research notes that there is a population of international Black female students from West Africa, it does not account for the presence of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students among those studying in the United States. The current trend of only disclosing the country of origin of international students is a disservice to international students who must choose between their racial and cultural identities when studying in the United States. Considering the dissemination of information about international students, this study is significant in this examination of a particular subgroup (Afro-Caribbean international females) who pursue graduate degrees at PWIs in the United States. While the lived experience of all international students of color is pertinent, this study serves as a platform, specifically exploring the voices and lived experiences of those Afro- Caribbean international females who chose to pursue graduate degrees at PWIs in the southeastern United States. Through their stories, insight was gained about their experiences while studying at PWIs in the United States.

The findings in this study have the potential to inform recruitment and retention, academic affairs, university career and counseling services, as well as international policymakers seeking to expand educational opportunities to Black and marginalized women around the world. In better understanding the unique perspectives of this particular subgroup's experiences while attending PWIs in the southeastern United States. Adding to the literature, the analysis and finding of Afro- Caribbean international female pursuing graduate degrees at PWIs in the United States will possibly provide a greater understanding of how best to serve and increase the numbers of college educated international Black women in the United States.

Theoretical Framework

This study is situated between two social theories: a) Black Feminist Thought and b) Post-colonial theory. In addressing the lived experiences of Afro- Caribbean international females pursuing graduate degrees at PWIs in the southeastern United States it is necessary to provide an alternative perspective to the universal narratives about international students studying at United States colleges and universities. Black Feminist Thought and Post-colonial theory provide a lens into how race, class, and gender intersect to shape experiences on college campuses.

Black Feminist Thought

This study adopts a Black Feminist Thought (BFT) epistemology in its investigation of Afro-Caribbean international female students attending post-secondary institutions in the United States. BFT was produced by Black women for Black women. Collins (1986) outlined three themes of BFT as: (1) The meaning of self-definition and self-valuation, (2) interlocking nature of oppression, (3) importance of Black women's

culture. Black women share unique perspectives in their experiences. There are certain commonalities shared among Black women as a group; however, class, region, age, and sexual orientation offers differentiated expressions of those experiences. Placing Black women's experiences in the center of analysis is the core of BFT (Collins, 2000).

Shifting to a global analysis of Black women's experiences reveals intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, and sexuality by diverse regions. Collins (2000) argues that Black women in Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom, Brazil and other nation-states share in a similar global matrix of domination affecting women of African descent. The legacy of colonialism, imperialism and global racism has resulted in attacks on women of African descent. However, based on the construction of social institutions and policies in different regions Black women views on domination vary.

The BFT framework, which places Black women at the center of the discussion, is important in examining the experiences of international Black college women attending PWIs. BFT recognizes the similarities of Black women college experiences yet distinguishes their individual perceptions of lived experiences based on race, class, gender, and sexuality as well as global regions of origins. The experiences of Black women and Afro-Caribbean international women pursuing graduate degrees at PWIs in the United States, experiences vary based on their exposure to structural and interpersonal patriarchy.

Post-Colonialism

Post-colonialism provides a framework for challenging and contesting the dominant ideology of race and culture. It points to race and racialization as socially produced through the historical, socioeconomic, and political processes of colonization

and imperialism (Anderson, 2002). Post-colonialism is a discourse from the perspective of the colonized and it is framed as an historical condition rather than as a chronological period (Ashford, 1996). According to Hall (1996) post-colonialism is a transnational process not confined to any one nation in society. Hall (1994) places Afro-Caribbean people at the center of post-colonialism as he seeks to examine how culture identity is created and reshaped within the context of colonialism and decolonization.

Context of the Study

The current study was conducted at a public PWI in the Southeastern region of the United States. The participants for this study were recruited from public predominately White universities in the area. The researcher has identified discussions of racism, sexism, and culture as possible risk factors (for participants during interviews) associated with the study due to the emotional nature of those topics.

This qualitative study used a phenomenological approach to gain an understanding of the college experiences of Afro- Caribbean international women pursuing graduate degrees at PWIs in the United States. Phenomenology provides rich and rounded insights into people's descriptions of lived experience and meanings, as well as the nature of the location they inhabit, through the collection of detailed observations and interviews (Finley, 2009). Phenomenology interprets the everyday experiences from the participant's perspective and the meaning they attach to those experiences (Merriam, 2002). The purpose of phenomenology makes it suited to examine the lived experiences of Afro- Caribbean international women pursuing graduate degrees at PWIs in the United States.

The data collection process for this study included in-depth interviews with Afro-Caribbean international women pursuing graduate degrees at PWIs in the United States. The use of interviews allowed the participants the opportunity to voice their opinions and experiences on their own term. The interviews were then transcribed, coded and categorized into themes. Common themes were then identified among groups of statements from Afro-Caribbean international women pursuing graduate degrees at PWIs in the United States in relations to their experiences while obtaining advanced degrees from four-year institutions.

Definition of Terms

Afro-Caribbean: a person of African descent living in or coming from the Caribbean

Black: refers to person or persons from racial, cultural, or ethnic descent of the continent of Africa.

BFT: Black Feminist Thought framework, places Black women at the center of the analysis.

Caribbean: The Caribbean islands stretch from the tip of Florida to the coast of South America in the body of water known as the Caribbean Sea (Waters, 1999). The Caribbean islands are divided into the Greater and Lesser Antilles based on size and geographic location.

HBCU/HBI: Historically Black college or university; Historically Black institution-college or university with a majority Black student population. Established during the reconstruction era educated Black students who were not permitted to attend PWIs.

International Black woman: female gender person of African descent living outside of her home country.

International student: foreign individual attending school/college in a country outside of their home country.

PWI: Predominately White Institutions- College or university with a majority White student population.

Summary

The current qualitative study focuses on the college experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female pursuing graduate degrees at a PWI in the southeastern region of the U.S. In the investigation of the lived college experiences of the participants exposed the realities of begin international, Afro-Caribbean/Black, and female on campuses of higher education in America. Chapter one contains the background of the problem, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the significance of the study. The chapter also contains the research questions, terms/definitions, assumptions, limitations/delimitations of the study, nature of the study and an overall research plan. This chapter also includes the Theoretical Framework. Chapter two contains a review of the literature. Chapter three will present the purpose of this study, in addition to data collection methods, and analytical tools used for this study, followed by a detailed discussion. Chapter three also includes a description of the research site and participant selection criteria and concludes with a discussion of the study analysis. Chapter four presents the study findings. Chapter five concludes this dissertation with a discussion and a section on implications for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the scholarly literature related to the college experiences of Afro-Caribbean international women attending PWIs the United States. First, the study is situated within the literature on international students studying abroad particularly in the United States. This section also includes studies that examine Black international and immigrant students spanning from regions in Africa, Great Britain, the Caribbean, and migrant populations outside of the United States. Next, the review of literature focuses on Afro-Caribbean and international Black women who have navigated their gender and minority racial identity while studying abroad; the final section of the review of literature explores the educational experiences of United States born Black female students in higher education, chosen because of possible similarities to international Black females college experiences.

International Students Attending Colleges and Universities Abroad

Colleges and universities in the United States enroll the largest number of international students in the world (Bain & Cummings, 2005). During the span of 2014-2015, the U.S. hosted a record high of 974,926 international students (*Open Doors*, 2015). The largest influxes of international students studying in the U.S. come from Asian nations, while Europe, Africa, Latin and Central American countries also send a considerable amount of their students to the United States (Open Doors, 2015).

For many international students it is a lifelong goal to study abroad particularly in the United States. There is a level of prestige in the international community associated with degree attainment from a world power nation (Atlbach, 2004). According to Arthur (2008), international students view attending college in the United States as a positive stepping-stone in their future career trajectory. Students who study outside of their home country in the United States, often feel better prepared to compete in a global workforce, which can include possible employment from their host country (Arthur, 2008; Atlbach, 2004; Hazen & Alberts, 2006).

International students see the benefits of attending foreign universities, while these countries recognize the economic impact of hosting international students. In the United States, international students contribute over \$30,000,000,000 annually into the nation's economy through their tuition and living expenses (Institute of International Education, 2015). Other nations such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Australia, also see the global and economic significance of allowing international students to study in their countries, all hosting an increasing number of students in recent years (Alberts, 2007). Well-established nations are thriving from of global higher education (Wildavsky, 2012). Meanwhile numerous developing nations do not have the resources to accommodate large number of students pursuing higher education degrees at the local colleges and universities within their borders. With the Caribbean as the example, the competitiveness of limited space at the universities for students, leads many to study in the United States and other nations. Accounting for specialized fields, particularly Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) majors and graduate level degrees, many nations cannot keep up with the demand (Beoku-Betts, 2000).

Developing and non-host countries are not at a total disadvantage in the international student market, in that students who choose to return home after studying abroad often work in leadership positions in industries that boost the global economy and foster international relationships (Altbach, 1998,2004; NAFSA, 2003).

International Students Experiences

Ideally traveling to a foreign country to pursue a higher education degree is a great opportunity to experience different cultures, learn new languages, and ultimately to see the world. International students come to the United States because of the educational and economic opportunities that are displayed throughout the world (Open Doors, 2014). However, international students experiences in the United States are diverse partly due to their region of origin (Lee, 2010). This section of the literature focuses on the psychosocial and academic challenges faced by international students.

Before international students ever leave their home countries they have to undergo intense immigration (Altbach, 2004) and visa processes, which can delay or eliminate enrollment into foreign colleges and universities (Lee, 2007; Toutant, 2009). In 2003, the United States introduced SEVIS, which is a system of tracking international students (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2003). The student visa process varies depending on agreements with nations and some international students have to reapply to add more time on their visas for the duration of their studies abroad. Leaving the familiarity of home in exchange for college can be a enormous change for any student, but international students encounter challenges that impede their aspirations of success (Anderson et al., 2009).

Culture Shock

International students may experience culture shock upon landing in their host country; transportation and climate can have initial effects on international students adjusting to their host country. Culture shock can be defined as anxiety that results from losing familiar sights, sounds, and loved ones and replacing them with strange foreign or unknown things (Brown, Edwards, & Hartwell, 2009; Hall, 1959). Feelings of culture shock can range from initial homesickness, cultural adjustments, alienation, language barriers, isolation, and stress causing health related issues such as headaches and nausea. Culture shock can be defined as anxiety that results from losing familiar sights, sounds, and loved ones and replacing them with strange foreign or unknown things (Brown, et al., 2009; Constantine, et al., 2005; Hall, 1959; Lee & Rice, 2006).

While culture shock is common among all college students it can be intensified among international students, who are separated by national borders from their family and support networks (Banjong, 2015; Kim, 2001; McClure, 2007). However, the recent use of Internet technology such as Skype and other social media applications have extended communication capabilities beyond the expensive international telephone fees (Myburgh, et al., 2002). Foreign students are often skittish of discussing their true international experiences with individuals back in their home country; they tend to embellish the quality of life in America to resemble the picture perfect media images that are displayed around the world (Traore & Lukens, 2006). International students are troubled at the notion of disappointing their loved ones who have made sacrifices to allow them to study abroad. International students feel that failure in America is reproachable (Traore & Lukens, 2006).

International Dietary Needs

The dietary needs of international students are extremely important to consider as they study abroad in regions in which food is drastically different from their home country (Anderson et al., 2009; Lee, 2007). Food is a cultural connection that many international students struggle to adapt to in their host countries, as food serves as a source of comfort and belonging (Locher, Yoels, Maurer & van Ells, 2005). International students found that when their host countries offer familiar food options the tastes of the food are very different from that in their home country, many view the foreign versions as inauthentic (Brown et al., 2009).

Many international students prefer to prepare their own meals because of health concerns associated with consuming fatty and sugary foods in western nations (Brown et al., 2009). International students studying in England complained about the amount of pesticides on fresh foods in their host nation. International students viewed organic foods as healthy but the prices were too expensive for student budgets.

In addition to the types of foods international students consumed in their host countries, many lost the cultural patterns in which they ate meals. Asian students studying in the United States often skipped breakfast due to class schedules, often opting for salty and sweet snacks after moving to the United States (Pan, Dixon, Himburg, Huffman, 1999). International students decreased the amount of hot meals they normally consumed as well as the hours they ate in their host countries (Pan et al., 1999). Many college students also reported that campus food services failed to provide authentic food options.

Academics

Academics and successful degree completion is the primary goal of international students studying abroad (Anderson et al., 2009). Students' academic goal commitment is a key factor to persistence in college (Tinto, 1975). Academic expectations vary across nations; in the United States there are a variety of instructional methods that may place in the span of an individual class period. International students are often uncomfortable with this form of instruction that involves class discussions since the majority of foreign students come from Asian nations that typically focus on lecture style of instruction, they are surprised at the cultural norm of exchange and questioning of professors by American students.

The study conducted by Constantine et al., (2005) study found that Asian international college women in the United States enjoyed math courses that involved less oral communication, in comparison with courses that required class discussion. Some Asian participants in the study preferred courses with limited English speaking, reading, and writing; one student reported fear of being made fun of by peers and professors due to a lack of English proficiency. Asian international college women in the study also revealed because of their cultural upbringing they struggled with finding an assertive voice which is valued in the United States' classrooms.

Some international students are unconformable with their limited language proficiency, as it is needed to be successful in class discussions, testing, and writing (Miller, 1987). International students ability to communicate through the use of unfamiliar technology also is a barrier for students from developing countries with limited use of school websites. Banjong (2015) found that international students had

difficulties typing and completing online assignments, and downloading course materials. Technology challenges can lead to frustration and poor academic performance among international students (Banjong, 2015). College professors often take for granted that students know how to navigate such resources without prior tutorials.

The academic success of international college students should be a combination of student's hard work and resources provided by the university faculty and staff. Shearer (1989) outlined some basic teaching strategies that college professors should do to assist international students become accumulated into college classrooms. Providing international students with copying of lecture notes that they can use after class to translate difficult vocabulary and concepts, is a strategy to ease them into foreign academic environments. Shearer (1989) also suggested providing contact information for the professor and classmates to international students as a means to foster a sense of community for international students. The strategies for assisting international students are not difficult, but must involve care and creatively on the part of professors. University professors and staff have to be willing to build a rapport with students to help them with adjust to college expectations (Shearer, 1989).

In teaching international students university staff must use the whole student approach that was designed by John Dewey. Dewey (1916) believed educators must evaluate and address the different learning needs of each individual student to have a successful impact on their learning experience. Oftentimes in university settings professors do not consider the social-emotional stress levels of international students as it relates to their academic abilities (Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000).

Language Barriers

The majority of international students studying abroad do speak their host country's language in addition to their first language. However, they may not be comfortable communicating in the host language in front of native speakers (Lin & Yi, 1997). Robertson, et al., (2000) study in Australia found that language was an issue of extreme sensitivity for international students who desired to fit in socially and succeed academically. The study also found that professors were less than empathetic to students' language barriers. Beoku-Betts (2004) study in the United Kingdom noted similar findings as the Robertson study, in that professors would criticize the accent of international graduate students. Ill-treatment of international students' use of host languages has also discouraged their participation in class discussions; these barriers have also affected academic writing increasing instructors' views of incompetence of foreign students (Lee, 2007; Roberts et al., 2000). Lee (2007) also found that international students often changed academic advisors due to discrimination.

Discrimination

College assimilation and adjustment can be especially difficult for international students based on their country of origins, religion, and physical appearance (Church, 1982). The literature indicates that domestic students and university officials have displayed different forms of discrimination toward students based on appearance (Lee & Rice, 2007). Students from the Middle East have experienced unpleasant discrimination since September 11th, 2001, which has caused a decline in their international enrollment. Furthermore, women wearing veils and saris have had difficulties integrating on college campuses dating back prior to 9/11 (Atlbach, 2004; Cole & Ahmad, 2003; Lee, 2007;

Revis, 2002). Students from Asia, Latin America, and other non-White students have experienced discrimination in housing, financial aid, and student services. Classrooms and university common areas have also been uninviting environments for international students (Shachtman, 2009).

Hanassab's (2006) quantitative study on the experiences of international students from Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Oceania, and Southeast Asia who traveled to California, found that foreign students faced discrimination in their host country. The finding of the study found that African and Middle Eastern students experienced more discrimination than international students from other regions. While studying in California international students often experienced discrimination from professors who were very insensitive and verbally abusive to foreign students. The levels of discrimination ranged from completely ignoring international presence in class, making offensive remarks about students' homelands, to extreme and blatant racism. The discrimination of international students in California was not limited to professors but included university staff as well as domestic students across campus (Hanassab, 2006).

Hanassab, Bonazzo and Wong (2007) study on international students studying in the Southeastern region of the United States, they like Hanassab (2006) found that professors were a source of discrimination for international students. International Japanese female college students shared their experiences of being ignored in science classes, being made fun of for their accents and their appearances. Japanese students resented being lumped together with other Asian students fitting into the stereotype of the model minority. Japanese female college students in the southwest also experienced discrimination when traveling on a bus in the United States, by the border patrol, the

international students were removed from the bus and interviewed for not carrying their passports with them at all times (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007).

Discrimination and stereotypes are so strong in some host regions that international students themselves display discrimination toward other international students based on skin color. In Constantine et al., (2005) study on international student adjustment, an African female student's Asian roommates requested a room change due to her race. Media portrayals of certain populations effect how they are treated in their host countries. Lee and Rice (2007) explain that many international students of color are plagued with dueling images of themselves; at times they are viewed as "exotic" and other times "ethnic" in American context. In the United States, news outlets are constantly showing images of minority groups committing crimes and traveling to the U.S. illegally which shapes how international students view others and themselves within their new communities (Lee & Rice, 2007). International students studying in the United States found there are multiple layers of racism from blatant to subtle in which people would shake your hand while assuming you are inferior (Lee & Rice, 2007; Waters, 1990).

Skin color in the United States is the most powerful characteristic for social stratification and discrimination (Appiah & Gutman, 1998; Glick-Schiller & Fouron, 1990; and Omni & Winant, 1986 as cited in Romanucci-Ross, De Vos, Tsuda, 2006). Black international students have to learn the meaning of race in the United States upon arrival. They are often shocked by the level of racism that exists toward Blacks in the U.S. (Romanucci-Ross et al., 2006). Black international students and immigrants tend

make their cultures known to avoid being labeled as American Blacks due to discrimination in the United States (Waters, 1990).

The literature on the experiences of international students in the United States is vast yet it tends to focus on international students as a generic homogenous group. There is an intense focus on the Asian experience (Yoon & Portman, 2004), perhaps due to the nature of their acculturation process. However, it is also critical to consider the effects of studying abroad on more westernized students, specifically those from the English speaking Caribbean. The experiences of English speaking Caribbean students could possibly differ from the dominant group of international students. Further their contact with a completely new cultural environment is bound to demand variations at several levels. As indicated by the existing research, diverse issues have been addressed in relation to international students. However deficiencies in the literature are apparently unique to specific diverse ethnic groups on college campuses in the U.S.

Caribbean and Black International Students

In Campbell's (2002) qualitative study, he explores the college experiences of Caribbean students as they adjust to a predominately White liberal arts college in the U.S. Campbell found the college actively recruited Caribbean students during their high school years as non-traditional minority students. The college facilitated a Minority Spec Weekend and Summer Institute in which Caribbean participants had opportunity to visit the campus prior to the beginning of the semester. The participants mentioned in interviews that the institutional programs were key determining factors that lead them to believe the college was committed to its minority student body. However the students were presented with a drastically different reality during their first year on campus.

The Caribbean students in Campbell's study credit the Minority Spec Weekend and Summer Institute programs for furthering their academic futures. However, the students in his study reported that the college adjustment process was a daily occurrence that affected their thoughts and actions, to which they were offered little to no assistance. Many of the Caribbean students stated that they had to block out many of the negative experiences they encountered on campus. The students reported that the adjustment to their PWI was difficult and their institution needed to do more to accommodate their students during their transition to campus.

Brown-Huntt (1996) examined the academic and social adjustment experiences of Latin American and Caribbean graduation students at a PWI in the mid-western region of the U.S. She points out that students' ability to adjust varied by age. The graduate students in the study faced a range of adjustments while attending a PWI in the United States. The graduate students in the study praised the university research, resources, and the technological amenities their campus had to offer, in comparison to their home countries. However, the students believed their institution lacked a global perspective, which restricted the scope of education that was obtainable at the university. The participants reported the social-cultural/and political environment focused on the needs of the host country lacking global inclusiveness.

The students had to adjust academically to the new ways of learning and thinking at the university. The graduate students were exposed to cutting edge-research in their fields. The participants had to learn new pedagogical skills that concentrated on student centered learning and conversations between professors and students. This was new to the students who were accustomed to lecture style instruction in their home countries.

While the learning techniques were an adjustment, many of the participants enjoyed the open dialog. Though the Caribbean students benefited from the open dialog that took place in their courses many of them felt the need to conform to an Americanized-form of English, due to criticism from United States born peers. In addition to speech related issues Caribbean students shared concerns about biases they encountered from professors about to British syntax in their writing.

Similar to Brown-Huntt, Lauture (2007) study found that writing issues were common among certain groups of international students who were not accustomed to APA, MLA, and Chicago styles. Black Caribbean female students in her study were called out and embarrassed by professors for having bad English when speaking British English. English speaking Caribbean students, like other foreigners studying in the United States often find it difficult to integrate into higher education due to cultural language barriers (Lopez, 2003; Santiague, 2007; Zephir, 1996).

In the United States, language along with other western cultural traditions are needed to assimilate into mainstream society (Banjong, 2015). Foreign-born individuals are burdened with the task of changing their beliefs, customs, and traditions to fit into their new environment. There are often consequences of cultural adjustment for new comers, particularly students that depend on adapting as a means to becoming successful in college (Kilinc & Granello, 2003). Several scholars have noted that attending college in the U.S. is difficult for Black international students. Constantine et al., (2005) points out that stress and depression are common among Black international students. Carty-Roper (1989) found female Caribbean students experience greater levels of homesickness

than their male counterparts. While, Jamaican students have higher levels of depression amongst students from the Caribbean (Buddington, 2002).

According to Nebdum-Ezeh (1997), international students' ability to cope with the cultural adjustment issues range from trial and error tactics, to contacting fellow international students and faculty for support. In Sanner, Wilson, and Samson (2002) study on a group of Black international nursing students coped with the obstacles of attending college in the United States by forming a peer support system instead of seeking out campus support services. Many international students are reluctant to talk with college counselors or seek out any forms of mental health services due to cultural differences (Constantine et al., 2005; Lee & Rice, 2007; Lee, 2010). Although, many colleges provide counseling for students when support is inaccessible on campus, international students may seek help from the outside community. Some Black international students have found support through church groups to deal with their lives in a foreign country.

Evive's (2009) study found Black international students cope with racial discrimination by disassociating themselves with the treatment. Participants in Evive's (2009) study viewed the negative treatment was more so directed at American Blacks, therefore they often decided to overlook negative racial treatment. Several other studies have also indicated that Black international and Caribbean students have the ability to detach themselves from racial discrimination, due to their strong cultural identity developed before sojourning to a foreign nation (Brown-Huntt, 1996; Davis, 2004; Waters, 1990; Wiggan & Walroad, 2013).

In the literature, Caribbean international students do identify, as having a Black phenotype but the majority of the group is unwilling to accept the status of American Black or African American. Zephir (1996) argues, that Caribbean immigrants and students abstain from intermingling with African Americans because Caribbean immigrants perceive African Americans as lower economic class. Many Caribbean immigrants and international students avoid conforming to American norms because they believe their stay in the nation as temporary for education and economic mobility (Zephir, 1996). According to Zephir (1996), Caribbean immigrants and students believe their culture is superior to those of African Americans, however in the United States, individuals from the Caribbean are viewed as a segmented group of oppressed Blacks.

Santiago (2007) explored the experiences of Caribbean and Caribbean American college students' experiences in the United States. Santiago (2007) discovered that many Caribbean college students have identity development issues as they want to maintain their cultural identity while navigating a United States society that views them as African American. In her study, she also mentions how Caribbean students have to indicate their racial status as Black or African American on university paperwork. Many Caribbean students rely on scholarships, government and university programs to assist with the financial aspects of their college education, however their interactions with university officials leave them feeling alienated for enrolling in assistance programs (Santiago, 2007). Caribbean students value strong support systems in place as they matriculate through college environments. They also cited the importance of having a critical mass on campus, as they tend to rely on others within their community to navigate academic environments. Many Black international college students, such as Haitians, Jamaicans,

and Puerto Ricans benefit from campus environments in which they have/or can create a critical mass (Zavala, 2000).

In the literature of Blacks in the Canadian context, Wiggan and Walroad (2013) discuss how a group of Caribbean college students were deported from Canada after they conducted a two-week long protest against institutional racism and grading discrimination. During the student demonstrations a mainframe computer system and a campus facility was destroyed; the local community lashed out against foreign Black students with a series of racially incited incidents. The behavior of the local Canadian community insinuated there was a larger systemic racial divide in the community than previously acknowledged until the students' protest. Many nations outside of the United States are willing to accept that there are class distinctions in their countries, however, they are unwilling to acknowledge racial divides that exist within their borders (Waters, 1990). International students and their parents back home were not prepared for the interpersonal racism that the West Indian students received when studying abroad.

Ogbu and Simons (1998) discuss the differences among minority groups, they have classified minorities into groups: voluntary (immigrant) minorities, refugees, migrant/ guest workers, involuntary (non-immigrant) minorities. Ogbu and Simons (1998) explain that Black voluntary (immigrant) minorities willingly move from parts of Africa, Cuba, Central and South America, the Caribbean (Jamaica, Trinidad, the Dominican Republic), and Mexico. Ogbu and Simons (1998) state that voluntary minorities chose to come to the United States with the hopes of a better future, they conclude this population has not been forced to come or remain in the U.S. by the government or by white Americans. According to Ogbu and Simons (1998), refugees

were forced to come to the United States due to civil war or some form of crises in in their home country are neither immigrants nor voluntary minorities. Though refugees have not freely entered the United States, they benefit from adapting a tourist type of attitude toward the culture and language differences. Refugees in the U.S. learn to communicate similar to White Americans while maintaining their cultural and language identities.

Migrant/guest workers are not considered immigrants or voluntary minorities because they do not intend to permanently settle in the United States, they only extract enough of the host country's culture and language necessary to successfully accomplish their economic goals (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Other groups such as African Americans, and Puerto Ricans are among some of the involuntary minorities in the United States. These populations were conquered, colonized, or enslaved against their will. According to Ogbu and Simons (1998), United States involuntary minorities status was forced upon them by White people.

In the literature on international Black students in the United States there is a considerably growing amount of research on race. However, there is minimum research as to how gender shapes international Black students' experiences abroad, specifically focusing on international Black women. The following section will examine literature particularly focused on international Black women college experiences studying abroad.

International Black Women

The lived college experiences of international Black women are greatly impacted by the campus environments in which they study. This section of literature review focuses the experiences of international Black women. As international Black women

study in foreign countries, they are not known first by academic ability but by the color of their skin, which in turn places them at a disadvantage due to stereotypes at many universities in North America and Great Britain (Beoku-Betts, 2004). A large number of international Black women studying in the United States come from homogeneous countries where class distinctions exist, however they lack knowledge to prepare them for the racial division in the United States (Manyika, 2001). International Black women attending college in the United States are shocked by the economic power that White Americans have in comparison to other racial and ethnic groups in the country (Constantine, et al., 2005).

Black international women from the West Indies attending graduate school in the United States experienced the discriminatory lows of being Black minorities in American college classrooms, which they were not accustomed to in their home country (Waters, 1990). Black international women from West Indies majoring in English were often questioned about the authentic of their writing by White professors and lectures. Some West Indian Black international women felt racial segregation and domination in some fields of academia and created a classroom environment in which non-Whites were viewed as invaders (Waters, 1990).

Issues associated with race are ever present in the United States. The longer international Black women from the West Indies study in the United States the more they recognize the subtle racism that exists in the United States. Black women from the West Indies became uncomfortable with comments such as “you speak so well” or “you write so well” due to the racial connotations associated with Black social and intellectually inferiority (Waters, 1990). Black West Indian international women were astonished to

discover even though they actively participated in classes that professors would not learn their names and even returned class assignments with wrong names and lower grades to international Black students (Waters, 1990).

Constantine, et al., (2005) study, found that international Black female students were unwilling to accept the viewpoints of professors that teach students to only value the thoughts of White people. International Black women attending college in the United States feel that Americans believe foreign Blacks are less intelligent, and have encountered experiences in which their race and academic ability were criticized in class settings. Many international Black college students are not prepared or willing to challenge the discrimination they often face in the United States, given their cultural/racial upbringing outside of the United States.

Black African graduate students experienced racial and gender discrimination as they pursued science degrees in Western nations. Foreign Black woman are encouraged to pursue their education in countries such as the United States. However, they are viewed as incapable, and often met with a lack of respect for their professional ability. International female professors of color have encountered White students that questioned their authority as educators. Racism is often overt while sexism is subtle and entrenched in many academic environments; male dominated institutions openly discuss women empowerment but continue to marginalize women (Hicks, 2012).

In Beoku-Betts (2004) study on third world African women pursuing graduate degrees in science, she found that these women encountered a range of racial and sexist discriminatory experiences while attending graduate school in Great Britain and North America. The unfair sexist treatment included funding, as one of the participants noted

that she was overlooked for a tuition paid fellowship because a recruiter asked about her marital status, which was later used against her in favor of a male recipient. The same recruiter disclosed to the participant years later as to why she was overlooked for the award.

Higher education of African women pursuing science degrees has caused jealousy and strife in some marriages because of patriarchal traditions in African society. Some African women opt the study abroad while leaving their spouse and children in another country while others bring families along while they complete their studies. Often African husbands do not share in the responsibilities of the home and children with their wives causing strain on academics careers and relationships. In the Beoku-Betts (2004) study, one participant shared that her husband decided he wanted to complete a PhD because he did not want her education to surpass that of his, outside of the family dynamic women in science related also have to compete in a male dominated field.

STEM careers are an enormous part of economic global expansion, however international Black women are excluded from vital labs that would make them proficient in those degree programs and careers (Beoku-Betts, 2004). Many educational systems throughout the international community have not prepared their female students to take part in advance courses that would allow them to enter into advance science and medical programs at the university level, segregating them into more female related fields. In choosing to study abroad, Rosser (1991) argue that foreign women pursuing graduate degrees in STEM related fields in the U.S. were treated as outcasts by their North America peers.

Beoku-Betts and Njambi (2005) pointed out that colleges and universities desire to have African and Afro-Caribbean join their institutions as a means to diversify American campus culture without addressing the deep-rooted racial tensions between the White hegemonic academy and African Americans. African and Afro-Caribbean women are viewed as less threatening to White females (Beoku-Betts & Njambi, 2005). Beoku-Betts and Njambi (2005) assert that African and Afro-Caribbean faculty appointments often serve to further marginalize African Americans in higher education, they also believe this dynamics hinders the relationships between international Blacks and African Americans.

Contrary to the literature that denies international Blacks connections to African Americans, Beoku-Betts and Njambi (2005) found a common bond between African and native born American Black women. The literature on African Americans females untimely provides a lens to the experiences of international Black females in the United States (Beoku-Betts & Njambi, 2005). The following section of the literature review provides a historical perspective of the experiences of African American women in the United States and academia, which will set the foundation for which international Black females have been inserted into by mainstream American society.

The Historical Context of African Americans Woman in the United States

Africans slaves arrived in North America from the Island of Barbados in 1619. The Transatlantic Slave trade exported slaves from Africa throughout the Americas and the West Indies. Many Black slaves were shipped from the Caribbean Islands to Jamestown, Virginia. Slaves went through a process of dehumanization as their rights and freedom were stripped away (Lander, 1972). Blacks slaves were forced to conform into a

subservient status in which they were not allowed to read, write, or speak their native languages; slaves went through a process of dehumanization as their rights and freedom were striped away.

Enslaved African women were raped, beaten, and impregnated by their White European colonizers. Enslaved Black women were blamed for the rapes against them. Female slaves were portrayed as oversexed temptresses that seduced their innocent masters into sexual misconduct (hooks, 1982). Black male slaves repeated the hegemonic rape culture against Black women that existed during slavery; White women ignored the wrongdoings of men yet harbored resentment toward female slaves (hooks, 1982). The institution of slavery and the treatment of women are elements of white European patriarchy that has been engrained into the structure of American society through adapted still maintain a system of White male hierarchal privileges.

Education in the United States

The earliest form of education in the American colonies was Christian theology, the colonists wanted to ensure that all individuals obtained and upheld the same moral beliefs (Rury, 2012). Christian teachings were disseminated throughout the colonies, to the European settlers, Native Americans, and African slaves. Colonists built training schools to teach Natives the Christian principles. European countries donated funds to build the nation's first colleges and universities in the northeastern region of the country (Wilder, 2013). These early schools trained Christian missionaries to serve and work in the colonies. According to Rury (2012), White women were excluded from early educational training in the colonies, later they were provided training for the purpose of preparing their children for citizenry. In the southern colonies, Black slaves were denied

a formal education, not permitted to read or write, yet they were used as Christian missionaries to convert other slaves (Wilder, 2013; Woodson, 2008).

While it was an illegal offense to educate slaves beyond domestic service in the colonies, some slave owners secretly taught African slaves to read and write. In the northern colonies, abolitionist groups opened schools for free Blacks (Woodson, 2008). The first black colleges in the United States, Lincoln and Cheyney universities in Pennsylvania and Wilberforce in Ohio were established during the first half of the 1800s. In the southern colonies, wealthy landowners were against educating slaves (Rury, 2012). After the Civil War, Blacks were legally allowed to obtain an education in America (Franklin & Moss, 2000; Wiggan, 2013). The second Morrill Land Grant of 1890 provided land for twelve additional schools to open for Black students (United States Department of Agriculture). The educational training of the students during this era focused on European traditions, which prepared its students for work as ministers and teachers in an effort to uplift their race. Women were encouraged to pursue higher education however their training should not surpass their male counterparts (Evans, 2007).

The quality of education varied for Black women depending on the type of institution they enrolled. Many women faced gender limitations from their schools when seeking to take courses deemed for male students. On rare occasions Black college educated women gained employment as attorneys, bankers, and doctors (Perkins, 1997). Until the 1950s, Black college educated women were often restricted to the teaching profession due to gender and racial discrimination in the United States (Breux, 2010).

College educated Blacks were encouraged to go back and strengthen their race by working as teachers at segregated schools for Blacks (Perkins, 1997).

Education of Black Women

Early HBCUs

Many of the early colleges in the United States that admitted Blacks provided an education that was equivalent to a high school. Many of the colleges in the country during the 19th century were single gender institutions with the exception of some of the normal schools in the south. These schools had very strict Christian rules for the interaction between male and females. Some schools did not allow female students to leave campus without a faculty escort (Anderson & Moss, 2002; Davis, 1994). Black women were plagued with slavery stigmas of jezebels, which led to their restrictions on college campuses (Davis, 1994; Evans, 2007). Many college age women in the south were excluded from male academic disciplines (Perkins, 1997).

Early PWIs

Perkins (1997) study examined the academic achievement of African American women whom attended the group of prestigious White colleges in the northeastern part of the United States known as the Seven Sister colleges. The Seven Sister colleges included Mount Holyoke, Vassar, Wellesley, Smith, Radcliff, Bryn Mawr, and Barnard (Perkins, 1997). While admittance to these schools were ultimately reserved for White students, there were over 500 hundred African American women that attended the group of schools from 1880-1960; the actually number may have been higher yet some women chose to withhold their racial identity due to skin complexion which allowed them to pass as White (Breux, 2010; Perkins, 1997; Evans, 2007). According to Perkins, students from

the Seven Sister colleges were afforded greater educational and career opportunities upon graduation. The first African American female judge, physician, and Ph.D. were all noted as attending these elite colleges. Colleges and Universities in the Midwest also admitted African American women into degree programs that were deemed race and gender appropriate (Breux, 2010). However the majority of educated women still experienced underemployment despite their degree attainment (Dubois, 1899; Breux, 2010; Perkins, 1997).

Higher Education of Black Women during the Civil Rights Era

African Americans began fighting for access to segregated higher education institutions years before the seminal Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas 1954*, that desegregated schools in the Jim Crow south. African American women brought cases against universities that denied them admission, Ada Spuel filed suit against the University of Oklahoma State School of Law in 1948 and Autherine Lucy also filed suit against the University of Alabama Graduate School in 1952. African American women fought for civil rights alongside their male counterparts though their roles were overshadowed by patriarchal sentiment. Black college women were active members of the civil rights movement many were put in jail alongside their male counterparts in the fight for equality. The students at the all female colleges Bennett and Spelman participated in lunch counter sit-ins in their states (Gasman, 2007).

The literature on this era in the U.S. indicates that Black college educated women used activism, and community engagement a form of resistance to the racial and gendered oppression they endured on and off campuses in American society. Some of the tactics these civil rights pioneers used were positive as they fought and gained admission

in the nations all white institutions. However, those early black students of both sexes to integrate United States colleges and universities still encountered racial attacks from whites at their PWIs. In Florida a Black female college student reported being raped by four White males on campus. Black college women were fighting dual fights of equality during this era for both their race and gender.

Education of Black Women in the 21st Century

The education of Black women and girls in the 21th century reflects the decades before that often grouped them with Black males or totally excluded their existence. The experiences of Black women are often overshadowed with studies focusing on their male counterparts in the United States (Gasman, 2007). Research on the K-12 and college experiences of Black males has been documented in numerous studies (Jackson & Moore, 2008; Moore & Lewis, 2014; Noguero, 2003; Toldson & Lewis, 2012). The plight of African American males in schools in the United States is one worth discussing but not at the expense of their female counterparts (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Gasman, 2007). Young African American girls are often overlooked in the classroom settings, it is only when they display disruptive behavior they are noticed (Fordham, 1993). According to Evans-Winters (2005) African American girls are more likely to be praised for social behaviors as opposed to academic achievement, and often viewed as inferior in comparison to both males and White females.

According to researchers the last 70 years, the number of African American women attending colleges and universities has surpassed their African American male counterparts (McDaniel, DiPrete, Buchmann, & Shwed, 2009; Zamani, 2003). While African American females rates of enrollment are significant, the group as a whole still

lags behind their White counterparts in total enrollment as well as in specialized fields such engineering, science, and math (Zamani, 2003).

African American women educational experiences are intertwined in a complex system of race, class, and gender. Allen (1992) argues that African American females encounter experiences shaped by their gender or race or a combination of both whether attending Historically Black Institutions (HBIs) or Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). HBIs foster environments that support the academic achievement of African American female students. They are typically small institutions, which are beneficial in terms of class ratios and provide greater accessibility to faculty by students (Allen, 1992). According to Fleming (1983), in addition to offering supportive academic spaces Historically Black colleges and universities also allow students to interact with other Black students in ways that are not always available to those students that attend PWIs (Fleming, 1983).

The absence of Black critical masses on the campuses at most PWIs negatively affects African American females ability to date within their race (Altbach, Lomotey, & Rivers, 2002; Fleming, 1983). Lacking a social life on campuses exacerbates isolation among African American college female students attending PWIs (Carter, Pearson, & Shavlik, 1988; Fleming, 1983; Gay, 2004). The theme of isolation is consistent amongst non-white students attending PWIs (Beoku-Betts & Njambi, 2005; Carter et al., 1988; Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenberg, Klukken, Pollio, Thomas, & Thompson, 2004; Fleming, 1983; Gay, 2004; Lee, 2007 Lin & Yi, 1997). Without a critical mass of Black students at PWIs, African American females and other women of color are often burdened with the position of spokesperson for their entire racial group (Jenkins, 2015). Therefore, Black

college women at PWIs are under pressure to be successful due to the stigmas about African American females and their race. Black students at PWIs feel they have to constantly prove their worth in White college environments (Davis et al., 2004).

Racial Identity

In their qualitative study Davis et al., (2004) found that Black students often felt invisible while attending PWIs. Both students and instructors overlooked Black students presence in classroom settings. Participants in Davis et al., (2004) mentioned that White students would ignore them when they were seated next to each other in class in favor of pairing with other White students. Similar behavior was cited in Obiakor and Grant's (2005) study of international Black African students. Many of these students feel academic pressure to be successful given their hypersensitive presence in college classrooms; some students reported lower course grades based on their race. Though, Black students experienced discrimination from White professors and students many of them felt disconnections from other Black students on PWI campuses that are not focused on their academics (Davis et al., 2004).

College experiences among Black students may vary depending on social class, gender, and racial identity. Black students' background has a huge impact on how they navigate their college environment. Black students are not a homogenous group (White, 1998); racial identification and cultural identity are two different things (Hesse-Biber, Livingstone, Ramirez, Barko, & Johnson, 2010). The acculturation process varies among students but is intensified among Blacks (Thompson, Anderson, & Bakeman, 2000). African American students who previously attended predominately White high schools may be more inclined to build friendships with White students with common interests

versus Black students with whom they only share similar skin color. Whereas some Black college students only feel comfortable with members of the same racial group due to upbringing (White, 1998). Some students may not feel fully accepted into either group, they are too Black to fit in with White peers and on the other side not Black enough to be accepted by the Black community (Allen, 2010; White, 1998). Challenges complexion, vernacular and weight issues (Allen, 2010; Hesse-Biber, et al., 2010) accounting for international Black students add another layer to the complex racial identity of Blacks in America. Foreign Black students often feel like outsiders (born outside the host country) within (similar phenotype) in relation to African Americans (Collins, 2000; Davis et al., 2004, Smith, 2015).

Black Feminist Thought and Postcolonial theory

BFT and Postcolonial theory both place Black/former-colonized individuals at the center of the analysis. BFT and Postcolonial theory provide a lens into how race, class, and gender intersect to shape experiences on college campuses. Given the concept of intersectionality being a core tenet of BFT and Postcolonial theory they are idea in addressing the lived experiences of Afro- Caribbean international women pursuing graduate degrees at PWIs in the United States. It is necessary to provide a counter-perspective to the homogenous universal narrative about international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities.

Summary

This literature review offers insight into the work that has already been conducted in the area of international students of color experiences in the United States, focusing primarily on Afro-Caribbean international female college students. It is imperative to be

knowledgeable of the experiences of Afro-Caribbean international college women in the United States. Furthermore, it is important to examine Afro-Caribbean international college women experiences in predominately White U. S. campus environments. Using BFT and Postcolonial theory centers the voices and experiences of Afro-Caribbean international college women attending PWIs in the United States. Remarkably, this study from a BFT and Postcolonial standpoint will provide a counter narrative on international college students' experiences attending PWIs in the United States.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The study explores the perceptions of international women who self identify as Black enrolled in Predominately White higher education institutions in the United States. This chapter includes the description of the research purpose and research questions, a synopsis of qualitative research as it relates to the study, explanation of phenomenology and the use of phenomenological research methods, and a detailed outline of the research design and procedures. The research procedures section includes an explanation of the setting and recruitment, data collection, data analysis, confidentiality measures, and risks and benefits of the research. The research questions explored in this study include:

1. What are the campus-based experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female college students attending a predominately White university in the southeastern United States?
2. What are the academic experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female college students attending a predominately White university in the southeastern United States?
3. What unique factors shape Afro-Caribbean international females' college experience attending a predominately White university in the southeastern United States?

Research Design

Qualitative methodology, involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of

narrative and visual non-numerical data, which provides insight into a particular phenomenon (Gay, Mill, & Airasian, 2012). Berger (1989) refers to qualitative research as the essence of people, objects, and situations. Qualitative research seeks to understand how people construct meaning about their world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative researchers believe the world is not uniform, coherent or stable, and there are multiple truths when studying humans due to varying perspectives among people and groups (Gay, Mill, & Airasian, 2012).

This study was framed within a qualitative paradigm that used semi-structured interviews in order to discover what characterizes the educational experiences of the participants and what they note as unique factors during their time in college. The intent of this study was to learn of authentic lived experiences that led to a successful trajectory through attending college in the United States. A qualitative paradigm informs this study related to the experiences in the lives of these international women that enabled them to successfully navigate through the U.S. higher education system.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is appropriate for this qualitative inquiry due to the nature of the research questions and the overall aim of the study. As a methodological approach, phenomenology explores the lived experiences of individuals, and its goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the essence of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). It investigates what it means to be human through experiential meaning (van Manen, 2001). Phenomenology seeks to gain the truth of these experiences through the perspective of those who have lived in the period of time. The sole purpose of phenomenology alone makes it well suited to examine the lived experiences of Afro-Caribbean international

female graduate students attending PWIs in the U.S.

During the 1700s, the term phenomenology was used throughout Kant's writings, though it was Hegel who constructed the early technical meaning of the term. For, Hegel, phenomenology was the science of describing what one perceives, senses and knows about a personal experience (Moustakas, 1994). While phenomenology is rooted in the works of, Kant, Hegel, it was ultimately Descartes who influenced Edmund Husserl during the twentieth century. Husserl is considered the founder of philosophical tradition of phenomenology (Patton, 2002). Originally known as a philosophical method, phenomenology has since transformed as numerous scholars, such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, have elaborated the nature of the phenomenological method.

For the purpose of this study, Husserl's analysis is primarily considered because he is often considered the father of phenomenology. The philosophical phenomenological method is comprised of four steps: 1) Epoche, 2) Phenomenological reduction, 3) Imaginative variation, and 4) Synthesis (Moustakas, 1994). The first step Epoche is the process researchers enter to set aside prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas one may carry about an experience into the field. Husserl defined the Epoche as the freedom from suppositions, Epoche is a Greek word, which means to abstain or stay away from (Moustakas, 1994). Epoche is a state of newness, an opportunity for a new beginning, void of past experiences. The Epoche is a way of allowing one consciousness to see with openness, the freedom to see just what is there and what is there to stand (Moustakas, 1994, p.86). While experiencing the Epoche, no positions are assumed and nothing is predetermined; only what is new or present has any validity. The second step, phenomenological reduction is the process of returning to the essence of the experience

continually to develop meaning and of itself. The third step, imagination variation involves examining data from varying frames of reference. The final step of a phenomenological study is the construction of the synthesis the descriptions of the meanings of the experience. Phenomenology connects consciousness to the lived experience of the phenomenon (Giorgi, 2009). Phenomenology focuses on the essences of an experience (Merriam, 2002; van Manen, 1990).

Phenomenology is often used in the field of education. Phenomenological researchers have used this methodology to explore educational issues. For instances, Lauture (2007) used a phenomenological methodology to explore the lived experiences of Haitian college students in studying in U.S. colleges. In studying the phenomenon of cultural factors affecting Haitian immigrant college students, twelve themes emerged 1) Problem speaking in front of class, 2) Coping with learning style, 3) Problem challenging professors, 4) Avoiding eye contact, 5) Problem initiating conversation, 6) Feeling of being misunderstood, 7) Feeling lost, 8) Retaining abilities or study strategies, 9) Seeking assistance, 10) Comparison of classrooms, 11) Improvement needed for acquired learning, 12) Culturally diverse-oriented. The study's findings affirm the need for resources and training to assist American professors develop new teaching tools and practices more applicable to multicultural diverse classrooms.

Brown-Huntt (2000) also used a phenomenological approach to examine the experiences of ten transnational students from Latin America and the Caribbean. The essence of this phenomenon was obtained in the narratives provided through in-depth interviews. The interviews were later transcribed and analyzed using phenomenological analysis. Five central themes derived from the analysis: 1) Learning adjustments, 2)

Language usage, 3) Relationship building with faculty, 4) Relationship building with peers, 5) Adjustment to new socio-cultural and socio-political environments. The results of this study inform numerous areas such as international student experiences, education policies and procedures, as well as the globalization of higher education.

Much like phenomenology was appropriate for the studies listed above; it is effectively applied to the present study given the nuances of gender, race, and international status of the participants of this study, The intent of the study is to describe the experience from the participants' point of view in order to understand the shared experiences of Afro- Caribbean international female graduate students attending PWIs in the U. S. (van Manen, 1990).

Researcher Subjectivity

As a Black woman, student, and teacher, I have encountered experiences in which my intellectual ability has been challenged on the basis of gender, and race by teachers in peers. Despite living through various negative experiences in educational settings, I consider myself an overcomer of circumstances in which could have been detrimental to my success. In addition to my personal experiences, I have had the opportunity to teach and mentor both domestic and international Black girls and young women, who have also endured systemic and institutional barriers in their schooling experiences.

Setting

The primary setting for the study was a predominately White public research university in the southeastern part of the United States at the undergraduate and graduate level. There are approximately 28,700 students enrolled at the university at the

undergraduate and graduate level. In the fall of 2016, there were 1,242 international graduate students enrolled at the public predominantly White research university.

Sample

Eight (8) Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending college at a predominantly White university in the southeastern region of the United States participated in the study. The study participants' college classifications ranged from graduate students to recent graduates. Study participants self-identified their racial and ethnic identity as Afro-Caribbean, Black or of Black African ancestry from the Caribbean.

The study used purposive and snowball sampling, which allowed the researcher to recruit participants that met the criteria of the study. The researcher used both her personal and professional contacts to solicit Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending college at PWIs in the southeast for this study. Using their contacts and close associations with others fitting the criteria at the university other participants were requested. The specific criteria for this study are as follows: Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending college at PWIs the United States.

Data Collection

Qualitative data collection takes many forms, anyway the participant can describe their lived experience can be used to gather data in a phenomenological study. The use of qualitative interviews to gather the participants' descriptions of their experience are most common. Though techniques such as participants' written/oral self-reports, or even art, narratives, or poetry can be utilized to collect data (Vagle, 2014; 2Waters, 2000/2016).

The two primary sources of lived experience data in this study are the in-depth interview and the lived experience written description.

Participant Interviews

Participant interviews served as the primary data collection instrument for this study. Giorgi (2009) emphasizes the use of interviews in phenomenological research when getting the descriptions of others experiences. The interview process consisted of scheduling interviews via email or phone communication. Recruitment letters were also sent to participants providing detailed explanations for the purpose of the study, inclusion criteria, data collection and analysis procedures. The recruitment letter clarified that participation included audiotaped 60-90 minute face-to-face, telephone, or tel-video interviews with the possibility of a follow-up interview as well as a lived experience description activity (Angrosino, 2007, p.48). Each participant, all of whom were over the age of 18, signed an informed consent form to participate in the study. Participants were given the opportunity to opt out of participation in the study through out the duration of the study.

Data collection included a demographic form and participant interviews. The interview protocol guided the data collection process for individual interviews with Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending PWIs in the United States. The interview protocol was developed to gain an understanding of how Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending college at PWIs characterize their college experiences in in the United States. The protocol began with general questions to create a rapport between the participant and the interviewer. The next set of questions focused on open-ended questions about the experiences that the Afro-Caribbean

international female graduate students participants had pre and post their arrival at a college in the United States. The interview questions, allow the researcher to further explore specific questions about the contributing factors that have shaped Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending college at PWIs both positive and negative issues that may have added to their college experience in the U.S. (Angrosino, 2007).

The lived experience description provided additional access to the phenomenon and served as a second data source. To help participants craft a lived experience description, I contacted participants using email that included a protocol (adapted from van Manen, 1990) for writing lived experience descriptions. Participants were asked: *What is it like to be an Afro-Caribbean female on a PWI campus in the U.S.?* Responses to the lived experience descriptions were returned and included in the data analysis.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process for the current study was guided by the modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis of phenomenological data as explained by Moustatas (1994). The process was outlined in eight detailed steps:

1. Obtain a full description of the experience: the process allowed the researcher to preserve unbiased description of an observed experience.
2. Record all relevant statements: transcription process, apprehension of textural qualities of the phenomenon including visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory sensations.
3. Clustering horizons into themes: saturation through the act of writing the description of the phenomenon in the words of the participants. In this process statements that were irrelevant, overlapping and repetitive were removed, leaving only the invariant core

constituents of the phenomenon to be clustered into themes. This is accomplished by analyzing the language used by the participants that describes their experience.

4. Constructing textural descriptions for each participant's experience: review the horizontal statement multiple times as a means to gain a greater layer of meaning.
5. Composite textual description for each participant's experience: this final step in phenomenological reduction identifies the core elements that are central across all participants.
6. Structural description for each participant's experience: the recursive process of identifying the themes within each participant.
7. Composite structural description for each participant's experience: these descriptions are woven together to represent the core.
8. Textual structural description for each participant's experience is the final step in analysis involves creating an integrated description of the essences of the experience for all participants as a whole (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122).

Ethical Considerations

The Institutional Review Board's (IRB) review of the research proposal ensured that the protection of participants in the study. The IRB from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte approved the research study before work with human subjects began. The researcher identified the discussion of racism, sexism, and culture as possible risk factors (for participants during interviews) associated with the study due to the emotional nature of those topics. The researcher will try to make the questions as open as possible to reduce or eliminate any negative feelings. Other than the possibility of

minimal discomfort related to interview questions, there are no other psychological, academic, economic, or legal risks associated with participating in this study.

The researcher maintained trustworthiness in the study by checking transcriptions for accuracy. Copies of the transcriptions were also given to participants for review prior to coding the data for member checking. To deal with the element of human bias the researcher participated debriefings with noninvolved professional peers. The researcher also used the voices of participants through quotes from the semi-structured interviews. Transcripts and participant data collected during this study are kept in a secured folder in a locked file cabinet. The audio files are on a protected computer accessible only by password. The participants' names have been replaced by pseudonyms, and are not identified in the final report of the study.

Limitations

Eight (8) Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending college at PWIs in the southeastern region of the U.S. participated in the study. Due to the size of the sample, the experiences of the participants do not represent all Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending college at PWIs in the U.S. Furthermore, this study only addressed Afro-Caribbean international female graduate matriculating in southeastern PWIs in the United States.

Delimitations

This study focused solely on Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending college at PWIs in the southeastern region of the United States. Afro-Caribbean international female graduate participants were selected from PWIs in the southeastern region in the United States. In addition, only Afro-Caribbean international

female graduate students and recent graduates attending PWIs in the southeastern were used in this study.

Assumptions

The study was conducted with the following assumptions the sample consisted of willing participants, offering truthful and open responses during the interview. The participants were assumed to be experts on their lived experiences. Additionally, participants were representatives of the population of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students at PWIs in the United States.

Summary

The current research study explored the lived experience of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending PWIs in the United States utilized a qualitative phenomenology design. The goal of phenomenology connects consciousness to the lived experience of the phenomenon (Giorgi, 2009). The participants of the study were 8 Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending PWIs in the southeast United States. with a minimum of completing two years of college in the United States. The selection of eight participants occurred through purposeful and snowball sampling.

The data collection happened through interviews with Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a PWI in the United States. The data analysis occurred using Stevick-Colazzi-Keen method (Moustakas, 1994).

This chapter concludes with a review of ethical procedures for the study. The findings of this study are detailed in chapter four.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of the current qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a PWI in the southeastern United States. This chapter includes the analysis of the data collected through in-depth, audio-recorded interviews of eight (8) Afro-Caribbean international women attending graduate school at PWIs in the southeastern region of the United States. The in-depth interviews protocol utilized during the data collection with organized by on the three research questions that guided the study: 1) What are the campus-based experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States; 2) What are the academic experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States; and 3) What unique factors have shaped international Black females' experiences college experience while attending graduate school a predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States?

The data collected in this study is organized by participants' responses pertaining to their experience(s) as related to each research question and its alignment to Black Feminist Thought and Post-Colonial Theory, as a theoretical framework. The use of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of phenomenological analysis was used and allowed the researcher to review and horizontalize transcribed data, organize data into themes, gather

textural-structural meanings, and determine the shared essences of participants experience (Moustakas, 1994).

The organization of each section in chapter 4 is guided by one of the three research questions mentioned above. Chapter 4 also contains the emerging themes, and significant statements of the participants. The themes that emerged during the analysis phase are used to synthesize textural and structural descriptions into a textural-structural meaning that provides the shared experience of the participants in relation to each research question. Chapter 4 then concludes with the synthesis of each textural-structural meaning that provides a composite description the shared experience of Afro-Caribbean international women attending graduate school at PWIs in the southeastern region of the United States

Participants

This section introduces the eight women who participated in this study. For the purpose of confidentiality, names of participants; colleges and universities of the participants are not listed. Only the state in which they attended graduate school is identified. Additionally, the researcher changed other details where necessary to protect and shield their identities.

The eight participants in this study were either from the Bahamas, Jamaica or Trinidad and Tobago. All of the participants attended a PWI in the Southeastern region of the United States. All of the participants were of Afro Caribbean descent. There were also interesting variations among this group: Two of the participants had at least one child during their time as a graduate student, one participant was married during her time in graduate school, one participant was completing master's degree, while another

participant was in the Master's phase of a dual PhD program, six had graduate assistantships at their PWIs and all eight had at least completed one other degree in the United States.

Mary. Mary is 39 years old at the time of the study. Mary grew up in Kingston, Jamaica in a two-parent home with three boys and a sister. While neither of Mary's parents attended college; however, her mother stressed the importance of higher education to her children, all of Mary's siblings have graduated from college with at least a masters. Mary is also the first female in her family to pursue a doctorate degree. Mary's shared a little about her the first time she came to the United States is to visit her aunt. It was just a holiday summer visit, where she did a summer job at Target, in New York. Officially, when she came in the academic realm, she was an exchange teacher. While working as a public school teacher in South Carolina she completed a part-time masters degree program before continuing her education at a large PWI in South Carolina. Mary recently completed her PhD in the field of education.

Hannah. Hannah is 39 years old at the time of the study. Hannah grew up in the Bahamas in a two-parent home with three sisters. Hannah came to the United States as an exchange teacher, while working as a public school teacher in Florida she completed her masters degree before returning back to the Bahamas. In 2014, Hannah returned to the United States to pursue her PhD in education at a PWI in North Carolina. Hannah is currently in the third year of her doctoral studies.

Deborah. Deborah is 36 years old at the time of the study. Deborah is from the Bahamas and grew up in a two-parent home. She is the only child. Her mother wanted her to become a doctor; however the school she attended in the States did not have a pre-

med program. Deborah attended a HBCU in the gulf coast of the U.S. before being recruited to a PWI in South Carolina where she completed both her masters and PhD. Deborah was in an interracial relationship during her time studying in South Carolina. Deborah is currently a professor back in the Bahamas.

Faith. Faith is 26 years old at the time of the study. Faith grew up in Jamaica with her parents and two siblings. She worked in the United States National Parks a year prior to enrolling in an undergraduate degree program in the Midwest. Faith is currently in her second year of graduate school at a PWI pursuing a dual masters public policy and urban planning in the state of Georgia.

Naomi. Naomi is 38 years old at the time of the study. Naomi is from Trinidad and Tobago; both of her parents and brother now live in the United States Naomi and her father both completed their PhDs from the same university. Naomi has completed three degrees at the same PWI in VA. Naomi has dated interracially since studying in the United States She became a mother while working on her doctoral degree. She is currently an education professor in the U.S.

Hope. Hope is 40 years old at the time of the study. Hope is from Jamaica she has three brothers. Hope completed both her undergraduate and master degrees at HBCUs. She works for the United States government, in addition to pursuing her PhD at a PWI in the DMV region (District of Colombia, Maryland, and Virginia).

Esther. Esther is 36 years old at the time of the study. Esther grew up in Jamaica in a single parent household. Ester's mom is a schoolteacher in Jamaica. Esther completed her Bachelor and Master degrees in the Midwest, before moving to Florida to pursue her Ed.D. Esther works full-time, is married and has two sons. Esther is expected

to complete her degree this upcoming spring.

Ann. Ann is 26 years old at the time of the study. Ann grew up in Jamaica in a two-parent household. Ann's father traveled abroad to the United States for college, her mom did not attend college however she wanted Ann to come to the United States and become a doctor. Ann completed her undergraduate degree on the West coast region of the United States, she changed her major from engineering to psychology her senior year. She worked in the U.S. for a year after graduating from undergrad before going back to Jamaica. Ann returned to the United States in 2015 to enroll in a dual MA-PhD program. Ann's mom is very proud of her daughter for pursuing a doctoral degree. Ann is currently in a long distance relationship with a guy back in Jamaica. Ann attends a PWI in Tennessee.

Participants shared their first impressions of the southeast United States.

Mary:

When I was in the plane looking down. I remember it like yesterday. I was in the plane looking down and I said, "Is this America?" You have this picture of New York. The first entrance to the United States was really New York, for me, when I went to stay with my aunt for that summer. When I saw all the vegetation and all of that, I was saying, "Is this America?" I was wondering is this still America because I was not used to seeing ... I have never been to the south. I was definitely looking for the metropolitan setting. What struck me the most was the history. I felt like I was stepping into a history book. Again, because I was a history major, I could see the historical significance of the place because I saw buildings that looked colonial. Then I'm coming from a colonial setting myself. We have colonial buildings. Immediately, I made that connection and said, "Wow. There is some connection there." That was the thing that struck me the most, the history, the historical connection between Jamaica and the south.

Deborah:

Well okay, so I'm from a like 95% black country and I went to a black [HBCU] school so there was not a big difference, but when I went to a [PWI] I was like, "Whoa! There are a lot of white people here!" I knew I was coming to the south. I

know the people in America are racist so, I mean I expected some racist stuff.

Hannah:

I had visited because I was an exchange teacher and I was a part of a program for our orientation we had to come to North Carolina because this is where the program is based. I've actually visited North Carolina before but to say to go on a tour to see the different parts, no... I'm used to heat because I'm from the Bahamas so I'm used to that Caribbean heat. I spent three years in Florida so I got accustomed to that heat as well and it's the Bahamas and Miami they are similar. I often call the weather here bipolar, I call it bipolar because one day it's very, very cold and then the next day it can be very, very hot. Getting adjusted to it, it wasn't hard. It was just I don't think I could have anticipated like the bipolar like the difference in weather so suddenly.

Faith:

Being in a metropolitan city that has, one, a large Caribbean population, two, that has a rich black population, you know, it was motivational. I feel that lots of reason why people enjoy coming to [GA] and seeing black people, because you get to see examples of people that are successful. Definitely, in Michigan, I didn't see that because you had, our school was located, it was like across the street from our school, it was like black parts of the area in Michigan and it's poor. So you see all this area that's like poor black people and depression. I mean that exists in [GA] too, but you have both sides. You have pockets of poor black people but you also have pockets of rich black people who are, you know, involved with politics, involved in academics and involved in all these other things, you know, that you aspire to get involved with.

Naomi:

My dad had just started his PhD in Virginia. And he said "Well, why don't you come down here and visit?" And I was like "Where is this Virginia place?" Like, "Why in heaven's name would I want to go to someplace called Virginia?"

Esther:

Growing up I came to Florida and New York so I pretty much had seen that side of the United States. Okay so getting to Florida I was really excited. When you come here and visit it's a lot different than when you are actually here living and having to navigate the system that presents itself. When you come up here you are on vacation you go shopping you get to enjoy a part of America that what I like to say now is a façade, because the true America is one that's very for lack of a better word colorized. When you come here and visit it's a lot different than when you are actually here living and having to navigate the system that presents itself.

Ann:

I was adjusting to the South now instead of being on the West Coast. I was scared for a lot of the first semester because I thought the South was just going to be like full of rednecks and ... I just really was like scared of like being a black person in the South.

Themes

Several themes emerged from each research question posed in this study. The themes ranged from *outsider in the academy* to *Black international female*. Meaning units emerged from significant statements provided by the participants.

Afro-Caribbean Campus-Based Experiences at PWIs

Research question 1, which asks *what are the campus-based experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States?* seeks to gather the participants' voices pertaining to their experience(s) as Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a PWI in the southeastern United States. Through the voice of the participants, two significant themes emerged: a) *outsider in the academy* b) *visible/invisible graduate student*.

Outsider in the Academy

In examining the first research question, participants describe the campus-based experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States, *outsider in the academy* emerged as theme supported by statements and stories of the participants. Though the voices of the participants three subthemes emerged a) *Isolation*, b) *Unwelcoming environment*, and c) *Stereotypes*.

Lorde (1984) described Black and third world women's outsider experience as one of which they are viewed as subordinate and inferior in American society. Thirty-

three years after Lorde's sister outsider analysis, participants in this study are reporting outsider in the academy experiences while attending PWIs in the southeastern United States. Despite the qualifications of Black and women of color, they are not widely accepted into the campus culture at PWIs in the United States. Blacks, women of color, and non-white international people often feel their presence at PWIs is only tolerated. Afro-Caribbean female graduate students like their African American peers do not feel acknowledged as creditable equals by Whites at their PWIs. When people are characterized as outsiders they tend to experience dehumanizing inferiority as they are othered by dominant groups.

In this section of the findings participants reflect on first hand accounts of campus-based experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a PWi in the southeastern United States. Participants described Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a PWi in the southeastern United States experiences as *outsider in the academy*. Participants discussed the early days as graduate students attending PWIs in the southeastern United States. It is common for students to feel the effects of adjusting to higher education environments; however, in noted that adjustment issues are increased for foreign individuals that are not apart of the dominant population. At the graduate level, participants faced the realities of being one of a few or the only racial and/or ethnic minority students in their programs. Prior to enrolling at her PWi in the state of South Carolina Deborah attended a HBCU. Deborah reflects on her initial contact being on a predominately White campus, "I was the only foreign national they picked up from my school." Ann shares a similar sentiment as she points out that she is the only Black person as well only foreign student in her department:

There is not a Caribbean or Black community here.” ... I feel this distance. I never feel like I fit in fully, or like I belong here fully. I feel like any moment this can just get dragged from underneath me or whatever.

Participants’ perceptions of being outsiders in the academy vary from racial cultural differences with faculty and domestic students, discrimination to feelings of isolation. Many non-white and international students experience imposed physical and intellectual isolation from members of their host institutions (Gay, 2007; Trice, 2007). For Afro-Caribbean female graduate students attending PWIs in the southeastern United States isolation can lead to depression, sickness, lower grades, and possibly withdrawal from the university. Participants in this study have some limited knowledge of the cultural/racial history of the southeastern United States however many of them reveal that their upbringing in the Caribbean had not trained them to interact in racist environments. The campus atmospheres at many of the PWIs that my participants attended were plagued with anti-Black, anti-foreign discrimination.

Mary recounts that her first semester in the PhD program was challenging:

I felt like an outsider in a sterile, sanitized environment. Most people were polite however there is always uneasiness when engaging within my department and around campus. I felt that my presence on campus was at times undermined. During a light conversation with a white professor on campus, she made a comment about me studying in special education, as if that was the only program that Black students could obtain a degree, when I corrected her, she acted as if she could not hear that, I was a PhD student in language and literacy.

Naomi recalls a somewhat similar experience with a woman at the library on campus to check out some books:

I was starting my pilot study for my dissertation, and I was checking out books, and she went "Oh wow! Those are hard books!" She said "Wow, you've got thirty books checked out" and I said "Yeah, I'm PhD student." And she said "Oh my gosh! I never see black PhD students, congratulations, your family must be so proud!" And she was like "You must be the first girl in your family to go to college too?"

Ann expressed her concerns about several of her graduate school cohort members:

There were some things about my cohort members that annoyed me, like one of them used to keep doing these micro-aggression kind of things. I felt fetishized or something because she would keep asking me about stuff in Jamaica and then talking about when she was in Africa, this, and when she was in Africa, that. It was kind of like, one Jamaica's not Africa. Two, you lived in Africa for like a few months, I'm literally talking about 18 years of my life. If something happened, for example, like, when the protests were happening on college campuses... black students wanting recognition and rights on campus and stuff... when I told her what happened she was like, "Oh, I'm so sorry, I didn't know. Could you tell me when something happens next?" And I was just like [thinking], I'm not like your black news source.

Ann recalled taking the bus to Atlanta from her university in Tennessee because she had some friends from high school who lived in Georgia. Ann used those trips to help cope with adjusting to her new environment. She believed having a community is really important. Ann also shared her experience trying to adjust to everything, not really having friends at school she would swim with a classmate:

We were like, oh we're gonna be swim buddies and, like, exercise together or whatever. And it's like... I got the highest grade in the class... that same day at swimming she was like, "So how much do you work?" or whatever. And I was like, "I mean, I do work and then I take Fridays off and maybe I'll work on Saturday sometimes or whatever." And she was like, "Wow, 'cause I feel like I'm just doing so much more work than you, but you're doing better than me and I just don't understand." And she was like, "you're probably just like, really talented or whatever" ...I just felt like, why are you comparing yourself to me, "I was thinking would you even be doing this is I was white?" I thought those things weren't really bothering me that much... until I started talking to my therapist about it and then I was just like, bawling. I was just like...It was just really stressful. And I think that that, along with like ... Yeah, I think that and just like ... It just felt stressful.

Routine campus interactions for Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending PWIs in the southeastern United States were often met with unfriendliness and exclusion. Deborah described her experience as a new graduate assistant, being met by a confederate flag hanging on the wall. She switched offices with

another white student:

They wouldn't directly say they don't want to share an office but like, if somebody put up their confederate flag and try blocking ... It's clear that they're saying, "I don't want to share an office with you."

Visible/invisible graduate student

In examining the first research question, participants describe the campus-based experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States, visible/invisible graduate student emerged as theme supported by statements and stories of the participants. Though the voices of the participants, two subthemes emerged a) *Alienation*, and b) *Undermined*.

Institutional racism rendered many Afro-Caribbean female international graduate students attending PWIs in the southeastern United States invisible. Visible/invisible graduate student usually refers to the perceptions of non-White persons attending PWIs who are often ignored by faculty, White students, and males. Afro-Caribbean female graduate students received little to no assistance navigating the political landscape of higher education. Many experiences for Afro-Caribbean female graduate students were based on trial and error including who, and when to contact regarding graduate/teaching assistantships. Few of the participants discussed experiences of dehumanizing alienation by professors in comparison to their White counterparts. In addition participants discussed being undermined and overlooked for networking and collaborative opportunities at their PWIs.

Six of the eight participants shared experiences working as graduate assistants

(GA) and teaching assistants (TA) at their PWIs. Graduate and teaching assistantships help fund many international students tuition and fees to attend college in the United States. Participants shared their feelings of gratitude for receiving graduate and teaching assistants; graduate funding largely influenced the six participants decision to attend their particular institution. Some graduate and teaching assistants are given opportunities to teach and publish articles with faculty, while others are not. Ann recalled choosing her PWI because the institution was going to pay her fees and provide housing. Her GA position and stipend equaled close to the amount of money she was making at her college counseling job back in Jamaica prior to coming back to the states for graduate school. Deborah was recruited to attend her PWI, she received housing and a GA position. Mary felt the stress of paying for graduate school lifted once she received her GA position because even though she already living in South Carolina, international students have to pay out of state tuition.

Mary shared her experience as a GA:

We were assigned to certain professors... but I felt there was some disconnect or distance. I was expecting greater interaction. I expected to feel welcome. I expected to feel like a person, rather than just an object in a setting just doing work. I just didn't feel like I was even being seen as a human being. I just felt like I was there to do something and people were being polite. I was the only black person in the office, but it's like we rotate out because we come in at different time. Sometime in which I came in, I was the only black person there. Everyone had their desks. Again, it was a sanitized interaction. People were polite. Beyond the politeness, there was no real engagement, or collaboration, or welcome. Some professors were not pleased with international students getting assistantships. I was in a meeting once this comment was made and I felt humiliated that it was made in my presence. After my first year it was challenging to secure Graduate Assistantship. I was only able to get it through the advocacy of my African American Professor and a White Professor whose work focused on social justice.

Hannah discusses her personal interaction as a GA with a professor she reported that on

multiple occasions she caught his watching her and monitoring her behavior. Hannah reported that the behavior of her male professor made her uncomfortable. She continued to share her experience:

As a graduate assistant some of the things that he has asked me to do is not the same that he has asked another or the other graduate assistant that is white. His relationship with the other graduate assistant that's white is totally different. It appeared that he considered the other student as an equal....He [professor] was upset when I got a TA position with another professor.

With the help of her advisor Naomi was able to secure an external GA position on a different part of campus; however, she recalls that obtaining a GA position within her department was very political:

I slowly started to realize everything happened behind closed doors. How assistantships were distributed. How they were announced. How often when they were announced they already had somebody lined up for it anyway. I learned that in my first, I would say the first year of my master's. And I remember being pretty angry at one point, feeling that I'd been gypped. The assistantships in our School of Education were very limited to begin with, but there was no one to help you with that either. "No." And it's like if you didn't have an assistantship, if you weren't in that little group of like 58 people that had assistantships in the School of Ed, you just didn't exist. Like people didn't think of you or see you for scholarships, awards, lunch invitations, nothing, you just didn't exist. And when you have a school where pretty much every professor is white and of a certain worldview, and they give their assistantships to people who share their worldview, people like me tend to get sort of skirted to the outside. It's not right that because people don't have assistantships in the building, we sort of get left out of the loop, we're not even considered for the things that are happening here. "I really feel like I got screwed over by this system." And I actually did get an assistantship within the department, which is what got me a job. I wouldn't have gotten a job without that assistantship in the department, because you have show that you have graduate- level teaching experience for the positions that I was applying for.

When discussing their campus based experiences participants voiced their perceptions of feeling alienation, isolation, and invisibility. Attending a PWI in the southeast United States was not easy according to the participants in this study, on many occasions participants experienced racist and micro-aggressive behavior in common

workspaces on campus. In campus environment in which participants expected to feel welcomed they often felt like foreign outsiders who were invading their PWIs. In addition to feeling like outsiders in the academy Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students perceived that some people ignored their existence around campus. Participants discussed lack of collaborative writing experience with professors in comparison to their white peers. A participant shared how invisible she felt when demeaning comments were made in her presence at a staff meeting about international students taking all of the graduate assistantships away from national students. Colleges and Universities are aware of the work restrictions that international students have to navigate however according to participants' responses, these students are often overlooked when jobs are distributed.

Academic Experiences of Afro-Caribbean Female Graduate Students PWIs

Research question 2, which asks *What are the academic experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States?*, seeks to gather the participants voices pertaining to their experience(s) as Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a PWI in the southeastern United States. Through the voice of the participants, one significant theme emerged: a) *value me and my voice*.

Value Me and My Voice

Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students just like all the students attending colleges and universities in the United States are people with feelings and opinions, both of which should be equally valued as all other students no matter their gender, racial/cultural background, or religious affiliation. For some of the participants in

this study they felt anything but valued, they discussed racist comments made professors, and classmates as well as the repercussions of speaking up to injustices in class. Participants share how they had to navigate their course selections to avoid racist interactions with professors at their PWIs in the southeastern United States. Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students in this study learned to alleviate some of the racial tension they experienced by limiting interactions with certain professors, however much of the inappropriate behavior of the professors went unreported for fear of backlash.

In examining the second research question, participants describe the academic experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States, *value me* and *my voice* emerged as theme supported by statements and stories of the participants. Though the voices of the participants, two subthemes emerged: a) *Classroom interactions*, and b) *Finding my place and my voice*.

Participants reflected on first hand accounts of academic experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a PWI in the southeastern United States. Participants discussed the importance of classroom interactions among Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students navigating academic experiences at PWIs in the southeastern United States. Ann stated that completing her undergraduate studies in the U.S. helped prepare her for the open dialog that takes place in grad school. Faith also noted the United States conversation style of classroom interactions that take place within her program:

I think professors up here are a lot more tangible, and they actively look forward to conversation, a conversational style in class and having to meet with the

students, which is not what we are used to in Jamaica. They are very, I guess it is more hierarchical in Jamaica, where I am the teacher, I tell you this, you do it and that's it. There's not necessarily a debate or a room or space for debate. Where in lots of the classrooms, the way the class is set up, it's meant to have conversation. Especially in grad school, where, you know, you are talking to grown people.

Many U.S. college classrooms are set up to have an open forum, which offer a platform for the exchange of ideas and worldviews among peers as well as professors. However, professors set the tone of those interactions. Esther recalls that most of her interactions in American classrooms have been traditional; however, she was not equipped to engage in dialog with a professor who openly stated in class, “that the education system in Jamaica had not prepared its students.” Esther admitted it was a struggles getting use to a professor who would say what was on her mind with little regard of its impact on students. Esther also adds:

I think about our school system back home you did your homework you turned it in to the teacher, the grade you received was between you and the teacher. Here.... One of the things she would do as part of that process was she would take your paper and put it up in front of the whole class and critique it. Now you had to be mentally prepared to have your paper up there and for it to be destroyed in front of your colleagues and to get statements.

Esther shared that for years of her graduate studies she would just sit and cower at her desk and try to go unnoticed by her professor:

Pretty much just hope to skate by and not get the wrath of her tongue. For her it was part of her preparing us; to be better writers, to think differently, to embrace the learning zone she created for us. For me it just was not, it was hard for me initially. Eventually she became my mentor but I still... I'm challenged ...when I have to interact with her.

Mary shared an example of a classroom interaction that was uncomfortable as a person of color:

I was in a class once and I guess it's 2010. Obama came into power 2008, right? There were still discussions about him coming into power. A white [female] professor, she said, "My brother was so mad about Obama becoming the president that he said, 'I do not have a president.'" There were just two of us black students in the class and I was so mad. She didn't expand on it. It was very clear to all of us, both white students and black students, what she was saying there. It mirrors the invisibility of how they treat us as black people. We are not seen.

Mary recalls being respectful and polite after the encounter that wounded her. However, she remembers placing a mental block up in that course because of what was said. That interaction drove Mary to focus on race in research:

I think that was the moment when I made up in my mind, I'm going to challenge what I see happening here." I made up in my mind that every single research I do in any of the classes, whether they are professors who are interested in social justice or not, I'm going to find some way to write about race.

Mary adds:

In that class, I did focus on the advocacy of African American woman in the area of literacy. It was a class that focused on literacy instruction and so I wrote about that. These were some of the things that were happening in the class. People were saying things that I found humiliating as a black woman, but people were quiet. I just didn't understand why my fellow students of color were quiet in the classes, later on, I understood perfectly why...when you speak up, you're targeted. I remember one of my African American male friends was going to present a paper on race. He said, "I'm scared. I don't know if I can do it." I said, "You have to do it. We all have to do it. If we don't, we're going to fall apart." We went through a lot of psychological trauma because we were dealing with issues that we want to talk about, but we know that we were also going to be targeted. I should tell you too...I started to have a lot of migraines because of the stress. I started to carry in my bag painkillers because, at any time, because of the tension in anticipation of the class or the tensions in the class, I would have a migraine. I had to make sure I have a painkiller just in case. I had that migraine pretty much ... I guess it left after I finished my coursework all together.

Mary discussed that the hostile racial environment at her PWI had affected her health and that it was hard to engage in classes in which the curriculum lacked a cultural relevant focus:

We were not given the space to really tap into the things that were concerning us. Even the selection of materials to read in the class, the articles you choose to read

did not represent our experiences. We did not see ourselves represented in those experiences. I'm talking about the courses that did not have a critical focus. Talking about the ethnicity part of it too, I did not see any connection to other world experiences. The curriculum was not broad enough to touch diverse experiences as well. Those were real concerns. It followed right through the end.

In a strategic effort to avoid contentious and racist environments Mary and Naomi both planned their course schedules to not include certain professors. Naomi worked with her advisor to take courses in the sociology department:

If I had stayed in the education department with the limited diversity that was there, I would never have come into that realization. Because very few professors presented anything outside of the dominant cultural perspective. So I would never have had a chance to even challenge my own thoughts in any significant way, because there was that overwhelming sense of whiteness.

Finding my place and my voice, emerged as a subtheme among participants who felt “othered” while attending their PWIs in the southeastern U.S. Hope stated that she had a African American female professor for statistics, and that the class was really difficult but the professor was helpful and encouraging in comparison to some of her white instructors who seemed disinterested in pushing her to excel in her PhD program. Mary quickly recalls wandering into an African American professor’s office first or semester before even taking a class with her:

Her door was open. I said, "Hey," and just introduced myself. She welcomed me and I start speaking to her. I think, at that point, psychologically, I need to make a connection with someone who I felt would understand. I didn't even tell her what I was going through and how uncomfortable I felt or unwelcome. I think maybe she sensed it. I think she maybe sensed in me a need to reach out and make a connection with someone who would understand without having to say the words.

Mary continued to stress that the she was most comfortable in courses that focused on critical issues, like issues of race and social justice:

Courses usually led by African American professors, in those spaces, I felt different. I felt more empowered. I felt like here is a space where some of my

concerns are being addressed. There was a kind of tug of war between spaces, spaces where I felt empowered versus spaces where I felt disempowered. That played out from the beginning to the end. There was this tension between those two spaces.

Ann also found value in classes that focused on critical theory, and discussed race and gender. Ann reflected on having a Black professor:

I had a black woman professor for one of my classes and I think that was really comforting as well because I did feel a lot of whiteness in my program. Like most of the people in my program are white, I'm the only black person in my cohort, and the only international person in my cohort. She was really helpful in terms of ... I don't know, me feeling like there was someone to support and back me up in some situations. I did really well in her class, which is supposed to be like the hardest class of first year, whatever, so it just felt really good to start off like that, doing really well and doing better than my other classmates... I feel like I had something to prove though because.... I'm the only black woman in this whole place.

Ann continues to discuss a class where she felt her voice was heard:

One of my favorite courses was Critical Methodologies and I think, I really enjoyed that when I made comments about Jamaica and stuff they weren't just disregarded because that happens a lot in other classes. Like, I will try to apply the work to my experiences or talk about current events that have happened and it's kind of like, if you don't stay U.S. focused people kind of brush over your comments. And it's not even tangential stuff, you know, like I'd be in Global Development and still feel like I can't talk about my own experience. But person who worked for the U.S. Military and has been stationed somewhere can. I just feel like often there's no equity in terms of who's speaking.

Hope and Faith also shared similar experiences in which course materials in their programs lacked a global focus. They questioned how the information they were learning could be adapted in a third world context. While some of the participants were discouraged by the lack of global content in their courses, Faith benefited from being enrolled in a dual program. Her public policy program focused on American issues while her city-planning program encouraged her to think globally.

As the Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students in this study

navigated their academic environments they experienced intense exclusion of their presence as persons of color as well as persons with different cultural experiences that they brought into classroom environments. Participants frequently encountered professors in their classrooms who would make racially insensitive comments that exposed biases toward people of color. Participants reported that they felt devalued and voiceless against the power force in the room. Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students indicated that many of their professors lacked a cultural competency that was needed in classroom settings. Some Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students stated they planned their course schedules to avoid racist professors.

Given that Afro-Caribbean international female participants combatted feeling of being belittled in many courses throughout their graduate studies, they began to seek out environments of inclusion. Many participants described inclusive environments as courses in which they could share their worldview with being discredited by professors or peers with negative opinions of foreign individuals and or people of color. Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students were looking for places and people who were willing to accept them as equal human beings as they attended PWIs in the southeastern United States.

Unique Factors Shaping Afro-Caribbean International Female Graduate Students at PWIs

Research question 3, which asks *What unique factors have shaped Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students experiences while attending graduate school a predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States?* seeks to gather the participants voices pertaining to their experience(s) as Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a PWI in the southeastern

United States. Through the voice of the participants, two themes emerged: a) *Black, international, and female*, and b) *Support*.

Black, international, and female

The Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students in this study come from countries in which the majority populations are Black. However upon crossing the United States borders participants quickly realized that race became their primary identifier and often a source of otherness by their host country. Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students that participated in this study are proud of their cultural background but would prefer that the United States would be more welcoming of racial/ethnic diversity rather than associating certain people cultures negatively because they do not fit into a White European-American narrative.

Participants collectively agree that being Black is not something that being in the United States would let them deny. Esther commented that, “I just could not leave my Blackness at home.” Faith also mentioned that her African heritage is her main identifier. My race is just there, it is not something that I feel the need to assert. I am a black graduate student, a Black TA, and I will be a Black graduate:

Being a Black female student in undergrad was much harder than it is now in grad school because I’m no longer in the sciences. Being in a more liberal and interdisciplinary degree has made grad school an easier transition. I definitely feel more confident in class because there are more non-white people in my courses.

Faith adds:

My Caribbean-ness on the other hand is the feature I am constantly trying to strengthen and present more boldly, because I feel like I’m losing it the longer I

am in the United States.

Faith believes maintaining connections to Caribbean culture through Caribbean students organizations has been vital during both undergrad and graduate school. Faith admits she is the only graduate student in the Caribbean students organization at her school, she considers herself, the big sister of the group. Naomi also stated she was member of a national Caribbean organization that meets once a year for a research conference. She acknowledges that the organization is an extended family. Participation in international, student, and community organizations was a subtheme that emerged across participant interviews.

Deborah stated that she is an activist:

I was the first female Graduate Student Government President, definitely the first black one and obviously the first foreign one... They were closing graduate housing, which really affected foreigners from poorer countries.

There was a lot of stuff that I spoke out about. I was visibly in the press, especially with the black party issue that had happened on campus. There was like a noose around my door at one time.

Deborah recalled, not alerting authorities about the noose around her door, but in hindsight she thinks probably should have reported the incident. Deborah explained, that neither race nor racism defined her experience while studying at a PWI in the southeastern U.S., however she acknowledged some of its effects, she shared that apart of her major was to work on a farm:

You would normally stay out in the farm and even my advisor was like, "Listen, I can't guarantee your safety there," because it's only other white people, so he gave me a car. To me...if a white person telling you they can't guarantee your safety, what's that telling you? Don't stay there, right?

Naomi stated, coming to the United States, my understanding of the racial dynamics in the U.S. were very limited, so “I even believed that the Klan was history, you know... I've been actually chased up a tree by Klan members in Virginia.” She went on point out prior to the experience with the Klan she held on to the common Caribbean perspective:

Caribbean people tend to have this perspective of African Americans as holding onto the past. Like, "Come on, we both dealt with slavery, let's move on. And I felt that perspective, especially coming from an uninformed place where I was, it was just sort of like "Well, okay, come on, let's just move on." Now that I'm trying to sift through cultural context involved... “I wasn't necessarily seeking to make friends with African Americans. I was perfectly happy insulating myself on the foreigners. Afro-Caribbean people tend to want to distance themselves from black Americans because of that stigma.... so to avoid all those assumptions and all the inscriptions that come with, being a black woman means that you're loud, and aggressive.... I could hide behind my Caribbean identity and just plain foreignness, and sort of escape that. So in that way it did allow me to ... it did allow me to not feel the brunt of what a lot of other people of color had to deal with on campus. But at the same time, it actually hurt, because it never really allowed me to really connect with everyone, because I felt like I had to either pick sides, and the side I picked was "the other people I was often placed in situations where White individuals would dismiss my presence in a setting when making comments about other Blacks, and telling me I'm not really Black I'm foreign so I should not be offended.

Naomi noted that it wasn't until after her undergraduate experience she really began to understand her racial and ethnic identity in a U.S. context. It was during her graduate studies where she began to notice that she was the only person of color in her education courses. Naomi credits the sociology department at her university for providing her with foundational knowledge of the racial binaries of the U.S.

Mary also shared her experience with race relations with her African American peers:

I had a wonderful relationship with my African American peers. As I look at the research with Caribbean students, it's not always the case because they come from a different cultural perspective. We come with different critical awareness. Sometimes, because people are not fully critically aware, they do not make the

connections they need to make in order to connect with African Americans and the issues they are facing.

Mary adds:

My peers really appreciated the fact, here is this girl coming from a Caribbean island, who doesn't have a long history of struggle, but she was able to make this connection with us and was willing to speak up in classes about racial issues.

As participants discuss the dichotomy of being Black international females Hannah's

words shaped the subtheme of international Caribbean accents:

"If you look at me I'm black, I'm a female. You can just look at me and you may think that I'm an American because I haven't talked, but when I open my mouth and you hear my accent then you know that, "Oh she is from another country because she has an accent."

Hannah explains that she is conscious of her accent:

I mean coming here I know this university is considered one of the best. At times I wouldn't talk like I wouldn't, I try not to elaborate when we have discussions in class. I try not to talk because I'm so conscious of my, what's the word? I'm so conscious of my accent. Coming from another country....you are unsure, you don't want to sound crazy, and you don't want to sound unintelligent. After going through the different semesters and just talking and just becoming more sure of myself I mean I've met persons who once I talk they are like, "Whoa I love your accent," so that makes me feel good. It makes me really...really feel good.

Based on Mary experiences at her PWI she viewed comments about her accent:

There are some people who will just say, "Oh, I love your accent." On the surface, I guess some of them say they love my accent, but that same accent was used to also other me. It was this binary, this tension between this tourist perspective of this accent. "Oh, it's a beautiful accent." As opposed to, "But she's not one of us. She's not from here." I always sense that tension, that was a lens through which people also viewed me, as someone who was other, not from here. That's why I started out by saying also that part of my tension was not only dealing with issues of race, but also of ethnicity. Sometimes being confused about...is race being at play here, or is it ethnicity, or is it both? Sometimes it was both. It made it even more complex. I felt sometimes doubly oppressed.

Mary added that she tends to focus more on race and ethnicity [in comparison to gender]

because those are the areas she felt more threatened, but she is also aware that the

structure of white institutions is patriarchal in nature as seen in the fact that often it was the white male professors who held top positions.

Deborah explains that during her PhD sexism was front and center from the White male graduate students:

“they would lead those kind of sexist comments, you know what I mean? That's something where, oh at least these guys probably can relate. Even if some of the other foreigners like the Indians or Africans might not want to jump onboard, because man always looking to be buddy up with other people. I think they were just being there laughing and not say anything about it. Like, "Oh that's in poor taste or something like that." Clearly I'd say maybe one or two of them was probably racist but it was so many mixes of people, they would be in the minority, so you can't display that kind of behavior when you in the minority.

Two of the eight participants experienced pregnancies while working on their PhD.

Esther recalled it was really difficult working with a demanding professor on a book chapter during her pregnancy. Naomi adds, that her pregnancy was so difficult, she fell behind a year in her studies. Naomi credits her advisor for assisting her through that time:

She made sure I could keep my assistantship; she filed paperwork so I could get an extension on my financial aid. People are really nice to you when you're pregnant after I had the baby, when people just sort of expected that everything would just return to normal, in terms of my research, my teaching, everything would just click back to normal. And I'm like "Dude, I have this person that needs me, and that I need to go to." That was, I felt that the university did not have the necessary support, except I got lucky the new Dean implemented this program where if you were a graduate student, they would pay your on-campus job, so that they could hire someone to replace you for six weeks after you had the baby, and you could get six weeks and still have your job. I thought it was a positive improvement. Naomi adds if I had a different advisor, I might have had to drop out of grad school. It would have been impossible for me to balance everything without having full-time help. I was actually lucky. My advisor let me bring my three-month-old to student week portfolio.

Dating

Participants shared some information about their dating life while attending graduate school in the United States. Though education is the main reason for Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students coming to the United States, many are at the age in which most people their age are dating, marrying and starting family, my participants discuss relationship challenges of attending a PWI in the southeastern United States. A few of participants share their stories of finding mates of similar racial/cultural backgrounds or deciding to date outside of their race while attending a PWI in the southeastern United States. Two of the participants in this study share some of the racial discrimination they and their spouses faced on and off campus. Dalmage (2000) explores the effects of rebound racism that interracial couples encounter when dating outside of their race in the United States.

The dating experiences of the participants differ depending on institutional climate and personal preferences. Hope discussed that it was her ex-boyfriend that encouraged her to apply to her PWI because he had applied, however he did not get accepted and their relationship did not survive. Ann explained that coming to graduate school, she feels life kind of gets pushed back in a way:

For example, people back home in Jamaica, they're like married now and having babies and all this stuff and it's just like, I never thought coming here might affect me finding like a partner or whatever. But I think especially in like grad school it was looking bad for a while.

Ann later shared she is in a long distance relationship with a guy back in Jamaica.

Naomi and Deborah were both in interracial relationships while in graduate school at their PWIs in the southeastern United States. Naomi recalled being ostracized

by both Blacks and Whites at her university. She shared how she was pushed in a cafeteria when walking with her white boyfriend who was on the football team.

Deborah:

At one point, I was talking to a white guy at his apartment. There were racial slurs that I wasn't even aware of. People would make comments, I guess by him, because more white people stayed by where he lived versus where I lived, where it was a mixture of people. People would walk by and be like, "Oh you need to stop talking to coons," and all that. People still have issues with interracial couples.

Evident in the voices of the participants, being a Afro-Caribbean international female at a PWI was a unique experience in and of itself. This section focused is on the Black, international female. Participants voiced that their race is always present in the United States, which was different from being back home in the Caribbean where they lived in majority Black countries. Participants also shared their experiences dating in the United States. Naomi and Deborah shared the racial discrimination they and their spouses encountered while dating outside of their race.

Support

Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students cultural upbringing is one that relies on the support of family members to be successful. Guiffrida (2005) explores how support of family members can be important to Black college students. Participants in this study discussed how important the support of their families was to their completion of their education in the United States. One participant shared how family members put their money together to prove to the visa office she had enough money to pay for college in the United States. Another participant shared that her grandmother in Jamaica raised her while her parents worked in the United States prior to her arrival for

school. Other Afro-Caribbean international females shared that their education was not just for them but also for their mothers who were not privileged enough to attend college.

Participants shared stories of the influence and support their mothers provided for them throughout their education. Mary recalls growing up in Jamaica, her mother encouraged her to get study hard and get an education; she credits her mother for being her biggest advocates:

I came from a traditional matri-focal family. My father was there and he was a very good provider. My mother is the one who talks a lot. She was the center of the family. She would talk a lot about history. She loved history, so she'd talk about the Maroons in Jamaica. She'd talk about slavery and that kind of thing. She would sing songs her mother would sing about emancipation in Jamaica and that kind of thing. I would sit a lot of time on our veranda. It's similar to a patio. She would just tell me stories, tell me about how hard we had to fight for freedom and that kind of thing. She really ignited in me a love for history and awareness of history.

Mary shares that her mother determined for her and her sister to break the cycle of being a housewife:

She really pushed us as girls. "Don't stay in the kitchen. You get out of the kitchen and go study your book. I'll take care of this." She really wanted us to rise above. Most of our society, they're patriarchal in nature and she really wanted us to break that cycle. That's one of the biggest gifts she gave us as girls, that we didn't feel like we have to be housewives. We can do something more. We can dream bigger. I think she really paved that way and ignited that fire in me to go for that dream. I can't disappoint my mom who has made so much sacrifice or my father.

Esther shared how instrumental her mom was in her decision to pursue higher education career in the states. She recalled that her dad was still alive and living in Florida. Esther wanted to come to the states for college and to work on her relationship with her dad.

That was short lived as he passed away about three years she came to the U.S:

When we decided that I was coming here to study my mom made a lot of sacrifices including delaying building her house and used that money so I could pursue my dream. Coming here was a two-person decision and one that she[mom]

supported because we thought that the opportunities after high school in Jamaica were very limited at the time.

Esther added that her mom still supports her. She has played vital role in her completing three degrees:

While I was working on the bachelors and masters, she made sure I was okay financially and paid for my trips home throughout both degrees so I could maintain my sanity and not die of homesickness (literally) She has continued to support me in my educational endeavors, from reminding me to coming to visit and keeping the kids so I could go off and write. There were times I thought about giving up but I knew completing this degree was also her dream. She calls and makes sure I am writing, even though she understands very little about the progress, she has come in town for the proposal defense and pretty much the week before that she held things down in the house making sure the boys were okay and that I was able to focus on writing. Now as I wrap things up she calls weekly to make sure we are still on for graduation.

Hannah also credits her relationship with her mom in assisting in her transition to the U. S. Hannah stated that her mom makes sure that she's straight:

I thank God for her. She has not only helped me financially but she has also helped me in terms of prayers she prays for me. I talk to my mom everyday sometimes we talk two, three times a day. I think being so far away from home....it's different... because of the foods too, because a lot of the foods that I can get in the Bahamas I can't get here. That's why if my mom travels she brings me stuff or if I go I try to bring like at least to help me or remind me of home while I'm here.

Deborah:

I'm an only child so my mommy, my daddy, my grammy, sometimes my cousins, most of my family knew my [PWI] family. When they had time off from work... they would take like six weeks there and eight weeks here. The summers when I had to go to school like five of my cousins would live with me.

Faith:

I have my aunt and my grandmother, live in south Florida. I call them all the time, I am very close to them. I call my parents and my brother and sister every weekend. We talk on Saturdays or Sundays, it's the ritual. We talk every weekend.

Church became a subtheme because 3 participants brought it up in their interviews. Esther said the Caribbean culture very religious. Ann stated that because there is only a limited number of Jamaicans she met at her PWI, she still feels isolated because they're Seventh Day Adventists and go to a specific church. There is a disconnect because she's not Seventh Day, nor does she go to church on a regular basis.

Mary:

I spent a lot of time going to church. Church became the space where I felt happy, felt welcome, felt like I had a community. It was a historically black church, tradition black. It had a long history in South Carolina. The church was very dynamic. They were really helping us to become more critically aware of what was going on in the area. The pastor is an African American. The membership is African American. I think there was just one white family in the entire church. That's not to say that I wouldn't have felt welcome if there were diversity. It just happened to be the space where I felt welcome, and actually, the space that really saved me. That was my way of coping.

Hannah:

Another good experience for me in terms of persons from different background is the church that I go to. I work with the children's ministry and the persons who work along with me they are very, very supportive. They are very, very encouraging and it's been a positive experience just going to that church and meeting all those different people.

Deborah:

I was like the only black person that went to my church. At church, I'd be like, "Okay what does this mean? [slur] What does this other thing mean?" Of course they'd be...I guess a little bit embarrassed.

Deborah states besides racial issues she enjoyed coming to the states for college:

I will not lie, I had so many wonderful experiences living there. People was really always try to do things, I guess they'd want to go, so everybody would invite me for lunch or dinner all throughout the week. It was so good because I could save so much money on food. People would take me out. They [church members] were really nice people and you know, right now with the travel ban, we had a

lot of Muslim students or whatever and they was reaching out trying to say, "Can we take care of your house and all that?" I just posted to them on Facebook like, "You know it was really good to meet actually, genuine people that really just try to help people all the time.

The Afro-Caribbean international female students that participated in this study shared that their families, particularly their mothers were instrumental in them pursuing their graduate degrees in the United States. Some participants shared that their families provided financial and spiritual support for them. Participants discussed how family visits to the United States and weekly phones calls were very important when they were homesick or just needed extra support. Church was also discussed as a place where participants were able to talk about racial issues that were affecting them while attending PWIs in the southeast.

Five of the participants discussed the recent election and the travel ban that was put on immigrants and visa holders. Many share the sentiment that being an international student at this time is difficult. Hannah shared that why the travel ban did not affect my country I just felt bad for the people it affected. It's disgusting how hateful he is toward. Mary shared her feeling the racial climate in the United States:

We have to look at how patriarchy and race are tied together. We see it being played out in the whole thing with Donald Trump. They are definitely tied together. It was very disappointing and very troubling, very concerning to see that we were moving from someone who was trying to bring the country together, someone who really made a difference in the lives of people of color, to someone who celebrate whitey supremacy. It's very concerning. It was psychologically draining, actually, to watch the election. It's very concerning. We wonder about the future for black children and all the progress we have made in social justice. What is going to happen now? We can only hope for the best, but it doesn't look too good. We can only hope for the best. We have our work cut out for us, that's for sure.

Hope discussed how the immigration ban is affecting her at work and colleagues at her university:

With the immigration ban, we have been on the news a lot at because I work in the government. Also my university sent out notice warning students to not travel at this time or if they're here in the US don't leave.

Ann shared her fears associated with the travel ban:

Even the recent immigration ban and stuff, it was like, yes, that was directed at Muslims but at the same time it's like, he could really just do that any day to me or to other people from the Caribbean.

Naomi explained that people in her community wanted her to know they supported her:

I think the day after the travel ban, I got this really super sweet phone call from this dude I've met twice, who I didn't even know, I guess he asked Jason for my number, and he was like "I just want to let you know not everyone is hateful." He said "If you ever need any place to be protected," he said "I've got a barn," he said "I will protect you," he said "I will hide you," he said "if it ever comes down to it," he said "you have a place to be hidden here, you have a place that is safe here with them."

Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students reacted to the 2016 presidential election, by stating that the new president was not the best choice for the United States. Participants explained that some of the comments he made toward women and immigrants were very disturbing. Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students shared their concerns about being visa holders in the United States during the recent United States travel ban. A few participant shared that even though the travel ban does not affect them personally they feel like the president could extend it to other visa holders.

Summary

Through the voices of the participants in this study, the experiences of Afro-Caribbean females at PWIs were explored. This exploration provided greater understanding of their perceptions of campus-based and academic experiences with the intersection of their race, international status and gender while attending PWIs in the

southeastern U.S. This chapter presented the major findings of the study in response to the three research questions: What are the campus-based experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States 2) What are the academic experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States 3) What unique factors have shaped international Black females' experiences college experience while attending graduate school a predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States? The first part of this chapter provided demographic information about the participants. The last part of the chapter presented the major themes and subthemes that emerged from the study's data. Data for this study included interview transcripts, and a lived experience description activity. The gathering of multiple data types is consistent with the phenomenological research design. The final chapter presents an in-depth analysis of the study's findings and themes with the BFT and Postcolonial theoretical framework and existing literature. Chapter 5 also presents implications and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenology study is to understand the experiences of eight Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students while attending graduate school at predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States. A qualitative design was used, with Black Feminist Theory and Post-Colonial Theory as the frameworks. This approach was employed because it had the ability to thoroughly capture the lived experiences of the women who were interviewed.

The results of phenomenological research include a comparison of the study findings with the literature reviewed at the beginning of the study (Moustakas, 1994). Relating the findings to previous research allows connections to be made prior to presenting the implications of this study. However, the limited amount of research specific to the experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students while attending graduate school at PWIs in the southeastern United States requires this study to be compared to multiple components addressed within the review of literature. This chapter is organized surrounding six themes.

Each of the five (5) themes headings provides a discussion of the findings and their connection to the theoretical framework and existing research. The second part of this chapter explains the implications of the study and provides directions for future

research. The first two themes *outsider in the academy* and *visible/invisible graduate student*, are examined in relation to the first research question. The third theme, *value me* and *my voice* is connected to the second research question. And the final two themes *Black, international, female* and *Support* is associated with the third research question.

Theme 1- Outsider in the Academy

When Afro-Caribbean female graduate students were asked about their campus based experiences attending a PWI in the southeastern U.S. five of the participants mentioned being treated as an outsider at their PWI. Those participants also indicated feeling of alienation and isolation. Those findings are also supported in other studies. (Banjong, 2015; Brown, et al., 2009; Constantine, et al., 2005; Hall, 1959; Kim, 2001; Lee & Rice, 2006; McClure, 2007). From a BFT perspective, Afro-Caribbean female graduate students attending a PWI in the southeastern U.S. are operating from the position of outsiders-within as they interact between race, class, gender, and international status. The participants' narratives about their outsider in the academy connects to Gay's (2004) research. Mary recounts that her first semester in the PhD program was challenging:

I felt like an outsider in a sterile, sanitized environment. Most people were polite however there is always uneasiness when engaging within my department and around campus. I felt that my presence on campus was at times undermined.

In Deborah's narrative she discusses being met with a confederate flag hanging on the wall of a shared graduate office in her department. They wouldn't directly say they don't want to share an office. But it's clear that they're saying, "I don't want to share an office with you."

International students studying in the United States found that there are multiple layers of racism from blatant to subtle in which people would shake your hand while assuming you are inferior (Lee & Rice, 2007; Waters, 1990). Similarly Gay (2004) states, “Graduate students of color complain about feeling only tolerated or endured, sensing that discussions are going on and decisions are being made around them to which they do not have access or knowledge until after the fact.” Gay argues that graduate students of color and international students often suffer from intellectual neglect as institutions of higher learning push them to the margins.

Attending college in the United States is often difficult for international Black women, the participants in this study echoed that alienation in their host country was costly. Afro-Caribbean female students knew that coming to the United States to accomplish their academic and career goals was going to require some sacrifices. Though they did not realize their graduate school experience was going to strip away some of their self esteem. Evive (2009) found that international Black students coped with racial discrimination by detaching themselves from the events, however participants in this study were not only effected by their race but also by their foreign status which was hard for them to disassociate themselves from due to visa and work restrictions.

Theme 2 - Visible/Invisible Graduate Student

One may define the term visible to mean someone/or something that is seen; however for my Afro-Caribbean participants I must extend the definition to include someone who is fully acknowledged as present in a work, class, or social setting as a equal contributor of the actions or conversations taking place as White individuals. While, the term invisible may be defined as someone/or something that is unseen. For the

participants in this study I must also extend the definition of the term invisible to include someone who is not fully acknowledged as present in a work, class, or social setting as an equal contributor of the actions or conversations taking place as White individuals. The combination of BFT and post-colonial theory used in this study counters the visible/invisible status of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending PWIs in the southeastern United States by moving them from the fringes of international and Black student issues to the center.

The theme visible/invisible graduate student describes the ways in which my participants discussed being treated like non equal-humans in their college setting. Mary, Hannah, and Naomi expressed that they were treated as invisible graduate workers. Mary explained she expected to feel like a person, rather than just an object in a setting just doing work. She expressed a desire to feel like she was seen as a human being. Hannah also described that a [professor] with whom she worked with on a project had a different, more friendly relationship with the other graduate assistants that were White. Hanassab (2006) found that international students often experienced discrimination from professors who were very insensitive and verbally abusive to foreign students. The levels of discrimination ranged from completely ignoring international presence in class, making offensive remarks about students' homelands, to extreme and blatant racism.

Smith (2015) examined that people of African decent are rendered invisible because of racist practices that systemically refuse to fully accept the existence of Black individuals. Gay (2004) argues that it is benign neglect for students of color to be denied opportunities to write and do research as TAs in graduate school. She also stated it is less likely for a graduate student of color to TA in a college of education during their first

year in comparison to their European counterparts. Naomi explained that getting a job in her field required her to have college level teaching experience, however she believed that professors in the college of education were keeping those jobs for white students that shared their worldviews. She stated that she had to openly voice her concerns at an open meeting before she was even considered for a TA position in her department.

Theme 3-Value Me and My Voice

The third theme, value me and my voice describes the need of equitable student interactions and multiple forms of knowledge to be extended in academics setting by instructors and White peers. Several of my participants described the lack of value placed on their presence and contributions in academic settings while attending a PWI in the southeastern United States. Esther recalls that most of her interactions in American classrooms have been traditional, however she was not equipped to engage in dialog with a professor who openly stated in class, “that the education system in Jamaica had not prepared its students.” Esther admitted it was a struggles getting use to a professor who would say what was on her mind with little regard of its impact on students. Mary: A white [female] professor, she said, "My brother was so mad about Obama becoming the president that he said, 'I do not have a president.'" There were just two of us black students in the class and I was so mad.

Participants discussed the effects of micro-aggressive behaviors from their classmates and professors while attending graduate school in the southeastern U.S. Mary explained that she experienced migraines throughout her coursework because of the toxic environment in which she endured at her PWI. Ann also reported that she visited a therapist several times during her first year in graduate school because of the micro-

aggressions she experienced. Jenkins (2015) argues that increased exposure to micro-aggressive behavior can cause racial battle fatigue (RBF) among people of color. The symptoms of RBF is subtle, stunning, cumulative, verbal and non-verbal insults layered with racism, sexism, elitism, and other subordination all of which parallel to experiences shared by the participants in this study.

Many international Black college students are not prepared or willing to challenge the discrimination they face in the United States, given their foreign cultural upbringing. Bonazzo and Wong (2007) study on international students studying in the Southeastern region of the United States found that professors were a source of discrimination for international students. International college students shared their experiences of being ignored in classes, being made fun of for their accents and their appearances (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007). Afro-Caribbean females in this study have been subjected to environments where they feel like invaders for raising issues that are counter to dominant western views. Ann stated that her comments were often overlooked in class, while her counterparts' statements were validated even when they shared similar viewpoints. Through the theoretical lens of BFT and Post-colonial theory non-privileged perspectives can be expanded in U.S. classrooms to include discussions of race, class, gender, and international issues. Subedi and Daza (2008) argue that it is important to go beyond dominant U.S. perceptions, to appreciate the non-White and third world contributions and opinions.

As a means of combating against feelings of being ignored, invisible, and dismissed by faculty in U. S. classrooms my participants sought out the support of caring females on campus. Patton (2009) argued that it is common for female graduate students

experience greater invisibility and dismissal from faculty than male students. Patton (2009) further asserts that it is important for female graduate students to have same-gender faculty with whom they could interact. My participants acknowledged the role that supportive [female] professors had on their graduate school success. Mary recalled seeking out an African American professor she had never even had a class with just to obtain a common ally on campus. Five out of the eight (8) participants in this study indicated that that had some form of interaction with a positive female professor during their graduate studies in the United States. One participant also mentioned having a positive white male professor during her graduate studies; he helped her get summer internships while attending a PWI in the southeastern United States. She stated that he even gave her a car to travel to a job site because he did not if she would be safe in that part of South Carolina because of her race.

Theme 4- Black, international, and female

Across all 8 interviews with my participants there was the common theme of being Black, international, and female. Participants discussed that the intersectionality of race, class, gender, and ethnicity shaped their experiences while attending a PWI in the southeastern U.S. Black international students have to learn the meaning of race in the United States upon arrival. They are often shocked by the level of racism that exists toward Blacks in the U.S. (Romanucci-Ross et al., 2006). Black international students and immigrants tend make their cultures known to avoid being labeled as American Blacks due to discrimination in the United States (Waters, 1990). I did not perceive this was the case with my participants, Mary constantly discussed the similarities between herself and U.S. born Blacks, and Deborah shared how she was involved in Black student

organizations on campus.

The international portion of the theme Black, international, and female is most evident in participants' discussion of accent, but is present when discussing visa status and the U.S. travel ban. In an excerpt from Hannah's interview she explains that her racial appearance and gender alone in the United States would subject her to being categorized as an African American woman, however once she speaks with an accent, people would know she's from another place. She discussed how speaking aloud in U.S. class settings initially made her uncomfortable because she did not want to be perceived as unintelligent in front of her peers. A few other participants also spoke of issues with their accents from fear of mispronunciations to losing their accents the longer they were in the United States. Many participants wanted to maintain their cultural identity while also accepting elements of their host country.

The female portion of the theme was weaved into participants' stories about dating, motherhood, and the importance of female education. Gender, like their racial status was always key identifiers for the participants in this study. The theoretical frameworks of BFT and Postcolonial theory are central to the theme Black, international, and female. Both BFT and Postcolonial theory place Black/former-colonized individuals at the center of the analysis. BFT and Postcolonial theory provide a lens into how race, class, and gender intersect to shape experiences on college campuses. Given the concept of intersectionality being a core tenet of BFT and Postcolonial theory they are ideal in addressing the lived experiences of Afro-Caribbean international women pursuing graduate degrees at PWIs in the U.S. It is necessary to provide a counter-perspective to the homogenous universal narrative about international students studying at U.S. colleges

and universities.

Theme 5-Support

Participants discussed the final theme support systems when talking about their families, friends, and church. Family members and community support serve as motivating agents for students of color as they navigate PWIs (Davis, 2007; Guiffrida, 2005). Guiffrida (2005) argues that supportive family members are vital to the success of high achieving Black college students. Afro-Caribbean and Black families that provide academic, emotional, and financial support enable students attending PWIs to be successful. Esther and several other participants discussed how their families particularly their mothers have continued to support their educational endeavors from undergraduate degrees to their doctorates.

Guiffrida (2005) further contends that friends who provide emotional support and could relate to the experiences of Afro-Caribbean female graduate students attending a PWI in the Southeastern United States could be viewed as assets. Ann and Hope both discussed how having friends from their home country was important to them, as a means of staying connected to home as well as discuss their academic journey. Ann also discussed that her friends from home made her experience in the United States less isolating during her trips to Georgia.

In addition to the support of family and friends, participants also discussed the role that their church communities were to their experiences attending a PWI in the southeastern United States. Deborah and Mary discussed that they spent a lot of time going to church while attending their PWIs. They discussed that their church communities assisted and supported them as navigated life in the United States. Mary

shared that church became the space where she felt happy, welcomed, and had a community. She also shared that church saved her and helped her cope during the low points of navigating graduate school in the United States. The support that participants discussed is consistent with the literature, Shorter-Gooden (2004) states that Black women rely on prayer and spirituality to make it through difficult times, and has been used when encountering issues of racism and sexism.

Implications of the Study

This study highlights some of the factors that influence the experiences Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending PWIs in the southeastern U.S. Participants in this study had a unique experience as they navigate higher education in a foreign country as Black international women. The data directly supports the challenges that participants encounter as international students in the United States, additional it also provides a lens to the nuances of race and gender in the U.S. The eight Afro-Caribbean females expressed the benefits of studying aboard in the United States; however, they noted the negative psychological effects they have experienced by studying aboard in a nation with a hegemonic racial/ethnic/gender hierarchy.

Though there are commonalities between international students and African American students in relation to Afro-Caribbean international students, there are differences based on how they may negotiate those experiences. It is important to share the experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female student experiences separate from both of those groups because neither is homogenous in their culture, worldviews, or behaviors. Barriteau (2002) states that Black women's experiences of race in the Caribbean differ from that of black women in North America. She further asserts that in

most Caribbean countries Black people are the majority population, therefore, there is a legacy of race rather than the U.S. version of daily racism. While these groups may encounter the same issues their interpretations of those experience could possibly be different based on their country of origins as well as their cultural awareness.

Limitations

This study was limited by several factors. First, all of the participants attended different PWIs in seven different states. If more participants attended the same university, one could determine if there was widespread institutional racism and xenophobia at a particular institution. Second, only participants who had previously studied in the U.S. for other degrees participated in the study. Newly arrived Afro-Caribbean international females attending graduate school in the Southeast may have interpreted micro-aggressive behaviors, racism and gender issues with different awareness. These limitations are likely to impact the findings and any application of these findings should be done with great care. Finally, despite my best efforts to be aware of my biases, they may have placed limitations on my analysis.

Recommendations

Further research to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of Afro-Caribbean female graduate students regarding their educational experiences in the United States is highly recommended. The following recommendations have been developed from the data collected as part of this research. Recommendations are being made in three categories: 1) Afro-Caribbean female graduate students, 2) Colleges and Universities, and 3) Further research. Based on the findings of this study when Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students study in the United States they should

seek out community/ and professional organizations within their host communities/countries. Secondly, if Afro- Caribbean international female graduate students studying in the United States experience any form of discrimination they should find or establish positive counterpaces (Solorzana, et al., 2000) within their campus community. While data suggests the number of women of color has grown on college campuses in the United States, it does not mean that these groups of women are able to adequately handle instances of racism and sexism (Zamani, 2003). Finally, when Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students come to the United States to study they should share their experiences through academic writing, to serve as a framework for other women from their home countries and to inform colleges and universities of diversities issues plaguing this population.

The second recommendation category for this study addresses colleges and universities in the United States that enroll Afro- Caribbean international female graduate students. Based of the finding of this study colleges and universities should implement/and require diversity training for staff and students each semester.

Secondly, colleges and universities need to integrate cultural/and global competency into their administrative staff and faculty hiring processes. Societal perceptions of Afro-Caribbean and women of color play a role in how staff and faculty perceive and support students. It is apparent that a lack of competency continues to enforce stereotypes and invisibility that is often experienced by Afro-Caribbean populations, women of color, and the international community. Third, all instructor/professors must validate and value the lived experiences students bring with them to the classroom. Incorporate globally diverse perspectives into curriculum

and create and maintain a respectful class environment. Fourth, colleges and universities need to create safe spaces for students to report discrimination without fear of backlash from the institutions.

The third recommendation category for this study addresses further research of the experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students and other women of color studying in the United States. The stories and experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students and other women of color in colleges in the United States must continue to be a priority for researchers, as their experiences are not homogenous in nature. As we work to counter narratives that inadequately represent their experiences, advancing the research agenda on Afro-Caribbean women and other women of color is vital to building institutional climates for diverse groups. The research agenda is also filling a void in the literature on Afro-Caribbean international women studying abroad, however contributions to this area will not only serve institutions but more importantly lead to better experiences for Afro-Caribbean women in college. It is important to expand this work to examine higher education experiences of Afro-Caribbean women in individual disciplines, such as STEM fields, human services, and education.

Conclusion

This qualitative inquiry was designed to examine the lived experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending PWIs in the southeastern U.S. The experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female students have often been homogenized in the literature as generalizable among international students or African American students. The eight women who participated in this study revealed the unique

outlook of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending PWIs in the southeastern U.S.

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Pseudonyms Name	Age at the time of interview	Home Country	Southeast Host State	Degree	Marital Status	Number of Children
Mary	39	Jamaica	SC	PhD	S	0
Hannah	39	Bahamas	NC	PhD	S	0
Deborah	36	Bahamas	SC	PhD	S	0
Faith	26	Jamaica	GA	MA	S	0
Naomi	38	Trinidad and Tobago	VA	PhD	D	1
Hope	40	Jamaica	MD/DC	PhD	S	0
Esther	36	Jamaica	FL	EdD	M	2
Ann	26	Jamaica	TN	Dual MA-PhD	S	

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Background/Rapport Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (Self-introduction) Please tell me a little bit about yourself? 2. What country are you from? 3. How long have you been studying in the United States? 4. How and why did you choose to study abroad in the U.S.? 5. Was there any specific person who influenced your college decision? Who he/she?
RQ 1: What are the campus-based experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United States?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Will you share your admission process with me. How long did it take? How did you obtain funding). 7. Tell me about your first semester as a graduate student in the U.S.? 8. How have more recent semesters compared to your first semester s a graduate student? 9. How and why did you choose your major? 10. What are your personal/ and professional goals at this time? 11. What kind of expectations did you have about your college experience prior to coming to the U.S.? 12. Do you think as a whole attending college in the U.S. was the right decision for you? (in what ways?)
RQ2: What are the academic experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students attending a predominately White colleges and universities in the southeastern United	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Tell me about the courses you have taken in your graduate program. What were your initial encounters in classroom environments with peers, professors, and acclimating

States?	<p>to U.S. teaching styles?</p> <p>14. What has been or was your overall experience in your classes?</p> <p>15. Which classes did you find the most challenging? Why do you think they are/were more challenging than others?</p> <p>16. Which classes did you find most comfortable? What made you feel comfortable in those classes?</p> <p>17. Describe your professor. How has your overall relationship with your professors or course instructors been?</p> <p>18. Tell me about a few professors with whom you have or had a positive relationship. (Ask probing questions to explore the context and intensity of the relationship)</p> <p>19. Tell me about a time during your graduate studies when you found it difficult to build a positive relationship with a professor. (Ask probing questions to explore the context and intensity of the relationship)</p> <p>20. Tell me about your classmates (any demographic information i.e. age, gender, race, or social economic status) How are/were their attitudes toward each other and toward you? Were there other students that looked like you or from your home country in your classes?</p> <p>21. Has your accent affected how you communicate in class/or with peers/or professors?</p> <p>22. When you have a question about coursework, who do/did you contact first and ask for help?</p>
RQ3: What unique factors have shaped Afro-Caribbean international female graduate students experiences while attending graduate school a predominately White colleges and universities in the	23. Tell me about your close friends on campus. Who are they (What is their major and any demographic information)? How did you get to know them?

southeastern United States?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">24. Tell me about how you spend time with your friends.25. Do/Did you study if so how frequently and where?26. Have you ever did project with your friends if so when? 27. Reflect and describe an experience (event) or experiences (events) in which race, gender, or international status have shaped your college experience in the U.S.?28. What have your experiences been like as a minority/international student in your major?29. Please tell me the biggest change that occurred since your arrival in the U.S. for College.30. What do you find is the easiest part of college life in the U.S.? What has gotten easier since your first semester?31. What do you find is the hardest part of college life in the U.S.? What has gotten easier since your first semester?32. How do you deal with those challenges? (discussed above)? 33. How do you process your emotions/ feelings associated with attending college in the U.S.?34. Who do you share the experiences of college with?35. When you have a challenging moment or in trouble, who do/did you contact and ask for help?36. How often do you communicate with loved ones or your support system?
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APPENDIX C: DATA ANALYSIS CHART

Primary Research Questions	Data Sources
<p>RQ1: What are the campus-based experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female college students attending a predominately White university in the southeastern United States?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcripts from audio-recorded individual interviews conducted with participants in person or via tele-video conferencing • Participants' written lived experiences descriptions • Researcher's reflexivity journal
<p>RQ2: What are the academic experiences of Afro-Caribbean international female college students attending a predominately White university in the southeastern United States?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcripts from audio-recorded individual interviews conducted with participants in person or via tele-video conferencing • Participants' written lived experiences descriptions • Researcher's reflexivity journal
<p>RQ3: What unique factors have shaped Afro-Caribbean international females' experiences college experience attending a predominately White university in the southeastern United States?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcripts from audio-recorded individual interviews conducted with participants in person or via tele-video conferencing • Participants' written lived experiences descriptions • Researcher's reflexivity journal • Transcripts from audio-recorded individual interviews conducted with participants in person or via tele-video conferencing • Researcher's reflexivity journal

APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT LETTER

Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Sheikia Talley-Matthews. I am a PhD candidate at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. I am writing in hopes of recruiting you for my research study. My research examines the college experiences of Afro-Caribbean international women studying at a predominately white institution in the southeastern United States.

The following eligibility criteria were selected for my participants:

- 1) Female, Afro-Caribbean, international graduate student
- 2) Attends/attended a predominately white institution in the southeastern region of the United States

Do you meet the selected criteria? If so, may I interview you? If you do agree to participate in this study, you will engage in a 60-90 minute interview, which will be recorded using a handheld audio recorder. The interview protocol questions are divided into sections (i.e., rapport questions, college experiences, and the closing). The interviews will conclude by offering participants a platform to express any additional comments or concerns. Different locations (e.g., UNCC College of Education, library, conference rooms, etc.) will be used to conduct the interviews, accommodating the schedules of all participants.

If you agree to an interview, I will need you to sign an informed consent form. I will email you a copy as well as bring a copy of this document to our scheduled interview. Please email (stalley4@uncc.edu) back specifying an interview date and time that works best with your schedule. I cannot thank you enough for assisting me in this matter, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Best,
Sheikia Talley Matthews

APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM



Department of Middle, Secondary and K12 Education
9201 University City Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001
t/ 704-687-8740

Informed ConsentStudy Purpose:

You have been invited to participate in a dissertation research study. The purpose of this study is to understand the college experiences of Afro-Caribbean international women attending a predominately White institution in the southeastern United States.

Investigator

This study is being conducted by Sheikia Talley Matthews, a Doctoral Candidate at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. The responsible faculty member associated with this study is Dr. Chance Lewis of the department of Middle, Secondary and K-12 Education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Description of Participation:

You are asked to participate in a study which includes a 60 to 90 minute interview, followed by a 10-20 minute lived experience description writing activity. The initial interview will follow a semi-structured interview protocol. The interview will be audio taped and then transcribed. Your name will not be included on the transcript or any written reports. This will help to make sure that your information will be protected. The particular steps to ensure data protection include maintaining all collected data on a password protected computer and storage device, which is only accessible by the investigator. Audio Data will be disposed of after one year.

In addition to the interview you will be asked to participate in a lived experience description writing activity. This portion of the data will not be completely confidential due to the use of email, however the researcher will only access email from a private password protected device.

At the completion of the interview and lived experience description you may be asked to participant in a short follow-up interview.

Length of Participation:

The entire duration of participation may last between 80-130 minutes, which will include a 60-90 minute interview, a 10-20 minute lived experience description and a possible 10-20 minute follow-up interview, if needed. Your participation in this project will begin on the date and time of your scheduled interview. If you decide to grant consent to participate, you will be one of approximately 8-10 participants in this study.

Risks and Benefits of Participation:

There is no risk associated with this study. There may be risks, which are currently unforeseeable. The benefits associated with participation in this study include strengthening and improving the educational policies and practices that effect Afro-Caribbean international women and all diverse populations attending colleges and universities in the U.S. and abroad.

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 in the study.

Confidentiality:

The data collected by the Investigator will be protected to the extent possible. Information shared through email is not confidential, however no participant will ever be mentioned by name in the reported results. Participants can end their participation at any time. Participants can choose not to respond to any question(s). Only the principal investigator will have access to the raw data. All gathered data will be stored on a protected storage device in a locked cabinet and only accessed on a password-protected computer.

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 (704-687-1871) if you have any questions about how you are treated as a study participant. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Principal Investigator :Sheikia Talley Matthews (stalley4@uncc.edu). Responsible Faculty: Chance Lewis, PhD (P: 704-743-4207; email: chance.lewis@uncc.edu).

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 study. 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)

Participant Signature

DATE

Investigator Signature

DATE

This form was approved for use on *Month, Day, Year* for a period of one (1) year.