



Chapter Title: Introduction

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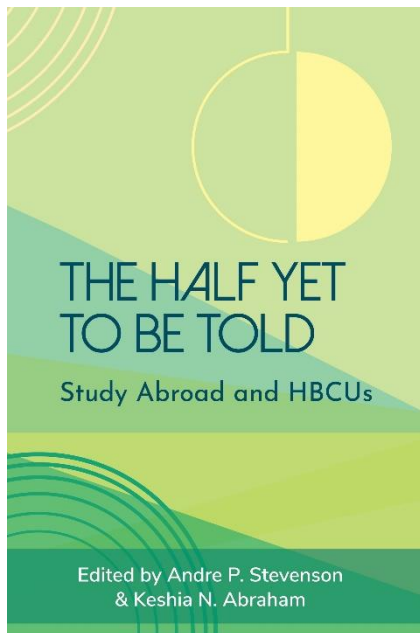
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Introduction

Andre P. Stevenson and Keshia N. Abraham

Many Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are engaged in study abroad and have been for decades. Like other institutions, study abroad at HBCUs offers a variety of options for traveling to different areas of the world for students, while seeking to advance toward obtaining a degree. HBCU students are also increasingly receiving scholarships to study abroad and faculty-led programs have also become options for students to gain such experiences (Clay, 2022; Warren, 2022; Stevenson et al., 2019). Annually, more HBCU students participate in internships abroad, as well. However, broader narratives regarding study abroad at these institutions often over-emphasize challenges and depict them from a deficit perspective (Brux & Fry, 2010; Redden, 2018). This edited volume seeks to highlight the extraordinary and innovative contributions of HBCUs to study abroad as a whole, from a nondeficit perspective, with special emphasis on historical perspectives of global education, empirical studies, opportunities for global engagement, stories from faculty, staff, and alumni, and how study abroad fosters a sense of belonging in the world.

History of Historically Black Colleges and Universities

The United States has long had a history of denying *access* to Black Americans. The phrase “Black Americans” is used loosely at this juncture of the Introduction, as enslaved Africans in America were not legally recognized as citizens until the latter part of the 20th century. To understand HBCUs from a historical context, one has to revisit the period of 1619–1865. This was the period of slavery in the United States, which included the brutal

dehumanization of Black people. A part of that dehumanization was the consistent denial of access to basic education. Access to formal education was illegal and punishable by death during this period. For an enslaved person to read or write, they are provided with access to information. Access to information would provide the ability to think. Providing the ability to think meant the ability to organize. The ability to organize could lead to uprisings. In 1739, an enslaved man named Jemmy led what is now known as the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina. As a result, South Carolina passed the Negro Act of 1740, whereby it became illegal for enslaved people to learn to write, assemble in groups, and earn money (Rasmussen, 2010). Shortly thereafter, many other states enacted similar laws.

Prior to 1861, educating Blacks was unlawful in most Southern states and discouraged in most Northern states (<https://hbcufirst.com/resources/hbcu-history-timeline>). As such, few schools to educate Black people were in existence. Cheyney University was established in 1837; University of the District of Columbia was established in 1851. Lincoln University (PA) was established in 1854. Wilberforce University was established in 1856. After the Civil War ended in 1865, HBCUs were founded to provide Black people with access to education.

The first HBCUs were established to provide education for the children of formerly enslaved people, as well as training for them to educate other Black people. They offered primary, secondary, and postsecondary education, as they were the only schools for most Blacks at the time. Most early established HBCUs were started by Blacks and philanthropists. In addition, the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the American Missionary Association were instrumental in their establishment. Later, the federal government, through the Freedman's Bureau, provided funding for additional institutions (Neal & Kremm, 1989).

Of course, these institutions were simply known as individual institutions whose primary mission was to assist with the education of formerly enslaved Blacks. However, the term "Historically Black College/University" (HBCU) was coined over by the language placed in the Higher Education Act of 1965, 100 years after the first institution was established. Through this legislation, we began to see increased federal funding for these institutions, though quite limited funding in comparison to non-HBCUs.

There are currently 101 HBCUs in the United States. They are located in 19 states, the District of Columbia, and the US Virgin Islands (<https://nces.ed.gov/>). Though originally founded to educate Black students, and it remains the primary mission of most, the HBCU composition of students has changed over the years. In 2020, 24% of students enrolled in HBCUs were

classified as non-Black (<https://nces.ed.gov/>). Historically, at a time when majoritized universities were limiting access to all students of color and some women, HBCUs demonstrated a sense of diversity and inclusion by providing access to non-Black students, faculty, and staff without labeling it as such.

Stereotyping Black Spaces - Deficits

Empirical evidence supports the success of HBCUs, particularly as it relates to the quality of graduates they produce, yet many stereotypes and negative attitudes associated with these institutions exist. Bonam et al. (2016) assert that physical spaces associated with Black Americans are themselves subject to stereotypes and that such negative stereotypes lead to negative appraisals of the value of spaces occupied by Blacks, as well as the implementation of policies that can affect them in many ways. Documented research in psychology and mass communications suggests that the transmission of racial biases by the news media can provide negative cross-group depictions that impact attitudes (Dixon & Linz, 2000; Fujioka, 1999; Weisbach et al., 2009). So, it is possible that one may not be familiar with HBCUs and have negative stereotypes about them, what their purpose is, what types of graduates they produce, or what their capabilities may be. So, it can be concluded that such stereotypes regarding HBCUs are related to a belief in social dominance and hierarchy and preference for the meritocracy principle.

Study Abroad and HBCUs - The Uniqueness of This Work

The main purpose of this volume is to add to the scholarship on Education Abroad and HBCUs while challenging deficit-based thinking regarding HBCUs and study abroad. As you will read throughout the chapters, HBCUs have historically and consistently been engaged in international education work for decades, going back at least 150 years. However, much of the existing literature remains antithetical and incomplete. Starting from a positive premise, turning the lens around to see these institutions and their education abroad capacity from their perspective, rated and ranked on their own institutional missions allows us to begin our conceptualization of an assets-based approach to understanding global engagement at HBCUs. As the chapters that follow will demonstrate the origin stories of the growth and development of a deliberate study abroad movement among HBCUs are tied to how freedom, agency, and community are conceptualized. To be fully realized, global education, specifically education abroad at HBCUs, has had

to include an acknowledgment of the unique circumstances and cultures of people of color in the world. This is an acknowledgment of the strengths-based approach to education provided by these institutions as well as an appreciation for the kinds of care and sense of safety through inclusion that these institutions have cultivated. Faculty-led and mission-based programs proliferate in our institutional histories and speak volumes about HBCU institutional culture, which has historically been a safe haven for people of all backgrounds unlike predominantly white institutions (PWIs) or traditionally white institutions (TWIs). With missions that hold safety and cultural uplift as sacred, prioritizing global education has had to include facing systemic inequities head on, recognizing how the systems we operate in may not have been designed for us and still building pathways to success that work with, not against who and how we are in the world. Thus, every education abroad program at each of these institutions is something to celebrate and offers something to learn from.

How Can This Work Be Used

There is so much to learn from HBCUs and how education abroad is conceptualized, cultivated, funded, counted, influenced, and sustained at these institutions. This volume presents opportunities to see the value of education abroad at HBCUs, reframing narratives of exclusion and demonstrating what more can be seen and cultivated when HBCUs are framed as having significant cultural assets. How is it that HBCUs who produce the majority of Black scholars, doctors, lawyers, social scientists, and artists create a culture of belonging that makes education abroad possible? What is it that other institutions stand to learn from what these institutions offer? How is dignity positioned as a cornerstone to education in a way that influences the success of Black participation in global learning?

This book challenges assumptions about how education abroad is conceptualized when a student's cultural identity is centered. By positioning people of African descent and our institutions as sites of knowledge, culture, and heritage, this book provides examples of global learning legacies and their impact. It brings HBCUs into the center of global learning discourse challenging common perceptions that credit PWIs and TWIs as having established the tradition of education abroad in the United States. Here we consider what it is to cultivate a culture of education abroad that presumes value in African diasporic identity and culture not as an add on but already in the center. As Toni Morrison has offered, it is often "inconceivable" to consider spaces where people of color "are already the mainstream." Our

book centers the history and experience of advising, course planning, faculty development, and program design where participants of color are the majority and their identities are at the center of their holistic education abroad experience.

This book can be used to help contextualize the value of HBCUs within US and international higher education systems and cross-institutional partnerships. It sheds light on the layers of internationalization that are a part of these institutional narratives, thus shaping how student mobility and international faculty, student, and staff engagement are read. The chapters in the first section include historical narratives and discuss a range of innovative initiatives that provide strategies for internationalization that could be utilized at other institution types, especially those desiring to provide holistic programs for their students. The second section includes innovative best practices in education abroad programming, and the third section includes personal reflection on experiential learning. Guidance is provided throughout on what inclusive learning communities of practice can be and what they can do, especially in terms of providing psychosocial support and leadership development for students, faculty, and staff.

Chapters in This Volume

The 17 chapters in this volume provide examples of the rich legacy and current traditions of study abroad at HBCUs. Some chapters provide historical – of study abroad at their respective universities, while others provide results from empirical studies, demonstrating effectiveness. Others provide personal accounts of their study abroad experiences, as well as alumni within various programs. They are organized with attention to institutional histories and to how they build on select themes.

Chapter 2, “Ties That Bind: Global Engagement, Exchanges, and Education Abroad Between HBCUs and Africa,” provides an analysis of the history of global education at HBCUs prior to de jure desegregation of US higher education in 1954. The author investigates the cultural and political values that informed the approaches to global education among HBCUs. The chapter is divided into three parts: an overview of study abroad strategies among HBCUs as well as the participation of African American students in global opportunities; a discussion regarding how the philosophy and cultural values of open access at HBCUs also enhanced the educational access and outcomes of other marginalized groups, specifically focusing on the experiences of early Black immigrants from the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa; and an examination of approaches to global and transnational partnerships,

and how a historical analysis of global engagement at HBCUs can inform critical approaches to global engagement.

In Chapter 3, “Telling the Lincoln Legacy of Study Abroad,” the authors discuss the history of global engagement within one of the oldest HBCUs in the United States. They address Lincoln’s intentional connections with Africa in the mid-1800s, which saw an increase in enrollment among African students well into the 1960s. They highlight that the first leaders of the newly independent nations of Nigeria and Ghana were graduates of Lincoln, as well as share information about other notable African alumni. Throughout the second part of the chapter, the authors discuss sustainability efforts during the 21st century, which included various partnerships and faculty-led programs.

Chapter 4, “Understanding the Growth, Assessment Methods, and Transformative Impact Study Abroad at Spelman College,” by ‘Dimeji Togunde and Rokhaya Fall presents an analysis of the practices that have fostered award winning growth in outbound student mobility and campus internationalization at Spelman College. Using both qualitative and quantitative data, authors Togunde and Fall provide a detailed history of the study abroad journey at this stellar Historically Black Women’s College, drawing out factors which have contributed to their global learning success, particularly within the past decade. They identify seven key factors which led to the extraordinary growth in study abroad participation and a well-evidenced approach to understanding what makes the study abroad experience transformational for Spelman women. This chapter generously ends with lessons to help grow study abroad participation at other institutions.

In Chapter 5, “Our Commitment to Study Abroad and Lessons Learned: The Advancement of Study Abroad at Maryland’s Preeminent Public Urban Research University,” the authors explore the importance of study abroad to the mission of the Morgan State University community. The authors highlight a variety of global education opportunities to engage both students and faculty through administered faculty-led and virtual exchange programming.

Chapter 6, “Developing a Viable, Vibrant Study Abroad Culture at a Rural, Low-Resource HBCU: MVSU, Oasis of the Mississippi Delta,” provides a discussion regarding Mississippi Valley State University’s (MSVU) Office of International Programs multipronged inclusive strategy used to increased study abroad capacity building and how it is contributing to a culture of study abroad at MVSU. The authors discuss a holistic approach involving students, faculty, staff, and administrators across campus, as well as the local community to provide uniquely immersive international experiences.

In Chapter 7, “Black History in the Making: How Study Abroad Imparts Self-Efficacy, Black Identity Development, and Career Exploration Within HBCU Students,” the authors detail how study abroad positively impacts Black students at HBCUs, specifically focusing on Prairie View A&M University and Howard University. The author uses student narratives and personal stories of international educators to reveal how study abroad imparts self-efficacy and racial identity development.

Chapter 8, “The Place Matters: A Case Study on How Short-Term Study Abroad Adds Measurable Change for Assessments in Preexisting Courses,” provides results from a case study where students from Savannah State University enrolled in journalism courses on a study abroad in Panama. The authors provide a mixed-methods analysis to understand how study abroad affects learning outcomes and how kinesthetic connections prior to travel enhance students’ learning experiences.

In Chapter 9, “Historically Black Colleges and Universities as Catalysts for Developing a Sense of Belonging in the Global Community: Perspectives From South Africa,” the authors present narratives of the trajectories and experiences of a former doctoral student and Fulbright Scholar at Clark Atlanta University and the contributions of a Howard University alumnus to global education and study abroad programs at HBCUs. The authors discuss potential contributions of HBCU alumni in fostering unique global education and study abroad experiences among HBCU students. The catalytic role of HBCUs in the realization of global citizenry among Black students in the United States is highlighted.

In Chapter 10, “Maximizing Global Opportunities: Fostering Cultural and Occupational Experiences for HBCU Students Who Study Abroad,” the author provides a literary analysis of best practices for HBCU students who study abroad to ensure maximum cultural and vocational benefits of their global learning experience. Using the Social Change Theory as a theoretical framework, the author seeks to highlight the benefit of study abroad in an effort to increase opportunities for employment for students.

In Chapter 11, “Academic Service Learning in Trinidad and Tobago: A Hidden Study Abroad Jewel” the author highlights information regarding how the use of a capstone initiative between Florida A&M University and Savannah State University led to the creation of a faculty-led program for students to study abroad in Trinidad and Tobago. Testimonials from students who studied abroad are also highlighted.

Chapter 12, “Cultural Humility: From Rural Halifax, Virginia to an International Quest to Serve : Follow the Process - A Personal Narrative,” highlights the journey of a recent alumna of Virginia State University (VSU) from

rural Halifax County, Virginia who was first introduced to study abroad by a VSU professor. The authors chronicle the alumna's experience from applying for their US passport to studying abroad in Ghana. The authors further discuss how the study abroad experience led to the alumna being accepted to serve as a volunteer with the Amizade Individual Volunteer Program in Bolivia and later with the Peace Corps in Eswatini (formerly Swaziland).

In Chapter 13, "Social Media and Its Impact on Black Student Engagement in Education Abroad," the authors introduce two social media-backed movements that focus on engaging, informing, and empowering students attending HBCUs to explore and maximize global learning experiences. The authors highlight #StudyAbroadSoBlack, Fulbright HBCU, and Fulbright Noir and the communities that exist for Black students to begin envisioning themselves participating in education abroad experiences. Issues related to Black identity, cultural awareness, the development of transferable job skills, and social justice are discussed.

Chapter 14, "Faculty Internationalization: The Impact of Faculty-Led Study Abroad Programs on Faculty at Spelman College," explores faculty roles in the delivery of general education requirements in international studies and world languages and mentoring/supporting students' international research. The authors highlight, through data, faculty's roles in developing faculty-led study abroad programs. The chapter demonstrates the pivotal role of faculty in contributing to Spelman's internationalization.

In Chapter 15, "A Rights-Based Approach to Study Abroad Through the HBCU Land-Grant Experience at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff," the author explores aspects of their life growing up in the heart of the Mississippi Delta and how they were influenced by the images, stories, and experiences of generations of activists who transformed the society. They then focus on how those experiences, including becoming a lawyer, led them to engage in global education, including leading Global Leadership Initiative at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

In Chapter 16, "Online Global Engagement and the Advancement of International Education at HBCUs," the authors highlight global engagement opportunities through a partnership with Soliya Connect. They provide results from data collected regarding students in the Department of Social Work at Bowie State University who participated in a virtual exchange program, as well as provide implications for HBCU students who may not choose to physically travel to a study abroad site.

In Chapter 17, LaNitra Berger's essay, "Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung (Processing the Past): Germany's Complex Role in Internationalizing HBCUs," utilizes a complex German expression to offer a thoughtful analysis of the

role that Germany, German scholars, and institutions played in the internationalization of HBCUs from the late 19th century through the 1960s. By focusing specifically on unusual relationships involving Germany, Tuskegee, Togo, Jewish refugee scholars, and nuanced cross-cultural collaborations, this essay is able to highlight the impact of faculty “bridge leaders” and “transformative intellectuals” in education abroad.

Language is powerful. Semantic shifts from deficit approaches regarding viewing Black students and students attending HBCUs can be shifted. We posit that the chapters within this volume can assist researchers, providers, and practitioners within international education spaces to move beyond labeling and comparing study abroad opportunities at HBCUs. These chapters are offered as a mechanism with which to transform “unfavorable” attitudes regarding HBCUs in general, understanding their historical context, particularly against the backdrop of a constant and consistent hostile society. The empirical studies within this volume offer clearly articulated data regarding the successes of study abroad opportunities for students. We also offer testimonials of alumni whose lives were transformed as a result of their experiences abroad. Overall, this volume can be used to celebrate the work of HBCUs in advancing international education. We hope it will help shift the discussion in a more positive direction.

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Chapter Title: Black History in the Making: How Studying Abroad Imparts Self-Efficacy, Black Identity Development, and Career Exploration Within HBCU Students

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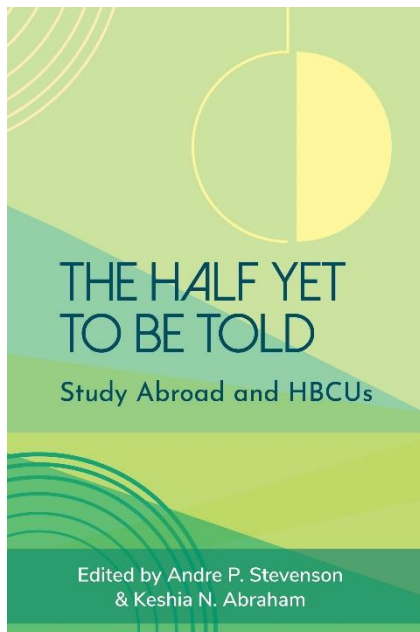
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7

Black History in the Making: How Studying Abroad Imparts Self-Efficacy, Black Identity Development, and Career Exploration Within HBCU Students

Stephanie Tilley, Ashleigh Brown-Grier, Marcus King and Shadana Chaney

Introduction

Studying abroad for college students grants exposure to other diverse perspectives, expands one's cultural competence, and allows the exchange of ideas. As a result, social barriers are questioned, critical thinking is enhanced, and sacred relationships are formed. Global engagement allows students to evaluate their ideals, personal philosophy, life's purpose, and world view as new information is presented and integrated. This enlightening experience allows college students to grow and expand within themselves because they have the opportunity to examine who they are and who they aspire to be. It is through this environment of exploration that college students develop a deeper understanding of their passions, guiding values, and professional trajectory. Self-exploration and human connection are the essence of global engagement; these powerful tenets enhance students' global consciousness,

cultural agility, and internal capacity. For these reasons and more, studying abroad is deemed a high-impact practice that contributes significantly to the growth and development of college students, specifically Black students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Stebbleton et al., 2013).

As a diverse community that significantly contributes to the identity and narrative of higher education institutions, HBCU and Black students are growing visibility within the field of education abroad. During 2018–2019, 6.4% of Black students engaged in studying abroad (Institute of International Education, 2020). Within an HBCU context, 0.5% of the overall student population participated in study abroad programs in 2015 and 3.4% of the undergraduate student population engaged in global programs (Redden, 2018). The reality of these statistics signifies the importance of representation within global experiences and affirms the work that HBCUs and supporting allies are doing to strengthen study abroad engagement for Black, HBCU students. There is a direct correlation between studying abroad and student self-efficacy, self-actualization, career exploration, and Black identity development. Black students who study abroad have a stronger belief in who they are, their capabilities, possess more confidence in their ability to succeed and perform in a career that is most suitable for them (Lee & Green, 2016). This reality is crucial for Black HBCU students because it liberates them from traditional thought processes and external influences and allows them to identify their purpose in an environment that cultivates freedom and fulfillment.

This chapter details how studying abroad positively impacts Black students at HBCUs, focusing specifically on Prairie View A&M University and Howard University. The chapter uses statistical data, student narratives, and the personal stories of international educators to reveal how studying abroad imparts self-efficacy, one's career trajectory in positive way, and racial identity development within Black HBCU students. The chapter authors are past recipients of global education programs and/or current study abroad advisors of Black and HBCU students and have witnessed and experienced elements of self-efficacy, self-actualization, clearer professional purpose, and reverence for one's Black identity within their students, peers, and themselves as a result of global travel.

Theoretical Frameworks

Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory defines self-efficacy as one's self-belief and confidence in their ability to succeed and exert control over their performance, behavior, and social environment. Diego-Lazaro et al. (2020)

find that there is a direct correlation between studying abroad and student self-efficacy; the evidence of this relationship implies that students have a stronger belief in their capabilities and possess more confidence in their ability to flourish. Studying abroad causes students to navigate an unfamiliar setting. As a result, valuable skillsets such as communication, adaptability, resourcefulness, and others are further developed (Harder et al., 2015). Such skillsets are essential and highly valued within professional settings and increase employability (Harder et al., 2015). The internal process that students experience while studying abroad allows them to evolve in deeper and more profound ways, which simultaneously strengthens their confidence to prosper in the unknown and become more environmentally agile. As a result, the self-efficacy of Black students at HBCUs is nurtured because of their belief in their capacity to achieve. Such developments inform their purpose and career identity. Studying abroad positively impacts participants' ability to reveal and align their inner desires to their professional trajectory; there is heightened consciousness of their goals and interests as it relates to future career and educational pursuits (Jon et al., 2018). Research shows that 75% of students who study abroad strengthened skillsets that influence their career trajectory and 86% of students who participated in global engagement impacted their subsequent educational experiences (Anonymous, 2022). The weight of these statistics implies the transformational power of global engagement.

Exploring how self-efficacy is developed in Black HBCU students as a result of study abroad participation demonstrates how international opportunities allow them to create a foundation of self and contribute to their self-actualization journey. Self-actualization is the highest form of psychological development within Maslow's hierarchy of needs where one realizes and/or fulfills their full potential (Bulut, 2018). Self-actualization is a delicate, complex, and powerful inward journey that diminishes deficit thinking and fosters self-empowerment, which is crucial for Black HBCU student growth and success. This is especially important for Black students within the U.S. American context, as blackness is often subject to criticism, racial stereotypes, social prejudices, and historically diminished by privileged communities. The polarized environment within the United States has created collective feelings of oppression, suffocation, othering, and trauma within the Black community, which has caused overt and covert damage in how we perceive our reality in U.S. American society.

However, research shows that a majority of the Black American community have found relief in global settings (Wood, 2016). Whether for temporary travel or extended living, there has been a long-standing history

of Black Americans experiencing better treatment outside the United States. Historically, Black Americans have galvanized abroad dating back to the 19th century; renowned legends such as Josephine Baker, Richard Wright, and Nina Simone found refuge overseas (Wood, 2016). While describing his experience as a Black American, James Baldwin famously stated, “To be a negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time.” His profound words still ring true regarding the reality and plight of Black Americans. For these reasons and more, coupled with heritage seeking and targeted social efforts such as Ghana’s Year of the Return, the Black American expat community continues to grow (Levius, 2020). Such realities imply the social sanctuary Black Americans encounter abroad regarding belonging and identity.

William Cross’s (1991) Nigrescence model examines how African Americans come to understand their identity. In this essay, the writer defines Black Americans as those born in the United States and are descendants of slaves brought to U.S. American lands forcibly in the slave trade. The African American experience, historical narrative, and identity are rooted in slavery and systematic racism specific to the United States. The five stages of the Nigrescence model are pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment (Cross, 1991). Although this model was used to examine African Americans’ identity development in the United States, it is a perfect model to understand Black identity development in studying abroad. The positive notions of studying abroad, specifically in an African and diasporic context, have caused Black American students to experience a deeper sense of self, shared ancestral roots, and a stronger, historical understanding of Black mobility and geographies (Lee & Green, 2016).

When Black American students feel welcomed and appreciated while studying abroad in their host countries, feelings of mattering instead of marginality emerge. Schlossberg’s Theory of Mattering and Marginality focuses on student development and their experiences in times of transition and change (Schlossberg, 1989). These polarized concepts make sense of how students are received and/or perceived; mattering indicates one’s sense of belonging and appreciation, whereas marginality defines feelings of exclusion and insignificance (Schlossberg, 1989). Mattering and marginality have an impact on student’s self-efficacy and identity, especially within the context of studying abroad. The underpinnings of these models will illuminate throughout personal accounts of the authors and the student narratives to capture the impact studying abroad had on their self-efficacy, career trajectory, and/or identity development.

Personal Narrative by Stephanie Tilley: Self-Efficacy

Stephanie Tilley served as a program coordinator in The Office of International Programs at Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU) for over four years; within her role, she provides study abroad advising and programing, international fellowship advising, and planning for faculty-led programs. She is a proud Ph.D. scholar in the Educational Leadership Higher Education at Prairie View A&M University and a Graduate Research Assistant in the Minority Achievement, Creativity, and High Ability (MACH III) Center at PVAMU; she is committed to advancing academia and scholarly research in the following areas: the impact of global experiences on minority students, globalization efforts at HBCUs, and contemporary circumstances in African diaspora communities. Stephanie has worked abroad in various higher education capacities in Greece and South Africa; however, her foundation as a global educator stemmed from her study abroad experiences during her undergraduate years.

Studying abroad revived Stephanie in so many ways; it was one of the most powerful and awakening moments that truly directed how she saw herself and her place in this world. She comes from very humble beginnings and an unconventional household; drug addiction, alcoholism, and neglect were the realities of her childhood until she moved to live with and be raised by her Auntie and Uncle who were financially limited, but rich in mindset, character, and love. Due to her adverse background, her Auntie and Uncle raised her to have a growth mindset and to be excellent in everything that she did and to live a colorful life that was constructed by her dreams and not by her reality.

As a recipient of the most prominent study abroad scholarship, the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, and an awardee of one of the most influential and powerful programs that supports minority academic achievement, The Jackie Robinson Foundation Scholarship Program, Stephanie was able to study abroad for a semester in San Jose, Costa Rica, and to participate in a service trip to Belize. Prior to studying abroad, she carried a lot of shame, anger, and resentment about her personal background. However, having the opportunity to study abroad made her realize how fortunate she was and introduced her to various levels of social privileges that she carries. As a result, she was freed of the deficit thinking that she consciously and unconsciously held; it helped her to understand, acknowledge, and accept the beauty in her story and to have pride in who she is and where she comes from. Most importantly, it gave her a deeper appreciation of cultural diversity and an insatiable hunger for human

connection through global travel; as a result, she was introduced to a more liberated and exploratory side of herself, which fueled her decision to pursue a career as an international educator.

Stephanie sees a lot of who she is in her Black HBCU students; their resilience, cultural curiosity, hunger for more, enthusiasm to learn, desire for a change in environment, and so much more are the very emotions that drove her to study abroad. Black HBCU students have rich backgrounds that expand and significantly contribute to the U.S. American narrative. Studying abroad is a mutual exchange and invaluable opportunity for both Black HBCU students and international communities; it allows our students to grow, learn, and reimagine themselves in varied ways while also exposing international communities to the vibrant, complex, and unique lived experiences of the Black American community.

Student Narratives From Prairie View A&M University: Self-Efficacy

The majority of the Black student study abroad alumni at Prairie View A&M University informally and formally expressed a heightened consciousness of themselves and their place in the world. As a result, their studying abroad experiences evoked self-discovery and a stronger belief in their purpose. A first-generation Gilman scholar who studied abroad in Italy for a summer shared, "I honestly do not know who I would be today if I was not granted the opportunity of a lifetime. I learned so much during my time abroad and would not trade the experience for anything." In sharing how studying abroad shaped her self-perception, she stated, "I came back to America stronger, more sure of myself, and a heightened desire to see the world and impact it for the better." Comparably, a male identified student with an adverse and rich background who studied abroad in Chile for a summer stated, "Studying abroad allowed me to unlearn and relearn what life is truly about. It allowed me to never doubt and second guess my purpose. Studying abroad allowed for me to see my true self and was one of the greatest experiences of my life." Similarly, a male student who studied abroad in London for a summer described his experience as, "I learned how to be a person, just who I am freely and not the identities connected to me. I just existed; I felt real. Abroad I can just be me; it's total freedom. I grew in my individuality and confidence." All of these student testimonials expressed feelings of liberation, growth, and a stronger sense of self as a result of partaking in their first international experience. Through their study abroad experiences, they were able to connect deeper to their potential and discover their intrinsic value as a unique and productive individual. Study abroad is a powerful experience

that transforms the perception and development of these students and many other Black HBCU students. Therefore, it is imperative that there are continuous and supportive efforts to garner study abroad experiences for Black HBCU students so they are exposed to a global context and have a broader view of their self-perception (Covington, 2017).

Student Narratives From Prairie View A&M University: Career Exploration & Readiness

Through conversation and feedback from the Black students at Prairie View A&M University, majority of the students' experiences were life changing and impactful; as a result, they were filled with wanderlust and were open to any opportunity to go abroad again. A first-generation college student who studied abroad in London, England, for a summer shared, "My trip to London changed my vision and helped me to stop limiting my thinking. I believe it was meant for me to go so that I may have a better outlook on what he could do given his background." The student studied international marketing and diversity. As a Black man from a small town in Texas, both his discipline and his new environment abroad were intriguing for him to explore as it exposed him to diversity of thought and community. The student believed the primary gain from his trip was faith. According to him, "He learned that no matter how hard things are, you can easily devote time and effort to getting where you want to go in life." Settling for some can be an option; however, through the student's trip to London, he understood the power of exposure, discomfort, and openness to connection. Strangely to say, abroad he no longer felt like a Black man from Texas, but instead he felt like a liberated man doing what he wanted and pursuing a life that he desired.

Such testimonies create fulfilling careers for international education leaders working at HBCUs. As HBCU study abroad educators and/or alumni, the chapter authors are reminded of the power and necessity of their work. According to the U.S. Census and State Department data (2017), 42% of Americans were passport holders; of that number, 7% of African Americans held passports. This percentage of African American passport holders indicates that as international leaders at HBCUs, we must enforce the change we want to see. Prairie View A&M University has been committed to leading the charge since 2017 and has annually provided over 300 complimentary passports. If more HBCUs collaborated and launched a passport initiative to offer free passports to Black HBCU students, it could strengthen students' access to go abroad. "Of all the books in the world, the best stories are found between the pages of a passport." – Anonymous.

In the past decade, PVAMU has had consistent growth in students studying abroad on short-term faculty-led trips, external summer, and semester programs. Between 2010 and 2019, the number of students studying abroad annually rose from 24 to 124, a 416% increase. Of these students who studied abroad, one of the most compelling career path examples is about a graduate student who participated in a short-term faculty-led program in Ghana. A year after graduating with her master's degree in School Counseling and Guidance Services, Marcus was excited to receive a call from her inquiring about resources that would help in her new role as study abroad coordinator at another HBCU. She noted that her 2-week trip to Ghana was "life changing" and had such an impact that it influenced her decision to pursue her new role in international education.

In another case, an undergraduate business marketing major interned abroad in London, England, the summer leading up to his sophomore year. He worked with a startup company doing marketing and sales, gaining direct experience in his field of study. Career fairs and internships are competitive by nature; therefore, it is necessary to arm students with the work experience to market themselves on all professional platforms, such as their resumes, elevator pitches, and interviews. However, the challenge is companies are often unwilling to offer an opportunity to someone who does not have work experience. As a result, study abroad providers offer the ideal solution for students to get their foot in the door. Providers use their vast networks to match students' interests and aspirations with employers around the globe. It is important to note these internships are typically unpaid and there is a cost associated with the matchmaking service to the students. After all, expenses such as transportation, lodging, and meals still remain. As a result, students are encouraged to pursue internal and external scholarship opportunities, in addition to saving and fundraising for study abroad. Students receiving 6-credit hours during the internship are eligible to use financial aid. Ultimately, the return on investment is worth it, and the associated courses the student takes while interning prepare them for leadership in the globally interdependent and culturally diverse workplaces of today.

After interning abroad in London, our aforementioned business marketing major landed internships with IBM and Google in subsequent summers. The student described, "On a professional level, my internship abroad allowed me to better understand professional culture on an international level which has made me more marketable. Study abroad provided me with the hunger and desire to pursue international business projects in the future at whatever company I choose to work at." When advising students and parents

about study abroad, a top-selling point focuses on career paths such as this. The entire purpose for which many pursue higher education is to gain the knowledge and skills to become more marketable and obtain work to increase their wages. Studying and interning abroad allows students to experience a varying business and economic system in another country while leveraging their experience for future job opportunities.

At a PVAMU passport fair, President Ruth Simmons addressed students with the message, “When you are International, you are very special in the workforce. You are going to get more opportunities in the workforce; you’re going to be promoted faster and you’re going to be given a much greater variety of opportunities if you are International.” She continued to explain that she does not hire anybody without looking at their resume to notice if they have been outside their own country or culture. Employer surveys indicate that she is not alone. In a 2018 Employability and Study Abroad survey of more than 1,000 employers, nearly one-third (29.6%) reported considering whether a student has studied abroad when hiring graduates and nearly a quarter (23.3%) of participants said they are more likely to hire a recent graduate that has lived or traveled abroad over another candidate with equal academic qualifications (Hostelworld, 2018).

Students going on to pursue graduate degrees also report the impact of their study abroad experience as pivotal in their application and interview process. One PVAMU student reported during a Medical School Interview that it seemed the 8 weeks he spent abroad at the University of Nicosia studying health sciences was all his interviewers wanted to discuss. He later received multiple acceptance offers and went on to study podiatry. In another example, a PVAMU international student decided to study abroad again and interned with the Uganda Women’s Network (UWONET) for 2 months in their monitoring and evaluation department. His focus as an intern was to investigate the impact of the organization’s educational and career development activities on youth in rural communities. The student explained he was exposed to multiple real-life social, economic, and political situations, which were pivotal to his quest and motivation to pursue his doctoral studies in educational leadership. When asked about future goals, he stated, “My goal is to be more competent and knowledgeable to contribute to youth development globally.” The impact of studying and interning abroad is unique for every individual. However, the common theme that persists among students at Prairie View A&M University is that the experience has opened doors and paved the way for opportunities that may not have existed without it.

Career Exploration & Personal Narrative of Education Abroad Advisors Marcus King and Shadana Chaney

The saying goes, “Love what you do, and you’ll never have to work a day in your life.” Reading between the lines in this quote points to the passion employees must-have for the work they do to maintain happiness in their careers. Marcus King, an international program coordinator at Prairie View A&M University, says, “If I could give my younger self, or a young person one piece of advice, it would be, follow your passion.” In 2016, Marcus made the career transition from working as a mechanical engineer in the oil and gas industry to a full-time social entrepreneur and founder of a nonprofit organization. Although Prairie View A&M University did not have a formal study abroad office and Marcus did not have the opportunity to study abroad in his undergraduate years between 2006 and 2011, he was still fortunate to visit countries like Cuba and Jamaica on his own time. These visits, along with his other travels, opened his eyes to the power of experiencing a new culture and gaining a new perspective of the world. Recognizing how impactful these experiences were for him, he found purpose in helping sponsor passports for students to study abroad through his nonprofit, The Hardly Home Initiative. For Marcus, work in international education was much more intriguing and fulfilling than his engineering job. Helping students study abroad, particularly at HBCUs like his alma mater PVAMU, has been most rewarding for Marcus. When he first learned about international education, he was surprised that it was a career path available for him to pursue. However, once realizing that it was, he immediately envisioned it as a career that he could see himself devoting his life to. Still, one problem remained, at the time, he had no formal study abroad experience. Even though he had identified this as his passion and had relatively extensive experience traveling abroad, planning group trips, and a host of skills and knowledge developed due to being an entrepreneur, it was not enough to warrant a job offer in international education. Still, he went on to achieve his goal of helping sponsor more than 100 passports, which led to opportunities to network throughout the field and get involved with organizations like NAFSA: The Association for International Educators, Diversity Abroad, and The Institute of International Education (IIE) to build his resume. Later in 2018, a job opportunity became available when PVAMU was awarded a Title III grant to internationalize its campus. That January, Marcus accepted the offer in PVAMU’s International Programs Office, which has fast tracked his international education career through professional development opportunities, including training programs such as NAFSA Academy and additional workshops and conference attendance. Additionally, Marcus has been fortunate to lead students on programs in Australia and

China while assisting students and faculty with other opportunities. Marcus' story is just one example of how travel has influenced his career path as an HBCU student. Although preferred qualifications exist for working in international education, to increase student mobility among HBCU students, we must consider the unique and nontraditional pathways to becoming an international education professional who can help achieve this goal.

Shadana Chaney was an education abroad advisor at Prairie View A&M University for several years. She has a bachelor's degree in psychology from Prairie View A&M and a master's degree in public administration from Texas Southern University, both HBCUs. During her time as an undergraduate, she studied abroad in Ghana, and in graduate school, she studied abroad in Tanzania and Granada, Spain. The culmination of her experiences made her triple study abroad alumni and birthed her love for exploration and discovery. Shadana had such a transformative experience studying abroad, she felt the need to return to her undergraduate alma mater, Prairie View A&M University, to help other students of color go abroad to gain a greater understanding of the world.

Within this section, Shadana uses her story to explore how international education creates a greater opportunity for Black students at HBCUs to gain a sense of self-identity and self-exploration outside their perception. As a child, Shadana was always curious about global issues, the cultural norms of others around the world, and people's well-being in her neighborhood. As a member of an underserved community, she did not have the privilege of traveling and exploring the globe; however, her mother strongly believed in the importance of education for her family through access to private school education and weekly trips to the library.

At the age of 5, Shadana began traveling through reading; books were her passport to other worlds and perspectives until her sophomore year of college when she had the privilege of studying abroad in Ghana, West Africa, where it would be her first-time abroad. Visiting Africa as a Black American woman was the most empowering thing she had ever done. It gave her the liberation that she longed for but did not know she needed. During her time abroad, she was able to break all the negative stereotypes she inherited living in the United States about people of native African descent. Her study abroad program allowed her to witness the joy and vibrant culture of the Ghanaian people. She observed that Ghanaians were happy, well-dressed, loved to dance, loved to cook, and, most importantly, loved one another. For the first time in her life, she felt proud about putting the African before the American in her ethnicity. The people in Ghana embraced Shadana like their long-lost sister and a family member who lived abroad. After she departed Ghana, she

knew it would not be her last time abroad or the last time she stepped foot on the continent of Africa.

As a result of the life-changing experience abroad, her way of learning shifted from reading books to exploring the world in person. Since her very first trip abroad, she has now explored more than 12 countries, with two additional studies abroad trips to Tanzania, East Africa, and Granada, Spain, where she lived for 3 months. Shadana journeys abroad prepared her for any jobs of her choosing. As a result of her experiences, she was able to easily adapt to any environment and relate to more cultures and ethnic groups outside her own. According to Shadana Chaney, “A person must first journey on their own to a foreign land for self-exploration, then find a way to support others who are disadvantaged do the same.”

That journey can come in the form of serving at an HBCU in a study abroad office. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2020), Black women are the most educated group in the United States percentage-wise. African Americans who choose to attend HBCUs have meaningful and rich experiences. According to Gallup, Black students experience a better social, community, and physical well-being than Black graduates from non-Black institutions (Seymour & Ray, 2015). About 55% of Black HBCU graduates said they “strongly agreed” that their college or university “prepared them well for life outside of college,” compared to less than 30% of non-HBCU Black graduates. More than half of HBCU graduates reported “thriving in their purpose and well-being,” compared to 43% of Black graduates from non-HBCUs (Seymour & Ray, 2015).

Knowing that Black students thrive in an HBCU setting should incentivize HBCU administration to prioritize and support studying abroad. In Shadana’s experience working at Prairie View, she discovered that many students were not aware of the easy access to studying abroad and university resources. Therefore, awareness and preparation are vital; preparing more African Americans to explore a life outside their norms benefits them holistically. In contrast, the hardships and stereotypes that people of color face within the United States are vast; therefore, finding ways to combat those hardships through career readiness by going abroad is crucial. Serving as an advisor and helping Black students go abroad is advantageous in many ways. The beneficial outcomes that students gain are as follows:

1. Expand employment opportunities.

- Companies are more than likely to show interests in candidates who have studied abroad due to the skillsets gained and/or strengthened on their resume (Harder et al., 2015).

2. Learn technical skills that are career related.
 - Some students go abroad for internships in their related fields of study. It allows the student to gain exposure and use the skills they have gained to practice with a future employer.
3. Increase understanding of the world in society.
 - Departing from an HBCU, students will see that the world is more than Black and white. Preparation for cultural appreciation puts them a step ahead in their career readiness process.

To prepare students to travel overseas, global educators need to build relationships with their students to help them overcome their fears or misconceptions of going overseas. By establishing genuine rapport with students develops trust and strengthens the students' interests in going beyond their comfort zone to grow stronger as a global citizen. Furthermore, studying abroad contributes to Black HBCU students' racial identity development and understanding of power, privilege, and equity.

Black Identity Development & Personal Narrative of Howard Student Ashleigh Brown-Grier

Ashleigh Brown-Grier is a doctor of philosophy student in the Higher Education Leadership and Policy Studies program at Howard University. Her area of research focuses on internationalization at HBCUs, including international students, international exchange programs, and diversity and inclusion in international education. Ashleigh is the founder of Fulbright HBCU social media platform and international HBCU xchange (iHBCUx) and an alumni ambassador for the Fulbright U.S. Student Program. She has attended three HBCUs—Talladega College, Morgan State University, Howard University—and the University of Pennsylvania. Her passion for international education stems from her experiences abroad as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) in Malaysia. Within this section, Ashleigh uses her personal experience to detail how global education contributes to the identity development of Black HBCU students.

Historically, white students, specifically white women, lead representation in global engagement and study abroad opportunities. The dominant representation of whiteness in study abroad often emphasizes the voices and experiences of white people. For example, flyers, marketing, social media, and websites often depict white students. Such experiences indicate the importance of diverse representation in such materials and study abroad experiences.

While sitting in a class at a predominantly white institution (PWI) in the eastern part of the United States, a guest speaker made a generalized statement about American travelers, “Americans do not have negative experiences when traveling abroad.” This statement did not take into consideration the role race plays for travelers. However, the guest speaker based his comment on his personal experiences. Traveling abroad with ease is not an “American” phenomenon that every American can benefit from when factoring in race or gender. However, in the age of Black Lives Matter, more literature on social justice, increased focus on diversity, and the willingness to support underrepresented students in international education and literature from minoritized voices have emerged and become more accessible.

Black students make up 6.4% of students who studied abroad in the 2018–2019 academic (Open Doors Report, 2020). In comparison, the percentage of Black student participation has slowly increased since 2000–2001. During the 2019–2020 academic year, Black students saw a slight increase in study abroad participation (Institute of International Education, 2021). The role HBCUs play within international education is crucial. According to the Open Doors Report (2019), Black students make up the largest percentage of students, based on race, who study abroad from HBCUs. Six percent were Hispanic or Latino, 2% were white, 2% were Multiracial, and less than 1% was Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, or Alaska Native. In comparison, 6% of Black students enrolled at Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) and 7% of Black students enrolled at Asian American, Native Alaskan, and Pacific Islander-serving institutions (AANAPSI) participated in study abroad during the 2017–2018 academic year (Open Doors Report, 2019). Nationally, roughly 6% of Black students studied abroad.

As aforementioned, William Cross’s (1991) Nigrescence model is an ideal model to understand Black identity development in studying abroad. Ashleigh will apply this model to share her international education experience. In 2017, Ashleigh was awarded a Fulbright ETA to Malaysia. One major concern she had before her departure was how she, a Black female American, would be accepted into her Malaysian community. She also worried about navigating life in a country without her family and close friends. Upon arrival in Malaysia, Ashleigh quickly made friends with three other Black ETAs. This group and those relationships would prove beneficial to the four of them throughout their year in Malaysia.

Cross (1991) explains the pre-encounter phase as assimilating to white culture and de-emphasizing or downplaying your Black identity. The pre-encounter phase happened to Ashleigh during her first 2 weeks of Fulbright orientation. She grappled with being true to her Black identity or assimilating to

white Americanness (just about 80% of her ETA cohort was white). Ashleigh intentionally chose to be authentically Black.

The second stage in Cross's (1991) model is the encounter and event that forces one to acknowledge the impact of racism and structural racism and realize that one cannot be white. For many Black people living or studying abroad, our skin color and other parts of our identity such as our hair texture set us apart. As such, Black people must deal with whatever, positive or negative, comes our way. For example, when Ashleigh first met her mentor teacher, she immediately noticed how standoffish and aloof her mentor teacher was. The mentor teacher missed several days of orientation, and when she showed up, she seemed nervous to be around Ashleigh. Toward the end of her Fulbright grant, her mentor teacher (with whom she built a close bond) admitted when she first met Ashleigh, "she prayed to God and asked why he gave her the Black ETA." This racial encounter stuck with Ashleigh because although her mentor teacher had only met a handful of Black people, it is assumed that her perception of Black people was heavily influenced by westernized television and stereotypes.

Another example of the encounter stage was the locals always acknowledging white people as "beautiful" while Ashleigh, a Black or other darker skinned people, were not deemed attractive. However, self-affirmations, confidence, and relationships with Black friends were essential for keeping positive self-confidence and a healthy self-image. In contrast, Black encounter experiences are not just seen within the host community, but from Americans from other non-Black racial backgrounds. Often not mentioned are the microaggressions or blatant racism received from white American colleagues—those who are supposed to be a part of the support group—often leaving African Americans to grapple with racial encounters alone. Although Ashleigh is American, she is a Black American, and her life experiences, international experiences, and racial encounters are vastly different from those of her white counterparts.

Immersion/Emersion is the "simultaneous desire to surround racial identity and the active avidness of whiteness; actively seeks out opportunities to explore aspects of one's history and culture and support from peers from same racial identity." While in Southeast Asia, Ashleigh traveled with some white colleagues to Cambodia. It was her first international trip while living in Malaysia. Ashleigh's white counterparts did not travel in groups (traveled as individuals), did not check in regularly with each other, and did not book hostel (Ashleigh had never heard of before) rooms together. Ashleigh found herself sleeping in a room with 12 strangers who traumatized her. As a Black American, we know the importance of traveling in groups, choosing safe lodging, and ensuring we stay in contact with each other to ensure our safety

and well-being. Growing up Black in America, we naturally develop measures of safety which are heightened while traveling abroad. Needless to say, after those experiences, Ashleigh only traveled with her Black friends. Traveling with her Black friends allowed them to talk about their Black experiences living in Malaysia, discuss their racial encounters, embrace our Black identity without the fear of judgment, and be in a supportive Black space. All of these proved essential to Ashleigh and her friends completing their grant year.

Internalization is the fourth stage of the Nigrescence model. Internalization is being secure in one's blackness, unapologetically Black, and the willingness to establish meaningful relationships with white allies (Cross, 1991). As Ashleigh became more comfortable in her unapologetically Black identity, she felt more comfortable speaking about her blackness and Black experiences with white cohort members. One of her white friends, Sadie, made an effort to travel with Ashleigh and her friends to Vietnam and Thailand. While visiting a beach in Thailand, a woman came up to us and immediately pointed to Sadie and screamed, "beautiful." At the same time, touching her skin and sadly saying, ugly. The lady was darker skinned, which is deemed ugly in Southeast Asia. Sadie immediately responded, "your skin is beautiful, too," and joined my Black friends saying, "all skin is beautiful, dark skin is beautiful." When the lady walked off, Beth asked if her response was appropriate as she did not want to offend anyone. On another occasion, Sadie supported Ashleigh in a heated conversation about Black women being treated differently by doctors than white people. Sarah, a white colleague, told Ashleigh she was wrong about the Henrietta Lacks and Tuskegee experiments' stories. It was not until Sadie corrected Sarah, who confirmed what Ashleigh said, that she believed the issues Black people face within the U.S. health care system.

The final stage of Cross's (1991) Nigrescence model is internalization-commitment, which is when one has found a way to translate one's sense of blackness into a plan of action or commitment to the concerns of Black people. During the beginning of her grant year, Ashleigh noticed a considerable disparity in the number of HBCU and Black students selected in her Fulbright cohort. Ashleigh desired to create a platform that focused on increasing HBCU and Black student knowledge about and participation in the Fulbright program. In February 2020, Ashleigh launched Fulbright HBCU to do just that. The platform highlights the international experiences of current Fulbrighters and alumni. Fulbright HBCU has expanded to conduct outreach and recruitment to study abroad offices at HBCUs and has been at the forefront of HBCU outreach and recruitment conversations with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the IIE. Through serious and

honest conversations about her racial encounters, the Fulbright HBCU team has encouraged countless HBCU and Black students to apply for Fulbright grants.

Although Ashleigh experienced racial encounters, it did not take away from her overall positive experience teaching in Malaysia and traveling throughout Southeast Asia. She understood how her international experience helped her build her Black identity, learn to embrace, and understand other cultures while simultaneously pouring in her students. Black students need to hear the experiences of other Black people who have studied abroad so they know what to expect and how to navigate the challenges of being Black abroad.

Another aspect of Black identity development is heritage seeking. Heritage seeking is defined as selecting a particular country to study abroad based on family background, religious, national, cultural, or ethnic (Szekely, 1998). In a study conducted by Carroll (1996), a significant number of Black students pursued study abroad in countries that reflected their heritage and cultural background. Morgan et al. (2002) discovered that Black women who seek to study in Africa as their experiences aid in the development of an ideology of the shared values, cultural traditions, and racial/ethnic identities (p. 350). Additionally, study abroad courses allow African American women to reclaim their heritage and explore their racial identity (Morgan et al., 2002, p. 350). While heritage seeking may play a role in African Americans studying abroad, the top destinations for HBCU students are Spain, Colombia, South Africa, China, and Ghana (Open Doors Report, 2019). However, in comparison to the national average for institution type in study abroad, HBCUs are the only institution type overly represented in Columbia, South Africa, and Ghana, which are all locations that have sizable Afro/Black communities. Such opportunities are crucial to Black student development and identity.

Conclusion

Studying abroad creates an environment of exploration that waters the fertile seeds of Black HBCU students. Through global engagement, Black HBCU students are able to intricately and powerfully craft their worldview of others, their purpose, and, most importantly, themselves. It is through this emancipated experience that they undergo internal transformations that give them space to unapologetically explore who they are while reimagining the social constructions that have traditionally limited them. This journey of self-discovery radically supports the complexity, beauty, and variance of Black HBCU students and their deserved pursuit of happiness

and fulfillment. As stated earlier, studying abroad directly enhances the self-building process, racial identity journey, and career trajectory of our students; therefore, it is the responsibility of HBCUs to continuously prioritize, resource, and support cross-cultural engagement efforts. Doing so strengthens a purpose-driven education for our students and, most importantly, furthers their internal, intellectual, and professional capacity. As a result, our students eradicate deficit thinking and understand who they are in a way that powerfully maximizes their potential and contributions to the world. Therefore, our Black HBCU students nurture the hidden or malnourished aspects of their identity while discovering the lived experiences of other cultural communities. For these reasons and more, studying abroad cultivates a holistic evolutionary journey within our Black HBCU students that allows them to boldly walk in their purpose and make history that is unique to them and is beneficial to society. Furthermore, studying abroad contributes to Black HBCU students' racial identity development and understanding of power, privilege, and equity.

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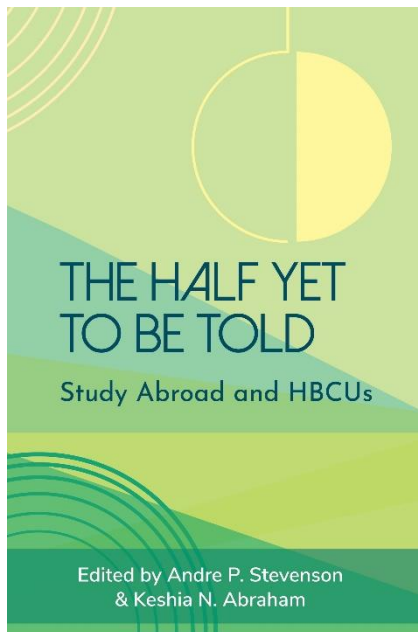
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Online Global Engagement and the Advancement of International Education at HBCUs

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Makeba T. Green, Mentha Hynes-Wilson and Krystal Lopez**

Introduction

Limited access to international programs does not stop the growing demand for students to be capable of cross-border communication and active engagement with global issues (Algood et al., 2018). The initiative to create global citizens can bring a distinctive perspective to international support for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) campus communities and increase the institutional focus on global education. Since HBCUs play an essential role in the education of students of color, increasing their presence on an international stage can prepare them for a global economy and give them a greater understanding of social and political issues.

While Bowie State University (BSU) was nudged into virtual programming because of limited physical travel opportunities, it turned out to be a valuable innovation for the social work department to expand global engagement opportunities and encourage intercultural competencies among students. The primary focus of this chapter is to highlight global

engagement opportunities through BSU's virtual exchange. It highlights how the Department of Social Work developed a virtual exchange program model that provides students with opportunities to engage with universities abroad and offer similar experiences students would have in a traditional study abroad program. The chapter compares traditional study abroad with the environment and resources needed to support learning and development through a virtual exchange platform. The chapter also briefly analyzes the impact on global student engagement and the role that a virtual exchange model can play in the larger globalization of HBCU campuses.

Bowie State University: Historical Background

BSU is a member of the University System of Maryland Schools located in Bowie, Maryland. The University is a public HBCU and one of the 10 oldest in the country. In 2019, 71% of the students were returning (meaning not first year). Seventy percent of students were traditionally college aged (between 18 and 22), and 83% were enrolled full time. In 2019, the accessibility and awareness of global education were limited on the campus. However, the Department of Social Work had 10 students to participate in international education during that year.

Eighty-three percent of undergraduate students were full time in 2016–2019. It was confirmed that the University continued to have a high number of traditional-aged college students. The numbers were a clear indication that there was an opportunity to introduce more traditional-aged students to global education, including international online programs.

Moreover, in 2019, 89% of undergraduate students at BSU were documented as in-state students, which meant they had Maryland residency for at least a year. For many of these students, this means they had not lived or traveled for long periods outside the state of Maryland, not to mention engaging in an international setting. On average, 49% of the undergraduate students at Bowie between 2016 and 2019 received Pell grants (given for demonstrated financial need). In addition, 31% of those same students at BSU disclosed they were the first generation in their family to attend college. For students with high financial need and limited support systems at home, these experiences can influence their willingness to participate in traditional study abroad programs involving international mobility. The BSU colleagues in the Department of Social Work saw an opportunity to change how study abroad is perceived and enhance students' intercultural opportunities through virtual exchange.

Global Learning Visits Program

The Global Learning Visits Program (GLVP) in BSU Department of Social Work was created to provide a global education experience for social work majors. In 2014, the department first initiated global learning as a short-term travel program (7–21 days). Faculty were pleased at the number of students who studied abroad increased from six students during the first year to 12 students in 2015. The department organized and led two study abroad programs a year, with an average of seven students traveling each time.

The department recognized that many students had a desire to engage in international education but were unable to do so because of many factors. For example, in 2016, the department was composed of 43% (68 students) of traditional-aged students (ages 20–22). Sixty of the social work majors received Pell Grants and 37% were first generation. Less than 20% of students engaged in physical travel that year, including study abroad or student exchange programs. The department saw the virtual exchange as a way to engage students seeking to increase their sensitivity to cultural differences and learn more about international social work, thereby hoping to increase their interest in traveling and studying abroad at a later date (Algood et al., 2018).

GLVP's goals include cultivating intercultural competencies and generating new knowledge about global issues. Upon completing an international learning visit, students were expected to interpret aspects of other cultures and countries with greater accuracy and acquire a more meaningful sense of global interconnectedness (Stevenson et al., 2019). This activity was encouraged through the 2019–2024 strategic plan for BSU that included developing and implementing programs and services that promoted access to the underserved populations on campus (bowiestate.edu/strategicplan). Over the past 7 years, the underserved population has come to include low-income, first-generation students, individuals with disabilities, and students majoring in disciplines that do not offer targeted programs. One of the goals of GLVP is to support the university strategic plan by enhancing opportunities for underserved students through study aboard and experiential learning activities.

After 2 years of traditional study abroad experiences, GLVP began looking for new and innovative ways to advance the program and incorporate global learning opportunities for students unable to travel (Shannon-Ramsey & Stevenson, 2018). The social work faculty members attended a symposium hosted by the U.S. Department of Education. They met and connected with the Soliya Connect Program's co-founder. The presentation explained how virtual exchange would benefit the students and viewed ways students can

begin transcending culturally imposed boundaries. Inspired by the presentation and understanding that not all students would physically travel, the department implemented the Soliya Connect Program, named it the Virtual Connection, and incorporated it as an online component of the GLVP (Shannon-Ramsey & Stevenson, 2018). The faculty found that this Virtual Connection modality increased students' interest in traveling abroad. To date, 30% of Virtual Connection participants who have traveled on global learning programs sponsored by the department.

Soliya Connect Program

Soliya Connect is a structured 8-week program that ensures that, as relationships develop, participants explore difficult conversations and gain a critical awareness of their peers and themselves (O'Dowd, 2017). Soliya's customized video-conferencing application operates as a weekly engagement that allows students to discuss social challenges, values, social norms, identity, culture, and stereotypes. The groups are randomly assigned, so students from the same institution are not usually in the same group. Soliya allows students to work with their group members and explore topics that exist in their communities. The exchanges rest mainly with the learners, who are expected to provide feedback on their partners' content and create joint recommendation papers outlining ways to address a chosen issue (O'Dowd, 2017). Soliya provides participants with procedures for technical support and registration. They are equipped with an information packet that breaks down the weekly activities and the topics. The topics are designed to allow students to understand alternate perspectives and the sources of their views. The engagement approach helps students analyze what they see as the most pressing global challenges and social issues in the world. Throughout the program, students are being evaluated on their communication abilities. The group facilitator assesses student engagement with peer and group discussions. Based on the full assessment results at the end of the 8-week program, students may receive a recommendation from Soliya to engage in training and become facilitators to future Soliya Connect programs.

Virtual Connection

Virtual Connection was created as a module of a social work course. The module grew into a larger infrastructure provided by the Social Work Department in the form of an international component in a credit-bearing course (SOWK – Social Work in Communities). The course's Virtual Connection component

gives students hands-on experience talking, learning, and discussing social issues with their peers worldwide. The students worked on social issues with their counterparts through a joint research project. Projects included many topics such as discrimination in gender, social movements, police brutality, stereotypes, and differences between cultures. These discussions and research motivated students to seek out civic avenues in their communities or begin an active dialogue with their field agencies.

Virtual Connections is a bridge between learning opportunities that reach across borders and improve cultural knowledge without physical travel. The virtual exchange program aims to provide some of the same options as traditional study abroad programs, such as preparation sessions and orientation. Virtual Connection gives students Soliya information packets and an orientation to prepare them to explore identity issues and share cultural information in the same format. Students are required to have access to a computer to log in. They also need a headset and a video camera. If required, the department arranges access to a computer lab for students who do not own the necessary equipment or have access to it at home. Virtual sessions take place between Monday and Thursday from 7:00 am to 2:00 pm (it may vary based on time zones). This schedule allows students who have work or caregiver responsibilities to participate without scheduling conflicts. The course meeting time is also designed not to overlap with any student's online session.

In February 2016, the program began the partnership with Soliya for its first cohort. Four of the social work students became members of the inaugural group. The small group quickly grew, and by the following spring semester, 16 students were signed up to participate (Shannon-Ramsey & Stevenson, 2018). For the next 2 years, each semester would have a cohort of social work students averaging 10 participants. The first year, the students spent 8 weeks primarily engaging with students from Jesuits Worldwide Learning-Iraq, American University of Sharjah, and American University of Kuwait. Students reported that it was initially difficult engaging with peers from diverse backgrounds and views. The students had limited exposure to culture and students in the Middle East prior to the start of the program.

By the end of the 8 weeks, students reported they enjoyed the experience and appreciated being heard and respected in their small groups. For example, one of the female students in the first cohort was in a group with primarily males from countries in the Middle East. Some of their views of women was a culture shock for her. She discussed her concerns with faculty and her BSU peers to develop strategies for assertions without being disrespectful to others in her group. It was exciting to learn that her facilitator rated her engagement and communication extremely high by the end of the

virtual exchange. The student had learned to develop her communication skills and cross-cultural awareness to interpret situations and information while being an empathetic and diplomatic group member. In the first year of the program, a participant expressed, “the topics we were given to discuss in the class were touchy and opened the door for disagreement, arguments, and difficult decisions, but the group was filled with very mature people. We could discuss religion, gender, politics, and many other topics that can be very hard to talk about when there are so many different opinions around” (Anonymous, December 5, 2016).

While participating in the Virtual Connection, students evaluated their ability to process constructive cross-cultural communication and articulate ideas and points of view during in-person discussions and self-reporting during the weekly check-ins and program progress reports from Soliya. This method provides a faster turnaround of the student’s assessment. It provides the department with a method to address issues and concerns in real time instead of waiting until the program has ended. The facilitators (Soliya staff) are encouraged to tailor their approach with the groups based on the students’ learning styles in the group. In 2017–2018, over 50% of the BSU participants assessed at a high level (score ranged from low to high) the ability to practice constructive cross-cultural communication. Forty percent of the participants scored at an average level in their ability to engage with their peers and group discussions. The group facilitator rated the students with prior international experience higher in communication skills based on their openness to intercultural communication and willingness to approach new topics and issues in dialogue discussions.

Financial Viability

Study abroad has expenses that include everything from passport fees to travel insurance. BSU has found an avenue to grow internationalization for its students with a low price tag. The department signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Soliya to address university fees and the cost per participant. BSU was the first HBCU to participate with the Soliya Connect Program. Therefore, the department was a pilot program, and neither university nor the students incurred any cost. However, the department was responsible for ensuring students had lab access, headsets, and computer cameras. Any student who did not have computer equipment was given access through the department. Since the student’s engagement is course based, the student’s financial aid is applied to the cost of this course. Overall, the cost is low in comparison to physical travel. Students do not have expenses

such as a passport, travel insurance, or airline flights. However, there is still the potential for a wealth of knowledge, individual growth, and experience for students.

Research Question and Methodology

To gauge if Virtual Connections increased students' interest in international exposure, the following research question was examined:

RQ: What were the benefits of the Virtual Connect Program toward increasing students' intercultural experiences?

A study of the virtual exchange experience of students was conducted to learn more about the student's perspectives regarding intercultural experiences related to the Virtual Connect Program. The study included a mixed-methods approach, which included surveys, interviews, and reflection papers. The study was designed to collect data about students' perceptions and feedback on intercultural awareness, and communication skills. In this context, the purpose of using a survey questionnaire was to reach students across several classifications to collect data through closed- and open-ended questions.

Survey

The questionnaire was administered through Survey Monkey. It consisted of a total of 25 items designed to receive feedback about participants in the areas related to:

1. Demographics (age, classification, ethnicity, etc.)
2. Intercultural competency
3. Virtual exchange experience
4. Interest or plans in future study abroad

Using elements from *The Sage Handbook of Cultural Competence* (Deardorff, 2009), we developed assessment measures to evaluate intercultural competency related to the skills, knowledge, and attitudes when functioning in other cultures. We created questions that were designed to be cultural neutral because of the diverse background of participants and discussion topics. The questionnaire covered how students viewed the world from other perspectives (skills) and grasped global issues and trends (knowledge). In addition, students self-reported their values of other cultures and how well they viewed the difference in culture and communication styles as a

learning opportunity with their peers (attitudes). The questionnaire included a mix of closed questions using the five-point Likert scale (e.g., “How effective was the program in helping you improve your cultural awareness?”), (e.g., “Do you have prior virtual exchange experience?”), and open-ended free-text answers (e.g., “How did participation in the program influence your college experience?”). Questionnaire data were collated and analyzed using spreadsheets. Responses to open-ended questions were clustered for meaning around emerging themes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants to follow up on their answers to the questionnaire.

Interviews

The purpose of the interviews was to collect a more detailed narrative about participants’ responses in the questionnaire to deeper understand their experiences and opinions about the virtual exchange. There were no barriers to student participation in these interviews since they were conducted on campus. For students who were only on campus for class, arrangements were made to conduct interviews over the phone. The interviews lasted between 30 and 50 minutes. These interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Questions focused on two categories: (1) confirming questionnaire answers with closed-ended questions and (2) expanding questionnaire answers with questions like “Can you tell me more about your answer on how your virtual exchange experiences helped improve your intercultural communication.” Six months after the interview, participants were asked via e-mail about their participation in additional global educational programming. The participants were also asked to submit a reflection paper at the end of the program that provided additional feedback on their experience with the virtual exchange.

Reflection Papers

All participants were asked to complete a reflection paper at the end of their virtual exchange experience. There were no set requirements on the length of the paper. Three faculty members analyzed the reflection papers for qualitative content. The responses were categorized according to two preestablished questions that ask them to reflect on their experience of engaging in cross-cultural communication and showcase the most important lessons learnt during the program. Two consistent themes were identified within the reflection papers that encompassed group dynamics and personal insight gained throughout the program. Themes were tracked by the number of

reflection papers in which the theme was discussed and the total number of references to the theme in all the papers. Students expressed how impactful it was to understand diverse cultures. One student expressed that, "It was impactful when the Muslim students talked about how the world viewed them as bad people. It was eye-opening to hear from them that they feel unsafe because of such hatred. This Soliya program created an exuberant experience that I will always take with me" (Anonymous, December 7, 2018).

Results

The Department of Social Work conducted a program assessment through surveys, interviews, and reflection papers from the participants of the Virtual Connection. The results were collected from 65 student participants. The assessments provided a more holistic picture of the student's virtual exchange experience. The demographic information showed that 9.24% identified as males. The remainder of the participants identified as women, with 60% being sophomores and juniors. In addition, of the 26 seniors who participated the program, there were 15 who were planning to graduate within the next 6 months. Several of these participants joined the program because they saw it as their last opportunity to participate in international education at the undergraduate level. Even though the study involved students at different levels of their academic journey, specific findings repeatedly appeared across the data.

The first of these findings is that student surveys showed that 92.3% of the participants had not engaged in virtual exchange before Virtual Connection. The remaining participants indicated that they had been involved in virtual exchange outside the university. Ninety-three percent of the participants from the survey reported that the program was effective in helping to improve their cultural awareness and intercultural communication. The participants elaborated on how awareness and skills were improved during their interviews. Most of the responses centered around participants learning from someone else's experience, listening to the culture of other countries, and having in-depth discussions on issues of race, religion, and political factors. The participants also reported that intercultural communication was improved by asking questions if they did not understand the context of the dialogue and analyzing their personal biases before engaging in the group discussions.

A second common finding is that 63% of the participants who engaged in Virtual Connection developed cultural knowledge during their virtual exchange. The knowledge included cultural information about the

peer's culture itself or the countries international policies and practices. Participants also reported learning factual information about many topics and social issues, including immigration, gender roles, and the different national reactions to global issues such as domestic violence, child abuse, and mental health.

The surveys reported high levels of student satisfaction with the program. Ninety percent of the participants shared they would highly recommend the program to their friends and classmates. In some cases, the one-on-one interviews revealed that participants often maintained the relationships after the Virtual Connections had ended. However, a small number of participants (10%) shared that the program was too long (8 weeks) and that there was a limited number of program participants from specific countries they were interested in knowing more about as reasons they would not recommend the program.

The survey results also revealed that 95.38% indicated that global education through virtual exchange substantially impacted their college experience. Over 50% of the first academic year cohort (2016–2017) shared that their civic knowledge increased, or it at least gave them a reason to reflect on the level and intensity of their engagement. In addition, 38.46% of the students engaged in Virtual Connection went on to a study abroad or global learning program within a year of participation. Unfortunately, the university did not have a consistent study abroad or virtual exchange infrastructure before 2019; therefore, we were unable to compare participation rates of all students on the campus pre-Virtual Connection.

The personal interviews affirmed much of what was provided in the surveys. For example, 87% of the responses from the interviews agreed that the program helped them understand more about their identity in respect to engaging with others. Furthermore, they reported that their identity is connected to their worldview and how others engage with them. Sixty-one percent of the participants elaborated on having certain aspects of their identity only present in specific settings, such as school, work, or home. The Virtual Connection put them in an environment where they sometimes questioned why they held certain beliefs and assumptions. A small portion of the participants (15%) indicated that they did not question their beliefs or assumptions during the program. Still, they might feel uncertain during physical travel if they live and function in an unfamiliar environment. On the other hand, another 10% felt comfortable being around individuals different from themselves and thought they would do well if they physically traveled.

In addition, the interviews also supported the findings in the survey that participants improved their cultural competency. Eighty-three percent of the

participants reported that they gained more of a worldview on specific issues that included mental health and education. While 20% felt they already had a worldview from prior experiences and the social work courses. They did explain in the interview that the Virtual Connections was the first time they practiced the skills since engaging with the content in the classroom. The data also reported that 68% of the participants improved their grasp on global issues and trends. Participants shared in the reflection paper that the virtual exchange gave them new knowledge about global issues and expanded their perception of social work practice. Participants also described learning about differences and similarities in social work issues and interventions.

Perhaps more significant of the study was the reflection papers where the participants could explain their experience engaging in cross-cultural communication in their dialogue groups. First, each participant was required to work in small groups to build their comfort and familiarity with each other. Then, participants could make personal connections by spending time in pairs and practicing some essential tools for constructive communication, such as listening and asking questions. The feedback from these exercises was shared in the reflection papers. Over 89% of the participants reported learning to have an open conversation with their peers during the program. Ninety-one percent of the participants shared that it was a challenge, in the beginning, to address controversial issues with persons of different backgrounds or even find a comfort level in initiating discussions with their peers. However, almost all of those same participants reported improving strategies for engaging in dialogue. The participants also shared learning more about themselves through the virtual exchange experience (i.e., personal biases, confidence building, and the ability to self-disclose).

The data extrapolated from the participant's reflection papers pointed to certain conclusions. While all students benefited from being engaged, some students benefit more from certain activities than others. Twenty percent of the students described feeling gratitude for the opportunity to participate in Virtual Connections. They felt a sense of pride and wanted to make their country proud by being insightful and open to others' experiences and views. These participants took the time to read more about social and political issues before each session. Twenty-five percent of the participants felt like they had taken a journey to a foreign land by hearing some of their peers describe what they loved about their communities and countries. Listening to the other group members motivated some of them to get their passports and research potential global learning programs.

It is worth noting that this study's findings are similar in its findings to the internal surveys conducted by Soliya of all its participants. In 2017, Soliya

shared in ongoing dialogue that over 80% of the students agreed that the program had improved their cross-cultural communication skills and that it played a significant role in reducing fear and hate of others in their community because of the Soliya Connect Program.

The participants also describe how the program increased intercultural experiences as a part of their formal and informal education. For example, one former participant shared that she was “not able to travel as much as I would like to, so this was a good way to meet and at least talk to people from the countries I would like to visit someday such as Italy and Morocco” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 4, 2016). The first group of students demonstrated an increase in personal and social responsibilities. These students expressed that the Virtual Connections helped them recognize how they could be more socially responsible in their global community. This was demonstrated in the student’s mindfulness of how their actions could affect society. For example, one student encouraged the social work club to join her in an online campaign for women of domestic violence. Another student encouraged and successfully helped 39 members of her community gain a passport. Two students who later participated in global learning conducted service-learning projects in South Africa.

The participants also used their reflection papers as a way to describe their group work. For example, a former participant shared in her reflection paper, “I loved my group, and the facilitator was very insightful and helpful. Knowing that other countries have the same problems that American citizens face today was very interesting. Lastly, thank you for the experience” (Anonymous, personal communication, May 6, 2016). Another of our participants from 2017 indicated that he found Soliya as a “great experience to talk about things in the world and personal problems, which an individual would receive a different perspective, unbiased response, and advise. I would participate again and recommend to anyone interested” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 6, 2017).

Limitations of This Work

This program provides an alternative to immersing students in formalized international learning opportunities. The virtual experience provided them with the opportunities to expand global engagement. However, the research question is biased toward the benefits and does not address the potential limitations or disadvantages students may experience in virtual settings. It would be important to also investigate the disadvantages for these learners as to find ways to improve virtual learning experiences for students.

Implications for Virtual Exchange at HBCUs

The study suggests that Virtual Connection at BSU can impact students' intercultural competencies related to online dialogue and communication. The students gained an understanding that their participation in the virtual exchange program was the beginning of a lifelong process of self-awareness and viewing the world from others' perspectives. The Virtual Connections participants reported their experience influenced their social work education by broadening their definition of diversity, increasing awareness of social issues, and integrating intercultural competency skills into interaction with others. Having virtual exchange embedded in the curriculum allowed students to be aware of complex issues related to various populations and learn more about global resources and opportunities. In addition, students were more likely to participate in in-person study abroad after Virtual Connections.

The virtual exchange program at BSU is an example of how students can develop the same cross-cultural skills experienced by those who participate in traditional study abroad. As an educational avenue for those with limited resources, HBCUs can use the virtual exchange to leverage the opportunity for underserved students. HBCUs play a key role in providing more access to higher education for first-generation Black students than other institutions. They successfully create nurturing environments that lead to degree attainment and are important drivers of social mobility. For example, nearly 70% of students at HBCUs attain at least middle-class incomes (The Hunt Institute, 2021). Therefore, expanding the relevance of global education through the virtual exchange would continue to provide academic strength and a mentoring legacy practiced by many HBCUs. In addition, HBCUs can potentially use the virtual exchange to offer students of color a way to increase racial identity and assist them in understanding the world and society around them. Moreover, it can be an integral component in helping Black students develop global awareness and practical communication skills. All of which will be needed by HBCUs to build a comprehensive career pipeline that allows students to be more competitive in the current job market.

The lack of access to traditional study abroad only increases online international engagement to offer students intercultural experiences that enhance their critical thinking skills and communication styles from the privacy of their computers. In addition, HBCUs can easily incorporate virtual exchange into the curriculum, classroom, and campus community to globalize their students. These skills are seen as important in the work environment and necessary to help HBCUs continue to have a competitive edge in the academic development of their students. Using what we know about

online engagement and the known benefits, we can begin to help HBCUs teach with a global lens that will help prepare students to work with people from other countries and in diverse cultural contexts. HBCUs can advance their learning outcomes through the virtual exchange to increase personal and social responsibility, communication, and cross-cultural management skills for students of color.

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