Research Article

Black Student Experiences with Study Abroad Marketing and Recruitment

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Abstract

Research has shown that Black students are not participating in study abroad at the same rates as their White peers. This participation gap is concerning given that study abroad is a high-impact experience with discernable benefits for students who participate; study abroad is linked to increased institutional engagement, self-esteem, student success, and higher starting salaries for students once they enter the workforce. While scholars have identified finances, family and faculty support, and program limitations as barriers to minority student participation in study abroad, research surrounding how Black students perceive and interpret study abroad marketing and recruitment was absent from the literature. This qualitative study explored how Black undergraduate students at predominantly White four-year higher education institutions described their experiences with study abroad marketing and recruitment. The study incorporated a document analysis of publicly available study abroad marketing materials alongside sixteen semi-structured interviews with self-identified Black undergraduate students. The results from the document analysis showed that institutions take a varied approach to study abroad marketing and that some institutions use imagery that could be described as colonialist, voyeuristic, or patronizing in nature. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Black student perceptions of and attitudes towards study abroad marketing varied based on the information and imagery in the materials. When institutions incorporated problematic imagery

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that portrayed the host culture in a paternalistic fashion, Black students described their experience with those materials negatively. In contrast, when marketing materials showed hosts in active positions of teaching and authority, Black students described their experience with the materials positively. Black students actively looked for representation in photos and materials and preferred materials that signaled inclusion through imagery and program design. Finally, when brochures seemed inauthentic (because they gave vague or inflated financial information, tokenized Black students and culture, or endorsed the program in a way that seemed overinflated), students were put-off. Overall, the study adds Black student narratives to the discourse of study abroad marketing and the findings provide valuable insight for higher education administrators seeking to improve inclusivity in study abroad.

Abstract in Spanish

Investigaciones anteriores han determinado que los estudiantes con ascendencia africana no están participando en programas de estudios extranjeros en las mismas cantidades que aquellos de raza caucásica. Esta discrepancia es preocupante, dado que el estudio en el extranjero es una experiencia importante con beneficios distinguibles para los participantes. Investigaciones anteriores demuestran que aquellos estudiantes que estudian en el extranjero participan más en el sistema de educación superior, tienen una autoestima más alta, y ganan salarios más altos cuando entran en la fuerza laboral. Se ha identificado que algunos obstáculos a los que los estudiantes de minoría se enfrentan en relación con la participación en estudios en el extranjero son la falta de recursos financieros, apoyo familiar y académico, y deficiencias en los propios programas. Sin embargo, estos análisis omiten una examinación de la manera en que los estudiantes con ascendencia africana perciben e interpretan la promoción de estos programas. El presente análisis cualitativo explora cómo estos estudiantes, sobre todo aquellos que cursan estudios en universidades de matrícula predominantemente blanca, describen sus experiencias con la promoción de programas de estudios en el extranjero. El presente estudio incorpora varios documentos públicos de promoción relacionada con el estudio en el extranjero junto a dieciséis entrevistas con estudiantes universitarios autoidentificados como afro-americanos. Los resultados demuestran la variedad de maneras que las instituciones de estudio superior utilizan para promocionar estos programas, algunas de las cuales, incluso, pudiendo ser consideradas como colonialistas, voyeristas, o condescendientes. La percepción de los estudiantes afro-americanos sobre los estudios en el extranjero demostró ser variada en base a la información y las imágenes usadas en la publicidad. Cuando las instituciones incorporaron imágenes problemáticas, que representaban a la cultura anfitriona de una manera paternalista, los estudiantes afro-americanos reportaron haber tenido

una reacción adversa. Por contraste, cuando la publicidad presentó a los anfitriones en posiciones de autoridad, los estudiantes reaccionaron de una manera positiva. Los estudiantes afro-americanos buscaron y prefirieron materiales que representaban inclusión. Finalmente, cuando los folletos parecieron falsos o insinceros (porque presentaron información imprecisa o inflada sobre el tema de las finanzas o porque tokenizaron los estudiantes afro-americanos y su cultura) los estudiantes se sintieron desanimados. El presente estudio agrega narrativas de estudiantes afro-americanos al discurso.

Keywords:

Study abroad, Black student experience, marketing, higher education

Previous Research

Benefits of Study Abroad

The benefits of study abroad are varied. Early research promoted the many benefits of studying abroad, and educators began marketing programs as a means of expanding global knowledge, gaining cross-cultural skills, increasing critical thinking and intellectual curiosity, and promoting self-efficacy, all while delivering important career and academic content (Salisbury, 2012). Recent scholars have questioned whether the research entirely corroborates these claims. Of course, educators expect to see increased cultural competencies with students who study abroad, but the concept of cultural competency is difficult to define and measure (Twombly et al., 2012). Previous research has substantiated claims that study abroad leads to the acquisition and improvement of skills within a single domain or discipline, such as foreign language or an understanding of international affairs topics (Ogden & Streitwieser, 2016). Unfortunately, research on learning across multiple domains (such as intercultural sensitivity or global awareness) can be less reliable due to reliance on self-reporting methodologies (Ogden & Streitwieser, 2016; Twombly et al., 2012). Some of the benefits noted in more recent research include that students who study abroad show increased institutional engagement and student success (Kuh, 2009), are more likely to work in global careers (Ogden & Streitwieser, 2016), are more likely to graduate in four years (Cook-Anderson, 2012; Ogden & Streitwieser, 2016), involve themselves in reflective learning experiences upon their return (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2011), hold jobs within six months of graduating (Cook-Anderson, 2012), have increased institutional loyalty (Ogden & Streitwieser, 2016), and

earn more in starting salaries (Cook-Anderson, 2012). Critics still wonder whether the study abroad programming alone is responsible for some of these benefits, arguing that perhaps students who study abroad earn more after college because historically it has been wealthier students who studied abroad. It is difficult to discern whether the participants reap these benefits as a result of the study abroad experience, or whether those that choose to participate in study abroad were uniquely predisposed to these outcomes regardless (Salisbury, 2012). Ultimately, educators should not overstate the evidence of study abroad research, but neither should they dismiss it altogether. An honest and empirically sound claim would be that intentional and well-designed educational experiences abroad have been shown to contribute to the personal development and self-awareness of students, and likewise support a set of complex learning outcomes (Salisbury, 2012).

While the majority of research to date has focused on White middle-class students or students in general, research on study abroad outcomes specifically among Black students shows very promising results. Black students who study abroad build cultural capital and negotiate intersecting identities (Wick, 2011), have increased self-esteem and intercultural sensitivity (Day-Vines, Barker, & Exum, 1998), and improve their understanding of their own ethnic identity (Willis, 2015). Identity growth and cultural validation are the most often cited benefits for Black students and are noted in Bruce's (2012), Green's (2017), and Wick's (2011) works. Green's (2017) qualitative dissertation investigated this notion of identity building further and found that Black female students who studied abroad with other Black female students cited a strong sense of self-discovery that resulted in feelings of racial healing. While research is still emerging, it is evident that study abroad programs can have differing and additional benefits for Black students.

Demographics of Study Abroad

Early research in the field of study abroad hoped to identify the "typical" study abroad participant as well as the motivational factors that compelled those students to study abroad. In the early 1990s, research identified the emerging profile of a typical study abroad student as overwhelmingly affluent, White, and female (Nguyen, 2015). The trends identified in the early research of the 1990s are still widely reflected in the current field of study abroad (Nguyen, 2015; Twombly et al., 2012). In 2015, White students made up only 57.6% of the

overall enrolled population but accounted for 72.9 % of the study abroad population (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016). Black students, conversely, represented 14.1% of all students but only 5.6% of the study abroad population (NCES, 2016). While the overall population of African American students enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions grew from 12.7% to 14.5% in the five years between 2005 and 2010, the study abroad participation rates of this population remained fixed (Sweeney, 2013). These low rates, paired with the slow pace of change, have prompted educators and researchers to investigate the factors that contribute to the low levels of participation among minority students (Twombly et al., 2012).

The issue is not that African American students are not interested in study abroad. Quantitative studies showed that when surveyed about their intent to study abroad, there was no significant statistical difference between African American and White students (Salisbury et al., 2011) and that 83% of African American high school students indicated that they desired to study abroad in college (Penn & Tanner, 2009). Because African American students indicate in high school that they intend to study abroad but ultimately do not follow through on the decision, scholars might focus on the factors that inhibit these students from acting.

Unsurprisingly, the most commonly cited factor in Black student participation in study abroad is cost. Scholars point out that these students might have difficulty meeting the direct cost of programming (Murray Brux & Fry, 2010; Penn & Tanner, 2009). There is also the opportunity cost incurred for employed students who will miss out on income opportunities while abroad (Murray Brux & Fry, 2010; Penn & Tanner, 2009). One study reported that 20% of minority student respondents listed work responsibilities as a barrier to study abroad (Murray Brux & Fry, 2010). Furthermore, less affluent students are less likely to have traveled prior to college, and scholars point to previous travel experience as a factor that positively impacts an individual's likelihood to participate in study abroad (Nyaupane et al., 2011; Penn & Tanner, 2009). However, to reduce the many barriers to study abroad down to finances alone oversimplifies the issue. The Paul Simon National Study Abroad Bill, passed in 2006, authorized $80 million in grant money to promote study abroad with an emphasis on increasing minority participation (Picard et al., 2009). Looking at demographic trends since 2006, Black student participation barely increased.

According to NCES (2016), Black students represented 3.8% of study abroad students in the 2006 to 2007 school year and 5.9% of students in the 2015 to 2016 school year. One would assume that if costs were the chief deterrent, study abroad participation amongst Black students should have increased significantly after this influx of available funding. Sweeney (2014) argued that educators need to do a better job of informing students of the many scholarships and financial aid opportunities available to fund study abroad. Twombly et al. (2012) noted that misinformation, myths, and a general lack of awareness limit participation in study abroad for all students. Research has found that students of color are less likely to be aware of the possibility to apply federal financial funds to study abroad (Twombly et al., 2012). Arguably, financial barriers may be more of a perceived than actual barrier to study abroad (Twombly et al., 2012).

Marketing and Study Abroad

Institutions communicate the benefits of study abroad through institutional messaging in online, interpersonal, and written marketing communications. If Black students do not internalize these messages of the cultural and social capital of study abroad, the issue may be in the messaging. Currently, higher education marketing efforts focus on communicating the University brand and values by emphasizing various aspects such as learning environment, mission, reputation, and graduate employment data (Kincl et al., 2013). Within higher education, study abroad is often marketed as the best way to develop cross-cultural competencies and learn about other societies (Salisbury, 2012; Sweeney, 2014). This proposed benefit is less likely to resonate with students of color, who typically come from more diverse communities to begin with and who practice code-switching and navigating complex cultural dynamics daily at predominantly White institutions (Salisbury, 2012; Sweeney, 2014). Salisbury (2012) claimed that overall, study abroad marketing efforts likely "work more like a dog whistle audible to those [already] tuned to [its frequency] than a megaphone that can be heard by everyone" (para. 3). In other words, current marketing materials are most effective only within the population that has been predisposed to study abroad.

As higher education professionals struggle with reduced government funding and subsidies, student dollars become increasingly important, and institutions compete for these dollars by offering students what they think they

want (Sharpe, 2015). Gathogo and Horton (2018) confirmed in a qualitative analysis of study abroad electronic advertising that both universities and third-party program providers overemphasized recreation and de-accentuated the academic outcomes. This trend towards advertising study abroad through a consumer-oriented lens has serious consequences for the field. Scholars worry that this commodification of study abroad has resulted in "academic tourism" and the promotion of the overall experience over academic development (Breen, 2012).

Postcolonial theorist Mimi Sheller (2003) argued that consumers in the United States have created distorted travel fantasies of holiday, romance, and pleasure while ignoring the violent history of US invasion or economic exploitation that might be linked to these spaces. Sheller (2003) coined the term "cultural cannibalism" to describe this process of consuming texts, arts, images, cultural heritage, and landscapes through travel in an exploitative manner that reinforces unequal relationships. Study abroad advertisements typically use language with monetary connotations such as "rich," "invaluable," and "wealth" (Zemach-Bersin, 2009). Marketing also typically employs language that assumes that host cultures are passively waiting to be discovered. Zemach-Bersin (2009) illustrated this point by underscoring the prevalence of the slogan "The World Awaits!" in study abroad advertising. This nuanced language, paired with an emphasis on personal fulfillment and adventure, reinforces neo-colonial undertones in study abroad marketing. Given this subtle context of colonialism and entitlement, it seems understandable that this messaging would not resonate with students of color, who have historical experiences of disenfranchisement through colonialism. Purposeful marketing might highlight meaningful exploration and might show host community members actively teaching and working with students (as opposed to students smiling or dominating the landscape or interaction). Scholars hypothesize that a shift in marketing might resonate better among diverse student groups, but research had not explored how students of color experience and interpret marketing images.

Research on higher education institutional marketing has shown that students who see or hear their identities represented in marketing materials and recruitment are more likely to envision themselves at these institutions (Hakkola, 2015). The power of representation holds true for study abroad

recruitment as well; Black students have confirmed in previous research that seeing other Black students study abroad gave them confidence to do so as well (Holmes, 2008). However, scholars noted that study abroad marketing did not often portray heterogeneous student groups. Gathogo and Horton (2018) confirmed through a document analysis of electronic study abroad marketing that Black students are overwhelmingly omitted from electronic ads and that available advertisements perpetuate a discourse of homogeneity. Marketing research has shown that the ways in which higher education institutions represent diversity in their marketing affect a student's sense of belonging (Pippert et al., 2013). Falsifying diversity in brochures is not the solution; manipulating imagery to reflect misleading demographics communicates that an institution has done the hard work of establishing diversity when they actually have not (Leong, 2014, para. 15). Furthermore, research has shown that minority groups tend to view higher education institutions as less favorable when those institutions have misrepresented diversity through overrepresentation in advertising (Spoor et al., 2014). That minorities would be frustrated at falsified diversity is understandable: in essence, the institution is hoping to derive social and economic value from perceived associations with nonwhite individuals. This subtly reinforces a system of racial identity commodification (Leong, 2012).

People of color are often absent from higher education marketing materials, but when they are represented, the literature suggests that these representations are skewed in a way that reinforces White supremacy. One study found that when featured in pairs or groups in higher education materials, women of all racial groups and men of color were often portrayed as "sidekicks" and were shown providing assistance, taking direction, and generally functioning in supportive roles (Osei-Kofi & Torres, 2015). The proliferation of imagery showing people of color in subordinate roles within higher education is somewhat tied to a larger trend of under-representation of faculty of color. The narrative reinforced in this imagery is that minoritized bodies may exist in higher education, but they lack power and agency (Osei-Kofi & Torres, 2015). The literature shows that Black student representation in study abroad marketing is lacking, and when present, can reinforce harmful narratives about Black students. The issue of increasing Black student study abroad participation is clearly more complex than simply working towards representation in

brochures. However, there is currently no available research on how Black students would prefer to be engaged and represented in a meaningful way.

While scholars have noted inequities in study abroad marketing materials, the hypothesis that the materials may contribute to the participation gap has not been explored in depth. Specifically, there was no research incorporating Black student voices, experiences, or perspectives on marketing efforts. Because Black students are uniquely positioned to articulate what they find to be inclusive, qualitative research that involves said students was necessary for higher education leaders to better understand what aspects of study abroad marketing materials resonate with Black students (Nguyen, 2015; Thomas, 2013). With that aim, this study examined how Black undergraduate students at predominantly White institutions described their experiences with study abroad marketing and recruitment efforts.

Methods and Procedures

The study was conducted with critical race theory (CRT) as the theoretical framework. At its core, CRT "challenges the experiences of Whites as the norm" (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015, p. 8). Americans often think of racism as willful individual acts of aggression, but this interpretation fails to understand the deeply ingrained historical and ideological choices that have shaped U.S. institutions, including higher education (Parker & Lynn, 2002). In his research on critical race theory, Tate (1997) posed the question of whether certain systems are designed to guarantee certain "winners" and "losers". That is, if the White normative experience is used as the standard by which all people in society are measured and valued, it is understandable that such a system would create disparities. Critical research seeks to challenge the privileged discourse and highlight counter-narratives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The experiences of people of color must be legitimized, included, and valued to make academia more accessible to marginalized people, and critical race theory argues that these marginalized groups are uniquely able to articulate their experiences (Kumasi, 2011). By approaching the research from the perspective of presenting and elevating the counter-narratives within the discourse of education, the researcher intended to present a valued alternative to understanding differences in study abroad participation that avoids problematizing Black student participation.

Data collection involved sixteen semi-structured interviews with self-identified Black undergraduate students, which were later transcribed, coded, and triangulated with data from a thematic analysis of the artifacts (study abroad marketing materials). Participants for this study were self-identified Black undergraduate students who were actively enrolled at a four-year predominantly White higher education institution and who had not studied abroad. The researcher identified interested applicants by posting information regarding the study on the social media pages for Black student union and interest groups, after receiving permission from page administrators. Social Media posts linked to a pre-screening questionnaire that confirmed that students met the participation criteria. Students who met the study criteria were invited to participate in a recorded interview at the library of their choice. The researcher also employed snowball sampling and thus some participants were referred to the researcher through friends who participated.

Because qualitative research should be iterative rather than fixed, the researcher used expert-reviewed guiding questions in semi-structured in-person interviews to allow for the exploration of emerging themes during the interview. During the interviews, the researcher introduced sample study abroad marketing materials and asked respondents for their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of these materials. The researcher always introduced marketing materials created by the institution the participant attended. In addition to their own institution's marketing materials, participants were asked to review a sample of marketing materials comprised of pieces from Institution A, Institution C, and from third-party program providers. All marketing materials were public and obtained through institutional websites, study abroad offices, and as handouts at study abroad fairs. It is important to understand the themes inherent in study abroad marketing in order to understand Black student experiences with said marketing materials; thus, the researcher conducted a thematic analysis of these documents. The data from the thematic analysis of the study abroad materials, or artifacts, were later triangulated with the data from the interviews.

The guiding interview questions were:
1. Describe the students on your campus that study abroad. How do you think these students find out about the programs?

2. What would the study abroad experience have to include for you to consider going?

3. Please take some time to look at these study abroad materials. What are your initial impressions? What, if anything, surprised or interested you? What, if anything, did you find to be distasteful or off-putting?

4. What changes, if any, do you think an institution could make to engage with you in a meaningful way?

When data collection was complete, the data collected from the documents and from the semi-structured interviews were prepared for analysis. In total, the recordings contained over 490 minutes of interview data. After reviewing the collected data for phrases or ways of thinking that stood out, the data were broken down into first level concepts through a process known as open coding. Axial coding involves finding connections among those open codes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researcher organized the emerging themes in tables to visualize key concepts across interviews in order to identify the emerging themes of the research.

Through member checking, the researcher was able to determine the accuracy of the emerging themes and concepts. Member checking involves gathering feedback on the preliminary analysis from a participant to ensure the emerging themes accurately capture their perspective (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Upon completion of the preliminary analysis, the researcher privately emailed each participant a copy of their transcript, excerpts from their transcript that the researcher planned to use in the published manuscript, and the context within the research in which the excerpts would be presented. Of the 16 participants, four responded and approved the researcher's interpretation of the interview.

Sample

While recruitment was not limited to specific institutions, the geographic reach of some of the social media sites and the use of snowball sampling resulted in a final sample that represented students from four different predominantly White institutions in the United States. All of the institutions represented in the sample were nonprofit educational institutions. The researcher has included basic information about the institutions that these students represent below.

Six participants attended Institution A. Institution A was a public doctoral research university in the Midwest. At the time of the study, Institution A had an acceptance rate of about 50% and reported an undergraduate student body of about 35,000 students. Of those undergraduate students, approximately 4% identified as Black. According to the website of Institution A, 37% of their undergraduate student body studies abroad.

Six participants attended Institution B. Institution B was a private doctoral research institution in the Northeast region of the United States. Institution B was the most selective institution in the sample; at the time of the study, Institution B had an acceptance rate of about 15% and reported an undergraduate student body of slightly over 6,000. Of those undergraduate students, approximately 6% identified as Black. According to the website of Institution B, 40% of their undergraduate student body studies abroad.

Three participants attended Institution C. Institution C was a religiously-affiliated private university in the Midwest. At the time of the study, Institution C had an acceptance rate of approximately 60% and reported an undergraduate student body of about 2,400 students. A third-party website estimated that between 10% and 34% of the student population identified as Black at Institution C. Institution C's website did not list any figures regarding the number of students on their campus that study abroad annually.

One participant attended Institution D. Institution D was a selective rural private university in the Midwest. At the time of the study, Institution D had an acceptance rate of about 20% and reported an undergraduate student body of slightly less than 2,000 students. Of those undergraduate students, approximately 4% identified as Black. Institution D boasted the highest number of students studying abroad on campus. According to the website of Institution D, the percentage of seniors in the 2017-2018 class that had studied abroad at some point before graduation totaled 70%.

The researcher opted to give the participants pseudonyms in this study, not only to protect their identity but to make them easily identifiable by institution in subsequent sections. All participants at Institution A were given pseudonyms beginning with 'A' in order to better identify the student and their institutional affiliation. The six participants from Institution A were 'Abigail', 'Amelia', 'Aisha', 'April', 'Asma', and 'Aliyah'. The six participants from

Institution B were given pseudonyms that start with 'B.' Institution B's students were 'Bruno', 'Bayla', 'Bineta', 'Brienne', 'Blessing', and 'Beatrice'. Institution C's students were given pseudonyms starting with 'C' and are identified as 'Cory', 'Charisse', and 'Ciara'. The single participant from institution D was given the pseudonym of 'Diego'. Table 1 broadly outlines the participants and the institutions:

	Institution A	Institution B	Institution C	Institution D
Carnegie Classification	Doctoral Universities: Very High Research Activity; Community Engagement	Doctoral Universities: Very High Research Activity	Master's Colleges & Universities: Large Programs; Community Engagement	Baccalaureate Colleges: Arts & Sciences Focus
Location	Midwest	Northeast	Midwest	Midwest
Approximate Selectivity	50% acceptance	15% acceptance	60% acceptance	20% acceptance
Approximate Size	35,000	6,000	2,400	2,000
Approximate Percentage of Student Population that identifies as Black	4%	6%	34%	4%
Approximate Percentage of Students that Study Abroad	37%	40%	Unknown	70%
Number of Participants in Study	6	6	3	1

TABLE (1): OVERVIEW OF INSTITUTIONS REPRESENTED IN THE SAMPLE

Results

Document Analysis

The data set included a collection of publicly available study abroad brochures, retrieved from study abroad fairs and institutional study abroad offices. In total, the collection included study abroad materials from Institution A, Institution B, Institution C, and Institution D, as well as third-party providers. Of the documents analyzed, all programs listed destination, program length, and field of study. Institution B and Institution D had marketing pieces that were

brief and conveyed minimal information about destination, courses, and dates (although neither institution addressed cost on their handouts). Institution A and Institution C had marketing materials that were similar in style to those of third-party providers; all of which highlighted travel and exploration in addition to location, academic programming, and dates. Imagery was varied; some providers opted to use photos of the location, of the locals, or of the students. Images with students could either be passive or active, showing students posed in front of a landmark or actively learning on location. In some instances, locals were shown as ethnically distinct to the students, particularly if locals were in traditional dress or displayed indications of poverty. Representation of Black students within the images and brochures varied from provider to provider but was generally low.

Interviews
Perceptions About Who Studies Abroad

Many participants felt that study abroad was dominated by White students on their campus. Furthermore, many respondents described the students that study abroad on their campuses as being wealthy or having substantial financial means to do so. Some students noted that they felt Humanities and International Studies majors were more inclined to study abroad. These perceptions reflect what research has shown to be the reality of study abroad in that White students and Humanities majors are over-represented nationally.

However, respondents did not limit their descriptions to demographic information or declared major. A few respondents described a "world-traveler" student that they felt was typical of study abroad. "All of them are hippie-dippy chicks," said Amelia. "You know what I mean? Like they're super, I don't know, world-traveler types of people." This sentiment was echoed in Cory's interview, although he did not necessarily restrict the stereotype to a gender:

> I would say there's just a general vibe of the kind of people that you think go study abroad. A lot of what studying abroad seems like is some folks kind of standing there uncomfortable, hot and sweaty, not really prepared for it… kind of just being nerdy in a place you don't belong. You're kind of just like, "Hey, I'm here!" I think that is off-putting. Because you don't want to be that guy that just is like [whining], walking around while some foreign dude tells me something about the trees, you know what I mean?

Cory later iterated this view, specifically noting that "sometimes, some of the people that are trying to be really worldly? They can be kind of annoying." Responses such as Amelia's and Cory's make it evident that Black students perceive study abroad to be popular among a certain "type" of student, and that they don't necessarily see themselves as those types of students.

It is also interesting that of the students interviewed, the only participant who seemed to inherently see himself as part of the target market for study abroad advertising was Diego. When asked to describe the students on his campus that study abroad, Diego responded:

> Lord. Umm, everybody. A lot of people study abroad. I think the figure is around like 70% will study abroad at some point. So really, everybody. I know a lot of students of various demographics that are going abroad.

This may be attributable to campus culture. As noted previously, Institution D had the highest rates of study abroad participation among the institutions represented in the study. In fact, Diego cited the exact institutional statistics regarding the 2017-2018 senior class: by the time of degree completion, 70% of the graduating class had studied abroad. Diego affirmed later in his interview, "I don't feel like I am underserved in terms of marketing or targeting or anything like that."

The researcher has included Table 2 as a visualization summarizing the results across interviews:

Respondent	Perception
Abigail	• Majority of students go to Europe • Wealthy • Business majors (Study Abroad is a required component of this major at Institution A)
Aisha	• Wealthy • Have knowledge of how things will transfer • Business majors (Study Abroad is a required component of this major at Institution A)
Aliyah	• White • Wealthy
Amelia	• Women • World-traveler types • Personally knows both White and Black students who have gone abroad
April	• White • Encouraged by friends and family • Self-motivated

Asma	• Wealthy • Race and ethnicity don't matter as much as financial means
Bayla	• White • Humanities/International Studies majors • Globally-minded students
Beatrice	• Humanities/International studies majors • Heritage seekers of all races
Bineta	• Variety of students from variety of majors • Self-motivated
Blessing	• International studies majors • Globally-minded students • Wealthy
Bruno	• Self-motivated
Charisse	• Self-motivated
Ciara	• Self-motivated • Seems diverse
Cory	• World-traveler types
Diego	• Anybody, everybody

TABLE (2): PARTICIPANTS' DESCRIPTION OF WHO THEY FEEL STUDIES ABROAD ON THEIR CAMPUS

Participant Experience with Study Abroad Recruitment and Marketing

With the exception of faculty or peer conversations, the recruitment strategies cited by students were mostly passive in that participants felt students were not actively recruited to study abroad by their institutions. Many students noted study abroad signage, posters, and brochures around the campus, as well as study abroad fairs and/or information sessions on campus. Students also noted that their institutions promoted study abroad through emails and daily announcements, notifying students of opportunities and upcoming events. In general, participants felt that students typically became interested in study abroad through this generalized marketing and then the onus was on the interested student to do their own research on available programming and/or schedule an appointment with a representative from the study abroad office. It should be noted that while all four campuses boasted Instagram pages for their study abroad offices, none of the participants had visited these pages, and when asked, said they felt unlikely to do so in the future. Students felt that the departmental website was a more informative hub than social media for relevant information.

Participants noted that program opportunities spread through word-of-mouth in conversation with friends and peers on campus. The importance of peers was a re-occurring theme throughout this study. While Aisha, Aliyah, Blessing, and Brienne recalled friends who had shared their positive

experiences abroad, Asma and Diego both recalled stories of Black friends that had experienced harassment and racism abroad. "I have a friend, he's Somali, and he went to Budapest and he was preaching to me that different racist things happened to him while he was there and so that's got me shying away from wanting to go to Budapest," said Diego. The data suggests that both the positive and negative experiences abroad circulate through peer groups.

In addition to social circles, program promotion by word-of-mouth happened in another important campus environment: the classroom. Students noted that professors plugged study abroad programming in class and were oftentimes the instructors or managers for the programs that they promoted. When a student liked the professor in question, they were much more likely to view the associated study abroad opportunity positively. Conversely, a negative experience with a professor could have a negative impact on the student's perception of a study abroad program. Brienne reflected on an in-class presentation given by a professor that made the study abroad programming in question seem "uninteresting, specifically because the presentation was not good." When asked what aspect of the presentation she found to be unappealing, she shared:

> He [the professor] was just saying stuff about Africa being dangerous and stuff like that and it just made me think I don't want to be around the kind of person who only sees Africa as what they have in the commercials.

Black students were particularly attuned to negative or racialized stereotypes of Africa or African culture. In the previous literature review, the researcher cited post-colonial theorists who found the portrayals of host cultures within study abroad marketing to be problematic; the perpetuation of stereotypical "needy" or "third-world" cultures can lead to oppressive power relations between students and their hosts. The participants in this study not only identified and called out this imagery, they described these stereotypes as "triggering" and hateful. Specifically, students called out pieces that they felt perpetuated "White Voyeurism" (Amelia), "White Savior Complexes" (Bayla, Diego), and "Suffering Tourism" (Amelia, Aliyah). Student responses were straightforward in their distaste of these pieces:

> I hate seeing stuff like this. I just feel like these people, they're not really like this, and it irritates me a little bit. Like this one, it's kind of annoying

that this is on a brochure and I feel like the message portrayed is "Oh, he went to a poor country in Africa, helped the kids, gave them water, clothes, and you can do it too!" you know? [And it's important to] show that Africa isn't just sand and mud and trees. I don't know about these [photos of Elephants and Lions], when I was younger, students would think when you go to Africa you just see zebras and lions walking everywhere! (April)

The first thing that usually catches my eye is like, all you see [are] White people. There's no diversity in here. And this part, I feel like there is good and bad in Africa because I am from Africa. Seeing this, I feel like people always just [think about] the bad side, like "Oh, these people are suffering!" And [sometimes] they are, I understand, but- I don't know. There always like, that one White person that- I don't know. (Aliyah)

Ok. I don't know if this sounds out there, but I just hate this. Maybe it's just me. But this seems very White savior type thing. I don't like that. That threw me off immediately. I'm an African, you can tell- so it's very disturbing to me when people do things like that, they don't seem very genuine. Like you just want to go there to take pictures and then leave, which I don't like. (Bayla)

What is this!? Is this really what they're showing people?! This seems like, "Come to Africa! It'll be nice, it'll be fun!" Almost anyone can go, a 2.5 GPA [requirement], that's nothing. And then the front! It's a White man kneeling laughing with a whole bunch of Black boys! No! I mean, I see these people [presumable natives in the photo] in the mix, and they look interested, but it's like, "Smile for the Picture! Glad you're here, aren't you?" It feels more staged, like "Hey, we have to make a good brochure!" And I doubt that their experiences reflected that, at least not entirely. (Ciara)

This picture rubs me the wrong way. Just look at it, it's the whole White Savior complex. There are legacies of photos like this, from mission trips and going to indigenous spaces and like, coming in and using them as props. It's like, are you really engaging the people or are you just using them to feel good? That's the theme I am thinking about when I see pictures like that one. (Diego)

When asked how these brochures made them feel, students were blunt in their responses. "It's a trigger," said April. Aliyah felt similarly; "[it] triggers me a lot." In this context, the term "trigger" refers to emotional distress based on past traumatic experiences. When students feel triggered, it signals that the higher education institution does not value their wellbeing or inclusion (Spencer & Kulbaga, 2018).

In conversation with participants, it became clear that students negatively received the passive, "posed," and/or racialized portrayals of locals. In contrast, participants proposed showing locals in active teaching roles. Cory summed this up succinctly in his interview:

> Yeah, this is another uncomfortable picture, it's just kind of like, "Hey, we're here as a class!" Which I think is the vibe to move away from. Right? See even this picture, this [local] lady is clearly teaching. It's a better photograph you know what I mean?

April also noted this preference, citing a brochure for India that featured a presumably Indian woman in a sari, pointing to architectural features of a temple in what appears to be a seminar or discussion. "I feel like what would attract me personally would probably be something like this," said April, "with the students and the people interacting with each other." "This is perfect. When I see stuff like that it's always kind of heartwarming," said Bruno of a photo of a Somali woman leading a group discussion. Students felt that these engagements felt authentic and inclusive.

Overall, the researcher found that the photos students gravitated towards "signaled" inclusion in some way. For example, Institution C's marketing booklet had a large image on the inside cover of a street lined with rainbow flags. "I like from the second I open the page, it's already addressing the LGBTQ community, like literally on the first page," noted April. Students also reacted positively to a large image of an anti-racism protest featured prominently in a third-party program provider brochure. "Oh, I like this! Just like, protests and people are actually standing up for their beliefs, people are standing in solidarity," commented Aliyah. Institution C highlighted the phrase "Decolonizing the mind" in large letters to advertise a program in Africa. This coded language signaled to students that the program had a racially conscious lens. Diego noted:

"Decolonizing" pulled me in. Oh, this would be cool, it'd be really cool! First, I want to go to Africa, and we talk a lot about decolonizing in my courses. A lot of these course offerings I see would benefit me to learn on location.

Institution C was not the only program to signal inclusion through course content: A brochure for a James Baldwin centered writing program was also well-received by students due to the topic being studied.

It should be noted that signaling worked both ways; Ciara reacted very negatively to a brochure that featured a White woman with dreads. "You can't put somebody like that on the front [of the brochure]," Ciara felt. By featuring a White woman with an arguably culturally-appropriated hairstyle on the cover of a brochure, the institution signaled their lack of awareness on the impact and history of White appropriation of Black culture. "No, this is not going to have me intrigued," said Ciara of this brochure, indicating that this trope negatively impacted her perception of the institution's programming overall.

A straightforward way to signal inclusion would be to ensure Black students felt represented, not only in photos of students but in photos of staff and personnel. Students noted that they actively looked for diversity in photos, as evidenced by this excerpt from Abigail's interview:

In this picture [of study abroad ambassadors]- I always look for those things because I'm Black- I noticed there are only one, maybe two [out of the 38 students pictured] that are Black, but they're fairly light-skinned so I can't see anybody that I would identify with.

Brienne also noticed diversity in photos and felt less receptive to pieces that failed to include people of color:

For some reason, for me, I don't think the pictures of the people help, maybe because there are never Black students in there. Maybe I'm not as receptive to as much or something.

On the other hand, when institutions did include diversity, students gravitated towards these pieces. One third-party brochure, which had the highest ratio of Black student representation in this study per the document analysis, was received positively by students. Students immediately commented on the diversity in their photos, prompting students to spend extra time with

these materials: "I'm not gonna lie, I saw a Black person and that's why I started reading this one," said Diego of the brochure.

When institutions failed to represent Black students in their photos, participants shared concerns that they might feel alone abroad. "I would be so uncomfortable being the only Black person sitting at this table," commented Aliyah on one of Institution A's brochures. "You can tell if it's a diversity program, if all are welcome," noted Bineta on the importance of photos. "I want to know the types of students the program draws. Will I be the only one that looks like myself on the program? And the coordinators as well."

Representation was just as important in staff photos as it was in cohort photos, as evidenced in this excerpt from Ciara's interview:

> And this is their advising team? It looks like if I were to ask them, they'd be like "Yeah, it's nice." There is one person out of all these people that looks like me and two minorities in the entire group. So either they just really don't have anyone- Why can't they have more people work there that [are diverse]? Because this is why, it takes me knowing what's going to happen before I can apply and that's not going to happen.

This excerpt suggests that when students don't see diversity within the study abroad offices, they are less comfortable in seeking out support and information from these offices. When cohorts lack diversity, students are concerned that they may not feel welcome.

While representation was important, students were very attuned to whether this representation seemed tokenized. Students felt that over-representation could be just as problematic as under-representation. "If there's a black person in [the photo] it's like, 'Here, our group is diverse', like an effort to show they have diverse groups of students going abroad but [they don't]," noted Abigail. Ciara felt the issue with over-representation was that it was misleading for those students specifically seeking out safety in numbers:

> The one thing about brochures is that they always try to put diversity in it, but then as soon as you go, you realize it's not like that. You'll see it on the brochure but as soon as you go you're the only person [of color] … I don't know, I know you're out of the country to travel but to a lot of people, that's just the opportunity for bad things to happen. Like, if I'm alone in another country and I know that I'm a minority, that's more opportunity for something bad like that to happen to me.

Aliyah claimed that when institutions "tokenize" Black people, the end result is that students feel tricked; they arrive on campus and it feels like the institution has pulled "a bait and switch." Aliyah recommended using peers to recruit as a way of combating tokenization because then students can "trust the source." While the importance of representation was referenced often, students wanted this representation to be honest.

How Students Felt Institutions Could Do Better

When asked how students find out about programs, respondents reflected on the amount of self-motivation and independent research they felt was required to find available programs that fit their interests. In order to engage more students in a meaningful way, participants recommended that institutions pursue targeted recruitment campaigns related to various majors and departments, and Black student interests specifically. Abigail, April, Bruno, and Cory felt institutions would do better to have advisors, study abroad personnel, or faculty individually recruit them based on their interests and majors. Cory said individualized recruitment could make the difference of whether he goes abroad during his studies; "if I go to a person and they're like, 'yeah this is a good idea for what you want to do,' I will do it!" Abigail, Amelia, Bruno, and Cory also recommended changing the marketing approach to attract Black students by eliminating language and imagery reminiscent of the "White Savior" traveler. Students also felt that building programming that was specifically relevant to Black students would help institutions connect with this population.

In terms of how institutions recruit, students agreed that institutions could better leverage the cultural student associations, multicultural and Black student unions, and historically Black fraternities and sororities on campus. Students are more likely to connect with study abroad marketing if it it's delivered in a safe space on campus by another person of color. "I'd rather have a Somali person tell me because I can understand, I can relate to them more," said Aliyah. Bayla frequented the Office of Multicultural Affairs on her campus for advising and mentorship, and she noted that study abroad personnel had never visited that office "that I know of, that would be cool if they did."

Lastly, it was imperative that Institutions improve the home campus culture first if they hoped to attract Black students to study abroad. Except for Diego (the sole participant at Institution D), students noted that they felt unwelcome and/or unsupported on their campus, which negatively impacted

their willingness to engage with the campus. At the time of the study, Institutions A, B, and C had made regional and national headlines for racialized comments or events on campus. While Institution A's study abroad materials went out of their way to include an equal opportunity statement, students felt this statement rang hollow in light of the recent remarks from the University President. Students at Institution B felt similarly that their Institution outwardly promoted diversity for "PR purposes" but failed to deliver on any diversity initiatives in a meaningful way. Participants pointed to the administration's failure to adequately address recent campus-wide protests initiated by the Black Student Union regarding racial inequity on campus. Institution C also made headlines for divisive language used in the classroom; "people of color, we're already singled out and outcast here, I'm not trying to leave the country to still find out that I still am," said Ciara. The researcher highlights these examples not as specific to Institutions A, B, and C but as symptomatic of the current higher education landscape in general. American institutions that struggle to meaningfully address racial inequity on campus may find it difficult to engage Black students in extracurricular activities such as study abroad.

Table 3 lists the individual recommendations regarding the changes an institution could make to meaningfully connect Black students and study abroad:

Respondent	Perception
Abigail	- Make information easier to digest (less text dense) - Avoid language and acronyms that might confuse students - Parse information rather than rely on hyperlinks - Be honest about student experiences if they're negative - Include more information regarding safety abroad
Aisha	- Advertise by major rather than by country - Leverage cultural student associations on campus to help recruit - Leverage faculty to recruit students - Advertise in places Black students hang out, like the Black Student Union - Develop programming around issues important to Black students, such as Black history & culture or social justice
Aliyah	- Be clear and upfront about program requirements - Include more student testimonials - Send alumni of color to cultural student associations to promote programs - Increase diversity in photos and brochures
Amelia	- Get rid of language such as "exploring" and "immersion" as it is perceived to be coded language for "White Savior complex" students - Promote programs and resource for Black students just as fervently as other programs; don't bury resources four pages deep in the website

April	• Be clear about how program will benefit students in specific majors • Personalize recruitment for students based on interest • Use eye-catching subject lines in emails • Send study abroad professionals to areas of campus that students of color already feel comfortable in to promote there • Be authentic in portraying programs, avoid superficiality
Asma	• Be clear in presenting information, especially cost and scholarship • Advertise in places Black students hang out, like Black fraternities/sororities • Fix the campus culture first: Black students feel like they're just a number, doesn't feel the campus is trying to be inclusive based on recent comments from the University President that were perceived to be racist, and subsequent lack of consequences for said comments
Bayla	• Fix the campus culture first: Hire more Black faculty and encourage mentorship for people of color. Campus promotes diversity to save "political face" but doesn't listen to students of color or take any action on inequality. • Increase representation in study abroad offices • Send study abroad professionals to areas of campus that students of color already feel comfortable in to promote there
Beatrice	• Include more student testimonials • Increase scholarship and funding opportunities
Bineta	• Be more transparent with costs and funding opportunities • Be flexible with application deadlines and payment options • While she did not feel this was an issue for her campus, felt other campuses needed to diversify locations of where they study
Blessing	• Fix the campus culture first: Feels Institution B does worse in supporting Black women and supporting mental health & wellness on campus than other campuses nationally. Institution B needs to address high turnover and attrition rate if it wants to keep Black students, let alone push students to engage in experiential learning
Brienne	• Leverage faculty to recruit students • Increase diversity in photos and brochures
Bruno	• Be more transparent on costs and funding opportunities • Personalize recruitment for students based on interest • Work to build a strong and diverse cohort that interacts before the trip • Advertise by major rather than by country
Charisse	• Fix the campus culture first: Institution C has a large population of Black students whose families immigrated from continental Africa, Institution C has to do a better job of including these histories and voices in the classroom and curriculum before it can expect to diversity study abroad. Institution C needs to look inward, addressing issues of microaggressions on home campus and building better relations with the neighboring communities before looking outward.
Ciara	• Leverage alumni of color to promote programming to peers • Fix campus culture first: Black students are "singled out and outcast here."
Cory	• Have advisors and faculty actively recruit him

	• Change marketing strategies as the current language "attracts a group of people that I'm not interested in."
Diego	• Be transparent and flexible about how to pay for programs • Does not feel personally underserved in terms of marketing

TABLE (3): PARTICIPANTS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOW INSTITUTIONS CAN BETTER CONNECT WITH THEM

Summary

After analyzing the data across interviews and triangulating the interview data with the document analysis, clear themes emerged. The open codes converged to form the following axial codes of relationships, respect for hosts, authenticity and clarity, representation, the importance of signaling, and the importance of the broader campus culture.

Relationships. Relationships with peers, faculty, and campus organizations and spaces were important in that students sought information from these sources. The relationships formed through academic and social circles specifically had the ability to positively or negatively shape a student's perceptions of study abroad.

Respect for hosts. Respect for hosts was critical in demonstrating to Black students that study abroad programming was racially conscious and safe for students of color. When brochures failed to represent host communities respectfully, students felt "triggered" and "disrespected".

Authenticity and clarity. Authenticity and clarity were valued by students in that students wanted transparent information on costs, courses, internships, outcomes, and experience. Information should be easily digestible; participants noted their generation's reputation for diminishing attention spans. Students felt imagery conveyed authenticity when photos were not staged and showed active learning.

Representation. Representation was important to Black students. Brochures that highlighted diversity in their photos were well-received by Black students. Representation was important among cohorts as well as staff and faculty.

Signaling. Signaling could be used in brochures to demonstrate to students that programs were inclusive and that experiences would be unique and new to students. Statements on LGBTQ or Black student experiences and inclusion were well-received by participants. Imagery that incorporated symbols of inclusion such as the Pride flag or a statue of Nelson Mandela may

have signaled to students that programs were intentionally designed with diversity in mind.

The broader campus culture. Finally, the broader campus culture shaped how students felt about their institutions, including study abroad. When students felt that their institutions were unsupportive of Black students, or that they were just "a number" on campus, students extended those feelings towards study abroad. It is highly likely that improving relations on campus could positively impact study abroad departments as well.

Discussion

The results from the document analysis and sixteen semi-structured interviews provided answers to the research question of how Black students at predominantly White institutions describe their experiences with study abroad marketing and recruitment. Black students described their experiences with recruitment in a mostly passive fashion in that they were aware of posters and events on campus but did not feel that study abroad departments specifically targeted them. Students reported increased engagement with the recruitment process in the instances when they were actively recruited by friends or faculty. Students who were recruited through these personal connections described their experiences in a more positive and enthusiastic manner.

Of course, the way students described their experiences with marketing materials themselves varied based on the materials shown. The document analysis found that some study abroad marketing incorporated imagery or themes that perpetuating colonialist stereotypes about non-Western cultures and people. The document analysis found that problematic portrayals of hosts were still prevalent in some, though not all, of the current study abroad marketing brochures, particularly brochures for non-Western destinations. The presence of these racialized images in brochures for non-Western destinations is particularly problematic given that both the previous literature and data from this study suggest that Black students are attracted to programming in Africa. Negative perceptions of study abroad could be further exacerbated by a campus culture that is perceived to be unsupportive of minority students.

In contrast, students positively received marketing that they felt respectfully portrayed host cultures, that included diversity of students in the imagery, that represented their academic and world interests, and that signaled inclusion. In addition to representation, institutions could signal inclusion to

Black students by promoting programming designed with Black student interests in mind; such as programming on the Black diaspora, Black philosophical movements and leaders, global racial equity initiatives, and Black history and culture (to name a few).

While problematic imagery still exists in study abroad marketing materials, this imagery was not as pervasive in the data set as in Caton and Santos's (2009) data set, suggesting that the field is improving in this regard. Some study abroad providers have designed programs with social justice and Black student interests in mind, and these programs were well-received by the sample. When compared to findings from Caton and Santos (2009) or Zemach-Bersin (2010), the document analysis suggests that study abroad marketing has since evolved to be more inclusive, although further improvement is necessary.

Institutions can improve the Black student experience with their marketing by revising the content to be more inclusive. Further research on how other under-represented student populations experience marketing might aid administrators in this effort. Study abroad professionals might improve the Black student experience with recruitment, specifically, by pursuing more targeted recruitment strategies that meet Black students in their own spaces and by leveraging the relationships they have on campus with peers, student organizations, advisors, and faculty. Institutions can pursue inclusive excellence by seeking out the perspectives of Black students on their campus and including their narratives in future discourse and planning, by diversifying staff, marketing, and recruitment strategies, addressing inequity in the broader campus community, and continually challenging White normative assumptions in their institutional practices. When Black students feel intentionally addressed, wanted, and heard in the recruitment process, they positively described their experiences with and attitude towards study abroad marketing.

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