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Influence of Intercultural Experiences Abroad on African American High School Students

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

Influence of Intercultural Experiences Abroad

on African American High School Students

by

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MA, Chestnut Hill College, 2007

BA, Institut Supérieur de Commerce, 1986

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education

Walden University

November 2017

Abstract

African American high school students are underrepresented in study abroad programs, and their lack of intercultural skills and international understanding can impede their personal and professional development, and limit their career opportunities. The purpose of this descriptive qualitative case study was to explore the influence of intercultural experiences through study abroad and immersion programs on African American high school students' intercultural competence. The conceptual framework drew on 2 theories: Bennett's development model of intercultural sensitivity and Kolb's experiential learning. Data from interviews and focus groups with 13 African American high school students, 2 parents, and 2 teachers as well as documents and field notes from a Northeast United States urban high school addressed the research questions pertaining to how students perceived travel abroad that fostered intercultural competence skills as well as how teachers and parents perceived students' personal development. Findings resulted from provisional codes used to identify pattern of codes, and central themes that indicated predeparture seminars and reflective practices enhanced intercultural skills. The portfolios suggested that most students became more reflective and accepting of cultural differences after their sojourn abroad. Recommendations based on the findings suggest increasing homestay experiences and planning and predeparture trainings. Future research is needed on how to attract more male African American students to such programs. The findings may contribute to positive social change by encouraging investment in homestay study abroad and immersion programs with adequate preparation and planning at inner city high schools that might foster intercultural competence skills.

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Dedication

In memory of my parents: Kadima Shambuy Crispin and Emelya Tshidibi WA Bukasa who have taught me the value of education since my early childhood but were not fortunate to live long enough to reap the fruit of their investment. May you repose in peace!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Experiential learning through study abroad intercultural exposure has been found to provide learners with the opportunity to develop intercultural competency skills, to enhance their intrapersonal and interpersonal abilities, and to foster global awareness (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Intolubbe-Chmil, Spreen, & Swap, 2012; Lee & Green, 2016; Olberding & Olberding, 2010; Wynveen, Kyle, & Tarrant, 2011). Despite these benefits, African American high school students are underrepresented in study abroad programs, and African American high school students' lack of intercultural experiences and international perspectives can impede their personal and professional development, and limit their career opportunities (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015; Mclellan, 2011; Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2011). During the last decade, researchers have explored the study abroad programs in higher education institutions and their impact on college students. Also, a few studies have focused on African American students and the rationale for their poor participation in the study abroad and immersion programs. In this chapter, I introduce and describe my research project's problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the theoretical framework, the research design, the sampling strategies, and data collection procedures and interpretation, potential weaknesses and ethical concerns, and the implications for social change.

Background

Research on international education has found that students who participated in intercultural experiences through study abroad or immersion programs experienced lasting effects on academic, personal, and social growth (Braskamp, Braskamp, &

Merrill, 2009; Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josić, & Jon, 2009; Root & Ngampornchai, 2013; Schuitema & Veugelers, 2011). Despite these benefits, African American students remain underrepresented, less internationally oriented, and less confident in their ability to adapt to the foreign cultures (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015; Mclellan, 2011; Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2011).

For global educators, the purpose of intercultural experience is the enrichment of the participants in global education that transcends both an ethnocentric view and cultural relativism and promotes shared values, beliefs, and respect for cultural differences (Stoner, Tarrant, Perry, Stoner, Wearing, & Lyons, 2014). Moreover, intercultural experience has been shown to enable students to competently interact with people from other cultures, and live among people who share different cultures with respect, appreciation, and understanding of their values and beliefs (Bennett, 2004; Maddux, Adam, & Galinsky, 2013). Maddux, Adam, and Galinsky (2013) found that participants in international and study abroad programs demonstrated more keen problem-solving skills, and flexibility in adjusting to cultural differences than students who stayed at home.

Olberding and Olberding (2010) also found that a 1 week immersion and exchange program had a positive impact on the students and even greater effects on chaperones, parents, host families, students, and teachers at host schools. These international programs equipped students with language learning skills, multicultural competencies, intercultural awareness, and personal development and growth (Anderson, Hubbard, & Laweon, 2008; Stoner et al., 2014). Furthermore, previous studies have

found that students who have participated in experiential learning abroad programs initiated and led international days in their schools and organized after-school activities to promote respect, tolerance for diversity, and open interaction among community members (Monaghan & Hartmann, 2014).

Problem Statement

Intercultural experiences through study abroad programs and immersion experiences have become a vital component of the United States education system. Previous researchers (Braskamp et al., 2009; Brown, 2009; Lee & Green, 2016; Root & Ngampornchai, 2012; Salisbury et al., 2011; Savicki, 2013; Stebleton, Soria, & Cherney, 2013) have found study abroad and immersion programs to provide students with enriching intercultural experiences, cognitive and intrapersonal development, and interpersonal skills. Furthermore, other researchers have found that experiential learning abroad can have an impact not only on the participants but also ripple effects on chaperones, host families, and parents (Olberding & Olberding, 2010).

Despite these numerous advantages, African American high school students remain underrepresented in study abroad programs, and some of these students are fearful of traveling abroad and critical of their peers from foreign countries (Mclellan, 2011; Salisbury et al., 2011; Stebleton et al., 2013). These inner city students' lack of an international perspective may impede their intercultural, personal, and interpersonal development skills (Royster, Gross, & Hochbein, 2015). During the last decade, researchers have explored the study abroad programs in higher education institutions and their impact on college students. Additionally, a few studies have focused on African

American high school students and their rationale for not participating in the study abroad and immersion programs. This study explored the influence of intercultural experiences through study abroad and immersion programs on African American high school students' intercultural competence.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to explore the influence of intercultural learning through study abroad and immersion programs on African American high school students' intercultural competence. This descriptive qualitative case study was rooted in Bennett's (2004) development model of intercultural sensitivity and Kolb's (2015) experiential learning theory that I explained in detail in Chapter 2.

Research Questions

This descriptive case study research project used qualitative methods to respond to the following three questions:

1. In what ways do travel abroad and immersion programs enhance African American high school students' intercultural competence?
2. What aspects of experiential learning abroad do African American high school students believe have fostered their intercultural competence?
3. How do African American high school students' teachers and parents perceive their children's personal development during and after their intercultural and experiential learning abroad?

Conceptual Framework

I considered two theories to guide my research design and help interpret the results. My research focused on how cross-cultural experiences can influence African American high school students' intercultural competence, notably Kolb's (2015) experiential learning theory and Bennett's (2004) development model of intercultural sensitivity. These theories are complementary yet different regarding various aspects of the experiential learning process.

Experiential Learning Theory

According to Kolb (2015), experiential learning is a cyclic and dynamic process of learning based on action-reflection and experience. This developmental, experiential learning may occur both in the formal environment and in all other areas of the learners' lives. Kolb, who has drawn from the work of Dewey and Lewin, stated, "knowledge is continuously gained through both personal and environmental experiences, but the learner must be willing to be involved in the experience, reflect on it, conceptualize it, and use new ideas gained from the experience" (p. 38). Dewey (as cited in Kolb, 2015) echoed Kolb's approach when Kolb indicated that the experiential learning must be embedded by activities that compel self-reflection and keen observations. Furthermore, these learning experiences must be built on previous experience (continuum principle) and the interaction between the learner and the environment (interaction principle). For Kolb,

the tendency to define learning in terms of outcomes can become a synonym of non-learning, and the purpose of experiential learning is to stimulate inquiry and

skill in the process of gaining knowledge, not memorize knowledge. So, learning is a process, not a product (p. 38).

Dewey (as cited in Kolb, 2015) laid the groundwork for Kolb's approach when he argued that "knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, continuing, and hopeful inquiry in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p. 38). So, people's willingness to learn and reflect on their experiences with the environment can lead to personal development if the knowledge gained is built on the previous learning experiences and sustained through reflective practices.

According to Kolb's (2015) approach, experiential learning is characterized by four learning attributes, namely (a) social learning, (b) continuous learning grounded in experiences, (c) holistic adaptation to the world, and (d) transaction between the person and the environment. For Kolb, learners' concrete experiences are the basis for observations and reflection that are assimilated and distilled into abstract concept from which the implication for action can be drawn; this implication can be actively tested and serve as lenses in creating new experiences that may produce learners' transformation in three areas, notably affective, cognitive, and behavioral (p. 38). In experiential learning through study abroad for example, the facilitator may need to ask the right questions, lead reflective and insightful conversations, and provide opportunities for constructive discussions before, during, and after the sojourn abroad programs. The learners can participate in the experience, use analytical skills to conceptualize the experience, and engage in decision-making and problem-solving skills in order to integrate the ideas gained from the experience (Brewer & Cunningham, 2009).

Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence is a dynamic process, an on-going process that can be honed by well-structured and designed travel abroad and immersion programs (Deardorff, 2009). Bennett, Hammer, and Wiseman (2004) developed the Intercultural Development Inventory based on generic approaches to culture that is a mindset relating to intercultural sensitivity (Taylor, 2014). In this theoretical framework, I used the Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) to help me understand intercultural competence concept.

The DMIS was created as a framework to explain the observed and reported experiences of learners in intercultural contexts such as workshops, classes, exchange, and graduate programs (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). The participants in these experiential learning activities confronted cultural differences as they learned to become more culturally competent. Bennett and Bennett (2004) used grounded theory to organize the observations in seven dynamic stages of sensitivity to the cultural difference that represented a model of the development of the cognitive structure. The learner's behaviors and attitudes at each phase were indicative of a particular condition of the underlying worldview (Bennett & Bennett, p. 152). These stages range from denial, defense, and minimization (ethnocentrism phase) to acceptance, adaptation, and integration (ethnorelativism phase) (Bennett & Bennett, 2004).

According to Bennett and Bennett (2004), in the denial phase, sojourners maintain psychological and physical isolation from cross-cultural differences. In the defense phase, sojourners tend to denigrate cultural differences, but consider their culture as the best

among other cultures. In the minimization phase, sojourners experience their culture with universal perspectives despite differences and understand that their culture is similar to others, whereas in the acceptance phase, sojourners are tolerant of the host country's values and beliefs even though they may dislike or disagree with their societal values (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). In the adaptation phase, sojourners take their host country's perspectives, and engage in activities or work in their host country or share their beliefs (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). In the integration phase, sojourners reestablish their identity within the host country, and they broaden their views to become bicultural as they navigate between the two cultures (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). The DMIS as explained in Bennett's framework illustrates a dynamic process that can lead an individual to become interculturally competent. This framework was studied in the specific contexts of workshops, classrooms, and graduate programs. Other factors such as family background, gender, race, and social environment might lead to different outcomes.

Since the transition between different stages of DMIS can increase tension between the groups and cultural anxieties for a study abroad student, the development movement among different stages can be facilitated by emphasizing the commonality of cultures, particularly in terms of what is generally good in all cultures (Bennett, 1993, p. 40). As Bennett (1993) argued, "adjusting to such lifestyle in a foreign country will not be a natural disposition" (p. 15). Students will have to move from the ethnocentric stage where only their values and culture count to ethnorelativism where they may accept, adapt, and adjust to other people's values and lifestyle (Bennett, 1993). Berg and Paige's (2012) evaluation of study abroad programs noted that multicultural education training at

home can enhance students' experience during their sojourn abroad. For example, education abroad educators may enhance students' integration in the host country by promoting cultural activities that generate discussion, simulations, independent and intergroup research, and reflective journals that enhance students' self-awareness and develop cross-cultural competence skills.

I discuss the above interrelated and complementary theories through literature review in detail in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

This descriptive qualitative case study explored the impact of the cross-cultural experiences abroad on African American high school students' intercultural competence guided by Yin (2014)'s recommendations for case studies. I used qualitative case study methods of data collection, notably interviews with 13 inner city students who have traveled abroad from an international baccalaureate urban high school in the Northeast of the United States, experiential portfolios, and field notes. Also, I supplemented these interviews with three focus group meetings of five, four, and four students to corroborate my findings. Also, two teacher and two parents' individual interviews were included.

I transcribed the digital recording of the interviews into a Microsoft Word document and used provisional codes I drew from the conceptual framework, and Excel software to analyze interview data, seek additional codes, and identify central themes as recommended by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) and Patton (2015).

Definitions

The following terms, used throughout the study, are defined below:

Cultural competence: Cultural competence is the intercultural sensitivity that respect and honor different cultures (Bennett, 2008)

Cross-cultural empathy: Cross-cultural empathy refers to an individual's ability to participate in another person experience, to connect emotionally, and to show compassion for others (Deardorff, 2009).

Cross-cultural understanding: Cross-cultural understanding is "the ability to connect with other people through a deeper sense of appreciation" (Shirae & Levy, 2015).

Culture: Culture is defined as a system of beliefs, values, and assumptions that guide behavior of a group of people (Deardorff, 2009).

Cultural flexibility: Cultural flexibility is an individual's capacity to replace activities enjoyed in home country with activities in the host country (Deardorff, 2009).

Experiential learning: Experiential learning is a learning process where knowledge is created through transformation of experience. Learner is directly in touch with reality being considered (Kolb, 2015).

Intercultural competence: Intercultural competence refers to an individual's ability to understand and respect other people's worldviews, to evaluate knowledge, and to see from other perspectives (Savicki, 2008).

Intercultural sensitivity: Intercultural sensitivity is a mindset that focuses on knowing and understanding other cultures, assimilating ideas and moving among different cultures while maintaining one's identity (Taylor, 2014).

Intercultural understanding: Intercultural understanding is how people's abilities to relate to and communicate across culture, interact with individuals from different background and skills (Walton, Paradies, Priest, Wertheim, & Freeman, 2015).

Multicultural understanding: Multicultural understanding refers "to a positive and productive relationship among culturally diverse population" (Locke & Bailey, 2013).

Sojourner: Sojourner refers to a person who stays temporarily in another place (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

Transcultural understanding: Transcultural understanding refers to "the understanding of divergent cultural values" (Guan, Greenfield, & Orellana, 2014).

Assumptions

Creswell (2009), Maxwell (2013), and Patton (2015) agreed on the unavailability of validity threats since researchers bring their learning experiences to the research process. Therefore, the researcher's bias might be certain. The topic of my research project resonated with my personal experience working in several inner-city school districts where over 200,000 high school students who drop out of high school each year (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014), are more likely to bully their peers, and have less learning motivation (Jargowsky, Wood, Anglum, & Karp, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). In contrast, students in other developing countries, Congo-Kinshasa, my native country for example, strive for better education (Kongolo & Zamberia, 2016). My assumption in exploring this qualitative case study was that the African American participants have a better recollection of their experiences abroad than the school's website report. Furthermore, my interview style and questions

would allow the participants to provide a reasonable perspective on their personal development. I also assumed that the artifacts, African American students' reflective papers, their electronic portfolio, and their social media postings would offer an authentic representation of students' cognitive, personal, and personal growth during their experiential learning abroad. Additionally, I assumed that the students' parents would offer their genuine perspectives on the participants' transformation after their return home and the faculty would provide an accurate assessment of students' development and their impact on the school environment.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this descriptive case study focused on one school, an international baccalaureate urban high school in the Northeast region of the United States because that school offers a global education through service learning opportunities and immersion and exchange programs to high school students aged 16 to 19 in partnership with the Global Citizenship Association (I used this pseudonym to maintain the confidentiality agreement). Furthermore, the school promotes participation in students' international exchanges, travel abroad, and sends students to attend international and national events organized by the Global Citizenship Association. Over a decade ago, the school joined the International Baccalaureate Organization that fosters international travels and global awareness. Students participate in these immersion programs during their sophomore, junior, or senior years. The student population is diverse: 51% African American, 11% Caucasian, 12% Asian, 20% Latino, and 6% of the students are from other ethnic groups. While administrative challenges were not a part of the scope of this qualitative case

study, the data led to some important aspects of administrating a study abroad program that I discuss in Chapter 5. But I delimited this study to focus on the influence of experiential learning abroad on African American high school students' intercultural competence.

Limitations

As the principal investigator to this study, I assumed sole responsibility for all data collection and subsequent analysis and reporting of findings. A qualitative case study approach provided a complete, in-depth, and literal description of a human situation or program using an array of sources of evidence (Miles et al., 2014; Stake, 2010; Yin, 2014). Also, this qualitative descriptive case study approach provided me with a variety of sources of evidence that facilitated triangulation and strengthened the study's findings. The participants' stress, peer pressure, and lack of self-awareness may have impeded their willingness to participate fully in the interview process. Moreover, Bowman (2014) and Bowman and Seifert (2011) found that college students experienced difficulty while reporting their learning and growth on critical thinking, civic engagement, and appreciation of diversity. However, some researchers found that African American adolescents are comfortable and relaxed in a group setting where they can express their feeling and convey their ideas within the peers' culture (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). Therefore, I combined individual interviews with group interviews to allow the participants to build on their peers' talk and discuss their experiences. Also, I adapted my interview style and process and emphasized their voluntary participation (Maxwell,

2013), and included in the list of interviewees parents and teachers who had participated in experiential learning abroad during the last 3 years.

Maxwell (2013) suggested that researchers understand how the validity is tainted and acknowledge his/her bias at the outset of the proposal or the conclusion. In addition to the researcher's reflexivity, the participants and the audience's reviews served as a credibility triangulation (Patton, 2015). Besides the above strategies I used to minimize the validity threats, I read and learned from the prior qualitative researchers who have prevented the validity threats and ensured the credibility of their findings. In Chapter 3, I elaborate on additional strategies I used to prevent validity threats.

Significance of the Study

Nationally, reports indicate that about one-third of all students who enter high school in the United States do not graduate on time or they do not graduate (Ricard & Pelletier, 2016; Royster, Gross, & Hochbein, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Also, Stetser and Stillwell (2014) noted that over 7 % of the high school students who drop out are African Americans. According to Statistic Brain Research (2016), over 3 million Americans between the ages of 16 and 25 have dropped out of high school without a diploma; among these students 50% are minorities, and 7.5 % of these minorities are African Americans. In their studies on experiential learning through study abroad programs, intercultural competence and global citizenship. Anderson, Lorenz, and White (2016); Bell, Gibson, Tarrant, Perry III, and Stoner (2016); Berg, Paige, and Lou, (2012); Deardorff (2014); Kolb (2015); Krishnan, Masters, Holgate, Wang, and Calahan (2017); and Wang, Peyvandi and Coffey (2014)

found that intercultural experiences led sojourners to global awareness, enhanced their personal growth, developed their interpersonal and their intercultural competence skills. Additionally, Peng, Van Dyne, and Oh (2014) found that undergraduate African American participants in study abroad envisioned alternatives to their lifestyles and attempted to change their behaviors or took actions as a result of their exposure to the intercultural experience.

Moreover, African Americans' lack of international experience and foreign language skills may deprive the United States from the social capital that they may bring into the world stage as diplomats in the U.S. Foreign Service Department (Carlson, 2015; Constantinou, 2016; Lu, Reddick, Dean, & Pecero, 2015; Samel, Sondergeld, Fischer, & Patterson, 2011). The present study seeks to provide insights for support of investment in study abroad and immersion programs that can enhance African American high school students' intercultural competence skills.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I described background information of this descriptive case study, provided the problem statement, and the research questions. In the background section, I noted the underrepresentation of African American high school students in experiential learning abroad programs despite the numerous benefits of these experiential programs. In the problem statement, I noted that the lack of intercultural experience impedes the urban students' personal development, limit their career opportunities and make them critical of their peers from foreign countries. The research questions focused on the influence of intercultural and experiential learning abroad on African American high

school students' intercultural competence, the exploration of aspects of experiential learning that enhanced sojourners' intercultural skills, and the teachers' and parents' perceptions of the student participants' personal development after their return. I included in this Chapter 1, the conceptual framework, my assumptions and limitations, and the significance of the study.

In the next chapter, I review the recent literature related to experiential learning abroad and their impact on the sojourners' intercultural competence through the lenses of Kolb's theory of experiential learning and Bennett's theory of development model of intercultural competence conceptual framework.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Previous researchers found that experiential learning abroad programs provided participants with opportunities not only for personal growth, motivation for learning, and intercultural sensitivity, but also challenges that enhanced their independence, their emotional development and their leadership skills (Braskamp et al., 2009; Brown, 2009; Lee & Green, 2016; Root & Ngampornchai, 2012; Salisbury et al., 2011; Savicki, 2013; Stebleton et al., 2013; Travers, 2014). A holistic assessment of these experiential learning abroad programs indicated that students' experience during their sojourn abroad helped them to develop in three domains: cognitive, intrapersonal and interpersonal, and civic engagement (Kiely, 2011; Rust, Dhanatya, Furuto, & Kheiltash, 2008; Stebleton et al., 2013). Furthermore, these developmental skills can have a lasting impact on their personal and professional lives. Since a few studies have focused on African American high school students' participation in these experiential learning programs, I proposed a qualitative descriptive case study that examines the influence of these programs on African American high school students' intercultural competency, and the impact these experiential learning programs might have on their families and the school environment.

Chapter 2 commences with the search approach I used to assemble literature related to experiential learning abroad, the long-term impact of these experiential learning abroad opportunities on the participants' development, and the role of administrators of these programs in promoting experiential learning, and also the research on African American high school students' participation in intercultural experiences. After an overview of research on experiential learning programs that benefited the participants and

pedagogical strategies used during these programs, I examine the main concepts of the literature review around the conceptual framework of the study. I conclude Chapter 2 with an explanation of my decision to use a qualitative case study approach to answer the research questions.

Literature Search Strategy

I found a broad range of scholarly peer-review journals related to experiential learning abroad using Google Scholar. As I narrowed my research interest to focus on African American high school students, the following databases provided me with additional resources: Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), SAGE journals, the EBSCO Host Business Management, Academic Search Complete, ProQuest, and Jossey-Bass' New Direction Series. I expanded my research to include the words *adolescence* and *adolescent* and *study abroad* following the librarian's advice. Also, I consulted books, dissertations, and seminal articles that aligned with my research topic. I used the following key terms to guide my queries: *adolescence* and *adolescent*, *African American*, *experiential learning*, *cross-cultural competence*, *cross-cultural learning*, *emotional intelligence abroad*, *cultural curiosity*, *inner city students*, *intercultural competence*, *study abroad*, *transformative learning*, and *urban high school students*. As Machi and McEvoy (2012) and Dawidowicz (2010) suggested, I scanned, and mapped the articles' abstracts to flesh out a planned reading list that aligned with experiential learning abroad for African American high school students. Furthermore, I created a bibliographic information sheet in Excel software to help manage the journal articles I collected (Maxwell, 2013). Also, I broadened my research to include issues related to

terminology of related terms such as intercultural and cross-cultural competencies, and experiential learning.

Terminology of Related Terms

Intercultural, cross-cultural, multicultural, transcultural, and intracultural competence are not synonymous terms, but they are intersected by describing people's ability to interact, build a relationship, and learn despite their cultural differences (Deardorff, 2009). As Taylor (2014) suggested, the increase in global communication and migration compels people to learn how to accept, understand, respect, and interact with other individuals who possess different values and beliefs.

Kolb and Passarelli (2012) have found that experiential learning abroad can improve the participants' development towards a greater level of acceptance, adaptation, and minimization that leads to intercultural competence. In the context of intercultural competence relationships, individuals learn and grow together; and their relationships are shaped by other people's experience (Taylor, 2014). Whereas in cross-cultural relationships, people reach across cultural boundaries to build relationships and learn with opportunity for individual transformation but the focus is not a collective integration (Lokkesmoe, Kuchinke, & Ardichvili, 2016). For example, other people might be left unchanged with their values and beliefs.

In contrast to gaining intercultural and cross-cultural competence from an intercultural relationship, in a multicultural relationship, individuals might support each other, but the interaction among members remains unidirectional and one party benefits (Deardorff, 2009). So, intercultural competence implies building a mutual and beneficial

relationship among members of different cultures. As Hammer (2013) suggested, intercultural competence is an individual's capability to shift perspectives and adapt behavior to cultural differences.

Also Lokkesmoe, Kuchinke, and Ardichvili (2016) have focused on individuals reconciling different point of views through the understanding of challenges they encounter during the stages leading to intercultural competence. That ability to reconcile cultural differences and create new ways of resolving cultural dilemmas has been called transcultural competence (Glover & Friedman, 2014), whereas the capacity to manage various ethnic groups within teams has been identified as intracultural competence (Trompenaars & Woolliams, 2009). As Deardorff (2009) suggested, the value of research on competence across cultures is not only to manage the cultural differences in the short-term but to get a better understanding of the different point of views for the wellbeing of the whole society.

Some scholars have observed that intercultural sensitivity is not a natural human virtue (Bloom & Miranda, 2015). For example, history demonstrates that bloodshed, war, oppression, and domination have resulted from the contact of people from different cultures (Olson & Kroeger, 2001). However, the global imperatives of the 21st century compel us to meet people of different cultures, understand, respect, and assimilate their ideas without losing one's identify (Taylor, 2014). Bennett's DMIS is based on his research that demonstrates that people progress through distinct six stages of intercultural development as they experience cultural differences (Bennett, 2008, 2004). Experiential learning abroad programs can provide an opportunity for transformative learning to urban

high school students within an intercultural learning environment (Lee & Green, 2016; Passarelli & Kolb, 2011). As students experience, reflect, think, and act upon unfamiliar cultures, they might be challenged to overcome cultural dilemmas, and shift from ethnocentrism mindset to ethnorelativism as these students progress toward intercultural competence. As Bennett (2008) suggested, intercultural competence refers to the individual's ability to accept, respect, adapt, adjust, and integrate into the new culture.

Conceptual Framework

My conceptual framework combined two theories, namely Bennett's (2004) DMIS which I used to support the construct of intercultural competence, and Kolb's (2015) experiential learning theory. I discuss these complementary theories in the next section.

Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential learning theory focuses on "the interaction between internal characteristics and external circumstances, between personal knowledge and social knowledge "(Kolb, 2015). This process of learning from experience is also a social process that shapes and actualizes the learners' development potential; therefore, the experiential learning becomes a vehicle for human development and instrument of social change in the society (Kolb, 2015). Among the characteristics of experiential learning theory, Kolb cited the processes that include social learning, continuous process grounded in experience, holistic adaptation to the world, and transaction between the person and the environment. In the following section, I discuss the characteristics of the Kolb's experiential learning cycle.

Six aspects of Kolb's experiential learning. Experiential learning is an emerging process whose outcomes become significant and memorable (Kolb, 2015). In this process, concepts are formed and continuously modified by experience. For Kolb (2015), the experiential learning cycle is a learning process that stimulates inquiry and leads to the gain of knowledge (p. 38). Dewey laid the ground work for Kolb's approach when he argued that knowledge results from continuing inquiries and social interactions (Dewey, as cited in Kolb, 2015, p. 38). Experiential learning implies that all learning is relearning, and every experience takes something from prior knowledge and adjusts in some way the quality of the future experiences. As individuals move from one situation to another, their world and their environment expand. It is in the interaction between expectation and experience that learning occurs. The process of learning from experience requires "the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world, and learning results from the resolution of these conflicts" (Kolb, 2015, p.38). For example, in experiential learning abroad, sojourners may experience intercultural differences that require their critical thinking and reflective abilities. In such a challenging situation, the sojourners can use different perspectives, reflect on their current and prior experiences, and even create new concept to decide or solve the problem. Kolb (2015) acknowledged the resonance between Dewey (1938), Freire (1993), and his own work when Kolb indicated that Dewey referred to the impulse that gives ideas their moving force and the reason that gives desire its direction. Also, Kolb noted that Freire referred to the dialectic nature of learning that is the reflection and action upon the world to transform it (Kolb, 2015). Dewey, Freire, and Kolb agreed that

actions and reflection are the crucial factors that drive people's cognitive, personal, and interpersonal development during their interaction with the environment. The conflict that may result from their contact in the new milieu might enhance the learner's thinking abilities and foster their problem solving skills.

As a holistic process, experiential learning provides conceptual bridges across life situation such as school and work, portraying learning as a continuous lifelong process. This aspect of experiential learning is not a functioning of human cognition or perception, "it involves the integrated functioning of the all organism, namely thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behavior" (Kolb, 2015, p. 43). The basis of the learning experience is an interaction among organizational members who control the flow of events to their satisfaction (Dewey, as cited in Kolb, 2015). According to Kolb (2015), this interaction implies that there is a fluid and interpenetrating relationship between objective conditions of the environment and subjective experiences of the individual. In this context, both the person and the environment are subject to change. Kolb stated that, "knowledge is a result of the transaction between social knowledge and personal knowledge, and social knowledge is the accumulation of the previous human cultural experience" (p. 48). He also specified that personal knowledge is the accumulation of the individual subjective life experiences (Kolb, 2015). The experiential learning framework as conceived by Kolb (2015) indicates that authentic learning is a dynamic process that includes people's feeling, thinking, and behaviors. A learner's willingness and disposition to gain knowledge through personal inquiry and social interactions can build on previous experiences and lead to an individual cognitive development. Experiential learning

abroad programs offer numerous opportunities for the sojourners to immerse in the host's culture while reflecting on their home culture.

Application and findings related to experiential learning abroad. As the above characteristics demonstrate, learning from experiences is a developmental process that is both challenging and involves emotional feelings from the facilitator and the learner. In experiential learning through study abroad for example, the facilitator may need to ask the right questions, lead reflective and insightful conversations, and provide opportunities for constructive discussions before, during, and after the sojourns abroad. The learners must participate analytically and reflectively in these experiences to enhance their personal development and foster their cross-cultural competence skills (Kolb & Passarelli, 2012).

According to Kolb's theory of experiential learning, knowledge creation is a result of the transformative experience (Kolb, 2015). Researchers have found that well-planned activities before, during, and after the trip abroad enhanced participants' cultural sensibility and transformed their ethnocentric views of the world (Boateng & Thompson, 2013; Lee & Green, 2016; Rockstuhl, Seiler, Ang, Van Dyne, & Annen, 2011; Sample, 2013). Also, such experiential activities have been found to transform participants' behaviors and enhance their intercultural competence skills (Dunn, Dotson, Cross, Kesner, & Lundahl, 2014).

In a meta-analysis of 14 studies on service learning, Warren (2012) found that service learning had a significant impact on students' learning. The 14 studies were selected based on the examination of the relationship between students' learning and

service learning outcomes, the measurement of service learning as a dependent variable, and the inclusion of an experiential and control or a comparison group. The 14 studies had a cumulative student sample size of 2,129 undergraduate students and were published or written between 1993 and 2008. The effect sizes were weighted by sample size and combined using standard fixed effects meta-analysis procedures. Warren found that service learning had statistically significant and positive effects on students' learning. Also, there was a significant heterogeneity among the studies' outcomes that the participants developed a higher order thinking, empathy, cultural awareness, personal and interpersonal development, motivation to engage in social issues, to study life skills, self-efficacy, and civic engagement (Warren, 2012). This meta-analysis study demonstrates that experiential learning that includes civic activities and fosters intercultural reflection can enhance sojourners' cognitive and interpersonal skills, and foster their intercultural awareness.

Pless, Maak, and Stahl (2011) who explored an integrated service-learning program through study abroad for graduate students, called Ulysses, found that experiential learning enhanced responsible global leadership competencies. The participants' field experiences took place in Africa (43%), Asia (29%), Latin America (29%), and Eastern Europe (1%) (Pless et al., 2011). The researchers interviewed 70 people who participated in the Ulysses program between 2003 and 2006 (Pless et al., 2011). Each participant was interviewed before, during, and after the assignment. Ulysses participants reported that the program helped them to learn about themselves, adapt to a new culture, work effectively in a multicultural community, and broaden their horizons

(Pless et al., 2011). From the survey and interviews analysis, the researchers found evidence of cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning as a result of the experiential assignments abroad (Pless et al., 2011). The post program narrative analysis suggested significant learning in cultural intelligence and intercultural competence development (Pless et al., p. 249).

Other researchers have found that well-planned programs and activities such as study abroad internships, international research project learning, critical thinking simulations, engaging discussions, cross-cultural courses with hands-on components, portfolio projects, reflective papers, daily journal writing or blog to encourage personal reflection, and support and follow-up support from administrators after the sojourners' return home enhanced participants' cultural sensibility and transformed their ethnocentric views of the world (Boateng & Thompson, 2013; Rockstuhl et al., 2011; Sample, 2013; Thomas, 2012).

Study abroad dispositions are not necessarily credit earning educationally, as they are enhanced by incorporating activities designed to foster reflections and keen observations (Kolb, 2015). Such experiential learning may broaden sojourners' understanding of the world and their abilities to interact outside of their comfort zone, and develop their intercultural competence skills (Kolb, 2015). Many educational institutions offer experiential learning education programs such as internships, service learning, field projects, action or team learning, and classroom experiential learning exercises in addition to their traditional academic studies in order to build learners' survival skills for their future global experiences. If such experiential learning programs

are embedded in the high school curriculum, particularly in urban schools, they may inspire high school students to experience other cultures through immersion and sojourn abroad and enhance their intercultural competence skills.

Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

According to the DMIS theory, individuals may progress through six stages of intercultural development as they gain exposure to cross-cultural differences (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). These stages range from denial, defense, reversal, and minimization (ethnocentrism phase) to acceptance, adaptation, and integration (ethnorelativism phase) (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). The intercultural development is based on generic approaches to culture relating to intercultural sensitivity, and Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2012) developed the Intercultural Development Inventory based on DMIS to measure individuals' cultural competence (as cited in Taylor, 2014). In this study, I used the developmental lens on the assumption that the ethnorelativism stage comes with intercultural competence. Anderson, Hubbard, Lawton, and Rexeisen (2008) who used the DMIS survey to collect data from 54 undergraduate students in their longitudinal study on experiential learning abroad, found that most of the 54 undergraduate students who participated in a semester program abroad, showed significant development of their intercultural competence skills.

In a similarly study on experiential learning abroad, Boateng and Thompson (2013) in their qualitative case study of 15 American undergraduate students in Ghana, noted that their analysis of students' answers to the interview question and reflection papers suggested that they moved gradually from the denial, defense, and minimization

stages to the acceptance, adaptation, and integration stages gaining an understanding of the host's country culture and their biases and adjusting to the new ways of living at the end of a summer experiential learning in Ghana. Other researchers have found that well-planned activities before, during, and after the trip abroad enhanced gradually participants' cultural sensibility and transformed their ethnocentric views of the world (Braskamp et al., 2009; Lee & Green, 2016; Rockstuhl et al., 2011; Sample, 2013). Such experiential learning programs through study abroad have been found to transform progressively participants' behaviors and to enhance their intercultural competence skills (Brown, 2009; Deardorff, 2009; Dunn et al., 2014). While a semester of experiential learning in Ghana (Africa) has transformed the African American undergraduate sojourners ethnocentric views and enhanced their personal and intercultural development skills, African American high school students may also benefit from such opportunities if they can participate in similar programs through immersion and sojourn abroad.

Bennett (2004) suggested that sojourners in experiential learning abroad programs make conscious efforts to transition into ethnorelativism stages in which they could explore a new relationship across cultural differences. Since these sojourners are at the periphery of the host's culture and their own, they may need to internalize the new values and beliefs in order to move from ethnocentrism mindset to the recognition of cultural differences (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

The adjustment may not come easily for students who travel abroad, accepting, adjusting, and adapting to a new lifestyle may require a change in students' attitudes and mindset (Bennett, 1993). For example, in their research on study abroad programs,

Trompenaars and Woolliams (2009) found that simply traveling abroad did not help sojourners to develop sojourners' ethnorelativism mindset, but the participants needed to be prepared physically, mentally, and emotionally to confront the cultural challenges and conflicts before, during, and after their sojourn abroad. This predeparture preparation allowed students to get a better understanding of their host's culture, to integrate smoothly in the local culture, and to stay connected long after their return home for the benefit of the global society.

Literature Review of Empirical Studies Related to Factors of Experiential Learning Abroad

Researchers have found that participants in the experiential learning abroad programs gained cognitive, personal, and interpersonal skills; and enhanced their civic engagement abilities that have shaped their leadership opportunities (Allison, Davis-Berman, & Berman, 2012; Root & Ngampornchai, 2013; Ya-Chen Su, 2011). In the following section, I examine scholarly literature related to sojourners' development during their experiential learning abroad.

Sojourners' Cognitive, Personal, Interpersonal, and Civic Development

Experiential learning abroad can empower participants to pursue opportunities outside of their comfort zone and might increase the participants' knowledge of the rich opportunities to strive in life for a better future (Allison et al., 2012). In their study on a semester experiential learning abroad of 20 undergraduate students, Root and Ngampornchai (2013) found that the participants increased their knowledge of their host country's history and political system, acquired non-verbal communication skills, and

gained confidence in new language. Root and Ngampornchai noted that the use of discovery methods such as role plays, critical thinking, and cultural simulation during the participants' sojourn abroad, fostered the participants' cognitive skills. Similarly, Ya-Chen Su (2011) who studied the use of cultural portfolios to promote intercultural understanding with 38 undergraduate students in Taiwan, found that through active learning abroad, students developed diversity awareness and their openness to accept cross-cultural differences. Furthermore, Ya-Chen Su found that 90% of the participants reported having increased their understanding and respect for English language and culture, developed critical thinking skills and their ability to generate unconventional ideas.

Savicki (2013) who examined the reactions of a 12-week experiential learning program abroad on 32 undergraduate students in Argentina, found that despite challenges and hardships during their experiential learning abroad, the participants' anxiety, uncertainty, and acculturation stress fostered their inner development and enhanced their emotional intelligence. Savicki suggested that a psychological predeparture training, in-field support, and follow-up after a sojourn abroad could help enhance interpersonal skills. In alignment with Savicki (2013) findings, Braskamp, Braskamp, and Merrill (2009); Schuitema and Veugelers (2011); Salisbury, Paulsen, and Pascarella (2011); and Stebleton, Soria and Cherney (2013) found that during experiential learning abroad, the participants not only engaged in relationship with their host, but also broadened their worldviews, adjusted to cross-cultural differences, and acquired values, attitudes, and beliefs that could shape their choices in life and influence their future career plans.

Other researchers have found that preparing students mentally and emotionally through high school academic, social, and political activities, created a pathway to their future cognitive and civic development and influenced their decision to participate in experiential learning program abroad (Rust et al., 2008). In their study of 276,449 freshman students from 413 institutions using on-line survey, Rust et al. (2008) found that students who were involved in their community could move beyond their local milieu to navigate between different environments with opposing values and beliefs. Such civic engagement fostered their cultural curiosity and mental toughness that enhanced their leadership skills and led to intercultural competence.

Sojourners' Intercultural Competence in Experiential Learning Abroad

The pivotal outcome of experiential learning abroad is the development of the participants' intercultural competence, which implies the acceptance of cross-cultural differences, the respect of other people values and customs and a willingness to maintain their identity (Brown, 2009; Crooks, Burleigh, Snowshoe, Lapp, Hughes, & Sisco, 2015; Robinson, 2013). As a result of their experiential learning abroad, the researchers found that sojourners adapted to local customs, changed their mindset, behavior, and skill sets that are fundamental to the cross-cultural competency (Bennett, 2004; Deardorff, 2009; Hunter, 2008; Walton et al., 2015).

In their longitudinal study on experiential learning abroad, Anderson et al. (2008) found that 54 American college students in their junior year who participated in the research after a semester of study in London, developed a deeper appreciation and understanding of cross-cultural differences, races, and ethnic background. Anderson et al.

used Bennett's DMIS and IDI to measure the participants' progression towards intercultural competence. Anderson et al. (2008) found no significant change in the participants' score at the ethnocentrism stage because of the participants' participation in predeparture training that prepared them to overcome the challenge of their cross-cultural experience. In contrast, the participants showed a significant improvement in their cross-cultural sensitivity at the more advanced ethnorelativism stage.

Similar to Anderson et al. (2008), Brown's (2009) ethnographic study of the transformative power of international sojourn, found that the participants' experiential learning abroad increased their intercultural understanding, tolerance, and respect for other people's values and customs. Furthermore, Brown found that the participants' attitudes and behaviors evolved from confrontational to those with a new culture to tolerance, respect, and adjustment.

African American high school students who participate in such experiential learning abroad may accept and adjust to cross-cultural differences, and be more likely to avoid bullying and stereotyping and prejudice, and seek peace with their peers (Bernardino, Ehigiator, & Picard, 2008; Crooks, Burleigh, Snowshoe, Lapp, Hughes, & Sisco, 2015; Epprecht & Fizzell, 2014). Allison et al. (2012) echoed Brown (2009) and Olberding and Olberding's (2010) recommendations when they suggested that such experiential learning provides a "rite of passage for young people making transitions from adolescence to young adulthood moving away from home to begin employment or university study" (p. 489). Educational organizations can facilitate this transition while fostering intercultural competence skills in African American high school students in

promoting pedagogical strategies that encourage intercultural learning that I will discuss in the following section.

Pedagogical Strategies that Enhance Intercultural Competence in Experiential Learning

The global connectivity of the modern world offers many educational opportunities to acquire and develop intercultural competence skills (Leung & Chiu, 2010). Hence, study abroad professionals may adopt and implement pedagogical strategies that promote study abroad programs with policies that encourage underrepresented students to participate in their programs. In order to provide sojourners with the intercultural skills that enhance their cultural competence during their sojourn abroad and beyond, researchers have suggested the following learning strategies for use before as well as during, and after sojourn abroad: service learning, internships, and volunteer or work opportunities (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009; Stebleton et al., 2013); reflective journaling and observations (Angela & Chiu, 2010; Craig, Zou, & Poimbeauf, 2015; Savicki, 2009; Williams, 2009); project-based learning (Singaram, Vleuten, Stevens, & Dolmans, 2011); exchanges programs (Olberding & Olberding, 2010); on-line courses with specific assignments (Williams, 2009); communication and internet-based technologies (Ya-Chen Su, 2011); and predeparture training and on-site support (Savicki, 2009).

Service learning and work opportunities. In their research on students' engagement during their sojourn abroad, Braskamp, Braskamp, and Merrill (2009) found that providing students with the opportunity to volunteer in the host

country or to give back in the communities served to build and strengthen partnership between the sojourners and their hosts (p. 113).

Observations and reflective journals. Williams (2009) suggested the use of journals with open ended questions to encourage students' reflection on their experience and the articulation of their intrapersonal and interpersonal growth (p. 304). Also, Savicki (2013) found that reflective journals enabled students to discuss and analyze incidents that they found frustrating or amusing (p. 8).

Project-based learning (PBL). Singaram et al. (2011) found that project-based learning can unite people from different ethnic and racial background, enhance interactions across diverse boundaries and foster a sense of togetherness without prejudice. Well structured and organized projects were found to bridge inequalities among students with different academic preparedness levels (p. 302).

Exchange projects. Study abroad professionals have also used international exchange programs as a strategy to develop students' intercultural competence. Olberding and Olberding (2010) found that during an international exchange project in the United States, students were engaged not only in numerous activities such as field trips, research projects, and educational games, but also attended culture nights that celebrated the customs, culture, and history of the participant countries (pp. 75-76).

On-line courses. Williams found that students were more likely to be engaged during their sojourn abroad if they have specific assignments and

guidelines in an on-line class that allow them to interact with the local community (Williams, 2009, p. 304).

Modern technology with tasks. The use of modern technology such as video-conference, internet, telephone, Skype, Twitter, blogs, and Facebook can foster collaboration and transform the host country into a classroom. Ya-Chen-Su (2011) suggested that students engage in a process of discovery that allows them to create and re-create knowledge. Additionally, students can select their topic and gather information in their host country with their instructor's approval. That project can be part of their portfolios that can demonstrate their learning.

Predeparture training and on-site support. Savicki (2009) suggested that study abroad professionals use predepartures' simulation activities, reentry, and follow-up exercises to help sojourners bolster their psychological skills in order to cope with culture bumps in their host country (p. 8).

In her research on study abroad assessment, Williams (2009) also found that students gained in their cognitive domain, their acceptance of cultural differences and emotional confidence in living far away from home (p. 107). Other researchers found that sojourners' reflections on their experiential learning abroad led sojourners to respect and accept cultural differences, and to building intercultural skills that eased their integration in the global community (Brown, 2009; Singaram et al., 2011; Schuitema & Veugelers, 2011; Ya-Chen Su, 2011). Whether the study abroad is for short or long term, the above pedagogical strategies may spur creativity, enhance communication skills in the host

country's language, and foster students' cross-cultural competence (DeGraaf, Slagter, Larsen, & Ditta, 2013; Olberding & Olberding, 2010).

Experiential Learning Programs and Intercultural Competence

Since sending students abroad may not result automatically in transformative learning experiences, research suggests that educational administrators design experiential learning programs and plan activities that foster collaboration, stimulate critical thinking and encourage meaningful integration within the host community. In the following section, I will analyze larger experiential learning programs that have used several curricular strategies I have described in the previous section.

Curricular activities in the Study Abroad Ghana program. The Study Abroad Ghana (SAG) was organized by the University Study Abroad Consortium (USAC) in the United States to equip graduate and undergraduate students with professional skills to deal with diversity and enhance their personal development (Boateng & Thompson, 2013). This SAG program included two courses (social work and service learning) that combined class lectures and hand-on experiences in the field (Boateng & Thompson, 2013). During their social work course, the 15 students enrolled visited a hospital, an orphanage, and a refugee camp to observe and listen to people who lived in poverty and to talk about the government system in place to meet their needs. Additionally, students participated in field trips, tours, internships, independent studies, had volunteer opportunities in the local communities; maintained a weekly journal to reflect on their experiences; and participated in group discussions to share their experiences with their peers and mentors.

In the interviews and reflective journals analyzed by Boateng and Thompson (2013), the participants reported an increased interest and empathy for the local population and gained a global perspective on the social services despite their biases, beliefs, and assumptions. The participants were concerned about social problems such as immigration, HIV/AIDS, child labor and poverty. For the six African American undergraduate students who participated in this experiential learning in Ghana, the trip had a significant value. These African American students learned about the slave trade and visited an historical monument (slave castle), and places where they gained a better understanding of their origin as members of the African diaspora.

While adjusting to bucket baths, local foods, hand washed laundry, the participants reported they learned through these challenges to be patient, increase their respect for their hosts, and appreciate what they had at home. As a result of their volunteer services within the local organizations, the participants increased their sensibility to the global issues, become more aware of discriminatory practices and social injustice, and were more prepared for effective leadership roles in the international organizations. Once they returned to the United States, the participants became “Informal International Student Ambassadors” sharing their experience within their community. As Boateng and Thompson (2013) had found, experiential learning, with well planned activities such as field trips, educational tours, internship, independent studies, volunteers’ opportunities, observations, service to community, site visits, direct observation, stimulating discussions, field presentations, independent research, reflective questions, and community projects can have a significant transformative effect on college

students as well as high school students as echoed by Monaghan and Hartmann (2014) in their study of the Traveling School.

The Traveling School curriculum. The Traveling School used an integrative pedagogical approach that combined place-based content, experiences, and critical reflection. The purpose of its curriculum was to facilitate the transformation of students and their teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and values (Monaghan & Hartmann, 2014). The Traveling School took 13 female high school students [five seniors, four juniors, four sophomores] with four female teachers to Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Mexico for 16 weeks (Monaghan & Hartmann, 2014). During their mandatory predeparture training, the students and their teachers discussed and analyzed topics and events such as conflicts, poverty, and environmental issues, most likely to occur or be evident during their sojourn abroad. Furthermore, teachers invited guest speakers, and planned didactic lectures, discussions, and simulations during the orientation.

Monaghan and Hartmann (2014) noted that the participants and their teachers were emotionally disoriented to see people living in extreme poverty during the first 4 weeks. As they analyzed daily events and reflect on the different topics, their sadness, anger, and frustration increased. Some of the students had insomnia and wondered about the United States' involvement in the wars in those countries. These outdoor activities helped turn students' despair into advocacy, hope, and resilience. Even their teachers expressed the same feeling of despair but tried to find uplifting activities to comfort the students (Monaghan & Hartmann, 2014, p. 93). Through hands-on experiences, discussions, interviews, group activities, and personal interactions, the researchers noted

the students' capacity to ask complex questions and observed a significant change in the students and their teachers' behaviors, values, and attitudes. Once they returned home, the participants were required to present a Zenith project on their experiential learning during their trip abroad; this project fostered collaboration and allowed the students to give back to their communities.

As this study demonstrates, the students' behaviors and attitudes' transformation was not an incidental outcome; the researchers claimed that these transformations were a result of well-planned predeparture training activities with supportive administrators and well trained teachers. Throughout the in-field academic and emotional challenging activities, teachers eased students' transformation and sustained their integration once they returned to their high school. This experiential learning enhanced the participants' potential development as global leaders which was also the purpose of the Ulysses experience described next.

The Ulysses experience model. The aim of the Ulysses project was to help future managers to develop key competencies required for responsible global leadership. Its curriculum was an integrated service-learning program that sent the participants to Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe to work in partnership with non-governmental organizations, social entrepreneurs, and international organizations (Pless, Maak, & Stahl, 2011). The aim of the curriculum was to broaden and deepen the perspectives the participants have on the global issues and their role in their institutions, to enhance their moral development, and to develop a greater tolerance for diversity (Pless et al., 2011). The 70 participants were selected among professionals who

demonstrated leadership effectiveness at the local level, the potential for senior leadership roles, and English proficiency. The curriculum included “360 degree feedback, coaching, team-building, project-based learning, meditation and yoga, reflective exercises, and storytelling to achieve learning at the cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels” (Pless et al., 2011, p. 241).

The participants passed through five phases that were part of the Ulysses’ curriculum:

- Preparation phase. The participants were selected based on their country, gender representation, and the program chosen.
- Induction phase. The participants practiced yoga, meditation to develop the balance of their body and mind in order to cope with emotional and challenging situations during their sojourns.
- Field assignment phase. The participants worked in team projects with local partners, developing their professional knowledge and helping the local organizations to achieve their social and environmental missions.
- Debriefing phase. The participants shared project experiences and celebrated within their groups, the cross-cultural competence gained in achieving their learning objectives.
- Networking phase. The participants attended alumni and special interest group meetings where topics such as diversity and poverty were discussed, and panel discussions were organized by each research team.

From the participants' interview analysis, the researchers found that the participants' experiential learning during their sojourn abroad triggered deeper reflective thoughts and greater self-awareness, and fostered their interpersonal and communication skills. Additionally, the researchers noted that through the experiential learning, the participants developed a greater tolerance for ambiguity, respect, and acceptance of other people's values and traditions; furthermore, these experiences taught them humbleness and the recognition of their limitations. Similar transformations through experiential learning in the study of competence development in educational travel will be described next.

An international internship and research project. During an international internship, the participants lived and worked with people of the host country and they had the opportunity to socialize and tackle real world challenges faced by the host organization; whereas the international research project was created by the Association of Marketing' graduate students from the Rotterdam School of Management (Netherlands) to allow them to conduct marketing research in a foreign country (Van't Klooster, 2014).

In order to identify competencies and professional skills the participants developed during their International Internship (II), Van't Klooster surveyed 967 graduate students [501 females and 466 males] using an on-line survey. Inglehart and Baker's dimensional value model (as cited in Van't Klooster, 2014) was used to measure the psychic distance (distance between home and foreign market) and the consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) checklist for data analysis. The researcher found that the interns adjusted easily to cultural differences regardless of the

country of destination. The participants and their parents reported an increased self-awareness, self-confidence, and the ability to solve problems; they improved their time management and communications skills, developed ethnorelativism views on controversial issues, and gained knowledge of the socio-economic and political institutions of their host country. Additionally, the researcher noted that the participants from less developed countries adjusted easily during their internship to high income countries whereas the participants from developed countries hardly established meaningful interactions within their host countries. For the researcher, the influence of the media (movies and television shows) may have influenced the participants' perception of the values of their hosts.

During their international research project, the participants attended counseling sessions with their academic supervisors, participated in market planning and desk research, and presented a final project. The participants were required to reflect on their experiential learning and to evaluate their final project. Moreover, they worked with different personalities with various worldviews which tested their patience, and their team-building, conflict, and management skills.

The 116 participants were required to journalize their perception of learning in terms of management skills, cross-cultural competencies, and personal development. Their reflective journals were analyzed and coded using the competence framework. The researcher found that 80% of the participants mentioned an improvement in their collaboration skills, honed their interview skills, and developed their organization skills with the tools such as Google Docs and Dropbox. Furthermore, the participants reported

an improvement in their understandings of intercultural differences, foreign politics, economic policies, religious and customs and the impact of these factors on the hosts' attitudes, behaviors, and skills.

As Van't Klooster (2014) indicated, the added value of educational travel programs depended on the duration and the destination of the participants (p. 171), and administrators of the educational institutions can plan, design, and select experiential study abroad programs that foster reflective thoughts, empower the participants' personal and professional development, and enhanced intercultural competencies.

The Community Geographic Project. In the Community Geographic Project (CGP), 22 American students (12 graduates and 10 undergraduates) were selected after an interview process, to participate in experiential learning through study abroad in Belize (Hawthorne, Atchison, & LangBruttig, 2014). The project aimed to develop international community-based research experiences, understand the social and environmental issues important to Belizean collaborators. Prior to their departure, the participants met several times to learn the basic of the Geographic Information System (GIS) data collection; and to discuss the research ethics and the expectations for the learning experience; and different strategies for developing a partnership with the Belizean collaborators.

During their sojourn abroad, the participants selected one project from among the three projects that focused on economic development, transportation planning, and tourism services and resources management. With their hosts, they mapped public

transportation across Belize, agricultural production in Stann Creek district, and reef habitats in the South water cage.

Mapping the public transportation. Many Belizeans relied on the bus to travel between towns and cities in search of employment or family obligations but did not possess a comprehensive map of potential bus routes. Therefore, the participants collected input from the community that they included in their analysis and the creation of the final map.

Mapping the agriculture production. The participants utilized the venue of this agriculture project to request additional funds for large scale GPS project related to agriculture throughout Belize. Twenty-two students, eight Belizean community staff members, and two ministry staff members collaborated and teamed up (three to four teams) to create a database and maps for the Belizeans' Banana Association.

Mapping the reef habitats. The participants consulted with the resort staff on the South water cage in Belize to create a Geographic Information System (GIS) database and map of snorkeling hotspots to guide tourists, snorkelers, and boat captains. The reef's map was created with strong community inputs: boat captains provided their opinions about reef bio-diversity while snorkelers provided their perceptions of the shallow areas to avoid.

Through the participants' interviews and reflective journals, the researchers found that the participants developed an appreciation of the local power actions, a genuine understanding of their struggles, and an increased self-esteem in the participants' ability to impact the local communities and the government systems' decisions. As this

community geographic project demonstrated, experiential learning through study abroad that includes meaningful local community (academic and non-academic) collaboration can prepare the participants for employment in the global market place, enhance their intercultural competence, and develop their interpersonal skills.

The School of International Studies (SIS) at the University of Pacific had also helped the participants develop cross-cultural competency but with an integrated study abroad curriculum that is described in the following section.

The School of International Studies. The School of International Studies (SIS) was located at the University of Pacific in the United States and had an integrated curriculum; undergraduate students took courses in cultural adaptation as a part of their predeparture training and spent at least a semester abroad (Sample, 2013). Then during the next 4 years, the participants took interdisciplinary and faculty team-taught courses such as contemporary world issues, perspectives in world history, international research methods, and world geography. For example, an economist lectured students on poverty whereas an anthropologist explained the meaning of poverty from people's perspectives.

This integrated curriculum aimed to transform participants into independent thinkers, to foster their understanding of global issues, and to develop their critical skills. The SIS had various study abroad destinations: Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Oceania. Fifty-three undergraduate students who enrolled in the program from 2007 to 2010 were selected to participate in this study. The participants had to read and write on a range of contemporary and historical issues as a part of their course assignments and lead weekly discussions. Additionally, the participants immersed

themselves in their host countries, interacted with local people, and submitted reflective papers on different cultural aspects (norms, values, and behaviors) of their host countries utilizing and highlighting their observational, analytical, and reflective skills.

The researcher followed the participants for 4 years through direct observation and direct assessment of their international and intercultural learning using the Intercultural Development Inventory. The findings suggested that the participants enhanced their ability to behave appropriately in cross-cultural situations, and improved their sensibility to cultural differences. Sample (2013) noted that the experiential learning that led to the participants' intercultural competence, did not emerge accidentally, it was a result of an educational process that had cognitive, affective, and experiential components. The participants were engaged cognitively and experientially through independent readings and reflective writings, audio and visual presentations (using Skype and smartphone) from the pre-training orientation to their experiential learning during their sojourn abroad.

As the SIS researchers suggested, experiential learning through study abroad included an integrative curriculum that combined lectures, hands-on experiences, international internship and research projects, reflective questions that stimulated thinking, immersion with a collaboration with the hosts' staff and personal, discussions, and visual presentations using modern technology such as Skype, Google Hangouts, and Facebook. Whether the study abroad is for short or long term, the above pedagogical strategies may spur creativity, enhance communication skills in the host country's language, and foster students' cross-cultural competence.

Short and Long-Term Implications of Experiential Learning Abroad

African American high school students can benefit personally, academically, and professionally during their short or long-term experiential learning abroad, and immersion programs (DeGraaf et al., 2013; Olberding & Olberding, 2010). Student candidates for study abroad programs may need human, social, cultural and financial capital to guide them in their choice between short and long-term sojourns abroad (Salisbury et al., 2011; Stone, 2014; Travers, 2014). However, Kehl and Morris (2008) suggested that before students' decision to choose an experiential learning abroad program, study abroad professionals provide them with educational training on the benefits of both short and long-term study abroad programs, and the cost that may incur.

Short versus long-term experiential learning abroad. In their study on the differences in global mindedness between short and a semester long study abroad, Kehl and Morris (2008) found that both short (8 weeks or less) and long-term (at least a semester) sojourns abroad required an appropriate preparation of the participants, realistic expectations, and participants' training on intercultural encounters (p. 77). Out of 992 students contacted through e-mail, 520 responses were received. The analysis of data indicated significant differences between short and long term study. The participants who completed a semester-long program abroad scored higher in global-mindedness than students who studied for 8 weeks or less. Similarly, Dwyer and Zorn (as cited in Kehl & Morris, 2008) found that full academic year of study abroad experiences had more significant and lasting effect on students' personal and cross-cultural development than a short-term sojourn (p. 71). The alumni of study abroad programs stated that a long-term

(a semester) allowed sojourners to increase their language fluency, to integrate in the host culture, and to make friends (p. 70). Dwyer and Zorn found a significant correlation between the duration of the study abroad program and the cross-cultural perspectives (p. 72).

Other researchers have found that participants' move from their ethnocentric mindsets to ethnorelativism took time, and in some cases, the cultural differences might become complex for the participants to adjust; and the sojourners may experience a transformation compelled by the need to survive or out of necessity (Beaven & Spencer-Ovate, 2016; Brown, 2009; Evans, Blamer, Jensen, Schertz, & Kelly, 2013; Huish & Tiessen, 2014; Robinson, 2013; Schuitema & Veugelers, 2011). For example, an international student may express his disappointment in the United States after a semester of study in an American college because he is unable to make friends, and then may decide to go back home.

Despite the conflicting opinions on the most effective duration of study abroad programs, study abroad professionals may help potential sojourners to consider many other factors that can affect their decisions regarding choice of programs (Soria & Troisi, 2013). For example, they may examine the level of the cross-cultural immersion, the type of housing in the host country, and the financial resources to assure that the outcomes of their experience are achieved. The aim for both sojourners and the study abroad administrators may be to bring a sustainable transformation into their students with social change implication in the long-term for their communities (Anderson, Lorenz, & White,

2016; Bennett, 2008; Brewer & Cunningham, 2009; Lee & Green, 2016; Olberding & Olberding, 2010; Perry, Stoner, & Tarrant, 2012).

Alternatives to experiential learning abroad. Internationalization at home may be an alternative for African American high school students who lack financial resources to support their sojourn for experiential learning abroad (Soria & Troisi, 2013). In their study on internationalization at home, Soria and Troisi (2013) used the Students' Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey of 213,160 undergraduate students from nine large public universities in the United States. The participants answered questions related to academic engagement, research experiences, sense of belonging, satisfaction, and demographic information during their college years. Across the nine universities, 81,135 students responded (38.1%); among the participants, there were 59% of females, 41% males, .4% American Indian, 6.3% African American, 12.4% Hispanic, 19.6% Asian, and 61.4% White. In addition to the SERU survey forced choice questions, the participants were asked to self-report their global, international, and intercultural (GII) competence skills before and during their college years in the following areas: the understanding of global issues, ability to apply global knowledge and work across culture, and the ability to appreciate, tolerate, and understand the global diversity. The researchers used a descriptive analysis to examine the students' participation rate in at home global activities and multiple linear regression to predict students' self-reported development in global and intercultural competencies (p. 270).

In their analysis of the students' self-report and the SERU survey, Soria and Troisi (2013) noted that there was significant student participation and engagement in the

formal and informal activities of the nine participant universities. For example, the participants enrolled in a course with an international theme, connected with an international student, or attended lectures, performances, workshops, or an international conference with a global focus.

Participants also reported development of the global, international, and intercultural (GII) competencies, but African American students reported statistically significant and lower development of intercultural competencies than the average, Asia students reported lower development in both international and intercultural competencies, and Hispanic students reported statistically significant and higher development of global and intercultural competencies. Female, low-income, and working class students reported greater development in both global and intercultural skills.

The researchers suggested that formal, informal, and structural or unstructured activities be included in the curriculum at home to enhance all the students' global and cross-cultural competencies (p. 273). Furthermore, Soria and Troisi (2013) noted that educational institutions can foster collaboration between international and local programs, promote the social engagement of the students, assist faculty in their willingness to integrate cross-cultural experiences in their pedagogy, and incorporate international themes in different aspects of campus life. The researchers added that these institutions can sustain the internationalization at home through policy, funding, and programs that support teachers and students to develop intercultural competence skills.

Overview of Key Constructs in Relationship to the Research Questions

As the above literature review demonstrates, study abroad programs can change students' world views, enhance intercultural development, dispel stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination, promote language learning, and foster cognitive and intrapersonal growth (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009; Brown, 2009; Root & Ngampornchai, 2012; Salisbury et al., 2011; Savicki, 2013; Stebleton et al., 2013). Additionally, these study abroad programs can strengthen academic abilities of the participants and their professional skills. Moreover, students might learn to value themselves, to respect, accept and adjust to cultural differences (Anderson, Lorenz, & White, 2016). The insights I have obtained from the above literature will guide my reasoning during my exploration of the influence of intercultural experiences abroad on African American high school students (RQ1).

Unfortunately, most of the above studies related only to college level students in affluent lifestyle even though African American high school students can also benefit from experiential learning abroad programs and enhance their intercultural competence skills. In this research project, I plan to focus on the influence of such intercultural learning experience abroad on African American high school students.

For the six African American graduate students who participated in the study abroad program in Ghana, Boateng, and Thompson (2013) noted that their reflective essays suggested they moved gradually from the denial, defense, and minimization stages to the acceptance, adaptation, and integration stages. The experiential learning in Ghana was historically meaningful for the six African American students because they learned

about the ancestors' history, visited slave castles, and accepted their identity as members of the African diaspora. In my dissertation, I plan to listen for other factors such as the trip destinations, the length of time abroad, and gender that might influence the participants' intercultural competence development (Beaven & Spencer-Oatey, 2016; DeGraaf, Slagter, Larsen, & Ditta, 2013).

Other researchers have used pre and post trip interviews and open-ended questions with the participants to obtain their perspectives on values, beliefs, and perceptive transformation (Monaghan & Hartmann, 2014). I intend to use open-ended questions during my semi-structural interviews that might invite the participants to provide a thick description of their intercultural experiences abroad.

Intercultural experiences abroad can influence not only the participants but also the parents, the host country's participants, the chaperones, and the education institutions (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009; Brown, 2009; Olberding & Olberding, 2010; Root & Ngampornchai, 2012; Salisbury et al., 2011). I plan to use the insight gained from the ripple effects of experiential learning abroad to answer RQ3 that focuses on how the parents and teachers perceive the participants' personal development after their experiential learning abroad.

As Bennett and Bennett (2008) suggested in the DMIS, acquiring intercultural competence is a dynamic process. For example, moving from ethnocentric mindset to ethnorelativism thinking takes time. The cultural differences might become insurmountable and complex to accept, adapt, and adjust (Brewer & Cunningham, 2009; Olberding & Olberding, 2010; Perry, Stoner, & Tarrant, 2012). However, well-planned

structured and unstructured activities (Bernardino, Ehigiator, & Picard, 2008; Brustein, 2009; Bunggle, Clayton, Platter, & Jones, 2009; Hall, Gray, Downey, Sheringham, Jones, Power, & Truong, 2016; Goodall, 2013; Grimminger-Seidensticker & Möhwald, 2016; Schuitema & Veugelers, 2011), predeparture training, and reflective practices such as journals and portfolios have been found to enhance participants' awareness of the global culture and to develop their intercultural competence skills (Angela & Chiu, 2010; Craig, Zou, & Poimbeauf, 2015; Savicki, 2009; Williams, 2009).

Monaghan and Hartmann (2014) found that high school students who have traveled to developing countries have experienced sensitive events and conflicts that stirred their reflection and keen observation. The power of witnessing such life threatening obstacles as poverty, tribal conflicts, and environmental concerns can be counted among the numerous intangibles that might transform the participants' attitudes, values, thinking, and enhance their intercultural competence skills (Boateng & Thompson, 2013; Sample, 2013). As Kolb (2015) suggested in the theory of experiential learning, learning from experience is a vehicle of human development and instrument of social change in a society. In the conceptual framework of my research project, I plan to use Bennett's DMIS to explain the gradual process of developing intercultural competence through increasing cultural sensitivity, and Kolb's theory of experiential learning to demonstrate the importance of reflective practices in intercultural learning abroad.

Rexeisen (2013) who used the DMIS in his study, found that students do not carry the benefits of their experience abroad beyond the stage of minimization. The participants

continued to have a mono-cultural view of the world whereas Boateng and Thompson (2013) found that the participants who traveled to Ghana enhanced their sensitivity at the acceptance and adaptation stages. Also, in their qualitative case study, Root and Ngampornchai (2013) found that through activities that foster cultural reflections and include ethnocentrism case studies such as prejudice and stereotype, the participants enhanced their cultural difference approach with ethnorelativism mindset. Moreover, Olberding and Olberding (2010) and Monaghan and Hartman (2014) found in their qualitative case studies that reflective activities led to open- mindedness, acceptance, and respect of other people's values and cultures.

Since students' interpretation of their experiences abroad may differ according to each student's cultural lenses, base knowledge, and emotional resilience, it might be unrealistic to expect all students who participate in these study abroad programs, to react the same way to their experience during or after their sojourns (Allison et al., 2012; Kehl & Morris, 2008). Therefore, travel abroad professionals may prepare potential sojourners emotionally and psychologically to the challenges awaiting them in the host country (Dunn et al., 2014; Keung & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2013; Savicki, 2013).

Summary

The review of empirical studies indicates that researchers whose studies I reviewed are unanimous on the positive influence of intercultural experience abroad. In these studies, undergraduate and graduate students have benefited from their sojourn abroad in developing abilities to interact out of their comfort zone, accept cultural differences, and adjust their ethnocentric mindsets to move gradually towards

ethnorelativism thinking. This dynamic process can be facilitated by reflective activities that stir participants' reflection and keen observation.

Despite the numerous advantages, African American high school students remain underrepresented in intercultural experience abroad programs, and only a few studies have focused on their participation in immersion and international exchanges. Their involvement in such programs might open them to a new way of thinking, provide insight into their values and beliefs, foster their appreciation of cultural differences, enhance cultural sympathy and humility, tolerance for diversity, and promote peace and social change in their education institution and the global community.

In Chapter 3, I outlined a descriptive qualitative case study approach that examined the participants' perceptions of the influence of the experiential learning programs on their intercultural competence, the perceptions of their parents and chaperons on their participants' development. An in-depth analysis and the findings resulting from this study may enlighten future exploration of experiential learning abroad.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to explore the influence of intercultural experiences through study abroad and immersion programs on African American high school students' intercultural competence. In Chapter 3, I discuss the rationale for the research design, explain my role as a researcher, and describe my methodological plan. Also, I justify the rationale for choosing a sample beyond the targeted population and explain the participants' selection process and the instruments of data collection. Moreover, I outline my plan for data analysis and explain how I managed trustworthiness issues and ethical procedures during the research process.

Research Design and Rationale

I chose a qualitative descriptive case study approach for this research project because that approach provided a complete, in-depth, and literal description of a human situation or program using an array sources of evidence (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Stake, 2010; Yin, 2012). In the following section, I restated the research questions, identified the central phenomenon of the study, and justified the rationale of my research design.

Research Questions

This qualitative descriptive case study research project intended to answer the following questions:

- In what ways do travel abroad and immersion programs influence African American high school students' cross-cultural awareness and intercultural competence?

- What aspects of experiential learning abroad do African American high school students believe have fostered their intercultural competence?
- How do African American high school students' teachers and parents perceive their children's personal development during and after their intercultural and experiential learning abroad?

Case Study Rationale

In this research project, I explored the influence of intercultural experiences on African American high school students' intercultural competence, and the manifestation of that competence in the school environment, and in their respective families upon the participants' return. I used a descriptive case study approach to analyze the perceptions of the African American sojourners, their parents, and their chaperons after their experiential learning abroad. Yin (2012) suggested that the use several sources of evidence in a case study allows the researcher to analyze data in many different ways and to avoid a premature conclusion. Also, the finding becomes more convincing and accurate when a pattern from one source is corroborated by the evidence from other sources. These sources of data may include field observations with diaries, interviews with the participants, blogs and journals, physical artifacts, and archival records (Merriam, 2009; Miles et al., 2014; Stake, 2010). Furthermore, Creswell (2009) added that a case study is an exploration of a bounded system through detailed, and in-depth data collection involving multiple perspectives and sources of information. For example in this research project, I identified aspects of experiential learning abroad programs that may have led African American high school students to intercultural competence through

interviews, focus groups of students, field notes, and the narrative part of the students' experiential learning portfolios. Patton (2015) validated the strength of a case study approach when he noted that this approach offers a possibility of in-depth interviews that allows the participants to share their stories and involves greater reactivity than surveys and tests that are used in quantitative inquiries. A descriptive case study allowed me to obtain the participants' perspective after their experiential learning abroad. Also, a thick and rich description of the sojourners' experiences using a descriptive case study approach can allow the reader to decide on the transferability of the findings (Creswell, 2009). During the data collection process, the sojourners reported on their experience abroad. For example, explaining how to manage stress, assumed responsibility, became more independent thinkers, and overcame challenges of living away from their comfort zone. I used a reflective template prompt that guided the participants' interviews and focus groups (Appendices A & B). According to Yin (2012), the researcher's ability to deal with a variety of evidence from different sources constitutes the strength of the case study approach.

Other Qualitative Approaches Considered

Before I settled for a case study approach, I explored the phenomenological, narratives, and the qualitative ethnographic approaches. According to Creswell (2009), a phenomenology approach requires a broader philosophical assumption of the participants' values and beliefs which necessitate a hefty period of time and resources. While the phenomenological approach focuses on what all participants have in common as they experience the phenomenon, narrative studies are built on participants' life

stories, a focus that can impede collection of insightful perspectives from program administrators or other stakeholders (Creswell, 2009). Moreover, an ethnographic approach may require a full immersion with African American high school students and a long sojourn abroad which can become time consuming and a financial burden for the researcher (Merriam, 2009). Some researchers have expressed concern about the lack of rigor in adopting case study approach and the influence of equivocal evidence on the conclusions (Patton, 2015) while other researchers have found the inability to generalize the findings from a case study a legitimate concern (Stake, 2010). Despite these shortcomings, a researcher using a case study approach can work hard to establish rigorous procedures of data collection and analysis, report all evidence fairly, and exert greater attention during the experiments (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, Yin (2014) suggested that case studies experiments can also be generalizable to the theoretical proposition but not to the population or universe.

A qualitative descriptive case study approach compensates for limitation of the approaches I discussed above and provided me with a variety of source of evidence that strengthened my study's findings. My roles as data collector and analyst are discussed in the following section.

Role of the Researcher

As a principal investigator in this study, I valued the importance of aligning the sample with the research questions and determined if the participants were representative of the population of the study. In this qualitative descriptive case study, I served as the sole data collector, interviewed transcriptionist, and data analyst. I established and

maintained a working research partnership with the school administrator, and the community partner who served as a liaison at the data collection site (Maxwell, 2013). Furthermore, I constantly attempted to identify and recognize reflectively my biases and personal background that would have shaped the interpretation and analysis of data. As Maxwell (2013) suggested my eyes and ears were the tools to gather information from casual and incidental conversations, and make sense of the data collected.

Method

In the next section, I described the school site of my analysis, the selection criteria for participants, my plan for sampling strategies, and identified other sources of data for my analysis.

School Site

I sought permission to collect data at an international baccalaureate high school in the Northeast of the United States, which I called St. Marcel High School to preserve anonymity, which offers global education through service learning opportunities, immersion and exchange programs to high school students aged 16 to 19. In partnership with the Global Citizenship Association, the school promotes participation in students' international exchanges, travel abroad, and sends students to attend international and national events organized by Global Citizenship Association. For over a decade, the school has belonged to the International Baccalaureate Organization (IB) that fosters international travels and global awareness. The student population is diverse: 51% African American, 11% Caucasian, 12% Asian, 20% Latino, and 6% of the students are from other ethnic groups.

Participant Selection

The director of the Global Citizenship Association at the international baccalaureate high school served as my liaison with the participants. She was willing to help post a recruitment flyer in the school to inform and invite African Americans students, their parents, and teachers to the information sessions about the study. Also, I planned that the director of the Global Citizenship Association at the international baccalaureate urban high school would keep a sign-up log for the individuals who would be interested in attending the information sessions. Only African American students, their parents, and the teachers who participated in experiential learning program abroad during the last 3 years were selected on the first come, first serve basis. I planned to conduct three information sessions in the school library: one session with parents, another session with teachers, and the last session with students. The purpose of these sessions was to explain the purpose of the study, the benefits, and the risk of participation using the consent and assent forms. During these sessions, the library door was closed with a “do not disturb” sign on the door to protect the participants’ privacy and maintain confidentiality. The participants at these information sessions had 5 days to reflect and review the consent/assent forms before they signed and returned the forms to me at the end of the week. The community partner signed the confidentiality agreement to protect the participants’ privacy and parents signed the consent forms to indicate their consent for their children’s participation. Students signed the assent forms, and parents and

teachers signed the interview release form to indicate their voluntary participation.

Sample Size

The sample size of 15 African American students, four parents, and three teachers was expected to be representative and broad enough to reach data saturation. As Merriam (2009) indicated, the purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to solve a problem, discover what occurs and the relationship among different constructs. Also, the researcher needs to determine the selection criteria for choosing or selecting the participants or the site of the study (Merriam, 2009). Patton (2015) and Merriam (2009) added that the researcher may need to consider factors such as the research question, what is at stake, what will have credibility, and what the researcher can accomplish with available resources and time. Furthermore, the researchers need an adequate number of participants, an appropriate site or activities that may help to answer the research question until they reach the point of saturation. As Creswell (2009) suggested, I was flexible during the data collection process. For example, the sample changed when the participants withdrew or an unexpected event occurred. In such instances, I used alternative participants or an interview format to reach the potential number of participants.

Sampling Strategy

The purposeful sample for this descriptive qualitative case study included 13 African American students, two parents, and two teachers from an international baccalaureate high school in the Northeast of the United States. As Patton (2015) suggested, I considered the resources available, time, and the thickness of information at

the research site to ensure saturation, and to explore the influence of intercultural exchange programs abroad on the participants. Only current African American students, parents, teachers, and school personnel who participated in the experiential learning programs abroad during the last 3 years participated in the study. My community partner helped post the recruitment flyer, maintained a sign-up log for interested individuals who were willing to attend the information sessions, and helped verify the eligibility criteria using the school trip log.

Students. I intended to interview 15 African American students who had participated in the immersion program and Easter trip abroad during the last 3 years. This study was conducted in collaboration with my community partner who helped verify possible students' and teachers' eligibility. The eligible students participated in the focus group meetings and individual interviews. I expected the sample size of 15 African American high school students to be representative and broad enough to reach saturation for this descriptive case study.

Parents. The community partner helped post a flyer to inform parents about the study, and invited them to the information session I conducted at the school. Also, I planned and followed through to send an information letter with the school principal's support letter to inform parents about the study. If interested, parents would sign-up for the information session at the community partner's office. I anticipated at least four parents of the participant African American students to attend the information session. They would have 5 days to reflect on the study and sign the consent form before their voluntary participation in the data collection process. The parents' perspective was hoped

to provide insight on their expectation before and during the immersion, and what they had observed when their children returned home.

Teachers. The community partner helped post a flyer to inform teachers and school personnel about the study and invited them to the information session. If interested, teachers and school personnel would sign-up at the community partner's office to attend the information session. The community partner would help verify the eligibility criteria using the school trip log. I anticipated at least three teachers and school personnel who had participated directly or indirectly in the immersion programs to offer their perspectives on the immersion programs and comment on the students' development during and after their sojourn abroad. Furthermore, the teachers and school personnel might refer to the students' experiential learning portfolios to demonstrate the influence of the students' experiential learning abroad on their intercultural competence skills. This data triangulation process might provide insight on the influence of intercultural exchange programs on the participants and enhance the credibility of the findings (Patton, 2015).

Recruitment Procedures

The recruitment of participants was contingent upon the approval of my research project by the St. Marc school district's office of research and evaluation office. I submitted a complete application form with the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval number before any field research work in the district (Walden IRB approval number is 11-30-16-0239878). The community partner helped post a recruitment flyer that informed and invited African American students and their parents, teachers, and

school personnel who had participated in exchange and immersion programs abroad during the last 3 years, to attend the information sessions about the study and receive the consent/assent forms. Following these information sessions, the participants had 5 days to reflect and decide whether they intend to participate in the study. After 5 days, the participants signed and returned the forms to me at the end of the week. Only participants who completed, signed, and returned their consent forms were selected to participate in the research project. For minor students, their parents' consent were on file to comply with Walden University's requirements.

Instrumentation

I created the interview protocols for teachers and parents with the support of my committee chair. The alignment of the interview protocols with the research questions was detailed in Appendix A. I designed the interview questions to be an adaptation of Bennett and Hammer's Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) that has been tested for validity and reliability in measuring intercultural competence and has been found to be appropriate for high school students (Hammer, 2009, 2011). Sample (2013) and Rexisen (2013) used quantitative approach to administer pre and posttests through the lenses of IDI. The IDI was based on the validity of the DMIS to help understand intercultural competence (Taylor, 2014). Boateng and Thompson (2013) used the DMIS in their study to explain the dynamic progress of the participants towards intercultural sensitivity. I adjusted my interview questions to the individual situation of the participants and asked them about the skills acquired (if any) during their trip(s) abroad, and experiential learning that might have led to intercultural competence. The interviews

were audio recorded using my Samsung Galaxy Tab 10.1 (Piper, Weibel, & Hollan, 2013). I explained my plan for data collection procedures, storage, integrity protection, and analysis plan in the data collection and analysis sections.

Moreover, I moderated three focus groups of five students each to ascertain the views of each participant in the group, to allow the participants to provide a fresh commentary about their experience abroad, and to make additional comments beyond their original responses (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014). However, only 13 students participated. As Yin (2014) suggested, the purpose of such a focus group was to corroborate certain findings that the researcher had already established and to test the genuineness of the participants' views by checking with their peers who hold different perspectives. The focus group protocol and sample questions are included in Appendix B.

I used triangulation and peer review to test the accuracy of my data collection. To triangulate, I diversified the interview methods and sources, notably interviews, focus group, and participants checking of the verbatim transcripts that created the bedrock of my analysis (Patton, 2015). Through the face-to-face interview and the focus group I was able to read the participants' body language, facial expressions, and the environment, and recorded these elements in my Livescribe note book. I planned to add to these strategies, expert audit review (feedback from my committee members), parents' and teachers' feedback, and the narrative part of students' experiential learning portfolios during my effective data collection (Janesick, 2010).

The interviews were planned to last 30 to 45 minutes to obtain a general perspective on the participants' intercultural experience abroad using the semi-structured

interview. The interviews ended up taking 25 to 68 minutes. The second interview was intended as a follow-up with the participants to provide new insights or to confirm or clarify my early observation. I intended to conduct the follow-up interviews for additional information where necessary, which I used two times. Also, the participants had the option of interviewing where they felt comfortable to speak without impediment.

Data Collection

As the purpose of my study was to understand the influence of the intercultural experiences on African American high school students, I intended to use qualitative methods of data collection, notably interviews with African American high school students who had traveled abroad from an international baccalaureate school in the Northeast of the United States, focus groups of students, and students' portfolios. These interviews were semi-structured to allow for revision and flexibility in dealing with unexpected events during the interview process (Patton, 2015).

Researchers found that African American adolescents are comfortable and relaxed in a group setting where they can express their feeling and convey their ideas within the peers' culture (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). Therefore, I combined individual interviews with focus group meetings to allow the participants to build on their peers' talk and discuss their experiences. I intended to lead three separate focus group meetings of five students each and individual interviews with parents and teachers. I used the school library to conduct these meetings. In order to protect the privacy and maintain the confidentiality of the participants, the library door was closed, and a "do not disturb" sign was posted on the door. With the students' permission, I reviewed their experiential

learning portfolios to corroborate their responses to the interview questions and their statements during the focus group meetings.

Also, I needed to establish a working partnership with the participants to gain access to their world, to get them to share their experiential learning abroad without overstepping my boundaries. As I interviewed the participants, I decided to record and take field notes that would inform my analysis during the coding process.

As Patton (2015) suggested, managing and protecting collected data would be pivotal in the continuity of my research work. Therefore, I intended to create an Excel database inventory and backup copies of all collected data and keep one master copy in a secure place. I used a locked cabinet in the basement of my home office with a passcode known only to myself. Creswell (2009) corroborated Patton's suggestions, but added that if the researcher uses software to organize and manage the data, a backup copy of the computer files, and a master list of the types of information gathered be developed. Following their suggestions, I used an external flash drive to create a backup copy of all my computer files. Also, I labeled and stored collected data in a locked filing cabinet with a duplicate key I will keep in my personal safe for 5 years after the completion of the study. Since I would be accountable for following the ethical procedures and had promised to protect the confidentiality of the participants, I would be obliged to take good care of data collected as precious materials in my possession (Patton, 2015).

Exit Procedures

At the conclusion of the data collection, each student participant received a \$5 Dunkin' Donuts gift card whereas parents and teachers received \$10 gift cards each with

a note of appreciation for their voluntary participation in the research process. All participants received the gift regardless of their availability for the follow-up interview. I was opened to any protocol existing in the school district and in collaboration with the school administrator to determine the best way to show appreciation to the participants. However, such protocol was inexistent. I will send a digital copy of my dissertation to the district research and development office as requested in the collaboration contract.

Data Analysis Plan

Data I collected from the interviews of students, parents, and teachers, and focus group meetings with students were recorded with the participants' consent. I transcribed the digital recording into a Word document and used the Excel software for coding and analysis of data collected. I corroborated the transcribed interviews from students, parents, and teachers, and field notes to identify salient themes, reoccurring patterns, and codes based on the IDI (Hammer, 2011; Miles & Huberman, 2014; Patton, 2015; Saldana, 2016). I corroborated data collected from the interviews with focus group meetings, field notes, and experiential portfolios to limit poor recall or inaccurate articulation (Yin, 2014). As Patton (2015) noted, this triangulation process may require technical, intellectual skills, and flexibility in the part of the researcher who needs analytical skills in coding, analyzing the emerging themes for patterns, and building the foundation for the interpretation phase.

Initially, I developed a coding structure list (figure 2) based on my conceptual framework and research questions that I revised or changed during data collection (Miles et al., 2014). As I reflected and thought through the interviews, focus groups, and

documents processes, I used memos to synthesize data and detected reoccurring patterns. Then, I clustered similar codes to create a reduced number of themes that helped develop analytic meaning for the assertions. I started coding data as soon as I collected it, to help me sharpen my eyes and ears when I returned to the setting the next day to collect more data. Finally, I created a matrix display that helped organize the condensed data into a format for reflection, verification, and analysis (Miles et al., 2014; Thorne, 2016).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Since I was both the collector and the analyst of data in this descriptive case study, there may be a concern for the credibility of the findings (Maxwell, 2009). Therefore, I intended to increase trustworthiness of the findings by minimizing threats such as personal bias and data saturation. I address the issues of trustworthiness in the next subsection,

Credibility

To ensure the credibility of my conclusion, I needed to avoid any threats that may impede the validity of the findings. Maxwell (2013) suggested the use of triangulation, the collection of rich and thick data through an in-depth semi-structural interview, feedback from my committee members, codes and themes that cover relevant data, and the notes from the site visit as strategies to test the credibility of the findings. Also, Patton (2015) suggested rigorous data collection strategies and analysis procedures. Similarly, I planned to use various sources of data such as the participants' interviews, my field notes, and the students' experiential learning abroad portfolios that would help triangulate data, identify biases and validate the conclusion.

Transferability

Transferability or generalizability refers to the applicability of findings from one context to another (Creswell, 2009). This descriptive case study was not intended to generalize findings. However, its findings may add to the database of qualitative inquiry that can enrich the experiential learning abroad in urban high school settings to illuminate future researchers.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the integrity and reliability of the research process. For example, data collection and analysis may evolve as I expect new insights from the interviews and observation that can influence follow-up questions or narrow the focus of my research (Patton, 2015). Using memo and reflective journals during the data collection process may help establish an audit trail of this descriptive case study, whereas my focus on the participants' experiential learning abroad during the analysis phase, can enhance my ability to consider all factors that may lead to alteration of the analysis process. As Patton (2015) suggested, the "design is not a mechanical, a set in-stone plan, but a process and a way of thinking that evolves during the research process" (p. 244).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to a researcher's efforts to corroborate data and affirm their interpretation (Creswell, 2009). I planned to enhance confirmability in obtaining direct observation and requesting feedback session(s) from the participants in school settings, corroborating reports from different sources, providing a detailed description of the content and purpose of the study, and maintaining an audit trail that may allow future

researchers to understand and expand the analysis. Also, I included the participants' words from the transcripts in the Chapters 4 and 5 to maximize confirmability.

Reducing Personal Bias

The topic of my research project resonates with my personal experience working in the inner-city school district where a high number of African American high school students drop out of high school, bully their peers from other countries, and have less learning motivation. My assumption in exploring this descriptive case study was that African American high school students might demonstrate understanding, respect, and empathy towards their peers from foreign countries after their exposure to experiential learning abroad. Since my personal experience and background are a part of my experiential data, Maxwell (2013) suggested the use of triangulation to minimize the validity threat. In addition to my personal reflexivity using observation notes, the participants' perspectives and answers to the interview protocol (Appendix A) would serve as a credible triangulation (Patton, 2015).

Ethical Considerations

I sought the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to confirm a design and process that protect the participants. To comply with ethical practices and in anticipation of IRB requirements, the process began with a request for cooperation letter that was sent to the Global Citizenship Association Liaison at St. Marcel High School to contact the participants. The confidential agreement that I signed with the participants certified that their participation was voluntary, and no financial compensation would be provided. I planned to hold the interview in strict confidence, and had the parents sign the

authorization form to allow their minor children to participate in the interview during the research process. Also, each participant was planned to receive the general information about the research project and the interview sample questions. Maxwell (2013) suggested that researchers understand how the validity was tainted and acknowledge his/her bias at the outset of the proposal or the conclusion. I followed Maxwell's suggestions by recognizing my personal bias with a declarative statement acknowledging my past experiences working in urban schools in the conclusion of my research project.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I presented the research questions, described the research method, the rationale for choosing the site, and the methodology for data collection, analysis, and interpretation process. Furthermore, I outlined different strategies to minimize the validity threats, and the procedures to follow to comply with the IRB. This qualitative descriptive case study addressed the gap in the literature regarding African American high school students' experiential learning abroad. The outcome of this study may encourage investment in experiential learning abroad for high school students, particularly for African American in urban settings. In Chapter 4, I report my findings and discuss the setting procedures I used for participants' selection, data collection and analysis, and I provide evidence of trustworthiness. Bennett's DMIS and Kolb's theory of experiential learning will frame the discussion of the findings in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Results

In Chapter 4, I explain the findings of this qualitative descriptive case study, describe the setting and the participants' selection procedures. Also, I discuss the data collection strategies and their analysis, and the evidence of trustworthiness. This study focused on the influence of the intercultural experiential learning abroad on the African American high school students who have participated in these exchange and immersion programs during the last 3 years. In the following sections, I describe the research setting, the processes of participants' selection, data collection, and analysis, and present the results of my findings.

Setting

I collected data from an international baccalaureate high school in the Northeast of the United States, which I call St. Marcel, to preserve anonymity. St. Marcel offers global education through service learning opportunities and immersion and exchange programs to high school students aged 16 to 19. In partnership with the Global Citizenship Association, the school promotes participation in students' international exchanges, travel abroad, and sends students to attend international and national events organized by Global Citizenship Association. Since 2005, the school has belonged to the IB that fosters international travels and global awareness within the larger international baccalaureate mandate which is "to develop, inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who help to create a better, a more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect" (Wright & Lee, 2014). The student population is diverse:

51% African American, 11% Caucasian, 12% Asian, 20% Latino, and 6% of the students are from other ethnic groups.

The admission at this school is very competitive. The applicant must be in the 80th percentile on standardized tests which implies an advanced score in reading and mathematics. Also, the applicants' report card grades must have As and Bs in the core courses, and excellent attendance and punctuality. Moreover, three letters of recommendations are required from all the candidates. Once accepted, students might take advanced placement (AP) course and exams. The AP participation is 45 % and the graduation rate is 96%.

Besides the 22 extracurricular academic teams and cultural club activities, the school organizes spring trips abroad and exchange programs. As a part of their predeparture training, students attend seminars and workshop worth a .25 credit. During the last 5 years, students traveled to China in 2017, Spain and Portugal in 2016, London and Paris in 2015, Costa Rica in 2014, and Spain in 2012. Also, students participated in a legislative, executive, and diplomatic tour of Washington DC, and Beijing sister students' exchange. Many students are usually excited to participate, but their parents' financial hardships prevent them from making the monthly payment. So far, only 9 % of the students have participated in these experiential trips abroad.

Participant Selection

The participants included 13 African American students, one parent, and two chaperones (a teacher and the school principal) who participated in the intercultural experiences abroad during the last 3 years. Among these student participants, there was a

senior female student who traveled abroad for a 2 week homestay trip organized by a virtual school, and who transferred to the St. Marcel High School during her senior year. The school principal helped post the recruitment flyer after we discussed the recruitment process and I explained the voluntary aspect of the students' participation, and the necessity to protect the potential participants' privacy. A week after the flyer was posted, I received four calls from African American students who were anxious to learn more about the project. After discussion with the principal by email and telephone, we agreed that Wednesday morning was a convenient time because students have an extended advisory period. So, 5 days after the flyer posting, I conducted the information sessions in the school library with 11 African American students and in the conference room with 10 African American students and one chaperone. Among these 21 student attendees, there were three male, two transgender, and 16 female students. Students were called to the principal office through the school intercom. African American students who attended the information sessions signed an attendance sheet and provided their parents' contact information. This attendance sheet allowed me to verify their participation eligibility and obtain their parents' contact information since no parents responded to my introduction letter. I sent out another information letter to parents through their children, and I made five follow-up calls in the evening to introduce myself and remind them of the information session at the end of the week. On Friday afternoon, I organized another information session for parents in the school library where two parents attended. In the evening, I called the parents who couldn't attend, and I emailed the study information to other parents who were not accessible.

At the end of each information sessions, I handed the interested African American participants the consent/assent forms, and I returned to the school site 5 days later to collect the signed forms in the principal office where I left a yellow envelope with my name on for the signed forms. Fifteen African American students, two chaperones, and two parents returned the signed forms. However, two students and two parents were not able to follow through and schedule the interview for personal reasons. But after I made follow-up calls, they accepted to be interviewed by phone. Among the potential African American participants, there were eight seniors, four juniors, and three sophomores, and three chaperones. Fourteen students were females, and one student was male. In addition, there were also two transgender senior students among the participants. One senior student transferred from a virtual school where she had traveled abroad on scholarship and had homestay arrangement. In all the school trips abroad, the typical gender ratio is 10% male and 90% female students.

Data Collection

For the purpose of this qualitative descriptive study, I conducted three focus group meetings with Annie, Rose, Julie, and Marie in group A; Flore, Monique, Nadine, and Paul in group B; and Emelie, Jeanne, Louise, and Yvonne in group C. I randomly grouped the African American student participants, and I used pseudonyms instead of their names to protect their privacy and preserve their anonymity. Also, I conducted individual interviews with chaperones and parents, used field notes I took during the interview process, and analyzed documents that include participants' reflective papers, travel plan application packages, photo souvenirs from the sojourners abroad that were

posted on the school Facebook page, and power point slides I collected from the participants' projects. I procured these presentation materials and reflective journals by emails from the student participants. During the African American students' information session, I asked them to sign-up on a separate log if they had any materials or papers related to their sojourn abroad. Three students signed-up and emailed me the slides of their presentation and a reflective paper of their project. The African American student participants were given projects related to their sojourn abroad during the predeparture seminars, and it was due 3 weeks after their return.

I held the first focus group meeting in the school library in the morning with four female African American students: two juniors and two sophomores. The meetings were held on Wednesday morning because the school has an extended advisory period during that time, and also to prevent the participants from missing their instructional time. The meeting lasted 45 minutes that included 5 minutes pause during the school intercom announcements. Two participants came 5 minutes late during the first focus group meeting.

I conducted the second focus group meeting in the school library in the morning with five senior African American students: four females and one male. One student came 8 minutes late during the second focus meeting in the library. The meeting lasted one hour and 5 minutes that included 7 minutes pause during the school intercom announcement. The library door was closed during the two meetings with a "do not disturb" sign posted on the door. I held the third focus group meeting a week after the first with four African American female students: one senior and three juniors. I

conducted the meeting in the school conference room to protect the participants' privacy. One student entered the school conference room 13 minutes after I commenced the third focus group meeting, and left 35 minutes later to attend one of her classes. The meeting lasted 55 minutes. All the focus group meetings were recorded using my Dell PC Voice Recorder, and I used an external flash drive to back up the recording.

I interviewed the first chaperone, who is the school principal, in her office for 30 minutes. The door was closed to maintain confidentiality and preserve privacy, and "do not disturb" sign was posted on the door. I interviewed the second chaperone, who is a teacher and the Global Citizenship Association liaison at the school, a week later after her overseas trip for an hour in her office, at the Global Citizenship Association headquarter conference room. The door was closed to maintain confidentiality. My tentative plan to interview the 3rd chaperone was unproductive. All my phone calls and emails were not returned.

Out of two parents who returned their consent forms, one parent was available for interview. However, her work schedule did not allow for a face-to-face interview. She accepted a telephone interview, which lasted for 25 minutes. I voice recorded all the chaperone and parent' interviews using my Dell PC voice recorder with an external flash drive as a backup. I conducted the follow-up telephone interviews with two African American student participants that lasted 18 minutes each to seek clarification on their experience abroad.

The African American participants emailed me their reflection papers and the slides of their PowerPoint presentation. I used these documents as a source of data for

this qualitative descriptive study. Also, the school administration included me in their website group where photo souvenirs from the students' trip abroad were posted. These documents and the notes I took during the meetings with the participants enhanced the triangulation of the findings.

The African American student participants were engaged and willing to share their experiences. They added to their peers' comments and built on their stories. All of the student participants were participating in a research process for the first time and were curious about how the process is conducted. As one of them told me: "...this process is a source of inspiration." I brought pastries during the meeting, and they were grateful. They were even more appreciative to receive a handwritten thank you note and a \$5 gift card as a sign of gratitude for their participation. I asked follow-up questions and supplementary questions to help them clarify their ideas and elaborate on the key aspects of their stories. For the chaperones, the study process was an opportunity to speak openly about their financial challenges in organizing the students' trips abroad and share their enthusiasm for the international program at their school. They were eager to read my findings and hope that the conclusion might enlighten the path of the program renaissance.

Data Analysis

I started data analysis by reading through all my field notes and listening to the interviews and focus group meetings. After listening to the digital recordings five times, I transcribed these recordings and typed them into Microsoft Excel (La Pelle, 2004; Meyer, & Avery, 2009). I used Excel Software, Microsoft Word, and the portfolio analysis and evaluation guide (Appendix C) to facilitate my analysis. As I read each transcript, I used

a memo to write any emerging themes, and what I could do with each part of the data. The note memo I wrote guided my analytic thinking and stimulated my reflection. I created seven tabs in the Excel worksheet for each group of the three groups of participants and data sources.

1. Participant group A : Annie, Julie, Rose, and Marie
2. Participant group B: Flore, Monique, Nadine, and Paul
3. Participant group C: Emelie, Jeanne, Louise, and Yvonne
4. Sojourners' artifacts
5. Documents
6. Focus group with African American student participants and interviews with chaperones
7. Follow-up interviews with African American student participants.

Each participant or data source had a row in the Excel worksheet tabs that contained data. The worksheet had seven columns titled with the participants' pseudonym name or data source, excerpts from the data, the code title assigned to each excerpt, my comments, and the ultimate theme.

After initial coding, I clustered codes that fit my conceptual frameworks: Bennett's (2004) development model of intercultural sensitivity and Kolb's (2015) theory of experiential learning. Also, I developed and applied a cluster of codes for a third theme from the interview transcripts after the first reading. For instance, I fleshed out pattern and noted more emerging codes such as *impact*, *aspects*, and *challenges*. I used the coding structure list of codes (Figure 1) I created based on my initial reading of the

transcripts, the conceptual frameworks, and open coding to analyze the participants' verbatim transcriptions and their sojourn artifacts. In addition, I used the portfolio analysis and evaluation guide (Appendix C) to code the students' artifacts and documents.

Following my second reading, I renamed some of the codes that reflected the Bennett's DMIS and Kolb's theory of experiential learning: *defense, denial, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, integration, actions, and reflection*. After the suggestions from my mentor, I created codes to specify the impact of travel abroad as well as aspects of programs that fostered intercultural competence, and challenges encountered by all the participants. I brought closure to the document analysis when I exhausted all the sources of information, the set of codes was saturated, and further analysis of sources led to redundancy in coding. Finally, I clustered similar codes to create a reduced number of the following major themes that helped answer the research questions:

- African American sojourners' dynamic process towards intercultural competence
- African American sojourners' perceived program aspects that fostered their intercultural competence
- The influence of reflective practices on the African American participants' intercultural skills
- Travel abroad challenges for the African American sojourners

Sources, Research Questions, and Themes	Code Title	Codes
<p>Conceptual framework - Bennett's development model of intercultural sensitivity</p> <p><i>Theme related to framework and research question 1:</i> African American sojourners' dynamic process towards intercultural competence</p>	Denial	DEN
	Defense	DEF
	Minimization	MIN
	Acceptance	ACC
	Adaptation	ADA
	Integration	INT
<p>Conceptual framework - Kolb's Experiential learning</p> <p><i>1st theme related to framework and research question 2:</i> African American sojourners' perceived program aspects that fostered their intercultural competence</p> <p><i>2nd theme related to framework and research question 2:</i> The influence of reflective practices on the African American sojourners' intercultural skills</p>	Actions	ACT
	Reflection	REF
	Experiences	EXP
	Interactions	INTR
	Stimulation	STI
<p>These emergent codes were not clustered with conceptual framework but are related to two themes</p> <p><i>Themes related to research question 2:</i> Travel abroad challenges for the African American sojourners</p> <p><i>Theme related to research question 3:</i> Teachers' and parents' perception of African American participants' personal development</p>	Attitudes	ATT
	Behaviors	BEH
	Discovery	DISC
	Challenges	CHAL
	Character	CHA
	Empathy	EMP
	Independence	IND
	Knowledge	KNO
	Maturity	MAT
	Respect	RES
	Resilience	RESI
	Impact	IMP
	Self-identity	SELI
	Tolerance	TOL
	Feeling	FEEL
Interaction	INT	

Figure 1. Coding Structure List

In my initial plan, I planned to use NVivo, but the cost and the time required for training with the newer version compelled me to opt for Microsoft Excel software (La Pelle, 2004; Meyer, & Avery, 2009). Regardless of the tools used, the qualitative analytical procedures remained unchanged.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

During the data collection and analysis, I used memo and reflective journals to establish an audit trail of the study. I used triangulation to corroborate reports from different sources, notably thick data from in-depth face-to-face and follow-up telephone interviews, detailed field notes, students' reflective journals, experiential learning portfolios, trip planning documents, and photos that were taken during the participants' sojourn abroad. Also, I increased the trustworthiness of the findings by minimizing threats such as personal bias and data saturation. Therefore, I requested direct feedback from the participants through emails, but only one participant responded with a few annotations on the script.

Furthermore, I requested feedback from my committee member during the coding process, and I used a friend researcher to review my coding during the analysis process. Moreover, I included the African American participants' words from their verbatim transcription that focus only on their experiential learning abroad in the chapters four and five to enhance confirmability.

Results

As results of data analysis guided by Bennett's (2009) DMIS and Kolb's (2015) experiential learning conceptual frameworks, the following major themes that aligned

with the three research questions emerged. In the following sections, I organized the themes outlined in figure 2 to respond to the three research questions which address the African American paths towards intercultural competence development, the aspects that foster their intercultural skills, and the teachers' and parents' perception of the student participants' personal development.

Major Themes	Research Questions
<p>Theme: African American sojourners' dynamic process towards intercultural competence</p> <p>Theme: African American sojourners' perceived program aspects that fostered their intercultural competence</p> <p>Theme: The influence of reflective practices on the African American participants' intercultural skills</p> <p>Theme: Travel abroad challenges for the African American sojourners</p>	<p>1. In what ways do travel abroad and immersion programs enhance African American high school students' intercultural competence?</p> <p>2. What aspects of experiential learning abroad do African American high school students believe have fostered their intercultural competence?</p>
<p>Theme: Teachers' and parents' perception of African American sojourners' personal development</p>	<p>3. How do African American high school students' teachers and parents perceive their children's personal development during and after their intercultural and experiential learning abroad?</p>

Figure 2. Research Questions and Themes Alignment

The data analysis indicated that sojourners' patterns of adaptation and integration in the hosts' culture took different trajectories according to the African American participants' travel motivations, their prior language skills and intercultural experiences, and their

lodging accommodations. The 11 African American participants who wanted to experience a new culture, take a break from school, and get out of their comfort zone, enjoyed their stay, enhanced their language skills, and their prior intercultural experiences eased their integration into the host's culture, and they claimed to have established a lasting friendship with their hosts. Also, the African American student who had homestay lodging as part of her experience abroad reported a remarkable adaptation to her host country and increased knowledge of the host's culture. Whereas the two African American participants whose primary motivations were to meet new friends and had high expectations about the host's country expressed frustration, stress, and felt deceived.

Three of these 13 African American participants provided me with power point slides and reflective papers that were a part of my data analysis. What I heard from the participants, read in their reflective papers, and viewed in some of their presentation materials suggest that the African American participants moved along Bennett's intercultural sensitivity continuum (Bennett & Bennett, 2004) from ethnocentric mindset to ethnorelativism worldview.

The 11 African American participants revealed that they were humbled by their experience abroad, became more mature, more accepting, tolerant, and more respectful to their peers who were different from them. Also, they indicated that the predeparture seminars, informal observation and reflection, and emotional support during their sojourn abroad helped them to cope with stress and anxieties. Moreover, the chaperones reported that as post trip activities, the student participants organized, planned, and led workshops

during cultural assemblies to show and share their learning from the experiential trips abroad.

Despite the African American participants' gain in intercultural skills, the chaperones revealed key challenges that negatively impacted the experience overall, including the financial challenges that resulted in a personnel shortage, the poor quality seminars, the limited number of African American participants in the trips abroad, and a decline in the level of service provided by the Global Citizenship Association.

I describe below how the findings of this qualitative case study relate to the three research questions which examine ways that experiential learning abroad enhanced the African American sojourners' intercultural competence, program aspects that fostered their intercultural skills, and teachers' and parents' perception of the student participants' personal development. Also, I organize the themes according to my conceptual framework, development model of intercultural sensitivity and experiential learning, and the relevant sections of Chapter 2.

African American Sojourners' Dynamic Process towards Intercultural Competence

The interview data indicated that the African American participants had different motivations for traveling abroad, and all the African American participants stated that the experience abroad exceeded their cultural learning expectations. All the African American participants suggested that their intercultural skills depended on their individual background and family experience. Monique stated: "I wanted to see and experience how other people live." While Paul said: "... because my friends were going".

For Nadine, the trip abroad was “just a way to be away from school...take a break from the same old things.” Whereas for Marie, she “wanted to discover a new culture.”

Besides the recreational motivation, there were also African American participants for whom travel abroad was just an adventure. The African American participant who had a homestay in Japan for a week had a different experience. She stated:

I am a city child at heart, and as a matter of fact I don't really like living in the country because it is more difficult for me to get around. It didn't take me very long to get adjusted to living in Tokyo even though the streets are much cleaner, it's safer, and it's much larger than Philadelphia is. Unfortunately, I seemed to have adjusted too quickly and found myself not getting excited about much other than the food anymore.

Even though for most of the African American sojourners, the cultural curiosity, the strong desire to break from their daily routine and to discover the world beyond the United States eased their path to integration in the host country, for some African American participants, their fantasist expectations turned into a nightmare. A chaperone reported:

Students had a romantic vision of Paris: beautiful city, people are painting, play music, and things of that nature. They just come from London where they had an amazing time. It was beautiful, it was great. I noticed that it started when we got off the train from London. We found security guards everywhere in the train station. But that student had some other issues: she was traveling by herself while

other students knew whom they were traveling with. This girl, in particular, wanted to go just to meet new people. That's not the norms for students to typically go. She was senior and had no underclass friend. It was a hard time for her. She had some really hard breakdown.

A chaperone indicated that the security concerns made travel abroad less desirable and led the sojourners to experience homesickness in the host country. She reported:

I had a student during our trip to London /France who had a panic attack, a mental breakdown. It was really bad. This was the first time I thought I will have to send student home when we arrived in Paris. The student was infatuated with Paris. As a chaperone, we did our best to make sure that students' expectations were realistic. We arrived only 2 months after Charlie Hebdo happened. And you had a lot of concerns about families whether we gonna be in a safe environment.

African American participants' comments revealed that the path to intercultural competence was not linear for all the participants. Twelve African American participants indicated that they adjusted and integrated easily into their host' cultures, whereas one African American participant had an emotional breakdown. However, she relied on her peers, chaperones, and even called home for emotional support and survival strategies. Louise reported:

I started to feel like I was a Spaniard. They would speak in fluent Spanish and they would come to me...and I say, what do you do with camera in my neck? As I was always with Emelie...she would listen and tell me what they say, and I will...

I can speak it really well [Spanish], but Emelie can understand what they are saying.

The responses of chaperones and the African American participants' comments pointed out the aspects of the travel abroad program that had a significant impact on the African American participants' worldviews and their intercultural skills. I examine these aspects in the following sections.

African American Sojourners' Perceived Program Aspects that Fostered their Intercultural Competence

The interview analysis, the focus group interaction, the African American participants' artifacts, and the planning trip documents indicated that the predeparture training, homestay lodging, intercultural environment, post-sojourn practices, and reflective practices fostered the African American participants' intercultural competence skills.

Predeparture seminars to manage expectations. The purpose of a predeparture training at St. Marcel High School was to address the African American participants' expectations and assumptions so that they knew what to expect during their travels, what was expected of them in the host community, and understanding the assumption regarding American youth that may be held by host country nationals they may encounter. A chaperone referred to these seminars when she stated:

We organize international travel biweekly seminars in conjunction with the trip. Each seminar is led by different speaker. For example, issues of safety overseas, how to be St. Marcel's ambassador abroad, crash course in French where students

learn basic phrases to survive in France, how to deal with different customs. Also, students pick a project. They gather field experiences while abroad and share them during International Day. They might choose fashion, stereotype issues, bridge culture, compare and contrast, or specific interest in sciences and share what they learned while abroad. There are also parents' seminars that prepare them to their children departure abroad.

The structure of these seminars has changed over the years as reported by the principal of the school who was also a presenter during the seminar:

So, in the past, we actually gave them $\frac{1}{4}$ credit for this, and we had more staffing involved from the Global Citizenship Association. The nice thing is that even after the staffing changes, some way, we still have a template for seminars and students who attend seminars prior going on trips. Usually, what we do is invite students, those who traveled to these countries to come share different aspects of cultures. There were 10 classes they had to attend. Each class had different field and presenter. What I presented was about an ugly American in Paris. What I did was explain what is there and here, so you don't do anything inappropriate. We do it on language, religion, culture norms, geography, and overview of the trip. They get $\frac{1}{4}$ credit.

According to the principal of the school, the predeparture preparation starts half a year before the trip. The program coordinator shops around for the trip package and makes a decision based on the current situation of the country. All trips are submitted to the district for approval. The trips abroad are organized during the Spring break to

prevent students from missing instructional days. Also, students attend meetings at the Global Citizenship Association where they meet famous people and experts in their fields.

During the focus group meetings, the African American participants barely referred to their school predeparture seminars. For example, Jeanne stated:

I also feel like..., for example when we went to Paris someone left his book bag, and they steal her water bottle. So I feel like...they shouldn't experience that that way. We should have experienced that here so when we go there...like, so I feel like we should be prepared mentally, emotionally.

Louise added:

Actually, I think since we are international school, I think the trip should be longer than just couple weeks. I also think that like in college, we should actually take classes abroad or spend a semester in another country like in college...so you still learning...we can be prepared.

Homestay versus non-homestay lodging. The African American participants' focus group meeting, chaperones' interviews, and the African American participants' reflective journals revealed an advantage experienced by the African American participant who had homestay lodging over those who did not have homestay lodging. Among all the African American participants interviewed, only Rose participated in a homestay lodging on scholarship from another school for 2 week period. This added experience resulted in an increased opportunity for cultural exchange, immersion in the

local culture, and a gain in intercultural competence skills. In her reflective narrative, she wrote:

Being in Tomakomai provided me with a very different perspective of normal Japanese life. My host mother, Mrs. Naka, was an English teacher so I found myself communicating with her the most. ...Talking with her and being a part of her household really made me realize that Japanese people aren't that different from American people. Both countries have political and social issues...one of the highlights from my host family experience was when my house mother pulled me into the kitchen and wanted to teach me how to make curry udon. I thought it came out quite well and it was my first real success at cooking something. She gave me some to take home and told me to make it for my mother. That came out pretty well too.

On the other hand, all the 12 African American participants and the chaperones at non-homestay found their sojourn rushed and superficial. A chaperone stated:

that was one the thing we talk to students in the seminars. You paying a lot of money for these trips, so prepare to be tired. There is little free time build-in.

They may not understand it first, but when they get there, they had a jab leg, tired constantly. They realized what it is like.

The Global Citizenship Association liaison at St. Marcel High School expressed her preference for homestay lodging when she stated:

In my opinion ...the way these trips are set up are surface level in terms of culture immersion. Think about... you not doing home stay, right, you stay at European

Hotel with continental breakfast every morning, have lunch on your own, your dinner is very much prepared for you, and you not really immersing yourself the way you are going to immerse in home stay, and getting in that local culture that sort of thing. I don't think it is easy to send students in home stay if it's the first time. In my opinion, they get so much more and come back with so much more where they are not doing only things like surface level trips.

In her concluding comments, the Global Citizenship Association liaison expressed her hope to see more homestay lodging type programs included in the school voyage plan because of their profound impact on the participants. She stated:

What I'd love to see in the future is the combination of what our travel department does and the homestay kind of program. So that our students come back with a more immersed experience. Because that's what is going to change them. Like I said it's easy to travel but you are not learning anything. Also, we have Youth Volunteer Corps (External partner) where students volunteer the service hours...they went to Malawi to build houses. That's what we call service learning: It's impactful. For example, when we went to Costa Rica, we brought supplies to school and were able to see elementary school, planted the trees.

Ninety percent of the African American participants reported that they formed strong bonds with each other, 8 % of the participants stated that they become closer during and after their trips, and the African American participant who had homestay lodging stayed in touch with her host after her return to the United States. As one of the chaperones commented:

You have to realize that the best way to learn about somebody is to spend 2 weeks with him. We have the kids that go because friends are going, but they end up making other friends. The inside joke you have with those people you have...when they come back, they have more interaction with students they didn't have before.

Post sojourn practices to preserve the skills gained abroad. The African American participants' experience abroad had strengthened their leadership skills and transformed their worldviews to the extent of leading cultural clubs, organizing International Days activities and leading workshop to share their experience abroad. One of the chaperone reported:" ...also students pick a project [during their predeparture seminars], they gather field experiences while abroad and share them during International Day."

According to the school travel abroad program coordinator, students undergo a rigorous selection process to be accepted in the trip cohort. Even after their return to the United States, the expectations for participation in the program remain. She reported:

We have a very high level standard as far as who we let go on the trips. Your teachers have to recommend you. You should not be under any type of disciplinary action, and you should maintain a good GPA. Throughout the process, we assign chaperones to a certain number of kids who use trips as incentives, and when they come back, we wanna make sure they can stay at that level, and be expected to be...they have to appear a role model for their peers, and explain to them what that experience was like.

The student participants in the trip abroad aligned their senior project to their experience abroad or work in groups of three or four students to present a collection of their experience abroad. The administrator of the program reported:

you have students that have to start their senior project, and ...because they attended the trip, they are more able to use or refer to their experience abroad. We put them in a group of 3 to 4 students where they are able to make presentation.

The school principal echoed the above comments to say:

students who traveled abroad always prepare an activity...they share. They normally share what they experienced abroad: dance, food, arts from other countries. They tend to share that through workshop...they organize workshop for the school.

The experience abroad inspired the African American participants to organize and lead club activities after their trips abroad which demonstrates the ownership of their learning. Referring to these club activities, the school principal stated:

We have a lot of clubs. Umm, I mean what we do here is we have a lot of culture assemblies or special programs. A lot of that will reflect the experience of traveling abroad. We do Asia Heritage Month, we do Black History Month, Haitian's culture... All that comes into the play. It's unique here. That includes dance, music, and reflect what's like to be there.

One African American participant who attended the homestay travel lodging coordinated through a virtual school reported in the follow-up telephone interview that she didn't have a predeparture training per se, but she was given options, after her return,

to write a reflective essay or choose to research an aspect of her experience abroad. She reported: “you had just to reflect on the experience you had abroad...I was given option....to reflect on my experiences.”

During our focus group meeting and interviews, the African American participants recognized many financial, structural, and organizational challenges that impede the travel abroad program offered through the St. Marcel High school that I describe in the following section.

Travel Abroad Program Challenges for the African American Sojourners

All the African American participants expressed concern about their comrades who were unable to travel abroad with them for financial reasons, the chaperones worried about the budget cut that impacted the structure of the travel programs and their collaboration with the Global Citizenship Association, and the parents shared their anxieties on the cost of the trip and the safety of their children when they travel to unstable countries. A chaperone stated:

I think students are prepared but not as well as we would make them. I don't think the travel seminars even exist anymore. I do worry about that. It's horrible that these things have happened...these students are impacted by the change in the programs...because the St. Marc School District has cut funds.

Students' challenges. During the focus group meeting C, a sojourner stated:

“this makes me more appreciative. I was able to come here because some people can't, but you have families that have sacrificed.” Jeanne added:

I think there should be scholarship to help travelers. We don't have money. But a lot of people will say: "we should go abroad, but you have to pay for it." You know, I was privileged to go on trip to London and Paris...I have no problem for that...but a lot of my friends can't. It's not St. Marcel fault, but the school district has so many opportunities. We don't have to wait until college to study abroad.

Emelie expressed sympathy for her friends who can't afford the travel. She said:

My grandparents provided all the money, but people who can't afford it because of lack of money, they should make adjustment. When we went to Spain, my mom helped make payment, but most of students start dropping out because of money problem. So, open up to everyone ...because no one can't afford.

Jeanne who is a transgender African American participant shared her feeling and apprehension on how she would be treated abroad. She said: "It's the same thing when I went to Germany...everyone is moving like in NewYork...same thing in London. People won't say excuse me ...like the culture...see people who were gay...how they would see me as I came from the United States."

The Global Citizenship Association liaison at the St. Marcel High School corroborated the sojourners' statements about the African American participants' hardship. During the interview, she said:

It was not easy to pay for the trip. I just had to be candid with parents up front. They pay for the trip on a monthly basis from September to avoid high payments. Many of these parents are single parents, single salary, multiple jobs, multiple children, no nucleus family. So my job was also to find fundraising opportunities

whether out or inside the school. I have to work with company to explain the hardship. I was like what is the best discount you can get. I had one student. He has a trust set up for him, but I had also more families drop out because they couldn't make payment. I had 20 students set up, but I left with 15. Most parents had senior students, and they had a lot going on.

During our interview with the school principal who has oversight over the travel program, she also shared the similar students' financial road block. She said:

but another thing is we need to find ways to fundraise more, so more students can go on these trips. Right now, the kids have to put up their money for over a year to make payment to their account. That's a limiting factor.

Chaperones' challenges. The budget cut and the change in the collaboration with the Global Citizenship Association liaison were the concerns for the school principal and the Global Citizenship Association liaison for the school. The school principal stated:

because of budget cut and change in the Global Citizenship Association, we don't have a level of liaison in the building as we used to have. So the liaison used to be more visible here. That kind of shift a little bit. She [the Global Citizenship Association liaison] previously run the seminar.

There was also a change on the collaboration structure that impacted the seminars. The principal added:

right now, we have few meetings [seminar]. The problem is staffing. Before, we used to have a permanent Global Citizenship Association (Rosalie) who acted as a part of her job description. The Global Citizenship Association pulled back that

job and we lost that. The new World Affairs Liaison (Jean) isn't here often. His job description changed. So there are things we have to pick up here. We need more staff to do that.

The Global Citizenship Association liaison confirmed the principal's financial and structural concerns during the interview. She stated:

So I think in a way, it's horrible that these things have happened. At the end of the day, these students are impacted by the change in the programs. The Global Citizenship Association has set up since the school district has cut funds. Part of my job is to find funding to maintain the program level at St. Marcel, and the participation of the students in our programs. So we still do the paper work, prepare 40 pages of documents without which students can't travel. Teachers at St. Marcel can't do that. They don't have time to run a seminar, or resources for really provide the level of servicing we did ourselves. It is the goal of the Global Citizenship Association to bring back the program full time, but it will require a sustained funding. We need a long-term funding to bring the position back there full time.

Furthermore, the curriculum structure and the time for students' reflection during their sojourn abroad were of concern for a chaperone. She stated:

the course isn't still there. The school was unable to fit it in the curriculum. Make a class that is in conjunction with our goal and objectives, but not run a study hall. So a Global study course was created to fill a void.

The planning and the lack of down time for African American participants during their sojourn were also among the impediments. The chaperone stated:

we took the subway from London to France, check-in in the hotel and hit on ground. There were [sic] no down time. That was one the thing we talk to students in the seminars. You paying a lot of money for these trips so prepare to be tired. There is little free time built in.

On whether the African American sojourners reflected or journalized during their sojourn, the chaperone responded:

Students had to do that as part of their seminar grade. Keep a journal, but the point blank is that as chaperone we don't have time to facilitate these type of administration while overseas. I have to be more concerned about students' health, roommates, homesick, somebody who worries about bug bites, and thinks she is gonna die. For me, it's something that is on paper in the seminar. But we had it in such way that we are monitoring what they are doing while they are there.

Moreover, one of the chaperones expressed concerns for the sojourners' health and safety. She stated:

I have to be more concern about students' health ...I had a student during our trip to London/France who had a panic attack, a mental breakdown. It was really bad...

Parents' financial challenges. Most parents were sending their children overseas for the first time, and most of the travelers were seniors who were dealing with prom expenses, college application and financial aid packages. However, parents were willing

to support their children's trip abroad. A parent confided during the telephone interview: "...I am willing to make this kind of sacrifice for my child...because it might set her apart from the crowd and give her an edge in the college application." The Global Citizenship Association liaison who conducted the parents' seminars, and met with them during the planning process stated:

In my opinion, I don't think they fully understand what their investment is. For example, they will pick the cheapest trip without knowing the destination. If I give them the choice with all destinations, they are not looking at the quality but the cost, unfortunately. However, we want to give them the best for their investment. For parents, they see it as something that can define their students, set them apart, put them in a different group of those who apply to colleges...They want their students to get this experience because they are going to St. Marcel. They definitely want to set their students apart. The college admission is not going to look at itinerary...they will see a trip out of the United States.

African American Sojourners' Teachers and Parents' Perception of their Personal Development

Reflective practices such as reflection papers, research projects and presentation, journalizing during or after the sojourn abroad have helped the African American participants to balance their expectations and reevaluate their ethnocentric worldviews. As they navigate between the two values after their experience abroad, the African American participants' behaviors and attitudes might become noticeable to their teachers and parents. I discuss the sojourners' teachers and parents in the following sections.

Chaperones and parents' perceptions. One of the chaperones stated:

this is an educational opportunity to really think about what their expectations are, their feelings going through this experience, answering their questions, knowing their itinerary, the country they are going to. In both cases, we did a crash course in both languages: Spanish and French even though not every student was taking that language.

In this statement, the chaperone is referring to the seminars that are organized as a part of the participants' predeparture training.

The African American participants' informal immersion and their participatory involvement were also a part of the chaperone's comments. She stated:

We didn't do much in France, but in Costa Rica we did a lot of movement. ... The first was the bus tour of the city, having a guided lecture, to show us some of the cities of the district. We visited Les Champ Elysées, Arc de Triomphe, walked and visited Notre Dame, the same day we arrived.

While in France, the chaperone reported that the sojourners visited a local school and a shopping center, and learned to play the Pentatesque game. That involvement gave them an opportunity to interact with their host country's community. She stated:

The second day, we had a guide tour of the Eiffel Tower, optional excursion to Versailles, half of the group went to Versailles, and the other half stayed in the city. We did some activities, some shopping, and had an authentic diner that night. On Friday, we did an impressionist paintings, visited a school ... had a nice lesson on Art and Culture in Paris, and what else... and ... on Saturday, we visited

an important cemetery, a game of Pentatesque, a typical French game ...we learned how to play that, we play that...that was at the school...and we had an authentic dinner that evening.

During a telephone interview with a student participant's parents, the mother said: "my ultimate goal is to have my child get the most out of her trip...an opportunity for her to learn a new culture and to discover the world." Even though 10 of the 13 of the student participants were traveling for the first time, their parents were excited to see their children going overseas to enrich their résumés and maximize their chance of acceptance in a competitive college.

Student participants' perspectives. In her reflective narrative, Rose indicated that their immersion in the host countries created a personalization experience and a positive emotion that led to a meaningful learning. Rose who participated in a homestay lodging in Japan wrote:

I also found it quite striking how my Japanese host mother had a personality similar to my actual mother. They're even around the same age with my host mother only being four years older. She talked about her daughter and that while they were away at school some nights her husband had to work late as well and she found herself very lonely. Hearing that made think of my own mother and how she would feel when I, her youngest child, would be going away to college next year. It made me appreciate her youngest child, would be going away to college next year. It made me appreciate her more and want to spend more quality time with her.

Furthermore, Rose reported also that her interaction with her host mother enhanced her knowledge of the Japanese's culture and helped her balanced her stereotype assumptions of the Japanese people and their lifestyle. She wrote:

Talking with her and being a part of her household really made me realize that Japanese people aren't that different from American people. For example the topics of standardized testing is a common controversy. Just like in America there are high school students that try their hardest and some that slack off. Even the mentality of "if you come to America you should speak English" is the same while their version is "if they come to Japan they should speak Japanese." Upon discussion I even found out that her family and I were both Buddhist. I didn't realize we had so much in common because I had come to Japan with the thought that it was some strange and backwards country. I can never see any similarities between "theirs" and "ours" but I was so very wrong.

Rose added:

we discussed a wide array of topics from American politics to Japanese ones and in doing so we discovered that both of our countries saw each other as a reflection of our media. I learned that normal Japanese life isn't like Anime, and I showed her that normal American Teenage life isn't like Glee, and not all Americans own guns.

During our focus group meetings, the African American participants reported that their informal immersion and their participatory involvement fostered their intercultural

skills and changed their negative perception of their host countries and the people who are different from them.

Marie reported:

everything was done by hand...we were sitting on grass, and people had different accents. We just had to navigate our ways around. I had to wake-up early and try new food that I ate with hands...I learned not to take anything for granted because we met many people who didn't have what we have...what I enjoyed the most were their food [rice], helping people, and speak the language [French].

During the focus group meeting, Paul reported that their visit at different places such as restaurants and shopping centers offered them an intercultural learning opportunity that stirred their thinking and fostered their openness to the world. He stated:

While abroad, I adapted to what they were doing and I become more mature. I become more easy going...and I wish we can extend how long we stay there. It changes me [experience in Spain] because I remember when we went to a restaurant in Spain, a waiter served me food with a bug in it. But calmly, I informed the waiter and asked for the replacement without being rude. I wouldn't act like that in the United States...I learned to accept differences and be patient.

Louise who traveled to Spain reported:

It felt like...I didn't like when they bump in someone...they didn't say pardon or excusez-moi. It was funny incident because Emelie and I were talking...and

someone just walk pass by and they didn't say excuse me...it probably part of their culture.

For some African American participants, constant interaction and peer discussion about what they were seeing and feeling fostered informal reflection that enhanced their empathy for the host community and their intercultural skills. As Pless et al. (2011) found in their study of the Ulysses Experience Model with graduate students, the participants developed a greater respect, and acceptance of other people's values and traditions, and recognized their limitations. Sample (2013) found also that the undergraduate student participants in the School of International Studies enhanced their cross-cultural behaviors, and improved their sensibility to cultural differences after a semester abroad. In this qualitative case study, the interviews and focus group meetings, the teachers' and students' reflections indicated that most of the student participants progressed in their views of cultural differences. Emelie reported:

For me, going to Spain made me realize that America is not the Golden Place. While in Spain eating breakfast, on T.V., in the neighbor country, there were bombings. I was like, Oh my gosh, it's coming here...and people had all their phone ringing...I realize that problems we have here are small compared to what happens everywhere else. It makes me more humble... I just afford \$2000 trips, and you have people that can't afford to go to school, and much less a meal a day. It made me realize that I may not be as higher class, but I am still privileged to go somewhere else than remain sucked in the bubble of Philadelphia...You get the feeling of who you are as a person.

Seeing people surviving with less than a dollar a day in other developing country might make them look foolish and unwise for wasteful spending habits at home. During my interviews, focus group meetings, and the African American participants' portfolios' analysis, I noted that eight of the 13 African American sojourners were appreciative of their American lifestyle, and expressed empathy to less fortunate people they met in their host country who can't afford to attend school, and live with a less than one U.S. dollar a day. For example, Emelie noticed that she gained a new perspective of the world after her experience abroad and seemed to value more educational opportunities and standard conditions of living that the United States offers. In such learning experiences abroad, the African American participants reflected in what they saw, heard and internalized it which becomes a moving force and a source of new perspectives.

Summary

The data I collected and analyzed indicate that most African American participants in the travel program abroad had enhanced their personal development, and the travel abroad program has fostered their intercultural skills. In alignment with the research questions, most of the sojourners had a cultural curiosity to experience a new culture, and one female African American student who had homestay lodging demonstrated a remarkable adjustment in her host culture (RQ1). Unfortunately, the predeparture seminars offered at St Marcel High School were of the surface level which might have impeded the sojourners' experience. In addition, my analysis of the interviews and focus group meetings with the African American participants suggested

the sojourners' lack of reflective time and journaling (RQ2). Teachers and parents expressed a satisfaction to see the student participants' maturity and their respectful attitudes towards cultural differences (RQ3). Also, the African American sojourners' experiences point out to the fact that the route towards intercultural competence is dynamic and challenging and involved planned pre and post trip activities, and reflective practices that stir the participants' self-reflection. All the participants indicated the financial challenges that impede the organization of such experiential learning abroad for the school and the program curriculum.

In Chapter 5, I use the theoretical framework of Bennett & Bennett's (2004) development model of intercultural sensitivity and Kolb's (2015) experiential learning to interpret the results and make recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, Implications

In Chapter 5, I summarize the findings of the qualitative descriptive case study and interpret the results through the lenses of my conceptual framework and the empirical literature. Also, I discuss the study procedures, the study's limitations, and the implications for social change. Additionally, I provide practical recommendations for improving the existing experiential learning abroad programs for African American high school students and possibilities for further exploration.

In this qualitative case study, I explored the influence of experiential learning abroad on African American high school students' intercultural competence through the following three research questions:

- In what ways do travel abroad and immersion programs influence African American high school students' cross-cultural awareness and intercultural competence?
- What aspects of experiential learning abroad do African American high school students believe have fostered their intercultural competence?
- How do African American high school students' teachers and parents perceive their children's personal development during and after their intercultural and experiential learning abroad?

I collected data for this qualitative case study through three focus group meetings, interviews with chaperones and parents, follow-up interviews with African American participants, sojourners' artifacts, and the travel planning program documents. I coded two main themes, namely *intercultural competence* and *experiential learning*, and

additional codes (Figure 1) many of which were rooted in Bennett's (2004) DMIS and Kolb's (2015) theory of experiential learning, the conceptual framework I used for this study. Three additional themes were (a) *perceived program aspects that fostered African American sojourners' intercultural competence*, (b) *travel abroad challenges for the participants, and teachers'* and (c) *parents' perception of African American participants' personal development*. Figure 2 illustrated how the themes related to the conceptual frameworks and research questions.

The data analysis indicated that African American sojourners' patterns of adaptation and integration in the host's culture took different trajectories according to students' travel motivations, their prior language skills and intercultural experiences, and their lodging in hotels versus homestays. The two African American participants whose motivations were to meet new friends and had high expectations about the host country were more likely to report being frustrated, stressed out, and felt deceived, whereas the 11 African American participants who said they wanted to experience a new culture, take a break from school, and get out of their comfort zone, were more likely to share that they enjoyed their stay, enhanced their language skills, and their prior intercultural experiences eased their integration into the host's culture. Moreover, the one African American participant who had homestay lodging, shared that her experience with her host mother was a remarkable integration in the new culture and she increased her knowledge of the host country. This student suggested having established a lasting friendship with her host family, and seemed to have moved farther along the stages of intercultural development, whereas 10 African American participants appear to have moved from

ethnocentric mindset to ethnorelativism worldview, following Bennett's (2004) stages of intercultural development. The 11 of the 13 African American student participants revealed that they matured, became open minded, and were willing to interact with people outside of their comfort zone. Also, they became more respectful and tolerant of their peers who were different from them.

Despite the African American participants' apparent gain in intercultural skills, the chaperones revealed the financial challenges that resulted in a personnel shortage, the poor quality seminars, a few number of African American participants in the trips abroad, and a decline in the level of other services provided by the Global Citizenship Association.

Interpretation of the Findings

In Chapter 2, I reviewed literature related to intercultural competence and different paths that led the participants in experiential learning abroad to accept, adapt, and integrate into their host country's culture. The researchers whose studies I reviewed all reported on the positive influence of intercultural experience abroad. The findings from this qualitative case study were similar to those found in all these studies. For example, undergraduate and graduate students benefited from their sojourn abroad in developing abilities to interact out of their comfort zone (Di Silvio, Donovan, & Malone, 2014; Lee et al., 2017), accept cultural differences (Hall et al., 2016), and adjust their ethnocentric mindsets to move gradually towards ethnorelativism thinking (Bennett, 2014). This dynamic process was often found to be facilitated by reflective activities that stirred participants' reflection and keen observation. In the following sections, I describe

how the findings of this descriptive case study relate to the previous research and theory and organize their interpretation to answer the research questions according to the relevant sections of Chapter 2, namely the influence of experiential learning abroad on African American sojourners (related to RQ1), perceived aspects of experiential learning programs that fostered African American sojourners' intercultural competence (related to RQ2) , and teachers' and parents' perception of African American participants' personal development (RQ3).

Influence of Experiential Learning Abroad on African American Sojourners

The analysis of the interviews, focus group meetings, reflective journals, and documents illustrate Bennett's development model of intercultural sensitivity, which goes from denial, defense, and minimization to acceptance, adaptation, and integration (Bennett, 2009). This dynamic process results in the development of sojourners' intercultural competence skills. Using this model, Lee and Green (2016) found that undergraduate African American students who participated in study abroad program increased their intercultural thinking skills, had a great appreciation for diversity and deeper engagement in the school activities. Also, Boateng and Thompson (2013) found that the participants moved gradually, at different paths through the six stages of intercultural competence, to gain an understanding of their host country's culture, and to adjust to the new way of living at the end of their experiential learning in Ghana.

During the group meetings and interviews I conducted, the African American participants reported that the predeparture seminars prepared them to deal with cultural differences which made their trip abroad less stressful. The photos posted on the school

Facebook illustrated the African American participants' excitement while traveling from London to Paris by metro, and highlighted the extent to which the sojourners were involved in the host countries. Eighty-five percent of the African American participants who stayed at the hotel indicated that they visited schools and museums, tasted French meals, and learned to play games with other high school students. However, one of the chaperones stated: "...that immersion was of the surface level in terms of culture." In contrast, Rose who participated in homestay experience abroad wrote in her reflective narrative the story of her ten days with her host family that relates to the six stages of Bennett's development model of intercultural sensitivity. In the following section, I use data I collected during the interviews, focus group meetings, the reflective papers, and the sojourners' portfolios to illustrate ways in which the African American sojourners progressed through the six stages of Bennett's model of intercultural competence (RQ1).

African American sojourners' paths towards intercultural competence. The path towards intercultural competence is a dynamic process that takes time, and the participants might not react the same way to their experiences during or after their sojourn abroad, because their interpretation of these experiences may differ according to each participant's cultural lenses, base knowledge, and emotional resilience (Allison et al., 2012; Deardorff, 2017; Stoner et al., 2014). For example, Boateng and Thompson (2013) found that the undergraduate students who traveled to Ghana for a semester, adjusted gradually to bucket baths, local foods, and hand washed laundry, and they reported having learned to be patient, and appreciative of their home lifestyle through those challenges.

In this qualitative case study, I noticed during the interviews, focus group meetings, and the sojourners' portfolios analysis, that the evidence of passage from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism differed according to the African American participants' motivation to travel abroad, their predeparture training, their prior intercultural experience, and their lodging arrangement in the host country. As previous researchers indicated, these experiential learning abroad changed the sojourners' worldviews, enhanced their language and intercultural thinking skills, and fostered their appreciation for diversity (Acheson, Nelson, & Luna, 2015; Beaven & Spencer-Oatey, 2016; Lee & Green, 2016; Walton et al., 2015). I illustrate the African American sojourners' progression through the six stages of Bennett's intercultural competence based on their self-reported data using provisional codes in the following sections.

At the denial stage, Bennett (2014) noted that sojourners avoid other cultures and consider their culture as the only good culture. I too found evidence of this avoidance in African American participants' reflection on the attitudes before the trips. For example, Rose thought that Japan was a backward country and Emelie expected people in her host country to be impressed by Americans' high life style. During the focus group meetings and follow-up interviews, most of the African American sojourners expressed similar views and recognized that the media (movies and television) had influenced their perceptions.

At the defense stage, participants tend to denigrate cultures differences and consider their culture as more valuable (Bennett, 2014). During the interviews and focus group meetings at St. Marcel High School, I did not hear any statement that denigrates

their host's country culture. However, five of the 13 African American sojourners reported that they were emotionally disturbed by the miserable living conditions of their host country. Similarly, Monaghan and Hartman (2014) found in their qualitative case study that the 13 female undergraduate students who traveled for 6 weeks to Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Mexico were emotionally disoriented to see people living in extreme poverty. Also, during the focus group meetings and interviews, 10 of the 13 African American participants stated that American's challenges are smaller than what happens everywhere else. The majority of the African American sojourners stated that witnessing such misery and emotionally disturbing events enhanced their cultural empathy and fostered their appreciation for their home country's living conditions.

At the minimization stage, Bennett (2014) found that sojourners minimized cultural differences, and considered other people's culture as similar to their own. However, Rexeisen (2013) found that the student participants did not carry the benefits of their experience abroad beyond the stage of minimization, and they maintained a mono-cultural world's view. Sojourners may require conscious efforts to negotiate cultural differences, and transition into ethnorelativism stages in which they will explore a new relationship across cultural differences (Engberg, Jourian, & Davidson, 2016). Such effort to negotiate cultural differences may broaden the African American sojourners' understanding of the world and strengthen their mental toughness. My data analysis indicated that most of the African American sojourners started their path towards intercultural sensitivity at minimization stage because of their excitement

and motivation to travel abroad and their cultural curiosity. So the sequential stages towards intercultural sensitivity as stated in Bennett's (2014) theory are questionable for this group of African American high school sojourners.

According to Bennett (2014), at the acceptance stage sojourners have been found to consider other cultures as part of their learning experience; they may not agree with the values and beliefs of the host culture, but still respect the differences in their attitudes and behaviors. Sojourners may become curious about their host culture, recognize and explore cultural differences. Also, Savicki (2013) found that the participants' anxiety and acculturation stress enhanced their inner development and their emotional skills. During data analysis, I found that the female African American student who had homestay lodging demonstrated a quick sense of belonging as she interacted with her host mother. I found such intercultural skills to be out of the ordinary and suggest further analysis.

Since these sojourners are at the periphery of their hosts' culture and their own, they might need to internalize the new values and beliefs to move from ethnocentrism mindset to the recognition of cultural differences (Bennett, 2014). During my analysis of the African American sojourners' portfolios and field notes, I found that all African American participants had a cultural curiosity to discover, and experience how other people live outside of the United States. Through insightful conversations, keen observations, and critical thinking discussions, the African American sojourners realized they had more in common with their host countries than they had cultural differences. For example, Rose

concluded that Japanese people are not that different from American people, whereas Marie noted that her perception of the host country was tainted by the media propaganda. Marie's observation may require further analysis since the social media seem to have reached the apotheosis for the millennials, for example exploring the influence of social media on African American high school students' cultural attitudes shift towards experiential learning abroad.

During my analysis of field notes, African American sojourners' portfolios, and literature review I found that African American sojourners who had homestay and had time to reflect on their experiences, adjusted quickly in their host countries. For example, Lee et al. (2017) found that two senior high school students who spent 15 weeks in China with homestay accommodation had many opportunities for intercultural learning at the dinner table with their host families. One African American sojourner wrote in his diary an interesting cultural note that he was told that it is impolite to leave any rice left in his bowl when eating, to finish off dishes on the table, and to always leave some on it, reflecting the value of saving food for siblings. The second student was impressed at how much time his host mother took to understand him.

In this qualitative case study, I noted similar reaction during my analysis of Rose's reflective paper. For example, Rose, an African American, a senior high school student who had a 2 week homestay sojourn, seemed to have adjusted quickly to Japanese culture and was excited to spend more time with her host mother. Rose's quick adjustment made me wonder whether African American

high school students can embrace so easily a new culture without predeparture training. Even most of other participants seem to have started at the minimization stage during their sojourn.

At the adaptation stage, Bennett (2014) stated that sojourners shift their perspectives out of another culture worldviews. It is a form of empathy where the participants internalize other culture's realities. For example in their Study Abroad Ghana, Boateng and Thompson (2013) found that the 15 undergraduate students who visited a hospital, an orphanage, and a refugee camp during their semester abroad, reported in their reflective journals an increased interest and empathy for the local population. Also, they were concerned about social problems such as immigration, HIV/AIDS, child labor, and poverty.

At the integration stage, Bennett (2014) indicated that the participants' cultural views are expanded to include cultural differences. Participants become capable of living and believing in multiple frames of references, a third culture person for whom both cultures' values and beliefs provide the frame of reference. In this qualitative study, the teacher participants at St. Marcel High School reported during the interviews that African American sojourners improved their behavior in school and their attitude towards diversity, but considering the short duration of their sojourn and the scope of the research, I was unable to confirm the sustainability of their intercultural skills after their return to the United States. Further study that examines the sustainability of these intercultural skills on

African American high school sojourners using mixed methods approach may illuminate the future investigator.

In comparing the participants' two lodging arrangements in this study and previous literature, I found that participants in homestays had more exposure to the host's culture, increased their language and intercultural skills, and forged an enduring relationship with their host's families (Di Silvio et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2017; Kinginger et al., 2016). During the interview, one of the chaperones reported that the homestay aspect offers a deeper level of immersion than other lodging accommodation such as a hotel or luxury resort where intercultural exposure is limited or nonexistent.

During the analysis of the focus group meetings, the sojourners' portfolios, and interviews at St. Marcel High School, I found that African American sojourners' interpretation of their experiences abroad differed according to each student's cultural lenses, base knowledge, travel motivation and their emotional resilience. In this qualitative case study, I noted Rose's genuine willingness to respect, adjust, and adapt in her host's culture without a predeparture training. Moreover, most African American participant sojourners did not seem to have started at the denial stage (Bennett, 2014) but at the minimization stage because of their cultural curiosity, their venture abroad spirit, and other factors that might be explored in the future studies. In the sections below, I discuss different aspects of experiential learning programs that fostered African American sojourners' intercultural competence skills (RQ2).

Pedagogical Strategies that Fostered African American Sojourners' Intercultural Competence

Having used Kolb in the second part of my conceptual framework, I will draw from his work to explain the pedagogical strategies that have been shown to foster African American sojourners' intercultural skills during their sojourn abroad. According to Kolb (2015), the learner touches all the following bases during the learning cycle: experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. These cycled experiences are the basis for learning. As such, in order for the learning to occur, participants must be guided through each of these steps, such as where "teams must create a conversational space where members reflect on and talk about their experience together" (Tiessen & Huish, 2014; Travers, 2014). When I compared the St. Marcel's International School curriculum as mentioned in the interviews, focus group meetings, and documents to Monaghan and Hartmann (2014)'s study on the Traveling School Curriculum, I found that a similar integrated pedagogical approach that combined the participants' destination-based content, experience, and critical reflection led to sojourners' transformation of attitudes, behaviors, and values, and increased their intercultural competence skills.

In the following sections, I review pedagogical strategies that were reported, and I discerned from my data analysis that fostered the African American participants' intercultural competence skills in light of the Kolb's experiential learning theory and the research literature.

Predeparture training, on-site and post trip supports. Several empirical studies found that exposing sojourners to a new physical environment for example,

airport, nature, city infrastructure, poverty, and different lifestyle, opened their eyes to new worldviews if given an opportunity to reflect and share their experiences.

Furthermore, many of these cultural differences require critical thinking and reflective abilities (Lee & Green, 2016; Read, Aldridge, Ala'i, Fraser, & Fozdar, 2015; Walton et al., 2015). Also, as in Savicki (2013)'s findings, the sojourners' participation in the predeparture trainings with intercultural simulative activities, infield reflective practices, and post-sojourn abroad reflective journals and workshops were more likely to enhance the participants' cognitive, personal, and interpersonal development, and strengthen the student participants' intercultural competence skills.

Other researchers stressed the importance of well planned activities before, during, and after the trips that provide opportunity for constructive discussion and critical thinking (Boateng & Thompson, 2013; Lee & Green, 2016; Sample, 2013; Dunn, Dotson, Cross, Kesner, & Lundahl, 2014). Similarly, Hall et al. (2016) found that short-term travel abroad trips that combine predeparture orientation activities, infield reflective activities for emotional adjustment and post sojourn reflection led to a substantial learning and sojourner' transformation.

During the interviews and focus group meetings with the participants, I found that the predeparture trainings were often mentioned as important element of the sojourners' preparation, but these trainings were lacking in depth. The St. Marcel High School's trip application documents indicated eight mandatory seminars that the student participants attended for a quarter credit. These seminars were organized after regular school time and focused on team-building, fundraising, language and culture immersion, and provided a

forum for students to complete a mandatory cultural pre-trip project related to the country of destination. Also, the trip application document indicated that the school offered parental workshops to encourage parents' involvement and to manage their expectations.

The school principal indicated that the quality of these seminars had suffered because of the budget cut and change in the form of cooperation with the Global Citizenship Association. This lack of external financial support has impacted the quality of the participants' predeparture training. The Global Citizenship Association echoed similar financial worries during the interview.

Rose who transferred from a virtual school and traveled with another high school indicated during the interview that they didn't attend any training seminar, but she was thrilled to hear that such predeparture seminars were offered at the school. Moreover, during our focus group meetings, two African American sojourners barely referred to the predeparture seminars and wished they could have been well prepared.

As noted in the above paragraphs, the participants' tepid reactions to the St. Marcel High School predeparture training suggest an improvement in the structures and the contents of these seminars is needed. Kinginger et al. (2016) suggested that asking students to conduct projects that involve observation, participation, and reflection can enhance the participants' preparation before their departure abroad.

The post-sojourn abroad activities were found to motivate the participants to reflect on their experience, and that reflection can help enhance the participants' intercultural skills (Strange & Gibson, 2017; Wilson, Brain, Brown, Gaind, Radan, & Redmond, 2016). Also, Travers (2014) found that when the sojourners made meaning out

of their travel experiences and were involved in pre and post trip activities, they were more likely to develop and maintain their intercultural skills. Moreover, during the post trip activities, the sojourners questioned the reality of what they witnessed abroad and reconsidered their past assumption. Similarly, Grimminger-Seidensticker and Möhwald (2016) found that experiential learning trips stimulated the youth participants' reactions and their thinking about themselves and the world relations.

These post trip activities were mentioned during the interviews with the school principal and the sojourners' focus group meetings at St. Marcel High School. The principal reported that the participants picked a project before their departure, and they gathered information while abroad and shared it with the school community and parents during the school international day. Also, the student participants planned and led workshops inspired by their experience abroad during the school cultural assemblies. As noted above, the predeparture workshops, keen observations, and on-site intercultural discussions that spur critical thinking and reflective writings are among the aspects of experiential learning abroad that are perceived to foster the African American sojourners' intercultural skills.

Project-based learning and reflective journals. Project-based learning and reflective journals may require structures that include a well-designed curriculum, well-planned activities, well-prepared teachers, and supportive administrators (Monaghan & Hartmann, 2014). In their study of the Traveling School Curriculum, Monaghan and Hartmann (2014) found that such structures eased students' transformation and sustained their integration in the host culture once they returned to their high school. Also, they

found that the experiential learning enhanced the participants' potential development as global leaders. These findings were echoed by Huish and Tiessen (2014) who found also that in order to maximize learning in a short-term trip abroad, the program administrator provided time for debriefing, journaling, group discussion, counseling or other forms of reflection to foster the sojourners' learning opportunities.

Other studies provided pedagogical strategies and experiential learning techniques that stirred the sojourners' critical thinking abilities and led to transformation such as internship and volunteer opportunities (Stebbleton et al., 2013); reflection, journaling, and observation (Hall et al., 2016); project-based learning (Singaram et al., 2011); and exchange programs (Olberding & Olberding, 2010; Travers, 2014).

As Kolb (2015) stressed, in order to turn the participants' experience into knowledge, learners must reflect on their concrete experience, comprehend the experience, and engage in experimenting with the concept. Kolb's experiential learning model focuses on reflection and analysis through dialogue and collaboration. Therefore, a balance between action and reflection was found to be vital to successful experiential learning abroad (Hall et al., 2016; Strange & Gibson, 2017).

During the focus group meetings with African American participants and interview with one of the chaperones at St. Marcel High School, I found that the African American participants had informal reflection sessions while journaling, whereas the chaperone recognized the lack of a formal reflective meeting during their sojourn. She cited her lack of time to facilitate the reflective meetings while abroad. In contrast, Rose who had a 2 week homestay experience in Japan, through another high school, and chose

to write a reflective narrative as a part of her exit project, demonstrated a significant gain in intercultural competence skills after her return home. As the above literature review and Rose's experience demonstrate, pedagogical strategies that are planned and organized thoughtfully, and include reflective and insightful discussions were aspects of the programs that fostered the African American sojourners' intercultural skills. Teachers and parents reported having noticed these intercultural skills and students' personal development during the interviews (RQ3) which I discuss in the following sections.

African American Sojourners' Cognitive, Personal, and Interpersonal Development

According to Deardorff (2017), the socio-linguistic and ethnic knowledge awareness and skills such as listening, observing, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating facilitate the participants' adjustment in their perspectives, and enhance their empathy, respect for others, and adaptability in a new cultural environment. Similarly, Bennett (2014) found that knowledge, attitude, and behavior must work together for development to occur. This combination produces a climate of respect for diversity, understanding and appreciation of different beliefs, behaviors, and values.

In their qualitative case study of two sister schools' cultural immersion trips in Indonesia, Walton et al. (2015) found that sojourners adapted to local customs, changed their worldviews and behaviors, and enhanced their language skills. Similarly, Crooks, Burleigh, Snowshoe, Lapp, Hughes, and Sisco (2015) found that the participants were more likely to avoid bullying, stereotyping, and prejudice, but to seek peace with their peers. Also, Olberding and Olberding (2010) found that adolescent sojourners who participated in the immersion and exchange experience changed their behaviors and

attitudes towards diversity. Their attitude evolved from confrontational to tolerance, respect, and ethnorelativism mindset.

I heard evidence of cognitive, personal, and interpersonal development in the focus group meetings and interviews with the African American participants. For example, during the interview with the school principal of St. Marcel High School, she reported that the African American participants' experience abroad had a curative effect on their attitudes towards diversity, and their behaviors in and out of school. Once the African American sojourners return from the trips, they exhibit more maturity, become reflective, and accepting of people who are different from them.

As Sample (2013) noted, experiential learning that led to the participants' intercultural competence is the result of an educational process that had cognitive, affective, and experiential components. For example, in her study on the School of International Studies, Sample (2013) found that the 53 undergraduate participants immersed in their host countries, interacted with local people, and submitted reflective papers on different cultural aspects of their host countries. As they observed, analyzed, and reflected on their experience, the student participants were more likely to enhance their cognitive and intercultural skills.

During the focus group meetings and interviews with the African American sojourners at St. Marcel High School, seven of the 13 African American participants reported that they improved their language skills, and were comfortable engaging in a conversation in Spanish after their sojourn in Spain. I also found that the African American participants felt that moving away from home was an emancipation, a rite of

passage from adolescence into their adulthood. The teachers had similar reflections during the interviews when they reported that the sojourners become mentors of first year and junior students upon their return from trips abroad. Also, Savicki (2013) noted that the participants' challenges of uncertainty, and stress acculturation abroad can foster the participants' inner development, enhance their emotional intelligence, and their interpersonal skills. These skills development may need interculturally competent educators to facilitate the sojourners' learning with pedagogical practices that may equip them to navigate and survive in a cross-cultural context (Berg & Paige, 2012). The sojourn that may enhance African American student participants' intercultural competence skills and personal development can be of short or long-term duration.

Short and Long-Term Implication of Experiential Learning Abroad

Travers (2014) found that both short and long-term sojourns abroad require an appropriate preparation of the participants, realistic expectations, and the participants' training on intercultural encounters. In addition, Shiveley and Misco (2015) found that a full academic year experience abroad had more significant and lasting impact on the sojourners' personal and intercultural development than a short-term sojourn abroad. For example, in a long-term sojourn, the sojourners increased their language fluency and integrated in the host country's culture.

Other researchers found that the sojourners' move from the ethnocentric mindsets to ethnorelativism took time, and in some instances the cultural differences might become challenging for the sojourners to adjust to, but can be compelled by the need to survive or out of necessity (Beaven & Spencer-Oatey, 2016; Brown, 2009; Evans, Blamer, Jensen,

Schertz, & Kelly, 2013; Huish & Tiessen, 2014; Robinson, 2013; Schuitema & Veugelers, 2011). In this qualitative case study at St. Marcel High School that focuses on a short-term trip abroad, I found during the focus group meetings and the chaperones' interviews that all the African American participants longed for a semester of study abroad. For example, Louise expressed a desire to have a semester abroad to fit in the international school curriculum.

Moreover, I also found that the African American student who spent time abroad in homestay lodging had more exposure to the host's culture, increased her language and intercultural skills, connected emotionally with her host mother, and forged a lasting relationship with her host family to a greater degree than the African American students who stayed in the hotels. Since the lodging arrangement was not included in my literature review but is one of experiential learning aspect that fostered one of the African American sojourners' intercultural competence skills, I have reviewed the literature related to the lodging arrangements in the following section. This lodging arrangement emerged as discrepant data based on the experience of a single participant who seemed, because of the uniqueness of her homestay, to have made significant progress along the stages of Bennett's (2004) model of intercultural development.

Homestay versus Nonhomestay

In their longitudinal case studies on the homestay advantages reflected in interviews, diaries, and photograph collected from two undergraduate students abroad, Lee et al. (2017) found that the majority of host families offered linguistic, cultural, and psychological support to students. These findings are echoed by Di Silvio, Donovan, and

Malone (2014) who found homestay arrangements more likely to enhance language proficiency and intercultural awareness than other lodging arrangements. Despite these advantages, Kinginger, Lee, Wu, and Tan (2016) found that learning daily practices and associated language in the homestay abroad is a challenging process, but through collaboration these problems can become an opportunity for learning. Sojourners can learn the speech style, culinary practices, and cultural norms of their host's families, and also confront the dilemma of intercultural and interpersonal discord (Kinging et al., 2016). For example, Roberge (2017) added food allergies and frustrations resulting from language immersion that might impact the sojourners' disposition towards learning and impede their integration in the host's culture. As Lee et al. (2017) noted, the homestay arrangement is not only about warmth and enthusiasm, but sometimes it is characterized by conflict and disappointments resulting from overwhelming language immersion and mockery of host families by the sojourners.

The African American participants' comments during the focus group meetings revealed a sense of cultural curiosity that might have been better met by homestays than staying in a hotel, and the chaperones' responses indicated the need for a total immersion through homestay in the host country. For example, Yvonne reported that contrary to her host country's image as portrayed in the media, the country was beautiful and the people hospitable. Also, one of the chaperones recognized that they had organized surface level without a deeper culture immersion.

The homestay arrangements can be a rich learning opportunity for both sojourners and host's communities if they collaborate to resolve homestay dilemma with a sense of

humor, empathy, humility, and flexibility (Campbell-Price, & Duncan, 2017; Di Silvio, Donovan, & Malone, 2014; Kinginger, Wu, Lee, & Tan, 2016; Kinginger, 2011; McGladdery & Lubbe, 2017). Total homestay immersion is one of the aspects of experiential learning abroad that can foster African American sojourners' cognitive language learning skills, spur their creativity, enhance their intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, and help develop their intercultural competence skills.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations associated with this qualitative study. I anticipated having many male African American students participate in this study, reflecting the concerns of my research study, but only one male out of 20 students who attended the information session returned the consent and assent forms. Two African American male participants declined to participate. Also, many of the African American participants' parents were unavailable to attend the information sessions or to respond to my emails or return the telephone calls. I was able to gather information from only two parents concerning their perceptions of their children's personal development following their travel abroad. In addition, the small sample size and a very distinctive and competitive urban high school student population and culture could limit the transferability of the results of this descriptive qualitative case study. Many of my most striking findings centered on a single student's experience: Rose. While her longer-term visit coupled with a homestay provided evidence of significant impact and mirrored findings in the literature, she was, in this study an inspirational case that needed further study to look at the reasons for her quick adjustment in her host culture. Also, given the changing context

and support for this program, the findings might be different if the study was replicated in the future.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this descriptive qualitative case study, I have developed seven recommendations for the improvement of the curriculum and experiential learning programs abroad at St. Marcel High School and similar schools around the world, and I have offered six suggestions for future researchers to consider. These suggestions and recommendations are rooted in the findings related to the three research questions that focused on ways in which experiential learning abroad enhanced African American sojourners' intercultural competence, fostered their intercultural skills, and their personal development as perceived by their teachers and parents.

Curriculum and Support Recommendations

My recommendations for improving preparatory, pre-trip curriculum and strengthening experiential learning programs abroad include the revision and restructuring of the school curricula to provide students with more global and intercultural knowledge and world language proficiency and ensure alignment of that curriculum with the original mission of the international school. This mission is to provide students with an intercultural knowledge of the world affairs and the ability to think critically through global education. Such curriculum can incorporate reflective practices that foster African American students' critical analysis of intercultural issues, keen observation of the world events, and continued development of their intercultural competence skills.

Since the lack of support has impeded the quality of school predeparture workshops and fundraising activities, I recommend the renewal of the financial and human support for the program in collaboration with the Global Citizenship Association to help implement and sustain the curriculum and strengthen the impact and learning associated with the program.

Also, the international baccalaureate curriculum of St. Marcel High School may require that the school administration provide to all teachers and school staff professional development sessions on intercultural competence topics in collaboration with the Global Citizenship Association. Such sessions can help embed intercultural competence skills in the school culture, prepare students for travel, and sustain African American sojourners' gains as they return home.

Considering the immersion advantages of the homestay accommodation such as language proficiency, deeper cultural immersion, and intercultural competence skills, during one African American sojourn in this study, I recommend that St. Marcel High School promotes homestay during the trips abroad planning and encourages students and their families to balance out the hosting experience by hosting exchange students.

As found in this qualitative case study, homestay sojourns that include intercultural assignments that foster observation, active participation in the host country, and well-designed reflective practices before, during, and after the student participants' sojourn abroad can enhance the African American participants' personal development, tolerance and acceptance for diversity, and foster their intercultural competence skills.

I recommend we provide African American high school students with more reflection space and time before, during, and after their trip abroad, and follow-up with discussions, journals, and case studies that stir reflection, promote empathy, acceptance of cultural differences, and the respect of other people.

Also, I recommend that St. Marcel High School create a classroom museum where sojourners can exhibit the artifacts from their sojourn abroad to inspire potential sojourners, visitors, and parents. This way, their experiences will be woven in the school activities and keep their memories alive.

In this qualitative study, I found that the African American sojourners were moved by the poverty they saw in some of their host countries. Such observations affected their assumptions, their feelings, and their emotions. As they witnessed and overcame these feelings, African American sojourners may develop inner strength. Therefore, I recommend that St. Marcel High School include in its planning a diversity of service learning experience by selecting developing country destinations in Africa, Asia, or Latin America with students' input during the selection process.

During the interviews with parents, they expressed concerns about their children's safety with the current world affairs dominated by terrorist attacks and political instability. Also, two students reported to having experienced stress and anxieties. Such events can impact the sojourners' intercultural experiences. So, I recommend that St. Marcel School's administrators of the trips abroad include additional strategies in emergency and contingency plans to support African American students with emotional

stress and homesickness or to overcome cultural shock during their sojourn abroad, regardless of the destination.

Future Research Recommendations

Regarding future research, this study points to the potential for using ethnographic or longitudinal study approaches to evaluate the extent of experiential learning's influence on African American student participants years after they graduate from high school and enter their professional life. Also, researchers could compare and contrast the impact of homestay lodging with other accommodation options on African American high school sojourners' intercultural competence.

As a result of this qualitative study, I found that only one out of 10 African American male students in St. Marcel High School has participated in the experience abroad. Therefore, I suggest that future researchers explore strategies for attracting and retaining more African American male high school students in the experiential learning abroad programs that include critical analysis and reflection and question ethnocentric assumptions.

Furthermore, in this qualitative study, I have explored the influence of experiential learning abroad on African American high school students' intercultural competence skills without focus on gender, due to the small sample size and the limited availability of research on this subject. I suggest that future research uses mixed method approach to examine whether study abroad through experiential learning can have a differential impact on male, female, and transgender African American high school students.

Implications for Social Change

Travel abroad programs provided African American participants with cultural experiences that have enhanced their intercultural skills, fostered their personal growth, expanded their worldviews, transformed their ethnocentric mindset, and made them better students. These intercultural competence skills were not the result of a spontaneous combustion, but more likely sparked by a direct response to the challenging and dynamic process that commenced at different stage for each African American participant. Most of the African American sojourners ended with a seemingly reasonable adaptation in the host countries. Throughout this dynamic process, the African American participants were more likely able to connect mentally and emotionally with their hosts and increased intercultural awareness through a participatory involvement and constructive discussions that stirred reflection.

Applying these intercultural skills in the African American participants' lives and interactions might promote peace in their community, prevent bullying and stereotyping, and help them and others to avoid ethnocentric mindsets and prejudice in schools. Also, interculturally competent African American students are more likely to be motivated to live together, avoid perpetuating otherness, and promote respect and understanding among their peers. Furthermore, as the African American sojourners compare their values and beliefs to those of their hosts, they were more likely able to realize the unrealistic assumption of their superiority. These African American sojourners are situated to accept that we are all bonded to live and share the future together in increasing harmony and peace.

In addition, travel abroad in developing countries might lead the African American sojourners to experience a culture of poverty that cannot only foster their empathy for the needy and the personification of poverty but also value many opportunities the United States offer. They might realize that poverty has a face, can smile, cry, eat, and run. That opportunity to witness tangible evidence of other people's struggle and lifestyle might nurture in them a humanistic heart, a burning desire, and catharsis empowering them to better their lives and change the world. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the study abroad program administrators to examine the level of intercultural immersion, the country of destination, the type of lodging in the host country, and the financial resources available to assure that the outcomes of their experiences are achieved and sustained.

As recognized by the teachers and parents during the interviews, the African American participants have become role models at St. Marcel High School and in their families as well as mentors for the freshmen students. Furthermore, they have the potential of becoming global leaders and social change agents in their communities.

Conclusion

Experiential learning through study abroad and immersion programs that can lead African American high school students towards intercultural competence is a dynamic process that combines reflective practices before, during, and after the sojourn abroad. The results of this qualitative case study indicated that such experiential learning programs enhanced most of the African American participants' intercultural competence, cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal skills development. The African American

participants' change in their attitudes, behaviors, and ethnocentric views may contribute to them becoming role models for their school and in their community and position them to become social change agents in the society.

Educational leaders of study abroad programs can offer African American sojourners the support and opportunity to develop these intercultural competence skills through a predeparture training with reflective practices, in-field support, and re-entry counseling. Such aspects of experiential learning have demonstrated means to foster African American participants' cognitive, intrapersonal, and intercultural development skills. Educational leaders cannot expect students to develop intercultural competencies overnight, as this is a dynamic process that demands motivation, knowledge, skills, and endurance. Inner city African American high school students likely need to be prepared for the challenges that await them abroad and should be supported with mandatory predeparture workshops managed by trained study abroad professionals who will follow participants throughout their sojourn and sustain them after they return home. As African American participants experienced unfamiliar cultures through their sojourn abroad, they were more likely to be challenged to overcome their ethnocentric worldviews and progress towards ethnorelativism mindset, which is the path towards intercultural competence.

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Appendix A. Interview Protocols for Students, Teachers, and Parents

Interview Protocols

Date:

Place

Interviewee:

Interviewer:

Interview with students

Pre-interview statement

Good morning. I am Kadima Bukasa from Walden University. I appreciate your willingness to participate in this interview. As you may know, my research interest is on the influence of experiential learning abroad on the African American high school students. Through this meeting, I would like to know your experiences of the immersion programs during the last 3 years.

Now, I would like to hear your experiences with the immersion programs, and any reflections you might have on your last trip.

Section 1: Preliminary Questions

1. What led you to sign-up for the international program at your school?
2. What were your expectations for the program?
 - a. Were they met?
 - b. How so?
3. What have you enjoyed during your participation in this program?

a. The most enjoyed?

b. The least enjoyed?

Section II. Students' Experience

1. Do you feel your participation in these trips or exchange programs have helped you acquire intercultural skills? Please explain.
2. Are there any way(s) that these exchange (travel abroad) programs have changed you?
 - As a student?
 - Classmate?
 - Or an individual?
3. Can you share some examples of cultural shock you have encountered during your participation in the programs? How did you overcome that cultural shock?
4. Please describe how your experience abroad influenced you on:
 - a. Your perception of other cultures, beliefs, and values different from your own.
 - b. Your curiosity regarding world affairs.
5. Is there anything else you want to share regarding your travel experience that has enriched your cross-cultural appreciation? If so, please share.

Section III. Parents' Experiences.

1. Tell me about your child's experience from your perspective: Did you notice any change in your child's interpersonal flexibility, adaptability, and interactions with

people from a different race or ethnic groups since his/her return from the immersion program abroad? If so, share some examples.

2. In your opinion, what can you tell us about your child's behavior at home, and intercultural skills such as empathy, world affairs curiosity, and tolerance for diversity after his/her experience abroad?
3. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your child's intercultural development or his/her participation in this international immersion program?
Please do so.
4. Do you feel this trip abroad was worth your investment of time and money?
Please explain.

Section IV. Teachers' experiences

1. In your experience, how did students who traveled abroad compare to students who stayed home in their behaviors and intercultural skills such as interpersonal flexibility and adaptability, interactions and communications with others?
2. Can you share some examples of students' interactions that demonstrate this shift in behavior and skills?
3. In your perspective, how can these immersion programs be improved to foster students' intercultural competence in your school?
4. If you have any additional insights to share, I invite you to share them now.

Appendix B. Focus Group Guide for Students

Good morning. I am Kadima Bukasa from Walden University. I appreciate your willingness to participate in this focus group. As you may know, my research interest is on the influence of experiential learning abroad on African American high school students' intercultural competence. Through this meeting, I would like to know your experiences of the immersion programs during the last 3 years.

First, I will ask that you take a turn to introduce yourself by stating your name, your grade level, and tell the number of times you traveled abroad during the last 3 years. Also, I am eager to hear any responses you may have to what your peers share in this focus group.

Sample type of questions:

1. Think back to your experience with the program and tell me: Why did you choose this immersion program? What factors have influenced your choice?
2. What do you see as barriers and benefits from this program?
3. What aspect of the program did you like the most? The least?
4. How can this immersion program be improved?
5. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding this international immersion program?

