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# Examining Racialized Deficit Mindsets of Black and Latinx Students' Lower Participation in Study Abroad

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## Abstract

This article examines study abroad personnel's rationale that Black and Latinx students participate in study abroad at a lower rate than their white peers. This article argues that this over-30-year-old rationale should be discontinued to achieve equitable study abroad participation for Black and Latinx students. The author introduces critical race theory as a theoretical lens for study abroad personnel to examine how the internal discourse of racial cultural differences among study abroad personnel is historically linked to pervasive racialized deficit mindsets about Black and Latinx students' achievement. The author reviews existing study abroad scholarship on Black and Latinx student participation to establish a foundation for how the rationale originated and uses critical race theory storytelling as a methodological framework to critique the lower participation rationale. Through this approach, the author advances emergent insights for study abroad personnel to be more equitable, conscious, and intentional in their advocacy for greater Black and Latinx student participation in study abroad programs.

## Abstract in Spanish

Este artículo examina el razonamiento del personal de estudios en el extranjero de que los estudiantes negros y latinos participan en estudios en el extranjero en un porcentaje menor que sus pares blancos. Este artículo sostiene que este razonamiento de las personas mayores de 30 años (de la baja participación)

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debería suspenderse para lograr una participación equitativa en los estudios en el extranjero para los estudiantes negros y latinos. El autor presenta la teoría crítica de la raza como una lente teórica para que el personal de estudios en el extranjero examine cómo el discurso interno de las diferencias culturales raciales entre el personal de estudios en el extranjero está históricamente vinculado a mentalidades deficitarias racializadas generalizadas sobre el rendimiento académico de los estudiantes negros y latinos. El autor revisa los estudios existentes en el extranjero sobre la participación de estudiantes negros y latinos para establecer una base de cómo se originó la justificación y utiliza la narración de la teoría crítica de la raza como marco metodológico para criticar la justificación de la baja participación. A través de este enfoque, el autor promueve ideas emergentes para que el personal de estudios en el extranjero sea más equitativo, consciente e intencional en su defensa de una mayor participación de los estudiantes negros y latinos en los programas de estudios en el extranjero.

## Keywords

Black and Latinx students; critical race theory; JEDI; student success; study abroad participation

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## 1. Introduction

The benefits of U.S. study abroad for U.S. college students has been well documented to show an increase in their likelihood of student success and degree completion (Barclay Hamir, 2011; Bell et al., 2023; Bhatt et al., 2022; Ogden et al., 2023). Bell et al. (2023) recently found Black and Latinx students<sup>1</sup> benefit the most from study abroad, such that Black and Latinx students who studied abroad showed a likelihood of between 7-13% higher timely graduation in four and six years, exceeding their white<sup>2</sup> peers who did not. Despite these benefits, the majority of Black and Latinx students in college are less likely to reap these benefits as their rate of participation in study abroad is disproportionately lower in comparison to their white peers since the Institute for International Education's Open Doors report began recording demographic data in 2000. As of 2019<sup>3</sup>, only 22,200 (6.4%) and 37,800 (10.9%) participants were Black and Latinx students respectively, with 242,900 (70%) identifying as white (Institute for International Education, 2022). This percentage is below, and disproportionate to 2018-2019 data of overall college enrollment rates for U.S. Black and Latinx students, wherein 16 million U.S. undergraduate students were enrolled, and 34% of them were Black and Latinx (NCES, 2019).

Study abroad personnel (SAP) – inclusive of scholars and practitioners in the United States who specialize in study abroad with a focus on student outreach and one-on-one advising (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2022) – have worked diligently to address the persistent disparity in study abroad participation between Students of Color and white students for over 30 years. However, I argue that lower participation rates among Black and Latinx students specifically have remained unchanged in part because SAP, particularly in the United States, have over-relied on stories of human experience (i.e., narratives) that position Black and Latinx students as the primary cause of their own lower participation (i.e., lower participation rationale). The college success of other Students of Color (e.g., Asian, Multiracial, Indigenous) is also important to overall discussions of equity in study abroad; however, SAP discuss the lower participation of Black and Latinx students more frequently than any other racial groups (Cole, 1991; Gozik & Barclay Hamir, 2022; Kasravi, 2018; Lopez-McGee et al., 2018; Salisbury et al., 2011). Therefore, in this paper, I will explore the development of SAP’s lower participation rationale of Black and Latinx students’ participation in study abroad and articulate how this SAP usage of this rationale is problematic in perpetuating a narrative of deficit tied to race and racism.

### 1.1. Black and Latinx Student Cultural Differences Problematized as Barriers to Participation

Since the 1990’s, SAP have delineated that Black and Latinx students possess specific cultural differences (e.g., fears of being perceived as a negative stereotype while abroad, unsupportive family, unrealistic beliefs about future education plans, and financial hardships) in comparison to their white peers (Cole, 1991; Brux & Fry, 2010; Gutierrez, 2015; Hembroff & Rusz, 1993; Kasravi, 2018; Salisbury et al., 2011; Simon & Ainsworth, 2012). SAP have further theorized that these differences serve as barriers for access to and are the largest contributions to their lower participation rates in study abroad programs (Cole, 1991; Salisbury et al., 2011; Simon & Ainsworth, 2011; Thomas, 2013). By problematizing Black and Latinx student lower participation as a matter of cultural differences, I argue that this fixation by SAP unjustly essentializes Black and Latinx student into a monolithic generalization (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

Critiquing the overreliance of cultural differences is not entirely novel as contemporary SAP have also problematized this lens through which SAP historically have viewed Black and Latinx students’ lower participation in study abroad as barriers-based (Acevedo, 2023; Contreras Jr., 2020; Doerr, 2018; Gozik

& Barclay Hamir, 2022; Sweeney, 2015; Thomas, 2013). At a micro level, SAP have pointed out how focusing on cultural differences unfairly positions Black and Latinx students as lacking global competence (Doerr, 2018), essentialize and exclude Black and Latinx students voices in discussions of these barriers (Acevedo, 2023), and normalizing white student participation by framing Black and Latinx student lower participation as a unique phenomenon (Thomas, 2013). At a macro level, SAP have also noted that the lower participation rationale alone cannot not fully explain the lack of Black and Latinx student participation in study abroad (Contreras Jr., 2020) and that reliance on the lower participation rationale is not conducive to realizing systematic equity for Black and Latinx students (Contreras Jr., 2020; Gozik & Barclay Hamir, 2022; Sweeney, 2013). Lastly, other emergent scholars have called for study abroad personnel to move beyond this existing rationale and singular focus on Black and Latinx students' access and representation in study abroad (Clay, 2022; Contreras, 2020; Contreras et al., 2019; Oguro & Payne, 2022; Perkins, 2020; Sweeney, 2013; Whatley & Raby, 2020; Wick et al., 2019) and suggest, perhaps, there are other unexamined factors that may contribute to Black and Latinx student lower participation (Perkins, 2020).

I agree with these critiques as they provide great insight toward developing more critical awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion in study abroad than ever before. At the same time, I posit that SAP have yet to openly identify how the lower participation rationale itself may be tied to historical narratives of race and racism. It is well known and acknowledged in study abroad scholarship that study abroad has a history tied to colonial forms of exclusion fueled by elitism, racism, and colonialism (De Wit & Merckx, 2022; Gozik & Barclay Hamir, 2022; Hoffa, 2007; Lopez-McGee et al., 2018). Yet, despite the contemporary efforts in the study abroad field to realize equity, diversity, and inclusion, it cannot go unsaid that these same ideologies remain deeply embedded in higher education overall (Patton, 2016). Therefore, more scholarly inquiry is needed to understand how these ideologies influence present day practices in study abroad.

To my knowledge, existing SAP have largely focused attention to Black and Latinx students' lower participation in study abroad by centering on Black and Latinx students and their experiences with studying abroad, which has greatly expanded insight to the unique stories of Black and Latinx students (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). However, higher education researchers studying similar discourses about Black and Latinx students low achievement in college

have found that historical narratives about Black and Latinx students' college achievement capabilities not only exist (Guiffrida, 2006; Harper, 2010; Stewart, 2013; Tierney, 1999) but also contribute to pervasive monolithic racialized deficit mindsets about Black and Latinx students' academic success and degree attainment (Harper, 2012; McNair et al., 2020; Museus, 2014; Mustaffa, 2017). I operationalize racialized deficit mindset as when someone attributes low academic outcomes (e.g., degree completion) to be the fault of Students of Color, particularly Black and Latinx students, citing aspects based on stereotypes about Black and Latinx students' culture (e.g., different socialization) as the source for their failure (Bensimon, 2005). As such, while it would be an overreach theoretically to posit that SAPs are explicitly and intentionally engaging in racialized deficit mindsets against Black and Latinx students, conceptually, I believe that the argument can be made that the study abroad field should consider at the very least how SAPs may be implicated in perpetuating racialized deficit mindsets about Black and Latinx students through the use of the lower participation rationale.

Thus, in lieu of empirical findings, I conceptualize this argument in this article by exploring relevant scholarship about the lower participation rationale through the theoretical lens of critical race theory (CRT). CRT is a powerful research tool, paradigm, methodology, and philosophical approach for studying the insidious nature of race and racism in U.S. law and policy (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), and especially in examining policies, practices, and lived experiences for faculty, staff, and students of color in higher education (Patton, 2016). Wick & Willis (2020) implore the importance of critical theory in international education as a form of emancipation as long as "race, racism, power, authority, privilege, and hegemony are named, discussed, and confronted throughout the process (p. 22)." Therefore, in this article, I first introduce CRT, its tenets, and, critical race storytelling as a theoretical lens to cultivate a shared yet demarcated understanding of the theory within the context of study abroad. Next, I introduce existing literature that is relevant to constructing the narratives of Black and Latinx students' lower participation. I will then analyze and interrogate the lower participation rationale using CRT storytelling to draw connections to how the lower participation rationale is tied to racialized deficit mindsets about Black and Latinx students. I conclude with a discussion on how SAP can generate greater critical self-awareness of the potential presence of racialized deficit mindsets in their own practices towards Black and Latinx students in study abroad..

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is a valuable theoretical frame for addressing the role of race and racism in institutionalized practices such as law and policy. Critical legal scholars first theorized CRT in the 1980s to interrogate the presence of race and racism in U.S. law and policy as a critique of color-blindness and legal neutrality of racial civil rights that limits racial equality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In essence, CRT is a form of narrative storytelling rooted in critical legal studies and radical feminism that has been expanded and utilized in education studies committed to critiquing the historical foundations of educational institutions for centering whiteness (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Patton, 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Over time, CRT scholars have worked to develop a series of tenets to identify philosophical approaches to understanding race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Briefly, the CRT tenets state that:

1. Racism is ordinary and commonplace in the U.S. This tenet proposes that racism has always maintained a dominant role in U.S. society, and that it will continue to persist so long as white people, regardless of socioeconomic status, are permanently invested in maintaining advantage over Black people (Bell, 1993; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).
2. Racism provides systemic physical and material benefits to white people. This tenet proposes that when the white colonists arrived in North America, they legitimized the concept of property ownership through the capture, racialization, and subjugation of African and Native American bodies and Native American land (Harris, 1993).
3. Race is a social construct, subjective and capable of changing its form when convenient (Ladson-Billings, 2013).
4. Centering the experiential knowledge of People of Color resists racist master narratives about their lived experiences. This tenet brings legitimacy and visibility to the manifestation of racism as hidden behind ideologies of meritocracy, and also “exposes deficit-informed research and methods that silence and distort the experiences of people of color” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26).
5. Intersectionality highlights the important in understanding the accrued and complex experiences of people of color in the U.S., and uses anti-essentialism, generalizing individual or groups of People of Color into harmful stereotypes,

to disrupt monolithic constructs of racism (Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano et al., 2000).

Each of these tenets produces a unique analytical lens by which scholars can attenuate the pervasive applications and permanency of race and racism in historical, current, and future matters in the U.S. Within this article, I am mindful of all the tenets to remain accountable to the original intentions of CRT toward dismantling policies and practices that perpetuate racial injustice (Ladson-Billings, 2013). However in this article, I primarily lean on the fourth tenet, centering the experiential knowledge of People of Color, to contemplate how the discourse on Black and Latinx students' lower participation in study abroad may be reliant on existing narratives based in a racialized deficit mindset. To further understanding of this tenet's application to the lower participation rationale of Black and Latinx students in study abroad, I briefly expand more on the purposeful role of storytelling in CRT research as a framing for understanding race and racism.

## 2.2. Critical Race Storytelling, Stock Stories, and Counterstorytelling

Critical race-storytelling is an analytical method for identifying and studying dominant racialized narratives of People of Color and positioning these narratives along the stories of People of Color. This positioning spotlights People of Color's voice as the authority to their own lived experiences and serves as a powerful tool to resist dominant racialized narratives (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Martinez, 2020; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso et al., 2009). These dominant narratives of race and racism (also called stock stories, majoritarian, or master narratives) are tied to larger ethnocentric and majoritarian "ingroup" ideologies that perpetuate race neutrality and inequity through law and policy (Delgado, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

Stock stories are narrated examples in which majoritarian in-groups (e.g., white people) construct a shared reality that mutually reinforces their position as superior and positions marginalized groups (e.g., Black and Latinx people) as inferior (Delgado, 1989). Stock stories appeal to majoritarian in-groups' beliefs about minoritized groups' inferiority by underscoring selectively chosen facts about minoritized groups that seem objective and neutral (Delgado, 1989). Moreover, Solórzano and Yosso (2001) note that stock stories can involve a number of real-life scenarios condensed into a composite or a combined representation "to recount the racialized, sexualized, and classed experiences of

people of color” (p. 33). Importantly, these narratives intersect with other social identities in addition to race in order to present assumptive stories about the most privileged, who are “Whites, men, the middle and/or upperclass, and heterosexuals”, as natural, normative, and universally reproduced, even by people of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 28).

I reiterate that SAP have taken opportunities to call attention to instances wherein Students of Color have been unjustly positioned against white students in terms of lower participation (Acevedo, 2023; Clay, 2022; Contreras, 2020; Contreras et al., 2019; Oguro & Payne, 2022; Perkins, 2020; Sweeney, 2013; Whatley & Raby, 2020; Wick et al., 2019; Thomas, 2013); however, I assert that these studies stop short of identifying these actions as connected to the systematic nature of race and racism. This is unsurprising, as stock stories are exceptionally difficult to dispel because people regard them as de facto truth, which often discredits alternative accounts or stories that do not align with the stock story (Martinez, 2020). Therefore, I pivot to denote the relevant literature that I believe has contributed to the Black and Latinx student lower participation rationale as a next step to understand how SAP have constructed stock stories about Black and Latinx students’ participation in study abroad.

### **3. Literature**

#### **3.1. Black and Latinx Student Participation in Study Abroad**

Research on Black and Latinx student participation in study abroad has been well discussed since the 1990s, yet studies remain limited in terms of intentional sampling of race and ethnicity to fully understand study abroad’s efficacy on Students of Color, particularly Black and Latinx students (Brunsting et al., 2023; Lopez-McGee et al., 2018). Despite this challenge, existing research on Black and Latinx student participation broadly focuses on three thematic areas: personal benefits of study abroad, navigating race and racism abroad, and student success post-abroad outcomes. The strand of literature on personal benefits have found that study abroad opportunities (of any length) help Black and Latinx students deepen their understanding of their own racial identity, particularly through experiences that allow them to dispel broad myths and perceptions about race, class, and culture in a global context (Blake et al., 2020; Lee & Green, 2016; Niehaus & Nyunt, 2023; Nyunt et al., 2022; Picard et al., 2010; Rose & Bylander, 2007; Ruth et al., 2019).

EAP also found that Black and Latinx students experience and navigate a wide range of positive and negative instances of racial identity and racism while abroad (Chang, 2017; Goldini, 2017; Lu et al., 2015; Nguyen, 2014; Quan, 2018; Williams, 2006; Wick et al., 2019; Willis, 2015). The positive instances occurred for Black and Latinx students based on shared or advanced proficiency in their linguistic capital within the host country (Chang, 2017; Quan, 2018; Wick et al., 2019). Negative instances occurred for Black and Latinx students who encountered microaggressions or discriminatory actions against them by their U.S. white peers or individual from the host culture (Goldini, 2017; Quan, 2018; Williams, 2006; Willis, 2015). Despite this, research findings generally show that despite the positive and negative experiences, Black and Latinx students demonstrate a strong resilience to navigating study abroad. Lastly, research on student success post-abroad outcomes has found that Black and Latinx students who participate in study abroad show a greater commitment to graduating college than their peers who do not (Barclay Hamir, 2011; Bell et al., 2023; Bhatt, 2021).

Overall, these thematic areas of the literature benefit from understanding the ways in which study abroad researchers have contextualized the narrative of what successful Black and Latinx student participation in study abroad looks like. These studies have helped to empower the field of study abroad to leverage and market the benefits of study abroad specifically to Black and Latinx students. This current of literature has also opened the door to an opposing discourse of why Black and Latinx students do not participate in study abroad, also known as underrepresentation in study abroad.

### 3.2. Black and Latinx Student Underrepresentation in Study Abroad Literature

Underrepresentation gives context to who does and does not participate in study abroad (Barclay Hamir & Gozik, 2018), which is largely both historically marginalized student populations (e.g., Black and Latinx students, first-generation students) as well as groups like community college and male students (Barclay Hamir & Gozik, 2018). Study abroad researchers have broadly indicated that Black and Latinx students' underrepresentation in study abroad in comparison to their white counterparts is largely due to specific barriers or obstacles that may prevent their participation (Brux & Fry, 2010; Cole, 1991; Council on International Educational Exchange, 1991; Gutierrez, 2015; Hembroff & Rusz, 1993; Kasravi, 2018; Salisbury et al., 2011). The earliest known discussion

of barriers to participation is tied to former Spelman College president Johnetta Betsch Cole's address at the 1991 CIEE conference.

In the address, Cole (1991) named the importance of supporting underrepresented populations to go abroad to push back against geopolitical chauvinism and that her own work with Black students led her to discover "Four F's": faculty and staff, family, finances, and fear as sources for their underrepresentation. For faculty and staff, Cole suggested that faculty and staff at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) may not perceive that Black students are good enough to pursue study abroad and also that faculty and staff at an HBCU often have limited resources to prioritize study abroad over academic course work. For family and community, Cole suggested that Black families are less likely to have traveled abroad therefore, there is uncertainty and concern about how their children will be treated based on their race. For finances, Cole reasoned that Black students are disproportionately unable to afford college along with some instances in which financial aid often is not sufficient to cover study abroad opportunities. Lastly, Cole proposed that Black students themselves have fears of encountering racism and are hesitant to place themselves in a foreign environment when they already experience racism in America.

Cole's "Four F's" have essentially become paradigmatic in the study abroad field as SAP have corroborated that Black and Latinx students do, in fact, identify barriers to their participation in study abroad when asked about them. Specifically, Students of Color have identified barriers such as: economic reasons (Brux & Fry, 2010; Council on International Educational Exchange, 1991; Gutierrez, 2015; Hembroff & Ruz, 1993; Norfles, 2003; Salisbury et al., 2011), academic reasons (e.g., attrition, low grades, academic progress) (Brux & Fry, 2010; Gutierrez, 2015; Hembroff & Ruz, 1993; Salisbury et al., 2011), and lastly, personal/cultural reasons (e.g., family concerns, fears or anxiety to travel; face discrimination) (Brux & Fry, 2010; Hembroff & Ruz, 1993; Norfles, 2003; Salisbury et al., 2011; Simon & Ainsworth, 2012). Brux and Fry (2010), Salisbury et al.'s (2011), and Simon and Ainsworth's (2012) studies are currently the most widely referenced for empirical research on underrepresentation, and these studies are useful to discuss in depth because both studies aimed to investigate Black and Latinx student underrepresentation comparatively across various racial groups, which had otherwise not been a focus in other areas of existing research on underrepresentation.

Brux and Fry's (2010) research utilized mixed methodology to sample Black and Latinx students (referred to as multicultural students) attending the University of Wisconsin–River Falls (UWRF) to learn about their participation in study abroad by studying obstacles and constraints relevant to Black and Latinx students. Their findings highlighted that multicultural students' constraints to study abroad are linked, to some degree, to a lack of awareness as well as a lack of encouragement from faculty and staff. Brux and Fry also noted that multicultural students in this study also addressed similar concerns about finances, family, and fear of discrimination abroad that have been shared more broadly in other studies on barriers.

In a similar vein to Brux and Fry, Salisbury et al. (2011) also conducted a study focused on Students of Color (including Black and Latinx students) and their underrepresentation in pursuing study abroad. However, their study also inquired why student participation in study abroad is predominately white. Their findings corroborate previous studies that white students, particularly from higher socioeconomic status groups, have a higher likelihood of their intent to study abroad in comparison to Black and Latinx students. However, as a point of distinction, Salisbury et al.'s (2011) study particularly measured intent to study abroad using distinct types of human, educational, financial, and motivational capital as predictors. In using these predictors of capital, Salisbury et al. found that students of color often scored differently on these predictors than white students, leading Salisbury et al. to suggest that differences in intent for Black and Latinx student participation exist because Black students' perceived beliefs that study abroad was not beneficial for their future career and that Latinx students who paid for their education with loans did not want to take on additional debt for optional experiences, such as study abroad (Salisbury et al., 2011).

Simon and Ainsworth (2012) also conducted a study to understand racial disparity in participation, in comparison to the other studies above, their study utilized a mixed methods research design. Their study specifically sought to understand qualitatively how race and class shape study abroad disparity for Black and low-income students, as well as to quantitatively study whether habitus or social and economic qualities to navigate social environment (e.g., previous travel experience), cultural capital (e.g., extracurricular participation, educational resources in a home), and social networks might explain the disparity. Their findings once again corroborate that for race, white and Asian students are more likely to participate than Black and Latinx students based on

Black and Latinx students' familial backgrounds possessing lower education, occupational prestige, income, etc. Despite these outcomes, the findings indicated that when socioeconomic status is controlled, Black students are interested in study abroad. However, their social networks disadvantaged their potential to participate in study abroad. As a departure from the other studies, Simon and Ainsworth noted in their discussion that changes should be made to the study abroad process that address Black students feeling unwelcome and discomforted by the process.

In sum, existing study abroad scholarship has helped student abroad practice historically in constructing a holistic understanding of Black and Latinx students' lower participation in study abroad. Yet, simultaneously, this understanding has seemingly led to an otherwise essentialized perception about Black and Latinx students in study abroad practices, of which contemporary studies have critiqued for being overly generalized and singularly focused on Black and Latinx students' deficits (Clay, 2022; Contreras, 2020; Contreras et al., 2019; Oguro & Payne, 2022; Perkins, 2020; Sweeney, 2014; Whatley & Latiner Raby, 2020; Wick et al., 2019). I wholeheartedly echo these critiques, and now introduce a further analysis of how the lower participation rationale is a specific form of a racialized deficit mindset that has become widely shared in study abroad practices as a stock story.

#### **4. CRT Analysis of Black and Latinx Students' Lower Participation Rationale**

Stock stories are most persuasive when narrators identify selectively chosen facts about minoritized groups that seem objective and neutral (Delgado, 1989). For the lower participation rationale, the selectively chosen facts SAP claim are that Black and Latinx students' possess cultural differences, due to their possessing distinct types of capital (i.e., human, educational, financial, and motivational) compared to their white peers (Brux & Fry, 2010; Cole, 1991; Salisbury et al., 2011; Simon & Ainsworth, 2012). As noted previously, contemporary SAP disavowed this perspective of cultural capital in favor of approaches that centered Black and Latinx students' strengths (Bush et al., 2022; Goldoni, 2018; Lu et al., 2015; Nyunt et al., 2022; Perkins, 2020; Thomas, 2013; Wick et al., 2019). These critiques did not come about just because these SAP considered cultural capital a thought of the past, but because they recognized that such chosen facts were all but neutral and objective. By selectively focusing on Black and Latinx students, the lower participation rationale unjustly portrays

Black and Latin student lower participation as a circumstance unique and specific to Black and Latinx students when SAP are aware that overall U.S. college student participation in study abroad is low across all racial groups (Institute for International Education, 2022; Thomas, 2013).

When SAP take up stock stories, they are (un)knowingly contributing to the larger deficit narratives about Black and Latinx students' low achievement in higher education by taking up an ahistorical – an attitudinal disposition wherein there is a lack of concern or disregard for historical context (Pepper, 2002) – stance. In critical race scholarship, ahistoricism has major implications toward for the prospects of achieving racial justice because enactments of neutrality dilute the meaning of racism into “a series of randomly occurring, intentional, and individualized acts” (Lawrence III et al., 1993, p. 7). The lower participation rationale is all but ahistorical as a close look into the theoretical underpinnings of the lower participation rationale are rooted in French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu's, capital theory (Salisbury et al., 2011; Simon & Ainsworth, 2012). Capital theory has also been widely used in higher education scholarship since the 1990s to establish a similar argument about such narratives about Black and Latinx student limited achievement in college.

#### 4.1. Historical Influence of Capital in Higher Education Research

Capital theory stems back to the sociological conceptualization of the terms, habitus and capital. Habitus describes the ability to navigate within social spaces, and one's habitus is mitigated by acquiring certain knowledge (or capital) to navigate the social spaces successfully (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Higher education scholars in the 1990s onward adopted capital theory alongside other similar sociological theories to better understand and explain how college students navigate or fail to navigate college environments and, more importantly, to determine the qualities of belonging that occur in college environments to convince college students to drop out and not finish college (Astin, 1993; Kuh & Love, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Seidman, 2012; Tinto, 1993). This body of research is known as retention and persistence research, and over time, has been expanded into a wealth of perspectives focused on student success to focus research on qualities that help students succeed in college (see Kuh et al., 2006).

Capital theory highly informed student success research in that higher education researchers began to devise comparative studies of students who succeed in college versus those that do not, and this lens has been particularly

popularized for studying Black and Latinx students success (and lack thereof) in higher education (Guiffrida, 2006; Kuh & Love, 2000; Tierney, 1999), as well as study abroad (Brux & Fry, 2010; Salisbury et al., 2011; Simon & Ainsworth, 2012). However, student success researchers have largely directed attention to the assumption that white students and Students of Color possess different acquired knowledge to succeed in college based on differential levels of cultural (e.g., education), social (e.g., networks and connections), and economic (e.g., finances) capital, and articulated a belief of difference in capital to be due to deficits of Black and Latinx students' backgrounds (Harper, 2010; Museus, 2014; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Yosso, 2005). This emphasis on Black and Latinx student deficits redirects attention away from the higher education leaders to challenge how the college environment itself is rooted in racial and cultural bias and, therefore, influences how Students of Color's experiences and outcomes are adversely shaped (Museus, 2014). More importantly, the positioning of cultural capital in this case establishes inherent deficit dynamics and reify "traditional assumptions" that communicate Black and Latinx students' cultural background as meaningless and views culture as a commodified form of capital that is only accessible those who already possess it (Guiffrida, 2006; Museus, 2014; Museus et al., 2017; Rendón, et al., 2000; Tierney, 1999). Again, these perspectives of cultural capital theory (and its usage of deficits) are well critiqued by SAP as barriers to achieving equity and access for Black and Latinx student participation in study abroad. However, the lower participation rationale and its function as a stock story has yet to be studied empirically. More practically, the lower participation rationale as it stands has yet to be disrupted from influencing current and future generations of SAP who work with Black and Latinx students.

#### 4.2. The Consequences of the Lower Participation Rationale

Without disruption to the lower participation rationale, SAP – as consumers of this stock story – will likely continue to universally accept these "fixed" cultural differences as the core reason for Black and Latinx students' lower participation in study abroad. Moreover, SAP will continue to perpetuate a universal assumption that all Black and Latinx students possess less capital when it comes to education, financial resources, and social access to study abroad than their white peers. More importantly, the lower participation rationale as a stock story discredits other forms of capital Black and Latinx students possess through from their own cultural backgrounds (Yosso, 2005), such as knowing a second language and navigating unfamiliar environments,

which can be useful in helping them overcome the potential barriers that would otherwise keep them from studying abroad. Therefore, this stock story contributes to larger educational dominant narratives about Black and Latin success in college, which thereby renders their possibilities for success in education precarious and unlikely. By continuing to encourage the lower participation rationale, many SAPs are consequently (un)knowingly passing on an over-30-year-old stock story. This unfairly places responsibility on Black and Latinx students as individuals to find solutions rather than placing the onus on SAPs to systemically interrogate their existing policies, practices, and beliefs that perpetuate inequitable participation for Black and Latinx students.

In sum, the stock story of the lower participation rationale generates an unfair monolithic perception and assumption that Black and Latinx students are not interested in pursuing study abroad. Most critically, this stock story persuades SAP to deny agency to these Black and Latinx students to have the capacity for move beyond their current capital positioning to be able to access study abroad opportunities. The consequence of such these assumptions going unchallenged is that continue to perpetuate a stock story rooted in a racialized deficit. Therefore, SAP must be willing to disrupt the lower participation rationale, by generating greater critical self-awareness and move towards action.

## 5. Concluding Discussion

It bears repeating that the field of study abroad is overdue in transforming existing study abroad policies and practices into more socially-just policies and practices that center the needs of historically minoritized students (Clay-Pedersen et al., 2022; Contreras et al., 2019; Contreras, 2020; Sweeney, 2014). Thus, to be inclusive and equitable in study abroad research requires a re-examination and re-definition of making progress toward equitable participation that goes beyond why certain groups do not go abroad (Contreras et al., 2019).

The over-reliance on the lower participation rationale as the sole reason for Black and Latinx student underrepresentation functions as both a fixation and an incomplete picture (Contreras Jr., 2020). Therefore, to work towards a more complete picture of Black and Latinx students lower participation in study abroad, current and future SAP must be willing to acknowledge that other factors may contribute to Black and Latinx students lower participation in study abroad (Perkins, 2020).

Through this article, I have laid forth my claim for how SAP's usage of the lower participation rationale may continue to adversely influence Black and Latinx students pursuing study abroad without meaningful acknowledgment of change in research and practice. CRT analyses of the lower participation as a stock story allowed for a shift in focus from how much "truth" is in the lower participation rationale to how such a rationale as a stock story impacts and shapes the beliefs and actions of those who consume the stock story. Without becoming more aware of what stock stories exist in study abroad, how they are constructed, and most importantly, how to dismantle them, the field will continue to struggle with fulfilling its promise of equity for Black and Latinx students and their participation in study abroad. Though the study abroad field has other challenges that threaten its ability to realize racial equity (e.g., the overturning of affirmative action in college admissions), now is a prominent opportunity to engage in this self-reflexive exercise to examine how it can be more responsive to increase support of Black and Latinx students.

Despite the oft sought after goal in study abroad to generate a check list of solutions or best practices to this issue, race and racism are too complex and too intractable to resolve in this article alone (Bensimon, 2005). Therefore, I instead wish to conclude by making the primary recommendation that SAP pause in their efforts to make promises to achieve equity for Black and Latinx students. Instead, I encourage that SAP take their time and wrestle with the hard truths of the field of study abroad's historical connection with race and racism in the United States. The most direct way to do so is to spend time (un)learning the history of race and racism, particularly in study abroad by looking into existing Black and Latinx expertise on race and racism referenced in this article (among others). In addition, SAP should reflexively reflect on how race and racism within their own institutions have contributed to limiting the participation of Black and Latinx in study abroad. Such reflection and validation would allow us to better account for the ways in which race and racism continue to influence our study abroad policies and practices.

Beyond this recommendation, I believe that cultural capital centered in Black and Latinx communities (Yosso, 2005) should be strongly highlighted and leveraged as an expansive foundational tool for re-conceptualizing SAP study abroad participation efforts. To acknowledge, incorporate, and uplift Black and Latinx students' cultural knowledge serves as a socially just praxiological step towards humanizing their abilities to succeed in college. Indeed, there are many existing ways in which SAP have done well to demonstrate how many of these

forms of capital can bring about success for Black and Latinx student abroad participation (Bush et al., 2022; Goldoni, 2018; Lu et al., 2015; Nyunt et al., 2022; Perkins, 2020; Wick et al., 2019). Conversely, there remains a great opportunity for SAP to increase research using CRT storytelling to examine the pervasiveness of racialized stock stories, such as the lower participation rationale, by conducting more empirical research to understand how such stock stories are constructed. Moreover, SAP should also prioritize ways to center the voices of Black and Latinx students as a counterstory to the lower participation rationale. Simon & Ainsworth's (2012) study offered a starting point for a counterstory by noting Black students' discomfort in the study abroad process; however, SAP should take additional steps to ask Black and Latinx students to verify the extent to which the perception about their lower participation is valid. In sum, research that concerns Black and Latinx students should center their voices on the solution, not positioning them as the problem. If the study abroad field is serious about its efforts to support Black and Latinx students, then it must take their voices, as well as the communities they come from, seriously.

The scholarly argument made in this article intends to begin a discourse and dialogue towards intentional assessment of and dismantling of all detrimental racialized deficit narratives about Black and Latinx students in study abroad. As long as the rationale remains unchallenged, SAPs remain complicit in carrying the lower participation rationale forward as a stock story, indicating our (in)ability to move beyond monolithic racialized deficit narratives about Black and Latinx students. Though empirical research on this phenomenon does not yet exist, I instead ask what difference can it make if SAPs were aware of the deficit-based assumptions they carried with them into their relationships with Black and Latinx students? Deficits portray a single story of what possibilities exist for Black and Latinx students. Therefore, SAPs must be incentivized to move beyond their perception versus the reality of whether a Black or Latinx student they work with possesses deficits. I believe it is our duty as SAP to invest in Black and Latinx student success by instilling an expansive mindset about what is possible for their study abroad opportunities.

Black and Latinx students who participate in study abroad gain greatly in building global skills and competencies that are critical for postgraduate success in the current global economy (Bingham et al., 2023; Lee, 2020). By proactively disrupting racialized deficit narratives, institutions of higher education and the study abroad field can reimagine Black and Latinx student success in college and put action behind their promised words of racial justice.

I believe that every SAP has a duty to take this call to action upon themselves on an individual level, and I also believe that leadership within NAFSA, The Forum, and the Institute for International Education must also take the lead collectively in prioritizing resources toward critically conscious research and best practices for racial equity. Otherwise, this lack of action further signals systematic ignorance and complicity in racist practices that ultimately harm Black and Latinx students.

## Notes

1. In this manuscript, I use the term Black and Latinx students intentionally to disambiguate from the term Students of Color; however, Students of Color will appear when specifically used by cited authors. Capitalization by cited authors will vary.
2. The term white is intentionally lowercase (see Daniszewski, 2020).
3. Data from 2019 is intentionally included to reflect the height of degree enrollment prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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