

**THE ATTITUDES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS TOWARDS  
THE STUDY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES**

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the reasons that African American students participate at lower levels in foreign language programs in terms of taking courses and majoring or minoring in foreign languages. The primary foreign language that it explores is Spanish, and its findings suggest that the introduction of the language devoid of the influence of Afro-diasporic linkages to Spanish culture leads to the topic being taught in abstraction, therefore causing a lack of interest among African American students. As this study shows, a teacher's thinking about cultural and racial difference is often intimately woven into their disciplinary training, and as a result, the convergence of these influences affects a professor's ability to provide culturally responsive service and a student's desire to engage both the teacher and the subject area. Integrating relevant foreign language theory and Afro-diasporic literature this dissertation conducts inquiry into pedagogical approaches for attracting African American students into the area of foreign languages.





## CHAPTER 1-INTRODUCTION

The United States has traditionally been characterized as the world's *Melting Pot*. America earned this moniker as a result of millions of immigrants from across the globe relocating from their homelands to the US and subsequently establishing the rich tapestry of people and cultures present in the U.S. today. For centuries these immigrants arrived on American shores with hopes of being able to take advantage of the high standard of living associated with American citizenship. Many of these new Americans eagerly anticipated their unique version of the *American Dream*--firmly situated within the US's highly developed educational system, thriving economy, and numerous opportunities for social advancement. Hence, individuals world-wide believe that migrating from their homelands to the United States means more promising life opportunities and a chance at greater prosperity.

However, historically while millions of immigrants may have sought their piece of the "American pie," not all Americans seem to view sharing their perceived part of America in a positive light. In fact, from the early booms in European immigration in the late nineteenth century to the current expansion of immigration from Latin/South American countries today, US citizens have expressed xenophobic anxieties about the changing racial and cultural demographics of their perceived territory (Madsen, 1998). If one is unclear of these attitudes simply examine the numerous English only propositions and calls for the tightening of borders between Mexico and the US that have sprung up across the nation at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For example, currently in Arizona Senate Bill 1070, which legalizes racial profiling, has just been passed. According to Arizona lawmakers, the bill is intended to eliminate illegal immigration into the country. As explained in *Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern*

*Poverty Law Center (2010)*, The police would be authorized to arrest immigrants unable to show documents allowing them to be in the country and the legislation would leave drivers open to sanctions...for knowingly transporting an illegal immigrant, even a relative. It expressly forbids cities from adopting "sanctuary" policies that restrict the police and public workers from immigration enforcement... ("Arizona Legalizes Racial Profiling")

Consequently, these events cause me to ponder whether or not Americans are truly willing to live harmoniously with immigrants who have decided to make the United States their home? How willing are historically majority populations in the US (both black and white) willing to embrace immigrants in terms of becoming more familiar with their various languages and cultures? Further, is the *Melting Pot* moniker a simulacrum and America is simply a culturally obtuse nation built on the idea that immigrants must assimilate to participate.

While these are clearly broad and expansive issues well beyond the scope of one dissertation, the aim of this study is to specifically address the linguistic aspect of this societal conundrum. In my approximate fifteen years of teaching African American and European American students as well as students of various other ethnic backgrounds, I notice a somewhat negative difference in the attitudes of African Americans in comparison with European Americans towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. It appears that the sincere desire to learn foreign languages and the customs of their peoples is not as pronounced among African Americans. I have had the pleasure of teaching some African American students who demonstrated an outstanding capability to learn a foreign language. However, the majority of these students view this ability as an advantage to simply pass the course(s) they are required to take, and once this goal has been accomplished, they see no need to further pursue studies in that language. Hardly any of these students find it necessary to cultivate or increase the knowledge

they have already acquired about the language as a result of taking the required course(s).

Not only have I observed a lack of interest in foreign languages and cultures among African Americans within a classroom setting, but outside the classroom as well. Being one who initially developed an interest in foreign languages, mainly Spanish, as a junior in high school and having acquired experience as a Spanish instructor, I have attended many cultural and international functions. Most of these events have been conducted by universities usually for the purpose of informing individuals or students about some important aspect of the field and to encourage the interest of students, who are not actively involved in, or studying, languages.

The Foreign Language Department at the university in which my study will be conducted, a predominantly African American university, annually celebrates what is known as Foreign Language Week. Each day of this school week is devoted to an exhibit of the particular country of a language offered within the department. Much effort is put forth by the faculty in this endeavor which takes place every spring semester. The exhibits usually include pictures, clothing, food and other significant aspects of the countries. The student turnout for the presentations is somewhat large but could be better with approximately 50-75 of the students from our classes. In addition to these students, the department chair sometimes invites students from other schools in the surrounding areas. However, it seems evident that in many cases the extra-curricular aspects of the events takes precedence over our proposed primary intent—nurturing an educational interest in the spotlighted foreign language. It appears that the motivating force behind our students attending these activities is the extra credit points we offer them in exchange for their attendance. However, I always try to make this an opportunity for my students to express themselves in writing regarding their thoughts and opinions about the presentations. I base the points they receive on how well they are able to write and critically

think about the aspects of the programs. Overall, despite our best effort to foster more interest in foreign languages and cultures among the students, more attention is paid to how they can benefit in terms of a grade or extra points and the actual presentation of the culture than any significant interests in taking the courses much less selecting a major/minor in the area of foreign languages. This fact leaves the foreign language department at Southern University as well as foreign language department at other predominantly African American universities to contemplate what more could be done to persuade students to see the value of learning a foreign language and culture in today's society.

Educator James Davis author of *Reflections on the History and Future of Foreign Language Education at Historically Black Colleges and Universities* (2000) suggests that if African American students were exposed to the connection between African culture and Hispanic culture, there would be more African American students who would continue to study Spanish. Davis (2000) recalls his sophomore year in college as a Spanish student. He had befriended a student whom he assumed was African American, but to his surprise, the student explained that he was a native of Cuba. Davis (2000) emphatically stated that had no knowledge of there being blacks within the Hispanic world. He wondered why their Spanish instructor never shared this fact with the students.

In addition to the aforementioned facts, even at the largest predominantly African American undergraduate baccalaureate institution in the world only an average of five students graduate with foreign language degrees each school year. As an undergraduate Spanish instructor at the fore-mentioned institution, pondering the lack of interest our African American students demonstrate in foreign languages, I decided to conduct a study which would probe the factors which contribute to the apathetic attitudes of African American students concerning the study of

Spanish. Hopefully, the results will give foreign language educators ideas concerning how we could join forces to arrive at a remedy for this problem.

## CHAPTER 2-REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This dissertation explores the reasons that African American students participate in limited numbers in foreign language programs with a particular focus on Spanish. For the purposes of this study, limited participation means the student population that I am studying tends not to enroll in foreign language classes beyond university required courses. The preliminary findings on which my dissertation will be based suggest that the introduction of Spanish devoid of the influence of African peoples' linkages to Spanish culture leads to the topic being taught in abstraction, therefore causing a lack of interest among African American students in the area of foreign languages. As this study suggests, a teacher's thinking about cultural and racial difference is often intimately woven into their disciplinary training, and as a result, the convergence of these influences affects a professor's ability to provide culturally responsive service and a student's desire to engage both the teacher and the subject area. Integrating literature concerning African American student attitudes about the study of foreign languages, relevant foreign language theory, and afro-diasporic literature this dissertation conducts inquiry into approaches for attracting African American students into the area of foreign languages, relevant foreign language theory, and afro diasporic literature this dissertation conducts inquiry into approaches for attracting African American students into the area of foreign languages. Once we have determined the attitudes of students based on their own experiences and beliefs, then we will be able to tailor our courses and the foreign language curricula to meet them on their personal levels as well as their educational levels when they enter our classrooms in order to embark upon the study of a foreign language and culture. Foreign language educators must stop and ask themselves the following: what do these African American students feel about the

individuals of the target culture; what experiences in their lives have led them to feel this way; what can be done in the classroom to overcome any negative feelings they may have acquired about the target culture?

### **Student Attitudes Concerning the Study of Foreign Languages**

Students' attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures are an integral factor in the education of foreign language students. Educators in the field of foreign languages have researched this topic with the intent of understanding what is necessary to encourage a greater interest in this field among students as well as for the purpose of enhancing foreign language teaching and curricula. The following review of literature reflects research which has been conducted by those in the field who examined African American students' attitudes concerning the study of foreign languages. Educator Linda Lassiter's (2003) research among African American students who were studying elementary and intermediate French at Southern University-Baton Rouge (a historically black university or HBCU) revealed that despite the low number of students who major and minor in French, forty percent of the students believe there will be numerous opportunities to utilize the language which they are studying. Davis and Markham (1991) conducted a similar study which consisted of data from 53 predominantly black institutions and discovered that forty percent of the participants indicated that foreign languages would be more worthwhile for them to study if African themes were included. Traditionally those with foreign language degrees have gone on to secure employment in the fields of business, education, nonprofit organizations and government when they have coupled this degree with a degree in another field according to The ERIC Review, and it is no coincidence that African Americans are sparsely represented in these professions. Moreover, the results of Davis and Markham's (1991) study seem to imply that these students would need to feel a sense of

identifying with a group of people of a different culture if they are going to embrace that culture.

These realities bring the significance of the notion of the relationship between racial identity and educational interests on the academic and professional outcomes of African American students to the surface. Critical educator Na'im Akbar (1998) acknowledges the absence of the African American experience and influence within the education system. Further, Akbar's (1998) work suggests that the narrow range of African American academic majors centering primarily on education, business and social sciences can be directly related to the limited representation of African-Americans across a broad range of academic majors.

According to *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (May, 2010), the most popular major for African American undergraduate students was business management during the 2005-06 school year. Contrastingly, as an example of pioneering African Americans who made contributions in areas that have traditionally been dominated by European American scholars in the US context, in *12 Black Classicists: A Photographic Installation*. Ronnick (2003) further acknowledges the contributions of African Americans such as Richard Greener, William Scarborough and Frazelia Campbell who were among the first to pave the way for African Americans in foreign languages is often overlooked in traditional foreign language curriculum.

Despite the perceived absence of African Americans in the field of foreign languages, there are several notable foreign language scholars of African descent. Ronnick (2003) has conducted extensive research on the 12 Black Classicists and documented that Richard Greener was the first African-American member of the American Philological Association (1875). Mounter (2001) explained Greener's life as a child by stating that he had to drop out of school at the age of 14 to support his family. However, with the assistance of two of his employers, August E. Bachelder and George Herbert Palmer, he enrolled in preparatory school at Oberlin



College where he attended from 1862 to 1864, and then went on to become the first African American to graduate from Harvard in 1870 with honors. According to BlackPast.org, Scarborough was born in 1852 to a free African American father and an enslaved multiracial mother and learned to read and write from his European American neighbors and his free African American family members. Despite these obstacles, he went on to attend Atlanta University and later completed his education at Oberlin College in 1875 and went on to become the first African American member of the Modern Language Association (1884). He is also well known for his Greek textbook, *First Lessons in Greek* (1881). Frazelia Campbell, who graduated from the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia in 1867, began to work as a teacher of Latin, German and Spanish at that school, and later became the school's principal for the department which was comprised primarily of women. Consequently, African Americans have played an essential role in the history of foreign language studies, however not a great number of African Americans today desire to continue this legacy.

While African Americans are reluctant to embrace the language and culture of Hispanics, the opposite is true concerning the attitudes of Spanish speakers, particularly Mexican Americans. Perhaps the reason may be because these Mexicans choose to live in the United States. Mejías, Anderson-Mejías and Carlson (2003) conducted a comparative study between the years 1982 and 2000 and discovered that Mexican American students who attend the University of Texas Pan American in the Lower Rio Grande Valley seemed to develop a stronger sense of assimilation within the North American culture as the years passed. For instance, in 1982 slightly over seventy-one percent of these students spoke Spanish to relate to family members and friends, while in 2000 approximately sixty-five percent of the students responded in the same manner. This fact leads us to wonder why if these Mexicans can live in the United States as

minorities just as African Americans, why are the Mexicans more willing to embrace a foreign culture than African Americans? Now that Hispanics, including Mexicans, are the largest minority group in the United States, it seems as though the acceptance of the Hispanics' language and culture would be to the advantage of African Americans. As we begin to investigate the attitudes of African Americans regarding foreign languages and cultures, we can begin with their attitudes from an educational perspective.

### **African American Student Attitudes**

The mission of Southern University and A&M College, an Historically Black, 1800 land grant institution, is to provide opportunities for a diverse student population to achieve a high quality, global educational experience, to engage in scholarly research, and creative activities, and to give meaningful public service to the community, the state, the nation, and the world so that Southern University graduates are competent, informed, and productive citizens. (Southern University-Baton Rouge Mission Statement)

The Department of Foreign Languages at Southern University-Baton Rouge is committed to excellence in instruction and to the promotion of global awareness and the appreciation of other cultures and peoples. (Southern University-Baton Rouge Foreign Language Department Mission Statement)

With the aforementioned mission statements which have been formed by the African American university Southern and its foreign language department, it still seems as though the attitudes of these students as well as other students at African American universities have not measured up to such aspirations. According to Lassiter (2003), only slightly more than three percent of foreign language graduates in the United States were African Americans in the 1990's although the majority of these students indicate awareness of the practical advantages of learning foreign languages. Even today the foreign languages departments at HBCUs struggle to stay afloat due to a lack of participation among students. With my own experience in regard to this subject in mind, I began to research the problems and findings of other educators and researchers concerning the anemic participation of African American students in the foreign language

departments. I discovered that I am not alone in the quest to better understand the lack of interest among African American students in the study of foreign languages and cultures. Lassiter (2003) conducted research at Southern University-Baton Rouge which included the findings of two attitudinal surveys of African American students in elementary and intermediate French classes. The first survey was administered to 205 first- and second-semester French students and focused on language learning background, student assessment of foreign language classroom activities, and motivation to learn a foreign language. The second survey was a modification of Horowitz' BALLI ("Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory") for beginning university students, which was administered to 165 students who were studying the elementary-level French (first-semester) course. The study sought to find out why students do not continue their study of a foreign language beyond the first two semesters and do what is deemed necessary to expose African American students to other languages and cultures. The findings of Lassiter's investigation reveal that approximately sixty-six percent of the students expressed that the language they were learning is of medium difficulty to them. Despite a decline in the number of French majors and minors at Southern, although forty percent of those who participated in this survey believe there will be many opportunities to use the language they are learning, forty-one percent expressed neutral feelings regarding job possibilities as a result of learning the language. It was also mentioned that the students did not encounter many other African Americans within foreign language departments, which could be a direct indication of the attitudes which are noticeable among African Americans and one of the causes for the continuation of these attitudes. Despite the perceived absence of African Americans in the field of foreign languages, there are several notable foreign language scholars of African descent.

Lassiter (2003) acknowledges that although her study covered a limited population of African American students, it may still offer some helpful insight as to what can be done to reform the foreign language curriculum at the institution for which she is presently employed as well as at other predominantly black universities. Should these departments focus on a change in teaching methods or is the inclusion of the African influence within these foreign languages and cultures what we should emphasize in reforming the curriculum?

Prior to Lassiter's (2003) study Davis and Markham (1991) conducted a study with the same focus which covered a larger population of African American students. The two researchers sent 1200 copies of a student questionnaire to 53 predominantly Black institutions which included such universities as Alabama State University, Alcorn State University and Southern University-New Orleans. According to the results of the study, only 4 out of 772 students anticipated majoring in a foreign language and 32 students anticipated minoring. The majority of the 791 students (eighty-four percent) indicated that they study a foreign language to be able to converse with that language's native speakers. Forty percent of the students acknowledged that their foreign language courses would be more relevant to them if African themes were emphasized in first- and second-year courses.

As previously referenced, Davis (2000) made a rather interesting comment in regard to African themes when discussing an experience he had during his sophomore year in college. He had a friend whom he had assumed to be of African American descent, and while conversing with this friend, he made reference to some aspect of his home. When Davis asked him where his home was, he was surprised to know that it was in Cuba. Davis had no idea that his friend who seemed to be African American, was from the Caribbean. Davis added that his Spanish teacher had never told him nor the class any such thing about blacks within Hispanic culture. Davis's

story is rather indicative of the problem with African American students which constantly challenges foreign language educators who seek to engage these students. Davis seemed rather enlightened to discover the African influence within the Hispanic culture, and it is likely that many other African American students would feel the same if they were to make the same discovery.

### **Reasons for Limited Participation in Foreign Languages Among African American Students**

The notion of a “hidden curriculum” is brought to the forefront of the US educational system in Akbar’s (1998) discussion of a curriculum which highlights the history and accomplishments of European Americans and purposely excludes those of African Americans. According to Akbar and like-minded critical scholars (Pinar, 2006; Giriaux, 1983, Watkins, 2001; West, 1990; etc.), as early as grade school, students are exposed to a Eurocentric curriculum replete with limited and often distorted notions of the presence and participation of people of African descent in the Americas. This sentiment seems to carry over into the study of foreign languages in that African influence is, for the most part, excluded from the culture and history of languages. Many students are not properly introduced to the century old ties that bind African and Hispanic cultures which profoundly influence the present day commonalities between the two communities.

Consequently, previous studies by LeBlanc (1972); Clowney and Legge, (1979); and Clark, (1982) indicate a serious lack of interest among African Americans. According to LeBlanc sixty-four percent of the students in her study believed that the foreign language requirement should be deleted from prerequisite for graduation. In addition to these responses, Clowney and Legge (1979) discovered that fifty-seven percent of these students believed that

their own cultural identity would be threatened by studying a foreign language and culture. Hence, following Akbar's discussion of the suppression of the influence of African peoples and culture in the introduction of African American students to the study of Spanish there is a resulting sense of apathy among students of African descent when it comes to studying or majoring/minoring in Spanish.

Besides the factor of identity among African American students concerning their study of foreign languages and cultures, Lassiter (2003) also pinpointed that, "African Americans generally have less exposure to languages and travel, and view foreign language as a rote exercise to be tolerated, one that is far removed from their concept of reality" (p. 6).

### **Participation of African Americans in Study Abroad**

Davis and Markham (1993) also found that eighty-four percent of the students in their study had not experienced travel to a country where the foreign language they were studying was spoken (see Appendix A, "Foreign Language Student Questionnaire Conducted by James J. Davis and Paul L. Markham" (1991)). Similarly Brown (2002) found an overwhelming decline in the interest among African Americans who choose to enrich their cultural and language knowledge via study abroad programs. Various factors are taken into consideration in determining possible causes for these attitudes among African Americans in this survey. It is believed that a lack of advertisement for these programs as well as their high costs are likely deterrents for African American students. Educators of African American students have also acknowledged that the students express a fear of the unknown in regard to foreign travel (Brown, 2002). The mere thought of differences or a change in scenario alone can cause some level of anxiety among students. Moreover, the media perpetuates the downside of life such as poverty and high crime against tourists from the United States which occurs in a number of foreign

countries, and this makes it more difficult to convince African American students to travel abroad and experience the culture of the target language. I believe study abroad among students and more travel abroad among teachers would greatly enhance the learning and teaching of culture in the foreign language classroom. Everyone would be able to contribute to the class discussions as a result of firsthand experience of the culture. Experience of the culture in addition to all the facts offered by the textbook would provide increased references or “real world experiences” to the material being covered.

### **Other Influences on African Americans’ Attitudes**

The attitudes of many African American students concerning the study of foreign languages and cultures did not occur overnight. Since as early as the nineteenth century, there have been a number of outside forces which have played a role in influencing the minds and opinions of students regarding foreign language study. According to Davis (2000), what we know today as Howard University and Morehouse College offered a minimum of three years of Latin and Greek from the beginning of their existence. Davis (2000) further explains that many other private colleges founded in the late nineteenth century began a classical literary curriculum which concentrated mainly on the study of the Latin and Greek languages. Davis (2000) goes on to explain such private black colleges as Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, founded in 1854 by the Presbyterian Church, and Wilberforce University in Ohio, founded in 1856 by the African Methodist Church, are said to be the first two black colleges which required the study of Latin and Greek while French and German were elective courses. According to Davis (200), this program is known as the New England classical curriculum which concentrated on languages and mathematical sciences at both universities and was generally accepted as the most cosmopolitan curriculum for all American universities at the turn of the 20th century.

However, despite the efforts of these universities to educate blacks in the New England classical curriculum, according to Davis (2000) Booker T. Washington arguably the strongest proponent of black education in US history fiercely opposed what this program sought to accomplish in educating its black participants. Washington believed the education of blacks in such a program was “nonutilitarian.” He argued that industrial/vocational education would better benefit blacks (Washington, 1901) and through his powerful "Tuskegee Machine" he championed an ethic of practical training in the industrial arts to allow black Americans to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps and participate as newly emancipated citizens.

Contrastingly, W.E.B. Du Bois argued that while it was necessary for blacks to receive an education in agricultural and mechanical arts he also supported expanded educational opportunities for blacks to study the liberal arts in the areas of mathematics, sciences, literature, languages and philosophy (Dubois, 1903/1990). This opposition between Washington and Du Bois is known as the “Washington-Du Bois Controversy.”

The institutions known as land-grant black colleges were more heavily influenced by Washington’s vision of education and often emphasized vocational training for blacks as opposed to curricula that prescribed the study of foreign languages and classical programs. The land-grant colleges concentrated more on the areas of agricultural, industrial, mechanical or teacher-training institutes. Davis explains that typically foreign languages were not offered at the land-grant colleges and if they were, they were of limited interest to the student body.

Davis (2000) attributes the lackluster interest of blacks towards foreign languages to the opinions of educational leaders at the time like Charles W. Dabney, the University of Tennessee’s president in the early 1900s appropriately labeled a "White and chief architect of black education by critical scholar William Watkins in his 2001 text *The White Architects of*



*Black Education Ideology and Power in America 1865-1954.* (Watkins, 2001) Discussing the influence of such men Watkins chronicled Dabney, who expressed his adamant displeasure with the education of black students in the area of Latin, Greek, and philosophy at their school. According to Dabney classical educational pursuits were impractical for blacks. Instead they should be educated in professions like vocational and industrial arts with more practical grounding.

My preliminary studies on this topic suggest that today students are receiving similar advice as they seek to be counseled regarding the steps they should take in their education. Clearly today's African American students are not the newly emancipated black student population at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but the advice to major in business, engineering, or education; professions with clearly established career tracks and practical grounding and to shy away from liberal arts inspired disciplines like music, art and for the purposes of this dissertation foreign languages still resonates within the African American community. Some of my own students have expressed to me that they have been encouraged by their on-campus advisors to either procrastinate fulfilling their foreign language requirements or to forego the option of majoring or minoring in a foreign language. They are told that to pursue foreign language study is useless or unnecessary. These sentiments of majoring in a discipline within an applied field exist beyond the confines of the university. The reasoning behind these assertions resides in the fact that many African American students arrive on campus as first generation college students. According to Hsiao (1992), universities and colleges in the United States tend not to keep records regarding the number of first generation students who are attending their schools. However, it is known that many of these students are enrolled at community colleges and the number of these students is growing. London (1992), in Hsiao (1992), stated, "...there is

agreement that those numbers are growing as a college degree becomes a prerequisite for more and more jobs." Padron (1992) in Hsaio (1992) pointed out that first generation students at community colleges are normally women or adults who are from working class, ethnic minority families. In many cases the costs of a four to six year degree either rival or far exceed their total family income over the course of the degree period. Against this tremendous investment of limited resources there is often a significant expectation that students in these situations earn a degree in a field that seems more traditional and has a supposed direct utility into a profession immediately after graduation that can more likely provide a return. Hence, the lack of a clear articulation of a correlation between humanities based majors and the current job market is a further confounding factor between black American student populations and participation pursuing foreign language degrees.

Consequently, when students enter our foreign language classrooms, they have already encountered challenging notions that deter interests in foreign languages from the academy, their communities and in some ways the current labor market that are deeply embedded into their psyche, and then we (the educators) must conduct the strenuous task of work to challenging this mentality.

Returning to the linkages between culture and language as a cause of limited African American student participation, studies reveal African American students are simply not aware of the African influence in the cultures of many foreign languages. Particularly at HBCU's like the one in which this study is being conducted this fact gives foreign language educators something to ponder in considering how culture and all the influences within culture should be taught in the foreign language classroom. Of the 139 students at Southern University-Baton Rouge on whom I conducted a preliminary study in 2003, 95 students indicated they would not

major/minor in the language they were studying at that time. Eighty-six of these students expressed that they would be more interested in foreign language study if African themes and languages were included in the curriculum. This valuable piece of information could lead foreign language educators to what may be the remedy for the lack of interest in foreign languages among these students, and then possibly in the future examine the attitudes of other students as well. Hence the fore-referenced literature offers more economic and employment opportunities, therefore leaving educators to further investigate their attitudes. With only a small percentage of African Americans majoring/minoring in a foreign language due to the notion of economic benefits, there must be deeper investigation to discover other avenues that will attract more of these students to the field of foreign languages.

### **What Is Culture**

One of these avenues could be that of culture. It is likely that at the onset of studying a language, some of these students are more interested in the culture as opposed to the language, and by effectively including this component in the classroom lessons, we could increase their interest in the language via the culture. It is through the culture which they come to know and understand the life and history of the people, and will thereby be able to possibly discover realities which may even relate to their own culture. We could start this process by pondering this whole idea of culture and what it means.

Culture is an ever present force with which we all live, both consciously and subconsciously. It is like the essential spice which is added to the bare necessities of life. There are several meanings of culture, and for the purposes of this study two are of major importance: culture as *everything* in human life and culture as the *best* in human life (Brooks in Hadley, 1993, p. 361). Noted Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973), who offers several potential

definitions of culture (see appendix B, "Potential meanings of culture by Geertz (1973)"), concurs with Brooks' notion, stating that culture is "the total way of life of a people". Geertz's broad conception of culture set the standard for present western discussions of culture. However, according to Allen (1985), the main focus of culture was to highlight outstanding literary masterpieces, which Brooks (1971) referred to as "Olympian culture" or "culture MLA", also known as "big C culture". This type of culture emphasized the music, literature and art of the community being studied. In the area of music, there is a rich and well chronicled relationship between African and Hispanic cultures. African drums and rhythms can be detected in the tunes of historic and present day Hispanic music. Geertz (1973) references this historical aspect of culture when discussing the potential meanings of culture. He describes culture as "a precipitate of history."

Seelye (1984), on the other hand, regards culture "as a broad concept that embraces all aspects of human life..." (Hadley, 1993, p.361). This concept of culture not only includes "Olympian culture", but also what Brooks (1975) referred to as "hearthstone culture," or "culture BBV", also known as "small c culture" (beliefs, behavior, and values) (Brooks 1975, p. 21). The opposing views of culture by Brooks (1975) and Seelye (1984) have led to several difficulties in the teaching of culture among language educators. In the 1960s, hearthstone culture ("little-c" culture) took precedence over formal culture ("big-C" culture) as the recognition of a more inclusive concept of culture came into view. As scholarly discussions of culture continued to evolve more researchers conceptualized culture as not just one aspect of life, but as life in general.

Hadley (1993) and other researchers tend to view culture as a humanistic entity, Johada (1984) believes that "artifacts also generate meaning and influence behaviour" (Hamers & Blanc,

2000: 199). For instance, if we consider the role of a car in some cultures, we know it provides increased mobility for individuals and allows them to travel farther distances. As a direct result of obtaining this type of luxury, “the car becomes a status symbol and may be chosen not for its qualities as a vehicle but because of the symbolic value attached to a particular model” (Hamers & Blanc, 2000, p. 199). Subsequently, just as the car came to mean more than the metal, plastic and rubber that it is composed of or even its actual purposes languages represent much more than the words, phonetic rules and pronunciations, or even the ideas that it conveys—language has an entire history, lifestyle, worldview and ultimate culture of a people. It would be appropriate for this study to focus on Geertz's (1973) and Brooks's (1971) notion of culture which comprises every aspect of life as indicative of culture. If we view culture as inclusive, or pertaining to everything in life, then that would include going back into history to see how the past of a group of people affects the present as well as how within one culture we have the influences of other cultures.

### **Challenges Teachers Face in Teaching Culture**

With this definition of culture in mind, we have to wonder how many foreign language educators would agree with this notion and would be willing to teach their cultural lessons in the classroom along these guidelines. Hadley (1993) identifies some of the problems language teachers encounter when attempting to teach language in a more holistic manner that encompasses culture. These problems include: (1) a lack of time to cover cultural material due to a substantial amount of grammar which needs to be taught; (2) a lack of knowledge on the part of teachers regarding cultural material; (3) and students’ attitudes associated with culture (p. 357-358).

Teachers tend to procrastinate on the inclusion of culture in their foreign language lessons, figuring they can come back and address it after all the grammar has been covered. However, in most cases, the semester or school year has come to a close before this actually happens. Plans to cover cultural material after grammar has been taught instead of demonstrating the relationship between culture and grammar by discussing the two components together is of non-effect. Howard and Frances Nostrand (1971) expounded on the focus of culture by suggesting nine objectives for students as stated in Hadley (1993, p. 363) (see appendix C, “Nine student objectives on culture by Nostrand & Nostrand (1993)”). It is useless to know a language without understanding when and how to use the language. One must understand when it is appropriate to use certain phrases or terms depending on the situation. For example, in Spanish, there are two types of 'you'. One is formal while the other is informal depending on whom the speaker is addressing.

As various researchers continue to offer their definitions of culture, this topic begins to manifest a static base, which Lafayette (1988) states has been criticized among foreign language educators. Lafayette (1988) believes students should be exposed to the information and concepts surrounding culture. In order to better describe this idea, Lafayette (1988) suggests 13 goal statements which are grouped into five categories (see appendix D, “Lafayette’s (1988) 13 goal statements of culture”). Lafayette demonstrates a more holistic view of culture which covers the formal culture such as history and monuments and popular culture which offers a more modern perspective.

Hamers and Blanc (2000) explain that although language and culture do not exist independently, they are not homologous. They state, “Language is a component of culture along with other entities like, for example, values, beliefs and norms; language is a product of culture,

transmitted from one generation to the next in the socialization process; it also moulds culture, that is to say, our cultural representations are shaped by language” (p. 199). Some students have expressed an interest in learning a foreign language without the inclusion of the culture of that language, and my colleagues and I always respond by informing them the two entities are inseparable.

When we refer to the relationship between language and culture, it must be understood that it is not mere sound patterns of the language to which culture is connected. Rather, it is the correspondence of the semantic pattern of the language which connects it to culture (Shaul & Furbee, 1998). The aspect of the language which is most closely associated with the culture is the vocabulary. Shaul and Furbee (1998) state, “So intuitively aligned is vocabulary with culture that vocabulary lists have formed the entire approach of language maintenance and renewal programs in some American Indian communities where English is replacing the native language” (p. 28). Interestingly enough, vocabulary which is culturally significant in the language is taught in classes with less emphasis on grammar, according to the “language and culture” approach. This may be a word of advice for foreign language educators regarding the inclusion of culture into lessons.

In addition to a shortage of time allotted to cover a sufficient amount of culture in the curriculum, there is also a lack of knowledge among teachers about the culture which should be taught. Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984) acknowledge the problem of teachers not being trained in the area of teaching culture. Therefore, there are no strategies implemented in the inclusion of culture within lessons. As a result of such an omission in the study of foreign languages, our students become what Freire (1978) refers to as "receptacles" or "containers" into which an enormous amount of information is deposited with no consideration of their own

history or present reality. This notion of "banking" in education implies that "knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" (p. 208). These educators never seek to meet the students within their own experience or make the subject relevant to their lives. Our students tend to view this type of learning experience as pointless and useless. Upon completing such a course, they have neither been challenged nor enhanced in their educational development. Therefore, they see no need to continue their study of the language beyond the requirement. Lassiter explains that of Southern University's approximate 8,000 students, only three students graduated last year with a degree in a foreign language.

According to the study conducted by Davis and Markham (1991), fifty-four percent of students at predominantly African American universities believe culture should be more emphasized in the classroom, and this lack of knowledge could be one of the main reasons for such an omission. In most foreign language classrooms, the discussion of culture is merely the imparting of facts, including dates, events, sites, geography, etc. Students, as well as teachers, are not able to make sense of all these facts concerning the culture being discussed. There is no understanding or relevance to the every-day lives of the students and teachers in the foreign language classroom. Hadley (1993) points out that this type of "information-only" approach to teaching culture actually further accentuates stereotypes which seem to be a constant barrier in the learning and teaching of foreign languages (p. 358).

These stereotypes which are pervasive due to a lack of knowledge and understanding in the area of culture leads to the third reason for which there are difficulties in the teaching of culture. Patrikis (1988) acknowledges this presence of cultural stereotypes. Many individuals tend to focus on one particular aspect of a culture, for example, poverty among some of its



members, and proceed to classify all members according to that notion. Once the students' minds have been influenced by such stereotypes, the teachers are faced with the resulting narrow student attitudes concerning foreign languages and culture. The students tend to view the differences in cultures as negative as opposed to being enlightened by new insight into, or a new perspective on human life. Hence, foreign language teachers must realize that all students enter the classroom with some form of knowledge before we can even attempt to impart any information in the class.

The guiding principles of this research reject representations of educators being charged to change or blindly indoctrinate students concerning their indigenous cultural beliefs. Rather, this research argues that foreign language educators should seek to challenge students to see outside and beyond their own lives and singularly experienced circumstances. This approach to teaching would be implemented with the aim of broadening students' horizons, teaching them that there is more than just one way to view and come to understand the language, cultures and peoples that they are studying. We should educate them to think critically about the topics that they are studying as opposed to simply providing endless vocabulary lists, facts, and grammar rules taught in abstraction about people and places with little or no meaning for students.

### **Preferred Approaches for Integrating Culture into the Foreign Language Classroom**

The idea of *differences* regarding culture has greatly influenced my personal position in the teaching of culture. Slagle (2007) stated in a national report that 44 million of the people living in the United States are Hispanics, who "are the fastest-growing segment, accounting for half of the nation's population growth," (p. 18). This growth is attributed mainly to the birth rate among present-day Hispanics in the country, which is higher than past immigrants.

Schmidt (2003) urges college professors to quickly learn to pronounce such names as Pilar,

Jorge and Alejandro because the Hispanic population at universities in the United States is rapidly on the rise. He stated,

Hispanics have become the largest minority group in the United States and now represent about thirteen percent of the country's population. They account for about half of the population growth in recent years, and are expected, given immigration and their relatively high fertility rates, to represent a much larger share of the population and work force in years to come. Of the 5.6 million additional school-age children projected to be living in the United States in 2025, some 5.2 million, or ninety three percent, will be Hispanic, the U.S. Census Bureau says. (Schmidt, 2003, p. 1).

The number of Hispanics has continued to increase over the years, now reaching twenty-five percent, according to CNN in April 2009. Although Spanish-speaking residents make their homes in regions all over the United States, they are mainly located in California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and New York. Mexican Americans, or Chicanos, reside in the states of California, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas and Colorado. In New York the population is greatly comprised of Puerto Ricans, and in Florida, New Jersey and California we find natives of Cuba (Terrell, Andrade, Egasse, Muñoz, 2006). Due to the fact that Hispanics are now the largest minority group in the United States, it becomes more evident that Spanish is a highly essential and advantageous foreign language for our students to learn, so how do we as foreign language educators go about imparting knowledge of not only the language but the culture associated with the language?

Galloway (1985) characterizes four common approaches to teaching culture, which include the (1) Frankenstein Approach, the (2) 4-F Approach, the (3) Tour Guide Approach and the (4) "By-the-Way" Approach. According to Galloway (1985), the Frankenstein Approach includes, what Spanish speakers would call "un poco de todo", or a little bit of everything. The "4-F" approach, which focuses on the social aspect of the target culture, does not really signify the idea of a holistic view of culture, which is, according to other researchers is, what we should

strive to teach. We cannot base the entire concept of culture on fun and games, such as dances, food and festivals. The “Tour Guide” approach, which emphasizes geographic locations and other sites, alone will not suffice in the teaching of culture. Students are not able to connect monuments, rivers and cities to their lives in any pedagogically meaningful way. However, a trip to some of these sites would possibly spark the interest of students. Concerning the “By-the-Way” approach, which highlights the differences between the culture of the students and the target culture, we are all, at some point, attracted to the differences of certain peoples, yet it is the differences which tend to separate us.

Just as I have discussed the various elements of culture and how one alone cannot define a culture, I believe it is impossible to employ only one approach to teaching culture. Such researchers as Brooks (1975) and Seelye (1984) agree that culture is a holistic component, and, therefore should be taught in the same fashion. However, with Geertz's (1973) notion of culture as a reflection of history in mind, these researchers could take the holistic component to another level, which would allow language educators to illustrate the very roots from which many of the dances, foods, and other customs are derived. In addition to the differences which are depicted with the “By-the-Way” Approach, students, as well as teachers, would be fascinated by the similarities. Kitano (2001) indicates that the mere recognition of language differences, which would also include cultural differences, fosters a feeling of anxiety among the learners of a foreign language. We foreign language educators should seek to eliminate such feelings. This fuels the challenge of breaking barriers and teaching in abstraction. While the differences between the cultures can spark an interest in the discussions, there should be a little more light shed on the similarities in order to get those students who view the subject as remote to their experience to become more engaged in the course.

## **College Students' Perceptions of Language Differences**

Behrens and Neeman (2004) offer some insight into the attitudes of college students regarding foreign language study in their investigation on the reactions of college students towards language differences in the classroom. According to Behrens and Neeman (2004) such language differences encourage reactions by the listener, regardless of the ethnicity of the listener, which lead to judgments about the speakers' personalities. It is believed that awareness of these factors will result in more effective teaching and learning.

In addition to judgments which are made among listeners to individuals of different languages and cultures Kitano (2001) indicates that the mere recognition of such differences encourages a feeling of anxiety among the learners of a foreign language. Kitano's study investigated two potential sources of anxiety among college learners of Japanese in oral practice. These sources are: (a) an individual student's fear of negative evaluation; and (b) his/her self-perceived speaking ability. The findings of a survey administered to 212 students in Japanese courses at 2 major universities revealed that: (a) an individual student's anxiety was higher as his/her fear of negative evaluation was stronger; (b) an individual student's anxiety was higher as he/she perceived his/her ability as lower than that of peers and native speakers; (c) the anxiety level of a male student became higher as he perceived himself less competent; and (d) the fear of negative evaluation and the self-perceived speaking ability did not interact to influence the anxiety level of an individual student.

What can educators in the field of foreign languages do to help students to feel less anxious in the classroom? We can first refer to what has been stated regarding culture from a holistic perspective and begin to focus more on similarities as opposed to only differences between the cultures to help students feel less alienated from the language and culture. In the case

of African Americans, we can go back into the history to show that the struggle of Hispanics began in the same manner as that of African Americans.

### **A Historical Reflection on the Diaspora of Spain and Africa**

In an attempt to begin to understand the complex relationship between African and Hispanic cultures, as a means for engaging African American students enrolled in Spanish courses, this section of my literature review begins by briefly discussing the shared history of African and Hispanic culture. In it I specifically discuss Spain's role in transplanting millions of people of African descent to the Americas through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

While the scars associated with state sanctioned slavery are still present today, over a century after the abolishment of slavery, there is yet to be a clearly articulated hemisphere-wide discussion of the societal implications of slavery on the Americas as a whole. Looking particularly at the US, paraphrasing philosopher Cornell West (1993), America exists as an a historical nation set on a simulacrum of a virginal birth absent any serious engagement of the initially Native American, and shortly thereafter African American blood, that was shed for the nation to exist as it is today. Lacking a sustained engagement of America's legacy of slavery, African American students in the US are often surprised to know that they are not the only people in the Americas scarred by slavery. The airing of the classic 1977 mini-series *Roots* provided a graphic depiction of the slave trade between Africa and the United States. As a matter of fact, I must admit that I shared this sentiment until I began to conduct research on the subject. It was not until the latter half of 2003 when I began to learn about the African influence within the Hispanic culture that I developed an interest in the role of Africans in Spain while studying the works of the African Cuban poet, Nancy Morejón (2003). Morejón (2003) expressed her sentiments regarding the transport of African slaves to Cuba in such works as "I Love My

Master” (“Amo a mi amo”), “Black Woman” (“Mujer negra”) and countless others. The Afro-Cuban poet is best known for her poems which depict slavery and the role of Africans within Cuban culture.

As I continued my studies on this topic, I discovered Lipski’s (1994) interpretation of Africans in Spain. In it he offered a detailed overview of the slave trade in Spain which is believed to have begun with the Portuguese-initiated Atlantic slave trade in the latter half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Even prior to Portuguese explorations of West Africa, sub-Saharan Africans, both free and slave, were present in Spain. This interpretation of Hispanic history and culture in relation to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade offers Spanish students and educators much insight into the way of life for early Hispanics. Moreover, it helps Spanish educators to enliven and enrich our cultural discussions in the classroom by considering various means to impart this valuable knowledge to our students.

Due to the fact that slavery existed since Roman times, those who resided in the Iberian Peninsula were accustomed to such practices. Slavery began as a result of prisoners of war as well as imperialistic conquests. Lipski (1994) explains, “The eight centuries of Moorish occupation, with the concomitant prolonged re-conquest, created large slave populations both among Spaniards and among Moors” (p. 1). At this point in history, Spaniards would often force Moors into involuntary servitude, most of who worked as domestic labors. There were also a few slaves who worked in agriculture. The difference between slavery during this time and the later African slave trade was there was no emphasis on race, or what North Americans know to be black and white. After 800 years of coexisting, according to Lipski (1994), the Spaniards and Moors “had interchanged much genetic material” (p. 2). Religious and cultural practices marked the differences between the two groups. Moorish Spain was known to be the economic, cultural

and intellectual capital of the Western world.

This slave trade during the Moorish occupation of Spain and Portugal as well as that of Arab and other Muslim traders eventually resulted in the interest of Europeans in the African slave trade. Lipski (1994) explains that such powerful African city-states as Mali, Ghana, Benin and several others are known to be the most predominant contacts for this early slave trade.

Black Africans were acquired from Ethiopia and the trans-Sahara trade caravans and brought to Spain by the Moorish occupation forces. These caravans would later transport slaves and tropical products to Christian Portugal and Spain. Lipski (1994) situates the beginning of slave ownership by Christian Spaniards as following the re-conquest of Seville in 1248. These slaves were formerly owned by Moslems. According to Lipski (1994), “Many of the descendents of these slaves were present in Spain, some still in forced servitude, during the reign of the Catholic monarchs Fernando and Isabela” (p. 2). By the 13<sup>th</sup> century, black slaves were located in Majorca, Aragón, and Valencia, and in 1401 the number of blacks in Seville had increased to the point of forming the first *cofradía* (mutual aid society). In 1472, a group of black slaves petitioned the Aragón government to form a *cofradía*, which they called ‘Nuestra Señora de Gracia,’ as well as a residence in Valencia.

### **The Entrance of More Africans in Spain via Portugal**

Initially, the Portuguese and Spanish explorers had no intentions of entering sub-Saharan Africa for the acquisition of slaves. Rather, they were more interested in the luxury items such as gold, ivory and spices which the western coast of this region had to offer. Lipski (1994) explains that the African leaders were more than happy to barter their goods for guns, gunpowder and other European commodities. As a result of such bartering, Europe became dependent on the trade agreements extended by Africa.

While engaging in numerous trade agreements with Africa, Europe also became aware of the lucrative slave industry in various African communities. Lipski (1994) likens the practices of intra-African slavery to those of imperial Rome and medieval Eastern Europe.

European traders discovered the advantage of slave ownership, and began to barter not only such commodities as gold and spices, but also slaves with Africa. Black Africans were eventually thought to be “nothing more than a virtually endless supply of cheap and durable labor” (p. 5) according to Lipski (1994). The Portuguese and Spaniards, who were no strangers to the slave industry from the time since the Moorish occupation, did not hesitate to welcome the African group of captives. Lipski (1994) further explains, “European explorers in Africa found, in addition to elaborate kingdoms, other groups of Africans who lacked the means of resisting foreign intrusions, and who lived in conditions which the Europeans could interpret as primitive” (p. 5). According to Rawley (1981), “Countering the view of the Manicongo and the Gold Coast chieftans as powerful personages, came the notion of the African as savage, fit only for forced labor” (p. 13). At this time, racist views of Europeans towards black Africans took precedence over the aforementioned notion. In Europe as well as the Americas, blacks were viewed as “different” and “inferior”.

### **The Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Comes to an End**

The slave trade continued to persist for centuries, attracting leaders among the French, the English and the Dutch. However, these countries eventually began to lose their power in this industry which proved to be rather lucrative. Although the Portuguese lost control of the Atlantic slave trade during the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, they continued to supply African slaves to the Americas until the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Lipski (1994), “The majority of the Portuguese slave traffic followed the straightforward Angola-Brazil route, but some also



found their way into Spanish American colonies. The greatest number arrived in Montevideo and Buenos Aires via Brazil in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, providing in fact the bulk of the considerable Afro-Rio Plata population which dominated these two cities during this time period” (p. 15).

Curtin (1969) acknowledges Brazil as the largest importer of slaves in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Approximately sixty percent of these slaves hailed from Angola and Nigeria. Cuba is noted as the second largest importer of slaves in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with nearly thirty percent of the slave population. Puerto Rico imported over 55,000 slaves during this century, which comprises nearly three percent of the total. The French Caribbean (Martinique and Guadeloupe) imported five percent.

### **Black Slavery in Spanish America**

The speculation of the number of slaves in Spanish America has proven to be rather ambiguous. While some estimates claim a total number of slaves taken to North and South America to be between 3.5 million and 2.5 million, Lipski (1994) pointed out,

The majority of studies are based on secondary sources, and there has been much perpetuation of originally inaccurate figures. Political and ideological considerations have entered into many calculations, some tending to inflate the figures while others having a diminishing effect. The huge but indeterminate clandestine slave traffic is the single factor which renders an accurate count virtually impossible to obtain. (p. 24).

This fact is especially significant in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when slaves were imported to Cuba, Brazil, Puerto Rico and smaller Caribbean islands. Laborers were taken randomly from all parts of Africa by not only well-established traders but also by occasional opportunists. In addition, there was the transfer of slaves and nominally free blacks from one Caribbean territory to another, oftentimes in opposition of the law. As a result of this manner of importation and transfer, slaves born in the Americas and those born in Africa were indistinguishable. However, despite the lack

of accurate results regarding slave importation, recent research, comprised of archival records, travelers' accounts, census data, and demographic extrapolations, offers reasonably reliable responses.

Lipski (1994) believes Curtin (1969) offers the most thoroughly and carefully documented quantitative estimates of the Atlantic slave trade. Curtin (1969: 88-9) acknowledges a total figure of approximately 9.6 million African slaves taken during the entire period of the slave trade. Roughly 175,000 of these slaves were taken to the Old World. 50,000 were taken to Europe (mainly Spain and Portugal), 25,000 to Atlantic islands (Canary Islands, Madeira, Cape Verde), and 100,000 taken to the island of Sao Tome. Approximately 651,000 slaves were taken to continental North America, 4 million to the Caribbean islands, and 4.7 million to South America. Curtin (1969) further estimates the totals (see Appendix E, "The Transporting of Slaves").

Rawley (1981: 53) later revised the figures for slave importations to Spanish America to about 1,687,000, which is approximately one sixth (1/6) of the total volume given by Curtin (1969). These revisions are a result of the estimate for Cuba to 837,000, which gives a total percentage of the Atlantic trade of roughly thirty-eight percent.

Although researchers have investigated the origins of African slaves and some have arrived at rather reasonable conclusions, the guessing game surrounding this subject continues. Lipski (1994) explains, "Determining the ethnic origins of African slaves can only be approached approximately, and figures vary considerably depending upon the time period. Different slave trading nations and groups had their own preferred areas of African coast, and changing alliances among African-based slave procurers also changed the ethnic makeup of the slave population" (p. 25).

During the 15<sup>th</sup> century, most slaves were taken from the Senegambia area, while smaller numbers were taken from the Gold Coast, near the fort of Almina, as well as from the Congo/Angola area. At this time, the slave trade was limited in the number of slaves. However, with the opening of the Spanish American colonies to African slave labor in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was a greater number of slaves in the region. Slaves were taken from regions along the entire West African coast, from Senegal River to Angola. Lipski (1994) points out some Portuguese slave trading occurred around the Cape of Good Hope, bringing Africans from “Mozambique” (the region of southeastern Africa).

Early figures from Peru (1548-60), suggest nearly seventy-five percent of the slaves taken at this time hailed from the Senegambia region. Twenty-two percent of these slaves were listed as Jelof (Wolof), nearly nine per cent as Berbesi (Serer), nineteen per cent as Biafara, and eleven per cent as Bran. The West African region, or the “Guinea Coast” provided roughly fifteen percent of the slaves, while central and southern Africa provided ten percent. Six per cent of these ten percent came from the BaKongo zone (Lockhart, 1968, p. 173). Beltran (1972, p. 244-5) offers figures for African slaves in Mexico during the year 1549. Eighty-eight percent of these slaves came from Senegambia. Seventeen percent of them being Wolof, seven percent Serer, eleven percent Malinke, twenty-eight percent Bram, and seventeen percent Biafada. Six percent of the slaves in Mexico at this time came from other West African regions, and less than five percent came from central and southern Africa. However, by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, all of West Africa provided only twenty-one percent of the total number of slaves, with no specific group mentioned in this category. Over seventy-five percent of the total came from central Africa, with Angola supplying more than sixty-seven percent. Southeastern Africa comprised nearly four percent of the total.

Curtin (1969, p.104f.) plots percentages for African regions from which authorized slave ships departed. This data is based on Chaunu and Chaunu (1955-1960, vol. 6, 402-3). Lipski (1994) explains, “In the period 1551-1640...approximately twelve percent of the ships left from Cape Verde (which also represents the mainland Senegambia/Guinea-Bissau zone), almost twenty five percent from ‘Guinea’ (presumably the remainder of the West African coast, centered around the Gold Coast), and thirty-two percent from Angola” (p. 26). Curtin acknowledges the shift from the Senegambia to the Congo/Angola region early in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which first occurred in the South American colonies. The main reason for this shift was geographical proximity of South America to Angola, while there was also the factor of the early flourishing of the Sao Tomé sugar production, which relied heavily on Angola for slave labor. However, this demand dwindled in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century due to competition from Brazil. This decline resulted in the availability of more Angolan laborers to the Americas.

### **Present-Day Connections between African Americans and Hispanics**

As these forced immigrants were brought to the United States, they were forced to learn a new culture and language. They no longer spoke their indigenous languages, Spanish, or French but also English. For this reason, no culture is able to stand on its own without influence of other cultures, and presently African influence continues to be perpetuated in Hispanic culture. Even today Spanish is the official language of the African region, Equatorial Guinea, indicating the shared heritage of African and Hispanic cultures. Moreover, not only is African influence common in literature with the works of such renowned writers as the Afro-Cuban poet Nancy Morejón who often recalls the role of Africans in Spain, but in the world of Rap and Hip Hop music there have been some ground-breaking contributions as well. Terrell et. al. (2006) depicts the celebration of the Barranquilla Carnival in Colombia which highlights the African traits of

Hispanic culture through music and costumes. Terrell et. al (2006) explain that the carnival originated in Spain, and is celebrated not only in Colombia, but also Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Panama and other Spanish-speaking countries. This grand celebration takes place for four days in February or March just before Lent.

Connections between African Americans and Hispanics do not stop at music, literature and holiday celebrations. They also carry over into family traditions. Although two-parent households are on decline in the African American community Hispanic culture continues to hold to the value of this type of family structure, family is still treasured by both cultures in terms of family gatherings and other family traditions. Both cultural groups view the death of family members and the funeral ceremony in the same light. The death of a family member is a time of the family coming together for the purpose of celebrating the life of the family member who has passed away (de Caissie, 2009). In both cultures a wake is held in order for the family members to keep the deceased and other family members company before the funeral service. Soon afterwards, the funeral service takes place with a family reception following. Both African Americans and Hispanics believe in the afterlife of eternity in heaven, and neither cultural group believes that death is to be feared. Rather, it should be celebrated by the family coming together and enjoying lots of laughter, fun and good food.

From this perspective of Hispanic culture, we learn that culture entails all aspects of life including the past and the present, the common and the elite. Seelye (1984) exclaims, “Elitism restricting the study in a given area to the academically gifted and disciplined, while divorcing the cultural content from those aspects of life that concern most people most of the time is responsible for much of the boredom current in too many social studies and language programs today” (p. 8 ). Once this idea of teaching culture has been established in the classroom, we are all

more likely to find that there are more similarities than differences among us.

### **Reshaping the Curriculum and Pedagogy in Foreign Language Education**

Not only must foreign language educators consider the aforementioned historical value of languages and cultures when determining changes that should be made in the curriculum, but also the overall atmosphere of the classroom as well as teaching experience. When considering anxiety levels of students, it is almost inevitable to ponder the role which teachers play in the learning process. Such factors as the atmosphere which is set by teachers in the classroom as well as the teaching practices which are implemented should be observed in relation to the attitudes of students. One of the most pertinent subjects in the area of research on teachers is the education of teachers. Byrnes (2001) expresses a dire need for the education of graduate students as teachers to be broadened to include both facets (teacher and researcher) in the graduate educational experience. A strategically conceptualized plan which integrates a 4-year, content-oriented and task-based curriculum with a focus on literacy is suggested in this endeavor.

Once teachers have been educated on the various methods and practices which may be implemented in the foreign language classroom, it is then necessary to carefully select those practices which will make for a learning experience that is both fun and beneficial for the students. In relation to teaching culture, foreign language educators should encourage an atmosphere which allows students to openly express what they are thinking at the time of the discussion. The students should be encouraged to think critically and carefully examine all aspects of the topic which is being discussed.

Although there is no particular method encouraged in foreign languages for teaching culture due to the multi-faceted perspective of culture, there are certain aspects which researchers consider to be most important. As explained by Stern (1981), "The area of what constitutes

culture is poorly defined, and courses offered in universities on culture or civilization generally lack a foundation in theory and research. As long as there is such a lack of adequate research it is very difficult to develop a cultural syllabus of quality. Some improvisation is inevitable, and only gradual improvement, as the data base grows, can be expected" (p. 16). This statement which was offered by Stern (1981) is still a reality even today. For this reason, the teaching of culture usually focuses on the information covered (which is offered in the models which have been presented and discussed in this dissertation by various educators in the field) rather than teaching methods, which are more prevalent in the teaching of grammar. Culture is usually presented in foreign language classrooms either via reading passages and/or videos/films. I find it interesting and rewarding to incorporate English and Spanish reading skills (which is one of the four skills when done in the target language). English writing and critical thinking skills during cultural discussions allow students to enhance their writing and thinking abilities. At the elementary level of a foreign language, students are not yet able to incorporate critical thinking in the target language. It proves to be beneficial to sometimes read a passage in Spanish and then discuss it in English. This way, the students do not go back into the passage and simply pick words which they do not understand in their contribution to the discussion.

### **Conclusion**

As foreign language educators consider improving the atmosphere of the classroom, determining which cultural points of the target culture are most worthwhile to cover with their students, and going back into the history of the target culture, then the students will enjoy a more fulfilling experience in their study of the target language and culture, therefore leading many of them to continue their study of the language and culture beyond the course requirement(s). The history of the African Diaspora is full of rich nuggets which would enhance the cultural

discussions in Spanish classrooms. Research on students' attitudes is an ongoing process in which the answers to the questions posed lead only to more questions. However, the African Diaspora gives educators of the Spanish language and culture much to ponder as far as exploring a different avenue to arouse the interest of African American students. This reality is present not only in research conducted on students' attitudes but also in the attitudes of North Americans in general. Maxwell and Garrett (2002) have researched the part of North Americans and the gradual shift of this notion in the last forty five years. The most recent cause of such a shift was the groundbreaking event of September 11, 2001. There is currently a renewed focus on the study and learning of languages other than English. However, such a renewed focus is usually a fading reality for most North Americans because after a short time, it is back to "business as usual" in terms of the study of languages other than English in our society, making this an arduous task for foreign language educators.

Students, particularly African American students, have proven that economic advantages alone will not foster their interest in a foreign language. Some of these students have indicated that they would not want their own culture to be threatened by learning a different culture. Moreover, history at predominantly black institutions has shown that the advice students have received from administrators has shed negative light on the field of foreign languages. Students have been persuaded to believe that foreign languages are useless and will not benefit them in their lives and careers. These students have also not taken advantage of opportunities to travel and study abroad in order to experience the culture and language which they are studying. The majority of these students have further suggested that African themes should be included in cultural discussions in order to attract more African American students. For this reason, foreign language educators must work diligently at considering how we can reveal not only facts about



culture that will interest our students, but also which allow them to relate the target culture to their own culture. I am interested in taking a more in-depth look at these students' views and experiences regarding these factors. In closing, it seems that covering the African history of the Hispanic culture would enhance the cultural theme among students simply because this is where we are able to examine that culture's roots and relate these roots to what African Americans consider to be the ongoing 'black struggle'. By doing this, we can make a connection between the target culture and that of the students. The history of Hispanics in Africa and the African Diaspora which is covered in this dissertation could be a launching point for cultural discussions that would draw African American students to the Spanish language and culture. I have reviewed literature on various definitions of culture and what educators should focus on when including culture into classroom discussions as well as the history component of the Diaspora in the Hispanic culture which will engage more African American students and encourage them to continue their study of Spanish beyond the required courses(s).

After careful consideration of what is stated in the literature review, I am now able to propose the following research questions:

1. Does the integration of shared cultural knowledge between diasporic African and Spanish peoples within elementary level Spanish courses encourage African American students to continue their study of the language beyond the core requirements?
2. What is the content of the cultural knowledge related to the teaching and learning of foreign languages that causes African American students to persist beyond introductory level Spanish courses?

## CHAPTER 3-METHODOLOGY

Now that I have reviewed the literature that will be used to frame my study, I am in a position to refine my research questions:

1. Does the integration of shared cultural knowledge between diasporic African and Spanish peoples within elementary level Spanish courses encourage African American students to continue their study of the language beyond the core requirements?
2. What is the content of the cultural knowledge related to the teaching and learning of Spanish that causes African American students to persist beyond introductory level Spanish courses?

This analysis will first look at the types of issues that students were paying attention to and then beyond that I will look for the variety of sources of insight that shaped the ways that students either were drawn to or deterred from the continued study of Spanish based on these issues. Throughout the data collection the focus will remain on the students. The study will be conducted at a midsized public historically black university in the southeastern region of the United States and all of the participants will be African American. One group of participants will consist of students who are taking introductory Spanish courses for the fulfillment of the university's foreign language core requirements. The other group of participants will be students who have gone on to either major or minor in Spanish and have subsequently taken additional higher-level Spanish courses beyond the university's core requirements. In addition to the one-on-one and focus group information that will be collected from students from both of the fore-mentioned groups, data will also be drawn from classroom observations. In the case of the

professors any interpretations of what they are thinking will be based on the student's perceptions of what was occurring in their classrooms.

The questions framed in the theories just reviewed point to two levels of inquiry that will be necessary for addressing these questions. The first level of inquiry will be framed by my discussion of culture in chapter two that characterized culture and cultural insights as ways of knowing that are the product of social discourses. Through this way of thinking about the relationship between cultural artifacts/discourses and meaningful approaches to language acquisition, cultural discourses constitute the subjectivity—conscious, unconscious, emotional, and cognitive experience of individuals—while also providing the rationale and justification for macro-social institutional arrangements in which these individual subjects live and work. The broader way that this research conceives of the relationship between language and cultural insights, highlights my primary thesis that to increase a student's desire for continued participation and meaningful understanding of a second language professors should draw from knowledge that emerges within a given community about a given set of issues in their teaching. This way of conceiving of a professor's practice being informed by distributed communities of cultural knowledge – which for the purposes of this study will be the influence of diasporic African communities on Spanish language and culture—will be useful because it provides a bridge between the influence of broad social discourses and what I consider to be the weakness of teaching the language through abstract rote memorization. There will be two primary types of discourse with which this study will be concerned. The first of these will be discourses pertaining to the influence of including a cultural component in an elementary Spanish class concerning whether it influences student persistence among African American undergraduate students. This level of inquiry relates to research question 1 concerning the continuation beyond mandatory

participation in core elementary level Spanish courses.

- a. The type of data that will be collected here includes field notes, audio/video recorded moments of teaching and learning, and interview questions.
- b. The protocol or fieldwork strategies will consist of frequent class observations and weekly interviews with each of the selected students. There will be two phases of these interviews with the initial ones consisting of discussions of general conceptions of learning and interest in Spanish classes by the participants. And as the interviews progressed the second phase of the interviews will examine, specific instances where the African influence on Spanish language arose or could be built upon, that will be collaboratively identified (between the researcher and the participants) for in-depth analysis and discussion.

The second types of discourses with which my study will be concerned is disciplinary discourses specifically related to teaching and learning Spanish that shaped the ways that students relate to the subject matter and ultimately their desire to continue on beyond introductory level courses. This is important because the disciplinary content is a central medium through which the professors and students interact. As Lee Shulman (1987) has suggested, “A teacher’s content knowledge rests on two foundations: the accumulated literature and studies in the content areas, and the historical and philosophical scholarship on the nature of knowledge in those fields of study” (p. 9). This is particularly important for this study because “the manner in which [this understanding] is communicated conveys to students what is essential about a subject and what is peripheral.... The [professor] also communicates, whether consciously or not, ideas about the ways in which ‘truth’ is determined in a field and a set of attitudes and values that

markedly influence student understanding” (p. 9). This tacit epistemological influence by and through disciplines is the effect of competing discourses and will be an important part of the type of study in that I believe it plays a significant role in affording students a better understanding and subsequent interest in Spanish and from there to actually consider majoring/minoring in the subject matter.

- a. The type of data that will be collected here will include field notes, audio/video recorded moments of teaching, and interview questions.
- b. The protocol or fieldwork strategies will consist of frequent class observations and weekly interviews with students who have chosen to major/minor or persisted on to take Spanish courses beyond university core requirements. There will be two phases of these interviews with the initial ones consisting of discussions of general conceptions of teaching and pedagogy in a Spanish class. As the year progressed the second phase of the interviews will examine specific teaching experiences that were collaboratively identified for in depth discussion and analysis by the participants and the researcher.
- c. The student participants in the study will consist of twenty African American students who have taken or are currently enrolled in Spanish courses. Ten of the students will be enrolled in elementary Spanish courses and ten will be Spanish majors/minors or students who have self-selected to enroll in Spanish courses beyond the elementary level university core required courses. All students are addressed by pseudonyms.
- d. The faculty participants will consist of two Spanish professors and two Spanish instructors who all teach elementary Spanish courses and will discuss their views on

including the Diaspora in their cultural discussions at those course levels. All faculty participants are addressed by pseudonyms.

### **Method Analysis**

My research design will follow the constant comparison analysis method. According to Goetz and LeCompte (1981) this method “combines inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all social incidents observed” (p. 58). As social phenomena are recorded and classified, they are also compared across categories. Thus, hypothesis generation (relationship discovery) begins with the analysis of initial observations. This process undergoes continuous refinement throughout the data collection and analysis process, continuously feeding back into the process of category coding. Hence, "As events are constantly compared with previous events, new topological dimension, as well as new relationships, may be discovered" (Goetz & LeCompte, p. 58).

The primary focus of the analysis will be the moments where cultural insights and curricular and pedagogical understandings associated with Spanish intersect. I will identify these moments of practice looking closely for the points where they seem to be in tension or conflict as well as the moments where they provide opportunities for better teaching and learning and subsequently greater interest among students in Spanish.

### **Setting**

The university in which the study will be conducted is a mid-sized public historically black university. The university is located in the southeastern region of the United States and it is a particularly rich location for this type of study because it awards the greatest number of baccalaureate degrees to African Americans of any institution in the world. The students

who will participate in the study will be selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. The only requirement is that they be either enrolled in Spanish courses or have taken Spanish courses in the past as in the event that a participant has already completed all the course requirements for a Spanish major/minor. In addition, special attention will be paid to students that have chosen to major/minor in Spanish in that (even at the target institution) there are so few African American students that go on to earn degrees in Spanish, the insights and motivations of these participants will be indispensable to this research.

### **Mode of Representation**

The general organization of this dissertation consisted of introductory chapters followed by analysis of the data, then cross case analyses, and implications and conclusions. The introductory chapters will develop the problem and the theoretical perspectives that will be drawn upon to examine the issues. The data will be examined to draw attention to the tensions associated with where cultural insights and discipline specific information either engages or dissuades students from the continued study of Spanish. Cross case analyses will be developed to display how this type of knowledge works across a range of student interest and desires concerning the study of Spanish. The implications and concluding chapters will discuss the specific areas within teacher preparation, curriculum, and pedagogy that are imperative for revitalizing interest in the study of Spanish among African American students.

The cross case analysis that will be developed will be written in third person with equal detail and attention being applied to the differences as well to the similarities that exist

across cases so that the uniqueness of each case is not absorbed into generalizations made across the cases.



## CHAPTER 4-SPANISH MAJORS AND MINORS

In an attempt to probe possible causes of the extremely low percentage of African American students who graduate in foreign languages each year, this case study was conducted at Southern University's foreign language department. Ten students who are currently majoring or minoring in Spanish and ten students who are non-majors but currently enrolled in elementary Spanish courses were randomly selected by the Spanish faculty, including myself, to participate in the study interviews. All students declared that they consider themselves to be African American. In addition to the students, two Spanish professors and two Spanish instructors were interviewed and also observed for classroom teaching. The interviews were conducted in various offices and classrooms within the foreign language department. All students and teachers shared my sentiment concerning the importance of this topic, and were eager to discuss their opinions and experiences regarding the study of foreign languages.

### **Places of Origin**

The majors/minors who were interviewed were nine females and one male who are from various cities in Louisiana, Texas and Mississippi. Three of these students are Spanish majors, and the other seven are Spanish minors. Seven of the students were native Louisianians and the other three were natives of Texas and Mississippi. Two students, Johnson and Jacobs, who are minoring in Spanish commented that they had lived as military children in various parts both inside and outside the United States. One of these students, Johnson, stated that she had lived in various other states with her family, but considers Monroe, Louisiana home. As I began my discussion with the other student, Jacobs, who grew up as a military child, I asked her where she was from. She had to first pause, and then she went on to explain, "Well, I'm a military child..., [so], everywhere." She was born in Colorado Springs but spent much of her youth in Germany,

which she considered to be her favorite of all places because, according to her recollection. "...that was my first year in high school." It was evident that throughout my conversation with Jacobs that, due to her world travels, she was always open to embrace various peoples and cultures. At the time of our interview, Christmas was approaching, and I humorously asked her at which 'home' was she going to spend Christmas. As we loudly laughed at the thought of her trying to choose just one area, she explained, "I'm tired of Vegas. My parents used to stay in Vegas, and my grandma stayed in Tangipahoa Parish." So, she finally said she would go spend the holidays with her sister in New Orleans. I gathered from her response that she did not prefer to remain in one place for a significant amount of time. As a military child, she had grown accustomed to moving from place to place and after spending so much time in Vegas, she desired to spend the holidays elsewhere.

Jacobs's comments suggest that she has developed a positive attitude towards the study of foreign languages and cultures due to her firsthand experience living in various countries. Studies and foreign language researchers have revealed a noticeable correlation between positive attitudes in this area and exposure to foreign cultures via travel or study abroad. Davis and Markham (1991) revealed in their study on the attitudes of African American students at various predominantly African American universities that an overwhelming eighty-four percent of the participants responded that they had no travel abroad experience to any country where their target language was spoken. Travel abroad significantly influences the attitudes of students towards the study of foreign languages and cultures due to the fact that the experience and exposure gained during time spent abroad allows them to see the tangible reality of the target language and culture. Misconceptions of differences or conflicts between the target culture and their own culture, and other related barriers, are dispelled causing the student to become more

willing to embrace that target language and culture. Davis and Markham (1991) believe that if more African American students were willing and able to travel as extensively as Jacobs for example, then there would be more African American students enjoying the benefits of studying foreign languages and cultures.

After circling the globe with Jacobs, a Spanish minor, I came back to the south, so to speak, with two of the other Spanish minors from Dallas, Texas, Fields and Maximus. Fields commented during our discussion about Dallas that "I know that it's impossible to find work there if you don't know Spanish." Through these remarks, Fields is acknowledging that she has realized the vital presence of Spanish speakers in the United States and has chosen to prepare herself accordingly as opposed to simply expecting them to automatically conform to the English language and United States culture. Fields is a native of Texas, which is a region that is heavily populated with Spanish speakers (Terrell, Andrade, Egasse, Muñoz, 2006), and she is not underestimating the perpetual urgency to learn their language and culture. According to CNN (2009), Hispanics comprised twenty-five percent of the United States population, making them the largest minority group in the country, and this percentage is steadily on the rise. There needs to be some effort put forth by United States English speakers to prepare for such an influx so that all cultural groups can live as harmoniously as possible in this country. At this rate, it would not be advantageous to United States English-speaking citizens to maintain a negative or non-tolerant attitude towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. As Fields stated in her above explanation, it is now impossible to succeed in the job market in Texas and numerous other regions in this country without having some understanding of foreign languages, particularly Spanish.

Of the remaining students from Louisiana, two Spanish majors were from Lafayette and Baton Rouge, Lomax and Parks. The other Spanish minors were from Shreveport, Baton Rouge, Monroe and Zachary, Williams, Johnson, Bates, and Taylor .

### **Educational Status**

As the Spanish majors and minors very fondly discussed their places of origins, I also wanted them to interject their current status at the university and also reflect on the point in their education at which they decided to major/minor in Spanish. In the category of graduating seniors, one student who is a Spanish major, Lewis, recalled that it was at about the time of her sophomore year she decided to major in Spanish. The other student who is a Spanish minor, Jacobs, said that she actually just officially declared her status as a minor this semester.

The two sophomore students, Williams and Taylor, who are both Spanish minors stated that they decided to minor even sooner than the aforementioned graduating seniors. Taylor explained, "Actually, from the beginning, I just wasn't able to fit it into my schedule." The remaining sophomore recalled making her decision to minor in Spanish even before she had entered college. Although it is believed by many foreign language educators at the college level, including Angelo and Livingston from Southern, that students at the high school and lower educational levels are not informed of the importance of foreign language study, as we will see in latter sections of this research, these two students decided early in their education to pursue a college degree in Spanish. While it is fortunate that these two Spanish minors realized the importance of foreign language study early in their education, much work is needed to bridge the gap between high school and universities in foreign languages in terms of breaking the barriers of misconceptions about cultures and languages. There should also be more emphasis placed on the importance of foreign language experience in the job market regardless of the future careers

they intend to pursue.

Most of the juniors who are currently majoring or minoring in Spanish expressed the same sentiments as the sophomore who made her decision before attending college. One student, Johnson, explained, "...well I decided to minor in Spanish when I was in high school because I took...two classes in Spanish, and I liked it..." Another junior, Bates, also briefly explained that she made her decision to minor in Spanish during high school. The only Spanish major who is a junior, Parks, explained that she had developed an interest in the Spanish language during her childhood. She stated, "Well, I always wanted to have something to do with Spanish in elementary school, really." Again, students such as Johnson, Parks, and Williams developed an interest in Spanish early in their education. However, as stated above, there would need to be more appeals made to students to continue to study a foreign language beyond high school, and at lower educational levels. Since at lower educational levels there is more time designated for courses, there is much more time that could be devoted to discussing the importance of learning a foreign language in today's society. University teachers constantly struggle to cover an extensive amount of material in one semester, while those at the lower educational levels are given the entire school year for each course. It would be helpful in terms of enhancing the foreign language experience for students if the teachers would discuss the importance of foreign languages so that they would already be informed of this fact when entering college. If more students are encouraged early in education when they are more receptive to what they are being instructed to do, they would develop positive attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures and enjoy the benefits of their decision to follow these instructions.

While Johnson and Parks were able to favorably recall their experiences in their high school Spanish classes, one of the other juniors, Maximus, who decided to minor in Spanish

during his first semester in college had an unfavorable recollection of his high school Spanish class. As he recalled his experience in Spanish during high school, he explained that he did not find it very interesting. He stated, "I took it in high school, but I never really took it seriously... So, ...I really didn't like it because the teacher spoke nothing but Spanish." Maximus's remarks suggest that he was not impressed with foreign language study at the high school level. This approach of target-language-only teaching which was practiced by his high school Spanish teacher is believed by some to be beneficial, while others find it a bit intimidating. Maximus seems to say that by listening to the target language only and not understanding any of the language at the elementary level, he did not see a need to take the language seriously since, after all, he could not understand anything that was being said.

The two remaining students, a junior, Fields, who is minoring in Spanish and a senior, Lomax, who is majoring in Spanish, decided during college to pursue a degree in the language. The junior who is minoring in Spanish explained that she decided about a year ago, which was her sophomore year, to minor, and the senior, who has received a degree in biology but returned to pursue a second major in Spanish, explained that she decided during the senior year of her biology studies to initially minor in the language. She stated, "I love Spanish so much I decided instead of making it a minor to just go for the major since [there are] not many classes I need." In addition to taking several Spanish courses which appealed to her interest in the Spanish language, Lomax is also one of the students who can attest that her study abroad experience with Southern's program to Mexico helped her to develop an even more positive attitude towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. Brown (2002) has stated that it is this factor which many African American students are bypassing which is one of the main causes for the lack of interest among African American students in the field of foreign languages. Lomax will continue her

discussion of her trip to Mexico later in this study.

### **Deciding to Major/Minor in Spanish**

When asked at what point in their education they decided to major/minor in Spanish, many of them expressed that they developed an interest in the language even before entering college. One of the majors indicated that she knew as early as elementary school that she wanted to work in the field of Spanish. Approximately half of the other students explained that they decided before entering college to major/minor in Spanish, which was actually the same time they developed an appreciation for the language. The other half, who also developed an appreciation for the language before entering college, indicated that they decided to major/minor in Spanish within their first or second year of college.

Besides developing an appreciation for the language at various levels in their education, these students also expressed that they were aware of the economic advantages to knowing a foreign language in today's job market as well as the growing Hispanic population in the United States. When asked what prompted their decision to major/minor in Spanish, they adamantly acknowledged this reality. Those from the state of Texas emphatically indicated the necessity to know Spanish if they intend to live and work in that state. These students all viewed their decision to major/minor in Spanish as advantageous for personal as well as professional reasons. One student explained her reason as a desire to speak the language or to be able to communicate the language. She explained,

Well, [because] well, in class it's always the basics. I [know] the basics but I don't know how to speak it...[a] verb, I can conjugate it [quickly], and culturally...but I can't speak it. People [say] 'ok, you [study] Spanish, speak it.' (Jacobs)

This point which Jacobs strongly presents is validated by Schmidt (2003) and CNN (2009) in their discussions of the ever increasing Hispanic population in the United States as well as Davis

and Markham (1991) who revealed in their study on African American students that eighty-four percent of 791 of the students who participated in the study responded that they were studying a foreign language in order to be able to converse with the native speakers of that language. This notion of being able to communicate in the target language goes a step beyond just possessing a positive attitude towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. Rather, it is a manner of taking the necessary action as a result of possessing a positive attitude. If we ponder the point which is being forwarded by Jacobs, we have to ask ourselves how are students going to benefit by studying a foreign language and receiving a degree in a foreign language if after all of this, they are not able to follow through and utilize that language? Unless students understand the benefit of becoming bilingual and acquiring the skills to speak and utilize the target language, they will continue to view foreign language courses as nothing more than a requirement to satisfy credit hours as opposed to learning the language for practical use in society. It is at this point that we have to consider that despite all the studies that have been conducted by Davis (2000), Davis and Markham (1991) and various other foreign language educators that are intended to pinpoint reasons for a limited interest among African American students in this field and, moreover, determine what should be done to arouse their interest, that we have to consider the long-term importance of them being able to communicate in the target language. This takes us back to one of the most necessary components of foreign language study which would be the study/travel abroad component. Despite very few students who, like Jacobs, have had the opportunity to travel and live abroad, Brown (2002) still emphasizes a lack of participation among African American students in study abroad programs for such reasons as limited finances, a lack of advertisement, and a fear among African Americans to travel abroad and experience an unfamiliar culture. Aside from study abroad programs, we would need to consider other ideas,



like round-table discussions in our foreign language departments on a regular basis which would allow students to come and take part in conversations on various pertinent topics.

Maximus echoed, like Jacobs's belief in both personal and professional advantages as motivating factors in his decision to minor in Spanish. He also stressed his interest and the importance of being able to communicate in the target language. He said,

[Yes], I came to college and all of a sudden I [became interested]...[because] I actually realized the importance of going somewhere and being able to communicate with individuals. And learning a bit of Swahili..., my mom speaks it and she's from Kenya. I [said], well...Spanish...doing that...and also business-wise. People in my major [who] graduate [and] know another language [receive]...benefits... [Besides], I really [want to] travel... (Maximus)

Maximus seems to possess an interest in utilizing the Spanish language for a variety of purposes. He sought out opportunities outside the classroom to practice the language and immerse himself into the culture. As one who loves to travel, he may become fluent in the language more quickly than most students at his level since we know as a result of reviewing the studies conducted by Brown (2002) and Davis and Markham (1991) that travel abroad and immersion in the target culture are essential to learning the target language. If we reflect on Maximus's previous comment regarding the high school Spanish class he took, he developed a somewhat lackluster attitude towards the study of the language, but now his attitude has become much more positive towards the study of foreign languages and cultures as he is now pursuing a degree in Spanish and looks forward to utilizing his degree via worldwide travel and enjoying a career in engineering.

Although Maximus looks forward to extensive international travel in the future, he and all the students are well aware of the increasing population of Spanish speakers in the United States and understand that the nation's racial and cultural demographics are rapidly changing.

They anticipate their active involvement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century United States and global culture which is prevalent at this time. One of the Spanish minors explained,

...the reason...I minored in it [was] because a vast majority of our population is Hispanic and I wanted to communicate with them because English is the first language and I thought since Spanish is the second one, [I decided to] learn [it]. (Bates)

Bates took a pragmatic approach in her decision to minor in Spanish as she referred to the rapidly growing Spanish speaking population in this country. Bates suggested the same sentiments as Jacobs and Maximus in acknowledging the necessity of learning Spanish in order to communicate with the ever-increasing Spanish speaking population in the United States. Additionally, Bates's comments support the literature that suggests that pursuing a degree in Spanish or any foreign language is useless without the ability to communicate in the language. Also, even though she does not directly state it, she may be considering the advantage she will have in the job market as a result of being able to utilize the Spanish language.

### **Travel Abroad Experience**

As Bates reflects on the importance of utilizing a foreign language in the United States, we should consider factors which would contribute to the quest of educating students in this aspect. Study abroad has proven to be one of the most essential factors in the foreign language experience for any student in preparation for this skill. Of the ten majors/minors who participated in this study, only three, Maximus, Lomax and Jacobs, have had the opportunity to travel abroad. Those three students expressed their extreme pleasure with the experience abroad. One of them even indicated that after participating in the study abroad program with Southern to Orizaba, Mexico, she decided to major in Spanish. She recalled the experience by stating,

...that was an experience in just knowing how I can communicate with others and coming back to the States and seeing other people that may not know how to speak English, or not well enough, and I work at a hospital. And so it would be helpful...to [assist] others

[in communicating] more, knowing a different language. (Lomax)

Lomax again mentions the acquisition of communication skills in foreign language study. She, like the other students in the study, have begun to take on the challenge of going beyond simply having a positive attitude towards the study of foreign languages and cultures to drawing upon what they have learned by communicating in the target language.

Another interesting point Lomax made was her desire to utilize Spanish in her career in the medical field. Davis and Markham (1991) revealed that eighty percent of over 600 students who participated in their study indicated that they were studying a foreign language because it was relevant to their career goals. Lomax is excited about the experience with the Spanish language and culture she acquired in Mexico, and she is eager to put it to practical use here in the United States.

As Lomax continued to discuss the study abroad program to Orizaba, Mexico which is a four-week program, she continued to describe the experience as a positive experience. She further stated,

Yes, I loved it. Everyone was very friendly. It was educational as well as fun... [I] was able to give back because I helped at the school teaching the kids English and it was there...teaching them English, they taught me also Spanish, ...a little slang [because] in school we're taught proper Spanish. And when you're in the community [they say] 'well, we don't really say it like that, we say it this way'. (Lomax)

Lomax raised another interesting point in her recollection of teaching the Mexican children during her trip. By stating that communicating with those in a Spanish speaking community such as Orizaba, she was able to learn some of the Mexican dialect which is not taught in the Spanish classroom. This explains why it is so important for foreign language students to experience the language and culture by way of study abroad. Classrooms and textbooks are not able to offer the totality of what it means to be fluent in a foreign language and culture. Study abroad exposes

students to the reality of life in the target culture and language, therefore, allowing them to communicate more effectively which many of the participants in this study, and others, have expressed that they desire to do.

Moreover, Lomax indicated that she had plans to travel abroad in the future as well. She plans to visit Puerto Rico and Spain in order to further expand her knowledge of the various Spanish dialects and Hispanic culture. Her enthusiasm regarding Southern's study abroad program is the reason for which such researchers as Brown (2002) are expressing a deep concern about the lack of participation among African American students in such programs. It is believed that if these students had more opportunities to study and travel abroad, then they would be more encouraged to study a foreign language. According to the sentiments expressed by Lomax, this is likely true.

All of Southern's students who have participated in the study abroad program to Mexico have indicated their extreme pleasure with the experience. They provide rather colorful, amusing details about the culture, the Mexican citizens, the language and other aspects of life in Mexico. However, one aspect of the experience which is never mentioned is the strong African influence in Mexican culture. Perhaps this is never mentioned because it is not known by students. This African influence goes way back to the 1500s as described by Bennett (2009):

By 1570, Mexico City was home to the largest African population in the Americas. In Mexico City, 9,000 persons of African descent (8,000 African and black slaves alongside 1,000 mulattos) outnumbered the 8,000 Spanish residents. The disparity between the number of Africans and the number of Spaniards increased over the course of the seventeenth century as thousands of Angolans arrived in the capital, augmenting a steadily growing creole population of blacks and mulattos. (p. 4-5)

Bennett (2009) further explains the African population of not only Mexico City but other major cities in Mexico by the year 1646, (see appendix F, European and African Population of Major

Mexican Cities, 1646). It is interesting to that some of these major cities are cities where students travel on excursions during their visits to Mexico. It seems as though students who have participated in the study abroad program to Mexico are unaware of the African influence not only in history, but even today in the food, clothing, dances and the family life of the citizens. This is something foreign language educators who accompany study abroad participants to Mexico should emphasize while residing in Mexico. The participants in Southern's program to Mexico are able to spend several days in Mexico City before and after living in Orizaba for three weeks. It may be necessary to highlight this historical and present-day fact of African influence particularly in this region during their visits to Mexico City. While viewing various sites of the city, this could be discussed with the students, as well as adding a course on Afro-Mexican history which would cover this information.

While Lomax expressed the benefits of her study abroad experience in Mexico as well as her plans to travel to Puerto Rico, one of the other three students who had spent time studying abroad expressed that he spent four weeks in San Juan, Puerto Rico and had fond memories of his visit there. I had attended his presentation in the department on his visit to Puerto Rico, so I already knew how much he enjoyed being in the country. Additionally, I was also looking forward to hearing him explain his experience in Puerto Rico to me one on one. As he recalled his time in Puerto Rico, he stated,

It was very comfortable, and I felt really welcomed there. ...the people there were nice. I say in a sense, it really reminded me of being around my mom's people... [there is] a lot of [African American influence] there. ... [I] felt real welcome there, real comfortable there. [I'm] used to certain people's attitudes. ...it was a really good experience, ...I learned a lot, made some friends at the same time and I was actually thinking about if I could..., I would [want to] live there for [awhile]...when I graduate...pick up on language while I'm here, minoring and majoring, become fluent, go there and live... It was a good experience. I felt very comfortable there... (Maximus)

Maximus seemed to feel right at home, in a sense, in the Puerto Rican culture and particularly the San Juan community, reflecting on his own home life and family life. As a result of feeling at home, he also believed that he would like to eventually make Puerto Rico his home. In his opinion, in the future he would be able to enjoy the total experience of a foreign language professional by completely immersing himself into the language and culture as well as living among the friends he met while studying in San Juan.

Maximus seemed to refer to the need of African American students to be able to identify with any culture and language they are studying as he mentions feeling welcome and at home in the San Juan community. He even goes as far as to state that it reminded him of his mother's family. Forty percent of 316 students in the study conducted by Davis and Markham (1991) indicated that their foreign language courses would be more relevant to them if African themes were emphasized in first- and second-year courses. It is noticeable that Maximus seems to be enthusiastic about the connection between the Puerto Ricans and his own family, particularly the African influence there. Overall, it seems as though the trip to Puerto Rico further enhanced his interest in Spanish and caused him to acquire an even more positive attitude towards the study of foreign languages and cultures.

As Maximus and Lomax raved about their study abroad experiences to Mexico and Puerto Rico, Jacobs, the third student who had travel abroad experience, expressed the same enthusiasm. However, she had not actually studied abroad, but, as she previously mentioned, had lived abroad in various countries as a military child with her family. She shared the same positive sentiments of her experiences. She explained that Americans here in the United States have such a limited perspective on cultures and other peoples around the world. She said,

... [experiencing] different cultures, and being a military child moving around, you get to see that. ...When I [arrived] here, I [said] 'oh, [you all] don't know anything else...' ...and it still blows my mind. It's like a whole [different] world. (Jacobs)

This statement by Jacobs is rather striking as she points out the notion of lackluster or, in some cases, negative attitudes which North Americans have towards foreign languages and cultures. She marvels at the lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of North Americans regarding foreign languages and cultures. North Americans have a way of forgetting or blocking out the rest of the world and nurturing such thoughts as 'What we have here in our country is all that matters.' This lack of understanding has contributed to the negative attitudes among African Americans in particular towards the study of foreign languages and cultures as a result of the omission of the history behind the target language(s) which they are studying. Due to what Akbar (1998) refers to as 'the hidden curriculum', students and many other North Americans are mute to the Diaspora and the connection that cultures share with each other. If this fact were disclosed, our African American students would discover a rich African heritage within the foreign cultures they are studying. As one who has traveled the world and experienced life in various countries, Jacobs is appalled by this close-minded mentality on the part of North Americans.

Jacobs went on to discuss her future in foreign languages and her interest in continuing to travel abroad. Although she had never studied abroad, she intended to participate in the study abroad program at Southern to Orizaba, Mexico. Jacobs was the epitome of the travel abroad student who was very open and willing to embrace cultures and languages other than her own due to the experience she had as a military child.

While Jacobs was amazed at the lack of knowledge among African Americans and other North Americans in our country regarding foreign languages and cultures, our other Spanish

majors/minors who have not yet had the opportunity to travel or study abroad are extremely eager to have a chance at the experience. While Brown (2002) mentions drawbacks as lack of finances and a fear of travel to foreign lands as factors in the lack of participation among African Americans in study abroad programs, none of them expressed any reservations or fears of the unknown or being in a foreign place. They are looking forward to the chance to practice Spanish and immerse themselves in the Hispanic culture in a Spanish speaking country.

### **Opposition to Spanish**

The majors and minors in this study demonstrated an enormous amount of enthusiasm in their study of Spanish. However, not everyone in our society has grasped the importance of learning foreign languages and may sometimes discourage those who decide to venture to do so. The participants in this study explained that they never received much opposition from family, advisors or the like to major/minor in Spanish. One of the majors indicated that her mother was not thrilled about her decision to major in Spanish when she first made the decision, but now she can see the growing need for Spanish speakers in the United States. As this student recalled what her mother thought about her decision, she stated "...she wanted me to go into speech [pathology]. ...but I told her I really like the Spanish language, and she said 'ok, do what you like,' so [I decided on Spanish]" (Parks) I interjected that maybe she was thinking about opportunities she may or may not have in the Spanish field. The student responded, "Right. Now she [the mother] sees they need Spanish teachers in school systems, so..." (Parks) On the other hand, one of the students emphatically stated, "Oh, my mom is excited about me becoming bilingual!" (Fields) According to the responses of Parks and Fields, while one of the mothers was skeptical about the field of foreign languages, fearing that it would not afford her daughter any worthwhile employment opportunities, the other was elated about her daughter's decision to



study Spanish because of all the opportunities it would afford her. While Parks is from Louisiana, Fields is a native of Texas, where residents are much more exposed to Spanish speakers, according to Terrell, Andrade, Egasse, Muñoz (2006). As a native of Texas, which is heavily populated with Spanish speakers, Fields and her mother have had a chance to realize the importance of becoming bilingual and learning to speak Spanish in order to be successful in the job market. Perhaps this is the reason her mother was so elated to discover that she was becoming bilingual. Fields's mother could envision her going forth with much success in the global society in which we all live nowadays and excelling in the competition due to her knowledge of the Spanish language. Her mother was also possibly aware that Hispanics comprise the largest minority group, and that her daughter has made a wise decision to minor in Spanish. As a result of residing in the Dallas area, Fields and her mother have both developed a positive attitude towards the study of foreign languages and cultures, viewing it as a promising path to take in education.

Just as Fields's mother expressed her elation at her decision to study Spanish, one student explained that she was also encouraged by her family to study Spanish while she was discouraged to pursue her other major field of study. When I asked if she ever received any opposition to her decision to major in Spanish, she said,

...actually no, I received a lot of support when I decided to obtain a second major in Spanish because of the urgency...just looking at the statistics of the United States, Hispanics...are the second highest majority...I actually experienced more opposition with my other major. ...because at first I had decided on psychology and then...went with something along the lines of mass communications, which some people thought was not as [practical]. (Lewis)

According to the statement rendered by Lewis, her family has developed a positive attitude towards the study of foreign languages despite the fact that they are all natives of Mississippi,

which is not as heavily populated with Spanish speakers. Therefore, to what could we attribute the positive attitudes of Lewis's family members who reside in a state which is not the home to many Spanish speakers? Again, as we have already pinpointed, Lewis mentioned that her family has paid close attention to the statistics which indicate that Hispanics are now the largest minority group in the United States, and, like Fields's mother, envisions a promising future for her in the field of foreign languages. As a student who is pursuing a double major in mass communications and Spanish, Lewis will most likely have the advantage in the job market as a bilingual who is able to communicate with both English and Spanish speakers.

Just as the families of Lewis and Fields expressed their approval of them deciding to study Spanish, other students indicated that some of their family members were actually excited for them to study Spanish and pursue a degree in the language as well. One of the minors, Williams, explained that her aunt who graduated from Wiley also received a minor in Spanish, so she is actually following in the footsteps of family by minoring in Spanish.

### **Families' Views on Other Cultures**

In this highly racist, discriminatory society in which we live, all the majors and minors expressed that within their families, prejudice against individuals of other cultures was never fostered or taught. The participants discussed such ideas as 'don't discriminate', 'love everybody' and 'we are all one' as the sentiments in their families regarding individuals of other cultures and races. Two of the Spanish minors, Fields and Williams, adamantly denounced any notions of prejudice in their families. Fields stated, "[We believe] just that we are all one and there should be no discrimination or prejudice. Deep down, we are all the same." (Fields) Williams, likewise, recalled the advice from her grandmother as she explained,

I was told [by] my grandmother, we're a firm believer in not judging people. I don't think you should judge any person on their color because who are we to judge somebody? And who are we to say this is not the [accepted] color or anything? So, I [have] an open mind, and I look beyond color. I get to know your personality and I don't feel like you should judge [anybody] based on their skin color because your spirit is not a skin color. (Williams)

As Williams and Fields expressed their views regarding race relations and the acceptance of cultures other than their own, I was reminded of the Diaspora, which tells us of the African influence within the Hispanic culture. Although Williams and Fields simply stated that they look within at an individual's personality or character, they may be unaware that African Americans and Hispanics share the same heritage in reference to slavery which we so closely associate with African Americans. For this reason, it is not only a matter of looking within to be able to relate to others. We can oftentimes look at their history and their heritage and find ways to connect with them. As explained by Lipski (1994), Africans were purchased as slaves in Spain and later transported to North and South America. It is believed that approximately 3.5 to 2.5 million of these slaves were transported, but these are only estimates due to the fact that the slave trade was so enormous until it was beyond anyone's ability to calculate an accurate slave count. Some of the Spanish-speaking countries which imported the most slaves were Cuba, Puerto Rico and Mexico. It is due to this aspect of history within the Hispanic culture that we can see that the similarities in their culture and the African American culture allow us to go beyond only character and personality as we probe how the two cultures can identify with one another. Obviously, Williams and Fields have developed positive attitudes towards the study of foreign languages despite their lack of knowledge on the Diaspora. They have both realized the advantages they will have in their chosen careers, mathematics (Fields) and political science (Williams), as a result of studying Spanish.

While on the subject of racism, another Spanish minor, Maximus, recalled his upbringing in terms of his neighborhood in Dallas,

...I never got any kind of negativity...but where I grew up was very diverse...North Dallas. [Yes], [as] a matter of fact, where I grew up the majority of my life was close to, it was called...DFW Chinatown. I mean, I have Asian friends... And ...I mean, I just grew up never really thinking of color or anything like that. [However], ...you can still feel a little tension from white people, you know. ...even though [it was] diverse, people had...views, like, 'oh he's black, something might happen...' I mean, there was still, ...racism..., but for the most part, most people knew you and [your] family..., then their views start to change...there were certain things when I was growing up, I didn't think that [were] racism, I just thought [situations] happen, and then as I got older and learned about certain things, you know...that everybody's different... (Maximus)

Maximus speaks of racism in his environment in his hometown Dallas, but it is not on the part of his family. Rather, it emanated from European Americans. According to Maximus, it seems as though he grew up in a neighborhood that was very diverse, and even though those in the community lived peaceably together, there may have been some racial tension or indifference, but not to the point of being overtly expressed. Therefore, it (racism) was never really acknowledged as a problem. In the case of Maximus, while some others in his neighborhood may not be as eager to accept individuals of other ethnic backgrounds, he still has a positive attitude towards individuals of other races and backgrounds. Maximus has already expressed his familiarity with the African influence within the Hispanic culture, particularly in Puerto Rico, which is where he participated in Southern's study abroad program. We can recall that he spoke of how comfortable he felt in the San Juan community because it reminded him of being at home with his family. This is the type of association with the target culture that it is believed by foreign language educators that would have the positive impact on African American students to study a foreign language beyond the course requirement and enjoy the advantages of knowing a foreign language in our global society. Maximus has realized the connection between the

Hispanic culture and his own culture and has developed an attitude that is even more positive towards the study of foreign languages and cultures.

Likewise, one of the Spanish majors, Lewis, further explained that she was always taught by family members to embrace individuals of other cultures. Although she did not mention growing up in a diverse neighborhood as the one mentioned by Maximus, she did explain that several of her family members, who are all African American, are diverse in the sense that they study and speak various languages. She stated,

...from what I remember, it was always positive. My family is very diverse. ...several members of my family speak different languages, whether it be German, French or even Spanish, ...I wasn't taught to look at color. I was taught to be culturally aware, but it wasn't..., we didn't go by the stereotypical or the stereotypes of people of other cultures. (Lewis)

It seems as though Lewis has decided to carry on the family tradition of studying foreign languages in her African American family. It is interesting that many parents would love to see their children become bilingual in today's society, but these parents have never considered learning a foreign language themselves. Parents and family members would be more convincing in their encouragement their children and their young family members to learn a foreign language if they would learn a foreign language themselves. Lewis mentioned in a previous statement that her family never opposed her decision to major in Spanish, but they did oppose her decision to major in mass communications. Lewis has revealed that her family members speak a variety of foreign languages, and it is also interesting to note that one of her aunts is currently a foreign language chairperson. According to Lewis, her aunt was the person in her family who proposed the idea of majoring in Spanish, and her other family members also thought it would be wise for her to do so. Perhaps, the reason Lewis's family members were supportive of her decision to minor in a foreign language was because they have experienced the advantages of

knowing foreign languages of Spanish, French and German. They have found it to be profitable to pursue a career with knowledge of foreign languages, and have encouraged Lewis to do the same.

As I continued to speak with the students regarding their upbringing, it seemed as though their teachings from family members to be open to other cultures played a significant role in their decision to major or minor in Spanish. One of the Spanish minors, Bates, recalled being a curious child when it came to individuals of other races and cultures, and her parents were eager to explain and clarify her curiosity. She recalled,

...when you were younger, you would ask 'why are people different'? Your mother would tell you, and I would [say] 'ok'. So, I was curious about why people were different and their different cultures. So, my mom accepted it, my dad accepted it. (Bates)

As I listened to Bates's response, I began to reflect on my own curiosity as a child, especially my curiosity about those individuals who did not look like me (were not African American). Then as I grew to understand the notion of 'black and white', I was even more curious about those who did not really fall into one of the two categories.

Jacobs and Johnson, like Bates, also grew up in families where individuals of foreign languages and cultures were accepted, which allowed them to understand the various ethnic and cultural backgrounds of peoples aside from the typical notion of United States citizens which tends to categorize everyone as either 'black' or 'white'. Johnson stated, "...well, I...am a military [child], so I've been around a lot of different people and races, so it really didn't affect me, but [I was taught] to love everyone." (Johnson) Jacobs also explained, "It [the teachings regarding individuals of other cultures] was open. Very open...it's not just us, so be open, basically...experiences, cultural perspectives, thoughts, views...different cultures, and being a military child moving around, you get to see that." (Jacobs) Again, Jacobs reiterated her

experience in a military family who moved about frequently, and as a result, she has become the type of individual who prefers to travel. She enjoys traveling to various countries and learning about their cultures. As she previously stated during the onset of our conversation, she has developed the habit of traveling quite frequently, so she does not like to remain in one place for an extended period of time. Jacobs helped me to further confirm that understanding other cultures helps us to understand and appreciate our own culture in that it broadens our perspective and allows us to compare and contrast our culture with other cultures. Also, as she stated above, she was encouraged by her family to be open to other cultures because the world is full of many different cultures. It is impossible not to be affected or influenced by other cultures as the Diaspora teaches us. Also, as I stated previously our survival is going to depend on getting along with other cultures. An African American may live in a neighborhood or an environment that affords contact with only other African Americans while they are in their own home or usual dwelling place. But, what if this person is faced with the event of depending on a person of a different culture for help in the time of need or being hired for a job? Acceptance and knowledge of the other person's culture may be necessary for one to receive what one needs in that scenario. Again, with Johnson as with Jacobs, we can see the positive effect that extensive travel abroad has on individuals in terms of their eagerness to learn foreign languages and cultures. As they grew up in the military with their families in various countries, they developed a positive attitude towards individuals from different parts of the world, and are now enjoying their journey of further increasing their knowledge by studying the Spanish language and culture.

The students expressed their intent to carry these values into the world as they pursue their places in life and hopefully make valuable contributions to society by breaking cultural and racial barriers and utilizing their knowledge of the Spanish language and culture. Whether due to

international travel or exposure to individuals of cultures and languages other than their own here in the United States, these students have demonstrated an interest as well as awareness in foreign languages and cultures that is mentioned in Southern University's mission statement.

### **Future Plans in Spanish**

I ended my interviews with the Spanish majors and minors by asking them to discuss their personal and professional plans for the future once they receive their degree in Spanish. I was in awe with some of the responses. These students have planned to have a great impact on the world with their knowledge of Spanish. They intend to travel the world as translators in various countries, serve abroad as humanitarians, and incorporate Spanish into the fields of nursing, politics, teaching and others. They all seem optimistic about their futures in Spanish. One of the minors, Johnson, who is majoring in political science expressed her desire to translate documents. She also seemed open to other possibilities. She stated, "I'm not sure what else is out there, but that's one thing that...a lot of people had told me about, translating documents. [Because] a lot of people don't understand Spanish, so you can translate the documents." Johnson intends to break the language barrier between cultures by working as a translator in the area of politics. Another political science major who is minoring in Spanish, Williams, discussed her plans to achieve equal rights for Hispanics. She stated,

...first, if I take my LSAT and get into the college, I mean, the law school that I want to get into, I'm going to practice law. And I want it to be geared toward helping Hispanics get [their] rights [in society]. And by me minoring in Spanish, it's easier for me to communicate with them and it's a workable language... So, it's either that or I'll...teach. ...I want to teach Spanish." (Williams)

As Williams responded to my question, I was under the impression that she, as an African American, felt that she could sympathize with Hispanics, who also as minorities, are faced with discrimination and denied equal rights in U.S. society. We can recall the recent law in Arizona



which was passed in an attempt to eliminate illegal immigration. There are great concerns that this law will increase cases of racial profiling against individuals in the Hispanic community. She commented that she would like to use her knowledge of the Spanish language as a means to assist Hispanics in such endeavors. Williams also mentioned the need to be able to communicate in Spanish in order to take this type of action in society. She stated that she is also contemplating teaching Spanish and imparting her knowledge of the highly essential Spanish language in order to equip students to achieve success in our global society.

In addition to Williams's goal to attend law school, one of the majors who is also majoring in broadcasting would like to continue her education in graduate school and utilize her knowledge of Spanish in news. She explained,

...my goal is to obtain..., actually, I'm going to obtain a masters in linguistics...and I took a Spanish phonetics class which really got me interested in the way sounds are formed, even dealing with people who have speech impediments or want to develop a more authentic accent...but my goal is to obtain a masters in linguistics and then a doctorate...also to work in a news station and use my Spanish to interview people that wouldn't be interviewed if they hadn't [spoken] the language. (Lewis)

I found this to be rather interesting since I too have a degree in broadcasting along with my degree in Spanish. I was curious to know where she intended to pursue her graduate studies, and she responded, "...at this time I am writing essays for colleges. I'm applying at Vanderbilt, Georgia State, Ole Miss, just pretty much putting my applications everywhere...[to] see which offer is best for me." (Lewis) She has expressed an interest in phonetics and linguistics which takes us back to communication of the language. As a future broadcaster, she has realized the importance of effective communication in English and Spanish in order to reach a larger audience in the broadcasting field. Again, knowledge of Spanish will give her an advantage in the highly competitive field of broadcasting, by being able to communicate with a more diverse

audience.

It is rather impressive how students such as Williams and Lewis intend to utilize either a double major or a major along with a minor in order to have a double impact on society via their foreign language experience. Davis and Markham (1991) pointed out in their study that eighty percent of the 600 plus African American participants indicated that they chose to study a foreign language because it was relevant to their career goals. The Spanish majors and minors in the above conversations have chosen to take the path of studying various fields along with Spanish, and it seems that when their plans materialize, they will be pleased with their level of success in their careers. They will have the advantage and receive the higher salaries that are predicted for students who choose the paths which they have chosen as they operate in their various positions with the positive attitudes they have acquired towards foreign languages and cultures. Maybe they will even become the trailblazers such as Richard Greener, William Scarborough and Frazelia Campbell among others African American classicists in the field of foreign languages.

### **Non-majors**

The non-majors were ten randomly selected students who were from the states of Louisiana, Texas and Indiana. All of them, seven females and three males, identified as African American.

### **Places of Origin and Classifications**

As I began my discussions with the non-major students, I wanted to get to know them by first finding out where they were from as well as their status at the university. Only two of the non-major participants, both males, were from out of the state of Louisiana. They were from Dallas and Indianapolis. The student from Dallas was a sophomore and the student from

Indianapolis was a junior. One of the females, who was a junior, explained that she was originally from Baton Rouge, but by the time she reached school age, she was living in Austin, Texas. The other students were from Saint Rose, Geismar, Burris, Greensburg, Montpelier, Baton Rouge and Lake Charles. The student from Geismar was the only senior in the group, while all the other students were sophomores and juniors. One fact that is noticeable regarding the places of origin is that many of these students are from small towns in Louisiana, possibly disallowing much contact with foreign citizens.

### **Chosen Fields of Study**

The students in this pool were majoring in a wide variety of fields, most of which required them to study at least two semesters of a foreign language. Two of the students were mass communication majors while the others were studying accounting, nursing, computer science, psychology, sociology, electrical engineering, civil engineering and mathematics. One student had a double major in civil engineering and mathematics while another student had a double major in psychology and nursing. The students in accounting, nursing and engineering explained that their majors did not require foreign language study, but either their other major required it or they took Spanish due to their personal interest in the language and/or culture.

### **Foreign Language Experience**

All the students in this study were enrolled in either one of the two elementary level Spanish courses. Four of them were enrolled in the first course, Spanish 100, while the other six were enrolled in the second course, Spanish 101. Two of the students in the 101 course had tested out of the 100 course, so even though they were taking Spanish for the first time at the university, they were already enrolled in the second course.

One of the students who had tested out of the 100 course, Albert, explained that she had many years of experience in Spanish when she entered the university. She stated, "...in high school I took it for two years and in middle school for two years." As I begin to ponder the responses offered by the students in this case, it is becoming apparent that the next best approach to study abroad or travel abroad would be previous study of a foreign language in terms of motivating students to major or minor in a foreign language. One other student also mentioned that her experience in Spanish dated all the way back to middle school, and the majority of the other students had taken Spanish in high school as well.

### **Reason(s) for Taking a Foreign Language**

While the majority of these students admitted to taking Spanish because they were required by their major departments to do so, a great number of them still acknowledged that they wanted to take a foreign language regardless of the requirement. Two of the students indicated that they were not required by their majors to take a foreign language, but wanted to take Spanish because they enjoy it. The electrical engineering student, Winbush, explained that she took a foreign language even though it was not required because "I like to explore other things rather than my own culture." She explained that curiosity is what motivated her to embark upon studying Spanish. When asked why she chose to study Spanish instead of any other foreign language, she explained, "Because I knew somewhat about the Spanish culture, but I wanted to know more as far [being] more fluent in it, to learn the different types of food, the foods they make, ...just their whole environment." The study conducted by James and Markham (1991) indicated that 555 of the participants from the 53 predominantly African American universities shared the same sentiment as Winbush and responded that they were studying a foreign language in order to gain a better understanding and appreciation for the culture of those who speak the

language. It seems that Winbush's curiosity regarding the Spanish language and culture continues to increase and further motivate her to continue her quest to learn the language and culture.

According to the responses given to Davis and Markham (1991) when conducting their study on African American foreign language students from 53 predominantly African American universities, eighty-one percent of 797 of the participants indicated that studying a foreign language was an enjoyable experience and sixty-five percent of the students indicated that they would study a foreign language even if it were not required just as the two students mentioned above. Also, Winbush has stated that she was somewhat familiar with the Hispanic culture and wanted to increase her knowledge of the language and culture. She now resides in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; however, as a child she attended school in Austin, Texas, where according to Terrell, Andrade, Egasse, Muñoz (2006), there was a greater opportunity for her to be exposed to the Hispanic culture due to the influx of Spanish speaking citizens.

Another student who expressed her fondness of the Spanish language, Payne, explained that she, like Winbush, was not even required to take a foreign language in her major, which was nursing. She took the course simply because she wanted to take it and she further explained, "[Because] I feel that [there are] more native speakers...in the United States. [Also because] I run into a lot of Spanish-speaking [people] in my life." Payne also pinpointed the increasing number of Hispanics in the United States, and has taken on the task of preparing herself to be able to communicate with them. Ironically, this student turned out to be the top student of her Spanish class during the time of this interview. Expressing the same sentiments in terms of fondness for the Spanish language was the accounting student who had already acknowledged that the course was not required but she took it due to her personal interest in the language. She recalled her experience in high school as she stated,

I just wanted to take it. I was really interested in it in high school. My...teacher...was so interesting, and that really [sparked] my [interest] in the language and the culture, and I just wanted to pursue it. (Albert)

So, again we can see that some of the students are impressed with the language and culture by high school foreign language educators, and fortunately some of them bring this interest along with them to the college classroom. As she further explained why she chose Spanish as opposed to other foreign languages, she stated, "I took French in elementary school, but when I took Spanish, it was so much more interesting to me, so I just [continued to study] Spanish." (Albert) Albert, like Winbush and Payne have developed an interest in the Spanish language void of any obligations or requirements placed on them by their majors. In addition to their personal interest in Spanish, they all recognize the urgency to be prepared for our nation's society which is now so heavily populated with Spanish speakers.

Winbush, Payne and Albert were not the only students who were persuaded by their curiosity of the Spanish language and culture. One of the students who is a mass communication major, Turner, stated that he had mixed reasons for taking Spanish. As he explained his reasons, he said, "...it's also required in my major, but I've always been curious about the Spanish language and learning more." Students such as Winbush, Payne, Albert and Turner find the Spanish language and culture fascinating enough to continue studying it, at least for the time being. The other mass communication student, Washington, further explained why he chose to study Spanish in order to satisfy his foreign language requirement as opposed to other languages by stating, "...Spanish is a language a lot more people are speaking..." Washington is expressing that he understands that the number of Hispanics in the United States is constantly on the rise. Washington wants to prepare himself for the culturally diverse society in which we now live.

Another student, Jack, who is a mathematics major discussed the advice his grandmother gave him to study Spanish. As he reflected on his grandmother who was obviously very dear to him as he spoke, he stated, "It's required for my mathematics [major], but my grandmother keeps saying I need to learn Spanish [because] in Texas half the jobs are for Spanish-speaking people, so you [have to] know both..." Jack's comment takes us back to the influence of family as previously discussed by the Spanish majors and minors when they discussed the impact of family regarding their attitudes towards individuals of foreign languages and cultures. We can reflect on the comments of the Spanish minor, Fields, as she explained the approval she received from her mother due to her decision to minor in Spanish. Jack's grandmother and Fields's mother reside in the state of Texas, and again we can pinpoint the encouragement that comes from parents and other family members when they study a foreign language, particularly Spanish. Just as Jack stated, many of the jobs in Texas require employees to become bilingual due to the high population of Spanish-speaking citizens in the state.

While the students who are required to take foreign language courses acknowledged their obligation to take a foreign language, the students still expressed their interest in the Spanish language for various reasons. One of the informants, O'Hara, who is a native of Greensburg, Louisiana and majoring in computer science explained that she is required to take the first two levels of any foreign language and the reason she chose Spanish was "[Because] I enjoy it, and since it's becoming the second language of the United States, I know I would like to become more...familiar with it." O'Hara did state that she enjoys the language, but spoke more in terms of a foreign language as obligatory. As we review the results of the study conducted by Davis and Markham (1991), there is a bit of contradiction among the participants in the study as with O'Hara. In Davis's and Markham's (1991) study, eighty-one percent of the participants state

that they enjoy studying a foreign language, just as O'Hara stated. O'Hara also acknowledges the growing Spanish-speaking population as she stated that it is becoming the second language of our country. Yet, O'Hara has adamantly declared that she does not want to continue to study Spanish much more beyond the requirement. O'Hara and the participants all acknowledge that they enjoy studying a foreign language and it is important in our society nowadays to do so. However, only 4 of 772 students in Davis's and Markham's (1991) study indicated that they anticipate majoring in a foreign language and only 32, or four percent, of the participants anticipate minoring in a foreign language. Keep in mind that this study was conducted at 53 predominantly African American universities, which means that these numbers are extremely small considering the number of schools and participants.

With this thought in mind, I was eager to continue my discussion with the other non-major students in order to find out if this contradiction would continue. As I proceeded to engage in the discussions with the students, they began to reflect on their prior experience with the Spanish language as well as the French language. Albert had already discussed her experience with French in elementary school, but stated that when she took Spanish in high school, she found it much more interesting. Likewise, one of the other mathematics students recalled her experience with the two languages, Spanish and French, when she attended high school as she explained her reason for taking a foreign language, particularly Spanish. She stated, "[Because] I took Spanish in high school and I like it, it was easy and..., well, I didn't like French..." (Gilbert) Davis and Markham (1991) research suggests if African American students at predominantly African American universities find a foreign language to be 'easy', as explained by Gilbert, and less intimidating, then they are more likely to continue their study of the language. The psychology student, Colby, like Gilbert, also mentioned her dislike for the French language by



stating, "Because I had background in French and I didn't really like it that much because it's [kind of] hard to speak French, ..." The sociology major, Carrington, like the mathematics major, also expressed the ease she felt with the Spanish language as opposed to other foreign languages when asked why she chose Spanish. She further explained, "...I've taken it in high school, so I'm a little familiar with it..., so, [I] just took the safe route." This sense of 'safety' mentioned by Carrington gives students a sense of confidence and increases their chances of being successful in a foreign language course, even if they are taking the course merely to satisfy their foreign language requirement. Carrington, like Payne, was awarded the honor of being the top student of her Spanish class at the time of this interview. Although Carrington was required to take two foreign language courses and Payne only took a foreign language because she enjoyed studying a foreign language, Carrington most likely excelled in the course due to her previous foreign language experience in high school which gave her the confidence and advantage to complete the course as the top student.

Carrington and many other participants in the study confirmed the importance of a foundation being established at the high school, middle school and even the elementary levels in order for foreign language departments and educators to attract students to major and minor in foreign languages at the college level. Although the participants in this section of the discussion are non-majors, we will later discuss the possibility of becoming majors and minors and discover that some of them are contemplating the idea of doing so. The comments that were offered suggest that exposure to foreign languages and cultures at pre-college levels will help students better understand the value of becoming bilingual/multilingual in our pluralistic society.

### **Travel Abroad Experience**

In addition to prior experience in foreign languages at high school, middle school and

elementary levels in their education, as previously discussed with the Spanish majors and minors, travel and/or study abroad is a highly essential factor in the attitudes that students will develop regarding foreign languages and cultures. Although Lassiter (2003) acknowledged, “African Americans generally have less exposure to languages and travel, and view foreign language as a rote exercise to be tolerated, one that is far removed from their concept of reality” (p. 6), four of the students explained that they had traveled abroad and found it to be a rewarding experience. Those students had traveled to Mexico when they were children, but some were unaware of which parts of Mexico they visited. Most of them were young children at the time. The other six students who have not had the experience of traveling abroad indicated that they look forward to traveling abroad someday in order to increase their knowledge of various cultures, with the exception of one student. While those who expressed an interest in travel abroad discussed plans to visit such countries as Spain, France and England, the sociology student rather humorously discussed her fear of a foreign land by alluding to the images portrayed by the media which depict poverty and violence and the whole notion that many who travel to these places can 'never return'! The fear in her voice was rather obvious as she stated, "Sometimes...you hear these horror stories like 'you can't return to the US'...like with the passport and the shots and the difference in money. That's ok. I'll stay here..." (Carrington) Carrington allows us to again reflect on Brown's (2002) observation in which he states that one of the reasons for a lack of participation among African Americans in study abroad programs is fear of the unknown or a foreign land. O'Hara also shared this same fearful sentiment felt by Carrington as she explained that she had traveled abroad and enjoyed the trip, but does not really want to travel abroad much in the future. She said she would only like to stay for a couple of days or so. She admitted to feeling a bit fearful of foreign travel, but when I asked her what she feared, she

could not really pinpoint the cause of her fear.

It was evident by the views of these two students that research has revealed a sense of fear among African Americans in regard to foreign travel. As previously stated, Davis (2000) discovered from his study that eighty-four percent of the students who participated in the study had not experienced travel abroad where their target language was spoken. Likewise, Brown (2002) also conducted research on study abroad programs at historically black colleges and universities and found a noticeable decline in the interest and participation of African American students. Besides such deterrents as a lack of advertisement which makes students aware of these programs and the high cost to participate in such programs, students such as the two in the above discussion express a fear of the unknown which is associated with traveling to foreign lands. To further perpetuate this fear, the media almost constantly portrays the down side of life in foreign countries with the depiction of poverty-stricken citizens as well as crimes such as robbery, murder and the slaughter of foreign tourists. As a result of this type of media coverage on the lifestyle and culture of some foreign countries, we in foreign languages are faced with a challenge that makes it almost impossible to persuade students about the advantages of experiencing the rich Hispanic culture as well as other cultures. It is unfortunate that these students will forego the opportunity to immerse themselves into the culture of their target language by living among the native speakers of that language. If African American students as well as teachers would experience this type of cultural immersion for their target language(s), the classroom experience would be enriched, therefore making the daily learning process more fulfilling. By adding their own knowledge and personal experience of the culture to the content of the textbook, the foreign language experience would literally come to life for them as they take a journey through the language and culture of other peoples.

However, while studies show that numerous African American students continue to dismiss the very idea of travel and study abroad, the accounting student who had traveled abroad with the program at Southern expressed her pleasure with the trip to Belize last summer. She stated,

It was wonderful! I'm so glad I went because without going through the school, I probably never would have had a chance to go anywhere outside the U.S. And I actually took a Spanish class there, the conversation class...it was wonderful. I had a good time.  
(Albert)

Moreover, she added that she was looking forward to participating in the study abroad program next summer by going to Mexico. As I listened to Albert express her extreme pleasure with the study abroad experience, I was reminded of the excitement I felt as a study abroad student in Mexico many years ago. While those such as Carrington and O'Hara are frightened by a different culture or a foreign land, others find the experience to be rather fascinating and exotic, and therefore, are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards the study of foreign languages and cultures.

While Albert found her study abroad experience to be enjoyable as well as fruitful, the other students, besides Carrington and O'Hara, who had never traveled abroad expressed their anticipation regarding travel abroad as they discussed the countries they would like to visit. Colby stated, "My sister and I were thinking about...Peru." She further explained that she would like to visit the country and help the less fortunate people there. In addition to practicing her use of the Spanish language, she would like to contribute to the poverty-stricken citizens of the country. While Carrington and O'Hara expressed their fear of foreign lands partially due to the negative images they see in the media such as crime and poverty, Colby, on the other hand, has decided to take on the role of helping to improve living conditions for citizens in these countries,

particularly Peru.

Moreover, the nursing student, Payne, who had traveled briefly to Mexico, also stated that she would like to travel more to Spanish-speaking countries. She did not have a particular country in mind. It really did not seem to matter to her, as long as it was a Spanish-speaking country. The engineering student, Winbush, also explained that she had briefly visited several border towns in Mexico and she looks forward to traveling abroad in the future. When I asked her what her experience in Mexico was like, she recalled,

...it was [kind of] like the United States, but then again, it's not [because] as we cross over, ...things are so different. It looks [like] a poor part of the United States in a way. [They also] have McDonald's and some things of that sort, [but] when you go into the little shops, it's just so different than the United States. We don't have little shops where [you go in] and ask how much it cost, this or...that sort of thing. It's just like a little town that looks like [a] corner store... (Winbush)

She said she really enjoyed her experience in Mexico and is considering traveling with the study abroad program at Southern to either Mexico or Belize. It is interesting that Winbush, who is a non-major participant in this study, has already developed a positive attitude not only due to her exposure to the Spanish speaking community in Austin, Texas when she was a child, but also by traveling to various border regions in Mexico. While this study is to help African American students understand the similarities in the heritages between African Americans and Hispanics, Winbush seems to be attracted to the differences of the target culture. Although she mentioned that some parts of Mexico reminded her a little of some of the poor areas of the United States, she seemed to be more interested in what makes the Hispanic culture different from her own as opposed to how it is similar to her African American culture.

One of the mass communication students, Washington, who expressed that he would like to travel to Spain and France explained his reason for choosing Spain: He explained,

Well, Spain, [I've] always heard...it's easier to...learn a foreign language when you stay in that country a little while. ...so you don't have [anyone] else to speak your language with you. It's easy to catch on." (Washington)

As for France, he stated, "And the only thing I know about France is the tower [in] Paris... I've [seen] pictures of that my whole life and I would like to go see that also in France."

(Washington) Washington plans to broaden his horizons by experiencing the culture of the Hispanic world as well as the French world. Studying one language/culture has motivated him to study another as well. Since Washington has not yet traveled abroad but still has developed a positive attitude towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. It is likely, according to previous research that has been reviewed (Brown, 2002 and Davis & Markham, 1991), that he will develop an even greater interest towards foreign languages and cultures once he begins to travel abroad. Seeing and living the culture of the target language firsthand arouses a deeper interest for many students who have had the experience.

Aside from the plans students have to visit Spanish-speaking countries and countries which are a part of the study abroad program at Southern, one of the mathematics students mentioned her fascination with the country of New Zealand. When I asked about her reason for choosing New Zealand, she thought back to the days when she attended middle school and said,

I don't know, it's [kind of] weird...when I was in middle school I [became] obsessed with it and I wanted to move there for awhile. I even learned the national anthem. I don't remember it now, but I think..., how did I get started on that? But, I wanted to go to college up there, wanted to move out there... But then I decided not to [because] it's [about] a day's worth of travel on a plane, so I couldn't... (Gilbert)

Again, according to Gilbert, and also like Washington, studying one culture aroused her interest in another culture. Gilbert, who is currently a non-major, has also, like Washington, Winbush, and others in this study, developed a positive attitude towards the study of foreign languages and cultures as a result of studying a foreign language as early as middle school. She, like

Washington, has not yet traveled abroad, but looks forward to doing so.

While the students in this section are non-majors, the majority of them still possess positive attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. They are currently studying Spanish and one has enjoyed the experience of taking their study of the language outside the classroom by way of study abroad programs. While two of the students are not fond of the idea of travel abroad, the other eight students are looking forward to a future that will include travel abroad.

### **Future Spanish Study**

While all ten students acknowledged the importance of knowing a foreign language in today's society, they also indicated that they have no concrete intentions of majoring or minoring in Spanish once they have satisfied the foreign language requirement. About half of them explained that they are contemplating minoring in Spanish, but have not made any definite plans to do so. Albert and Winbush in particular seemed to be the most likely of the students in this group who may go on to minor in Spanish. Two of the students, Carrington and O'Hara, strongly denied any intentions of majoring or minoring in a foreign language. Carrington said she would definitely not take any more foreign language courses after this semester, while O'Hara said she may take one more Spanish course. By the way, these are the same two students who discussed their fear of traveling to foreign countries and immersing themselves into the Hispanic culture.

### **Attitudes of Students and Families Regarding Individuals of Other Cultures**

While discussing their intentions, or lack thereof, of continuing to study Spanish, they all denied bringing any prejudices or misconceptions about individuals of other cultures to the foreign language experience via family or other influential persons in their lives. They also acknowledged the importance of being bilingual in today's society, which, in a sense, revealed a

bit of a positive attitude on the part of the non-major students. The engineering student stated,

It's very important because we have so many different cultures that are coming to the United States to observe what we do here. And you want to communicate and get involved with one another, we can be closer together... We should learn their language to show them '..., just because you're not from the United States doesn't mean that we can't communicate.' We're not willing to show them that we are willing to put in the extra effort and know their culture, know their language... (Winbush)

Winbush is in favor of a reciprocal relationship between the Hispanic and North American cultures as opposed to viewing English as the elite or supreme language. Her opinion seems to be based on the inevitable reality of the constant influx of immigrants, particularly the Hispanic culture. Growing at an extremely rapid rate, according to CNN (2009) the Hispanic population makes up twenty-five percent of the United States population, and there is no solution in sight for those who choose to believe that all Spanish speakers should be denied their language and culture in mainstream North America. Even if these types of laws were to be passed in the future, we would still need to ask ourselves, 'What do we do in the meantime'? That answer would most likely be, 'Learn the languages and cultures of our immigrants in order for us to all function harmoniously as United States citizens.' While those such as Winbush who have, and encourage others to have, a positive attitude towards the study of foreign languages and cultures, those with attitudes that tend to be more negative are not offering any concrete solutions along with their suggestions that all United States citizens should speak English only.

Another student who is studying civil engineering and mathematics discussed the importance of being bilingual from a professional perspective. He stated,

...because...if you're in a different work situation, you don't know what you'll experience, ...for an engineer you might go to work on someone's place that might only speak Spanish or something like that, so it [kind of] helps to know the major languages of the country and Spanish is coming up close to being [our second language]. (Jack)



Jack is again facing the reality of a growing Hispanic population in this country, and is hypothetically putting himself into various scenarios where he will be required to utilize the Spanish language. Particularly in the example he gives which depicts him at his place of employment, he is given the opportunity to serve a Spanish speaking client. Although in this case and other cases as well, the employee may be given the option not to serve that client and allow someone else in the company to serve him/her. However, for the employee, it becomes a missed opportunity to not only perform the task but to seize the financial advantage that would go with the task on the job. For this reason, Jack has developed a positive attitude towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. He is predicting that with knowledge of the Spanish language, he will excel beyond the abilities of most of his other competitors in the fields of engineering and mathematics.

One of the mass communication students contributed an interesting point in his response to the importance of being bilingual in today's society as he, like Jack, spoke of the necessity of knowing a foreign language for the purpose of seizing employment opportunities. As he reflected on the current recession, he stated, "I think it's very important because [in] the recession..., the jobs are going down, people losing their jobs and I think it would be important to know another language because in my opinion, that would increase your chances of keeping the job." (Washington) He also stated that it would pose an ideal situation for both groups to learn each other's language. Washington, like Jack, believes that knowledge of a foreign language gives one the advantage over other employees in the workplace. Also like Winbush, he believes the reciprocal relations between Hispanics and North Americans would promote a harmonious environment for both groups to live in. He explained,

Well,...I think by them being the largest minority group now...I mean, ...I feel it would make them feel more at home if the current citizens [were] to learn their language. But, it would also be nice for them to learn our language too. (Washington)

Perhaps Washington would be interested in knowing that while African Americans are reluctant to embrace the language and culture of Hispanics, the opposite is true concerning the attitudes of Spanish speakers, particularly Mexican Americans. The reason for this fact could be that Mexicans choose to make the United States their home in order to seize the opportunity for a better, more economically stable life for themselves and their families. In other words, these Mexican immigrants view the United States as a promise land of some sorts. Mejías, Anderson-Mejías and Carlson (2003) conducted a comparative study between the years 1982 and 2000 and discovered that Mexican American students who attend the University of Texas Pan American in the Lower Rio Grande Valley seemed to develop a stronger sense of assimilation within the North American culture as the years passed. For instance, in 1982 slightly over seventy-one percent of these students spoke Spanish to relate to family members and friends, while in 2000 approximately sixty-five percent of the students responded in the same manner. So, we have to wonder why if these Mexicans can live in the United States as minorities just as African Americans, why are the Mexicans more willing to embrace a foreign culture than African Americans? Now that Hispanics, including Mexicans, are the largest minority group in the United States, it seems as though the acceptance of the Hispanics' language and culture would be to the advantage of African Americans. Although, as stated, these Mexicans choose to migrate to the United States in order to obtain a better life for their families, the study conducted by Mejías, Anderson-Mejías and Carlson (2003) directly addresses the concern expressed by Washington and others in this case study who believe that a reciprocal effort of African Americans and Hispanics is necessary in order for us to all live and work together as citizens in this country.

The nursing/psychology student further stated, regarding employment opportunities and the need for African Americans to learn a foreign language, "I think it's really important because, ...even today when you go somewhere they ask you if you're bilingual. Most of the time you get paid more if you're bilingual and it may help you get the job." (Colby) In addition to remaining employed during the recession, Colby is focusing on the financial advantages of being bilingual on the job. She is aware that numerous companies and businesses promise higher salaries to their bilingual employees.

The accounting student also considered her future in terms of career plans and the possibility of living in Texas as she discussed the importance of being bilingual. She explained,

I'm thinking of moving to Texas where Spanish is one of the primary languages now, it's close to Mexico and a lot of people are coming in from there. ...also I'd like to [study] Chinese because in the business world...they do a lot of trading with China. So, I'd like to do that too. It's important in today's society to be bilingual in some...way. (Albert)

She further stated that North Americans should not demand that Hispanics learn English as opposed to North Americans learning Spanish by explaining, "..., because they even have a whole Spanish channel on TV now, ...things that you buy in stores have the double language, English and Spanish. So, I think it would be a good idea just to be able to communicate with them..." (Albert) Albert, like several others in this study, is emphasizing the importance of reciprocal relations between English and Spanish speakers, as also stated by Washington, as well as the economic advantages of studying various languages and cultures in order to compete in the business world. Albert also mentioned plans to reside in the Texas area, which Terrell, Andrade, Egasse, Muñoz (2006) have declared is one of the states which is the home of numerous Spanish speakers.

The sociology student expressed the same sentiments as Jack and Washington in a hypothetical reflection while discussing the importance of being bilingual in today's society. She explained,

It is very important because you never know who's [going to] need your help, you know, it might be a person that speaks another language [who is] the only person available to help you, so it is very important. (Carrington)

She went on to say,

It's all about helping each other. I never know when I might have to live in Mexico, so I would want somebody to be merciful to me and help me, so I say I think we all should learn some type of foreign language. (Carrington)

Carrington is one of the students who previously expressed a fear of international travel as well as her refusal to continue to study a foreign language beyond the requirement. However, in this comment, she acknowledges the importance of knowing a foreign language in this country and being able to utilize it when needed. Carrington's comments above do not seem to be limited to the place of employment. Rather, she seems to point out the possibilities of depending on non-English speakers in a much broader scope of life. She is implying that life itself has a way of placing us in situations that we would least expect to find ourselves, giving us no choice of who will come to our rescue or who will be available to assist us. According to Carrington, for this reason, it would be to the benefit of all United States citizens to develop a positive attitude towards the study of foreign languages. However, she does not believe that she should study a foreign language beyond the requirement of her sociology program of study. It is true that understanding the need for individuals to work in a certain field, such as foreign languages, does not mean that everyone should work in that field, especially considering that not everyone has the capabilities of doing so. However, for those who have studied in the field at least at the elementary levels and have proven that they are capable of being successful in that field, then

why not make an attempt to further their studies in that area? For example, we would all agree that there is a need for doctors in our society, but it does not mean that we are going to all study to become doctors. We are not all capable of doing the job. However, in Carrington's case, she has proven that she is capable of further study of a foreign language because, after all, she was the top student in her elementary foreign language class.

Gilbert took the hypothetical notion to another level by explaining that she was presented with the opportunity to know or at least be able to comprehend Spanish at her home. She recalled the time during Hurricane Katrina while explaining the importance of being bilingual in our society. She explained, "I think it's very important. Because I'm from Lake Charles and after the hurricane a lot of...Hispanic people [who] came...that were working on our house, ...didn't speak English, and you need to communicate with people." (Gilbert) Just as Winbush previously stated, she further explained that North Americans should not expect Hispanics to embrace the language and culture in the United States without being willing to reciprocate. She stated, "... [myself] in particular, I think some Americans think they're above everybody else. In most countries...they're multilingual, they learn more than just [one] language..., so, I think Americans should be required to learn more than just their language." (Gilbert) Gilbert seems to have a realistic attitude regarding the influx of Spanish-speakers to this country, understanding that teaching all of them English would be almost impossible at the rate at which they are entering the country. She believes in having an open mind and being willing to embrace the language and culture of the Hispanics.

For the reasons previously mentioned by Carrington and Gilbert, the nursing student, Payne, stated that she would strongly urge North Americans to learn Spanish in today's society. Just as Gilbert recalled her experience at her home, she recalled a recent situation in which she

found herself stranded. She stated,

I had a flat tire. ...this Spanish man came up to me [and] he [was] not good at speaking English. He wanted to help me with my flat [tire], but my dad was already on his way [to help me]. So, I was...able to tell him that my dad was coming and [not to] worry about it. And [this was only about] 3 weeks ago! So...you never know...and some people...if they don't know what they're saying will probably take [things] the wrong way, so I think it's good for them to learn how to speak Spanish. (Payne)

As Payne described this experience, she had a sense of pride and confidence in knowing that she was able to communicate with an individual who did not know how to speak English. In addition to the pride she felt, she was able to convey a necessary message. For these reasons, she would like to continue to study Spanish and increase her opportunities for Spanish communication in various capacities. Just as Carrington has described the possibility of finding ourselves in unexpected situations and being in need of assistance, which in Payne's case was a flat tire, it is true that in these unexpected incidents we have not always planned for the unexpected. Therefore, we would be forced to depend on whoever happens to be in the same place at the same time, regardless of their cultural and language background.

In addition to understanding the importance of learning foreign languages in today's society, nine of the ten students claimed to have friends/associates of cultural backgrounds other than their own, and they could recall receiving positive views from parents and family members regarding those of other ethnicities. As they discussed their friends and associates, they claimed to have friends of Caucasian, Asian, Hispanic and various other ethnic backgrounds. They have always been taught to embrace or accept those who are different and to avoid any discrimination due to race or culture. As one student explained, he was taught to "...always treat people the way you want to be treated. We may be different shades or ethnic backgrounds but [our] blood [is] red, and we all are God's children." (Washington) It seems that Washington's upbringing was

based on Christian values which promote love of all individuals regardless of race or background.

Also expressing the need to promote unity in our society, the accounting student, Albert, discussed the role of her parents in encouraging the acceptance of individuals of foreign backgrounds. She stated,

My dad is a criminal justice major, [and there are] a lot of different ethnic groups and they always tell me to have an open mind, be open-minded and accept everybody for who they are because just like they're different to you, you're different to them. You have to compromise... (Albert)

She also explained that due to her job, she comes in contact with individuals from various ethnic backgrounds, and she has remained faithful to the values which were taught by her parents regarding those of foreign backgrounds. She stated, "Especially at my job, I work in the mall. I work in a photography studio, and in the photography studio we have a lot of different backgrounds, and I become close with them. In middle school, my best friend was actually Chinese, and I communicate with her too." (Albert) Albert chooses to embrace the cultures of her colleagues and friends as opposed to expecting them to conform to her language and culture. She views having foreign friends as a learning experience, and welcomes the opportunity to learn something new or different from her own culture.

The electrical engineering student discussed her experience in school during the time she lived in Texas in terms of how she was taught to view those of other ethnic backgrounds. She stated,

...the basic thing is that 'people are just people', and whoever you make your friends, that's fine. You know, I was always taught that if they do something to stab you in the back [then there's a problem], I wasn't taught... 'you couldn't [be friends] with him because he's white' or 'you couldn't [be friends] with him because he's Mexican.' [At] the high school I [attended] in Texas, there are all...different races mixed into the school, so it didn't bother me, it didn't bother my family at all. We're all accepting of different people,

...so I wasn't taught that it wasn't right to [associate] with a certain group or 'that' type of group. I mix and mingle with everybody because...you [have to] know people. (Winbush)

Winbush is emphasizing the importance of looking beyond race or color and focusing on the character of individuals. She believes that all United States citizens should become more united as opposed to the polarization and division which seem so prevalent.

On the other hand, while urged by family members to maintain a positive attitude towards individuals of different ethnic backgrounds like the aforementioned students, the two math students discussed the warnings of their relatives to stay on guard for those who are not so positive towards individuals of different backgrounds. One student who received most of his advice from his grandmother explained, "As history of our country says...not everybody's happy with all kinds of groups, so pay attention to who you are...stay open-minded, but just watch your surroundings." (Jack) Jack's family encouraged a more cautious approach to mingling with those of foreign languages and cultures. However, Jack seems to maintain an open mind as well. The other math student, Gilbert, recalled that she attended a predominantly European American high school in which there were several racist incidents, but her mother encouraged her not to focus on such incidents. Rather, focus more on getting an education.

The only student in the group who responded that she does not communicate often with individuals of other races or backgrounds was the computer science student, O'Hara, who stated that the reason is because she does not often come in contact with them. Due to the fact that she went to a predominantly African American school, and now she is attending a predominantly African American university, she does not have much of a chance to befriend those of foreign cultures, but she is not against the idea of doing so.



Although all the students in this study have expressed their acceptance towards individuals of other races and cultures, I still wanted to discuss the possibility of the notion that studying a foreign language and/or culture could pose a threat to one's own culture. According to Davis and Markham (1991), eighty-four percent of 653 of the African American participants in their study responded that their cultural identity is not threatened by studying a foreign language, which is a noticeable improvement from Clowney and Legge's (1979) study on African American students who responded that they believed that their culture would be threatened by studying a foreign language and culture. Likewise, all of the students who were asked the question emphatically replied that no foreign culture is going to threaten their own culture. I was rather humored by Washington's response as he stated,

No, I don't believe it will [threaten my culture] because I'm 22 years of age now, I mean, I can't forget my culture. ...Regardless [of]...other languages and cultures I study, I'm still accustomed to mine because [I've] been living it my whole life, so I [don't] think it'll be a threat because [if there's] something I don't like, I can always go back to mine with no problem. (Washington)

Washington believes that a foreign culture can only enhance his culture. He is looking forward to his future travels to Spain and France, which he has already discussed, and is not at all concerned about any threats to his culture. He has developed a positive attitude towards the study of foreign languages and cultures, and wants to maintain his positive attitude. He is aware of the fact that at least twenty-five percent of the United States citizens are Hispanic but has no concerns of his African American identity being compromised as a result of this reality and his interest in learning other languages and cultures.

However, the idea behind feeling threatened by a foreign culture becomes almost mute in the case of African Americans and Hispanics in particular. We learned from Lipski (1994) in the previous review of the literature that these two groups share much in common in terms of the

Diaspora and their historical backgrounds.

### **The Diaspora**

As I engaged in discussions with the students regarding the Diaspora, we reflected on the very similar heritages of African Americans and Hispanics in light of the slave trade. While talking with the non-major students, I referred to Spain's role in transporting millions of people of African descent to the Americas through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in order to expose them to the reality of a slave past for Hispanics as well as African Americans.

All the students seemed to understand that despite racial and cultural differences that are perpetuated in our society, all cultures are bound together by the intervention of mixing which goes back many centuries. The African American and Hispanic cultures share numerous similarities aside from all the differences we choose to highlight in cultural discussions. The accounting student, Albert, mentioned that a lot of the students in her Spanish class say that the subject is not interesting to them simply because they cannot relate to it in any way. She went on to state, "Instead of focusing on 'we're so different from them' and this and that, it'll make you want to see what we do have in common to kind of compromise..., and work together." (Albert) Albert is reiterating the purpose of this dissertation by stating that we should focus more on similarities rather than differences in our cultural discussions in foreign languages. The comments of these African American students suggest that they would like to see more of their experience and heritage in any foreign culture that they study.

While the scars associated with state sanctioned slavery are still present today, over a century after the abolishment of slavery, there is yet to be a clearly articulated hemisphere-wide discussion of the societal implications of slavery on the Americas as a whole. Looking particularly at the US, paraphrasing philosopher Cornell West (1993), America exists as a

historical nation set on a simulacrum of a virginal birth absent any serious engagement of the initially Native American, and shortly thereafter African American blood, that was shed for the nation to exist as it is today. Lacking a sustained engagement of America's legacy of slavery, African American students in the US are often surprised to know that they are not the only people in the Americas scarred by slavery. While African American students are influenced by images of their ancestors which were depicted in the classic 1977 mini-series, they have developed the belief that only African Americans are rooted in this type of harsh slave background. The Afro-Cuban poet, Morejón (2003), illustrates this same reality in her poetic works, "I Love My Master" ("Amo a mi amo"), "Black Woman" ("Mujer negra") This poet is popular in her native country Cuba, which is also the native country of Southern's Spanish professor, Dr. Delgado. She may find it necessary to include the works of this poet in her cultural discussions for the students in her Spanish 100 course.

The conversations with the non-majors were proving to be rather fruitful on this topic as they shared their own views as well as the impact they thought it would have on students at Southern as a whole. As they continued to share their views, I continued to reflect on Lipski's (1994) interpretation of Africans in Spain in which he offered a detailed overview of the slave trade in Spain which is believed to have begun with the Portuguese-initiated Atlantic slave trade in the latter half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This historical inclusion of Hispanic culture could help Spanish educators to enliven and enrich cultural discussions in the classroom by considering various means to impart this valuable knowledge to our students.

It is important to note that as we refocus our attention on the Diaspora at this point in the dissertation as well as discuss the presence of Africans in Spain with our students, particularly our African American students, that we help them to see the entire picture of this scenario. As

Lipski (1994) pointed out in his discussion of the Diaspora, Spain was a major slave owning country which purchased numerous Africans during the slave trade. As we seek to appeal to African Americans in this aspect of history in terms of persuading them to understand the importance of foreign language study, not only should we emphasize the reality of Spain's history of slave ownership, but we should especially focus on the mixing of the races and cultures as a result of this practice. Then we are able to help African American students in identify with the experience of the Hispanic heritage. The reason this is so important is because some choose to focus only on Spain as a slave holding country and develop a sense of hatred or animosity towards the country as opposed to viewing Spain as only one part in the process of the African and Spanish cultures coming together and sharing such a rich heritage between them.

If we take a look back at the history, initially, the Portuguese and Spanish explorers had no intentions of entering sub-Saharan Africa for the acquisition of slaves. Rather, they were more interested in the luxury items such as gold, ivory and spices which the western coast of this region had to offer. Lipski (1994) explains that the African leaders were more than happy to barter their goods for guns, gunpowder and other European commodities. As a result of such bartering, Europe became dependent on the trade agreements extended by Africa.

While engaging in numerous trade agreements with Africa, Europe also became aware of the lucrative slave industry in various African communities. Lipski (1994) likens the practices of intra-African slavery to those of imperial Rome and medieval Eastern Europe.

European traders discovered the advantage of slave ownership, and began to barter not only such commodities as gold and spices, but also slaves with Africa. Black Africans were eventually thought to be “nothing more than a virtually endless supply of cheap and durable labor” (p. 5) according to Lipski (1994). The Portuguese and Spaniards, who were no strangers

to the slave industry from the time since the Moorish occupation, did not hesitate to welcome the African group of captives. Lipski (1994) further explained, “European explorers in Africa found, in addition to elaborate kingdoms, other groups of Africans who lacked the means of resisting foreign intrusions, and who lived in conditions which the Europeans could interpret as primitive” (p. 5). According to Rawley (1981), “Countering the view of the Manicongo and the Gold Coast chieftans as powerful personages, came the notion of the African as savage, fit only for forced labor” (p. 13). At this time, racist views of Europeans towards black Africans took precedence over the aforementioned notion. In Europe as well as the Americas, blacks were viewed as “different” and “inferior”.

Particularly at this point in history, African American students would begin to sense the relevance of the Diaspora to their own lives and history. The Diaspora demonstrates the reality of the slave background for both groups, which is a vital aspect in the Hispanic culture often overlooked in the cultural discussions of college Spanish classes. All students except the electrical engineering student, Winbush, emphatically explained that this needs to be included in the cultural discussions of classes beginning at the elementary levels. Although Winbush expressed some doubt as to the impact it may have on African American students to continue to study Spanish, she did explain that it may possibly influence them to do so. She stated,

I don't know exactly, because so many people think so many ways. I know if it [were] me, regardless of it was close to our culture, our African American culture or not, I'm still interested. But with other students, some of...it might capture them, some of them, it might not. Just depends on the student and how much they really want to learn something new, or something close to their heritage. (Winbush)

While Winbush thinks it would be worth the effort to include the Diaspora in cultural discussions, she is not totally convinced that it would have an enormous impact. However, she believes it is worth taking a chance on including it in these courses. Similar to Winbush's idea

regarding the Diaspora, Turner predicted a positive impact on the participation of African Americans in foreign language departments as a result of the inclusion of this historic component; however, he stated that it would not encourage him personally to major or minor in Spanish.

As we continue to reflect on this legendary time in history as told by Lipski (1994), we see that the slave trade continued to persist for centuries, attracting leaders among the French, the English and the Dutch. However, these countries eventually began to lose their power in this lucrative industry. Although the Portuguese lost control of the Atlantic slave trade during the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, they continued to supply African slaves to the Americas until the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Lipski (1994),

The majority of the Portuguese slave traffic followed the straightforward Angola-Brazil route, but some also found their way into Spanish American colonies. The greatest number arrived in Montevideo and Buenos Aires via Brazil in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, providing in fact the bulk of the considerable Afro-Rio Plata population which dominated these two cities during this time period (p. 15).

As foreign language educators ponder ideas for the discussion of the Diaspora in their classroom discussions, it would be imperative that the actual transporting of the African slaves to Spanish speaking countries be highlighted in the discussions in order for students to focus on the African influence which includes racial and cultural mixing in those countries. Curtin (1969) acknowledges Brazil as the largest importer of slaves in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Approximately sixty percent of these slaves hailed from Angola and Nigeria. Cuba is noted as the second largest importer of slaves in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with nearly thirty percent of the slave population. Puerto Rico, the country where Maximus, one of the Spanish minor participants in this study, spent several weeks via Southern's program, imported over 55,000 slaves during this century, which comprises nearly three percent of the total. The French Caribbean (Martinique and Guadeloupe)

imported five percent.

The speculation of the number of slaves in Spanish America has proven to be rather ambiguous. While some estimates claim a total number of slaves taken to North and South America to be between 3.5 million and 2.5 million, Lipski (1994) pointed out,

The majority of studies are based on secondary sources, and there has been much perpetuation of originally inaccurate figures. Political and ideological considerations have entered into many calculations, some tending to inflate the figures while others having a diminishing effect. The huge but indeterminate clandestine slave traffic is the single factor which renders an accurate count virtually impossible to obtain (p. 24).

This fact is especially significant in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when slaves were imported to Cuba, Brazil, Puerto Rico and smaller Caribbean islands. Laborers were taken randomly from all parts of Africa by not only well-established traders but also by occasional opportunists, making it difficult to distinguish from which regions the slaves were taken. It is at this point in history that African American foreign language students will make the connection between their own history and that of Hispanics. Any African American person could read this history and pinpoint the possibility that some of these slaves, whether born in the Americas or Africa, could have been their ancestors.

Lipski (1994) went on to explain that he believed Curtin (1969) offered the most thoroughly and carefully documented quantitative estimates of the Atlantic slave trade (see Appendix B, “The Transporting of Slaves”).

Although researchers have investigated the origins of African slaves and some have arrived at rather reasonable conclusions, the guessing game surrounding this subject continues.

Lipski (1994) explained,

Determining the ethnic origins of African slaves can only be approached approximately, and figures vary considerably depending upon the time period. Different slave trading nations and groups had their own preferred areas of African coast, and changing alliances

among African-based slave procurers also changed the ethnic makeup of the slave population (p. 25).

As a result of such a rich heritage that African Americans and Hispanics share, an overwhelming majority of the participants in this study are convinced that it would motivate more African American students to study Spanish beyond the requirement and even go on to major or minor in Spanish with the confidence of knowing that they are closely connected to the target culture Carrington explained,

I definitely think we should address it because you can't fix what you don't face, and it needs to be talked about. And sometimes there [are] just misunderstandings and some people...come off the wrong way...so communication is the key to solving these problems where we can all move forward. (Carrington)

Carrington seems to point out that the mentality among many African Americans regarding individuals of other races and cultures is that those of other cultures will always view African Americans as, what Lipski (1994) has previously stated, 'different' and 'inferior.' Although African Americans tend to focus this notion on the part of European Americans, they also tend to transfer this it to those of other cultures. This brings us to the central theme of this dissertation, which seeks to break these barriers by putting into action what Carrington is suggesting. She states that "...communication is the key to solving these problems..." (Carrington), and by educating students on the history of the Diaspora as discussed by Lipski (1994), African American students can study the reality of a history of other cultures as they relate to their own culture. As a result of such communication, these students will develop attitudes that are more positive towards the study of foreign languages and cultures and, as Carrington also stated above, "we can all move forward" (Carrington) and reap the benefits of operating in our society as global citizens.



Likewise, one of the mass communication students, Washington, also stated that it should definitely be covered in the elementary courses at the college level because in grade school, only so much information is covered. He added,

And I figure if they...let us African Americans know that we share a common history..., common things we had to go through with them, I think it would be...what's the word, it would be a plus and you know, they would want to study it more. (Washington)

Just as Carrington stated, Washington suggested that African Americans be educated on the history of Hispanics as it relates to their own history in order to feel more compelled to study a foreign language and culture. This omission of the historical component in foreign languages contributes to what Carrington expressed as 'misunderstandings' among cultures, and has caused African Americans to develop negative or lackluster attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. Such an omission has led to what Akbar (1998) refers to as 'the Hidden Curriculum', which intentionally overlooks any inclusion of African Americans in history, and has further encouraged the notion of being viewed as different or inferior among African Americans. If this aspect of history is continually overlooked, the constant conflict among races and cultures will continue to hinder the progress of our country and citizens as we continue to fight over our differences and not come together on what we have in common.

The psychology/nursing student, Colby, also added that she believes the inclusion of the Diaspora in cultural discussions at the elementary level would influence African American students to study a foreign language beyond the requirement, and possibly even major or minor in that language. She also suggested that one way that would be effective in attracting more students would be to create a title which suggests cultural studies, or something similar. She stated, "Because we had...a general course in psychology and I really liked the class and I decided to major in it." Since she was persuaded to major in psychology as a result of taking a

general studies course, she believes many students would react the same to taking a cultural studies course in a foreign language. Such a title would help students to understand that by taking the course, they will actually be educated on the speakers and people of the target language, which in turn would arouse their interest in the language itself. I can recall my conversation with Carrington when she expressed that she was more interested in the Hispanic culture and its people rather than the language. Perhaps if she were to take this cultural studies course, which is being suggested by Colby, she would be more compelled to study the language and become fluent. Colby gives foreign language educators and departments something to ponder in the quest to attract more African American students to major or minor in a foreign language. If we could appeal to some of these students by first introducing them to the culture and history of the target language, then they would most likely develop an attitude that is more positive towards the study of foreign languages and cultures and proceed to major or minor in a foreign language, becoming citizens who are more globally aware in our society.

As we continue to journey through the history of the Diaspora, Lipski (1994) explains, that early figures from Peru (1548-60) suggest nearly seventy-five percent of the slaves taken at this time hailed from the Senegambia region. Colby would be amazed at this discovery since she has expressed an interest in someday traveling to Peru in order to provide assistance to the less fortunate citizens there as well as to further expand her knowledge of the Spanish language.

Since the majority of the students in the study believe that including the Diaspora as discussed above, or the African influence within the Hispanic culture, in the elementary level Spanish courses would arouse the interest of African American students, I wanted to also find out their views regarding the lack of African Americans in the field of foreign languages. Would African American students be more likely to major or minor in foreign languages if there were

more African American foreign language educators? Unlike the results of the response regarding the Diaspora, three of these students, in computer science, O'Hara, mass communication, Turner and psychology/nursing, Colby, replied that they did not believe this would be a factor in students deciding to major or minor in a foreign language.

However, the other mass communication student, Washington, stated, [Yes], ...as [much] as I hate to say it, I think so. You know, you probably figure since a lot of African Americans are not teaching in the department, they probably figure it's irrelevant to what they know or it's not, you know, it's not fun to learn or it's boring." (Washington)

In addition to Washington's idea of African American students getting the impression that an area which is almost void of African American participation is an indication of an area being boring, we have to also understand that during the time of slavery as Lipski (1994) discusses in his interpretation of the Diaspora Africans developed a sense of being 'different' and 'inferior'. As a result of this mindset, even today African Americans have to feel a sense of identifying with a field or whatever the case may be in order to feel compelled to participate.

Likewise, the nursing student, Payne, responded in a manner which implied the students' need to be able to identify with the teacher in terms of learning a foreign language. She stated,

[Yes], I think so, [because] I have some friends... [who] by not having someone who speaks English..., they wouldn't understand... ..that's how it was at my high school. They [native speakers] don't understand how hard it is for them [because] they grew up speaking Spanish, it's [going to] be easy to them. I think if they had more...originally English [speaking] people to teach Spanish, then more people would come in because they'll feel that...they originally spoke English, so they'll understand...how it was for them to learn how to speak Spanish... (Payne)

While Payne was not discussing the need of the African American student to feel a sense of belonging from a racial or cultural standpoint, she was pointing out the students' need to identify with the teacher in terms of how a foreign language is learned. Some foreign language students have expressed that they find native foreign language teachers a bit impatient with the rate at

which some of the students learn the target language. However, as Payne discussed above, a teacher who is African American like the students and learned the language by studying it as opposed to growing up as a native speaker of the target language would be able to sympathize more with the students.

The electrical engineering student, Winbush, expressed her desire to see African Americans in fields where they are almost non-existent, including the field of foreign languages. She explained,

[Yes], because I think that would [encourage] them to [want to] learn something. [Because] you know, as many people say, there aren't many of our faces in certain areas. They want us to do those things in places where you're not seeing our faces as much. [Take] engineering, engineering is not a place where you see a lot of African Americans, foreign languages, mathematics. People are not being pushed enough to go ahead and try something different or something you don't see a lot of our African American people in. So, some people are afraid to try that instead of just going ahead and doing it, so we can get more of our African Americans to be involved [and] come together...showing our faces more. The more we drop out, the more we're going to be non-existent... (Winbush)

Winbush was stating that she believed that African Americans are usually skeptical regarding attempting unfamiliar fields of study such as foreign languages. She believed that if they are not willing to venture into foreign languages and cultures, they will be at a disadvantage in competing in the job market and society in general. She seemed to encourage African Americans to venture into those areas she mentioned, such as foreign languages, engineering, and mathematics even if other African Americans are not participating in those fields. Each individual has to see the benefit of participating in these fields of study regardless of the participation of others in his/her cultural or racial group. African American students have to realize that when they choose to delve into those areas where other African Americans have not dared to venture, then they have the opportunity of making history in a way that is outstanding and remarkable. Here we can reflect on Ronnick's (2003) discussion of such classicists as

Richard Greener, William Sanders Scarborough and others who paved the way for foreign language studies. Richard Greener became the first African American to be elected to the American Philological Association, the primary society for classical studies in North America, and William Scarborough is known as the first African American classical scholar. In the above statement by Winbush, she urged African Americans, like these classicists, to dare to be different and participate when other African Americans are not doing the same. It could be an opportunity to make history in a way that is positive. Winbush's statement could encourage African Americans to study foreign languages and develop a positive attitude in our global society towards the study of foreign languages and cultures.

Although according to Winbush African American students should not allow a lack of participation on the part of other African Americans to determine whether or not they participate in foreign languages, the accounting student, Albert, added that she has been motivated to study Spanish by having African American teachers. She stated,

...because seeing that [my instructor] is an African American teaching us Spanish, and he's really good, I find that very motivating. And when I went to Belize, my teacher was actually from Ghana, and to see that he was so passionate, it motivated me as well. I would think that would definitely make a difference. (Winbush)

While Albert did not imply that if there were no African Americans in the field of foreign languages that she would not be interested in foreign languages, she is stating that having some African Americans as foreign language teachers gives her increased motivation to study and enjoy the Spanish language. She seems to be thrilled at the idea of being able to identify with her two Spanish teachers who are African and African American.

The civil engineering/mathematics student, Jack, chose to take a different perspective in his response by saying some students are not able to understand foreign teachers as clearly as

African Americans or North Americans in general. For this reason, some students will avoid taking a class that is taught by a foreign citizen. However, he stated that it does not matter to him since he has had all European American teachers anyway.

After discussing the benefits of having African Americans in foreign language departments, I wanted to close the interview by asking them to further interject any ideas or suggestions they may have for foreign language departments in general to attract more African-Americans as majors and minors.

### **Suggestions for Foreign Language Departments**

The informants did offer several suggestions in terms of fostering an interest among African Americans in Spanish. Students stress the need for more widespread advertisement by foreign language departments, particularly Southern's foreign language department. Brown (2002) mentioned a lack of advertisement for study abroad programs at predominantly African American universities, but according to the students in this study, more advertisement is necessary in foreign language departments in general. In addition to the much needed Diaspora at the elementary levels of Spanish classes, the students encouraged the foreign language department to post more advertisement which includes the benefits of knowing Spanish. Several of the students also expressed a desire to see more activities and events outside the classroom in order to provide an outlet from the stringent classroom instruction. They indicated that they want more 'fun' activities to spark their interest in Spanish. These students offer some ideas that really give foreign language educators much to ponder in terms of informing the student body of the benefits of their program. According to Washington,

[If] maybe [for example], you have history courses, you have the basic, I'm not sure of the numbers...history 100, history 101. [Then] you might have... I know black American history is history 311, ...just have more Spanish courses than elementary Spanish [for

example] intermediate Spanish, you might have a course for an example called Comparisons, the Comparisons of African Americans and Hispanics, like a Spanish history class. And once they see that title course, it would make them more interested and want to take it. (Washington)

Washington is pointing out that an attractive title to the course, which depicts the African American experience being compared to and closely related to the Hispanic experience, would encourage students to consider studying Spanish as majors and minors.

In addition to advertising and relevant course titles, another student, Turner, urged departments to demonstrate the benefits of majoring or minoring in a foreign language. He stated, "...look at the students who major in chemistry...there are so many signs [and advertisements]... ..if [only] you saw all the opportunities..." Turner is stressing the importance of catching the eye of students with signs, flyers and like forms of advertisement. He believes that foreign language departments must appeal to students by demonstrating the numerous opportunities in the field of foreign languages. This type of advertisement should be noticeable not only in foreign language departments, but throughout the campus community.

### **Spanish Professors/Instructors**

#### **Differences Between African American and European American Students Who Study Spanish**

All teachers who participated in this study have taught both African American and Caucasian European American students. As I observed the class sessions of these foreign language educators, it was evident that culture is not discussed on a daily basis. In fact, culture was not discussed in any of the class sessions I observed, although one of the professors in this study particularly stressed that she does discuss the African presence within Hispanic culture when time permits. According to Hadley (1993), a lack of time to cover cultural material due to a substantial amount of grammar which needs to be taught has proven to be one of the greatest

obstacles in discussing culture in the in-depth manner which it deserves to be discussed. As a result of this challenge to foreign language teachers, students specifically of African American descent are not exposed to the African presence in the Hispanic culture which means that there are no opportunities for them to witness the similarities in the Hispanic experience and their own experience in history as well as today.

Only one of the teachers mentioned that she noticed a greater interest among African American students in Spanish, while the other three indicated the opposite. The other three teachers have noticed that European American students tend to be more prepared for foreign language study, having previously studied a foreign language as well as having traveled abroad. The other instructor raised an interesting point by suggesting that the high school experience for students plays a major role in their success, or lack thereof, in college. He explained,

The difference I see sometimes is that the students here at Southern..., the education that they've had at the high schools is not always up to par, as to that of the LSU students. I notice that the LSU students sometimes test out of Spanish level 01, Spanish level 02, and they go into a 3rd semester...sometimes they go into a major and they do well. And I notice here, well, ...they don't come as well prepared, an issue that we need to deal with in high school, and how high schools are adequately preparing these students for their college experience. (Livingston)

Mr. Livingston seems rather concerned about this lack of preparation on the part of high schools in properly educating and preparing students for success at the college level. He is implying that foreign languages are not emphasized at the high school level, and when these students enter college, their interest in foreign languages is non-existent.

My discussion with Mr. Livingston leads me to interject my own experience with high school students from the Upward Bound-Math and Science college preparatory program. I have taught Spanish in the program for several years, and have worked at educating these African American students who attend various high schools in the Baton Rouge area on the importance



of foreign language study. As a result of frequent in-class discussions regarding foreign language study, it is evident that all the students are aware of the importance of foreign language study as it relates to increased job opportunities. However, the history of the Hispanic culture is a component to which they have not been exposed in their education. I learned this by including the Diaspora in my lessons, and the students had some really thought provoking responses.

I decided to begin this portion of the lesson by posing a self reflective series of questions to which they could respond in an in-class essay according to their own opinion and experience. The question was composed as follows: 'What is your definition of the 'black experience/black struggle'? On what factor(s) do you believe this notion is based? How does it affect your attitude towards individuals of other races or nationalities? What have you been taught by your parents/guardians, other family members, or others in authority about these individuals?' By assigning this series of questions I intended to gain an understanding of the students' perceptions of themselves as African Americans as well as how they feel that they relate to individuals of other nationalities.

I wanted to gain a sense of whether their attitudes towards other peoples were positive or negative and also help to prepare them to enhance critical thinking skills. As Mr. Livingston stated above, there should be a greater effort on the part of high school teachers in preparing students for foreign language study and college in. Of the approximate 35-40 Upward Bound-Math and Science students, I chose sixteen of the essays which were the most coherent and well written. According to the responses rendered by the students, the majority of them based the notion of the 'black struggle' on what we had formerly known as slavery, which today has led to struggles in areas of employment, education, home ownership and other areas in which African Americans are victims of discrimination. All the students responded that this struggle as they and

other African Americans have experienced in the past and still experience today have not caused them to develop a negative attitude towards European Americans and those of other races and cultures. They and their family members choose to be cordial towards individuals of other races, and some acknowledge that some of their closest friends are European American. However, in terms of the idea of the 'black struggle', they believe that only African Americans can identify with such a struggle, and this is where we can see the lack of education and understanding on the part of these students. One student expressed her idea of the 'black struggle' as a sense of lost identity on the part of blacks and having no knowledge of their history or from where they came before they were brutally thrown onto ships and transported. She believes that the central cause of violence among many African Americans is due to this lack of identity, and she acknowledged what Akbar (1998) refers to as the 'hidden curriculum' in which the history of blacks is either buried so deeply or omitted completely in school textbooks until African American students are not educated on their history. She went on to explain that she believes that African Americans are, to a certain degree, jealous of other peoples who know their history and their culture. This is, as stated earlier, one of the causes of the negative attitudes of African Americans towards the study of foreign languages and cultures as well as not being made aware that they are not the only cultural group who has had to face the struggle of the past and present. Furthermore, according to another student, there is a difference between the 'black experience' and the 'black struggle'. She stated that anyone, regardless of race or background, can live the 'black experience' as she defines the 'black experience' as those aspects which pertain to the black lifestyle. These aspects could include living in a black neighborhood, listening to black music, wearing black attire, and other such aspects. But, she stated that only African Americans can experience the 'black struggle' which is what blacks have to endure, meaning past slavery and present-day

discrimination, as a result of being black. As we have already discussed in this dissertation by Lipski's (1994) interpretation of the Diaspora, African Americans are not the only group of people who have endured and will continue to endure this type of struggle. As she expressed that African Americans are the only group that has had to struggle in this manner, it occurred to me that despite the fact that she in particular demonstrated an interest in learning the Spanish language, other African American students with this same mentality have developed negative attitudes towards the study of foreign languages.

Moreover, as an extension of the expressions given by these students on the 'black experience' and the 'black struggle', we then proceeded to discuss in detail the Diaspora as it was explained by Lipski (1994). On the final exam I included the following question: 'In an essay of ten (10) English sentences, explain your thoughts on our discussion regarding Africans in Spain and the transporting of slaves to Spanish-speaking countries. Were you aware of this reality before our discussion? Does this change your outlook on studying the Spanish language and Hispanic culture? Explain.' In response to the questions, all the students with the exception of one student expressed that they were not aware of the African presence within the Hispanic culture in light of the Diaspora. They were enlightened to learn this historic component of the Hispanic culture, and some expressed a desire to go forth and learn more about the Spanish language and culture stating that they now feel a sense of identifying with the culture. The one student who explained that she was aware of Africans being transported to Spanish-speaking countries stated that she did not know that there were as many as the reading by Lipski (1994) indicated. She was amazed to discover that there were almost as many as the slaves who were transported to North America.

These discussions with these African American high school students proved that Mr. Livingston's observation regarding the lack of preparation in high schools is correct. They are not adequately prepared at the high school level to understand the importance of foreign language study as well as the study of the cultures and history along with foreign languages. Mr. Livingston's observation further confirms the constant struggle that we foreign language educators are faced with at the college level as we work tirelessly to prepare our African American students for such a global society.

Expressing a similar idea to that of Livingston is Dr. Angelo who discussed his experience teaching mostly European American students at LSU in Baton Rouge and the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee while he is now teaching African American students at Southern University in Baton Rouge. As he pondered the differences between the two cultures of students, he explained,

The biggest difference that I've encountered is that the white students tend to have a stronger background in Spanish or in a foreign language. ...they come to the university with a stronger background which stems largely from...an emphasis at schools that they attended, but also many of them, compared to African American students, have traveled and have been more widely exposed to the culture and, ...because of that kind of exposure, they are a lot more eager and interested in becoming proficient, learning the language well enough to become proficient. (Angelo)

Dr. Angelo echoes the sentiment expressed by Davis (2000) in that eighty-four percent of the African American students in his study indicated that they had never experienced travel abroad as well as Brown (2002) who noticed a striking decline in participation among African American students in study abroad programs. Moreover, as indicated by the students via interviews in this study, the majority of them have never experienced travel abroad. However, those who have had the opportunity to travel abroad expressed the positive influence that their trips had on them in terms of being a factor in their decision to major or minor in Spanish.

The second professor, Dr. Delgado expressed similar ideas, but said that she had taught excellent students from both groups. She stated,

Actually, I... think they're very similar in attitudes towards foreign languages. ...when I first came to LSU...especially talking about students in required courses, they are reluctant, they don't think they need to learn a foreign language. I think this is...I would consider it an American cultural situation, not just African American. Now, I do think that in some instances, some African Americans, because of how they're educated, may resist it more. But I don't have definite proof of that, so I cannot tell you, but I have had brilliant students of both, whether they're white or African American. (Delgado)

She added that particularly at Southern, foreign languages are not regarded as an important field of study. Therefore, this sentiment filters down to the students. She explained,

They regard foreign languages as...some little two semesters that they have to take and that's it. And, they give it very little, I would say, importance when it comes to speaking it up...they talk a lot about global [awareness], but not about learning the language [in terms of]...more immersion in culture, etc. So, it comes from the top...but from the bottom, that's cultural. At HBCUs, especially ours, I can say, the only one I can speak or know of, are putting less and less in the last ten years, [and] I think that will change, they're putting less and less on what I would call liberal arts, ...language skills..., cultural studies, and more emphasis they put on sciences and engineering and...[fields] like that. (Delgado)

The points which Dr. Delgado mentions take us back to the negative implications indicated by African American universities in the past where administrators and university officials expressed that the study of foreign languages were useless and unnecessary for students. As previously stated, these lackluster attitudes African American students demonstrate towards the study of foreign languages and cultures did not happen overnight neither are they just beginning to occur. As far back in history as the nineteenth century, Davis (2000) explained that such African American educators as Booker T. Washington opposed the classical literary curriculum which focused on the study of the Latin and Greek languages. As a part of this classical literary movement, the African American university which is today known as Howard University as well as Morehouse College offered a minimum of three years of Latin and Greek

since they first opened their doors. Moreover, as Davis (2000) further explained, Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, founded in 1854 by the Presbyterian Church, as well as Wilberforce University in Ohio, founded in 1856 by the African Methodist Church, are believed to be the first two African American colleges to require the study of Latin and Greek and also offered French and German as elective courses. This particular program is known as the New England classical curriculum, concentrating on languages and mathematical sciences at both Lincoln University and Wilberforce University. These are the efforts and programs which Washington strongly fought against as he described the education of African Americans in such programs as "nonutilitarian", arguing that industrial/vocational education would better benefit these students (Washington, 1901).

Du Bois, on the other hand, promoted a more holistic approach to educating African American students as he expressed the need for them to receive an education in agricultural and mechanical arts as well as liberal arts in the fields of mathematics, sciences, literature, languages and philosophy (Dubois, 1903/1990). This conflict between Du Bois and Washington is known as the "Washington-Du Bois Controversy."

This negative sentiment expressed by Washington carried over to land-grant colleges which focused on vocational training for African American students in contrast to curricula which offered the study of foreign languages and classical programs. These colleges emphasized the areas of agriculture, industrial, mechanical and teacher-training institutes. According to Davis (2000), foreign languages were usually not offered at these land-grant colleges.

Taking the debate concerning the study of foreign languages even further was Charles W. Dabney, the University of Tennessee's president in the early 1900s and chief architect of black education (Watkins, 2001). According to Davis (2000), Dabney adamantly rejected the education

of African American students in foreign languages by proclaiming that he was adamantly displeased with the education of these students in the areas of Latin, Greek, and philosophy. Dabney believed that an education for African Americans in these fields was impractical and that they should pursue an education in vocational and industrial arts which would offer them a more practical grounding.

With all that being said, it is no surprise that Dr. Delgado would point out the lack of support for foreign language programs at Southern by the administration. It is ironic that the university mission statement promotes the preparation of globally aware students, but then puts little emphasis on foreign language programs. However, she said that she feels that this is likely to change in the near future as it becomes more apparent that the students will need to be knowledgeable of foreign languages and cultures in order to successfully compete in the job market.

### **Culture/Diaspora is Key**

While Spanish teachers at Southern await much needed financial support from the university administration as stated above, one area in which they acknowledged needs improvement in terms of classroom instruction is the area of culture. While these teachers have offered students basic insight into the target culture as far as such topics as common foods, holidays, and the like, they also find it necessary to go beyond the normal, everyday culture of the target language by demonstrating a cultural and historic connection that their students share with those individuals of the target culture. As a solution to all the aforementioned drawbacks in foreign languages regarding African American students, all teachers agreed that a renewed emphasis on the culture component, particularly the Diaspora, is what it is going to take in order to unlock the motivation of these students. Two of the teachers in the study, Dr. Delgado and Ms.

Lopez, are natives of Cuba and one other professor, Dr. Angelo, is of mixed African American and Nicaraguan heritage. They possess a wealth of knowledge on this subject in order to effectively incorporate it into their class discussions. Dr. Delgado has initiated including the Afro-Cuban entity into her class discussions via short films and photos. She is familiar with the aforementioned African Cuban poet Nancy Morejón, but did not mention that she has included Morejón's works in her class discussions as a means of further exposing her students to the Diaspora. The only African American teacher in the study, Mr. Livingston, explained that he was not aware of the Diaspora, but is eager to learn about it and include it in his class discussions. All the teachers in the study have also traveled extensively and would be proud to share the information and experience they have gathered over the years with their students to better enhance the foreign language experience for them.

Dr. Delgado, who is a native of Cuba, has already begun to discuss the presence of Afro-Cubans in her country, and sometimes shows pictures of some of these individuals to illustrate this reality during the class discussions. She believes that the inclusion of the Diaspora in our elementary level Spanish courses would enhance the foreign language experience for African American students. She explained,

Yes, the more exposure they have to real...music of all types, ...whether they're looking at [people] who are blacker than [they are] and they are speaking fluent Spanish and they're Cuban, or they're Puerto Rican, or they're Panamanian, ...and this is an important [factor]...they can say 'oh'. Because...the ethnocentricity of education in this country doesn't teach about other countries and so on, and that is something that needs to be changed. (Delgado)

Although the Diaspora is generally not included in the cultural discussions in elementary foreign language classrooms, Dr. Delgado has already realized the importance of this entity in the education of elementary foreign language students, and has embarked upon exposing her



students to this reality. Also, it is also important to note that her students are expressing a favorable reaction to the Diaspora, and that it needs to be included in all the classes at those levels.

Lipski's (1994) interpretation of Hispanic history and culture in relation to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade as previously discussed offers Spanish students and educators much insight into the way of life for early Hispanics. Moreover, it helps Spanish educators to enliven and enrich our cultural discussions in the classroom by considering various means to impart this valuable knowledge to our students. As we review the events of the Diaspora as they are interpreted by Lipski (1994), foreign language teachers would be able to base cultural classroom discussions on this rich history in helping African American students connect the target culture with their own culture and develop more positive attitudes towards studying the language and culture. African American students today who are enrolled in elementary level Spanish classes would be interested to know that black Africans who were transported as slaves to various Spanish speaking countries were thought to be "nothing more than a virtually endless supply of cheap and durable labor" (p. 5) according to Lipski (1994). This seems to be the mentality which persists among African Americans today, which contributes to the somewhat negative attitudes that they have developed towards foreign languages and cultures. Students have expressed that they are not able to relate to other cultures due mainly to the slave past which they will never forget. However, they will learn that Hispanics and other cultural groups share in this experience as well. As Lipski (1994) continued to reflect on this historical movement of the African and Hispanic culture, he recalled the Portuguese and Spaniards who were no strangers to the slave industry from the time since the Moorish occupation and did not hesitate to welcome the African group of captives. Lipski (1994) further explained, "European explorers in Africa found, in

addition to elaborate kingdoms, other groups of Africans who lacked the means of resisting foreign intrusions, and who lived in conditions which the Europeans could interpret as primitive” (p. 5). According to Rawley (1981), “Countering the view of the Manicongo and the Gold Coast chieftans as powerful personages, came the notion of the African as savage, fit only for forced labor” (p. 13). At this time, racist views of Europeans towards black Africans took precedence over the aforementioned notion. In Europe as well as the Americas, blacks were viewed as “different” and “inferior”. The mindset of being viewed as "different" and "inferior" continues to plague African American students today, possibly being the main cause for which they nix studying foreign languages and cultures. While studying a foreign language would better prepare these students to compete in the job market of our global society, they have developed negative attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures under the notion that no other cultural group has experienced the struggle and the slave past which is closely associated with being African American. As foreign language educators plan to include this historic component into their cultural discussions at the elementary levels, they will dispel the misconceptions of slavery as being only associated with African Americans and help them to develop positive attitudes towards foreign languages and cultures.

African slaves were supplied to the Americas until the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, while Curtin (1969) acknowledged Brazil as the largest importer of slaves during this time, Cuba is known to be the second largest importer of slaves, with nearly thirty percent of the slave population, and Puerto Rico imported over 55,000 slaves comprising nearly three percent of the total. As teachers discuss this portion of the Diaspora with their students, it would enrich the discussion if they would mention the study abroad programs, particularly at Southern, that allow students to travel to Cuba and Puerto Rico. These students will be more likely to feel a

sense of close identity with the cultures of those countries and possibly be more interested in traveling and immersing themselves into the Hispanic culture.

Moreover, as Lipski (1994) reviewed the transporting of slaves, he also pointed out the total number of slaves taken to North and South America to be between 3.5 million and 2.5 million. Especially at this point we are able to demonstrate the connection between the African American and Hispanic cultures. African American students would be able to pinpoint their own heritage as being closely related to that of the Hispanic heritage as they are exposed to these statistics regarding slaves being transported to both North and South America. In addition, there was the transfer of slaves and nominally free blacks from one Caribbean territory to another, making it impossible to distinguish between slaves born in the Americas and those born in Africa. While African Americans view individuals of Hispanic background as abstract and not at all related to their African American history and background, this fact helps them to understand that some of their own ancestors could be individuals of the Hispanic heritage who endured the same hardships in history. Teachers would need to stress this point during a cultural discussion on the Diaspora in order to clarify all the misconceptions regarding the mentality of the students who have a limited perspective on not only their own culture, but other cultures as well.

All the professors in the study strongly agreed that students should be exposed to the historic reality of the Diaspora as discussed above at the beginning levels of Spanish as opposed to having them wait until the more advanced levels of the curriculum to be introduced to this essential component of Hispanic culture. Many of these students never proceed to the more advanced levels of foreign language courses, and therefore, are never given an opportunity to learn this aspect of Hispanic history. While the two professors and one of the instructors are knowledgeable about the Diaspora and are willing to begin the process of including this historic

factor into their cultural discussions in class, the one instructor who is not familiar with the Diaspora sees it as advantageous in attracting our African American students as well. Hadley (1993) acknowledged that one of the greatest challenges for language teachers in education is the lack of knowledge and experience that some possess regarding the culture of the target language. Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984) also recognize this problem of language teachers not being trained and prepared in the teaching of culture. As a result of this reality, thorough strategies in the teaching of culture are not integrated into class sessions at the elementary level. Particularly regarding the Diaspora, African American students would have an opportunity to pinpoint the relevance of the Diaspora to their own cultural experience, thereby further arousing their interest in not only the culture, but the language as well. Davis and Markham (1991) confirmed that according to their study which included all African American students that fifty-four percent of the participants in the study responded that they would like to see a greater emphasis on culture in their foreign language classes. Unfortunately, the lack of knowledge as expressed by this teacher as well as numerous others who teach mostly African American students has proven to be one of the greatest hindrances in terms of engaging students in the foreign language experience and assisting them in the realization that this experience is not just a rote, pointless requirement in their education that is irrelevant to their lives and their future. Although this teacher has no knowledge of the Diaspora or the history of Hispanics in this aspect, he does strongly believe that it needs to be learned by all foreign language educators and covered in the elementary level classes. He explained,

I would be willing to learn, yes, that's something that, like you said, when you're studying Spanish, you're really not [familiar] unless you're in that course, in that particular course. I think it would be very good. ...the history, and it's something that they can identify with... and...that identification would, of course, lead to wanting to learn more about that...culture and wanting to learn more about the language. That could very well

increase someone's interest in the language, so I think that is very, very important, that would be really helpful. It's something new and something novel and I think that, uh, any, all of those aspects need to be introduced and especially at a black college. It definitely needs to be introduced, definitely so, [yes]. (Livingston)

Although Livingston was not at all familiar with the Diaspora, it was encouraging to know that he was eager to learn it and include it in his class discussions. He seemed enlightened as well as excited at the thought of sharing this reality with his students. He now looks forward to helping them to see a bit of themselves in the target culture and fostering a renewed interest in the Spanish language and culture.

### **Cross Case Analysis**

The previous sections thoroughly examine the cases of Spanish majors and minors, non-majors, and Spanish instructors and professors in terms of students' attitudes, whether positive or negative, and the role of foreign language educators in imparting knowledge and the importance of foreign language study to African American students. The intent behind the investigation of the cases between the students was to gain a clearer understanding of what motivated the current Spanish majors and minors to make their decision to study a foreign language and what needs to be done by foreign language departments and educators to attract more African American students to do the same. I am now able to cross the cases of the Spanish majors/minors and the non-majors with such factors as travel/study abroad experience, their families' views regarding individuals of foreign backgrounds and cultures and future plans in Spanish. These topics were discussed in detail with the majors/minors and non-majors alike in determining what actually contributed to the attitudes which have been developed. I am able to further cross the cases of the non-majors and the Spanish instructors and professors regarding the inclusion of the Diaspora at the elementary levels of Spanish for the purpose of helping these African American students to

connect their own heritage with that of the target culture.

As I cross the cases in these areas, I intend to further compare and contrast the students' cases along with that of the teachers and arrive closer to the solution of developing more positive attitudes among African American students towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. I will begin with the area of travel/study abroad as expressed by the students as well as researchers in the field of education and foreign languages in order to notice the trends between the student cases.

### **Travel/Study Abroad Experience for Majors/Minors and Non-majors**

As mentioned several times previously, Brown (2002) expressed the declined participation among African American students in study abroad programs. Spanish professor Dr. Angelo also noticed the tendency among African American students to study Spanish with a lackluster approach due to the fact that they have not traveled as extensively as their European American counterparts or gained as much exposure to foreign peoples and cultures. Brown stated such causes for this lack of participation as financial challenges, fear of foreign travel and limited advertisement of study abroad programs at predominantly African American universities have greatly contributed to this unfortunate reality concerning these students. The reason I posed this question and discussion to the students in the cases was to determine a correlation of some sorts between travel abroad experience and the likelihood of them studying a foreign language. I wanted to test the validity of the assumption made by numerous foreign language educators at Southern as well as other predominantly African American institutions that travel abroad and immersion into foreign cultures promote positive attitudes among African American students towards the study of foreign languages and cultures.

The previous interviews indicate that there is some truth to this assumption. We see that while some of the majors/minors as well as the non-majors have experienced travel abroad, the majors/minors have traveled more extensively and have been immersed into foreign cultures. Two of the majors, Jacobs and Johnson, have actually lived in various foreign countries with their military families, and this has contributed in a positive manner to their decision to minor in Spanish. Even aside from these two students who have lived in various countries around the world, other majors and minors such as Lomax and Maximus, have participated in the study abroad program at Southern and expressed that the experience only enhanced their already positive attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. In fact, Lomax, who traveled with a group of students at Southern to Orizaba, Mexico, explained that she would like to also travel to Puerto Rico. Maximus, who traveled via Southern's program to Puerto Rico, expressed an interest in actually living in Puerto Rico, mentioning that he found the African influence in the country to be intriguing. As he recalled his experience in San Juan, Puerto Rico, he stated with much enthusiasm,

When I went to Puerto Rico...as much as you see on TV, you don't see many white people. And when I got off the plane, I was getting a ride to...the school...going to school, and I [said] 'I see a black person. Oh, I see another one! Oh he's talking to me!' (laughter) And it was like, wow!,...you wouldn't think...there [are] more colored people out there, it's just not really shown and...like Brazil, some people are having problems because, in the media, they're not portraying colored people. All you see is...not...black [people], you know. I mean it was the craziest thing, you know, just to know that there [are] people like you out there, ...we're everywhere you know? (Maximus)

As Maximus had previously stated in our discussion, he was pleasantly surprised to see the African presence in the Puerto Rican community. He also points out here that the media chooses to omit black people from their portrayal of life in various parts of the world, particularly Spanish-speaking countries such as Puerto Rico. This statement given by Maximus helps us to

better understand the importance of travel abroad and exposure to foreign cultures. People, especially African Americans, should not limit their views of foreign people and cultures on what the media chooses to portray. As a result of this type of portrayal, African Americans have developed negative attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures, believing that they are the only cultural group who has experienced a heritage which is centered around slavery and degradation. However, if more African Americans would travel and gain the type of exposure to foreign cultures that Maximus and a few others have taken the opportunity to experience, then they would discover more similarities between their own culture and those of many foreign groups.

Unfortunately, many African Americans have become convinced that travel abroad is either dangerous or is an activity or pastime in which only European Americans indulge. The case of the non-majors in this study indicates, to a certain degree, that this notion of hesitance among African Americans regarding travel abroad is a pressing reality. While non-majors such as Albert, Winbush and Payne have traveled abroad and look forward to spending more time abroad in the future, the vast majority of the students in this case have either spent a very brief time in a foreign country and would like to travel more or were too young at the time to recall the experience, or have never traveled abroad at all and would like to do so, or have never traveled abroad and have no intentions of doing so. Of all the non-majors in the case, Albert was the most impressed with the study abroad trip she had the opportunity to take with Southern's study abroad program to Belize. She stated that she would also like to participate in Southern's study abroad program to Orizaba, Mexico and is even considering pursuing a minor in Spanish along with her major in accounting.



While Albert expressed her pleasure with Southern's study abroad program and the positive experience she had in Belize, O'Hara and Carrington, on the other hand, demonstrated more negative attitudes regarding travel abroad. O'Hara stated that she spent a day in a small Mexican town which she is not able to recall, and is not particularly looking forward to any future travel abroad. Similarly, Carrington, who has never traveled abroad, expressed her adamant displeasure with the mere idea of traveling abroad. While O'Hara really would not state a cause for her hesitant attitude regarding study abroad, Carrington did mention the reputation as encouraged by the media of foreign countries which depict the downside of the experience, meaning, inability to return to the United States. She has developed the fearful attitude which is oftentimes mentioned by Brown (2002) as a hindrance by African American students in participation in study abroad programs.

According to the views expressed above, travel/study abroad should be encouraged especially among African American students in order to eliminate any misconceptions which have been accepted via the media and the reputation of life in foreign countries. Foreign language educators can conclude in this cross case examination that travel/study abroad contributes greatly in helping African American students develop positive attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures, thereby, encouraging more of these students to major or minor in foreign languages in order to become global citizens.

### **Views of Families of Majors/Minors and Non-majors Regarding Individuals of Foreign Languages and Cultures**

Although students such as O'Hara and Carrington are not encouraged to travel abroad or continue to study a foreign language, they do state that they have always been taught by family members to embrace and accept individuals of other cultures. In fact, all students in both cases

have been encouraged to do likewise. However, one of the Spanish majors indicated that her mother was a bit skeptical in the beginning when she decided to major in Spanish. This student, Parks, recalled that her mother did not believe she would have a promising future in the field of foreign languages, but now understands the need for bilingual individuals in the job market.

Other Spanish minors such as Fields expressed that her family was ecstatic once she revealed that she was becoming bilingual. Lewis, also a Spanish major, was encouraged to major in Spanish by her family members, many of whom have studied foreign languages as well. As mentioned in the previous analysis of such students as Parks, Fields and Lewis, their families have paid close attention to the statistics which indicate that, according to CNN (2009), Hispanics comprise twenty-five percent of the United States' population, making them the largest minority group in the country, and have encouraged these students to become bilingual in preparation for our global society.

Even students such as O'Hara and Carrington who have responded that they would never major or minor in a foreign language stated that their families have always taught the importance of acceptance of individuals of other cultures and backgrounds. They quickly wanted to dispel any assumptions that the attitudes they have developed regarding foreign languages and foreign travel were not influenced by the views of their families. According to their statements, there have never been any prejudices or negative conceptions regarding individuals of foreign backgrounds. O'Hara admitted that she does not usually associate with people of other races or cultures simply because she does not come in contact with them. She attended a predominantly African American high school and is now attending Southern, which is also predominantly African American. Carrington, ironically, also mentioned the necessity to know a foreign language and culture in this day and age. She spoke hypothetically about the possibility

of finding herself in a situation which would require her to be rescued by a foreign person or even being required, for some reason, to live in foreign country. She is aware of the uncertainty of the future and admonishes everyone to be prepared to live closely among foreign citizens.

### **Future Plans of Spanish Majors/Minors and Non-majors in Spanish**

As Carrington spoke of an uncertain future in which she explained that we never know when we may need to depend on someone who does not speak our language or is not familiar with our culture, all students in the cases anticipate a more promising future as a result of majoring or minoring in Spanish, or even as a result of just taking the required courses. While the majors and minors look forward to utilizing their skills in the Spanish language and culture in such areas as law, broadcasting, translation and numerous others, the non-majors are also expecting to be prepared, to a certain extent, to operate in our global society. Colby, who is a nursing and psychology major, expressed plans to travel to Peru and provide assistance to the less fortunate. Washington, like Colby, has never traveled abroad, and stated that he would like to visit France and Spain. He would like to enhance his Spanish-speaking skills in Spain and become fluent in the language as well as expose himself to the culture.

As such non-majors as Washington and Colby plan to make Spanish and travel abroad a part of their future, Jack and Gilbert, who are also non-majors, intend to travel abroad as well. However, Jack expressed an interest in England while Gilbert stated that she has always been fascinated with New Zealand. Gilbert traveled to Mexico as a child, but has no recollection of the experience because she was so young. Turner, who also responded in the same manner as Gilbert regarding travel to Mexico, stated that he would like to travel to Spain in order to continue to practice speaking the Spanish language. However, he does not intend to continue to study Spanish after satisfying his foreign language requirement.

It appears that even the non-majors students acknowledge the importance of foreign language study, however, some of them have discarded the idea of majoring or minoring in the language. While Albert, Payne, Winbush, Washington and Gilbert are pondering the idea of minoring in Spanish, they still have made no definite plans to do so, but would like to continue to practice the language mainly by traveling abroad.

### **The Diaspora Attracting More African American Students in the Cases of Non-majors and Spanish Educators**

It is likely that if the students in these cases who have never traveled abroad are afforded the opportunity to do so, they will gain a better appreciation for foreign languages and cultures and develop more positive attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. As the Spanish minor Maximus stated earlier, his eyes were opened to the African presence in other countries such as Puerto Rico, proving media depictions to be untrue as they continue to omit this reality. Much of the fear experienced by African-Americans such as O'Hara and Carrington would be eliminated if they would allow themselves to be immersed in a foreign culture. But in the meantime, we foreign language educators have to start where we are as far as working to address these misconceptions. Where we are is the classroom, and, according to the non-major students and the Spanish teachers interviewed, we can start by including the Diaspora in our cultural discussions at the elementary levels of our foreign language classes.

As a result of Livingston's comments as well as the other Spanish teachers and students, all participants seem to share an interest in the Diaspora in terms of imparting this knowledge to the students at Southern University. The discussions revealed that some of the students and even one teacher (Livingston), were not aware of the Diaspora. Now that they have been exposed to it on a basic level, they are eager to further increase their knowledge of this historical entity for

both the African American and Hispanic cultures. Despite Livingston's lack of knowledge on the Diaspora, the other three teachers in the study are natives of the Caribbean region where the Diaspora is prevalent and can bring their own personal experience on the subject.

An overwhelming majority of the teachers and students are predicting a positive impact on the field of foreign languages among African American students with only one student and one teacher who expressed they would give it, more or less, a 50/50 chance of attracting more majors and minors in foreign languages. Dr. Angelo believes that whether or not the students decide to major/minor in Spanish as a result of the Diaspora being covered, they will definitely leave the course more inspired to open-minded to foreign languages and cultures. At any rate, all students and teachers who participated would like to see the Diaspora included in cultural classroom discussions at the elementary levels of foreign languages. Another factor which students and teachers agreed on was the lack of representation and administrative support rendered to the Southern University foreign language department. Dr. Delgado so adamantly stated,

They regard foreign languages as...some little two semesters that they have to take and that's it. And, they give it very little, I would say, importance when it comes to speaking it up...they talk a lot about global [awareness], but not about learning the language [in terms of]...more immersion in culture, etc. So, it comes from the top...but from the bottom, that's cultural. At HBCUs, especially ours, I can say, the only one I can speak or know of, are putting less and less in the last ten years, [and] I think that will change, they're putting less and less on what I would call liberal arts, ...language skills..., cultural studies, and more emphasis they put on sciences and engineering and...[fields] like that. (Delgado)

The students shared similar sentiments regarding emphasis placed on Southern's foreign language department in suggesting that the department devote more time to advertisement of the benefits of studying a foreign language. Turner stressed the need to see more signs and flyers throughout the campus which highlight the advantages to studying a foreign language.

The non-major students and the Spanish teachers agree that the Diaspora should be included in elementary level classes as an attempt to attract more African American students to major or minor in foreign languages. The Diaspora links the Hispanic heritage to the African heritage, showing a close connection between the two cultures. African Americans will then be able to see that they are not the only group who has had to endure slavery and even present-day discrimination at the hands of other races. Also, while learning about the target culture, African American students will likely gain a better understanding of their own culture for that matter.

### **Summary**

The preceding analysis focused on the views of Spanish majors and minors along with non-majors at Southern University-Baton Rouge regarding their views on foreign language study and factors which motivate African American students to develop positive attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. The majority of the students in both cases claimed Louisiana as their home state. Two of the Spanish minors stated that Texas was their home state and one Spanish minor responded that she was from Mississippi. Although two of the Spanish minors now acknowledge that their roots are mainly in Louisiana, they grew up in military families which allowed them to travel extensively and live in other regions of the United States and the world. All of the non-major students with the exception of only two students explained that they were from Louisiana. One of these students who now resides in Louisiana explained that she spent her childhood in Texas. The remaining two non-major students were from Texas and Indiana.

In addition to the Spanish majors and minors and the non-majors, the Spanish professors and instructors at Southern who possessed a wealth of experience in teaching Spanish to both African American students and European American students. They expressed their views on

students' attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures along with the support, or lack thereof, that the foreign language department at Southern receives from the administration in educating the students in this area. These foreign language educators also discussed the importance of the cultural component and exposure to the culture of the target language in foreign language study as well as comparisons in the attitudes of African American students and European American students in these aspects. During the discussions, the topics included the Diaspora, travel/study abroad experience, the views of family members regarding individuals of foreign backgrounds and students' future plans to utilize their knowledge of the Spanish language. One of the teachers, Dr. Delgado, also interjected her concern regarding the lack of support provided by the administration at Southern in aiding the foreign language department which seeks to educate these African American students with the mission of producing globally aware citizens.

During the interviews, the students and teachers alike strongly emphasized the importance of foreign language studies in their commentaries. However, if we ponder the reasons given for studying a foreign language among majors/minors and non-majors, the majors/minors have decided to study a foreign language for economic and financial benefits in their chosen careers. Since the non-majors are not attracted to foreign language study for that purpose, this study was conducted under the notion that the Diaspora would appeal to these students in terms of encouraging them to study a foreign language and culture and develop positive attitudes in this regard. The Diaspora as interpreted by Lipski (1994) would allow students to follow the events and experiences of African slaves in Spain who were transported to other Spanish-speaking countries during the time some of these slaves were also transported to North America. This historic component of the Hispanic culture would help African-American

students to understand the connection they share with those of the Hispanic culture in terms of a slave driven past which has been followed by a present-day display of discriminatory acts against those of both cultural groups.

Of the ten non-majors who were questioned regarding the Diaspora, eight of them definitely believe that more African American students will be compelled to study a foreign language if the Diaspora were to be included in the cultural discussions at the elementary levels. While the remaining two non-majors were not totally convinced that the Diaspora would have a major impact on African American students, they did express it is worth the effort to include the Diaspora in cultural discussions. Turner explained that while he believes others would be positively influenced by the Diaspora to major or minor in a foreign language, it would not have the same impact on him personally. However, Albert stated that she has witnessed students expressing that they cannot relate to a foreign language or culture and that the Diaspora would be the means by which we could make the target language and culture more relevant to them. She explained, "Instead of focusing on 'we're so different from them'..., it'll make you want to see what we do have in common to kind of compromise..., and work together." (Albert) Albert is reiterating the purpose of this dissertation by stating that we should focus more on similarities rather than differences in our cultural discussions in foreign languages. It is obvious now that African American students would like to see more of their experience and heritage in any foreign culture that they study.

While the majority of students believe that the Diaspora would spark the interest of African American students in foreign languages, likewise, the foreign language teachers are just as eager to begin teaching it. In fact, Dr. Delgado has already begun, little by little, to include some aspects of the Diaspora in her class discussions at the first level of Spanish at Southern



University. The other teachers in the study are in agreement with Dr. Delgado. Mr. Livingston, who currently does not possess knowledge of the Diaspora, is willing to learn this essential factor of Hispanic history in order to engage his students in the language and culture.

As we ponder the urgency to include the Diaspora in our classroom discussions at the elementary levels of our foreign language classes, there are other important factors which also contribute to the development of positive attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures among African American students. One of these factors which proved to be among the most pertinent was that of travel/study abroad experience. A noticeable decline in the participation of African American students in study abroad programs has been brought to the forefront by such researchers as Brown (2002) and Davis and Markham (1991), and this decline could be a direct correlation to the somewhat negative attitudes we see among these students. As Brown (2002) attempts to ponder reasons for this decline, he points out that a lack of finances on the part of these students, a lack of advertising on the part of those who conduct these programs and a fear of foreign travel among these students as major contributors to such a decline. Davis and Markham (1991) who conducted a study on the attitudes of African American students at fifty-three predominantly African American students where 1200 copies of a questionnaire were distributed. The results of this study showed that 632 or eighty-four percent of these students responded that they had never traveled to a country where the target language was spoken and sixty-eight percent has spent one week or less in a country where the target language was spoken. For these reasons, foreign language educators have concluded that a lack of foreign travel and exposure to foreign cultures has greatly contributed to the lackluster attitudes demonstrated by African American students.

The Spanish majors and minors in this dissertation who had traveled or studied abroad strongly attested to the fact that this type of experience had a positive impact on their attitudes regarding the study of foreign languages and cultures. Jacobs and Johnson, who had traveled the world with their military families, entered the university with attitudes that were already positive in this aspect due to their immersion into various cultures. Other students such as Lomax and Maximus who had traveled with Southern's programs to Mexico and Puerto Rico stated that their attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures became much more positive as a result of their participation in Southern's study abroad program. Lomax in particular stated that she made a decision to major in Spanish after traveling to Mexico and seeing all the aspects of the Mexican culture for herself. The other Spanish majors and minors who had not traveled abroad responded that they anticipate doing so in the near future in order to enhance their knowledge of the Spanish language and culture.

While travel abroad proved to be an essential factor in the positive attitudes of the Spanish majors and minors, about half of the non-majors has traveled abroad but not as extensively as the majors and minors who had traveled abroad. Winbush, Payne and O'Hara had traveled to Mexico but only spent a day in the town, which they could mostly not recall. Gilbert and Turner had also traveled to Mexico at a very early age, and for that reason, they were not able to recall the experience. Albert, who had traveled with Southern's program to Belize, was extremely happy about the opportunity to travel abroad. She as well as Winbush and Payne responded that they would like to travel to more Spanish-speaking countries in the future. Colby, who had never traveled abroad, expressed an interest in traveling to Peru for the purpose of providing assistance to the less fortunate citizens there. Carrington, another student who had never traveled abroad, strongly stated that she has no intentions of traveling abroad. Media

coverage has led her to believe that it would not be safe for her to do so. However, the Spanish minor, Maximus, directly addressed the issue of media coverage in his interview by stating that the media omits the African presence in their depiction of life in many foreign countries. When he traveled to Puerto Rico, he was amazed and intrigued by the African presence in the country of which he was never aware. Maximus made no comments regarding safety in Puerto Rico, however he indirectly addressed the concerns of Carrington and others who would agree with her by stating that the media tends to portray images of foreign countries that are either partially real or not real at all. It would behoove foreign language educators to counter images shown by the media which instill fear of foreign travel. The comments offered by Maximus regarding his experience in Puerto Rico should encourage foreign language teachers to include cultural discussions and illustrations which dispel the limited representation of foreign countries by the media. She and O'Hara expressed a fear regarding travel abroad. This fear which is common among African Americans was addressed by Brown (2002) who noticed a substantial decline among these students in study abroad programs.

While students prove that they are influenced by travel abroad experience and media coverage in terms of attitudes that they develop regarding the study of foreign languages and cultures whether these attitudes be positive or negative, they are also influenced by those close to them such as family members and their views of individuals of foreign languages and cultures. All students in both cases, majors/minors as well as non-majors, responded that they have always received positive views from family members which have encouraged them to embrace and accept individuals of different cultures and backgrounds for who they are. Maximus, a Spanish minor, indicated that he grew up in a neighborhood in Dallas which was the home of families of various cultures, and although there was sometimes, tension among the cultures, he never

allowed this to affect his positive attitude towards those of other cultures. Likewise, Jack, a non-major, was urged by family members to be accepting to those of other cultures but to always be cautious due to the fact that sometimes they are not accepting of other cultures. The Spanish major, Parks, received somewhat negative advice from her mother that was not in reference to individuals of foreign cultures. Rather, her advice pertained to foreign language study, as she opposed Parks's idea to major in foreign languages. Parks's mother simply did not see the benefit in her daughter pursuing a field of study that, according to her own opinion, did not offer a promising future. However, after Parks decided not to take her advice, she soon realized the need for bilingual employees in the job market and is now happy that her daughter did not take her advice.

In relation to the job market, it is also interesting to point out the desire of the majors and minors as well as the non-majors who expressed their anticipation in utilizing their knowledge, whether limited or on a more advanced level, of the Spanish language on their various paths in life. Davis and Markham (1991) discovered in the study that they conducted among African American students at various predominantly African American universities that eighty percent of over 600 of the students responded that they were motivated to study a foreign language because it was relevant to their career goals. Likewise, while the majors and minors look forward to coupling their knowledge of Spanish with other such fields as broadcasting, law, engineering, education, biology and numerous others, the non-majors also expect to be presented with opportunities to do the same in such areas as computer science, sociology, mathematics, accounting and nursing. They are aware of the Hispanic presence in the United States, which is now comprised with twenty-five percent of Hispanic citizens, making them the largest minority group in the country according to CNN (2009). Whether or not they choose to study Spanish as a

major or minor field, they all responded that it is extremely important to be bilingual in today's global society.

## CHAPTER 5-SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

As I close this dissertation by first reflecting on what prompted me to conduct this study, I must say that I am aware of the challenge that there is much more work to be done in the field of foreign languages in terms of striving to encourage more positive attitudes among African American students towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. The interviews with the students directly addressed the research questions by affirming that the integration of shared cultural knowledge between diasporic African and Hispanic peoples within elementary level Spanish courses will encourage students to persist beyond these levels of foreign language study. The content of the cultural knowledge related to the teaching and learning of Spanish which demonstrates a close connection between the culture and history of the target language and the culture and history of African Americans will help students develop a positive attitude towards the study of foreign languages and cultures, and thereby, positively influence their decision to continue their study of foreign languages. However, more work should be done in the following areas: African American students need to be exposed at the middle school and high school levels to the importance of foreign languages and cultures in order to begin to develop positive attitudes at the college level; culture, including the Diaspora, needs to be highlighted at elementary levels of foreign language courses as opposed to advanced levels; study abroad needs to be emphasized in order to expose the students to the culture and peoples of the target language in addition to studying the language students need to be informed of the financial advantages that they will enjoy in the job market as bilingual employees; the rapid increase in the Hispanic population in the United States demands knowledge of the Spanish language and culture in order to live harmoniously in the country.

As several students, Gilbert, Winbush, Carrington, Bates, Johnson and others in these cases for both the majors/minors as well as non-majors commented, they began their study of foreign languages at the high school and middle school levels. As previously stated by the Spanish instructor, Livingston, it is imperative that foreign language teachers at these levels consider the importance of appealing to students regarding not only the necessity of learning a foreign language for the purpose of being able to compete in the job market, but also include the Diaspora in cultural classroom discussions. Students will then enter college with an awareness of the language and possibly the history and culture of the language in regard to understanding that cultures are not totally isolated from one another, but are connected in different ways. As we noticed in previous sections of this dissertation, African Americans and Hispanics share a rich heritage particularly in terms of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade which is not discussed in elementary level foreign language classes. Predominantly African American universities are aware of the importance of producing students who will be capable of living and working in a global society such as the United States as well as producing students who will possess a wealth of knowledge regarding the history and culture of foreign languages. Southern University-Baton Rouge has composed the following mission statement which indicates the need to develop such students. Their mission states,

The mission of Southern University and A&M College, an Historically Black, 1800 land grant institution, is to provide opportunities for a diverse student population to achieve a high quality, global educational experience, to engage in scholarly research, and creative activities, and to give meaningful public service to the community, the state, the nation, and the world so that Southern University graduates are competent, informed, and productive citizens. (Southern University-Baton Rouge Mission Statement)

In support of this mission statement, Southern's foreign language department has formed its own mission statement which echoes this sentiment. This mission states,

The Department of Foreign Languages at Southern University-Baton Rouge is committed to excellence in instruction and to the promotion of global awareness and the appreciation of other cultures and peoples. (Southern University-Baton Rouge Foreign Language Department Mission Statement)

Despite such eloquently formed mission statements, the university and the department have not followed through by achieving this mission, graduating only an average of five of its students in foreign languages each school year. Spanish professor, Dr. Delgado, expressed her concern in this study of an administration that acknowledges the need to produce students who are globally aware, however, no support is given to the foreign language department in this endeavor. Foreign language departments at predominantly African American universities have consistently been faced with this challenge for a number of years now. According to Lassiter (2003), only slightly more than three percent of foreign language graduates in the United States were African Americans in the 1990's although the majority of these students indicate awareness of the practical advantages of learning foreign languages. Currently, there is no solution in sight for such an anemic level of participation among these students if we continue to implement the same practices which have been implemented for far too long. In our quest to determine an overdue solution to this problem, foreign language educators must consider the statement contributed in this study by one of the non-majors. This student, Albert, stated, "Instead of focusing on 'we're so different from them' and this and that, ...you want to see what we do have in common to kind of compromise..., and work together." Albert admitted during our discussion that she has witnessed students at Southern exclaiming that they do not see how they can relate to a foreign language and culture. Therefore, they are not interested in studying foreign languages and cultures and have developed a somewhat negative attitude towards doing so.



Washington, another non-major participant in the study, added,

...I figure if they...let us African Americans know that we share a common history..., common things we had to go through with them, I think it would be...what's the word, it would be a plus and you know, they would want to study it more." (Washington)

Washington is not alone in his opinion regarding what should be done to arouse the interest of African American students in the study of foreign languages and cultures. Davis and Markham (1991) conducted a study at fifty-three predominantly African American universities which allowed the foreign language students to respond via questionnaire in order to determine their attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. Forty percent (316 of the approximately 770 students) indicated that their foreign language courses would be more relevant to them if African themes were emphasized in first- and second-year courses.

Washington and Albert confirm the need for foreign language educators to consider taking a different route in terms of appealing to African American students who would greatly benefit by learning a foreign language. While the majors and minors in this study have taken action in making preparations to succeed in the global, multi-cultural society in which we now live in the United States which now has a population of at least twenty-five percent of Hispanics which is the largest minority group in the country according to CNN (2009), the non-majors ironically acknowledge that experience in foreign languages is important but they still choose not to major or minor in them. This correlation between awareness of the importance of foreign language study and making the choice not to major or minor in foreign languages causes foreign language educators to exercise other options in persuading these students to study foreign languages and cultures. What could these other options be?

If we ponder the above research results and the comments offered by the students in this study, we can conclude that the connection between the histories of African Americans and

Hispanics should be highlighted in our cultural discussions in the foreign language classes at the elementary levels. In this discussion we should also focus on present day connections between the two cultural groups which would imply discriminatory acts which have been inflicted upon these two groups by other groups. For example, from European immigration in the late nineteenth century to the current expansion of immigration from Latin/South American countries today, US citizens have expressed xenophobic anxieties about the changing racial and cultural demographics of their perceived territory (Madsen, 1998). Hispanics have been faced with numerous English only propositions and calls for the tightening of borders between Mexico and the US that have sprung up across the nation at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For example, currently in Arizona Senate Bill 1070, which legalizes racial profiling, has just been passed. According to Arizona lawmakers, the bill is intended to eliminate illegal immigration into the country. As explained in *Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center (2010)*,

The police would be authorized to arrest immigrants unable to show documents allowing them to be in the country and the legislation would leave drivers open to sanctions...for knowingly transporting an illegal immigrant, even a relative. It expressly forbids cities from adopting "sanctuary" policies that restrict the police and public workers from immigration enforcement... ("Arizona Legalizes Racial Profiling")

This law is indicative of the typical discrimination committed against Hispanic immigrants which has led to the negative attitudes that have been developed by United States citizens towards individuals of foreign languages and cultures. While African American students have further confirmed these attitudes by neglecting to study foreign languages and cultures, Hispanic citizens, particularly Mexican Americans, have maintained more positive attitudes towards the English language and North American culture. Perhaps the reason may be because these Mexicans choose to live in the United States. Mejías, Anderson-Mejías and Carlson (2003)

conducted a comparative study between the years 1982 and 2000 and discovered that Mexican American students who attend the University of Texas Pan American in the Lower Rio Grande Valley seemed to develop a stronger sense of assimilation within the North American culture as the years passed. In 1982 slightly over seventy-one percent of these students spoke Spanish to relate to family members and friends, while in 2000 approximately sixty-five percent of the students responded in the same manner. Although, as already stated, this may be the case due to the fact that these Mexican Americans have decided to reside in the United States, however, the law which has just been passed in Arizona mirrors the type of discrimination which many African Americans have also endured. This type of government action against minorities is a direct reflection of the African American experience in the United States, yet many African Americans continue to overlook this correlation and dismiss any consideration of studying foreign languages and cultures with the notion that they cannot relate to other cultural groups.

Since we are discussing the linkages between the cultures of African Americans and Hispanics, we should stop and consider what is actually meant by the term *culture*. We have acknowledged the need for foreign language educators to enhance cultural discussions, and it would behoove us to know the true meaning of culture. Seelye (1984) views culture as life in general, or everything which pertains to life. Geertz (1973) believes that culture can always be traced back to history, regardless of the aspect(s) of life on which it is based. However, once culture has been defined, there are still some drawbacks described by Hadley (1993) in our attempts to include the cultural component in classroom discussions. There are still numerous foreign language teachers who have not familiarized themselves with the target culture nor have traveled to the countries where the culture is practiced and the language is spoken. It is a matter of 'you cannot teach what you do not know' and 'you cannot lead where you cannot go'. There

needs to be more cultural and travel experience on the part of foreign language teachers before we can encourage African American students to become more engaged in this aspect of the foreign language experience and develop a positive attitude towards learning the language and culture. In addition to a lack of cultural experience by teachers, these teachers are also faced with the challenge of a limited time frame in which to include culture along with grammar for the semester or the school year in order to show a connection between the language and the culture or the speakers of the target language. As a result of these drawbacks, helping African American students to develop a positive attitude towards the study of foreign languages and cultures becomes unattainable when we are not able to make the content of the courses relevant to them and their experience.

According to the research and the comments stated above in this section regarding what is needed by foreign language educators who seek to encourage positive attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures among African American students, we can pinpoint that these students need to understand how the target language and culture relate to them in their experience as African Americans. We also find that if we are considering enhancing our cultural discussions in the classroom, we should take into account what the notion of culture entails according to Seelye (1984) and Geertz (1973). We should not limit culture to the present, here-and-now ways of life for both groups, but we should go back in history where we will find from where the here-and-now is derived and help African Americans to understand that they are not the only group whose roots are based in Africa.

In order to prove this to be a fact and to satisfy the desire of African American students to make a connection between foreign languages and cultures to their own lives, foreign language educators are now considering including the historical component of the Diaspora as interpreted

by Lipski (1994) at the elementary levels of their foreign language classes. By implementing this aspect of history at the beginning levels, teachers will be able to appeal to these students at the onset of foreign language study. As we include Lipski's (1994) candid, vivid portrayal of the lives of African slaves in Spain and then continue to follow as he extends his interpretation to include the transporting of these slaves to North America and other Spanish-speaking countries, African American students will be able to make an unmistakable connection between their own culture and history to that of Hispanics. When asked to contribute their views on the inclusion of the Diaspora in cultural discussions in order to encourage more African American students to major or minor in foreign languages, the ten non-major participants in this study believed that it would positively influence African American students as a whole to do so. Of the four teachers who were interviewed, three of them expressed that they were convinced of the positive impact it would have on these students in terms of them majoring or minoring in foreign languages. The remaining teacher, Dr. Angelo, stated that he was not sure that they would proceed to major or minor in the foreign language, but that he was sure that they would leave the required course(s) with more positive views regarding foreign language study.

Aside from the inclusion of the Diaspora at elementary levels of foreign language classes, the factor of travel/study abroad as it relates to the attitudes of African American students was also considered in this study. This proved to be a highly essential factor in the development of positive attitudes among these students as it was discovered that more of the majors and minors in the study had traveled more extensively and had developed positive attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures partially due to their travel abroad experience. Besides the one of the Spanish minors, Jacobs, who had traveled and lived in various states and countries with her family in the military, two of the other Spanish majors and minors, Maximus and

Lomax, as well as one non-major participant, Albert, had traveled with Southern's study abroad programs and were positively influenced by the experience. Albert commented that she is now considering minoring in Spanish. One of the Spanish majors, Lomax, emphatically stated that she made her decision to major in Spanish after participating in the study abroad trip to Mexico. Maximus, a Spanish minor, also stated that he was amazed at the African presence in Puerto Rico when he traveled there with other students from Southern. He also mentioned the limited portrayal of this African presence in the media, which helps us to see the importance of travel abroad in order to dispel any media misconceptions regarding foreign cultures. This is why it is so important for everyone, especially our foreign language students, to research their own history as well as the history of others. It is imperative that we break the barriers of differences and conflict and learn of the aspects where our heritages connect and tie us together. At the rate that our country is becoming more populated with Hispanics and other cultures, living apart from other cultures is no longer an option. Survival in the United States is going to depend largely on interaction with individuals of other cultures. This reality is inevitable whether or not we develop a positive attitude towards these individuals. However, if we strive to live in peace with those of various cultures, we are then able to enjoy the success we seek in every aspect of our lives as United States citizens.

While on the subject of misconceptions as discussed by Maximus, two of the non-major students expressed their fear or displeasure at the thought of foreign travel. One of these students, O'Hara, had spent only a day or so in a Mexican border town which she does not even recall, and stated that she does not really have a desire to travel abroad in the future. The other non-major, Carrington, had been persuaded by media images which depict foreign countries as the land of no return, so to speak. She has never traveled abroad and has no intentions of ever

doing so due to these images. Again, we now see the need to encourage more of these African American students to travel abroad in order to gain a better understanding of what the media chooses to omit in its coverage of foreign countries.

Although non-majors such as O'Hara and Carrington seem to have attitudes that are somewhat negative or hesitant to embrace foreign languages and cultures, they and all other students in this study denied that any negative attitudes were encouraged by family members and other influential persons in their circle of contacts. All of them stated that they have always been taught to accept individuals for who they are regardless of their race or ethnic background. It is also important to point out that the non-major students seemed to have positive attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. Two of these students are taking elementary Spanish out of their own interest in the language. They were not required by their major programs to take a foreign language. Coincidentally, some of these non-major participants, including the two who were not required to take a foreign language, Albert and Payne, are even considering minoring in Spanish, but have not made a final decision to do so at this point. As the discussions with the non-major students came to a close, they urged Southern's foreign language department to carefully consider the title of the cultural course which will include material on the Diaspora. They believe that the course title, which could possibly be 'Afro-Hispanic Cultural Studies' or something similar would draw students to the course and persuade them to enter the course with a positive attitude and willing to readily embrace the Hispanic culture. These students also suggested that the department invest more into advertising the benefits of major or minoring in a foreign language. They stated that they do not see the advertisement for foreign languages that they see around the campus for numerous other departments.

Teachers and students in the field of Spanish have offered great insight to foreign language departments and other educators in terms of encouraging more interest among African American students and helping them to develop positive attitudes towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. All agree that culture is a tool which can no longer afford to be overlooked, both in the classroom as well as outside the classroom. While all involved in the study agree that it would be beneficial to African American students who are studying Spanish to be exposed to the Diaspora at the elementary level of their Spanish experience, the ongoing challenge for teachers is blending this aspect of culture into what is already a tight schedule. Hadley (1993) has identified three drawbacks in the quest to teaching culture which include a lack of time, a lack of knowledge and a lack of interest among students. It is believed by many of the participants in this study that class discussions on the Diaspora would encourage a more positive attitude among students, particularly African American students. However, there would need to be some negotiation regarding the inclusion of the Diaspora into the grammar classes or creating a separate course specifically tailored around the Latino culture and history. Teachers will have to be required to conduct research on the Diaspora in order to adequately present it to their classes for discussion. According to the interviews that were conducted with the professors and instructors for this study, two of the professors and one instructor are currently familiar with the Diaspora due to their own ancestry and research. It may be beneficial for the department to offer a seminar/workshop in which those teachers who have experience and knowledge of the Diaspora to perform thorough presentations on the topic so that all the Spanish teachers who teach the elementary level Spanish courses will be equipped to include it in the syllabus and in their class discussions.



Moreover, when we consider appealing to students via activities outside the classroom, we could acknowledge the need to revamp some events and activities that are currently taking place. Foreign Language Week is now the epitome of cultural awareness within the foreign language department at Southern. Although students who attend the events during this time express their pleasure with the programs, they continue to suggest more organization or more preparation in planning the programs. There is also the foreign language club, which provides an outlet to students aside from the routine classroom instruction. However, participation is almost non-existent due to insufficient advertising. All of these programs are necessary tools in the foreign language experience for students and, as stated above, should be enhanced with more activities, particularly the Spanish Club. Some of the students in the Spanish Club made an attempt to assist students in learning Spanish vocabulary in one of the meetings, and this is something that could be continued and enhanced. Also, Spanish majors and minors could carry on round-table discussions in Spanish on various topics based on the chapters in their courses in order to help the students effectively utilize the target language. Southern seeks to produce students who are globally aware in our society, and the foreign language department plays a vital role in accomplishing this mission. The university will need to provide more funding to the foreign language department in order for this mission to be achieved. With additional funding, the enhance programs, activities and advertising will be more readily available to our students who study foreign languages.

In closing, once the department restores these components of foreign language study, it is likely that there will be an influx of African American students who will be eager to broaden their horizons in this field beyond just the requirement.

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## APPENDIX A

### FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE CONDUCTED BY JAMES J. DAVIS AND PAUL L. MARKHAM (1991)

Males-223 (28%)  
Females-578 (72%)

#### **Concerning Life History:**

Lived mostly in the U.S.-95%  
Lived mostly outside the U.S.-5%

#### **Anticipate Majoring/Minoring in a Foreign Language:**

Majoring-4 of 772  
Minoring-32 (4%)

#### **Racial/Ethnic Background:**

African-American-690 (91%)  
Not African-American-71 (9%)

#### **Travel to a Country Where the Language is Spoken:**

No experience-632 (84%)  
One week or less-68%

#### **Studying a Foreign Language is Enjoyable:**

Enjoyable experience-81% of 797  
Enjoy speaking a foreign language-75%  
Don't prefer a foreign language literature course in translation, would rather a foreign language class-47%

#### **Importance of Language Learning:**

Americans should strive to learn a foreign language-628 (79%)  
Would study a foreign language if it were not required-65%

#### **Motivation for Foreign Language Study:**

To be able to converse with that language's native speakers-84% of 791  
To work or study in a foreign language-346 (43%)  
Relevant to career goals-80% of over 600  
Gain a better understanding and appreciation for the foreign language culture by studying a foreign language-555  
Their cultural identity is not threatened by studying a foreign language-84% of 653  
Their foreign language courses would be more relevant to this if African themes were emphasized in first- and second-year courses-316 (40%)

**About Classroom Activity in Foreign Language Class:**

Could not be better-99 (29%)

Could speak more-241 (71%)

Teacher should be more sensitive to individual differences-187 (55%)

Culture should be more emphasized-184 (54%)



## APPENDIX B

### POTENTIAL MEANINGS OF CULTURE BY GEERTZ (1973)

1. "the total way of life of a people"
2. "the social legacy the individual acquires from his group"
3. "a way of thinking, feeling, and believing"
4. "an abstraction from behavior"
5. "a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave"
6. "a storehouse of pooled learning"
7. "a set of standardized orientations to recurrent problems"
8. "learned behavior"
9. "a mechanism for the normative regulation of behavior"
10. "a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men"
11. "a precipitate of history"
12. a behavioral map, sieve, or matrix

## APPENDIX C

### NINE STUDENT OBJECTIVES ON CULTURE BY NOSTRAND & NOSTRAND (1993)

1. React appropriately in a social situation
2. Describe, or ascribe to the proper part of the population, a pattern in the culture or social behavior
3. Recognize a pattern when it is illustrated
4. "Explain" a pattern
5. Predict how a pattern is likely to apply in a given situation
6. Describe or manifest an attitude important for making oneself acceptable in the foreign society
7. Evaluate the form of a statement concerning a culture pattern
8. Describe or demonstrate defensible methods of analyzing a sociocultural whole
9. Identify basic human purposes that make significant the understanding that is being taught

(Allen 1985; Lafayette and Schulz 1975)

## APPENDIX D

### LAFAYETTE'S (1988) 13 GOAL STATEMENTS OF CULTURE

- Group I: Knowledge of formal or “high” culture: Students will be able to explain...
1. major geographical monuments
  2. major historical events
  3. major institutions
  4. major artistic accomplishments
- Group II: Knowledge of everyday or “popular” culture: Students will be able to recognize/explain...
5. “active” cultural patterns, consisting of functions or tasks related to everyday living (such as eating, shopping, travel, obtaining lodging, etc.)
  6. “passive” everyday cultural patterns (consisting of underlying realities, such as social stratification, work, marriage, etc.)
- Students will be able to...
7. act appropriately in common everyday situations
  8. use appropriate common gestures
- Group III: Affective objectives: Students will be able to...
9. value different peoples and societies
- Group IV:
10. target language-related ethnic groups in the United States
  11. non-European peoples speaking the target language (Canada, Africa, South America, etc.)

Group V:

Process objectives: Students will be able to...

12. evaluate the validity of statements about culture

13. develop skills needed to locate and organize information about culture

## APPENDIX E

### THE TRANSPORTING OF SLAVES

|                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Mexico:                             | 200,000          |
| Central America:                    | 24,000           |
| Dominican Republic:                 | 30,000           |
| Cuba:                               | 702,000          |
| Puerto Rico:                        | 77,000           |
| Argentina/Uruguay/Paraguay/Bolivia: | 100,000          |
| Chile:                              | 6,000            |
| Peru:                               | 95,000           |
| Colombia/Panama/Ecuador:            | 200,000          |
| Venezuela:                          | 121,000          |
| <b>Total:</b>                       | <b>1,555,000</b> |
| <b>% of Atlantic trade:</b>         | <b>16.3%</b>     |
| Brazil:                             | 3,647,000        |

APPENDIX F

EUROPEAN AND AFRICAN POPULATIONS OF MAJOR MEXICAN CITIES, 1646

| <b>Region</b> | <b>Africans</b> | <b>Europeans</b> |
|---------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Mexico        | 19,441          | 8,000            |
| Tlaxcala      | 5,534           | 2,700            |
| Oaxaca        | 898             | 600              |
| Michoacan     | 3,295           | 250              |
| Nueva Galicia | 5,180           | 1,450            |
| Yucatan       | 750             | 497              |
| Chiapas       | 244             | 80               |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>35,089</b>   | <b>13,830</b>    |

APPENDIX G

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH FOR DISSERTATION

My name is Katrina Watterson, and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Theory, Policy and Practice. I am completing my doctoral studies with a dissertation that will (when finished) document and analyze the attitudes of African American students regarding the study of the Spanish language and culture and what should be done by educators in the field to attract more majors and minors.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to allow the researcher to conduct a series of classroom observations of your teaching and to participate in a series of interviews with the researcher. The purpose of the observations is to gather empirical data to establish the grounding for conversations concerning teaching practice. There will be (4) projected observations over the course of the summer semester however, if more are needed they can be scheduled at your convenience. The purpose of the interviews will be to gather information to compose your thinking and knowledge in practice of addressing the attitudes of African American students in your Spanish classroom. This projected series of (3) interviews will last for a maximum of approximately 30 minutes over the course of the summer of 2009 semester. However, if more time is needed, or additional interviews are required, they can be scheduled at your convenience. Your responses will be recorded on audiotape, but only so the researcher may transcribe your responses as accurately as possible for accurate representation of our conversation. The participant, the researcher, and the researcher's doctoral committee will be the only persons to have privilege to these interviews. The only alternative for which the tapes may be heard by anyone other than those listed is by written permission from you, the participant.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. At no point do you have to allow your real name to be revealed if you so choose. A fictitious name may be used. During the interview you may refuse to answer any questions.

After the completion of the interviews, you will receive your transcribed interviews. At that point, if you wish to make any changes to the transcription, you may. Once you return a copy of the transcript and the project is near completion, you will receive a copy in which you may offer your insight. This is a collaborative project and will not be final until as accurate as possible representation is made of your teaching experience.

Little or no potential risks are identified. The benefits would include personal growth for each participant through opportunities for reflection and dialogue about their teaching.

I truly appreciate your participation in this project. I want you to be as comfortable as possible. Please feel free to talk to me about any concern you might have. My phone numbers are (H) 225-683-8379, (W) 225-771-3030.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the chair of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (205) 348-5125.

Please sign below indicating that you are aware of your participation in the project and are agreeing to be an informant in the project.

Participant's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX H

### PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR NON-MAJOR/MINOR STUDENTS

#### Participant Demographic Profile and Interview Questions for Non-major/minor Students

1. Name (Real or Fictional)
  2. What is your hometown/home state?
  3. Race?
  4. Gender?
  5. What is your status (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate student, other)?
  6. How long have you been taking Spanish courses?
  7. What is your major?
  8. Gender?
  9. Who is your Spanish professor?
- 
1. Why are you taking a foreign language?
  2. Why did you choose to take Spanish?
  3. Have you ever traveled abroad? (where, for how long, what was that experience like?) If not, would you like to travel abroad? Why/why not, where?
  4. Will you continue to study Spanish after satisfying your foreign language requirements? Why or why not?
  5. Will you major/minor in Spanish? Why or why not?
  6. How important do you think it is to be bilingual/multilingual?
  7. Within the last couple of months CNN reported that 25% of the United States' citizens are Hispanic, making them the largest minority group in the country. Do you believe that all other citizens should be able to speak Spanish for this purpose? Why or why not?
  8. Do you openly communicate with and form friendships with individuals of ethnic backgrounds other than your own? Why or why not?
  9. What were you taught by your parents and/or other family members to believe about individuals of races and cultures other than your own? What advice have you gotten from counselors, advisors regarding foreign language study?



10. Do you believe that studying a foreign language and culture would threaten your own culture? Explain.

A. African Americans (Blacks) share a similar heritage and history with Hispanics in that both groups are rooted in slavery which was so prevalent back in the 1500s, as well as victims of numerous discrimination incidents today. If such African themes were covered in the cultural discussions of the entry level Spanish classes, would you be more inclined to major/minor in Spanish or continue to take Spanish courses beyond the requirements?

B. Do you think other African American students would be inclined to do the same? Explain.

11. The field of foreign languages tends not to attract many African Americans as educators, meaning that there are not many African Americans in foreign language departments. What effect do you believe this has on attracting African American students to pursue studies in Spanish or other foreign languages?

12. What do you think could be done by foreign language instructors/professors to attract more African American students to major/minor in Spanish?

## APPENDIX I

### PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SPANISH MAJORS/MINORS

1. Name (Real or Fictional)
  2. What is your hometown/home state?
  3. Race?
  4. Gender?
  5. What is your status (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate student, other)?
  6. Spanish major or minor?
- 
1. At what point in your education did you decide to major/minor in Spanish?
  2. What prompted your decision to major/minor in Spanish?
  3. Do you have any travel abroad experience? (where, how long, what was that experience like?) If not, would you like to travel abroad? (where, why)
  4. Did you ever receive any opposition to your decision to major/minor in Spanish? (from counselors, advisors, family)
  5. What were you taught by your parents and/or other family members to believe about individuals of different races and cultures from your own?
  6. What are the career and personal goals you plan to achieve once you receive your degree in Spanish?

## APPENDIX J

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS CONCERNING SPANISH PROFESSORS' PERCEPTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS REGARDING THE ATTITUDES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS TOWARDS THE STUDY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

1. Where else have you taught?
  - A. Where (else) did you learn to teach? From whom? How did you learn from this person? Did they talk about foreign language teaching?
  - B. Did you receive any formal training in foreign language teaching?
  - C. If at predominantly White universities, what differences do you observe between Black students and White students regarding the study of foreign languages and cultures?
  - D. An average of only three percent of the graduates in foreign languages each year are African Americans. Why do you think that foreign language departments have such a low percentage of African American graduates?
2. Research has shown that one of the possible reasons for which more African American students choose not to major/minor in foreign languages is because they observe that there are very few African American educators in the field. When receiving your graduate training in foreign language education did you have the opportunity to study with any professors of color?
  - A. What were those experiences like?
  - B. How if at all did they differ from studying with European-American professors?
  - C. Did you ever consciously reflect on why these opportunities were either limited or if they did occur why they are oddities?
3. What unique perspectives or personal views do you envision yourself bringing to the foreign language classroom?
4. Are their prominent African Americans celebrated as foundational or emerging figures in foreign languages? If so, please name a few.
5. Do you ever talk to other professors about the attitudes of your students regarding studying Spanish?
  - A. If so, what is the nature of that conversation?
  - B. If not, why?

C. Have you ever attended conferences, participated in roundtables, or Published in journals about this topic?

Again, an average of only three percent of students at predominantly African American students receive their degrees in foreign languages each year. Despite the economic advantages of knowing a foreign language in our global society, many African American students still opt not to pursue studies in foreign languages. There may be a need to explore other avenue in attracting more of these students to major/minor in foreign languages.

6. What do you believe is the greatest challenge in attracting African American students to major/minor in Spanish?

7. Foreign language education tends to focus on the notion of *differences* rather than *similarities* between the culture of the students and the target culture. Do you believe this makes African American students feel a bit alienated from the culture being studied? Do you believe that highlighting such differences between cultures is an effective manner to go about teaching the target language and culture to African American students? Why or why not?

8. The Hispanic heritage shares many similarities with that of the African heritage. Many of our African American students are not aware of the Africa Diaspora, which is usually not exposed to our students until the more advanced level courses, and sometimes not even until graduate level courses. Do you possess the necessary knowledge of the Diaspora to include this material in your cultural discussions? If not, would you be willing to conduct research on the subject? What impact do you think this would have on Spanish students at the entry level of Spanish in terms of encouraging them to major/minor in Spanish?

## VITA

Katrina Watterson is currently a Spanish instructor at Southern University in Baton Rouge and a Spanish teacher with the Upward Bound Program. She developed an interest in the Spanish language and culture during her sophomore year in high school. She entered Southern University in Baton Rouge with a major in broadcasting, and after receiving her bachelor's degree in that field, returned to Southern for another bachelor's degree in Spanish. After receiving her second and final bachelor's degree in Spanish, she entered Louisiana State University and pursued her master's degree in Spanish literature while teaching Spanish as a teaching assistant for that department.

Deciding that she had grown weary of the classroom, she took on various other positions which included telemarketing, bill collecting and legal analysis. While working in these positions, she would also assist the Spanish-speaking clients in these companies.

In addition to these positions, she began her own tutoring and translation business in which she taught Spanish lessons and tutoring sessions to individuals at their homes. She would also occasionally translate documents for various local companies. She still tutors students, but not as regularly as several years ago.

During the time she worked to build her business, she was persuaded by the foreign language chairperson at Southern University in Baton Rouge to return to the classroom and teach Spanish on a part-time basis. This position led to her interest in research which focuses on the attitudes of African American students towards the study of foreign languages and cultures. She has devoted her research to educating students, particularly African American students, on the benefits of knowing a foreign language and culture, and also teaching them of certain historical and cultural traits which the African American and Hispanic heritages share.