

NEGOTIATING BLACK MALE IDENTITY WHILE NAVIGATING  
PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

by

CHRISTOPHER OLIVER JOHNSON

(Under the Direction of LOUIS CASTENELL)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this Q methodology study was to examine the effective strategies and behaviors Black male doctoral students use to manage their interracial interaction with their White faculty and peers at Predominately White Institutions (PWI) in the southeastern United States. A PWI was selected for this study, both because of its unique educational environment and because there is a dearth of research on Black male students experiences at these institutions. This Q methodology study involved Q sort card sorting, and in-depth individual interviews. A concurrent design allowed qualitative and quantitative data to be collected simultaneously, analyzed independently, and integrated at the interpretation phase (Creswell, 2009). Participants in this study were Black male doctoral who were at least in the second year of their program. Data was analyzed using an interpretive interactionism paradigmatic stance to attain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants (Denzin, 2001). Additionally, co-cultural theory (Orbe, 1998a) was applied to highlight key communication practices at a PWI that contributed to Black male doctoral students and positive university experiences.

INDEX WORDS: Black male doctoral students, racial identity, interracial interactions, co-cultural theory, predominately white institutions (PWI's)

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B.S., Florida A & M University, 2007

M.Ed., The University of Georgia, 2009

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2016

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May 2016

## DEDICATION

First, I dedicate this dissertation to God. Without Him I am nothing, but with Him I can accomplish things beyond human measure. Thank you for your unconditional love, unwavering grace, and endless mercy. The purpose of my life is to honor you in everything I do. I also dedicate this dissertation to my Aunt, Koret Johnson. It is because of your unconditional love, support, and guidance over the years that I have reached this point in my life. I love you more than words can express. Thank you for being the greatest Parent that I could ever ask for.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank first the Creator. I also thank my Aunt Koret for her unconditional love, support, and guidance. You have always been and continue to be my inspiration. I thank my Grandmother, for being the best Grandmother in the world. Your unwavering love, support, and prayers have kept me grounded. I love you more than you know. I want to thank the Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, most importantly for providing me with a solid spiritual foundation and for always showing me how to lean on the Lord. You are my angels and I am eternally grateful to have you in my life. I want to thank my father for showing me that growth and change are possible and for teaching me the importance of having a forgiving spirit.

I thank my dissertation committee--Dr. Louis Castenell, Dr. Tina Harris, Dr. Tarek Grantham and Dr. Marty Carr--for their tremendous support, guidance, and expertise. I thank my brothers-in-friendship, Vince Taylor and Joseph Cooper, for their friendship, support, and guidance. I thank all my friends past and present for helping me grow as person and sharing priceless moments of life with me. I want to thank my family, my father, my mother, Auntie Marian Collins, Aunt Joy, Uncly Billy, Aunt Gloria, my big cousin Marquis Hatchett, my cousin Timothy Smith, my brother Michael Johnson, my brother David Williams, my sister Lynette Williams, my God sisters Charla and Sarah, my God brother Woody, and my cousin Carmela Drayer, my cousin Alvin Johnson, my cousin William Johnson and my grandfather Alvin Oliver Johnson. I thank all of my teachers, classmates, and colleagues past and present for your role in my personal and professional development. Thank you to everyone who has touched my life

in any way, because each of you has helped me reach this point in my life. My eyes will remain on the prize and I will continue to press forward towards my higher calling.

I want to thank my study group “Breathe University,” that includes Dr. Farris Muhammad, Dr. Tennille Lasker-Scott, Future Dr. Ashley Baker, and Dr. Bantu Gross. I also want to thank honorary members, Dr. Tyra Gross, Future Dr. Quincy Brewington, and future Dr. Beverly Harper.

I want to thank all of the people at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University who made this happen, because they prepared me for Graduate School. My advisor Barbara Wynn was really there for me and she believed in me. To all of my professors, Dr. Mary Newell, Dr. Marian Smith, Dr. Patty Ball-Thomas, Dr. Gail Bauman, and Dr. Charles Irvin. To all friends in the Gainesville City School district like Donna Allen, William Campbell, and Charlene Williams. To all of my professors at the University of Georgia that have helped me along the way like Dr. Nancy Knapp, Dr. Shawn Glynn, Dr. Stacey Neuharth-Pritchett, Dr. Robert Branch, Dr. Paula Schwanenflugel, Dr. Ezenemari Obasi, Dr. Derrick Alridge, Dr. Jerome Morris, Dr. Juanita Johnson-Bailey, Dr. Sheneka Williams, Dr. Cheryl Fields-Smith, Dr. Bettina Love, Dr. Ron Walcott, Dr. Scott Shamp, Dr. Denise Davison, Dr. Michelle Garfield-Cook, and Dr. Cheryl Dozier. I want to shout out all of the people who have helped me study or read my papers throughout the years. Ain Grooms has been there from the start and is still there and I thank you for that. Michael Childs is a great friend and would look at my papers whenever he had a chance. Darren Rhym has also looked at my papers in the past and has given me great feedback. Candice Benbow and her Mother Debra Benbow have given me a place to stay and finish my revisions and I thank them for that.



Fallon Dodson has spent a lot of time with me during this process and she has been very helpful. Shana Gulley has been there since my Master's program and she has also been a big help. Tia Madkins has also been there for me when I needed her and I appreciate everything she has done for me. Keisha Baylor has helped me with my statistics and I thank her for that. Aubrey Johnson also helped me with my statistics and I thank her for that. I want to thank all my friends over at JJ Harris Elementary School especially the principal Xernona Thomas, Vanessa Ford, Bashie Ebron, and Valerie Hendry. I also want to thank my friends over at Goldsboro Elementary school like Principal Mr. Schreiner and the Assistant Principal Mrs. Mulholland. I want to thank Vanessa Williams, Anthony Bowie, and Carmia Wynn for putting up with me this past year. I want to thank Mario Rivera for holding me down this past year, you are a great friend. I want to thank the Graduate and Professional Scholars for holding me down over there years. Shout out to all my ACD friends past, present, and future like Dr. Sara Woodruff, Dr. Stephanie Lai, Dr. Beryl Otumfuor, Dr. Nicole Barsed, Dr. Sarah Whitaker, Dr. Michelle Thomas, Tasha Alston, Alicia Welch, and Erin Horan. Last but not least I want to thank my editor, Dr. Lindsey Dippold, for helping me see this dissertation through until the end. I am forever grateful to you.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This study sought to address the paucity of literature on the experiences of Black male doctoral students at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). Although Blacks continue to demonstrate a desire for education (Cuyjet, 2006), Black male enrollment and completion rates in higher education are dismal compared to other groups, most notably when compared to Black women (Cross & Slater, 2000; Jackson & Moore, 2006, 2008; Palmer & Maramba, 2011). This finding suggests that Black men face somewhat similar obstacles that come with pursuing a degree, yet vastly different experiences as they deal with these obstacles. Research has attributed these challenges to race and gender. College enrollment among Black men was the same at the time of this study as it was in 1976 (Harper, 2006; Strayhorn, 2008). These findings were disconcerting and showed potential signs of institutional racism still present in higher education institutions. Other findings indicated the importance of the quality of interracial interactions between Black students and their White cohorts, faculty, and administrators (Cuyjet, 2006). Given the racial and social barriers impeding the academic and professional success of Black males, this study attempted to identify the communication strategies Black male doctoral students employ as coping mechanisms while attending PWIs.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Black male doctoral students deal with mental, emotional, social, and spiritual ramifications of overt and covert forms of institutional racism at PWIs (Chavous & Sellers, 2007). The racial climate for Black graduate or doctoral students may be a

reflection of the student's interaction with the institution (Clark & Garza, 1994), department (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001), and individual faculty members and students (Milner, 2004). Black doctoral students have also reported feeling invisible (Patterson-Stewart, Ritchie, & Sanders, 1997), isolated (Sligh-DeWalt, 2004), and undervalued (Milner, 2004), causing Black students to feel as if they have to over-perform (Bonilla, Pickron, & Tatum, 1994; Milner, 2004) or that the quality of their work was less than that of their White peers (Bonilla et al., 1994), thereby creating a feeling of academic vulnerability. In order for faculty members and mentors to effectively help Black male doctoral students navigate such environments, it is important to gain insight into the effect these environments have on their academic and educational success.

The most productive means of capturing such insight was through personal accounts of how Black men choose to deal with their interactions and relationships with European American faculty and graduate students. Though these connections were positive more often than not, co-cultural theory (Orbe, 1998a) suggests that their interpersonal exchanges and relationships with European Americans in the academic realm can be taxing, leading many to either underperform or withdraw prematurely from their doctoral studies.

According to Darwin's theory of adaptation, living organisms may change to become better suited for survival in their given environment (Darwin, 1859). In order to withstand the tensions of their immediate surroundings, organisms may avoid the stimuli (Silver, Wortman, & Cofton, 1990). In essence, there is an assumption that when facing stressful environments, humans, as living organisms, develop coping mechanisms to deal with stressful life events. Darwin's theory and coping mechanisms lead to the very

important question regarding how Black males manage their racial and gender identities in a context where they are in the numerical minority.

Co-cultural theory has primarily been used to provide insight into the general communication approaches that various co-cultural group members (people who are not a part of the dominant culture) employ in negotiating their societal positioning in organizations and inter-group relations (Buzzanell, 1999; Gates, 2003; Kirby, 2007; Groscruth & Orbe, 2006; Lapinski & Orbe; Parker, 2003). Assuming that a hierarchy exists in society which gives privilege to the dominant group, co-cultural theory provides a foundation to explore how people in non-dominant groups communicate with each other and members of the dominant group. In past studies, co-cultural theory has been used to highlight the experiences of those who are marginalized from the dominant culture: including women (Lapinski & Orbe, 2007), people with disabilities (Cohen, 2008; Fox, Giles, Orbe, & Bourhis, 2000), first generation college students (Orbe & Groscruth, 2004), Israeli women (Lev-Aladgem & First, 2004), and gay men (Kama, 2002). Co-cultural theory which is actually an extension of educational psychology, illuminates the unique experiences of people of color (Gates, 2003; Miura, 2001; Parker, 2003), international students (Urban & Orbe, 2007), and immigrants (Kirby, 2007). More recently, scholars have used co-cultural theory to examine how majority group members adapt to co-cultural practices in contexts where they are in the minority, for example, in collegiate and/or professional settings (e.g., Harris, Miller, & Trego, 2004; O'Hara & Meyer, 2003).

Communication is particularly pivotal in the examination of experiences of Black men at PWIs. This study primarily set out to identify the communication strategies that

Black males perceive to be most effective in handling negative interpersonal encounters with dominant group members while simultaneously maintaining a positive racial and gendered identity. The terms Black and African American are used interchangeably throughout this study. Black male students have lower postsecondary retention and graduation rates (35%) than their Black female (46%) and White counterparts (68%) (Pope, 2009; U.S Census Bureau, 2011), which would suggest that their experiences may be unique from other groups attending PWIs.

Co-cultural theory, the theoretical framework used, was most appropriate for exploring and analyzing the processes used to negotiate identities at PWIs. The theory also has the potential to determine the “best practices” that Black males and other historically marginalized racial/ethnic groups can use in successfully navigating the graduate school experience. While there are unique academic as well as social challenges specific to higher education as a whole, research suggests that microcultural (e.g., minority) group members who attend PWIs have significantly different experiences than their same-race cohorts (Cuyjet, 2006). Similarly, there are gender differences rarely accounted for in educational literature (Cuyjet, 2006). The experiences that a Black male at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) might face are most likely qualitatively different from those he might experience at a PWI. A vast majority of the students and professors at an HBCU were from the same racial background and may have shared experiences. Consequently, these students and professors may relate to one another in a way that may not occur as easily at a PWI.

I used a critical mixed-methods approach to explore the ways in which Black male doctoral students at a large Southern PWI negotiate their identities, as per co-



cultural theory (Orbe, 1998a), while they made progress in their respective graduate programs. The Q-sort methodology (Stephenson, 1935) is used in conjunction with in-depth interviews, which were transcribed verbatim and subject to a critical discourse analysis.

### **Significance of Educational Psychology**

Scholars asserted that educational psychology “is concerned with the development, evaluation, and application of (a) theories and principles of human learning, teaching, and instruction, and (b) theory-derived educational materials, programs, strategies, and techniques that can enhance lifelong educational activities and processes” (Wittrock & Farley, 1989, p.7). Educational Psychology looks at teacher relationships, motivation, and cultural differences. Educational Psychology is the teaching and learning process. There needs to be a good relationship between students and teachers in order for learning to take place. The absence of a comfort level or a lack of communication between the White professors and the Black doctoral students can create a poor or negative relationship. Similar to early educational psychologists, contemporary educational psychologists seek to understand how people learn, why they learn, and how the process of development occurs. Current educational psychologists also want to understand how individual differences affect learning and development, how various learning outcomes can be measured accurately, as well as to clarify the basic purposes of education (Grinder, 1989). Educational psychologists study several areas, including child and adolescent development; learning and motivation; identity; social and cultural influences on learning; teaching and teachers; and testing and assessment (Alexander & Winne, 2006). Educational psychology retained its basic orientation over

much of this century despite the influx of various theoretical influences (Snowman, 1997). Regardless of whether the reigning influence has been structuralism, functionalism, connectionism, Gestalt psychology, operant conditioning, humanistic psychology, information processing, or constructivism, educational psychologists continue to be primarily interested in understanding and improving how people acquire a variety of outcomes from formal instruction in different school settings (Snowman, 1997).

### **Black Academic Achievement**

In the United States, for each Black male who has enjoyed any degree of social or economic mobility, there were disproportionate numbers who continued to experience varying degrees of disenfranchisement (Howard, Flenbaugh, & Terry, 2012). The upward mobility most Black men achieve is not always attributable to the level of education, but rather in spite of their academic achievement (Howard et al., 2012). These disparities in educational attainment and achievement across racial groups, particularly in regards to Black students, are partially attributed to an increasingly racially-stratified society and the resulting structural inequities in education (Kozol, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006). However, structural inequities alone cannot fully explain these differences. The influence of racial identity on academic motivation interests educational psychologists to attempt to explain such differences for Black students. Research indicates that for some Black students, a strong racial identity may have a positive influence on academic motivation (Chavous et al., 2003; Graham & Hudley, 2005; Smalls, White, Chavous, & Sellers, 2007) and achievement (Exum & Colangelo, 1981; Ford, Harris, & Scheurger, 1993).

A child constructs self-identity early on in life, and identity has a significant value in how he or she handles various experiences moving forward. The educational problems and issues that Black men experience in elementary and secondary schools are not endemic to those educational settings (Palmer & Maramba, 2011). Although the number of Black men entering higher education increased substantially during the late 1960s and again during the 1980s and 1990s (Palmer & Maramba, 2011), Black men continue to lag behind their female and White male counterparts with respect to college participation, retention, and degree completion rates (Noguera, 2003; Palmer & Maramba, 2011; Polite & Davis, 1999). According to researchers (Green, 2008; Jackson & Moore, 2006, 2008), the number of Black men in prison exceeds those in postsecondary institutions. Specifically, Green (2008) stated that in 2000, there were 188,550 more Black men incarcerated than enrolled in institutions of higher education. The low numbers of Black men on college campuses have a noteworthy impact on the educational environment and affect others beyond the Black community (Cuyjet, 2006). Many schools profess a desire for a diverse student body, with the expectation that members of the campus community (i.e. students, faculty, and administrators) will have opportunities to interact with and learn from others culturally as well as intellectually (Cuyjet, 2006).

### **Racial Identity Construction and Socialization**

The African-American community is an abstract, yet tangible force that separates insiders from outsiders and offers safety and security for its members (White, 1998). Racial identity is described as identification with a particular group (Phinney, 1990), an individual's conception of their racial group membership (Bernal & Knight, 1993), and a construct that operates on both the self and group level (Hernandez-Sheets, 1999). Helms

(1993) explained that racial identity also referred to an individual's perception that he or she shares a "common racial heritage with a particular racial group" (p. 3). The term, racial identity, has also been used to group individuals based on physical characteristics. In a discussion of racial identity, Erikson (1968) speculated that minority and oppressed individuals may be prone to develop a negative identity due to accepting negative self-images projected onto them, not only by the larger society but by their own racial group. Conversely, when positive self-images abound within their own group, minority group members are often able to develop a positive concept of identity.

Ethnic identity, a construct that is similar to racial identity and equally as complex, is a social construct that is not limited to similarities of physical characteristics; rather, it is the sense of similarity based on traditional cultural practices, beliefs, and language (Phinney, 1990). African-American racial identity theory suggests that one's identity is multidimensional. It is created and constructed by interactions with others and surrounding environments (Allen et al. 1989; Cross 1991; Sellers et al. 1998; Shelton & Sellers, 2000).

One of the unique aspects of African-American racial identity is collectivism, which has been defined as an individual's concern with the advancement of the racial group to which he or she belongs (Akbar 1991; Allen & Bagozzi 2001; Nobles, 1991). The idea of collectivism was expressed by the African proverb, "I am because we are, and therefore, we are because I am" (Akbar, 1991). Collectivism is characterized as an individual's sense of connection to and responsibility for members of their group (Taylor & Moghaddam 1994; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). Collectivism has connections to African and African-American culture (Nobles, 2006). The extended

family and fictive kinship contain elements of modern-day collectivism, in that people who are often not related to the large family core are considered family members (McAdoo, 1998). There are conflicting opinions in the field of education regarding the impact of collectivism on the academic performance of Black students. Scholars found that African-American students who distanced themselves from their racial identity, or “act White,” performed at higher levels than those who do not (Fordham, 1988; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Witherspoon et al., 1997).

Racial identity construction, as defined by Cross’ (1971) theory of Nigrescence and operationalized by Parham and Helms (1981), was the process by which persons of color developed a positive sense of self in the context of a society that discriminates against them. The process of racial identity formation for Blacks and other visible racial ethnic groups was conceptualized in terms of four statuses that describe self-concept issues related to race (Johnson & Arbona, 2006). The four racial attitudes statuses include pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization. Pre-encounter is characterized by pro-White and anti-Black attitudes and obliviousness to racial dynamics. Encounter refers to being prompted by experiences of discrimination that challenge the individual’s race-related world-view and is characterized by doubt and feelings of shame and guilt about pro-White beliefs. Immersion-Emersion is characterized by deep involvement in Black culture, activities, and events and pro-Black and anti-White attitudes, which, in time evolve into a positive non-stereotypical Black perspective. Internalization refers to being characterized by a positive commitment to one’s group, self-confidence about one’s Blackness, and non-biased, positive attitudes toward other

racial groups, including Whites (Johnson & Arbona, 2006). Each of these four racial attitudes defines ways in which individuals viewed themselves in relation to others.

African-American students who are aware of their racial identity have been negatively related to adjustment to college (Anglin & Wade, 2007). However, other scholars found that African-American students who identify with other members of their racial group fare better academically than those who do not (Goodstein & Ponterotto, 1997; Harper & Tuckman, 2006; Spencer et al., 2001; Way, 1998). Despite these conflicting perspectives, it is evident that situational and environmental factors influence African-American college students' racial identities and racial identity construction, as well as academic achievement (Phinney, 1990).

### **Co-Cultural Theory**

A person is comprised of a set of characteristics and qualities that make him uniquely different from anyone else. These qualities and distinctive intricacies of a person's identity include racial, ethnic, gender, physical capabilities, religious orientation, or sexual identities, to name a few. For example, a person who is male, of African American descent, from a lower class family, a teacher, and of a certain age group simultaneously belongs to several groups and connects to each group uniquely. These interpersonal networks often include persons whose opinions and perceptions are valued and trusted (Orbe & Harris, 2008), and as a result, these interpersonal systems or associations directly influence an individual's identities. In addition, interactions with other groups or networks also help to shape a person's understanding of who he or she is as an individual.

As it pertains to identity, research has been primarily focused on individuals or groups that do not fall into what many consider the “mainstream”. Such persons are often described as marginalized, or are forced to the fringes of society where they are essentially ignored and deemed a part of the underclass (Harris, 2012). If an individual is not considered a member of the mainstream or does not display social norms of the mainstream, he is labeled as an *other* or as *othered*; “Other” is a term used in direct opposition to the mainstream, while “othered” refers to being treated differently because of race, gender, sexual orientation, physical abilities, or religious identity (Harris, 2012). These persons define and understand themselves based on their group membership, which ultimately creates their perspective and also forces the recognition and identification of it. By comparison, members of the mainstream or the dominant group are very rarely in the position where they must consider their point of view or identity.

Orbe’s (1998a) co-cultural theory aims to make sense of the world, to the extent possible, from the perspective of the other, and will provide the theoretical framework for this study. Co-cultural theory helps explain how those who are traditionally marginalized in dominant societal structures communicate in their everyday lives with outgroup members, or those in the dominant group. Grounded in muted group theories (e.g., Kramarae, 1981), standpoint theories (e.g., Smith, 1987), and phenomenology (Husserl, 1973; Lanigan, 1988), co-cultural theory is derived from the experiences of a variety of co-cultural groups. The co-cultural theoretical framework uses a phenomenological approach to studying the communicative experiences of diverse co-cultural group members. The fundamental conceptual stance inherent in a phenomenological

methodology, as it unites with muted-group and standpoint theories, appears especially fitting in the exploration of co-cultural communication (Orbe, 1998a).

Co-curricular theory was the theoretical framework for this study. Orbe (1998a) summarized the foundational assumption of co-cultural theory:

Situated within a particular *field of experience* that governs their perceptions of the *costs of rewards* associated with, as well as their *capability* to engage in, various communicative practices, co-cultural group members will adopt certain communication orientations – based on their *preferred* outcomes and *communication approaches* – to fit the circumstances of a specific *situation* (p. 129).

Co-cultural theory places significance on the role of communication, or the verbal and nonverbal message exchanges between two individuals, with particular attention to the interactions between “dominant and non-dominant” groups. This is preferred to other terms (such as subcultured, subordinate, or muted group) since existing terminology connotes co-cultural groups as being inferior to dominant group members and passively muted by oppressive communication structures. In this regard, the general definition is accurate but problematic since people, such as Black men, can concurrently be dominant (male) and non-dominant (Black) group members. Co-cultural theory provides the best foundation to investigate the emotional, social, and academic experiences Black males encounter (Orbe, 1998a).

This study explored *communication orientation*, a concept that referred to a specific stance that co-cultural group members assumed during their everyday interactions. Orbe (1998a) indicated six components of communication orientation:



communication approach, preferred outcome, perceived costs, rewards, capability, and situational context. Communication approach was a significant influence with respect to this study. *Communication approach* is conceptualized as the communication stance from which one interacts with dominant group members. In its most basic form, a nonassertive approach was one in which participants were non-confrontational, inhibited, and placed the needs of others before their own (Orbe, 1998a). Assertive communication involved expressive behavior that considered the needs of the self and other equally. The aggressive approach occurred when participants were confrontational, exhibit overly expressive, and attacking communication. Such communicative approaches have notable effects in the experiences of Black males in academic settings, which often times led to various challenges that impeded one's educational and professional advancement.

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

If Black male achievement in America can be largely attributed to drive and determination in spite of roadblocks present in academic environments, then it is necessary to understand how African-American males identify and address those roadblocks. Though the impact of positive racial identity formation on Black education achievement has not been consistent (Anglin & Wade, 2007), it was important to explore the influence of positive racial identity while navigating doctoral programs as a Black male at a PWI. African-American men are disproportionately underrepresented in higher education, and there is a desperate need for their experiences to be examined in totality; not only for Black men in doctoral programs, but for practitioners, professors, and others who might not understand them. Using co-cultural theory to articulate approaches Black male doctoral students employ to negotiate their identity in PWIs will shed light on the

process of excelling academically in America, despite obstacles, as a Black male.

Therefore, the study posed the following research questions:

RQ 1: What specific communication strategies (e.g., co-cultural theory) do Black males identify as most effective for their interracial interactions with White faculty?

RQ 2: What specific communication strategies (e.g., co-cultural theory) do Black males identify as most effective for their interracial interactions with White peers?

Gathering data using interviews was important in order to understand the interpersonal contexts within Black male doctoral students' experienced difficulties that potentially affected their academic success. This study asked participants to disclose and describe the specific events they recalled as examples of how they typically responded to how they perceived White faculty and graduate students treated them. Positive racial identity formation has been recognized as having some positive impact on educational achievement for Blacks (Chavous et al., 2003; Graham & Hudley, 2005; Smalls, White, Chavous, & Sellers, 2007). Additionally, since racial identity formation is restricted, many majority group members have little experience with Black students who exhibit strong racial identity and perform at high levels of achievement. To understand the impact of these limited interactions, the study poses the following research questions:

RQ 3: What specific communication strategies (e.g., co-cultural theory) do Black males identify as least effective for their interracial interactions with White faculty?

RQ 4: What specific communication strategies (e.g., co-cultural theory) do Black males identify as least effective for their interracial interactions with White peers?

### **Overview of Methods Used**

In this study, data was collected using the Q-sort methodology with 15 African-American male doctoral students at a PWI using Orbe's (1998a) co-cultural theory to investigate how they successfully negotiate Black male identity using interracial communication strategies. Following Q-sort practices, participants received a set of Q-sort items comprised of 26 index cards, each of which contained one co-cultural practice, which will be discussed at length in Chapter 2. After completing the Q-sort tasks, participants were interviewed, which afforded them the opportunity to expound upon their experience with the Q-sort process and to provide a richer understanding of the motivations guiding their communication behaviors with White faculty and graduate students.

### **Significance and Implications**

It is anticipated that this study will make a significant contribution to research in the areas of racial identity construction (Cross, 1971), achievement (Cuyjet, 2006), and co-cultural theory (Orbe, 1998a). There is currently limited research of the experiences Black males have while earning their doctorates at PWIs, which is a critical oversight if graduate programs are to successfully meet the academic and individual needs of their students of color. These findings will offer educators insight into the unique experiences and achievement aspirations of Black male doctoral students and identify strategies to effectively mentor and support them in their academic journey. Statistically, Black males are the least represented group regarding the enrollment in, as well as completion of, doctoral programs (Cuyjet, 2006). This may be considerably attributed to personal and emotional sacrifices. Given that they are also rarely represented in other professional

contexts and roles in the workplace (Cuyjet, 2006), the findings have the potential to provide Black males with indispensable knowledge, skills, and strategies essential in all aspects of their life (i.e. mentally, emotionally, socially, professionally), but particularly while successfully earning their doctorate. These findings will also aid academic departments at PWIs and other professional organizations in demonstrating how to successfully interact with Black males, when they are in the numerical minority.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Educational Psychology**

Educational psychology “is concerned with the development, evaluation, and application of (a) theories and principles of human learning, teaching, and instruction and (b) theory-derived educational materials, programs, strategies, and techniques that can enhance lifelong educational activities and processes” (Wittrock & Farley, 1989, p. 7). Educational psychology has retained its basic orientation over much of this century despite the presence of various theoretical influences (Snowman, 1997). Regardless of whether the reigning influence has been structuralism, functionalism, connectionism, Gestalt psychology, operant conditioning, humanistic psychology, information processing, or constructivism, educational psychologists have been primarily interested in understanding and improving how people acquire a variety of outcomes from formal instruction in different school settings (Snowman, 1997).

Educational psychology is not a new field. Issues Plato and Aristotle addressed, such as the role of the teacher, the relationship between teacher and student, methods of teaching, the nature and order of learning, and the role of emotion in learning, are still topics in educational psychology today. From its inception, psychology in the United States had deep connections to teaching. In 1890, William James founded the field of psychology at Harvard and developed a lecture series for teachers. James’ student, G. Stanley Hall, founded the American Psychological Association. Hall’s student, John Dewey, founded the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago and is considered

the father of the progressive education movement (Berliner, 2006; Hilgard, 1996; Pajares, 2003). Another of William James' students, E.L. Thorndike, wrote the first educational psychology text in 1903 and founded the *Journal of Educational Psychology* in 1910 (Woolfolk, 2012).

Thus, unlike many sciences, and even many branches of psychology, the fulfillment of the very purpose and goal of educational psychology depends upon the effective communication to and use of its findings by a wide variety of people *outside* the discipline itself. In fact, all of those who regulate, administer, and actually practice education – depend on the *teaching* of educational psychology (Knapp & Siefert, 2005).

Educational Psychology looks at teacher relationships, motivation, and cultural differences. All students hope to be treated equally by their teachers, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, and other social characteristics. Unfortunately, substantial scholarly evidence indicates that teachers, especially White teachers, evaluate black student's behavior and academic potential more negatively than White students (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013).

### **The Effects of Brown vs. the Board of Education**

*Brown vs. the Board of Education* has not had much of an impact on African-American students. Bell (2004) called attention to the failure of *Brown* to integrate American schools in his work. He noted that most African-American students still attend racially homogenous and economically distressed public schools with limited educational resources, facilities that are barely conducive to learning with high dropout rates, and low levels of achievement on most educational benchmarks (e.g., standardized test scores,

graduation rates, students' continuation to college). Similarly, Guinier (2004) offered the following critique of *Brown*:

The fact is that 50 years later, many of the social, political, and economic problems that the legally trained social engineers thought the Court had addressed through *Brown* are still deeply embedded in our society. Blacks lag behind Whites in multiple measures of educational achievement, and within the Black community, boys are falling further behind girls. (p. 92)

After *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, racial and gender inequities in school achievement are still particularly problematic in areas where there are larger concentrations of African Americans, such as in Southern states and urban centers<sup>1</sup>. For instance, Holzman (2004) found that New York and Chicago public schools, enrolling nearly 10% of the nation's African American males collectively, fail to graduate more than 70% of those students within four years of high school attendance. Trends such as these support the perspective that the promise of *Brown* remains unfulfilled. However, Willie and Willie (2005) characterized the ongoing implementation of *Brown* as a "work in progress" and argued that some gains have been made for African Americans as a result of the case and related legislation.

There has been limited attention placed on the intended outcomes of the ruling within the context of higher education. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 extended *Brown* to colleges and universities by prohibiting institutions receiving federal funds from discriminating based on race (Orfield, Marin, & Horn, 2005). Despite this, Orfield, et al (2005) described the persistent challenges of the "color line" in higher education, particularly in the areas of college access and achievement. Although racially integrated

educational institutions were supposed to emerge from *Brown* and Title VI, most public, predominantly White colleges and universities have remained predominantly White higher learning institutions. African-American males represented 7.9% of the 18- to 24-year-olds in the U.S. population, on average they were 2.8% of undergraduate students at the public flagship universities across the 50 states in 2004. At no flagship university did African-American male enrollments exceed 5.2% (Harper, 2008). Furthermore, Harper notes that African-American men made up only 4.3% of all students enrolled at institutions of higher education in 2002, the same as in 1976. The intention of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* was to narrow the achievement gap by integrating schools but was deterred due to social, political, and economic factors that were unrelated to education. These factors include social inequality, economic hardship, and societies hindering policies insensitive to African-American communities that lead to an unconstructive lifestyle, therefore contributing to the lack of motivation.

Harper (2012) reported that across four cohorts of undergraduates, the six-year graduation rate for Black male students attending public colleges and universities was 33.3%, compared to 48.1% for students overall. In addition, an alarming gender gap exists between Black males and females in graduate education in U.S. institutions of higher education. African-American males comprise only one-third of all doctoral students ("News and Views: Degree," 2005). Twenty-eight percent of Black males who enroll in graduate programs receive a master's degree compared to 72% of Black women. Similarly, 33% of Black males in doctoral programs complete their doctoral degree, compared to 66% of Black women (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Clearly, the low numbers of Black men with graduate degrees creates economic, political, social, and



personal disparities within the African-American community and the nation as a whole (“News and Views: Degree,” 2005). Such disparities have a direct as well as indirect impact on how one defines his or her identity.

### **Identity**

An identity is the set of meanings that define a person who occupies a particular role in society, is a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person (Burke & Stets, 2009). For example, individuals have meanings they apply to themselves in various roles ranging from family member, employee, or member of a community organization. Racial identity is identification with a particular group or as one’s racial group membership. Racial identity places individuals in various groups based on physical features. People possess multiple identities and occupy multiple roles, yet members of society share the meanings of these identities. Identity theory seeks to explain the specific meanings that individuals attach to their multiple identities. These meanings associated with identities relate to how an individual’s identities influence their behavior, thoughts, feelings, and emotions (Burke & Stets, 2009).

Identities characterize individuals according to their positions in society. The individual exists within the context of the social structure. Cooley (1902) suggested that the individual and society are two sides of the same coin. There is an elaborate system of mutual influences between characteristics of the individual and characteristics of the society. Educators need to understand both the nature of the individuals who create society as well as the action of the individuals in society. The nature of individuals and their actions depend in large part on the location of socio-structural positions. Some

structures tend to not be seen at all, such as the patterns of action that block access of Blacks to the educational system or the patterns of actions that create “glass ceilings” in organizations preventing qualified women from rising to positions of power and authority (Burke & Stets, 2009).

Social inequity places Blacks in a lower socio-structural position. Specifically, cultural mistrust, or the tendency for Blacks to distrust Whites in institutional, personal, or social contexts is common<sup>2</sup>. Such distrust, fueled by the pervasive influence of racism, saps Blacks’ confidence and trust in White Americans and White-controlled institutions (Feagin & McKinney, 2003; Larson & Ovando, 2001). While many Blacks have opportunities to work within the dominant culture, they still face limited opportunities for promotion, commonly known as “the glass ceiling” (Grodsky & Pager, 2001).

### **Roles in Identity Theory**

The emphasis on role identities was likely due to identity theorists’ symbolic interactionist roots, especially the focus on individuals playing out roles in interaction (Thoits & Virshup, 1997). Roles provide structure, organization, and meaning to the self and to situations. It is important to review social positions and roles to understand role identities. A social position is a category in society or an organization that an individual occupies. There are normative social positions given one’s life trajectory such as student, worker (for example, teacher, carpenter, or artist), spouse, and parent. There are also counter normative social positions, such as criminal, alcoholic, or homeless person. Other social positions are categorized based on one’s interests, activities, or habits (for example, activist, football player, dreamer, or maverick). These social positions are

known as “social types” or “kinds of people it is possible to be in a given society” (Stryker & Statham 1985, p. 323).

A role is the set of expectations tied to a social position that guides people’s attitudes and behavior (Burke & Stets, 2009). For example, tied to the social position of “student” are the roles of learning new knowledge and skills, establishing an area of study, passing courses, acquiring a degree, and so forth. Associated with the role of the “teacher” are the (role) expectations of being knowledgeable and instructive. There may be more than one expectation tied to a social position. Expectations can also refer to a minimal part or a large part of one’s range of interactions. For example, the role of “male” carries with it many expectations such as being dominant, assertive, and taking the lead. These expectations will be applicable to a wide range of interactions such as at home, school, and work, and with friends. In contrast, the role of “fraternity member” carries with it expectations that typically are relevant with friends or at school; thus, they are applicable to a smaller range of interactions (Burke & Stets, 2009).

A role identity is the internalized meanings of a role that individuals apply to themselves (Burke & Stets, 2009). For example, the role identity of “teacher” may include the meanings of “mentor” and “friend” that a person applies to him or herself while playing out the role of teacher. The meanings in role identities derive partly from culture and partly from individuals’ distinctive interpretation of the role. Individuals are socialized into what it means to be a student, friend, or worker. When two people interact, we see these two persons as relating to each other not as whole persons but as persons relating to each other only in terms of specific roles. For every role that exists in a situation, there is a related counter role. The role of teacher makes no sense without the

role of a student. The counter role can be defined as a pattern of behavior only in relation to the pattern of behavior of a student. If roles are related to counter roles, then by extension, identities are related to counter identities (Burke, 1980). For example, the student identity has a corresponding counter identity of professor. Since each person assumes a different identity in the situation, correspondingly there will be different perceptions and actions between individuals.

### **Integrating Role, Social, and Person Identities**

A social identity based on group membership or social category provides self-meaning that is shared with other group members. In verifying the self as a group member, a person receives recognition, approval, and acceptance from other group members. An individual's ties to the other group members are like their ties among themselves. A person receives group membership by being like the other members. In contrast, a role identity is tied to other members of the role set, verification comes by what one does, not who one is (Stets & Burke, 2000). Verification consists of mutual, complementary, and reciprocal processes. The output of each role is the input to its counter role. The verification of each identity depends upon the mutual verification of the counter identity in a reciprocal process. An individual receives verification not by being like another person, but by performing in a way that confirms and verifies the other's role identity and is matched by the other's performance in a fashion that verifies one's own role identity (Burke & Stets, 2009). Verification in a role identity reinforces the importance of a role within a set of role relationships. Each role becomes necessary to sustain its counter roles and thereby sustains itself (Burkes & Stets, 2009).

Finally, verification of a person's identity sustains the individual as a biosocial being (Burke & Stets, 2009). By acting, controlling, and verifying the meanings of "who" one is as a person, the person distinguishes himself or herself as a unique, identifiable individual with qualities that other individuals can count on and use to verify their own person identities (or group or role identities). Individual names may set each person apart and identify a person in relatively unique fashion, but meaningful traits and characteristics make individuals unique: levels of dominance or submissiveness, levels of energy, being tense or easygoing, being emotional or stoic, and so on (Burkes & Stets, 2009). These attributes suggest that individuals are complex beings and therefore have the ability to relate to or categorize themselves as having multiple defining attributes with which they identify.

### **Multiple Identities**

Linville's (1985; 1987) complexity theory dealt with the idea that individuals with more complex selves were better buffered from situational stresses. The complexity of the self was defined as the number of "distinct" self-aspects. Distinct self-aspects means the number of roles, relationships, traits, or activities that do not share attributes or meanings. Stryker (1980, 2000) suggested that the complexity of the self is a reflection of the complexity of society. As society becomes more differentiated in terms of groups, organizations, and roles available to persons, persons who take on more of these as identities become more complex themselves.

The viewpoint that identities are tied to social structural positions (i.e., individuals' memberships and roles in the groups, organizations, and networks to which they belong form the basis of many of their identities) grows out of structural symbolic

interaction theory (Stryker, 2000). This perspective suggests a number of ways in which the identities may relate to one another in terms of the way in which the positions connect within the social structure. From this perspective, there are three different conditions: a person may have multiple role identities within a single group, a person may have the same role identities but in different groups, and a person may have different role identities within intersecting groups.

Multiple identities within a single group could be single person who is a husband, father, son, and brother within an extended family. Multiple identities based on a common role within multiple groups happen in a sequential sense but not necessarily activated at the same time. A person may have the identity “friend” in separate non-overlapping groups or “treasurer” in several non-overlapping voluntary associations. Each of these role identities resides in the same individual, and many of the meanings have shared identities due to existing in a common culture. Multiple identities exist in intersecting groups. For example, a person may have the identity “friend” to a peer and “daughter” to her parents. The two groups may intersect when the peer visits the daughter’s home while her parents are present. The situation activates both identities and provides relevant sets of meanings and expectations to the identities (Burke & Stets, 2009). There are also circumstances that trigger an individual to alter or change his or her identity accordingly.

### **Identity Change**

Identity change implies that changes occurs with meanings held in high regard. There are four sources of change: (1) changes in situation, (2) identity conflicts, (3) identity stand and behavior conflicts, and (4) negotiation and the presence of others

(Burke & Stets, 2009). Changes in the situational meanings result in a discrepancy between the identity-standard meanings and the self-relevant meanings in the situation. Due to this discrepancy, people experience some form of distress and uncertainty. Normally, people would attempt to restore the situational meanings to match the identity-standard meanings, but when this is not possible, the only thing that can reduce the discrepancy is for the identity standard to change to match the situational meanings (Burke & Stets, 2009). When that has occurred, there will no longer be a discrepancy, and the distress that was felt will disappear (Burkes & Stets, 2009).

Identity conflict happens when people have multiple identities related to one another. The standards of each identity contain the same dimensions of meaning, but they are set to different and conflicting levels. In a certain situation, the identities activate at the same time (Burke & Stets, 2009). For example, a man may have a gender identity that defines him as masculine, that is, as rough and tough. He may also have a role identity as a minister that defines him as gentle and caring. Without yet going into how this might come about, it is clear that if the controls perceptions of rough/gentle to match the standard for one identity, these same perceptions are discrepant with the standard for that other identity (Burkes & Stets, 2009).

Individuals normally choose behaviors whose meanings are consistent with our identity or whose meanings restore situational meanings to be consistent with our identity (Burkes & Stets, 2009). Individuals cannot always choose desired behaviors and meanings. There may be situational reasons for choosing a behavior that is somewhat at odds with our identity. One reason may be that a behavior is at odds with one identity but

in accord with another, as in the case of conflicting identities. However, another reason may be that we do not fully see the consequences of a behavior or a decision.

Another circumstance in which identities change is a part of an adaptive strategy inherent in identities that help them establish what Burkes and Stets (2009) called mutual verification contexts. Mutual verification contexts are situations in which the identities of each participant not only verify themselves, but also help verify other participants' identities. A person alters the self to achieve desired and shared meanings as outcomes. Greater identity-verification and mutual verification occur when a person becomes aware of shared meanings and how to control them. Taking the role of the other is the source of that understanding that becomes incorporated into the identity as a set of standards or guidelines for assessing one's own behavior. Taking the role of the other is thus a mechanism by which identities adapt to the social situation in interacting with others and facilitate the creation of mutual verification contexts in which each identity in verifying itself also verifies the identifies of others in the situation (Burkes & Stets, 2009).

### **Ethnicity/Ethnic Identity**

In this country the terms ethnic identity and racial identity have been used interchangeably, and attempts have been made to understand the interaction between groups in society from both perspectives (Cross, 1971; Glazer & Moynihan, 1970; Gordon, 1964; Pierce, Hudson, & Singleton, 2011; Smith, 1991). Ethnicity, according to Phinney (1996) contains three basic components that are important to psychological functioning; which are (1) culture, which distinguishes the group; (2) identity, or a sense of group membership; and (3) minority status, or the subject of oppression by the dominant populace.



Early scholars viewed ethnicity as something that is “fixed, fundamental, and rooted in the unchangeable circumstances of birth” (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, p.48). Hence, characteristics and traits attributed to ethnic groups were perceived as innate and natural. Waters (1990, 1996) finds that ethnicity is flexible and optional, although for Whites only. Minorities have limited ethnic options because their ascribed race trumps any ethnic status which is why they cannot practice symbolic ethnicity. For instance, a person with black skin who had some Scottish ancestry would have to work very hard to decide to present himself or herself as Scottish, and in many important ways he/she would be denied that option. Raced as Black, any ethnic claims (e.g. Scottish) go unrecognized by larger society.

### **Racial Identity**

Racial identity development is a critical part of the overall framework of motivation and achievement in academic settings for Black students. Some students learn about racial identity at home and/or at school. Student who learn about racial identity develop an environment apt for learning about oneself and have pride in one's culture, capabilities, and potential. Racial identity is described as identification with a particular group (Phinney, 1990), as an individual's conception of his or her racial group membership (Bernal and Knight, 1993), and as a construct which operates on two levels: the self and the group (Hernandez-Sheets, 1999). It also refers to an individual's perception that he or she shares a “common racial heritage with a particular racial group” (Helms, 1991, p. 3). The term, racial identity, has also been used to group individuals based on physical characteristics.

Many minority groups in America reveal racial and ethnic identities in very conscious ways. This manifestation occurs via two very conflicting social and cultural influences (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999). One influence is the cultural traditions and values from religious, familial, neighborhood, and educational communities. This encourages a positive sense of ethnic identity and self-esteem. The second influence, contrastingly provides a negative influence, involving the creation of racial and ethnic identity through negative treatment and media messages received from others solely due to one's race and ethnicity (Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999).

In many instances, underachievement is more likely to occur when the values, beliefs, norms, and attitudes of members of the Black culture are inconsistent with those endorsed and supported by the majority culture. Ford (2011) indicated the knowledge and skills Black students acquire contradict information taught in a formal classroom setting. Ford asserts that Black students tend to be more socially-oriented and extraverted than their White counterparts and are conditioned to expect social interaction. Underachievement for Black students can be partially attributed to their inability to adopt or learn the mainstream social code of conduct. Often times, the rules of these social codes of conduct are unspoken and untaught but are expected and assumed common knowledge (Ford, 2011).

Racial identity development, as defined by Tatum (1993), is "a process of moving from internalized racism to a position of empowerment based on a positively affirmed sense of racial identity" (p. 3). It plays a significant role in the cultivation of self-esteem, self-worth, and achievement. Educational achievement and attainment in American society has well-established links to life outcomes such as enhanced life satisfaction and

well-being. Structural inequity alone does not fully explain the beliefs and attitudes that lead to academic behaviors. Researchers in the field of motivation suggest that youths' school engagement, performance, and persistence in an academic task link to their beliefs about their purpose, meaning, value, and ability to complete a task (Chavous et al., 2003).

### **Racial Identity Development Models**

Most identity development models and theories trace their roots to either the psychosocial research of Erik Erikson (1959; 1980), the identity formation studies of Marcia (1980), or the cognitive structural work of Jean Piaget (1952). Similarly, each of these racial identity development models focus on the psychosocial process of defining one's self (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999). To go a step further, some theories such as adult development and White racial identity, work to acknowledge the cognitive complexity of the self-definition process (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Helms, 1993).

According to Chávez and Guido-DiBrito (1999), racial identity development models were originally developed primarily for African Americans to understand the Black experience in America. Cross (1995) developed one of the first and most prevalent models of racial identity. His model helps to outline racial identity development as a dynamically critical progression. The individual's racial or ethnic group, as well as those who are outside of it, influence this transformation.

Parham (1989) described racial identity development as a lifelong, continuously changing process for Blacks. Parham posits that in identity development, Black individuals move through angry feelings about Whites and develop a positive Black frame of reference (Parham, 1989). In an ideal state of affairs, this would lead to a

realistic acuity of one's racial identity. Parham (1989) directly relates the development of Black identity to White American culture in a way that moves individual Black identity from the unconscious to the conscious. Parham's model is helpful in that it provides a sense of progression as well as a framework for movement from an unconscious racial identity to a conscious racial identity. The challenge with Parham's model is that it purports exposure to racial differences is not only unavoidable but is also the principal trigger for the development of racial identity. Many people believe immersion in one's own racial group serves as the primary trigger for racial identity development.

Helms (1995), who developed one of the first White racial identity models, addressed the existence of White privilege as well as individual, cultural, and institutional racism. Helms refers to the status of White racial identity development as statuses rather than stages, primarily because individuals can be in more than one stage at a time at any given point in their development. The first three statuses (contact, disintegration, and reintegration) outline how a White individual progresses away from a racist framework before moving onto the next three statuses (pseudo-independence, immersion/emersion, and autonomy) where individuals discover a nonracist White identity.

Helms' (1995) model is helpful in outlining interracial exposure as a powerful trigger for the development of racial identity. However, what is problematic about her model is the confusion of an individual's development toward a nonracist frame within development of a racial identity. She ultimately conveys that the development of racial identity for Whites is rooted in their perceptions, feelings, and behaviors toward Blacks rather than about the development and consciousness of an actual White racial identity.

Commonly, the racial identity models of Cross (1991), Parham (1989), and Helms (1995) all make a case for what we would describe as an intersection between the racial perceptions of others and racial perception of oneself, otherwise known as racial identity development. Our perceptions of others are vital in the development of one's own racial identities and act as triggers for development and consciousness of his or her racial identity. Simultaneously, there is also great significance in the consideration of racial identity for oneself as well as for groups of individuals.

Models of identity development typically outline commonalities that are likely within a particular ethnic group. Some racial/ethnic identity development models focus on what individuals learn about their culture directly from their family and community (Phinney 1989). Fundamentally, a person develops identity from the same culture of individuals who are connected by a shared race, ethnicity, religion, language, geography, and so forth. Phinney (1989) developed a model describing an ethnic identity process applicable to all ethnic groups. Phinney advocates that most ethnic groups need to resolve two basic conflicts that occur due to their membership in a non-dominant group. First, non-dominant group members must resolve the stereotyping and prejudicial treatment of the dominant White American population toward non-dominant group individuals. Next, most minorities must reach a resolution regarding the clash of value systems between non-dominant and dominant groups. Phinney's (1989) model is helpful in identifying very real triggers for racial identity consciousness as well as outlining potential threats to self-concepts of race and ethnicity. What is missing from her model, on the other hand, is the discussion of one's immersion into his or her own culture, a very critical aspect of developing one's racial identity.

There are fundamental differences in cultural styles and frames of reference between Blacks and Whites that often lead to inconsistent views on success and achievement. Ford (2011) purports that the African perspective emphasizes spiritualism, whereas the Euro-American perspective emphasizes materialism. Ford (2011) also describes collectivism as a primary characteristic of Black culture. Black students are encouraged to view themselves as a central part of the family and the community; therefore, success for one means success for all. Unfortunately, the collectivist way of thinking is adverse to the individualistic, materialistic propensity of the dominant culture.

Patton and Sims (1993) identified three components of a Black philosophical system that offers a propitious framework for developing theories surrounding the assessment of the intelligence and giftedness among Black students: metaphysics, axiology, and epistemology. Metaphysics refers to an individual's ability to perceive and understand reality as a whole as well as understanding the interconnectedness of parts that are used to make up the whole or 'big picture'. Critical and contextual thinking are necessary constructs of intelligence and achievement. Axiology is the preference for person-to-person interactions and the development of strong social bonds, a preference that is common within the African American culture. Lastly, epistemology encompasses one's sensitivity to emotions and feelings of his or her own as well as others (Ford, 2011). The need for social interaction, emotional nurturing, and support is a prevalent need among Black students in order to function optimally and thrive in academic settings (Ford, 2011). Educators who are familiar with and sensitive to these and other cultural themes and differences understand the critical need to decrease the cultural gaps between

the educational system and its students. These educators are typically more willing to work with gifted Black students.

### **Racial Socialization**

Racial socialization is the proposed process by which Black individuals develop a healthy Black racial identity (Stevenson, 1995). In general, the most influential and primary socializing agent is the family (Greene, 1990). Racial socialization describes a specific aspect of socialization that communicates messages to children to bolster their sense of racial identity, given the possibility and reality that their life experiences may include racially hostile encounters (Stevenson, 1995). Consequently, this process serves as a “buffer” against racist environments and has been discussed by several scholars in literature (e.g., Bowman & Howard, 1985; Greene, 1990; Spencer, 1983; Stevenson, 1995; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990).

Boykin and Toms (1985) surveyed the literature on racial socialization and identified three areas of socialization specific to African- American families. The three areas of socialization include socializing children according to mainstream social values, socializing within a Black cultural context separate from the mainstream, and socializing children with an understanding that there is a reality to the oppression of minority status individuals in American society. Research indicated that African-American men and women who reported receiving preparation for racism as children felt it was beneficial to their development and sense of identity (Demo & Hughes, 1990; Edwards & Polite, 1992).

Unconscious bias leads to unintentional racism. Moule (2009) suggests that unconscious biases affect all of our relationships between teachers and students, teachers

and parents, teachers and other educators. Understanding our own biases is a first step toward improving the interactions that we have with all people and is essential if we hope to build deep community within our schools. Biases are rooted in stereotypes and prejudices. A stereotype is a simplistic image or distorted truth about a person or group based on a prejudgment of habits, traits, abilities, or expectations (Weinstein & Mellen, 1997). Individuals learn ethnic and racial stereotypes as part of normal socialization and are consistent among many populations and across time.

### **Black Graduate Students with White Faculty**

Truitt (2009) suggests that Black graduate students at predominantly White colleges currently have a much more successful relationship with the faculty who teach than past students. Rose (2005) contends that the relationship between faculty and students can “provide sponsorship, protection, challenge, exposure, visibility, counseling, acceptance, confirmation, and/or coaching and can have a large impact on students’ perceptions of the quality of their graduate experience” (p. 53). The absence of positive faculty-student relationships can leave Black graduate students feeling helpless (Brown et al., 1999; Tuitt, 2009). Helplessness may contribute to why Black graduates fail to graduate at the same rate as their White counterparts (Winkle-Wagner, Johnson, Morelon-Quainoo, & Santiago, 2010).

It is important to review the impact that positive interactions between faculty and students can have on Black students’ academic success needs on a larger scale. Research in this area provided some insight to the benefits and challenges of establishing positive cross-racial relationships between Black graduate students and White faculty (Johnson-Bailey, Cervero, & Baugh, 2004). It is important to have graduate students trained under



the guidance and support of experienced faculty members in particular, and specifically by Black faculty (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2004). Unfortunately, there is little information on how race may affect the interactions between White faculty and Black graduate students, especially in regards to those interactions taking place in the classroom at a PWI.

The literature supports the notion that Black students in higher education have unique experiences that differ from other minority and White students. The racial climate within an institution's campus, college, department, and even the program, can greatly affect Black graduates' sense of belonging (Johnson-Bailey, 2004). Black doctoral students report a greater sense of separation from the institution and racial discrimination when compared to Latino and White doctoral students.

Thomas, Willis, and Davis (2007) viewed the cultural exposure of working across race as being very beneficial. However, the researchers pointed out that faculty members of the majority racial group may not understand the "educational and non-academic experiences of ethnic minority graduate students or lack experience in working in diverse contexts" (p. 183). McIntosh (2001) defined White privilege as "an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks" inherited by Whites (p. 78). Wise (2008) posited that "to be White is to be born with certain advantages and privileges that have been generally inaccessible to others" (p. 17). The literature indicated that when White faculty work across race, they may exhibit cultural anxiety. That anxiety could prevent the faculty member from making comments to the student and in fact, the anxiety may be a result of White faculty working through their own racial identity. It

should also be noted that the faculty member simply may not have an expertise in the subject of race.

Thomas et al. (2007) informs that it is quite possible that the faculty may resign to choose a student or mentee that looks more like him, in regards to race. Advisors certainly play an important role in the doctoral student's educational journey from matriculation to conclusion through experience and persistence (Lovitts, 2001). But the doctoral student's experience and persistence could be impacted by the race of student and the advisor (Nettles, 1990; Patterson-Stewart, Ritchie, & Sanders, 1997). This subject should be examined further in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of the doctoral student's advising needs.

### **Black Graduate Students with Black Faculty**

There is limited research on the interaction between Black faculty and Black graduate students in PWIs. The research regarding undergraduate institutions indicates that Black undergraduates have distinctive expectations of Black professors (Guiffrida, 2005). Previous research indicates that Black students make perceptions to (a) Black faculty's use of diverse content in their courses (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002), (b) the expectation that Black faculty will seek to establish a mentoring relationship with them (Guiffrida, 2006), (c) the likelihood that Black faculty will not treat them in stereotypical ways, (d) Black faculty members' positive belief in their academic ability, (e) the anticipation that Black faculty will hold them to higher standards (Guiffrida, 2005), and (f) their questioning of Black faculty credibility (Hendrix, 1998). The previous points provide insight to the expectations of a Black undergraduate student but due to the lack of

Black faculty at the PWIs, it is not unlikely that a Black graduate would hold the same perceptions.

Truitt (2009) believes that research within the field of “social science also adds to our understanding of how race may affect the pedagogical interaction between Black professors and Black graduate students” (p. 188). The researcher cites previous research in own-group conformity in relation to a Black undergraduate’s or graduate’s expectation of the Black professor’s behavior. Own group conformity indicates that individuals may experience elevated levels of stress when members of a specific racial group perceive that other members of that same group hold expectations about how they are supposed to behave. In this context of expecting how interactions should transpire between a Black student and Black faculty, own-group conformity can create a complex challenge and discomfort for Black faculty and Black students. Similarly, Black graduate students could also have increased levels of stress when they perceive that Black faculty have race-related expectations of them.

### **Masculinity**

Black males do not immediately identify masculinity as gender constancy. Black males only know the messages from other adults. If a young boy is hurt, adults may tell him, “suck it up,” “you better not cry,” or “stop acting like a girl.” These messages gradually introduce the concept of masculinity: largely implicit, culturally specific, social meanings that relay truths about how males are supposed to think, behave, or function (Jackson, 2012). When young girls hear these indirect messages, they may behave differently toward males who wince at pain. They may learn from this script that such a male response to pain is unattractive and/or infantile. Although these early lessons are

frequently about physical pain, it is not too long before boys learn to hide their emotional and psychological pain. Young boys essentially shut down, paralyze, or at least expand one's threshold for pain of all types (Jackson, 2012).

Another kind of pain emerges for Black males in the U.S. This pain is steady, constant, and rarely subsides. It is racial pain, complicated by the rules of being a man. In addition to protecting the family and community, Black men have proudly led civil rights protests alongside women. Black men pushed the boundaries of performance in virtually every field of endeavor. Yet the force of racial misery in the U.S. often works to batter our dream and blunt the imaginations of Black men. When Black males experience racism, bigotry, or prejudice, the expectation for Black men is to "take it like a man." A debilitating racial pain accompanies Black masculinity in America. Public spheres suppress conversations about race and racism while promoting a neoliberal assimilation to Whiteness. These spheres construct a containment discourse that simultaneously situates and frames the possibilities for Black boys and men. It is time to rethink Black masculinity for boys and men (Jackson, 2012).

Black males are frequently presented in the media as amoral beings (Wood & Hilton, 2013). Negative depictions of Black males in television, radio, print, and on the internet portray them as gangsters, rapists, womanizers, drug dealers, and thugs (Wood & Hilton, 2013). These negative depictions are rarely balanced with moral portrayals of Black males as successful contributors to society, family-oriented, working professionals, positive role models, or leaders. Negative representations of these males serve to shape societal perceptions of Black boys, youth, and adults (Hall, 2001; Hutchinson, 1997; Jackson, 2006). These perceptions of Black males underscore the importance of

understanding their identities and developing moral individuals. Trying to understand identity among Black males is a complex task, given the nexus of moral, Black, and male-role identities and their development (Wood & Hilton, 2013). These multiple identities intersect in unique ways that negate a complex examination; necessitating a more complicated and layered understanding of Black males that surpasses a surface-level understanding of identity, delving deeper into the intricacies of the Black male in America (Wood & Hilton, 2013).

Socialized males have several interactions to perform gender-role identities (Wood & Hilton, 2013). Gender-role identities refer to the “beliefs about characteristics and behaviors associated with one sex as opposed to the other” (Woolfolk, 2008 p. 194). Since gender roles are socially constructed, perceptions of male gender roles are socially constructed. Perceptions of male gender roles are not only shaped by patriarchal figures (e.g., fathers, older brothers, uncles, cousins, grandfather), but by all members of society (e.g., sisters, peers, co-eds, associates, teachers), and the media. However, since socialization varies by numerous factors (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, religion, culture), the construction of what it means to be male differs by one’s background (Kimmel & Messner, 2004).

Wade (1996) noted that Black males perceive traditional masculine roles to include providing for one’s family, goal orientation, aggression, and competitiveness. Wade (2008) also found that Black males who rejected traditional roles of masculinity reported more attitudes and behaviors associated with health and wellness. These roles are common masculine ideals found across racial/ethnic groups. However, Wade also stated that non-traditional masculine ideals found across groups were endorsed by Black

males, this included spirituality, community, interest in the welfare of others, compassion, and familial equality.

Majors and Billson (1992) introduced the concept of ‘cool pose,’ a gender identity espoused by Black males where lack of caring about others and one’s own development and future are performed as a marker of masculinity. This identity exudes power, pride, and control as core values of manhood, often serving as a protective mechanism against societal oppression. In general, depictions of Black gender roles center around three primary stereotypes: the athlete, the entertainer, and the criminal (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Hawkins, 1998). Oliver (2006) identified three common masculine roles associated with Black males, usually evident in the ‘street’ context, including “the tough guy/gang member, the player, and the hustler/balla” (p. 928). The juxtaposition of black male roles and traditional masculine roles deserves further investigation when attempting to understand how one understands his own identity in relation to the world around him.

### **Co-Cultural Theory**

Orbe’s (1998a) co-cultural theory aims to make sense of the world, to the extent possible, from the perspective of the other, and provides the theoretical framework for this study. Co-cultural theory helps explain how those who are traditionally marginalized in dominant societal structures communicate in their everyday lives with both in-group members and those in the dominant group. Grounded in muted group theories (see Kramarae, 1981), standpoint theories (see Smith, 1987), and phenomenology (Husserl, 1973; Lanigan, 1988), co-cultural theory is derived from the experiences of a variety of co-cultural groups.

It is necessary to have knowledge of some of the recent movements to understand the foundation of a co-cultural theoretical framework. Muted-group theory was initially established by the anthropologists Shirley and Edwin Ardener, and later adopted by communication scholars to address the experiences of women (Kramarae, 1981) and African-American men (Orbe, 1998b). Ardener (1975) and Ardener (1978) suggested that in every society, a social hierarchy exists that privileges some groups over others. Those groups that function at the top of the social hierarchy determine largely the communication system of the entire society. Over time, the structure of this system that reflects the “worldview” of dominant group members are reinforced as the appropriate communicative system for both dominant and non-dominant group members (Ardener, 1978).

Feminist sociology scholars established research for standpoint theory (Harding, 1987, 1991; Hartstock, 1983; Smith, 1987). Exposing the daily life experiences of persons situated in subordinate positions (Smith, 1987), standpoint theory focuses on acknowledging a specific societal capacity that serves as a subjective vantage point from which persons interact with themselves and the world. Standpoint theory, as it contributes to co-cultural theory, contains several tenets. First, research must begin from a person’s concrete lived experiences and include the experiences of marginalized group members in the process of inquiry in meaningful ways. Second, the inclusion of co-cultural group experiences is crucial since those with and without societal power have conflicting worldviews; the vast majority of existing scholarship presents only the dominant perspective. A third tenet extends this fundamental concept to describe the significance of

including perspectives of marginalized group members in scholarly inquiry (Orbe, 1998a).

The co-cultural theoretical framework uses a phenomenological approach to studying the communicative experiences of diverse co-cultural group members. The fundamental conceptual stance inherent in a phenomenological methodology, as it unites with muted-group and standpoint theories, appears especially fitting in the exploration of co-cultural communication. Gonzalez et al. (1994) call for research that invites personal experience into inquires examining culture, power, and communication. A phenomenological inquiry represents one methodological avenue that centers on lived experiences. Classified as a human science (Van Manen, 1990), hermeneutic phenomenology is the study of the lifeworld. Phenomenology focuses on the conscious experience of a person as she or he relates to the lived world (Lanigan, 1979). Phenomenological methodology includes a three-step process of discovery: collection of descriptions of lived experiences, reduction of capital into essential themes, and hermeneutic interpretation of themes. In short, phenomenology encourages researchers to acknowledge persons as multidimensional and complex beings with particular social, cultural, and historical, life circumstances (Van Manen, 1990).

Co-cultural theory has primarily been used to provide insight into the general approaches that various co-cultural group members take in negotiating their societal positioning in organizations and inter-group relations (Buzzanell, 1999; Gates, 2003; Kirby, 2007; Lapinski & Orbe; Parker, 2003; Groscruth & Orbe, 2006). Additionally, co-cultural theory illuminates for out-group members the unique experiences of people of color (Gates, 2003; Miura, 2001; Parker, 2003), international students (Urban & Orbe,



2007), and immigrants (Kirby, 2007), or those who are or may be marginalized from the dominant culture. More recently, scholars (Harris, Miller, & Trego, 2004; O'Hara & Meyer, 2003) have used co-cultural theory to examine how majority group members adapt to co-cultural practices in contexts where they are in the minority.

Co-cultural theory invokes five ontological/epistemological assumptions as its theoretical scaffold, and the theory's utility as an interpretive framework is warranted to the extent that these assumptions reasonably apply to the phenomenon in question (Orbe, 1998b). The first assumption is that any society has a structured hierarchy such that certain groups have more privilege over others. Second, the privileged group assumes the position of power by which it creates norms in accordance with its own communication styles. Third, those established norms create obstacles in the lives of the underrepresented people, or co-cultural members. Fourth, whereas the experiences of co-cultural members certainly vary, they usually have shared perceptions about their underrepresented position in the society. Finally, those co-cultural members use a variety of communicative strategies to counteract the oppressive force of the dominant structure (Orbe, 1998b).

Co-cultural communication refers to interactions between dominant and non-dominant groups and is preferred to other terms (such as subcultured, subordinate, or muted group). Existing terminology connotes co-cultural groups as inferior to dominant group members and passively muted by oppressive communication structures. The definition of co-cultural communication just given is a general one that is easy to understand. Communication between "dominant" and "nondominant" group members is a simplistic definition, given that societal positions consist of simultaneous memberships within a multitude of co-cultural groups. In this regard, the general definition is accurate

but problematic since people, such as African-American men, can concurrently be dominant (male) and non-dominant (African American) group members (Orbe, 1998b). Most of the descriptions and strategies draw from instances in which co-cultural group members interact with dominant group members, those persons who are European American, male, heterosexual, able-bodied, and/or from the middle- or upper-socioeconomic status. Other interactions are characterized by two co-cultural group members communicating; like two Mexican women, and another co-cultural variable becomes a salient issue (one woman's disability) within the interaction. This is an important consideration as it relates to the idea that people can function as the "target and vehicle" (Foucault, 1979) of oppressive communication. The stance of dominant group status is pervasive throughout our society. Nevertheless, the positioning of dominant and non-dominant group status is also contingent on other co-cultural and the specific communication context.

Co-cultural group members, despite having different personal identities, characterize their communication with dominant group members in fairly consistent terms. Although this is not true for all co-cultural group members, most often they describe their interactions with dominant group members as "cautious," "guarded," "fearful," "quiet," "uncomfortable," "not as outgoing," "careful," and "stifled." Co-cultural group members are involved in a process of "conscious communication" when interacting with dominant group members. Instead of the spontaneous interaction typical of intra-cultural communication, co-cultural group members are apprehensive while speaking with others unlike themselves and careful to say exactly what they mean. For co-cultural members, the need for strategic communication is reinforced by instances in

which they attempted to have their voices heard, only to be ignored by others (Orbe, 1998a).

Co-cultural group members use many communicative practices while interacting within dominant societal structures. A diverse group of co-researchers in several research projects (Ford-Ahmed & Orbe, 1992; Orbe, 1998b, in press; Roberts & Orbe, 1996) described 26 co-cultural practices. The following section explores a few practices and strategies that one might use to communicate in an interracial context.

Avoiding, as reported by Ribeau, Baldwin, and Hecht (1994), is a strategy used to evade or circumvent a person, conversation, or topic. Avoiding is generally physical in nature and involves co-cultural group members who acknowledge maintaining actual physical distance from acquaintances and co-workers. Co-cultural group members mirror, or deliberately replicate the practices of members of the dominant group to make their co-cultural identities less visible or invisible.

Dispelling stereotypes is a behavior that is largely unconscious and natural. For some, this practice is a by-product of being spontaneous, open, and unreserved in environments populated by dominant group members. Censoring the self involves being very conscious and mindful of their actions and perceptions when interacting with others. Many individuals describe instances of censoring themselves when they are extremely offended by dominant group members but decide to remain silent. Instead of confronting the offenders or disclosing their discomfort, they resolve to contain their immediate reactions and say nothing, to “blow it off,” or, as one of this study’s subjects aptly depicted, “swallow it” (Orbe, 1998a).

Table 1: Co-Cultural Strategies

**Nonassertive Assimilation**

Strategy	Description
1) Emphasizing Commonalities	Focusing on human similarities while downplaying or ignoring co-cultural differences
2) Developing Positive Face	Assuming a gracious communicator stance where one is more considerate, polite, and attentive to dominant group members
3) Censoring Self	Remaining silent when comments from dominant group members are inappropriate, indirectly insulting, or highly offensive
4) Averting Controversy	Averting communication away from controversial or potentially dangerous subject areas

**Assertive Assimilation**

Strategy	Description
5) Extensive Preparation	Engaging in an extensive amount of detailed (mental/concrete) groundwork prior to interactions with dominant group members
6) Overcompensating	Conscious attempts – consistently enacted in response to a pervasive fear of discrimination – to become a “superstar”
7) Manipulating Stereotypes	Conforming to commonly accepted beliefs about group members as a strategic means to exploit them for personal gain
8) Bargaining	Striking a covert or overt arrangement with dominant group members where both parties agree to ignore co-cultural differences

Table 1 continued.

**Aggressive Assimilation**

Strategy	Description
9) Dissociating	Making a concerted effort to elude any connection with behaviors typically associated with one's co-cultural group
10) Mirroring	Adopting dominate group codes in attempt to make one's co-cultural identity more (or totally) invisible
11) Strategic Distancing	Avoiding any association with other co-cultural group members in attempts to be perceived as a distinct individual
12) Ridiculing Self	Invoking or participating in discourse, either passively or actively, that is demeaning to co-cultural group members

**Nonassertive Accommodation**

Strategy	Description
13) Increasing Visibility	Covertly, yet strategically, maintaining a co-cultural presence within dominant structures
14) Dispelling Stereotypes	Myths of generalized group characteristics and behaviors are countered through the process of just being one's self

**Assertive Accommodation**

Strategy	Description
15) Communicating Self	Interacting with dominant group members in an authentic, open, and genuine manner; used by those with strong self-concepts
16) Intragroup Networking	Identifying and working with other co-cultural group members who share common philosophies, convictions, goals
17) Utilizing Liaisons	Identifying specific dominant group members who can be trusted for support, guidance and assistance
18) Educating Others	Taking the role of teacher in co-cultural interactions; enlightening dominant group members of co-cultural norms, values, etc.

Table 1 continued.

**Aggressive Accommodation**

Strategy	Description
19) Confronting	Using the necessary aggressive methods, including ones that seemingly violate the “rights” or others, to assert one’s voice
20) Gaining Advantage	Inserting references to co-cultural oppression as a means to provoke dominant group reactions and gain advantage

**Nonassertive Separation**

Strategy	Description
21) Avoiding	Maintaining a distance from dominant group members; refraining from activities and/or locations where interaction is likely
22) Maintaining Barriers	Imposing, through the use of verbal and nonverbal cues, a psychological distance from dominant group members

**Assertive Separation**

Strategy	Description
23) Exemplifying Strength	Promoting the recognition of co-cultural group strengths, past accomplishments, and contributions to society
24) Embracing Stereotypes	Applying a negotiated reading to dominant group perceptions and merging them into a positive co-cultural self-concept

**Aggressive Separation**

Strategy	Description
25) Attacking	Inflicting psychological pain through personal attacks on dominant group members’ self-concept
26) Sabotaging Others	Undermining the ability of dominant group members to take full advantage of their privilege inherent in dominant structures

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to identify the communication strategies and behaviors Black male doctoral students use to manage their interracial communication with White American peers and faculty. In order to address this purpose, the study investigated the following research questions:

- 1) What specific communication strategies do Black males identify as being the most effective for their interracial interactions with White faculty?
- 2) What specific communication strategies do Black males identify as being the most effective for their interracial interactions with White peers?
- 3) What specific communication strategies do Black males identify as being the least effective for their interracial interactions with White faculty?
- 4) What specific communication strategies do Black males identify as being the least effective for their interracial interactions with White peers?

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology used in the current study. It will discuss the site selection, participants and sampling, the research design, data collection, positionality, data analysis, and the limitations of the study.

#### **Site Selection**

The target institution was established in the late 18th century as a PWI, which was specifically designed to provide educational opportunities for White males, according to the school's website. It was the nation's first state-chartered university. The university is comprised of 17 schools and colleges: Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Arts and

Sciences, Business, Ecology, Education, Engineering, Environment and Design, Family and Consumer Sciences, Forestry and Natural Resources, Graduate School, Journalism and Mass Communication, Law, Pharmacy, Public Health, Public and International Affairs, Social Work, and Veterinary Medicine.

The target institution is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges as well as a variety of discipline-specific accrediting agencies. Academic offerings include 23 bachelor's degrees in 139 fields; 33 master's degrees in 135 fields; the specialist of education degree in 18 major fields; 4 doctoral degrees in 94 major fields; and professional degrees in Law, Pharmacy, and Veterinary Medicine. During the 2011-2012 fiscal year, the University awarded 6,861 bachelor's degrees, 1,778 master's and specialist degrees, 453 doctoral degrees, and 450 professional degrees.

The Fall 2012 enrollment totaled 34,519, which included 26,259 undergraduates, 6,606 graduate students, and 1,654 professional students. Ninety-three percent of undergraduates and 80% of graduate and professional students were full-time students. The undergraduate student body was 43% male and 24% minority. The 1,078 undergraduate and 1,355 graduate and professional students were from 121 foreign countries.

According to the target institution's Fact Book which is found on the school's website, there were 6,606 graduate students enrolled for the Fall 2012 semester. Six hundred and forty nine of these students self-identified as Black/African-American. Out of the 461 Black female graduate students, 68 were doctoral students. Out of the 188 Black male graduate students, 20 students were doctoral students



### **Research Design**

The researcher used data with Q-sort methodology. Q-sort methodology combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to reveal social perspectives on a particular phenomenon of interest (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). In Q-sort methodology, participants' opinions about the topic under investigation are collected using a sorting technique in which respondents rank-order a series of statements according to their point of view (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005).

Q methodology was developed by William Stephenson (1935) and is designed to measure human subjectivity using statistical applications of correlation to subjective sorts that have self-referent meaning to the participant, referred to as a sorter. Compared to the R method (normal factor analysis), the aim of Q is to utilize subjective views, opinions, and perceptions to capture general responses to a phenomenon (Bang & Montgomery, 2013). A Q-sort is a ranking of variables/statements sorted by the sorter. Q results allow researchers to understand subjective descriptions of a particular phenomenon; in the case of this study, interracial interactions.

William Stephenson (1935) was an applied scientist, trained in physics, psychology, and psychometrics. Stephenson designed Q-sort methodology as a tool to better understand individual subjectivity. Examples of situations in which the Q method has been used range from healthcare to experiences of bereavement to political attitudes. Q methodology uses a targeted, non-random approach and is less interested in demographic trends than in charting the patterns of belief that are used to describe subjective individual and group realities (Nerbonne & Pearson, 2014). Q methodology looks to combine the openness of qualitative methods with statistical rigor of quantitative

analysis by comparing each individual's whole pattern of response with each other person's whole pattern of response (Addams, 2000).

In the Q-sort method, the researcher or evaluator is given a set of standards or items previously developed or fixed upon. In the case of this study, the researcher used the 26 co-cultural strategies from the previously developed Co-Cultural Theory. Conventionally, the Q-sort items are printed separately on cards, a convenience which permits easy arrangement and re-arrangement of the items until the desired ordering is obtained (Block, 1961). Q methodology studies use a non-random set of participants that are selected to represent a range of opinions and worldviews. Participants are shown a set of statements and asked to sort them into bins representing various levels of agreement or disagreement (Nerbonne & Pearson, 2014).

Q-sort methodology is most commonly used in fields such as psychology, marketing, sociology, and conflict management (Ramlo, 2008). While it is often confused with quantitative methods, it provides the qualitative researcher with powerful tools to investigate the diverse subjective experiences and perceptions of participants (Killam et al., 2013). The analysis in Q methodology produces conceptual categories of viewpoints for interpretation by researchers. These are produced using a "by person" analysis to quantify the patterns of subjectivity in a group of participants who have completed a "Q-sort" (Akhtar-Danesh et al., 2008).

Q methodology provides a unique way to model individuals' viewpoints (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). A correlation matrix is generated based on the results of these Q-sorts, and the structure of the matrix is analyzed through factor analysis. Examination and interpretation of the factors allows the researcher to identify common

and divergent points of view represented by the sample. Q methodology studies operate with a small sample size and high level of detail (Nerbonne & Pearson, 2014).

Q methodology is increasingly recognized for its ability to quantify subjectivity. It is a powerful tool for researchers to discover a range and diversity of viewpoints, perspectives, and beliefs among a group of participants (Shinebourne, 2009). The increased availability of data-analysis software for Q methodology has also added to its popularity (Akhtar-Danesh et al., 2008). For example, PQMethod (Scholck, 2002) is commonly used by Q-methodologists and is available to download for free. Once a program identifies groups of people who have sorted statements similarly, tables are produced. These tables are then carefully analyzed by researchers to develop themes (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Typically, in a Q methodological study, participants receive a sample of statements about a specific topic called the Q-set. Respondents, called the P-set, rank order the statements from their individual point of view, according to personal preference, judgment, or feeling for each item, mostly using a quasi-normal distribution. In Q-sorting, people give their individual meaning to the statements and by doing so reveal their subjective (Smith, 2001) or personal profile (Brouwer, 1999).

These individual rankings, or viewpoints, are subject to factor analysis. Stephenson (1935) presented Q methodology as an inversion of conventional factor analysis in the sense that Q correlates people instead of tests. By correlating people, Q factor analysis gives information about similarities and differences in viewpoint on a particular subject. The results of a Q methodological study can be used to describe a population of viewpoints and a population of people (Risdon et al., 2003).

In this way, Q methodology can be very helpful in exploring tastes, preferences, sentiments, motives, and goals; the part of the personality that is of great influence on behavior but that often remains largely unexplored. Q-sort methodology was the primary methodology used in this study to explore the influence of racial identity as it pertained to navigating PWIs. As a measure of social behavior, Q-sort attempts to understand the behaviors of the individual by identifying the person's subjectively held pattern of beliefs, attitudes, and intentions. Focusing on the relative significance of characteristics within an individual enables the researcher to understand how those judgments and beliefs influence a person's behavior.

### **Participant Sampling and Recruitment**

The participants (N=15) in this study included 15 Black male doctoral students at a PWI in the southeastern United States in the Fall semester of 2013. This study was IRB-approved by the institution. This represents a 78.9% response rate (15 out of 19 total number of eligible Black male doctoral students). Due to scheduling conflicts, not all eligible Black male doctoral students were available to participate in the study. The criteria associated with the selection of the targeted population of participants included males who self-identified as Black or African American and were currently enrolled as a doctoral student who had completed at least the second year of his doctoral program at the institution. All of the names in this study were pseudonyms which were chosen by the participants. The study used a purposeful sampling process in order to select individuals who could best address the research questions and provide rich details about the key influences related to their interracial interactions and college experiences (Patton, 2002).

The researcher used several outlets to recruit study participants. The researcher contacted the Outreach and Diversity Office, located in the Graduate School, for statistics on the presence of Black male doctoral students at the university. The Office provided the researcher with the contact information for graduate programs in which Black male doctoral students were enrolled.

The researcher emailed every Ph.D. Program Graduate Coordinator to ensure that all current Black male doctoral students were notified of the study and given the opportunity to participate. A copy of the email is in Appendix A. A total of 27 Graduate Coordinators were contacted and all responded. Twenty-one graduate coordinators responded that they did not have any Black male doctoral students. Three graduate coordinators forwarded the email to all Black male doctoral students in their programs. Three other graduate coordinators responded to the email but it is unclear whether the information was forwarded to any potential study participants. The researcher knew a few of the Black male doctoral students from taking classes together and networking around campus, which is known as purposeful sampling and is also known as snowballing. Purposeful sampling is widely used in research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases that are related to the phenomenon that is of interest (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2013). This involves, but is not limited to, identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clarks, 2011).

Table 2: Overview of Studies that have looked at Black male students

Author	Theory / Framework	Central Topic/ Research Question(s)	Relevance to Black male Students
Conyers (2009)	Dual Deviant/Stigmatization	What happens when one is stigmatized by the dominant group and their minority group.	Provides insight on the lives of Black graduate students as they manage their
Harper & Davis (2012)	Oppositional Culture Theory	What compels Black male students to care so much about education, despite what is consistently reported in the literature regarding their gradual disinvestment in schooling?	To provide a counter-narrative about Black Male students and show that they do care about their education.
Appiah (2013).	Human Capital Theory	Given that recent studies reveal that the costs to society of the inadequate education of Black males are enormous, are there incentives for public support and/or other policy insights that would help address the problem.	Identifies reasons why Black males social and private rates are lower than they are for Whites and Black females.
Sanchez, Liu, Leathers, Going, & Vilain (2011)	The Social Class Worldview Model	To understand how a group of African American men in graduate school viewed social class in relation to their masculinity and how they believed different factors affected their opportunity for upward mobility.	Offers a look at the subjective experience of social class and upward mobility among African American men in Graduate School.
Harper, McGowan, Davis, Ingram, Jones, & Platt (2011)	Critical Race Theory	Why the racialized experiences of those who become actively engaged and assume leadership positions are low?	Provides implications for addressing racial toxins that dissuade Black student leadership at predominately white institutions.
Harper & Nichols (2008)	Heterogeneous Race Model	An erroneous assumption is often made that Black men, one of the most stereotyped groups on college and university campuses, all share common experiences and background.	Implications for Black male solidarity on campuses where few are enrolled and expanding conceptualization of interactions across different areas.
Bell (2014)	Grounded Theory	Why do Black males drop out of school?	To provide guidance and direction for school and community leaders to help Black males stay in school through graduation.

Snowballing seeks to identify cases of interest from sampling people who know people that generally have similar characteristics who, in turn know some people with similar characteristics (Palinkas et al., 2013). Snowballing is a technique used for gathering research subjects through the identification of an initial subject who is used to provide names of other potential participants (Atkinson & Flint, 2004).

An example of snowballing would be the researcher asking other Black male doctoral students if they know any other Black male doctoral students that would be interested in participating in a study about them negotiating their identity at that particular institution. The researcher met some of them at conferences and symposiums. The researcher knew a lot of the participants from various places; some of them were encountered while he was taking courses; some of the participants were met via the Black graduate student club on campus. The researcher met some of them at different multicultural events on campus and he met some of them at the gym working out. Some examples of studies that have looked at Black male students are in Table 2.

### **Data Collection**

The interviews involved the participants sharing basic demographic information, followed by two Q-sorting tasks and 19 follow-up questions. Lists of the questions are in Appendix B. Participants in this study were provided a set of 26 Q-sort items containing each of the 26 Co-Cultural strategies based on Orbe's Co-Cultural Theory (1998a). The items were written on separate index cards so that participants could successfully complete the sorting task. With the Q-sort items at hand, the research participant reviewed two scenarios. Instead of having one scenario, there were two different scenarios to provide the difference between communicating with White faculty members

and their White peers. The first scenario addressed coping strategies the participant would use with White faculty while they are negotiating their Black male identity. The second scenario addressed coping strategies the participant would use with White peers. The statements on the cards are responses to different scenarios that the participants might find themselves in as a graduate student, which can be found in Appendix C. The researcher and a committee member sat down and developed these items over time. Each statement on the card included one of the 26 Co-Cultural strategies and an example of a situation that the participants might encounter at a PWI. The Co-Cultural strategies (see Table 1) on these Q-sort cards were developed to make sure the theory (Co-Cultural Theory) and the method (Q-Sort Methodology) were being utilized.

Table 3: 26 Co-Cultural Strategies

	Assimilation	Accommodation	Separation
Nonassertive	1.Emphasizing Commonalities 2.Developing Positive Face 3.Censoring Self 4. Averting Controversy	13. Increasing Visibility 14. Dispelling Stereotyping	21. Avoiding 22. Maintaining Barriers
Assertive	5. Extensive Preparation 6. Overcompensating 7. Manipulating Stereotypes 8.Bargaining	15. Communicating 16. Intragroup Networking 17. Utilizing Liaisons 18. Educating Others	23. Exemplifying Strength 24. Embracing Stereotypes
Aggressive	9. Dissociating 10. Mirroring 11. Strategic Distancing 12. Ridiculing Self	19. Confronting 20. Gaining Advantage	25. Attacking 26. Sabotaging Others



The cards were in no particular order, and participants were informed there was no right or wrong answer. The researcher aimed to gain an understanding of how the participants specifically would respond to certain interpersonal interactions. Each experience was different and the researcher wanted to ensure that each participant's story was heard.

For the first scenario, the researcher asked the participant to think about his interactions with White faculty at the university, either in the department or other disciplines on campus. The researcher wanted a general understanding of how the participant managed interactions with White faculty. The participant received a stack of 26 index cards with statements describing various situations such as being overly nice to peers or faculty so that they are more comfortable around you or dressing more like the dominant culture while you are attending class. He chose his response or responses to each interaction. He was instructed to read each statement very carefully, and after doing so, place it in one of three stacks: (1) what the participant preferred to use most; (2) what the participant least preferred to use; and (3) what the participant was indifferent about using. There was no limit to how many cards could be in each stack. For example, they could have one card in a stack or 20 cards in a stack. Once the three stacks were created, the participant was then instructed to rank order the cards in each stack. For example, if the participant had three cards in the "least preferred" pile, then he would put the one on top he would use the most and sort the remaining two cards in descending order.

For the second scenario, the researcher asked the participant to think about his interactions with the White peers at the university, either in the department or other disciplines on campus. The researcher wanted a general understanding of how the participant managed interactions with White peers. The participant received a stack of 26

index cards with statements describing various situations. The participant chose his response or responses to each interaction. The participant was instructed to read each statement very carefully, and after doing so, place it in one of three stacks: (1) what the participant preferred to use most; (2) what the participant least preferred to use; and (3) what the participant was indifferent about using. There was no limit to how many cards could be in each pile of cards. For example, he could have one card in a stack or 20 cards in that stack. Once the three stacks were created, the participant was then instructed to rank order.

After completing the Q-sort tasks, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with the participants. The interviews lasted 60-90 minutes, depending on the participant's responses. The researcher encouraged the participants to take as much time as they needed to provide their responses, as the researcher wanted the participants to have the opportunity to give as accurate and detailed responses to the questions (Appendix B) presented as possible.

### **Context of Interviews**

Every interview occurred in a quiet, private location and all participants provided input into the location of the interview. Of the 15 interviews, 12 were conducted in the researcher's office. Two interviews were conducted in the participants' homes, as it was the most convenient for the schedules of the researcher and the participants. One interview was conducted at a small junior college in rural Georgia because one of the participants was currently employed there. It was important for the participants to choose the location so that they felt comfortable talking about a sensitive subject such as race.

Table 4: Participant Interview Data

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Interview date</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Location</b>
Rah	11/7/13	58:37	My office
Marcus	11/9/13	46:25	My Office
Cye	11/11/13	67:16	Washington D.C.
Tupac	11/13/13	55:08	Greensboro, N.C.
Raynard	11/18/13	63:33	His apt in Athens, GA.
Tim	11/19/13	35:14	My office
Anthony	11/20/13	44:51	My office
Malcolm	11/25/13	51:28	His office
Fonzworth	11/28/13	69:42	His office
Kendrick	12/3/13	66:34	Cuthbert, GA
Jim	12/5/13	27:08	My office
Jay Rock	12/7/13	57:22	His office
David	12/10/13	35:19	My office
Ron	12/14/13	34:19	Tallahassee, FL
Booker	12/15/13	26:25	My office

They were asked to pick a place that was not noisy so the interview process would not be interrupted. The researcher believes that the participants felt comfortable with him interviewing them since the researcher is a Black male. At the request of some participants, the researcher conducted interviews in several cities: Tallahassee, FL, Washington D.C., Greensboro, NC, and Cuthbert, GA., in order to finish the study as

soon as possible. The researcher traveled during Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks to interview some of my participants at their homes.

Table 5: Participant Demographic Section Results

<b>Participant Age</b>	<b>Year in program</b>	<b>Program of study</b>	<b>Hometown</b>	<b>Parent marital status</b>	<b>Parent education</b>
Rah 47	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Language and Literacy Education	New Jersey	Married	Both Parents High School Educated
Marcus 34	5 <sup>th</sup>	Microbiology	New York	Single parent	College Educated
Cye 30	5 <sup>th</sup>	Communications	Mississippi	Married	Both Parents College Educated
Tupac 29	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Sports Management	North Carolina	Single parent	College Educated
Raynard 33	7 <sup>th</sup>	Social Foundations of Education	Washington D.C.	Single parent	College Educated
Tim 27	4 <sup>th</sup>	Chemistry	South Carolina	Married	Both Parents College Educated
Anthony 31	3 <sup>rd</sup>	College Student Affairs	North Carolina	Married	Both Parents College Educated
Malcolm 30	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Recreation and Leisure	Louisiana	Married	Both Parents College Educated
Fonzworth 29	4 <sup>th</sup>	Higher Education	New Jersey	Single parent	High school Educated
Kendrick 36	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Counseling and Student Personnel Services	South Carolina	Foster Care	High School Educated
Jim 26	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Quantitative Methods	South Carolina	Single parent	College Educated
Jay Rock 29	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Education Administration and Policy	Michigan	Single parent	High School Educated
David 31	2 <sup>nd</sup>	College Student Affairs	Mississippi	Married	Both Parents High School Educated
020Ron 35	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Music Education	Georgia	Married	Both college educated
Booker 33	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Exercise Science	Ohio	Single parent	High School Educated

The researcher traveled to a community college to interview a participant because he just finished his course work and was ABD (all but dissertation) and currently working on his dissertation. As a result, he was no longer on campus. The participants' ages ranged from 26 to 47. The participants in this study included 15 Black male doctoral students at a PWI in the Southeastern United States and are shown in Table 5.

Once the participant arrived at the interview location, the researcher thanked him for his participation in the study, provided a summary of the goals of the interview, and asked him if he had any initial questions or concerns about participation. Both the participant and the researcher then reviewed the consent form (Appendix D) together. The participant was advised that he could cease participation or decline to answer any question if at any point he felt uncomfortable. After the participant signed the consent form, the researcher turned on the digital recorder and proceeded with the interview. The interview questions came about after the researcher and one of his committee members sat down and came up with questions after much deliberation.

The first part of the interview addressed basic demographic information about where they were from, family background, and what the participant was studying at the university. Once that information was gathered, the researcher then transitioned into the Q-sort. The researcher explained the Q-sorting process to the participant, and once it was clear that he understood, the participant was given the index cards (Appendix C) to sort and rank in three different piles (most likely, least likely, and indifferent). After the participant finished sorting the index cards, there was a follow-up interview. After the follow-up interview, the researcher thanked the participant for participating in the study.

### **Positionality of the Researcher**

The researcher identifies as a Black man which was advantageous for his ability to engage Black male doctoral students about race. Many of the participants stated that they were willing to participate in the study to support my work as a Black male scholar. Our shared racial and gender identities likely contributed to their comfort with sharing their personal beliefs and experiences with me. Due to our shared experiences, I may have been afforded greater access to the participants' otherwise private thoughts compared to someone who they perceived as having vastly divergent experiences (Schuman & Converse, 1971). My racial and gender identities, as well as my training as an educational psychologist, contributed to my ability to be empathetic during the interviews (Lambart & Barley, 2001). As an empathetic listener, I created a safe space for the participants to honestly reflect on their experiences (Gair, 2011). I presented myself as a curious researcher and practitioner who sought to learn from their experiences in order to support other Black male doctoral students.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher transcribed audio recordings verbatim and textually analyzed transcripts for content. The researcher used an inductive, iterative open coding process to identify themes and supporting quotations related to the interracial interactions of the participants. To increase reliability and validity of the themes the researcher observed, a master's student research assistant also read and coded the transcripts blindly. We then discussed our impressions of the transcripts, noting similarities and differences between our separate analyses. After we reached consensus on several themes, we agreed upon which themes were most salient for the participants.

To examine the relatedness of different strategies, we first created dichotomous variables that indicate whether a participant chose the strategy. For example, if a participant chose Q1, then that participant would get a 1 for Q1 and 0 otherwise. Then we computed Pearson correlations between the 26 strategies in SPSS Version 22. A significant correlation between two strategies indicates that participants who chose one strategy were likely to choose the other strategy.

### **Limitations**

There were several limitations to the study. One limitation was the subjectivity of Q methodology. Subjectivity can be found everywhere and the Q method, many times, effectively provides an opportunity for participants or respondents to represent his or her viewpoint in a manner that is to be held as a constant for comparison. Unforced Q-sorting was used in this study. The unforced Q-sorting procedure provides data that are unwieldy and at times impossible to work with whereas the forced Q-sorting procedure provides data in a convenient and readily processed form (Block, 1961). In the future, I would use the forced Q sorting procedure if I were to change anything. The Q methodology includes room for researchers to be flexible and creative. Since it achieves valid results through an intensive method with small numbers, the Q methodology can be efficient while remaining cost-effective. At the same rate, subjectivity is difficult to measure and quantify for the purposes of behavioral study. Though the Q methodology is a great fit for research on motivating African-American males toward educational success, it is not without limitations.

Typically, the types of samples used for the Q method are smaller, non-traditional, and nonrandomized and there are no control or comparison groups with which

to evaluate; a huge criticism of the method. Given this, the results of studies using the Q methodology cannot be generalized to the population from which the sample was derived. Additionally, the very definition of the Q method is to assess and measure an individual's perspective. Moreover, since the Q method requires participants to rank order their viewpoints on a set of stimuli or items, there is a strong opportunity for a culture of "forced choice" in the responses received. In this study, participants made discriminations that they might not ordinarily have made if left up to their own devices (Block, 1961).



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The chapter contains three sections: Q-sort findings, in-depth interviews and themes, and summary of the results. Given the mixed-methods nature of this study, the researcher analyzed data and presented the results in a manner consistent with each methodological tradition. Section I presents the statistical results from the Q-sort analyses, including the descriptive statistics. The statistical data, analyzed through SPSS, revealed patterns associated with particular strategies that were effective and those that were ineffective. Section II provides a description of the emergent themes from the in-depth interviews. The interviews provided a deeper understanding of the participants' communication strategies when interacting with White peers and faculty at a PWI. Section III provides a summary and interpretation of the results.

#### **Section I: Q-Sort Findings**

The Q-sort cards containing 26 co-cultural practices were administered individually to a group of Black male doctoral students ( $N=15$ ) at the selected PWI during the Fall 2013 semester. The items were designed to determine which co-cultural strategy each participant would most or least likely use when interacting with his White faculty and peers. The participants sorted the cards in regards to interactions with faculty and then with peers. The Q-sort results are highlighted in the subsequent sections in the following order: demographic information (see Table 1); most likely faculty results (see Table 2); most likely peers results (see Table 3); least likely faculty results (see Table 4); and least likely peers results (see Table 5).

### **Participants' Demographic Information Section**

Among the participants ( $N=15$ ), seven grew up in a two-parent household (mother and father), seven grew up in a single parent household (mother or grandmother), and one grew up in foster care. In terms of their parents' education, six grew up in a household with parents with at least a high school diploma, and eight in a household with parents having at least a four-year college degree, and one participant grew up in foster care and was not aware of the educational background of his foster parents. Regarding academic classification in college, two were second-year doctoral students, eight were third-year doctoral students, two were fourth-year doctoral students, two were fifth-year doctoral students, and one was a seventh-year doctoral student.

In terms of college majors, nine were Education majors (e.g., Language and Literacy Education, Social Foundations of Education, College Student Affairs, Recreation and Leisure, Higher Education, Counseling and Student Personnel Services, Education Administration and Policy, and Music Education), three were Arts and Sciences majors (e.g., Microbiology, Communications, and Chemistry), and three were Sports Science and Math majors (e.g., Sports Management, specifically kinesiology), Exercise Science, and Quantitative Methods. In terms of where they were from geographically: nine were from the South (e.g., Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Louisiana), four of them were from the Northeast (e.g., New York, New Jersey, and Washington D.C.), and two were from the Midwest (e.g., Michigan and Ohio) (see Table 2).

### Q-Sort Quantitative Results

**Faculty most likely.** Out of the 26 strategies, Manipulating Stereotypes and Ridiculing Self were not selected by any of the participants.

Table 6: Faculty Most Likely Rank

Participants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Rah	2	5										
Marcus	15	17	20	3	16	2						
Cye	2	10	16	17	1	20	23	14	26	5	11	13
Tupac	1	15	14	17	16	20	6					
Raynard	1	17	4	16	18							
Tim	15	23	4	3								
Anthony	14	2	1	9	22	15	16	23	21	17		
Malcolm	14	15	2	16	23	5	6	17	20	4	6	
Fonzworth	5	23	2	14	15	3	4	13	22	19		
Kendrick	17	5	13	2	3	23	14	20	4	8	11	9
Tim	15	14	16	5	1	4	3					
Jay Rock	5	14	2	17	23	26	1					
David	16	18	17	5	2	14	23	6	1			
Ron	14	16	23	17	5	6	15	20	13			
Booker	17	5	2	15	1	6	23	9	18	8		

*Note. First desired card chosen for ranking purposes =1; last desired card chosen = 11*

The definition for each strategy can be found in the Appendices. Communicating Self was not selected for least likely as it pertains to faculty or peers. The top five strategies that participants were most likely to use when communicating with White faculty were: Using Liaisons, Developing Positive Face, Intragroup Networking, Extensive Preparation, and a tie for fifth, Dispelling Stereotypes and Communicating Self (see Table 6). All correlations were found to be significant using the two-tailed test at the .01 level. Table 6 shows the top 12 strategies that were chosen by the participants. For example, Rah ranked “Developing Face” as his number one choice. I put the number two because of the 26 strategies “Developing Face” is listed as the second strategy.

Table 7: Peers Most Likely Rank

Participants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Rah	15	13	17	20	18						
Marcus	15	2	22	1							
Cye	14	23	20	1	17	16	2				
Tupac	2	14	15	1	16	20	18	10	6		
Raynard	20	17	16								
Tim	4	18	23								
Anthony	14	15	1	16	2	17					
Malcolm	23	15	16	14	18	17	24	20			
Fonzworth	15	2	14	23	4	19					
Kendrick	17	16	23	6	15	5	3	14	13	2	20
Tim	14	15	16	1	4	3					
Jay Rock	16	5	23	26	14	17	2	13	1	18	15
David	13	18	23	16	14	15	22	2	21	3	
Ron	14	16	23	17	5	6	15	20	13		
Booker	17	2	15	23	1	18					

*Note: First desired card chosen for ranking purposes = 1; last desired card chosen = 11*

**Peer most likely.** Manipulating Stereotypes, Bargaining, Dissociating, Strategic Distancing, and Attacking were never used by participants in interactions between peers. The top six strategies that participants were most likely to use when communicating with White peers, in rank order, were Dispelling Stereotypes, Communicating Self, Intragroup Networking, and Exemplifying Strength, with Using Liaisons, and Emphasizing Commonalities ranked as the two most preferred strategies (see Table 7).

**Faculty least likely.** The top five strategies that participants were least likely to use when communicating with White faculty were, in order of rank: Averting Controversy, Dissociating, Mirroring, Censoring Self, and Bargaining. Table 8 displays the participants' sorts for least likely faculty.

**Peers least likely.** The top five strategies were in order of rank Strategic Distancing, Increasing Visibility, Censoring Self, Extensive Preparation, and Dissociating (see Table 9).

### **Q-Sort Quantitative Analysis**

The use of Developing a Positive Face on peers and with faculty had a significant correlation ( $r = .645, p = .009$ ). Participants who utilized the Developing a Positive Face Strategy with faculty tended to use this strategy with peers as well. The increase in use of Developing Positive Face on faculty did have a positive effect on the amount of use of the quality with peers. There did not seem to be statistically significant data to show that the use of co-cultural strategies with a faculty member heightened or decreased the use of another co-cultural practice with a faculty member.

Table 8: Faculty Least Likely Rank

Participants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Rah	14	18	9	20	22	10	23	8	13	17	1	19	7	4	24	3	12	26	25
Marcus	22	6	5	21	14														
Cye	18	19	4	3	9	21	8												
Tupac	4	3	8	10	9	12	21	7	22	24	19	26	25						
Raynard	2	8	9	23	22	3	20	14	21	11	5	6	7	12	10	26	19	25	
Tim	9	14	7	13	10	11	24	12	20	22	21	26	19	25					
Anthony	20	13	8	3	4	18	19	11	10	25	7	12	26	24					
Malcolm	7	13	19	25	11	21	22	26	10										
Fonzworth	18	10	1	17	20	16	6	7	8	25	26	12							
Kendrick	16	19	10	21	25	26	2	18	7	24									
Tim	5	10	2	6	23	8	11	18	21	22	24	7	12	9	20	19	25	26	
Jay Rock	3	11	4	9	21	10	7	22	24	12	20	25	6	19	8	13			
David	10	7	4	8	11	19	26	25	12										
Ron	11	9	4	2	3	22	18	12	21	24	10	7	25	19	26				
Booker	22	20	13	4	21	7	12	25	26	11	3	19							

Note: First desired card chosen for ranking purposes = 1; last desired card chosen for ranking purposes = 19

Table 9: Peers Most Likely Rank

Participants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Rah	25	5	9	3	24	22	21	10	26	12	4	7	11	8					
Marcus	3	14	20	17	13	21	16												
Cye	10	11	13	26	22	21	15	8	4	3	18								
Tupac	12	21	13	11	7	19	26	25											
Raynard	18	13	11	8	4	7	12	15	2	6	9	10	23	22	21	14	26	25	19
Tim	9	6	11	3	13	20	10	7	26	22	21	19	25						
Anthony	4	18	5	23	13	19	8	10	20	9	25	3	7	11	12	24	26		
Malcolm	9	11	12	21	8	5	4	3	25	19	13								
Fonzworth	5	20	7	26	10	9	8	11	24	25	12								
Kendrick	22	1	4	18	8	9	21	4	25	26	10	19	7	12	24				
Tim	5	10	2	6	23	8	11	18	21	22	24	7	12	9	20	19	25	26	
Jay Rock	12	24	22	7	10	21	9	4	19	11	8								
David	5	6	1	8	19	20	11	4	7	26	12								
Ron	11	9	4	2	3	22	18	12	21	24	10	7	25	19	26				
Booker	20	24	7	9	3	12	25	26	19	10	11	21	22						

*Note: The Peer Least Likely Rank. First desired card chosen for ranking purposes = 1; last desired card chosen for ranking purposes = 19*

Participants who chose Censoring Self with faculty were more likely to also choose the use of Averting Controversy with peers. Using cross tabulations, the researcher was able to find co-occurrences. The frequency for Censoring Self increased among the participants when interacting with faculty as the frequency for Averting Controversy amongst the participants' peers did.

When participants used Dispelling Stereotypes with faculty they also used it with their peers. In this study, the participants were exact in their use of this co-cultural practice: they either always used the strategy, when communicating with their White faculty and peers, or they never used it.

Participants were more likely to use Dispelling Stereotypes with faculty if they also used Intragroup Networking with their peers. The more the participants used Dispelling Stereotypes towards faculty, the more likely they were to use Intragroup Networking with their peers. It appears that the more stereotypes that the participant tries to break with the faculty, the more the participant will try to relate with his racial identity.

Participants who used Dispelling Stereotypes on peers were more likely to also use Intragroup Networking on their peers. As participants increased the frequency in which they reported using a Dispelling Stereotype strategy with their peers, they also increased the frequency in which they reported engaging in Intragroup Networking.

Participants who tended to Using Liaisons with faculty also used Sabotaging Others with their peers. As the frequency of use of Using Liaisons with faculty by participants increased, the frequency for use of Sabotaging Others with peers' decreased

When participants used Sabotaging Others they also used Co-Cultural strategy of Mirroring towards faculty. As participants increased the frequency with which they



reported use of the strategy of Sabotaging Others (specifically with faculty), they also increased in the frequency with which they reported Mirroring the faculty.

Participants seem to use Sabotaging Others with both faculty and peers. As the participant increased the frequency in which they sabotage others (faculty), they also increased the frequency in which they (the participants) sabotage others (peers).

Participants always used Confronting with faculty if they used Confronting with their peers. It should be noted that only one participant who used the co-cultural practice of Confronting chose it for both faculty and peers. The other participants did not use this co-cultural strategy to gain acceptance.

Participants were more likely to use Exemplifying Strength with faculty when they also used it on peers. As the frequency of use of Exemplifying Strength increased among the participants towards the faculty, the frequency of use of Exemplifying Strength among peers by the participants also increased.

Participants were likely to use Liaisons on faculty when they used Averting Controversy among their peers. As the use of Liaisons among the participants towards faculty increased, the use Averting Controversy towards their peers decreased.

Averting Controversy has a strong relationship with different co-cultural strategies, Censoring Self and Using Liaisons. As participants increased the use of faculty Liaisons they decreased Averting Controversy among their peers. As participants increased the use of Censoring Self among faculty they also increased Averting Controversy among their peers. Participants tended to use Censoring Self on faculty when they used the co-cultural practice of Using Liaisons with faculty. As participants increased their self-censorship among the faculty, they tended to decrease use of faculty

liaisons. There is nothing to suggest a relationship between the use of Censoring Self and Using Liaisons on peers.

The frequency of use of Extensive Preparation on peers had an increased as the frequency of Increasing Visibility on peers increased by the participants. As participants increased their preparations for encounters with peers, they also increased participants' visibility amongst their peers.

The co-cultural strategy of Ridiculing Self on peers increased slightly in frequency as practice of Maintaining Barriers on peers by the participants increased. As participants increased in the frequency in which they ridiculed themselves in front of their peers, they also increased the frequency in which they maintained barriers between themselves and their peers.

Participants who frequently used Avoiding Controversy also used Maintaining Barriers when interacting with their peers. As the frequency for participants to avoid their peers increased so did the frequency for participants to maintain barriers amongst their peers.

## **Section II: In-Depth Interview and Themes**

Following the sorting and ranking of the Q-sort cards, the participants were next interviewed. Participants were asked 19 questions to get a better understanding of how they interacted with their White faculty and peers. From the interviews, certain themes emerged. These are discussed in this section, with guided information regarding each question and discussion of the themes and responses that were formed during the interview process.

**What would you say is the reason or reasons you chose to study at UGA?**

The first question presented to participants asked for explanation of the most salient theme that emerged from the data for participants related to the themes reputation/ranking, proximity, faculty, and finances. Reputation/ranking referred to how the institution's doctoral programs ranked against other institutions and the prestige of the name of the university. Nine of the participants chose the theme reputation/ranking. Proximity referred to the location of the institution in regards to family and job opportunities. Two of the participants chose location because they were from the North and they wanted to move to the South, four of them wanted to be close to their families, and one participant wanted to be close to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for possible job opportunities. Faculty referred to the professors that the participants came to the institution to work with. Finances referred to the cost of the university or if the participants received funding. Nine participants stated that they came to the university so they could work with a certain professor. Tupac, a third-year doctoral student, described some of the primary reasons he chose to attend the institution:

My primary reason for studying at the university was my advisor. He's one of the leading scholars in my field. Honestly, it's a very prestigious institution and it's known internationally to have a strong—not only undergraduate, but graduate education. Also, the fact that it was about four-and-a-half hours away from where I lived was important to me.

Raynard, a seventh-year doctoral student, described some of the primary reasons he chose to attend the institution:

I liked the university's program on paper. I was interested in the research interests of the faculty. The ranking of the institution at that time, it was – I think the School of Education was ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in the country at that time. And also just when everything came down the pike, it was free. I was like, free? Great!

David, a second-year doctoral student, described some of the primary reasons he chose to attend the institution:

I think the number one reason was finances. I took a job here out of my grad school knowing that this institution would also pay for a Ph.D. So for the most part, a lot of that had to do with finances, and I knew that if I worked out here, they could pay for it.

**Did you ever consider a historically black college or university? Why or why not?**

The researcher wanted to see if the participants considered attending an HBCU, assuming that they would not have the same issues with interracial communication because most of the professors would look like them. The participants explained that they did not attend an HBCU due to prior experience (already attended an HBCU for undergrad), a lack of program/research, and a perceived better education at a PWI. For the four participants who shared that they did consider attending an HBCU for their graduate studies, they stated that the cost prevented them from doing so.

Seven of the students reported having prior experience with an HBCU (they attended an HBCU for undergraduate studies), which resulted in them not considering one for their graduate study. During their interview, these participants reported that while they attended an HBCU for undergraduate education, they wanted a different experience for their graduate study at a PWI. Five participants stated that No/lack of

program/research referred to the fact that there were no HBCUs that offered their program or looked at their research interests.

For the five participants who stated that they had considered an HBCU for their doctoral studies, they reported that they did not attend one because although they had been admitted into their chosen program, they did not receive funding. Some stated that this was problematic because an HBCU is typically more expensive than a public PWI. No/better education at a PWI referred to the participants thinking they could receive a better education at a PWI. According to Cye, a fifth-year doctoral student, his primary reasons were related to not choosing an HBCU because of financial reasons. He offers the following explanation:

Actually, my first choice for grad school was Howard University, which is an HBCU. It was my number one choice, I applied to Howard two times, I applied as a master's student and I got in but they wouldn't give me any funding. I applied as a Ph.D. student and they admitted me but they wouldn't give me any funding so an HBCU was my first choice but it wasn't feasible.

Fonzworth, a fourth-year doctoral student, described primary reasons he did not attend an HBCU:

For my graduate program, no, I didn't consider a historically black college or university, because I went to a historically black college or university already, and I mean, Morehouse College being the best, there was no room for no other place!

Tim, a second-year doctoral student, assumed that he could receive a better education at a PWI:

I don't know. I guess I felt like I could get a better education at a PWI. What else?

Yeah, at that time I didn't really think about the cultural things that I would miss being around Black people a lot more, now that I reflect on it. I wish I had considered it because I do feel like I missed out on some of those cultural things.

Booker, a third-year doctoral student, described primary reasons he did not attend an HBCU:

Yes, I went to a historically black college obviously for undergrad so for my Ph.D. I did not partially because of the availability of the program that I was interested in and also because I wanted to do something different.

**What is it about your graduate program that you factored into your decision to be a student there?**

In response to what factored into their decision regarding their graduate program, the most salient themes among the participants related to the themes Reputation/ranking, Faculty, and Research interest. Reputation/ranking referred to how the institution's doctoral programs ranked against other institutions and the prestige of the name of the university. Eight of the participants found Reputation/ranking to be most salient. Faculty referred to the participants' interest to work with professors at the institution. Nine of the participants found the theme Faculty most salient. Research interests referred to the participants' research interests aligning with the professors in their respective programs. Six of the participants found research interests to be most salient. Cye, a fifth-year doctoral student, described how Reputation and Faculty were primary reasons for entering the program he chose:

I may have talked about it in a sense that the graduate program itself at the time I started there was ranked in the top five communication studies programs in the nation. It had a great reputation and they had a lot of grant money, they had some of the best professors of communication in the nation.

Tupac, a third-year doctoral student, described how Reputation and Faculty were primary reasons for entering the program he chose:

About the graduate program, when you're pursuing a Ph.D., you're looking for faculty members who have a reputation for what you're trying to study in the field. Because if you're trying to be the next best person studying it, you have to study under somebody who's deemed as the best, or who has a large body of scholarship that speaks to your topic.

Anthony, a third-year doctoral student, described Reputation and Faculty as primary reasons for entering the program he chose:

Well, outside of the prestige, the faculty seemed really supportive when I got here as far as my research. I talked about historically Black colleges and wanting to get back to the Black community in my personal statement, and they seemed okay with that and support that. So, that was cool, because I didn't get that with some of the other schools to which I applied.

**Since you've been in your program, do you find it to be as rewarding as you thought it would be? Why or why not?**

The most salient themes among the participants related to the themes Rewarding, Ostracized, and Not rewarding. Rewarding referred to the participants finding the program satisfactory or valuable. Nine of the participants found their programs to be

rewarding. Ostracized referred to the participants feeling excluded. Five of the participants felt ostracized. Not rewarding referred to the participants finding their program unsatisfactory or worthless. Six of the participants found their programs to be not rewarding.

Cye, a fifth-year doctoral student, described his experience while using the Co-Cultural strategies Overcompensating and Strategic Distancing:

When I first got into the program I never had an issue of working or working hard. Or what I thought hard work was or what I knew it took to get through the program— reading and preparing and doing the work. I had some resentment towards some of the professors because of their lack of belief in my abilities and what I could do and wouldn't do and so the result was that I distanced myself from the department because I felt like there was no representation of me there. I felt like I had to be the representative of my race, my way of seeing things because there obviously was a lack of color. There were no Black people in the program except for me.

Jay Rock, a third-year doctoral student, described some of the primary reasons why he found his program not to be rewarding and leaving him feeling ostracized:

I had the expectation of what I thought the doctoral program would look like in several different areas. I thought more Black people would be in my program so to be the only Black male in the majority of my classes is interesting and unexpected. The second thing was that I was expecting more Black faculty even though we have two Black faculty members we don't have any Black male faculty members in my department.



Ron, a third-year doctoral student, described some of the primary reasons he found his program to be rewarding, feeling ostracized, and not being rewarding:

Yes and no! Yes in that, you know, for me personally, I'm accomplishing something I feel like has never been done in my family, never been done in the community in which I grew up. I think that sometimes it is challenging to navigate an environment in which there is some diversity in class and the faculty—there are people that look like me or come from the same backgrounds as me—but there's not many people, except probably one person in the program, that I tend to relate with. And so that does make it a little bit challenging to navigate socially or even academically.

**What would you say are the major factors that contribute to that experience?**

In response to this inquiry, the most salient themes among the participants related to the themes faculty, lack of diversity, and being ostracized. Faculty referred to the professors at the institution. Six of the participants felt like a major impact on their experience is the relationships with their professors. Lack of diversity referred to the referred to the limited diversity in the student body and/or faculty. Five of the participants stated that the lack of the diversity was a major factor on their experience at the university. Ostracized referred to feeling excluded. Four of the participants as a result of their experience felt ostracized.

Tupac, a third-year doctoral student, explained how he used the Co-Cultural strategies Overcompensating and Extensive Preparation:

When you go to an institution like this one, which is anything below the Mason-Dixon line, you still have to deal with some racial tensions that are more covert.

At this school, because the way I look physically, people don't perceive that I'm a graduate student. You know? I don't look older, I don't look like a traditional student. I look like a football student athlete. So I had to deal with the way I communicate and the way I dress. It was almost like every decision I made was magnified, and that was tough. At this point, I had two undergraduate degrees, and a master's degree. I felt almost as if like, hey: this should be enough to where people shouldn't question my intellect, they shouldn't question whether I'm a criminal or not. And I got reintroduced to this notion that it doesn't matter what you've done before; people really just base a lot of what they think of you based on what they see. There was a lot of psychological energies that I put into trying to present myself in a way that Black people, and White people, and everybody else on campus would view me the way I wanted them to view me. And that was challenging; it took a lot of energy.

Cye explained how he used the Co-Cultural strategy of Strategic Distancing:

There may have been things that I agreed with and things that I disagreed with but none of them came from an African-American perspective so you know there are essentialized perspectives and that's not what I'm promoting. What I am saying is that perspectives are informed by your experiences which are shaped by your identity and my identity as a Black male in a perspective that most likely that comes from experiences of a Black male in an all-White environment was not represented. I recognized if it was going to be represented I would need to do it, but I ran away from doing it because I did not want to be the educator. I didn't want to educate them on me, I just wanted to be me and have them be okay with

me just being me so I took a hiatus from my department for about a year and a half. I didn't show up for anything, nothing. I didn't go to anything. Even if it was mandated all I did was teach classes and go to class.

**What do you find to be least rewarding about your program?**

In response to this inquiry, the most salient themes among the participants related to the themes the illusion of inclusion, forced interactions, and the hazing process. Illusion of inclusion referred to the façade of program and student body inclusion. Eight participants felt as if there is an illusion of inclusion. Forced interactions referred to requiring participants to attend department events and speak with unfamiliar people. Six of the participants talked about how forced interactions to be the least rewarding part of their program. Hazing process referred to emotional and psychological abuse. Five of the participants experienced some type of hazing during the duration of their program.

Malcolm, a third-year doctoral student, used the Co-Cultural strategy of Censoring Self:

The fact that I have to hide my opinion about some things is least rewarding because like my idea of grad school, school in general, academia is that we could get together and talk about ideas about our education and have real conversations about it and politely disagree with one another and not chastise another person for not agreeing with you.

Anthony, a third year doctoral student, described the least rewarding parts of his program:

The least rewarding part is probably the fact that we don't have any faculty members of color. We have one male, and he's retiring in the spring. As of right

now it's four white women. They say we value bringing in different people, and we value different perspectives. We need to do something about that.

Marcus, a fifth-year doctoral student, used the Co-Cultural strategy Developing Positive Face:

So a lot of the forced interactions that they make us go to, like some of the parties and seminars, and things like that. I understand why you have to do that, because you have to talk about your science, but I guess I feel like sometimes it's so forced that it seems disingenuous. And so when someone says, "Hey call me and we can talk, or have lunch, or whatever," it really doesn't mean anything. They're just saying it because they're supposed to say it; they don't mean it.

Cye, a fifth-year doctoral student, described the least rewarding part about his program: "I'll say least rewarding part denotes there was some reward to it."

**How would you describe your overall experience thus far at the institution? Has it been a positive experience? A negative experience?**

In response to this inquiry, the most salient themes among the participants related to the themes of positive experience, underrepresentation of representation, and made it positive. Positive experience referred to the participants having an overall positive experience at the institution. Seven of the participants had an overall positive experience at the university. Underrepresentation of representation referred to not having any faculty and/or students of color. Seven of the participants felt there was an underrepresentation of representation in their respective programs. Made it positive referred to them not having a positive experience but making the best of it. Six of the participants made the best of their situation and made it a positive experience even though it wasn't a positive experience.

Rah, a third-year doctoral student, used the Co-Cultural strategy Developing Positive Face:

I would say positive. I find that I am using a lot of my athletic training—my psychological athletic training—to try to stay on task, to try and stay focused, to try and stay positive. It has been, at times, very hard to stay positive, and I get depressed, and I feel overwhelmed. So I've used a lot psychological teachings that I've learned when I was younger, in terms of perseverance and just fighting through the hard times.

Kendrick, a third-year doctoral student, described his overall experience at the institution:

I feel like I'm in such a minority—or so underrepresented, that might be a better way of putting it—that the perception of those who either come from the dominant group or the underrepresented group, who had to go through similar experiences view me as, “You should be grateful to be here.” And teaching for me, it's not just for focusing on what the textbook says, because next year the edition will change. I need more knowledge about how to navigate and maneuver, so I can focus on the textbook. I think when people have these perceptions based on the fact that there's a small number of underrepresented individuals in their program, they end up taking their students for granted because the students don't really have a place to process, they don't really have anyone they can go to and talk to. And then those who are in the minority, or underrepresented groups as faculty, are overwhelmed so they don't want to do it. They're like, “Ooh, this is too much.” There's not enough underrepresentation represented.

Jay Rock, a third-year doctoral student, described his overall experience at the institution:

Overall, I would have to say it has been a positive experience based on what I have made it. So finding those outlets and those ways to remedy certain things, it's those kind of things that contribute to me having more of a positive experience. In addition, because of my background and the struggles that I have been through, I take a certain sense of pride in facing certain type of challenges and persevering over those challenges. Coming from Detroit made me, generally speaking, mentally tough.

**What do you believe has contributed to your positive or negative experiences?**

In response to this inquiry, the most salient themes among the participants related to the themes positive, support, and underrepresentation of representation. Positive referred to the participants. Seven of the participants fell under this theme. The participants who had a positive experience talked about staying positive and having a community of support around them. The participants who had a negative experience talked about not having enough people of color around them who could understand them. Six of the participants had negative experiences.

Rah, a third-year doctoral student, used the Co-Cultural strategy Intragroup Networking: "Support. I've had strong support from friends, professors, and other students."

Cye, a fifth-year doctoral student, used the Co-Cultural strategies Intragroup Networking and Using Liaisons: "Positive relationships, a sense of belonging to something is valuable. People willing to share activities and good experiences and

support and that mental support, any kind of communal support so that's what it is for me."

**As an African American, how would you describe the general impact that race has had directly on your graduate student experiences?**

In response to this inquiry, the most salient themes among the participants related to the themes underrepresentation of representation and only one. Underrepresentation of representation referred to not having any faculty and/or students of color. Seven of the participants talked about how the underrepresentation of representation impacted their experience as an African American. Only one referred to being the only one in the program and/or in classes. Six of the participants talked about the impact of being the only African-American male in their program.

Raynard, (a seventh-year doctoral student) used the Co-Cultural strategy  
Distancing Self:

In my lived experience as an African American, it colored – pun intended – who I hung out with when I came. I would have to say of my experience here, a solid upwards of 98% of the people that I have socialized with identify themselves as African American.

Jay Rock, a third-year doctoral student, described the underrepresentation of representation and only one in these terms:

I think racism is inevitable so you have to recognize blatant forms of racism and subtle forms of racism. I think that, racism or not, you have the hyper visibility that people utilize any time you are the only Black student or Black male student.

In general, a Black student inside of a classroom feels like education adds to that.

It seems like race and poverty class comes up and makes you feel concerned about those subtle terms, those euphuisms that are used in the classroom.

Rah, a third-year doctoral student, uses the co-cultural strategy Educating Others: I think it's very important that I get my degree so that I can help bring about more appropriate changes in the educational system for Black students. I mean, that's my goal. That's what I'm doing. I'd like to help Black students on a larger scale and be a part of that process. I feel that I'm intelligent enough to take care of myself where I'm not going to be manipulated. But for other students who don't understand the system and the way it works, they may not be as fortunate.

**As an African-American male, how has race and gender worked together to shape your graduate school experiences?**

In response to this inquiry, the most salient themes among the participants were related to the themes race, only one, and overcompensating/try not to look threatening. Race referred to the participants having to deal with racism or the issue of their race. Seven of the participants dealt with issues of race or racism. Only one referred to being the only in the program and/or in your classes. Six of the participants felt that being the only one shaped their graduate school experience. Overcompensating/try not look threatening referred to participants going out of their way to make the dominant culture feel more comfortable around you. Six of the participants spoke to the fact that they had to overcompensate for being an African-American male.

Tupac, a third-year doctoral student, used the Co-Cultural strategies Overcompensating, Exemplifying Strength, and Communicating Self:



I know some scholars have used this term “cool pose” to describe a Black male’s behavior in certain settings, kind of as a defense mechanism to certain stereotypes. That perception of the cool pose is present in educational settings, too. So, as an African-American male, I was mindful that people didn’t perceive me as being hard-working – at least in an academic sense – or as being intelligent. And so it definitely made me work harder. I felt like I had to prove myself to everybody—both my White peers and faculty members as well as my Black peers and faculty (members). It’s almost like proving yourself to your own people is challenging, if not more than it is proving yourself to White people. So it definitely influenced my experiences, both from a racial perspective and from a gender perspective. One of the Q-sort cards was talking about feeling like you have to represent your race, and as a Black male I have to represent my race and my gender. I have to explain this is my lived experiences, so I have to defend myself because I’m Black but also defend myself because I’m a male.

Booker, a third-year-doctoral student, used the Co-Cultural strategies Educating Others and Dispelling Stereotypes:

These are good questions, nicely written questions. Wow, race and gender together. I personally like being in situations where I have an opportunity to kind of debunk those stereotypes so I take pride in being at the doctoral level of education and being a Black male. So I think the motivation to debunk a lot of the stereotypes that are associated with Black men has positively affected my graduate school experience.

**How would you describe your comfort or discomfort with interracial interactions with your peers?**

In response to this inquiry, the most salient themes among the participants related to the themes comfortable with interracial interactions and proving self. Comfortable with interracial interactions referred to the participants not having any issues with interracial interactions with peers. All of the participants felt comfortable when it came to interracial relations with their peers. Proving self-referred to the participants having to go out of their way to prove they belonged in their program. Seven of the participants felt like they had to prove themselves when they are interacting with their peers.

Tupac, a third-year doctoral student, used the Co-Cultural strategy Censoring Self:

I'd say I'm comfortable. So I've been dealing with navigating this world forever. So the more you do it, the easier it gets. The notion of code switching; you know, how I talk to my White faculty members is different than how I talk to my Black faculty members, how I talk to my Black peers is different than how I talk to my White peers. Most of them gravitate to me because I'm Black. In some instances, I am the token Black friend. I think the ultimate goal is that we have an appreciation, and as best an understanding as possible for each other's cultures. It's like, this enhances the conversation because, you know, diversity and multiculturalism are like buzzwords in education now. Everybody wants this representation, even if it's just from a compositional standpoint, like "We've got to have a Black male."

Tim, a second-year doctoral student, used the Co-Cultural strategies Censoring Self and Emphasizing Commonalities:

I'm comfortable. I have to scale it back a little bit in terms of being completely 100% myself. The language I use with my friends is not the language that I would use around White people or anybody else but I guess that's just being in a professional setting. If I'm in a professional setting with Black people I still wouldn't use some of the language that I use with my friends so I don't think I switch it up too much in a professional setting, in general, but I do feel more comfortable around Black people. I do use that common ground strategy.

**Has the university or your department created an environment that's conducive to positive race relations?**

In response to this inquiry, the most salient themes among the participants related to the themes not so positive race relations and illusion of inclusion. Not so positive race relations referred to the university not having very good relationships with groups other than the dominant group. Ten of the participants reported having less than positive relations when it came to race within the department and the university. Seven of the participants talked about the department or the university having an illusion of inclusion. None of the participants thought the university or their department was doing anything conducive to create an environment for positive race

**How would you describe your comfort or discomfort with interracial interactions with faculty?**

In response to this inquiry, the most salient themes among the participants related to the themes comfortable racially, uncomfortable with the opposite gender, and no

support. Comfortable racially referred to the participants being comfortable with their interracial interactions with faculty. Six of the participants were comfortable interacting with White faculty members. Uncomfortable with the opposite gender referred to the participants not being that comfortable with their interactions with White women. Six of the participants had issues when interacting with White women faculty members. No support referred to the participants feeling like they were not getting any support from the faculty in their department. Seven of the participants talked about not having any support from the faculty members in their respective department.

Tim, a fourth-year doctoral student, used the Extensive Preparation Co-Cultural strategy:

They have been similar with peers. I don't feel any discomfort or anything with peers. I can just be normal. I don't feel the need to use the extensive preparation technique. I don't feel I need to do that with peers. I can just be myself since I feel comfortable and go with the flow but with faculty I use that to be prepared (strategy) or whatever. I think it's been similar.

Booker, a third-year doctoral student, used the Censoring Self Co-Cultural strategy:

Faculty is a little different in the sense that I think I put more effort into coming into the office more professionally, using or not using slang that I would normally use with my Black friends and not using slang that I would normally use with White students when I talk to White professors so I think it kind of gets filtered out if there is a level of comfort.

**In thinking about these two types of relationships, peer and faculty, would you say your experiences have been primarily similar or different, and how so?**

In response to this inquiry, the most salient themes among the participants related to the themes different, similar, and faculty interaction had-to basis. Different referred to the participants having different experiences with faculty and peers. Seven of the participants talked about how different their experiences were between faculty and peers. Similar referred to the participants having similar experiences between faculty and peers. Eight of the participants felt like their experiences were similar. Faculty interaction had-to basis referred to participants' forced interactions with faculty. Six of the participants talked about their forced interactions with faculty members.

Raynard, a seventh-year doctoral student, used the Co-Cultural strategy

Emphasizing Commonalities:

Because at the end of the day, we are infinitely more similar in many ways than dissimilar. And all of those differences are things that make the story interesting.

That diversity is infinity. Infinity is all about diversity! So that's been interesting.

**What would you say is your general strategy for managing or handling these relationships? And what do you believe is the motivation for using them?**

In response to this inquiry, the most salient themes among the participants' were related to the themes being/known self, professional manner, and focus on program completion. Being/known self-referred to the participants knowing their identity, history, and who they are as a person. Eight of the participants stated how being yourself is a great strategy to use when handling these relationships. Professional manner referred to the participants always being professional around faculty and colleagues. Six of the

participants felt like if they dressed in a certain manner that they would be treated better. Focus on program completion referred to the participants keeping their eyes on the prize so no matter what you go through your goal is finish your degree. Eight of the participants agreed that focusing on the completion of your program will help you deal with these relationships.

Anthony, a third-year-doctoral student, used the Co-Cultural strategy Avoiding:

I try to stay completely out of people's personal lives as much as possible, my faculty members and peers. They tell me things about their life but I'm quick to disengage from those conversations because I don't want to know about it.

Malcolm, a third-year doctoral student, used the Co-Cultural strategy Developing Positive Face:

It's all about making them feel comfortable and make sure they are not afraid but at the same time don't lose yourself in the process of being comfortable as an African American. Know yourself and when it's time to talk to them make sure you are polite in the process.

**If you had the chance to go back in time and apply to the university knowing what you know now, would you even apply or accept admission to your program? Why or why not?**

In response to this inquiry, the most salient themes among the participants were related to the themes yes, no, and don't know. Yes referred to over half of the participants stating they would still apply and accept admission even knowing everything they know now. Ten of the participants would apply and/or accept admission to their program. No referred to the participants not applying or accepting admission to the program after their

experience at the university. Only one participant said no they would not even apply.

Don't know referred to the participants being undecided on whether or not they would apply and accept admission into the program. Four of the participants did not know if they would apply or accept admission into their respective program.

**If you could give other African-American males a piece of advice for successfully navigating graduate school, what would that be?**

In response to this inquiry, the most salient themes among the participants' were related to the themes know thyself/be yourself, create an African-American community, and no help. Being/known self-referred to the participants knowing their identity, history, and who they are as a person. Eight of the participants stated that being yourself will help you successfully navigate graduate school. Create an African-American community referred to finding other Black doctoral students in other programs and building a community. Seven of the participants talked about creating an African-American community inside the university to help you successfully navigate graduate school. No help referred to the participants' perception that future students would not receive help from faculty or peers, and they would have to navigate graduate school alone. Six of the participants talked about not assuming that you will receive any type of help from faculty or peers.

Malcolm, a third-year doctoral student, used the Co-Cultural strategies Intragroup Networking, Using Liaisons, and Strategic distancing:

Find a good group of Black students to hang out with and find Black faculty to be in your corner. I think having some type of Black faculty and student alliance is

vital for any Black doctoral student going through this university because a lot of classes you will be the only Black male in that class.

Cye, a fifth-year doctoral student, used the Co-Cultural strategy Extensive

Preparation:

Read everything, read everything. Be willing to read, and read it with an open mind. Know that you have time to read it, because at the end of the day grad school is a great place to be but your first responsibility there is to be smart and being smart means reading the material that people give you to read.

**What advice would you give White-American peers on how to have positive interracial interactions and relationships with students of color in their program or elsewhere?**

In response to this inquiry, the most salient themes among the participants related to the themes avoid Barack Obama, don't assume, and get out of your comfort zone. Avoid Barack Obama subject referred to the participants not talking politics especially since the President is Black. Five of the participants agreed on not talking about Barack Obama and/or politics. Don't assume referred to participants wanting peers not to assume stereotypical things about them. Seven of the participants talked about how it's not okay to assume anything about anybody. Get out of your comfort zone referred to encouraging their peers to experience other cultures as the minority. Six of the participants talked about how their White peers should get out of their comfort zone.

Malcolm, a third-year doctoral student used the Co-Cultural strategy Dispelling Stereotypes:



My dissertation chair shot pool one night but I wasn't doing that well, and he said I picked you because you were Black so I thought you were good! I laughed at it because it was funny. I didn't get offended because it came from a good place but don't assume that because someone is Black that they are good at sports.

Tim, a fourth-year doctoral student, used the Co-Cultural strategy Averting Controversy:

Certainly, don't bring up the Barack Obama stuff. Don't be insensitive to what might be other people's beliefs.

**What advice would you give White-American faculty on how to have positive interracial interactions and relationships with students of color in their programs or elsewhere?**

In response to this inquiry, the most salient themes among the participants related to the themes learn culture, don't assume, and have diverse classrooms. Learn culture referred to the faculty taking the time to understand their Black students. Seven of the participants talked about how learning culture would be beneficial to White faculty members. Don't assume referred to participants wanting peers not to assume stereotypical things about them. Five of the participants talked about not assuming. Have diverse classroom referred to the participants wanting faculty to include books and research that reflected their experiences. Seven of the participants spoke about having diverse classrooms.

Malcolm, a third-year doctoral student, used the Co-Cultural practice of Dispelling Stereotypes:

Don't assume that they want to study race all the time and when a study is studying race, don't think they are angry about it, just be like this is what they want to study and have a genuine passion. I think they mistake our passion for anger or rage and not oh, it's just a passionate person. I think about the recent events with Dez Bryant (Black pro football player) and how he was yelling on the sidelines because they lost a game. It played in the media like an angry Black man. Part of me feels like there is a back story because he is in the final year of his contract. Some painted a bad picture of him suggesting his team must rid itself of a locker room cancer. But a few weeks before the Dez Bryant incident Tom Brady (White pro football player) did a similar thing and the media portrayed him as a fiery leader bringing the troops together. Dez Bryant does it and he is tearing the team apart yelling at people and mistaking his passion for the game as rage and anger. I think would be the advice that I would give to White faculty that if that person is studying race and they are passionate about it don't mistake it for rage or anger.

Booker, a third-year doctoral student, talked about using the Co-Cultural strategy of Emphasizing Commonalities:

That is a good question. That's a fantastic question. As you are asking these questions I can see the Q-sort cards. Find some common ground, don't just ignore someone or exclude someone from being your colleague because on race, I think you can find some common ground, always!

### Section III: Summary of Results

In addressing the research question about the specific communication strategies Black males identified as most effective for their interracial interactions with White faculty and with White peers, the participants used different strategies. The strategies Using Liaisons, Intragroup Networking, Dispelling Stereotypes, and Communicating Self, were in the top five strategies most used when it came to interacting with White faculty and peers. The others strategies for faculty were Developing Positive Face and Extensive Preparation, the other strategies for peers included Exemplifying Strength, and Emphasizing commonalities.

Cye, a fifth-year doctoral student, gave an example of Extensive Preparation:

Be willing to read everything and read it with an open mind. Read it actively. Be smart and do the work and take the time you need to do it, which means learning to sit still. Learning to be still is one of the biggest assets a Black male Ph.D. student can learn.

David, a second-year doctoral student, gave an example of Communicating Self:

I would say, one: be confident in who you are. That's one thing that I had to learn. You should be confident in your ability and in who you are. Obviously you are here for a reason, you were accepted here for a reason. So you're building yourself as an expert in the field, and just because the faculty members don't have the same exact research interest as you doesn't mean that you don't belong. It just means that you're proving some scholarship or some knowledge in an area that needs to be provided. And if you don't do it, then who is going to do it?

Jim, a second-year doctoral student, gave an example of Developing Positive Face:

My general strategy for managing these relationships is that I try to be professional. That way nobody can ever say anything bad about me. I just stay professional, polite, and respectful.

Booker, a third-year doctoral student, gave an example of Dispelling Stereotypes:

I personally like being in situations where I have an opportunity to kind of debunk those stereotypes. So I take pride in that. I take pride in being at the doctoral level of education and being a black male so I think the motivation to debunk a lot of the stereotypes that are associated with Black men has positively affected my graduate school experience.

Malcolm, a third-year doctoral student, gave an example of Using Liaisons and Intragroup Networking:

I contacted a professor who was essentially one of the people I wanted to come in with. She got me an assistantship to finish up the semester so I was cool. She was in my corner. The best thing that happened to me was getting fired from that assistantship because I started reaching out to Dr. Garnett in the counseling department, Dr. Taylor, and Dr. Pierce and all these other Black professors and I got this network of professors that had my back and then I started meeting other Black male doctoral students. It opened up a whole new world!

In addressing the research question regarding communication strategies Blacks males identified as least effective for interracial interactions with White faculty and with White peers, the participants identified several strategies. Dissociating and Censoring

Self were in the top five strategies as least effective when interacting with faculty and peers. The other strategies in the top five least effective strategies to faculty were Averting controversy, mirroring, and bargaining. The other strategies in the top five in regards to peers were Strategic Distancing, Increasing visibility, and Extensive preparation. The participants did not provide examples of these strategies since the strategies were ineffective. The interviews went more in depth to what was already discussed in regards to the strategies that were deemed effective or ineffective.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Because there are a limited number of Black males in higher education, there is a need to support Black male graduate students who pursue a graduate degree. There is a dearth of literature focused on the experiences of Black male doctoral students at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), and much of the research available overlooks ways to support Black males during graduate school. Black males are the proverbial “canary in the educational mines,” warning of dangers and pitfalls that are inherent in our educational system (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014). The impact of race and the related complexities regarding Black males are sensitive and difficult topics to deal with in the educational setting.

Chapter 5 is a discussion of the statistical findings from Chapter 4 and conclusions of the study. These questions helped guide this study on the realities of Black males pursuing graduate degrees correlated with the interracial communication between White faculty and peers. The purpose of this study was to find the most effective strategies for negotiating Black male identity while navigating a predominately PWI in Southeastern United States. Chapter 5 presents the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research.

### **Conclusions**

Black males have to communicate with White faculty and White peers while navigating their cultural identity in graduate school. Four research questions were tested to understand the most effective communication strategies for Black male doctoral

students when interacting with White faculty and peers. A detailed discussion of the results is provided in Chapter 4. The research yielded results that provide a foundation for interesting conclusions and implications in higher education.

The university used as a site for this research attracts students nationally and internationally as well as from in the state. It offers the state's broadest array of possibilities in graduate and professional education, thus a large part of the student body is post-baccalaureate. The mission statement of university talks about being the oldest, most comprehensive, and most diversified institution of higher education. The motto of this institution is to teach, to serve, and to inquire into the nature of things. The mission refers to the integral and unique role in the conservation and enhancement of the state's and nation's intellectual, cultural, and environmental heritage. This university endeavors to prepare the university community and the state for full participation in the global society of the twenty-first century. If the university's mission statement is to accomplish all of these tasks mentioned above, then it must provide support for the Black male doctoral students who enroll. If the university truly cares about preparing its large minority population and preparing all students for a global society, then there must be support systems in place for these students enrolling in programs across the university.

### **Research Question 1: Black Males and Effective Interactions with White Faculty**

In order to facilitate effective interactions with White faculty, participants identified a range of strategies they used. The five most frequently utilized strategies across participants were Using Liaisons, Developing Positive Face, Intragroup Networking, Extensive Preparation, Dispelling Stereotypes and Communicating Self. Thomas, Willis, and Davis (2007) viewed the cultural exposure of working across race as

being very beneficial. However, the researchers point out White faculty members may have limited experiences working in racially diverse contexts and little understanding of the in- and out-of-school experiences of graduate students of color (Thomas, Willis, & Davis, 2007). Fonzworth, a fourth-year doctoral student, gave an example of what faculty could do to understand diverse graduate students:

For faculty, I think it's just taking the time to understand the people that they're working with. We're not just students; we are potential colleagues. So, taking the time to understand the people that you work with is important.

Tupac, a third-year doctoral student, gave an example of cultural exposure:

I would say for faculty, diversify your curriculum; include research from scholars who are from different backgrounds so you're still teaching the same topics, but you're getting different perspectives on those topics. And then, there should be more concerted recruitment efforts to have a more diverse student pool in your programs.

Truitt (2009) suggests that Black graduate students at PWIs currently have a much more successful relationship between Black students and the faculty that teach than they have had in the past. Rose (2005) contends that the relationship between faculty and students can “provide sponsorship, protection, challenge, exposure, visibility, counseling, acceptance, confirmation, and/or coaching and can have a large impact on students’ perceptions of the quality of their graduate experience.” (p. 53). Rah, a third-year doctoral student, gave an example of a successful relationship with his White major professor:



I think if they're going to work closely with African-American students, they have to learn the culture. A huge part of why my major professor and I get along so well is because he's spent a lot of time teaching in urban environments, and I feel like he understands these students' (culture) and what these kids have to deal with. That makes it a lot easier to have conversations about things, because he has experience in those classrooms and what they look like, and what the students are dealing with. So you know, it's really important that colleges employ faculty members that care about students with diverse backgrounds, and have experience working with these types of students.

Cye, a fifth-year doctoral student, had a different experience and had some advice on how to understand your students:

It's different for me coming from certain perspectives in a sense the people I was dealing with never had an African-American male in their class so they didn't have a book. They were just straight up nervous. Take some time, I mean take your time. If you don't know, say you don't know. If you don't understand, say "I don't understand." But don't project or assume because then what you think is educational actually becomes detrimental.

### **Research Question 2: Black Males and Effective Interactions with White Peers**

The top five strategies were in order of rank Dispelling Stereotypes, Communicating Self, Intragroup Networking, Exemplifying Strength, and a tie for fifth, Using Liaisons and Emphasizing Commonalities. The findings suggest that White peers should think before they speak. Fonworth, a fourth-year doctoral student, gives an example of what peers should not do:

The first thing I would say is, it's not about you. Like, you're not the model, it's not just always about you. I am not your African-American encyclopedia. No, I don't want to talk to you about the Black church. Just because Barack Obama was elected doesn't mean that you have to get all touchy every time, someone talks about politics in the classroom. It's just not always about you; don't give yourself that much credit. And that's the biggest thing, like: get over yourself. Think about what the hell you're saying before you say it! One time, I heard three White guys in the program talking about how they were going to open up a bar. One of the guys had two daughters so they were like: "Oh, we're going to have his daughters work there because they're going to grow up and they're probably going to be really hot, and we're going have them work the front of the bar." And so one of the Black girls in the program said, "Oh, what about my daughter?" He said, "Oh, we could put her in the kitchen."

Kendrick, a third-year doctoral student, gives an example of what peers should do if they want to understand Black male doctoral students:

Having an understanding of the program doesn't necessarily mean you have an understanding of the people who are in the program. And the only way you can really get to know people is to step outside of the program. Spend time with people and not build relationships just solely for the purpose of the program. That is the only way to get to know people. I do know that I'm inundated every day on television with people who represent the dominant culture. They say, "These are the people who have power, these are the people who look good, this is what you should be about." My mind says, well, maybe you need to learn more about

people of color by watching media that way. Travel. And don't make assumptions on the basis of what somebody looks like on the outside. It sounds broad, but you kind of have to know the difference between what it means to be an academician and an intellectual. Kind of like what Bell Hooks talks about in her book, *The Pedagogy of Hope*. I think she is saying something like, "You know, an intellectual is always going to question. They are always going to ask. They can be in an academic setting, but they're going to be questioning. And they never think that they have all the answers because they published one particular thing. Because they know it can just always change. The question is, are you going to keep up with it now? Are you publishing? What are you doing?" But an academician, from what I hear sometimes, they think there's just one way. There's no other way. No other change, just going to go get my check. And you've got to meet the standards to graduate and I hold that power.

The absence of positive faculty-student relationships can leave Black graduate students feeling helpless (Brown et al., 1999; Tuitt, 2009). Helplessness may contribute to why Black graduates fail to graduate at the same rate of their White counterparts (Winkle-Wagner, Johnson, Morelon-Quainoo, & Santiago, 2010). Based on the participants' responses, the researcher believes that it is important that the faculty and students in the relationship find some common ground. Booker, a third-year doctoral student, gives an example seeking common ground:

Find some common ground; don't just ignore someone or exclude someone from being your friend based on race. I think if you can find some common ground it always helps. There is going to be some common ground there if you are in the

same program, you know. You have the same major so I think that's a good starting point. That has been my experience, start there with what your academic interests are and that one thing in common in some cases can blossom into relationships or just explore what else you have in common besides your research interest.

The negative depictions of Black males in the media (Wood & Hilton, 2013) are rarely balanced with moral portrayals of Black males as successful contributors to society, family-oriented, working professionals, positive role models, or leaders. Cyé, a fifth-year doctoral student, gives an example of assumptions and generalizations:

White people don't assume you know. Just because you see them and they look a certain kind of way you can't assume the Black guy likes rap music. He's from the South, okay he probably thinks a certain kind of way and he has a certain personality. He probably can't add well or he probably hasn't been out the country or exposed to much. Let me use smaller words, he probably don't understand big words, he probably plays basketball real good or runs fast. So he can't make those assumptions and I can't make assumptions about them like they always go skiing or they can't jump that well or they don't have rhythm or they understand George Bush's policies or somebody in your family is a strict Republican probably your dad. I can't make those assumptions.

### **Research Questions 3 & 4: Black Males and Ineffective Interactions with White Faculty and Peers**

The top five least likely strategies for interacting with faculty were in order of rank: Averting Controversy, Dissociating, Mirroring, Censoring Self, and Bargaining.

The top five least likely strategies for interacting with peers were, in order of rank: Strategic Distancing, Increasing Visibility, Censoring Self, Extensive Preparation, and Dissociating. The findings indicate that unconscious bias leads to unintentional racism. Moule (2009) suggests that unconscious biases affect all of our relationships between teachers and students, teachers and parents, and teachers and other educators. Understanding our own biases is a first step toward improving the interactions that we have with all people and is essential if we hope to build deep community within our schools. Biases are rooted in stereotypes and prejudices. Jay Rock, a third-year doctoral student, gives an example of bias and improving interactions:

Advice to Caucasian students: I don't think everybody shares the same views, I mean really share. I would just tell them to be openly honest regardless if your views are very biased. I think it's good for people to know that they might be labeled as racist if they have racist views but to the ones who are ignorant about racial issues and they suppress the things they say because they don't want to come off as ignorant I think that's a disservice to not only themselves but to everyone else. I think it's okay to be corrected or not know certain things. So again, me being comfortable with who I am, I have no problem in inquiring into what other people's race is and their cultural norms and what's considered appropriate. Do you prefer to be called an Indian or a Native American? Is the word Latino offensive to them or being called a Mexican or Hispanic? You hear those type of things. People say it's offensive to be called a Hispanic and some people say it's not. If you do not openly ask when you are unsure, I think you do yourself a disservice. I think that applies to White people too. Do you prefer to be

called European American or Caucasian or White person or Suburban American?

What do you want to be called? I would try to encourage them to be as open as possible and not be afraid to share their view. I think that's the only way we can make progress.

### **Implications**

There were several implications drawn from the research. The next section outlines how this study added to the body of knowledge for co-cultural theory. These implications may provide insight on how to improve higher education practices and policies. These implications may also provide additional insight to supporting Black males in academia.

#### **Implications for Higher Education Practices and Policies**

The findings from the current study provide insight into key institutional practices that could be implemented and enhanced for Black male doctoral students to have more positive college experiences. Despite the fact that findings from this study cannot be generalized to all institutions of higher of education in the United States, they should provide policymakers, educators, and administrators with useful information to evaluate their current policies and practices.

Policymakers should review their recruitment and retention policies to increase diverse classrooms and programs. It is important to improve diversity recruitment and retention policies so students of color do not feel isolated and ostracized. Booker, a third-year doctoral student, discussed his diverse program:

My program is actually very diverse, not in the sense that there are a lot of black people but there are a lot of different minorities such as Asian people, but it is still

predominately White. There are a good number of Black people and then some other races so I think inclusion is a big thing. You know it seems like they make an effort to create a diverse population with the faculty too. There are two Black professors and an Asian professor. So there is diversity within the faculty and I think that trickles down to the student body so I think they made a good effort to create a diverse environment.

Cye, a fifth-year doctoral student said his program lacked diversity:

It wasn't inclusive, you have to be able to inject your otherness to whatever they are doing, because there is no otherness there.

### **Implications for Black Male Graduate Students**

From this study, it is evident the participants benefitted from support systems comprised of friends, family, colleagues, and faculty. The support system might underscore the fact they are human beings first and Black male doctoral students second. Therefore, one recommendation would be for faculty and peers to act as though they are “upstanders.” Grantham (2011) states that an upstander is a person who takes a stand and engages in proactive roles to address injustices. Upstanders can be from any race or ethnic background. Upstanders can be administrators, faculty, or peers. Due to the difficulty for Black male doctoral students to navigate PWIs, they need someone in their corner who can make sure they graduate and have a positive experience. The Co-Cultural strategies of Intragroup Networking and Using Liaisons would be example of using upstanders.

The study revealed that some Black male graduate students had a limited ability to speak freely. Fonzworth, a fourth-year doctoral student explained his stance on changing the way he communicates:

I think the one of the biggest pieces is that I had to learn how to communicate in a way that I never had to communicate before. I was raised in the Northeast with a very (direct) family, you know, if your breath stank, we told you. But coming to school like this university, being in the South, I was confronted with a lot of passive-aggressiveness and my ability to communicate almost seemed harsh, so I had to kind of tone it back a lot. So instead of saying “Hey, your breath stinks,” it was now a matter of reaching into my bag and pulling out some gum and chewing it, and saying, “Gum – would you like some?”

Malcolm, a third-year doctoral student explained his stance on not being able to speak freely:

The fact that I have to hide my opinion about some things is least rewarding because my idea of grad school, school in general, academia, is that we could get together and talk about ideas about education and have a real conversation about it and politely disagree with one another and not chastise another person for not agreeing with you. There is not a fair exchange in ideas and I definitely see the power dynamics and hypocrisy within the program.

Jay Rock, a third-year doctoral student explained his stance on when to speak freely:

My relationship with communication with peers is strategic in certain situations; sometimes you can speak a bit more freely depending on who you are. Learn how



to access that particular person because all White people are not the same, of course. Some people are more comfortable being White. They understand their advantage to privilege, some are cool with it and some not cool with it. So I think it's real subjective regarding the White person in particular who you may be speaking with or a person from another culture.

Dr. Joseph Cooper at the University of Connecticut has a program called Collective Uplift (Cooper, 2015). Collective Uplift was created from his research on Black male athletes and their experiences at different universities. He found that they were frustrated with the lack of support that they received outside of athletics. The athletes felt like they were isolated in the classroom context. Because of their experiences, Dr. Cooper created an organization where they felt supported holistically and where they felt valued and accepted. This organization may serve as a model for other universities to adopt in order to create a supportive space for Black male doctoral students.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study contributes to the current body of literature on Black male doctoral students by examining their interracial interactions with faculty and peers. This study builds on the limited number of studies, which have investigated the relationship between Black male doctoral students and interracial interactions with White faculty and peers at a PWI. Future research should include a larger sample size of participants. Future studies should also conduct comparative analyses across institutional types (e.g. private vs. public) to further examine the impact of institutional cultures on the lived experiences and outcomes of Black male doctoral students.

Additionally, future research should include in-depth, cross sectional and comparative analyses of Black male doctoral students across institutional classifications (e.g. first year, second year, third year, fourth year, fifth year, and sixth year), family income backgrounds (e.g. high income earners, middle income earners, and low income earners), and academic preparedness for college (e.g. high school GPA, quality of high school). It is recommended that future researchers in this area administer research instruments at a time in the semester that may be less stressful than post finals in the fall semester, as the stress associated with this time may unduly influence responses to questions.

It is recommended that future research in this area employ more qualitative methods of data collection as it appears that some of the experiences of the participants may not be best captured by quantitative methods. The researcher would suggest the utilization of focus groups for future research. It is recommended that other aspects of Black male doctoral students' lives such as spirituality, physical health, academic progress, and commitments outside of school be examined to provide a fuller picture of the participants' graduate school experience. Future research could also include looking at Black male doctoral students' interactions with Black faculty. This study found the participants not only having issues interacting with their White faculty but also with their Black faculty members.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this mixed methodological study was to examine the effective strategies and behaviors African-American males use to manage their interracial communication with their White faculty and White peers at a PWI in the Southeastern

United States. Fifteen Black male doctoral students were interviewed for this study. The results of the study indicated several effective and ineffective strategies of intercultural communication between Black male doctoral students and White faculty. There were also several effective and ineffective strategies of intercultural communication between Black male doctoral students and White peers.

It is important to note that the study had several limitations, including subjectivity from Q-sort methodology. The lack of generalizability is also a limitation. Although these limitations must be noted and considered within the context of results and conclusions, the study still offers relevant insights into the communications between Black male graduate students, White faculty, and White peers. The findings of the study contribute to the existing body of research on Co-Cultural theory by providing current exposure to Orbe's (1998a) theory.

This research represented the combination of personal reflections from the researcher's own experiences and observations throughout his own graduate training, and a professional commitment to conducting meaningful research relevant to the great community. Collectively, future research should build on previous literature to identify effective strategies and best practices related to effective strategies for interracial interactions.

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## APPENDIX A

## EMAIL SCRIPT

Dear Graduate Coordinator:

My name is Christopher Johnson, and I am a doctoral student in the College of Education here at UGA. I am currently collecting data for my dissertation. My study aims to understand the graduate school experiences of Black Male Doctoral students during their time at the University of Georgia.

Because I am not a student in your Graduate Program, I seeking your assistance in recruiting eligible participants. Can you please circulate this email among your faculty and graduate students, as well as specific individuals you might personally know who qualify for participation in this study and are interested? Any assistance at all that you can offer is greatly appreciated;

To be eligible for participation in this study, participants must meet the following criteria:

1. You must identify as a Black or African American male 18 years of age or older.
2. You must have completed at least one year of their program.

If anyone qualifies for this study, then please have them email directly so that I can handle the logistics of the interview process directly with them. My email address is xxxxx@uga.edu. Also, feel free to forward this call to other qualifying individuals!! Thanks so much!!

--

Onward and Upward,

Christopher Oliver Johnson

## APPENDIX B

### IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### Interview Protocol

##### PART I

Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in my study on the topic of identity negotiation for black males at predominately white institutions (PWIs). As stated in the consent form, your participation is completely voluntary, and if at any point during the interview you become uncomfortable, you are welcome to cease participation.

The interviews should last 60-90 minutes, depending on your responses. I encourage you to take as much time needed to provide your responses, as I want you to have the opportunity to give as accurate and detailed responses to the questions presented as possible. This interview will involve you sharing basic demographic information with me, followed by two Q-sorting tasks, which will be explained shortly, and a few follow up questions. If at any point any part of the interview is unclear or confusing, then please let me know and I will clarify to the best of my ability.

First, I would like to ask you a few basic Demographic Questions.

1. Can you please tell me your race, gender, and age?
2. Tell me about your family background.
3. What is your area of study? What degree are you working on, and how many years have you been at UGA?

Thank you. Now, we are entering the Q-Sort portion of the interview. I have before you a stack of 26 index cards with statements on them. The statements are responses to different scenarios that you might find yourself in as a graduate student. I will guide you through each scenario, and for each one you will place the cards into three different piles, which I will be explained shortly. Be aware that the stack of cards is arranged in no particular order, and there is no right or wrong answer. I just want to know how you specifically would respond to certain interpersonal interactions.

##### SCENARIO 1:

This is the first scenario. Think for a moment about your interactions with the Caucasian peers here at the University, either in your department or other disciplines on campus. I would like to have a general understanding of how you manage your interaction with them. In front of you is a stack of index cards with statements describing various

situations and how you might choose to respond to them. I want you to take time to read each statement very carefully, and after doing so, you should place it in one of three stacks: (1) what you prefer to use most often; (2) what you least prefer to use; and (3) what you are indifferent about using.

Now that you have completed this task, I would now like you to rank order the respective piles, with the most favored strategy on top and the least favored strategy on the bottom.

SCENARIO 2: Now, I would like you to shift your thinking and consider how you manage your interactions with Caucasian faculty members here at the University, either in your department or other disciplines on campus. I would like to have a general understanding of how you manage your interaction with them. In front of you is a stack of index cards with statements describing various situations and how you might choose to respond to them. I want you to take time to read each statement very carefully, and after doing so, you should place it in one of three stacks: (1) what you prefer to use most often; (2) what you least prefer to use; and (3) what you are indifferent about using.

Now that you have completed this task, I would now like you to rank order the respective piles, with the most favored strategy on top and the least favored strategy on the bottom.

## PART II

Thank you for completing the sorting tasks. In order to further understand your experiences at a PWI, I would like to ask you questions that allow you to explain and describe in your own words the decision-making process you used to identify your strategy preference and selection from the pile of cards you just sorted. I will continue to audio-tape this interview, which will be transcribed for the purpose of analyzing. This will also ensure accuracy in interpreting your responses and experiences.

1. I will now ask you a few questions that will assist me in better understanding how you have dealt with being an African American male at a PWI. I will first, however, ask you some general questions, which will then be followed by a few questions regarding race and gender.
  - a. What would you say is the reason or reasons you chose to study at UGA?
    - i. Did you ever consider a historically black college university (HBCU)? Why or why not?
  - b. What is it about your graduate program that you factored into your decision to be a student there?
    - ii. Since you have been in your program, do you find it as rewarding as you thought it would be? Why or why not?
    - ii. What would you say are the major factors that contribute to that experience?
    - iii. What do you find to be least rewarding? Why or why not?

- c. How would you describe your overall experience thus far at UGA? Has it been a positive experience? Negative experience?
  - i. What do you believe has contributed to your positive experiences? Negative experiences?
- d. As an African American, how would you describe the impact that race has had directly on your graduate school experiences in general?
  - i. How has it impacted your experiences within your program?
- e. As an African American *male*, how have race and gender worked together to shape your graduate school experiences?
- f. How would you describe your comfort or discomfort with interracial interactions with your peers?
  - i. Has the university or your department created an environment that is conducive to positive race relations?
  - ii. How would you describe your comfort or discomfort with interracial interactions with faculty?
  - iii. How has the university or your department created (or not) an environment that is conducive to positive race relations?
- g. In thinking about these two types of relationships (peer and faculty/student), would you say your experiences have been primarily similar or different? How so?
- h. What would you say is your general strategy for managing or handling these relationships? What do you believe is the motivation for using them?
- i. If you had the chance to go back in time and apply to UGA knowing what you know now, would you even apply or accept admission to your program? Why or why not?
- j. Finally, if you could give other African American males a piece of advice for successfully navigating graduate school, what would that be?
  - i. What advice would you give Caucasian American peers on how to have positive interracial interactions and relationships with other students of color in their programs or elsewhere?
  - ii. What advice would you give Caucasian American faculty on how to have positive interracial interactions and relationships with students of color in their programs or elsewhere?

2. Thank you so much for your time and participation in this very important study. Your participation is very critical to social science research and how can best understand diversity in an environment that is slowly changing in terms of race, ethnicity, and culture.

## APPENDIX C

### CO-CULTURAL THEORY STRATEGIES

#### Co-Cultural Practices

##### 1. *Emphasizing commonalities*

Definition: Emphasizing Commonalities focuses on human similarities while downplaying or ignoring personal (co-cultural) differences. The practice of emphasizing commonalities is employed when persons try to promote a utopian society in which “people are people” and cultural differences are not as significant as shared human characteristics. Example: Emphasizing the fact that we are all grad students even though our experiences might be different.

##### 2. *Developing positive face*

Definition: Developing Positive Face is articulated by many co-cultural group members in recent research projects involves being “gracious communicators.” Some describe a proficiency at becoming more “respectful,” “polite,” and “more attentive” when interacting with dominant group members.

Example: Going out of your way to be nice to professors or classmates to make them feel more comfortable with you

### *3. Censoring self*

Definition: Besides being very conscious or very mindful when interacting with others, many persons describe instances when they are extremely offended by dominant group members but decide to remain silent. Instead of confronting the offenders or disclosing their discomfort, they resolve to contain their immediate reactions and “say nothing,” “blow it off,” or as one person aptly depicted, “swallow it.”

Example: When people talk about what excuse do Black people have when we have a Black president and not saying anything.

### *4. Averting controversy*

Definition: Averting controversy consists of deflecting communication away from topics that deal with certain “controversial” or potentially dangerous subject areas. People of color may abstain from discussions about affirmative action, Barack Obama, or California’s Proposition 187.

Example: When they talk about diversity and equality I don’t say anything so I don’t sound like the angry Black man.

### *5. Extensive preparation*

Definition: Extensive Preparation, for some co-cultural group members, face-to-face communication with dominant group members is inaugurated only after a great deal of preparation. “I have to think about what I am going to say before I say it.”

Example: Reading my professors CV and knowing where he or she is from so I can better understand and talk to them.

### *6. Overcompensating*

Definition: Overcompensating, is a tactic that is used more consistently when co-cultural group members find themselves interacting regularly with those representing the dominant culture. Co-cultural group members, typically in response to pervasive fear of discrimination, find themselves trying to be the “exemplary team player.”

Example: Trying to volunteer first to present in class or for different committees in my program.

### *7. Manipulating stereotypes*

Definition: Manipulating Stereotypes, as a co-cultural communicative practice, does not attempt to challenge existing stereotypes but to exploit them for personal gain. In other words, instead of actively avoiding or inadvertently dispelling “stereotypical” behaviors, some members of co-cultural groups conform to commonly accepted ones to obtain certain benefits.

Example: I talk about being an athlete. I can also sing and dance. I like fried chicken.

### *8. Bargaining*

Definition: Bargaining, is a communicative practice by which co-cultural group members strike an arrangement with dominant group members: They pledge to confirm dominant group members’ innocence in societal oppression when they are accepted and allowed to participate in dominant-structured environments.

Example: I agree to be of part of groups with my white classmates if we do not bring up race.



### *9. Dissociating*

Definition: Persons use this communicative practice as an attempt to negate any affiliation with their cultural identity. To “blend in” with the dominant culture, different co-cultural group members avoid different stereotypical behaviors when in the presence of dominant group members.

Example: Intentionally not wearing stereotypical Black male clothing (e.g. baggy clothes, athletic apparel, fitted cap, etc.) Wearing my Fonzworth Bentley outfit and my glasses from Claires is also a way of dissociating with my people.

### *10. Mirroring*

Definition: Mirroring, co-cultural group members who engage in this practice consciously attempt to make their co-cultural identities less visible (or totally invisible) and adopt those behaviors and images of the dominant culture. Members of different co-cultures venture to mirror, reflect to others, the appearance of the dominant culture.

Example: Using the language I hear my professors and classmates use. Listening to the same music, watching the same shows, or hanging out at the same spots.

### *11. Strategic distancing*

Definition: Persons may avoid associating with other co-cultural group members to avoid being pigeonholed as the typical minority group member. Instead, co-cultural group members use strategic distancing and other communicative practices such as overcompensating to set themselves apart from their counterparts.

Example: Not attending soul week during Black History Month. Not going to GAPS events.

### *12. Ridiculing self*

Definition: Ridiculing Self, to confirm their distinctiveness with their co-cultural counterparts, some will participate in (or even possibly initiate) demeaning comments – racist, sexist, classist, heterosexist, and the like, jokes – and nonchalant banter that include poking fun at one's co-culture. The object of these remarks is usually a generalized co-cultural other who appears in the climax of a joke or comment featuring a well-known cultural stereotype.

Example: Go along with White people talk about how Black people who are poor because they are lazy.

### *13. Increasing visibility*

Definition: Increasing Visibility, some members of co-cultural groups apparently believe that their increased visibility as diverse people is important. Instead of reinforcing the notion of “diversity as a detriment” and blending into the dominant culture, some co-cultural group members felt an increased need for visibility in attempts to counter existing negative attitudes toward diversity.

Example: Presenting in class using spoken word or a poem to convey my message.

### *14. Dispelling stereotypes*

Definition: Dispelling stereotypes is a behavior that is largely unconscious and “natural.” For some people this practice is a by-product of being spontaneous, open, and unreserved when in environments populated by dominant group members.

Example: When I don’t have kids out of wedlock and I don’t marry White women. When I speak up in class I know what I am talking about because I am actually smart.

### *15. Communicating self*

Definition: Communicating self, instead of worrying about the stereotypes that others place on all members of a co-cultural group, these persons do not allow such considerations to affect their behaviors. Co-cultural group members who exhibit positive self-esteem are likely to be self-assured communicators when interacting with dominant group members.

Example: In my classes, I would speak about my experiences as a Black male and convey the unique challenges I faced based on my social classification.

### *16. Intragroup networking*

Definition: Intragroup networking, more experienced co-cultural group members advise younger members on how to function in a society that maintains oppressive practices. Whereas few people describe associations with members of other co-cultural groups in recent research, most focus on the significance of locating other people like themselves for support, encouragement, and inspiration.

Example: My friendship with other Black male doctoral students and Black professors. Belonging to a predominantly Black church.

### *17. Using liaisons*

Definition: Using liaisons, some co-cultural group members find it necessary to identify specific dominant group members who can be counted on for support, guidance, and assistance during their interactions within dominant societal structures. Liaisons may include advisers, friends, colleagues, and empathetic supervisors who were genuine, sensitive, honest, and open with their feelings.

Example: Relationship with White students and faculty members.

### *18. Educating others*

Definition: Educating others, co-cultural group members often find themselves in an assumed role of “educator,” enlightening peers, co-workers, and acquaintances on the aspects of their co-cultural identity. In any number of situations, members of different co-cultures are informally appointed as “community spokesperson” and either directly or indirectly encouraged to offer the “co-cultural perspective” on any given issue.

Example: My interactions with my White undergraduate students and talking about my experiences. Sharing your perspectives on different topics regarding race or diversity.

### *19. Confronting*

Definition: Confronting, this type of communicative practice, described by one person as an “IN YOUR FACE” technique, ranges from malicious to belligerent behavior when interacting with dominant group members. Confrontational tactics can take several forms: using coarse language, contentiously questioning dominant policies and practices, displaying aggressive nonverbalisms, or giving dominant group members ultimatums.

Example: When I confronted my White female classmate who asked me "Why are you here?" I get angry and raise my voice and I look like the angry Black man.

### *20. Gaining advantage*

Definition: Gaining advantage, some co-cultural group members, as evident in the co-cultural communicative practice of educating others, find it important to expose institutional practices that are covertly discriminatory or subtle assertions of privilege that dominant group members take for granted. Persons who employ the practice of gaining advantage are not necessarily interested in enlightening dominant group members.

Example: When I bring up my perspective that Black male athletes are exploited at Division I PWIs. I might receive favor being an underrepresented minority.

### *21. Avoiding*

Definition: This strategy can include avoiding a person, conversation, or topics. Avoiding is more physical in nature and involves co-cultural group members who acknowledge “maintaining distance” with acquaintances and co-workers.

Example: Choosing not to go certain departmental gatherings or choosing not to go to a predominantly White church. Taking classes with Black professors if possible.

### *22. Maintaining barriers*

Definition: Maintaining interpersonal barriers, people use interpersonal barriers to create and maintain a psychological distance when physical distancing is impossible, such activity draws from the natural tendency for separation between co-cultural groups. People use different nonverbal behaviors (space, eye contact, body language) to avoid co-cultural interaction.

Example: Conversations with colleagues strictly focused on our professional and personal commonalities. Never staying after class to discuss anything with anybody.

### *23. Exemplifying strength*

Definition: Exemplifying Strengths, although the accomplishments of co-cultural group members are often marginalized to the point of insignificance, some persons feel that identifying and emphasizing co-cultural achievements is important to discount the hegemonic systems of dominant group supremacy. One consequence of exemplifying strengths is increasing the awareness level of dominant group members in regard to their conceptualization of co-cultural life experiences.

Example: Choosing a dissertation topic that focuses on Black cultural empowerment and our experience. Talking about all the things I had to overcome in order to become a doctoral student at the University of Georgia.

### *24. Embracing stereotypes*

Definition: Embracing Stereotypes, persons from different co-cultural groups undertake a negotiated reading of cultural stereotypes by which they adopt the dominant ideology in broad outline but selectively apply it in specific cases and reject it in others. In this regard, those characterizations that dominant society casts on co-cultural groups as an indication of their “less than dominant group status” is espoused and transposed into something positive for the group.

Example: When I talk about how athletic Black males can be. Embracing that we as a people can be loud and colorful.



### *25. Attacking*

Definition: Attacking, involves the use of verbal aggressiveness as necessary to “get through to some folks.” Verbal aggressiveness can be defined as “inflicting psychological pain by attacking the other person’s self-concept” and includes verbal abuse and personal attacks.

Example: When I talk about the pervasiveness of White supremacist ideology in society. Or when I’m talking to Mary Lee who thinks because I am Pro Black that I am anti-White. When I talk about White privilege.

### *26. Sabotaging others*

Definition: Sabotaging others, a communicative practice in which co-cultural group members undermine dominant group member’s ability to excel in environments that give them an inherent advantage over others. In other words, this tactic uses subversions to “make the playing fields a little more balanced.”

Example: When I reframe a conversation with a White person from racial differences to gender or socioeconomic status or educational differences, therefore leveraging power statuses. Talking about how I went to an HBCU but I am in a program with students that went to PWI’s and I am doing just as well as them or better.

## APPENDIX D

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in a research study titled "Negotiating Black Male Identity While Navigating Predominately White Institutions" conducted by Christopher Johnson from the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Georgia under the co-direction of Dr. Louis Castenell, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Georgia (706-542-4110) and Dr Tina M. Harris, Department of Communication Studies, University of Georgia (706-542-4893). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I can ask to have all of the information that can be identified as mine returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed. The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

The purpose of this study is to identify what communication strategies and behaviors AA male doctoral students use to manage their interracial communication with Caucasian American peers (or faculty) or Caucasian Americans in academe in general. The interview process should last 60-90 minutes, depending on my responses to the various questions.

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

- 1) I will do some Q-Sort tasks using two different scenarios, which are included in the Appendix.
- 2) I will answer some follow up questions after I finish sorting cards about school, male, and gender, academic, and social experiences in college. I will also answer questions about demographic information and commitment to my academic major. This process should take approximately an hour and a half; fifteen to thirty minutes
- 3) I may receive an email from the researcher to clarify my information.

The benefits for me include that I can provide insight to the academic research community and society about the experiences of Black male doctoral students at an institution of higher education in the United States. I will also provide insight into effective measures and key strategies for improving academic achievement and positive college experiences among Black male doctoral students. Findings from this study may prove useful in enhancing and creating programs that improve Black male students academic achievement and overall positive experiences in college.

No risk is expected, but I may experience some discomfort or stress related to discussions of experiences that might be personal or sensitive in nature during the in-depth interview. I can choose not to continue the interview at any point during the study if I feel uncomfortable.

No individually identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others without my written permission, except if required by law. I will be assigned an identifying pseudonym and this pseudonym will be used on all of the questionnaires I fill out. Even though the investigator will emphasize to all participants that comments made during the interview process should be kept confidential, it is possible that participants may repeat comments outside of the group at some time in the future.

I also understand that the individual interview will be audio taped and this recording will only be reviewed by the primary researcher. Pseudonyms will be assigned to participants; therefore, at no point will there be any direct identifiers linked to the participants besides the voice recording. After transcription and analysis is completed on the video and audio recordings, these tapes will be destroyed.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at; xxxxxxxxx.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Christopher O. Johnson

Principal Investigator Signature

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_XXX@uga.edu

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Louis Castenel

Co-Investigator Signature

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_XXX@uga.edu

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 629 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address [irb@uga.edu](mailto:irb@uga.edu).