RACISM, DISCRIMINATION AND PREJUDICE: THROUGH THE VOICES OF

UNDERGRADUATE BLACK MEN AT PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

by

JAMIE RONALE RILEY

(Under the Direction of Diane L. Cooper)

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study grounded in the methodological traditions associated with Critical

Race Theory, incorporated the use of storytelling and narratives in an attempt to uncover the

nature of racist experiences for undergraduate Black men attending predominately White

Institutions. In an effort to further understand the impact of these experiences, this study

integrated the use of written reflection and photo elicitation in a attempted to expose the meaning

participants made from their experiences and their personal perceptions of the campus climate as

it related to racial tensions experienced as undergraduate Black men. Through the use of

narrative analysis the researcher was able to conclude that the nature of racist experiences on

predominately White college campuses are immeasurable, resulting in the ability of participants

to encounter racially charged events from an array of internal stakeholders and constituents.

Regardless of their level of engagement, participants were predisposition to experience racism

within every aspect of their membership as members of the campus community. Participants'

ability to construct meaning varied. For some, their experience caused a limited desire to

interaction with their White peers, while others used their encounter as an opportunity to grow as

they strived to modify the role and effect of racial differences on campus. As it relates to the

campus culture, each participant was able to identify areas in which they felt environmental

incongruence between institutional traditions and norms, and their racial identity. Although

participants were able to recognize the role of race in perpetuating social imbalances on campus,

they were able to successfully integrate themselves into the academic environment, which

allowed them to develop a desire to persist throughout their collegiate experience.

INDEX WORDS: Racism, Discrimination, Prejudice, Critical Race Theory, Undergraduate
                 Black men, Campus climate, Constructivism, Narrative analysis, Photo
                 elicitation

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DEDICATION

Throughout this journey, I experienced good times and bad times; moments of success and moments of failure; instances when I wanted to give up, and seconds when I thought I didn't have another word, sentence, or paragraph left in me. However, there was always one person in my corner, one person who would push me beyond my limit and cheer me on from the living room couch or from over the phone. A person who would put aside their feelings and their responsibilities just to make sure I completed my goal; someone who may have been more proud of me for pursuing a doctorate than I was of myself. Whatever support I needed, Jason Anderson Overton, aka "Joe Sausage Head", "J.O.," "Bookes da Bookes," was there to support me and gave me the daily affirmation needed to go about my goals with confidence and esteem. He reminded me that this dissertation was something that I could do and was meant to do; something that our Lord called me to do. On Friday, February 25, 2011 I lost my number one cheerleader. Beyond striving to continue Jason's legacy by becoming a more giving, caring, selfless, and God-fearing man, I also wanted to dedicate this dissertation to him, because without his support, guidance and love, I doubt that I would have been able to push through to the end. Thank you Jason.

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black men enrolled in predominately White colleges and universities across this country. Your

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INTRODUCTION

The sky was shining bright, and so was his esteem. The late fall afternoon seemed perfect and as he locked his door to his apartment, he hesitated and thought, "Wow. I'm really here, I'm really doing this." He walked down the cobweb-covered steps to the parking lot and admired his luxury car. He was so filled with pride because of his current accomplishment. His heart and mind were on a succinct pattern, something that he had never experienced prior to this. He thought, "Man, I'm 26 years old, and I'm really doing this, I'm really embarking on this Ph.D. experience."

He had just completed his first month of graduate school, and as the ex-class clown he never thought that this would be something he would accomplish. As he gleamed at the newly waxed jaguar, he felt butterflies. He looked at his car and thought about the symbol of achievement for which it stood. As a Black man, a luxury car symbolized so much. It represented success, it represented acceptance, and it represented a life full of hard work. He reminisced about traveling with his father to the Million Man March and witnessing the re-birth of the Black male. He thought about his teen mother, and her decision to grant him life, he thought about his life as an struggling student in a semi-diverse high school, and he thought, "My God, my ancestors, my people, they have made this all so able." He continued to walk to his car, and was overly excited to unlock the door using the automatic remote. Small to some, he remembers growing up and watching his parents work hard, and struggle through educational endeavors

just to ensure that this moment would take place. Just so one day he would arrive, and be able to own the finer things in life and be somebody.

As he opened the door, the heat rose from the sticky black leather seats. He hesitated as he slowly slid into the drivers' seat. The heat was almost overbearing, and with contrasting thoughts of excitement and pride, he questioned if the heat offered within the reality of his car was worth risking. He decided to take the risk. He sat down, and pulled his seat belt across his lap and put the key into the ignition. He stopped for a quick second and admired the physical appearance of his cars interior. He thought, "Through years of hard work, self doubt, and numerous accounts of pessimism, I have made it, regardless of what those around me thought, I am here, and I will succeed!" He pulled out the parking lot, and for some reason that afternoon, the birds chirped extra loud, and the sky gleamed with a glair often unseen.

He was new to this community and decided that today was the day to find his place, his comfort level, his feeling of belonging, so he was committed himself to finding a local barbershop that could cut "black hair." Campus was bustling that day, it was a Friday afternoon, and everyone was in a hurry to leave campus and began their weekend festivities. As he turned into the main thoroughfare, he noticed the traffic ahead. His instinct kicked in. Before his relocation he experienced the hustle and bustle of the busy city streets, and knew that this traffic would deter his mission. He drove down the busy two-way street, and observed an opportunity to get ahead, to not be left behind in the slow moving traffic. He pressed on the gas, and of course the luxury car that he was oh so proud of forwarded him the opportunity to speed past the few cars that stood in the way of his destination. As he pressed the gas pedal of the black on black jaguar, his heart raced. "Is this real, he thought?" "Have I been blessed so much to have my life turn out like this?" As the aforementioned thoughts ran through his head, he quickly

recognized that the majority of the cars around him were not as supportive of his goal to get ahead. But he refused to be thwarted, and quickly pulled in front of the pack of cars and was congratulated with a green light. As he pulled through the light, he thought, "Could this day get any better?" He was so ecstatic to be there, and as he witnessed his environment, he felt a sense of accomplishment more than he had never felt before.

Before he could continue to celebrate his feelings of success, a large pick up pulled along side his car. He recognized the car as one of those he passed further back. The truck was large, over powering, and intimidating. It was filthy, covered in mud and bug carcasses; it seemed to be neglected. The entire vehicle stood out in stark contrast to his jag. The driver also seemed to be young and inexperienced, with a demeanor that screamed fury, anger, and hate. His eyes lit with a fiery red rage, and screamed violence and pain. Abruptly, the driver spoke out his window with a hauntingly familiar voice. A voice, he recalled from his childhood, as a boy sitting amongst peers whom didn't recognize his similarities. The driver screamed, "What the fuck are you doing, you fucking nigger?" The voice rang with such power, such force, a voice that would have filled the sky with thunder, and a voice that would have created fear in the hearts of many.

Before responding, before realizing the severity of the situation, the car, his life, his parents, his newfound success all flashed through his mind, and in that moment his heart sank, and a knot formed in his throat. He then realized that regardless of what he accomplished as an individual, despite his luxury car, or his new found esteem, others would always see him as a nigger. Reminding him, once again on that day that "… race will always be at the center of the American experience" (Omni & Winant, 1994, p. 5).

Because of the centrality of race, racism, a bi-product of race relations, has been and will always be a component of Americas' social structure. For many Americans and immigrants,

racism is a part of a common historical experience and has been adopted as an unfortunate aspect of many American's cultural tapestries (Smith, 1995). Defining the term racism, and understanding the intricate aspects that frame a racist experience is broad in nature. When attempting to define or describe racism, Bonilla-Silva (2001) stated that, although difficult to pinpoint an all-inclusive definition, racism is often viewed as "… prejudice, ignorance, or a disease that afflicts some individuals and causes them to discriminate against others because of the way that they look" (p. 21). Because of the subjective and contextual nature of a racist experience, racism is often grouped with other tyrannical terminology, such as, discrimination, oppression, and prejudice. Acts of brutality, bigotry, and violence tie the otherwise hurtful and disembodying language together as a conglomerate of negativity, pain, and suffering.

Racism, prejudice, and discrimination have all been terms familiar to those deemed "Black" in the United States. From the introduction of American slavery in 1619 to the organized efforts to place inferior social statuses on Blacks during the Jim Crow era, experiences of racism and other oppressive occurrences have plagued the Black community for centuries (Albach & Lomotey, 2002; Alexander, 1970). Through racism and other acts of social inequity Blacks have been historically placed in a role of subordination by the more dominant group known as "Whites." The most detrimental consequence of the involuntary immigration of Blacks was the creation of the historical pattern of dominance and subordination based on race (Blackwell, 1991). Being cast as subordinates has placed Blacks at the mercy of Whites, causing Blacks to exist as powerless contributors to the American culture and society. Historically Blacks, once known as Africans, were captured and used as free labor in the creation of a lucrative economic climate for the newly-established colonies and states. Slavery became a cultural practice in the United States and lasted for hundred of years, taking the lives of many, and effecting the

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existence of the Black race in the United States forever (Blackwell, 1991; Katz & Taylor, 1998; Frazier, 1970).

Even after the end of legalized slavery in 1865, Blacks were subjected to institutional and individual practices that still allowed for racism and oppressiveness to exist as constant reminders of their subordinate status as new members of the American society. In the early years, after slavery, Blacks were denied basic rights and privileges including voting, humanistic freedoms, such as use of certain public facilities, and access to education. Prior to the end of the Civil War there were laws, specifically in the southern states where the majority of ex-slaves remained, prohibiting the teaching of Blacks to read and write (Myers, 1989). After the end of the Civil War in 1865, Blacks were able to establish educational institutions with the help of The Freedman's Bureau, various religious organizations, and countless numbers of philanthropists. Although these schools primarily focused on rudimentary survival skills, they offered hope for future opportunities for equality (Hardin, 1997). However, with the *Plessey v. Ferguson* decision in 1896, racial segregation was legalized, which began to codify the educational opportunities for Blacks in America (Myers, 1989). Before *Plessey v. Ferguson*, racial segregation was more of a social practice that embodied institutionalized racism, but with the passage of this new law, Blacks were now legally separated from Whites in all facets of human existence (Anderson, 2002). In theory, *Plessey v. Ferguson* was intended to provide "separate but equal" facilities and opportunities for Black Americans. Unfortunately, this concept was more often espoused than actually enacted. The education, facilities, educational programs, and academic rigor at black institutions were inferior to their white educational counterparts. These inequalities became more and more obvious to Black leadership, and organizations like the NAACP began to legally challenge the separate but equal doctrine. Even though there were many victories against the

separate but equal doctrine, it wasn't until 1954, and the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, that segregation in public educational settings became illegal, allowing Blacks to seek admissions to all-White colleges and universities (Anderson, 2002; Harden, 1997; Myers, 1989). Regardless of the perceived positive outcome of *Brown v. Board of Education*, many states still practiced segregation and exclusion (Anderson, 2002). It wasn't until 1964 with the passing of the Civil Rights Act that institutions were reprimanded for discriminatory practices in the admissions process (Williams, 1998). Federal funding was often offered to institutions to establish programs to increase their enrollment of Black students. This practice was the birth of Affirmative Action in higher education (Anderson, 2002; Harden, 1997, Williams, 1988). Still after the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it wasn't until the 1970s that predominately-White institutions began to see a noticeable increase in the enrollment of Black students.

Campus Environments for Blacks: The Beginning of Integration

Even though legal statues like *Brown v. Board of Education* and The Civil Rights Act of 1964 gave Blacks the opportunity to experience life without the legal restraints of segregation, Blacks still endured levels of racism, discrimination and prejudice that questioned the true intent and effectiveness of laws focused on equality and justice. Those Blacks that attempted to enroll in predominately White Institutions were often met with disdain and violence from school administrators, students and community members. Black students often encountered rallies and angry mobs as they attempted to enroll in courses and become integrated into the campus culture. Some state institutions, like The University of Georgia and The University of Texas, attempted to deter Blacks from applying by creating admissions processes that were almost impossible for Blacks to navigate (Goldstone, 2006; Pratt, 2002). For instance, The University of Georgia required applicants to garner two letters of recommendation from alumni of the university. Since

there weren't any Black alumni at the time, and there were extreme social pressures against White alum writing a letter of recommendation, Black students were often left without the proper support or resources to enroll in traditionally white institutions (Pratt, 2002).

Those students who were able to overcome institutions efforts to deter their enrollment were often met with acts of racism and discrimination once on campus. It was common practice for Black students to reside on separate floors in residence halls and to eat in separate cafeterias (Hardin, 1997; Williams, 1988). Black students were often harassed by their White peers, and were unable to participate in many campus social activities including, intercollegiate athletics and student Greek lettered organizations (Pratt, 2002). On many southern college campuses, Black students were often escorted off campus to protect their safety and to control any campus rioting that might occur as a result of their enrollment (Hardin, 1997; Goldstone, 2006). Although during this period Blacks were given an equal opportunity to pursue educational opportunities in a more equitable manner, campuses environments were not conducive for their success and personal development (Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Seadlacek, 1997).

Campus Environments for Blacks: The Present

Since the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Black students enrollment in predominately White institutions, has increased. In the 1970s predominately-white institutions saw large increases in the enrollment of Black students (Hardin, 1997; Myers, 1989; Williams, 1988). The 1980s followed with increasing numbers of Blacks opting to attend Predominately White Institutions over Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Even still today, Predominately White College campuses are educating more Blacks than ever before (Anderson, 2002). With the increase of Black students, college and university administrators have been challenged with altering campus environments to better meet the needs of this fast-growing

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population. To meet these needs, many institutions have created programs and services designed to assist Blacks students in becoming more comfortable with their environment. Regardless of these efforts, many Black students continue to contend with feelings of alienation, isolation, racism, discrimination, and environmental incompatibility while attending predominately white institutions (Harper, 2006). Current research shows that Black students attending predominately white institutions typically deal with transitional and adaptation issues (Sutton &Terrell, 1997). Since Black students enter the college environment with physical features that pin point their minority status, they are more likely to become targets of bigotry because of the white institutions cultural values, beliefs, and structure (Aguirre & Messineo, 1997). Students often experience lack of support, professor bias, and exclusion from mainstream campus life and activities (Aguirre & Messino, 1997; Ancis, Seadleack, & Mohr, 2000). Black students often feel racist undertones when attempting to integrate into campus culture, which can ultimately affect their desire to become fully engaged with the campus environment. Additionally, the effects of racist and other discriminatory experiences can cause increased levels of stress for Black students and ultimately affect them academically, socially, and developmentally (Feagin, 1992; Greer, Chwalisz, 2007; Sutton & Terrell, 1997).

Undergraduate Black Men and Campus Racism

Since Black males typically make up one of the smallest populations on predominately-white campuses, racist and other discriminatory experiences are compounded and detrimental to their success (Cuyjet, 2006; Harper, 2005; Sutton & Terrell 2007). Much of the racism experienced from peers stems from the process of *racial priming*. Racial priming is a socialization process wherein racial messages and racial ideologies are passed on to White children through family members, friends, and the media (Smith, Solorzano & Yoso, 2007). The

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racial priming process can occur indirectly, directly, consciously, and unconsciously and is at times strengthened by the biases inherent in the family and/or homogenous communities. Consequently, White children subconsciously develop and internalize racist attitudes, stereotypes, assumptions, fears, resentments, and discourses about Black males, which affects their ability to develop positive working relationships with many Black male students (Smith, Solorzano & Yoso, 2007). These actions can lead to the development of *Black misandry*, which is the hatred of Black men. The authors of*, Racial primes and black misandry on historically white campuses,* identify four Black misandry stereotypes projected onto Black men. Specifically, students, faculty, staff, and administrators tend to view Black male students as: criminals and predators, street-smart experts on all things "ghetto," athletes, and anti-intellectuals (Smith, Solorzano & Yoso, 2007).

The Nature of the Study

When considering the multitude of negative race-related experiences undergraduate Black males encounter on college campuses, it is important to consider the lasting effects of these experiences on their academic and personal development. For instance, residing on campus and becoming involved in campus life has proven to be beneficial to college students' academic success and personal development (Astin, 1984; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The more effort and personal investment a student makes to become involved, the more the student can gain and experience desired student outcomes (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Becoming involved provides undergraduate Black men with the opportunity to experience the positive effects of involvement which include: cognitive and intellectual skill development, moral and ethical development, psychosocial development and positive images of self (Astin, 1984; Cuyjet, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). However, negative race-related experiences could potentially

hinder the development of undergraduate Black men and affect their ability to perform well academically. In addition, these experiences may create environmental incongruence, causing Black men to feel unwelcome, which could deter their decision to persist through graduation.

As stated in the beginning of this study, racism, discrimination, prejudice, and oppression have all been terms used to describe acts of violence and hate towards others. Historically, confusion has existed between the variance of these terms, and the meaning that individuals make of experiences grounded in hate and bigotry. Although we know that experiencing racism and other acts of discrimination can cause stress and affect the development of a healthy self-concept, we assume that we understand the nature behind these experiences and the meaning that individuals make from them. Considering the temperament of the collegiate experience for many Black undergraduate men, it is important to uncover the meanings behind racist experiences so educators can create infrastructures that support Black men as they struggle and cope with these occurrences. Furthermore, it is important to become aware of the naturalistic meaning of a racist experiences so we can better understand the psychological affects that result from acts of bigotry and hate. It is equally important that we hear the stories of these Black men, given the power of narratives to open the eyes of policy makers, students, and higher education professionals who may only have third party experiences with racism and bigotry.

As an attempt to develop a better understanding of this phenomenon, known as racism, this study attempted to foreground the stories of the racial realities that currently exist on college campuses. To better understand the meaning and the in-depth nature of a racist experience a qualitative methodology was used, to explore and understand the construction of the experience (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002).

Traditionally, qualitative research has been described as being inductive, naturalistic, and descriptive, concerned with the process of developing meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Qualitative research attempts to study phenomenon in their natural settings, attempting to make sense or interpret it in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Lincoln & Guba, 2007). Incorporating a qualitative methodological approach allowed for participants voices to be heard, as they exist and connect to the social world.

Epistemological Stance

Understating that racist experiences and other discriminatory acts of injustice exist as subjective components of an individual's life, incorporating constructivist paradigmatic approach supported the development of individual meaning and allowed stories to speak from the nature of participants' conceptualization of the topic. Constructivism postulates that meaning is not discovered but constructed (Crotty, 1998). The constructivist paradigm is particularly important to this study because it espouses that people construct meaning in different ways, even as it relates to the same phenomenon. Under the constructivist paradigm participants were able to develop meaning from their racist encounters while perceiving the affect of the experience within the realities of their respective worlds (Crotty). Allowing participants to construct their own meaning provided accurate and detailed accounts of a racist experience, which ultimately painted a clearer picture of their meaning making process.

Theoretical Frame and Methodological Approach

If we as educators are to fully understand the subjective nature behind the racist experiences of our students, we must employ a matched theoretical and methodological strategy that allows for us to witness the un-censored realities of racial encounters and acts of bigotry. As a result, I have chosen Critical Race Theory as a theoretical frame and a methodological

approach. Although new to the field of education, Critical Race Theory concerns itself with "…studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 2). Furthermore, critical race theorists are "… concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender" (Creswell, 2007, p. 27). Throughout this study, the researcher critiqued the institutional racism that has been interwoven through out the fabric of the American culture. Additionally, I analyzed historical constructs and underpinnings that have oppressed Blacks for centuries, and turned those oppressive experiences into opportunities for celebration and esteem for the Black community. The stories of racism and discrimination shared within this study provided an overt, uncensored view of the role of race relations for Black males on today's college campuses. This study is meant to not only inform others about the phenomenon we call racism but to transcend thinking patterns and ideologies about racial experiences and value.

As the researcher, it was my goal to uncover the nature of a racist experience for undergraduate Black men, allowing them to construct meaning based on personal encounters and experiences. As a methodology, critical race theory has historically incorporated the use of storytelling and personal narratives to uncover social inequalities arising through race and racism (Ladson-Billings, 1998; McDonald, 2003; Parker & Lynn, 2002). Critical Race Theory has also been useful in exposing "… the ways race and racism affect the education and lives of racial minorities in the United States" (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p.1). Through the exploration of racist experiences of Black undergraduate men, this study revealed the intricate details behind the experience, attempting to expose the true causes of racial inequality and bigotry towards this student population. The following research questions where used to guide the exploration of this phenomenon.

RQ1: What is the nature of a racist experience for Black undergraduate men?

RQ2: What meaning do Black undergraduate men make of racist experiences?

RQ3: How do Black undergraduate men perceive their campus climate in terms of race relations between Black males and their white peers?

Summary

Racism has been an aspect of the higher education experience for Blacks for decades. And as I rode in my luxury car on that bright sunny day, it became part of mine. Although many predominately-White institutions attempt to subdue these experiences by creating support programs and services for Blacks, many Black students still contend with feelings of isolation during their collegiate experience at predominately-White institutions. These experiences are often race-related and cause students to experience higher levels of academic and social stress, which often affects their ability to develop a healthy sense of self. Through the exploration of the above research questions, this study attempted to uncover the nature of a racist experience for Black undergraduate men, focusing on the meaning of the experience and its affects. When considering the importance of student involvement as it relates to personal and academic success, it is important that higher education professionals develop a firmer understanding of the nature of these occurrences, and the impact that they have on this student population. Uncovering the meaning constructed from these experiences should influence pedagogical changes within higher education when dealing with undergraduate Black men.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Before discussing the transcendent nature of racism towards Black Americans, Critical

Race Theory will be fully discussed as the theoretical framework used to guide the

conceptualization of the topic, allowing readers to analyze racism through the use of a critical

lens. To paint a more complete picture of racism as it relates to Black undergraduate men, it is

important to begin with a critical analysis of the nature of racism in America, followed by an

historical synopsis of the role racism has played in the lives of Black Americans, throughout

different historical moments. Brief explanations and descriptions of historical moments will

allow readers to conceptualize the transcendence of racism and other forms of oppression as it

has developed and matured into its current form. Since this study is aimed at highlighting acts of

racism, discrimination, and prejudice towards Black males attending predominately-white

institutions, special attention will be given to the integration of American colleges and

universities, for many prejudicial and discriminatory acts involved in higher education became

overtly blatant during the time of educational desegregation. In addition, this chapter will

conclude with a synopsis of the current state of college campuses as it relates to undergraduate

Black men.

Critical Race Theory

In researching the convoluted nature of racism and its socially constructed disposition, it

is important to inform readers early on of the frame used to fully articulate and conceptualize the

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topic. Having a firm understanding of the theoretical underpinnings that influence my research will allow readers to fully engage in the topic with a concrete knowledge base of how my thoughts, opinions and critiques were formulated. Racism has and always will be at the center of the Black experience (Omni-Winant, 1994) and exists as a normal component of our country's hierarchy of power and privilege (Taylor, 2009). Analyzing the existence of racism, its historical transcendence, and its effects on people of color, has been the premises behind the existence and creation of Critical Race Theory (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller & Thomas, 1995). Critical Race Theory, or CRT, questions the very foundations of the liberal order that exists within our country and seeks to not only bring the racial inequalities that exist to light but also incorporates the use of scholarly discourse and literature as tools to facilitate activism, social movement, and change (Delagdo & Stefaninc, 2001). In addition, CRT is rooted in expressing the realities of racism for those who have historically been most silenced (Knaus, 2006). According to Rabaka (2007), Critical Race Theory originates from the critical work of such activist as W.E.B. Dubois, whose writings on race relevant issues with regard to contemporary racism, overtly criticized the social structures that perpetuated racial inequalities and injustices within our country. Critical writers, such as Dubois, provided the impetus to formulate critical theories focused on racial inequalities. Critical Race Theory was first introduced in the legal profession, as a number of lawyers, activists, and scholars realized the stalling nature of racial equality that had taken place within our country's legal system after the Civil Rights Movement (Delagado & Stefanic). When discussing policy enactment and litigation, critical race theorists postulate that… "White elites will tolerate or encourage racial advances for Blacks only when such advances also promote White self-interest" (Delagdo & Stefannic, 2000, p. xvii). Throughout this chapter, legal statutes and policies will be analyzed considering their intended or espoused effect on Black Americans.

The intent of these laws will be critically scrutinized to decipher their true intent, which often fit under the hypothesis of White self-interest provided by critical race theorists.

Since its introduction in the 1970s, CRT has entered many other fields and professions, including education. Critical Race Theory within education proposes that race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequality in the United States, which transversely affects our educational system (Chang, 2007). As an analytical and conceptual tool, Critical Race Theory within the field of education has been used to unmask and expose racism in its various permutations by considering the social-political realities of marginalized groups instead of reinforcing the power structures that exist within higher education (Chang, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1999). Moreover, CRT has been used to uncover the hidden nature of racism within education, and has been adopted as a method to promote racial justice and equality within the field (Chang, 2007; Crenshaw et al., 1995). Incorporating Critical Race Theory within education requires one to subscribe to five basic perspectives or assumptions which frame and impact research methods and pedagogical ideologies (Lynn, Yosso, Solorzano & Parker, 2002). According to Solorzano and Yosso (2001). Research grounded in CRT must: (1) understand that race and racism are endemic, permanent and central within the intersection of other social identities, including gender and class; (2) criticize and challenge educational attempts to camouflage self interest and power behind color blind educational policies and procedures; (3) promote social justice, focusing on the transformation of racial, gender, and class oppressions; (4) acknowledge the experiences of students of color as legitimate components and assets when attempting to learn about racial subordination in education; and (5) analyze race and racism in education by placing them in both a historical and contemporary context. As a study grounded in

Critical Race Theory as theoretical framework and a method, the incorporation of the aforementioned perspectives can be identified throughout this dissertation.

Within education, racism can be as seemingly as verbal racist attacks, or can exist covertly, tucked away, hidden between the lines of institutional policies and procedures, or within the specific program curriculum and educational philosophies. Critical Race Theory recognizes the existence of these racial inequalities and attempts to bring them to light, in hopes to improve educational conditions and opportunities for people of color.

Throughout this dissertation, CRT will be used to describe, analyze, and articulate the nature of racism within our country and within the higher education system as it relates to undergraduate Black men. The critical temperament used throughout the historical narrative provide in this chapter attempts to push readers and scholars beyond levels of normality and comfort in relation to race related inequities that exist in our country towards Black Americans, including undergraduate Black men. Specific topical areas were selected to highlight and to illustrate the most pertinent occurrences within the transcendent nature of race and racism for Black Americans.

The Nature of Racism in the United States for Blacks

For many Americans born Black, racism has been a fixed component of their existence as free-Americans (Omni & Winant, 1994). Racism in America has reared its ugly head continuously, taking the shape of newly formed institutions and societal structures. To many members of the Black community, racism has, and will always, exist as a permanent condition and practice in the American culture (Fraizer, Margai & Tettey-Fio, 2003). Historically, racism has been a social construct used in the United States to create levels of superiority and subordination between Whites and people of color (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Hudson, 1999; Omni &

Winant, 1994). Quantifying a single definition for such terms as prejudice, discrimination, and racism has been a convoluted process because of the subjective nature of the terms and the experiences associated with them. Many scholars have argued about the nature of these terms, and their origination (Bates-Dobbs, 1993; Fraizer, Margai & Tettey-Fio, 2003; Katz & Taylor, 1988; Omi & Winant, 1994; Smith, 1995; Taylor, 1984). For many minorities in the United States, all three terms have resulted in negative experiences and encounters and have often been perceived as the same without indifference. Due to the interrelatedness of the terminology, it is important to develop a contextual understanding of the differentiation and similarities between the frequently used terminologies.

Racism, Discrimination, and Prejudice in the United States

According to Allport (1979), prejudice is "…a feeling, favorable or unfavorable, toward a person or thing, prior to, or not based on actual experience" (p. 6). Bates-Dobbs (1993) provided a more specific definition, stating, "…prejudice is a highly negative judgment toward a minority group, focusing on one or more characteristics that are supposedly uniformly shared by all group members" (p. 3). The term discrimination has been defined as "…the behavior through which one group prevents or restricts a minority groups access to scare resources" (Bates-Dobbs, 1993, p. 4).

Racism, the last of the three terms, has been much more difficult to define. There has been much debate about the origins of racism in the United States, whether it's grounded in the characteristics of an individual's natural born race, or the social structures of power and hierarchies that perpetuate inferiority based on race. Taylor (1984) defined racism as "… the cumulative effects of individuals, institutions, and cultures that result in the oppression of ethnic minorities" (p. 70). Smith (1995) echoed Taylor's definition by defining racism as the

"…predication of decisions and policies on consideration of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that group" (p.2). Taylor and Smith's definitions of racism originated in power structures, social hierarchies, and attitudinal incongruence, but did not fully consider the biological characteristics involved. On the contrary, Thompson (2002) referred to racism as being ideological, a belief system about fixed or stable biological characteristics. Similar to Taylor and Smith, Thompson's definition is missing a component, focusing on the biological differences of individuals, but not the societal infrastructures that perpetuate racism. The indifference between the perceptions of racism caused DuBois (1968) to suggest the creation of a new term, one that encompasses the role of biological natural born race and the effects of societal influence and structures. *Race Prejudice*, suggested by DuBois (1968) encapsulates the race component of a racially motivated phenomenon, and the social inequities involved, by acknowledging the discriminatory treatment towards minorities based on their natural biological race and the societal structures that strengthen and enhance their inferior status as minorities. By conceptualizing the definition of race prejudice, it can be postulated that interconnectedness of prejudice and discrimination has created the existence of racism. The intertwined phenomena of these denigrating experiences have caused racism to be considered a byproduct of both discrimination and prejudice (Bates-Dobbs, 1993; Omni & Winant, 1994). On the other hand, Katz and Taylor (1988) argued, "…separating the constructs of racism and prejudice clarifies the fact that attitudes do not always lead to particular behaviors and that certain behaviors can have the same devastating effects, with or without an attitudinal component" (p. 6). However, the overwhelming similarities between acts of discrimination, prejudice, and racism, make it extremely difficult to separate the meanings associated with this

occurrences. Overall, feelings of inferiority result from these acts, proving their inherent interconnectedness.

Regardless of the various efforts to separate the existence of racial inequalities, it seems racism can be best understood by recognizing the existence of discrimination and prejudice within the overarching frame of a racist act (Alport, 1978; Delagado & Stefancic, 2001). The role of social structures in fueling racism is an integral component of a critical race study (Bell, 1995). According to Delagado and Stefancic (2001), idealists within the critical race regime of research believe that "… racism and discrimination are matters of thinking, mental categorization, attitude and discourse" (p. 17). According to idealists, race is a social construction not a biological reality. On the other hand, realists believe that "…racism is the means by which society allocates privileges and status" (p.17). Realists believe that racial hierarchies determine the distribution of resources and benefits and create power structures that are enhanced through societal structures and cultural norms (Delgado & Stefaninc, 2001). Regardless of their subtle differences, both of these stances, consider the societal role in the continuation of racism in America, and recognize the hierarchal nature of racism for Blacks in America.

Individual, Cultural and Institutional Racism

Historically, there have been three types of racism: individual, cultural and institutional (Katz & Taylor, 1988; Rutstein, 1997; Smith, 1995). Individual racism shares many of the same defining characteristics as prejudice, focusing on individual attitudes and actions towards another person (Katz & Taylor, 1988). These negative racial attitudes can cause behavior in which Whites project ideas of inferiority onto Blacks through prejudicial or discriminatory actions (Smith, 1995). Individual racism is often enacted through subscription to stereotypical views or

assumptions about Black Americans (Smith, 1995; Jones, 1988). Although racial studies

conducted between 1960-1980 show that Whites reported a decline in racist attitudes toward

individual Blacks, Blacks still reported high percentages or racist encounters with Whites.

Currently, research suggests that 60 percent or more of Black adults encounter some form of

racism during their life (Sellars & Shelton, 2003). In 1978, Lois Harris, a scholarly racial

researcher, began a 15 year study of the attitudes toward racial and religious minorities and

women (Smith, 1995). This study attempted to assess white supremacist attitudes during the civil

rights and post-civil rights eras. Beginning in 1963, which was the height of the civil rights

protest era…

> Sixty-six percent of whites said that Blacks preferred to live on handouts, 35 percent
>
> thought Blacks were more prone to crime, 42 percent felt that Blacks were more violence
>
> prone, 39 percent thought that Blacks were less intelligent, and 31 percent agreed that
>
> Blacks cared less about family and in an overall sense that Blacks as a people were
>
> inferior to Whites (Smith, 1995, p. 38).

Over time, Whites began to show a steady decline in racist attitudes towards Blacks. For

example, "…in 1978 only 25 percent of the respondents agreed that Blacks were less intelligent,

29 percent thought they were more prone to crime, and only 15 percent felt they were inferior"

(Smith, 1995, p. 38). This decline in racist attitudes may reflect the societal influence of

inclusivity, and prove that Whites hadn't become less racist but unwilling to express racist

attitudes due to social pressures. In a more recent study conducted in 1991 by the National

Opinion Research Center, "…47 percent of whites said they thought Blacks tend to be lazy, 53

percent that Blacks tend to be violence prone, 59 percent that they rather live on welfare; and 31

percent said that Blacks tend to be unintelligent" (Smith, 1995, p. 39). Looking at the patterns of

opinions over an 11-year span, it can be suggested that these feelings of inferiority expressed by Whites about Blacks, strengthen the malevolent effect of individual racism and can often cause individual racism to transcend into Cultural racism, which is considered the most insidious of the three (Smith, 1995)

Cultural racism is the most difficult to eradicate because it is grounded in Whites' negative evaluation of the Black culture (Katz & Taylor, 1988). Although individual racism is detrimental, cultural racism affects the lives of millions of Black Americans, regardless of their experience with an individual racist encounter (Hudson, 1999). According to Katz and Taylor (1988) the salient factor that perpetuates cultural racism is the lower social position of Blacks, which allows cultural norms and ideologies to be ridiculed at a much more critical level. The roots of cultural racism lay within biological terms and the judgment of Blacks as an inferior race, which has provided rationale for the discriminatory treatment of Blacks over time (Jones, 1997). Furthermore, it has become normatively unacceptable to believe in biological inferiority, causing inferior social standing to be based off maladaptive responses to historical treatment (Bobo, 1988). The fact that Blacks were introduced as socially inferior beings and have experienced socially inferior treatment through the use societal institutions, Whites have formulated a cultural perception of Blacks to be insufficient and incapable.

By considering the nature of cultural racism it is easy to see its ability to create institutional structures that enable racism to grow beyond stereotypes and cultural ignorance. Institutional racism is "…understood as policies and practices, controlling for social class that subordinate Blacks or maintain or freeze them in a subordinate position" (Smith, 1995, p. 53). Institutional racism, also termed, *New Racism*, lingers under the social fabrics and institutional norms of the American society (Sniderman, Piazza, Tetlock & Kendrick, 1991). It not only

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affects the upward mobility of Blacks but also affects their ability to navigate social structures, and limits their access to scare resources and power (Katz & Taylor, 1988; Omi & Winant, 1994). One of the more popular examples of institutional racism is the passing of *Plessey v. Ferguson* (1896), which legalized segregation, calling for separate but equal services and opportunities for Blacks (Frazier, 1970; Goldstone, 2006). When considering the historical existence of Blacks in 1896, it was improbable to believe that equality would exist regardless of the decision rendered by the courts. The *Plessey v. Ferguson* decision can be viewed as attempt to separate Blacks from achieving equivalent social status by depriving them of the power to control resources necessary to reach levels of economic and education equality. Institutional racism has been intrinsically integrated into various societal institutions and structures. It has been identified as a ploy by White American politics to ensure the inferior status of Blacks by introducing racially targeted policies and practices within many of the American institutional structures including, education, housing, and employment (Sears, 1988). Residential segregation and access to economic resources have also been methods used to limit the viability of Black Americans (National Research Council, 2001). Blacks historically have experienced severe prejudice and discrimination in terms of neighborhood selection and have historically been confined to resource poor, urban or rural areas. The confinement of Blacks to under resourced areas has resulted in high levels of crime and illegal drug use within underprivileged Black communities (Bates-Dobbs, 1993). These occurrences of socially unacceptable behaviors have systemically affected Blacks' social status, in addition to enhancing the belief in their inferiority. On the other hand, education is an institution where class and socioeconomic statues depict one's ability to succeed on national recognized aptitude tests (Smith, 1995). Since a high percentage of Blacks have historically lived at lower socioeconomic levels than Whites, their achievement on

standardized tests has been traditionally lower, creating the inability of many Blacks to compete academically with their White peers (Bates-Dobbs, 1993; Katz & Taylor, 1988). Blacks' poor performances on socially accepted standardized tests have affected their ability to reach higher levels of perceived social status and acceptance. During the post-civil war era, one of the most blatant forms of institutional racism was the continued use of the IQ test, which wasn't used to measure acquired knowledge, but was used to measure innate intelligence. Given the social inequalities used to develop the test, Blacks often fared poorly and were then classified as mentally retarded (Smith, 1995). Once classified as mentally retarded, schools placed students in classes for the so-called educable mentally retarded (EMR). In 1978 Black students constituted 38 percent of the EMR enrollment, but were only 16 percent of the national school enrollment in general (Smith). Similar findings were found in 1984, with 37.3 percent of Blacks enrolled in EMR classes, which still exceed the total Black enrollment in American education. Among white students, EMR percentages never exceeded the White national enrollment (Smith, 1995).

Practices such as the IQ test were eventually found illegal and unethical. Such practices provide a framework to understand some the intentionality behind institutional racism. Some argue that institutional racism was and is a ploy to permanently withhold Blacks from reaching equal levels of social status (Bates-Dobbs, 1993; Smith, 1995). In addition, institutional racism has allowed segregation, oppression and bigotry to exist as less overt components of the American society. Regardless of the contextual differences between these types of racism, they have all oppressed Black Americans in some capacity (Bates-Dobbs, 1993; Hudson, 1999; Omni & Winant, 1994; Smith, 1995).

Overt and Covert Forms of Racism

Over time, these silos of racism have transformed from overt forms or racial degradation to covert methods of institutionalized oppression (Sellars & Shelton, 2003). When Blacks were first introduced to the United States, racism was an overt component of the American culture. Blacks, then known as slaves, were publically taunted and discriminated against without a reasonable doubt. Hangings, lynching's, whippings, and other forms of degradation were common methods used to express the inferior status of Blacks (Alexander, 1970; Frazer, 1970). It wasn't until the passing of many legal statutes and legislation that blacks were given rights as citizens, and racism became a covert component of the American society. Racism then became ingrained in social structures and policies and affected Blacks ability to compete economically, ultimately confirming Blacks role as subordinate members of society. Public housing, education, and voting privileges all became covert ways in which racism was espoused during this time period. Furthermore the existence of individualized racism has mainly been superseded by institutional structures that have limited the opportunities for Blacks in America. Although individual racism still exists, and still impacts the lives of Blacks daily, institutional racism has caused greater damage to the Black community because of its emphasis on economic opportunity and power relations (Hudson, 1999).

The Origins of Racism

To better understand how racism became a component of the American experience, it is important to provide a contextual history of its origins. According to Hudson (1999), racism evolved out of the Protestant belief system subscribed to by many of the original colonist. This time of history was called the Enlightenment, and White Europeans were expanding across the globe, which brought them in contact with the world's dark hued people and their cultures,

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customs, and traditions (Wright, 2002). Originating primarily from the British Isles (England, Scotland, and Ireland) these colonists identified strongly with the myth of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority, which prided itself on racial purity, physical prowess and beauty, love for of independence, and their "gift" of creating democratic institutions. These belief systems allowed colonist to believe in their own superiority (Rutstein, 1997). These systems of belief created a tumultuous relationship between the new settlers and the Native Americans, and inherently effected the treatment and status of slaves once they involuntary arrived on the new continent. Blacks were seen as property, means to achieve financial stability and freedom, which stripped them of their humanistic existence.

The attitude of dominance has continued throughout history and has been strengthened by the introduction of many other social systems that have continuously placed blacks behind in terms of opportunity, human rights, and equality (Rutstein, 1997; Wright, 2002). The phenomenon of racism has lived through out the history of Blacks in America. The remainder of this chapter will outline and describe the nature of racism through different historical moments, ending with segregation and its effects on higher education.

Slavery

According to the literature, it seems that racism as it relates to Black Americans began with the involuntary immigration of Africans to the American continent (Alexander, 1970; Bates-Dodd, 1993; Frazier, 1970). This migration began the historically wrenching structure known as American slavery. The establishment of slavery coincided with the discovery of the Americas by White Europeans. Even though other countries like Spain had enslaved Africans for centuries before, the enslavement of Africans in the newly established American continent did not officially begin until August 1619 with the arrival of twenty slaves in Jamestown, VA

(Alexander, 1970; Bolden, 1999; Frazier, 1970). According to Frazier (1970) these "…Africans had been pirated from a Spanish slave vessel bound for the Caribbean and sold by the master of the ship into indentured servitude" (p. 29).

The science of racism was developing in Europe, and during this time historians and philosophers attempted to rationalize and classify the various races that existed in the world (Wright, 2002). According to White (2002) and Menchaca (2003) German taxonomist, Carlos Linnaeus declared that there were four races in the world:, the European man (white), the Asian man (yellow), the African man (black), and the American man (red). Linnaeus ranked these races, incorporating his hierarchical racist belief system of superiority, ranking the white race at the top of the hierarchy, followed by the yellow race, then the red race, and ending with the black race. Theorists, like Linnaeus began the divide between race superiority and inferiority, which would only grow and strengthen over time.

The strong religious beliefs of early settlers caused them to feel compelled to rationalize the institution of slavery. The great wealth obtained by African slavery and the cultural differences between Africans and Europeans made White settlers feel much more comfortable enslaving Africans (White, 2002;Wright, 2002). Those who promoted slavery and its legitimacy profited heavily. As free laborers, Blacks assisted in making some of this country's most powerful and historical figures wealthy, including presidents James Madison, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson (Rutstein, 1997). The benefits of free labor outweighed all moral and ethical decisions and White settlers felt that it was their duty as Christians to help Africans to acculturate into Western ways and religious beliefs. However during the early years of slavery, Whites were reluctant to expose the teachings of Christianity because they feared that it would convert the slaves thereby making it the settlers' responsibility as Christians to free

them (Frazier, 1970). So in the eyes of the early settlers, the only way to achieve acculturation was through enslavement (Alexander, 1970; Fraizer, 1970).

During the formative years of slavery, there seemed to be no clear-cut distinction between Black and White indentured servants, but by 1640, a clear difference began to emerge. Before 1640, both White and Black indentured servants' worked as labors for citizens of newly colonized establishments (Frazier, 1970). Prior to Massachusetts's decision to legalize slavery in1641, slavery was a more of a social custom, focusing on variations of class existence rather than racial differences (Alexander, 1970).

For the purpose of regulating the distinction of servants, the state of Virginia passed civil law acts in 1662, which legally made a distinction between servants for years, who were typically white indentured servants, and servants for life, who happened to be Black slaves. With the passing of the civil act law, slavery became fully legalized in Virginia (Alexander, 1970). After the middle of the 1600's, all Blacks, and only Blacks who entered into the new colonies migrated under slave laws, transcending slavery's existence as a social custom to a new constructed legality (Frazier, 1970). Maryland subscribed to the civil law rule in 1663, and concluded that all Blacks imported thereafter would serve as slaves throughout life (Alexander, 1970.) This included their children, who were given the status of their Black mothers to ensure that the offspring of White slave masters, and Black slave women would bare slave status (Rutstein, 1997). It could be inferred, that at this point the institution of slavery became the foundation of prejudicial treatment and racism towards Blacks, which would later transcend into larger accounts of bigotry and hatred under the premises of race. With the rapid growth of plantation agriculture and the slave trade as booming industries, African slavery began to expand, especially in the southern states (Frazier, 1970). Along with the growth of slavery, came

the adoption of laws limiting the activity of slaves. These laws were designed to constrain the activity of slaves, hopefully preventing opportunities for insurrection and rebellion (Frazier, 1970). Not only did these laws diminish Blacks' abilities to organize and commune, they also prohibited them from owning property, carrying weapons, trading, marrying without permission, and traveling without a pass (Fraizer, 1970). In addition, these laws strengthened the magnitude of control of Whites over Blacks (Alexander, 1970; Blackwell, 1991). Slaves who broke these laws were often subjected to harsher punishments then their white counterparts. Mutilation was often punishment for crimes such petty crimes as robbery and burglary (Blackwell, 1991). These acts were used to inspire fear in the hearts of slaves and to remind them of their subordinate role within the fledgling American culture.

Today, we consider the restraints set by these laws as basic human freedoms, but as we conceptualize the stigmas of organizational forbiddance and fear placed on Blacks early in American's history, we should question the historical impact of such decisions on the development of long standing racist ideologies and paradigms. These laws not only confirmed the social ranking of Blacks, but also caused a paradigmatic shift in how humans were considered ultimately based on skin color. Majority of these racially charged laws were more so practiced in the south, since Blacks were never an important aspect of the northern states' economic stability (Alexander, 1970; Frazier, 1970). Northern Blacks typically worked in a variety of capacities within major cities, primarily as domestic servants, artisans, and skilled laborers (Frazier, 1970). But since northern Blacks often competed with Whites for domestic laboring positions, Blacks became legally barred from working in many skilled laboring positions, which became a way of socially segregating them and limiting their opportunities for equal citizenry.

As the new nation matured, the support of slavery did not dissipate among White citizens. The American economy had become dependent on slavery as a means to economic stability, and since slaves were still viewed as property, many Whites did not see the need to abolish slavery (Rutstein, 1997). The property status that plagued Blacks became legally ingrained with the establishment of the "*three-fifths rule*," in which the founding fathers categorized Blacks as three-fifths of a man (Alexander, 1970; Fraizer, 1970). Many small religious groups, like the Quakers, were the first to petition for the end of slavery, but to no avail. Their attempts were often met with hostility and were rejected outright. "Both northern merchants and southern plantation owners feared the abolition of Slavery would cause their economic demise" (Rutstein, 1997, p. 49). To ensure the continuation of slavery, Whites became overtly involved in promoting slavery and the notion of Black inferiority. This was often done through the use of books, public speeches, and violent out-lashes against any slave who attempted to break the social restraints of slavery. In I856, the Texas Almanac featured an article stating "…the African is an inferior being with wool instead of hair on his head, with lungs, feet, joints, lips, nose and cranium so distinct as to indicate a different and inferior being" (Rutstein, 1997, p. 48). Blacks' status as inferior human beings was strengthening with the *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857) U.S. Supreme Court case. This case became known as the Dred Scott Decision (Waskow, 1966). In 1851 Dred Scott, a slave, began a local court suit in St. Louis, attempting to gain freedom for himself and his family (Alexander, 1970). Dred Scott was one of the first slaves noted for attempting to seek his freedom, basing his argument on his residence in areas where slavery had been prohibited. Through this decision, Chief Justice Roger Taney declared "…Blacks are not included in the word citizen in the constitution, being a subordinate and inferior class of beings" (Rutstein, 1997, p. 49). Since Blacks were not considered citizens the courts decided that the

rights stated in the Declaration of Independence did not extend to Dred Scott and his family and the case was thrown out (Alexander, 1970; Rutstein, 1970).

After the Dred Scott Decision, many southern states began measures to abolish slavery in their respective jurisdictions (Alexander, 1970). These attempts were not fostered by an increasing perception of Blacks as equal citizens, but by the popularization of the Dred Scott Decision, which caused many Whites to rethink human bondage (Rutstein, 1997). Nevertheless, many southern states were reluctant to establish anti-slavery legislation due to the increased value of slave labor in their agricultural system. Although the mid 1800's brought about many attempts to abolish the customary and sometimes legalized institution of slavery, the feelings of Black inferiority still existed, which only strengthened racism as an overarching social norm and continued to push Blacks further away from their ability to reach social equality and acceptance.

The Civil War began as a resistance to northern attempts to secede southern states and territories (Alexander, 1970). According to Alexander (1970) the original cause of the Civil War in the United States was due to the different construction and perceptions of the national constitution. From the constitution southern states supported the superiority of state government over the national government and its legal statues. The northern states desired a unionized government, in which state government and statutes were subordinate to the national constitution and government. Fearing the ability to control state legalities, such as slavery, southern states showed resistance to the North's attempts to unionize, ultimately beginning the Civil War.

While the Civil War brought much bloodshed across the states, both northern and southern, it wasn't until the end of the Civil War and signing of the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation that legalized slavery was proclaimed as a custom of the past (Alexander, 1970). According to Guelozo (2004) "taken at face value, the Emancipation Proclamation was the most

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revolutionary proclamation ever signed by an American president, striking the legal shackles from four million Black slaves and setting the nation's face towards total abolition of slavery" (p.1). Although many applaud and celebrate Lincoln's abolishment of slavery, it was not done without doubt behind his intentions. Many historians and scholars (Alexander, 1970; Guelozo, 2004; Rutstein, 1970) suspect that Lincoln's rationalization for abolishing slavery was to ensure the stability of the White working class, and not an attempt to equalize the status of Blacks. With the end of slavery, new economic opportunities would emerge for Whites, thus supporting the creation of a booming White economy. As Blacks attempted to transition into their lives as newly freed citizens, they were met with hostility and violence from opposing Whites. Racism during the post-civil war era became even more ruthless because of the fury behind the abolishment of slavery and the secession of the south (Alexander, 1970). Most Whites showed little or no compassion for the more than three million freed slaves who were now set loose to fend for themselves in a country filled with those who less than desired their presence. The lack of education and exposure to other White customs and norms made Blacks seem unfit for equal citizenship; hence strengthen the perception of their inferiority among White Americans (Rutstein, 1997). For Whites, this time after the civil rights area became known as Reconstruction, an attempt to build a united society, but for Blacks, it became known as a time of violence and social disenfranchisement, eventually becoming the Jim Crow era (Bates-Dobbs, 1993; Rutstein, 1997).

The Jim Crow Era

Although the years following the Civil War brought legalized freedom for Blacks, the reactionary treatment from Whites resulted in acts of brutality, violence, and hatred. After their emancipation, Blacks were left to wonder the southern states in attempt to establish their new

lives. Much of the treatment Blacks received was a result of southern Whites disdain with their newfound freedom. Unlike slavery, where racism was an overt element of American society, the Jim Crow era bought a mixture of overt racial acts, supported by covert institutional policies, laws and practices (Davis, n.d., Rutstein, 1997). Although still prevalent, individual racism was no longer the sole source of racial prejudice experienced by Blacks. Institutional racism became a driving force in limiting Blacks opportunities for equality. The term "*Jim Crow*" first originated during the 1850s as a minstrel character, coined by Daddy Rice, a minstrel show entertainer (Davis, n.d). Painted in what has been historically called "*black face,*" Daddy Rice played a male character that embodied all of the stereotypical images of Blacks during this time. The Jim Crow character was very subservient and displayed inferiority and fear when confronted by Whites. These actions were typical of Blacks during this time because of their fear of punishment from offending or displeasing Whites. By the 1900s, Daddy Rice's character Jim Crow had gained popularity in the South, and the name became an imminent expression of racism towards Blacks, eventually representing racial segregation and disenfranchisement (Ayers, 1992).

Northern railroad cars were the first to acknowledge the racial undertones of Jim Crow, by referring to their segregating railroad cars, as "*Jim Crow Cars*" (Davis, n.d.). Ultimately, Jim Crow laws were targeted at limiting the upward mobility of Blacks through exclusion (Bates-Dobb, 1993). These laws, often termed, *Black Codes*, were designed to keep Blacks from using public services developed for Whites, and limited their availability to economic or political freedom (Blackwell, 1991; Rutstein, 1997). Many southern states adopted these laws in attempt to segregate Blacks.

The emergence of segregation in the South caused Blacks to establish their own churches, schools, and other public services (Bonilla-Silvia, 2001, Frazier, 1970). The founding of these social institutions led Whites to develop a heighten disdain for the historically oppressed population, causing them to retaliate through acts of violence. In an effort to limit acts of racism and segregation, the federal government passed the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments of the Constitution during the period of Congressional Reconstruction, which lasted from 1886 to 1876 (Davis, n.d; Frazier, 1970). In addition to the amendments, the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and 1875 in conjunction with numerous Enforcements acts in the early 1870s attempted to curtail southern Whites' ability to formally deprive Blacks of their civil rights (Blackwell, 1991). These amendments were intended to improve Blacks' conditions as citizens, by eliminating racial discrimination in voting rights and by extending citizenship to include Blacks (Blackwell, 1991). Between the years 1866 and 1877, often referred to as the Black Reconstruction, Black Americans experienced equal rights with Whites, which officially ended the use of Black Codes (Bowser, 2007). Federal troops were stationed in southern states to assist in keeping the peace between Blacks and unhappy Whites.

During this time Blacks experienced social mobility by becoming elected as political officials and securing the right to own property and land. For Blacks this was the first time that laws were established to protect their status as citizens, allowing them to experience life as full contributors to the American society. However, the celebration of this victory was short lived. Whites were outraged with the new gained rights of Blacks and retaliated through acts of violence, including lynching, beatings, and race riots. Between 1882 and 1901, it was reported that 1,914 Blacks were lynched attempting to experience the freedoms guaranteed them by the aforementioned legislation (Bates-Dobbs, 1993). Racially charged organizations like the Ku Kux

Klan, otherwise referred to as the KKK, spearheaded these attempts to scare and control Blacks (Rutstein, 1997). Although never officially documented, thousands of Blacks lost their lives during this era, all due to the racial inequalities that existed in the American culture. From 1898 to 1930 more than 3,700 men and women were reported to have been lynched in the United States; most of who were southern Blacks (Davis, n.d.). Blacks who had successfully relocated to the North did not experience the same menacing acts, because northern neighborhoods were racially segregated and northern Blacks had been progressive in becoming self-sufficient (Bonilla-Sillva, 2001).

In addition to the violence experienced by Blacks, Chief Justice Joseph concluded that although the Fourteenth Amendment did protect Blacks from state initiated discrimination, it did not protect Blacks from discrimination by private business or from individuals. His verdict had great impact on the rights of Blacks, ultimately causing the Civil Rights Act of 1875 to be struck down by the Supreme Court (Davis, n.d.). The 1875 law stipulated that "… all persons shall be entitled to equal enjoyment of accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of inns, public conveyances on land or water, theaters, and other places of public amusement" (Davis, n.d., p.1). Without the protection of the Civil Rights Act of 1875, Blacks were exposed to state legislation that could segregate them in every capacity of their existence. No longer were Blacks protected from state driven discrimination and segregation. States and private business alike were able to enact policies that denied service to Blacks, causing them to remain as inferior members of the American society.

Once the Civil Rights Act of 1875 failed, it did not take long for many states to begin enacting sweeping segregation legislation (Davis, n.d.; Wynes, 1967). To make matters even worse, the 1877 election of Republican governor Rutherford B. Hayes to the Presidency allowed

segregation to become a fixed component of southern states (Bates-Dobbs, 1993). During his presidency, the federal government essentially abandoned all efforts at protecting the civil rights of southern Blacks, which allowed for state governments and individuals alike to commence with orchestrating acts of racism and discrimination towards Black Americans (Davis, n.d.). According to Rutstein (1997) the national government felt that the country had many more pertinent issues to deal with besides guaranteeing Blacks their civil rights. Civil rights, such as voting were limited for Blacks, since poll taxes, literacy tests, and other forms of propaganda were used to discourage Blacks' interest or ability to participate in political activities (Rutstein, 1997). Those Blacks who attempted to execute their political freedom were met with often-fatal acts of violence (Blackwell, 1991). Other methods of racial discrimination were introduced during this time. Blacks were locked into a lower cast order, by only having access to low paying service jobs, which didn't forward them opportunity to grow economically; in turn limiting their ability to obtain power and prestige. Sharecropping was the most popular form of work for southern Blacks, in which they only received a percentage of the profits from any crops sold or traded (Bonilla-Silvia, 2001). Overall, segregation and the existence of Jim Crow laws replaced slavery as the social and political institution used to denigrate and subordinate Black Americans.

In addition to the systemic forms of racism Blacks were experiencing, new legal statutes across the southern states were used to solidify the powerful nature of racial segregation in the lives of Black Americans. In 1890, the state of Louisiana required that Blacks ride in separate railroad cars. Homer Plessy boarded a train and sat in the areas reserved for Whites as protest of segregation. As a result, Plessy was arrested. A local judge ruled against Plessy and in 1896 the Supreme Court upheld the judge's ruling, asserting that Plessy's rights were not denied because there were "separate but equal" accommodations for Blacks (Davis, n.d.).

The *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) ruling provided the premises for southern states to enact "separate but equal" accommodations for Blacks. The "equal" part of the ruling was often unmet. With the establishment of substandard services, Blacks soon realized that through the passing of *Plessy v. Ferguson* their spot as an inferior race of people among the cast of American citizens had once again been fixated. One of the most historical cases, exemplifying the unequal aspect of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* was the *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education* (1899) ruling (Davis, n.d.). This was the first case using *Plessy v. Ferguson* as a precedent (Blackwell, 1993). The Supreme Court ruled that Richmond County schools in Georgia were able to operate separate schools even if comparable schools for Blacks were not available. Richmond County had established that they only had enough money to provide high school education for Whites, and refused to shut down the high school in interest of the separate but equal doctrine. This case only increased the preeminence of racism since school districts that were able to demonstrate financial hardships were granted permission to disband attempts to create separate educational institutions for Blacks.

The *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision became the premise of the Black experience in America. Segregation was embodied in all aspects of the American society, causing a dual system of education for Blacks, a system full of civil inequities (Blackwell, 1991). For example, when new educational facilities were constructed for Whites, Black students frequently inherited old deteriorating buildings, which were often unsafe and dilapidated. Black students would have to walk up to 20 miles to schools while buses filled with their White peers passed them (Davis, n.d.). Educational resources and school curriculum were also unjust (Katz & Taylor, 1988). Whites were often offered college preparatory curriculum, whereas Blacks were given less well-developed liberal arts curricula adequate for the admission into predominately Black colleges or

industrial/vocational trade schools (Blackwell, 1991). Blacks were also not allowed to shop, live, or socialize in the same facilities as Whites.

These acts of segregation continued for decades, and Blacks ability to resist segregation was difficult because of the systematic efforts to keep Blacks in a sub servant role as an inferior class of citizen (Bonilla-Sillvia, 2001). Blacks were terrified to go against the norms orchestrated by the White driven society for the fear of violent acts of brutality and murder (Davis, n.d.). Due to the overwhelming violence experienced by Blacks in the south, many left for the north in hopes of a better life free of racial discrimination (Bates-Dobbs, 1991). The Kansas Exodus is an example of the numbers of Blacks who moved from southern states to western and northern states during the 1880s and 1890s. Thousands of Black sharecroppers moved their families to Kansas and Oklahoma in hopes to create all Black towns free of racial discrimination and violence (Davis, n.d.). Although racial discrimination existed in the north, the acts of violence and discrimination were not as blatant as in the south. However, segregation did provide the foundation for the creation of Black colleges and universities, which developed bright intelligent new scholars whom were ready to begin the challenge of securing civil rights and equality for Black Americans (Bates-Dobbs, 1993). These institutions proved to be safe havens for Blacks to organize and discuss the nuances of their fight to become equal citizens. In addition, these institutions existed as safe harbors away from the violence often experienced by those who attempted to integrate into the White social system (Katz-Taylor, 1988).

Beyond the existence of predominantly Black institutions, Blacks continued to found other social institutions to serve as conduits of support and hope towards the existence of a better future. Organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), The National Urban League, and The Southern Regional Council all became

components of the infrastructure needed to begin the process of solidifying equality (Bonilla-Silvia, 2001). With the development of newfound power, pride, and self-worth, Blacks began to organize and to form plans to achieve their well-deserved civil rights. With the existence of these newly created organizations came the emergence of Black leadership focused at finding tactics to create a better tomorrow for the oppressed population. Ex-slaves and Black intellectuals like Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Dubois were at the forefront of the movement, producing literature and strategies for securing civil rights in America (Davis, n.d.). Washington provided a strategy focused on accepting segregation and using it to secure equality through the attainment of economic stability. He hypothesized that using agriculture and tenant farming would provide the means necessary to gain power and position within the society. Dubois, on the other hand, had little tolerance for Blacks who favored segregation. Dubois was a proponent of fighting racial segregation by advocating for voting rights and using the few talented elite Blacks to lead the masses to equality and justice (Davis, n.d.). Although Washington and Dubois had contrasting ideologies about ending the Jim Crow era, these leaders, along with many others, provided a new light for Blacks, and helped cultivate a new spirit of activism among the historically oppressed population.

By the mid 1900s The NAACP became the primary vehicle for legal resistance against Jim Crow laws and other discriminatory actions towards Blacks (Bonilla-Silvia, 2001). In the 1920's, the NAACP conducted lawsuits at the local level in defense of Black civil liberties and rights and also lobbied Congress to pass a federal anti-lynching bill (Davis, n.d.). With a new population of college educated Blacks, the NAACP and other organizations were able to fight legislation targeted at limiting the upward mobility of Black Americans. For the first time in

history, Blacks were capable of advocating for their own rights and freedoms. This new push in Black empowerment and advocacy laid the foundation for the Civil Rights Movement.

The Civil Rights Movement

The first twenty to thirty years of the twentieth century still proved to be racially charged (Blackwell, 1991). Blacks continued to deal with discrimination in the areas of education, employment, and suffrage (Bonilla-Silvia, 2001). Although there was a new class of Black leadership and scholars, organizations like the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), still found it difficult to break the ever ending chain of racism and discrimination toward Black Americans. During the early part of the twentieth century, thousands of Blacks migrated to the north to escape the racial horrors taking place in the South (Riches, 2004; Dobratz & Shanks-Miller, 1997). Although Blacks experienced blatant acts of racial segregation in northern states, the threat of violence and overt bigotry was much more subtle than in the South. As the population of Blacks grew in the North, so did their political involvement. The growing population of northern Blacks effectively used their voting privileges, to support politicians, whom where typically democratic leaders with affirming civil rights agendas (Luders, 2010). The increase of Blacks workers in the North also increased Blacks involvement in union organizations (Feldman, 2004). Blacks had now gained the support of the Democratic Party and union groups, who eventually became financial supporters of the Civil Rights Movement in both southern and northern states. These newly established relationships added to the growth and momentum of the Civil Rights Movement.

It wasn't until the 1930s and the beginning of World War II, that Blacks began to see the possibility of achieving equal citizenship and restitution for the horrors of the past. With the attack on Pearl Harbor and the introduction of American troops into World War II, many lower

income White males were drafted into the war, leaving opportunities for Blacks to enter the work force at greater capacity then before (Riches, 2004). Winning the war was dependent on the rapid production of key materials including, ships, trucks, weapons, and uniforms. In order to meet the needs of the War it was necessary to temporarily overlook social norms that had historically plagued Blacks as second-class citizens for centuries (Bowser, 2007). Although, discrimination and racism still existed, Blacks were hired. In turn, Blacks gained the opportunity to achieve high levels of economic stability, which greatly enhanced their ability to increase their social mobility (Feldman, 2004). It can be presumed that this was the first time that Blacks in large masses were given the opportunity to compete economically with Whites, which provided capital to support programs, and initiatives geared towards achieving racial equality and holistic citizenry.

Now that Blacks had achieved education, mainly through attending Black colleges, established organizations aimed towards achieving civil equality, and become contributors to the economic infrastructure of the United States. Blacks were slowly becoming more equipped to challenge the social inequities ingrained within American history (Bowser, 2007). In addition to the gradually increasing role of Blacks in the American society, the end of World War II in 1945 created a new population of Blacks ready to contest the social inequities present in the American society (Bowser, 2007; Luders, 2010). According to Riches (2004), over 500,000 Blacks fought in World War II. Their dedication to support and protect a country that had socially enabled them affected their ability to return home and accept racist and prejudicial treatment. During World War II, Black soldiers fought to protect the civil rights of citizens of other countries, which made them question their rights as U.S. citizens (Riches, 2004). Once arriving back in the states, along with the new thriving class of Blacks, these war veterans were prepared to begin the journey of securing equality and justice for Black Americans (Blackwell, 2001).

With the introduction of a new sense of pride and ability, the Black community began to take action against the civil injustices experienced across the United States. The NAACP and other Black-led organizations began to legally challenge civil injustices against African-Americans. The Black church played a pivotal role during this time, providing meeting locations and developing new civil rights leadership who focused on creating opportunities for non-violent activism (Blackwell, 2001). Black Americans often used marches, boycotts and sit-ins as an attempt to break the social restraints of racism (Waskow, 1966). A new generation of Black activists had been born to expect equal rights. As a new generation of Black Americans, these activists were adamant about gaining equality and were often not frightened by the possibility of violence due to their blatant display of disproval of social norms and practices (Feldman, 2004). Although these methods of activism often ended with violence and brutality, Blacks were able to express their true disdain with social institutions that restricted their ability to achieve civil equality.

One of the most brutal acts of racism displayed during the civil rights movement was the torture and murder of Emmet Till (Davis, n.d; Feldman, 2004). During the summer of 1955, Emmet Till, a 14-year old Chicago resident, had spent the summer visiting family in Mississippi. After coming up missing, Emmett Till's body was found mutilated in the Mississippi River. When accusers, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam were asked why young Emmet was murdered, they accused him of whistling at a White woman; a failure on Emmet's part to obey the customs and norms of the South (Riches, 2004; Waskow, 1966). For Black Americans and many White northerners, the existence of racism had become all too real after the Emmett Till murder. The men who were accused of Emmett's murder where found not guilty, which caused a surge in civil rights demonstrations and violent race wars across the country (Goluboff, 2007).

As an attempt to fight the ongoing racial inequalities experienced by Black Americans, Oliver Brown decided to challenge segregation in Topeka, Kansas by attempting to send his daughter to the nearest school five blocks from their residence (Riches, 2004). Under Kansas state law, "…any city with a population over 15,000 could impose segregation in its grade schools" (Riches, 2004, p. 23). Under this legislation, Brown's daughter was prohibited from attending the all-White school closest to her neighborhood and was expected to travel 20 blocks to attend an all-Black school. The attack from the Black community on *Plessy v. Ferguson* towards education was led by Thurgood Marshall, the leading Black lawyer of the NAACP, who postulated that "… segregation by race was inherently unequal and a denial of equal protection under the law as guaranteed" (Riches, 2004, p.23).

Ultimately in 1954, the Supreme Court decreed that "…segregation of Black and White children was unconstitutional and that the separate-but-equal doctrine did not apply to education" (Blackwell, 1991, p. 217). Afraid of further litigations forcing the segregation of schools, many states began to implement corrective steps to improve the quality of education for Blacks (Blackwell, 1991). This was a victory for Black Americans and gave way to the beginning of a multitude of demonstrations focused on achieving civil equality. The victory experienced from the *Brown v. Board of education* (1954) decision is revered as the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement (Blackwell, 1991; Feldman, 2004; Riches, 2004).

The movement and newfound integration of schools appalled southern Whites. According to Lawson (2003), many Whites were unprepared for the impact that the Brown decision would have on their normative ways of existence and thought. The new legal restraints of the Brown decision challenged the Anglo-Saxon, protestant socialization of the south, and caused many Whites to react out of fear and ignorance (Feldman, 2004). White southerners were

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accustomed to a political structure that supported anti-black and anti-liberal ideologies and practices (Dobratz & Shanks-Miller, 1997). There was a strict fundamental belief that Blacks were subordinate and inferior and should not be allotted the same levels of opportunity and citizenry as Whites. The maladaptive ability of Whites to accept the progressive direction of society made it difficult for Blacks to fully celebrate their new civilities as American citizens.

Although educational integration had been legally granted, many Blacks struggled to experience the benefits of these newfound rights (Waskow, 1966). Discrimination in the form of segregation still existed in other social institutions such as residential segregation and employment discrimination. The need for activism in achieving civil rights as citizens was still of much importance to Black Americans. Such demonstrations as the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955, the 1960 sit-in at Woolworths by the Greensboro Four, and countless non-violent marches served as monumental grassroots movements focused at achieving racial equality during the Civil Rights era (Bowser, 2007). Student organizations like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) led many of the nonviolent protest, attempting to dissolve the acts of violence that had occurred during past demonstrations (Waskow, 1966). These non-violent efforts did achieve equality in many aspects. By September 1961, restaurants in 108 southern cities had ended racial segregation as a result of sit-ins and other non-violent demonstrations (Waskow, 1966). The voice of equality and the efforts of thousands of civil rights supporters were beginning to have an effect on the social norms, which had oppressed Blacks for over 400 hundred years. Regardless of the efforts to deter Blacks and their White supporters from gaining social equality, Blacks remained steadfast in their effort to achieve civil rights through non-violent demonstrations.

Blacks Americans became outraged with the consistent forms of discrimination and violence that took place after the Brown decision (Blackwell, 2001). As a community, Blacks placed pressure on the federal government to establish legislation that protected their rights and safety as American citizens (Riches, 2004). President Kennedy agreed with the need for such legislation but did not take immediate action in developing such a policy (Luders, 2010). In an effort to create a national voice in speaking out against the acts of violence towards Blacks and to pressure the federal government to pass overdue legislation, civil rights leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and A. Phillip Randolph, organized a massive march on the state capital (Riches, 2004; Luders, 2010).

On Wednesday, August 28, 1963, a quarter of a million civil rights supporters, including labor and church organizations, thronged the grounds of the Lincoln Memorial to demonstrate the need for equality and justice for all Americans (Bolden, 1999; Luders, 2010). The addresses given at the March on Washington called for nonviolent, interracial cooperation in achieving racial equality (Lawson, 2003). However, violence remained steadfast in the south. It is important to note that acts of violence still occurred during this time of non-violent action. The KKK played an integral role in sustaining violence during the civil rights era. In response to the Brown decision and many newly constructed civil rights efforts, the KKK was suspected of organizing numerous church bombings, murders and lynchings of civil rights activist such as NAACP field secretary, Medgar Evers (Dobratz & Shanks-Meile, 1997). In 1963 the KKK was accused and eventually found guilty for orchestrating the bombing of a Baptist church in Birmingham, Alabama, which killed four young girls while they attended Sunday school (Dobratz & Shanks-Meile, 1997; Luders, 2010).

After repeated attempts to suppress fractures in the Democratic coalition with the civil rights movement, the decrease of public support, the rising attentiveness to racial issues, and the growing fear of racial conflagration, Kennedy began to advocate for a more substantial legislative response to the civil rights needs of Black Americans (Luders, 2010). Additionally, Kennedy began to feel pressure from international partners who were appalled at the lack of justice and equality in the United States (Bonilla-Silvia, 2001). Many countries were tempted to end trade relations with the United States due to the hypocritical nature of U.S. domestic policies and practices in terms of race-relations and justice (Bonillia-Silvia, 2001; Bowser, 2003). The civil rights legislative package created with Kennedy's support included provisions to assure Blacks access to public accommodations, the desegregation of schools, the elimination of funding from governmental organizations practicing discrimination, strengthening of anti-discrimination enforcement among federal contractors, and the creation of the Community Relations Services; charged with overseeing peaceful desegregation as a peaceful process (Blackwell, 2001; Lawson, 2003; Luders, 2010).

In the midst of Kennedy's goal of establishing more concrete civil rights legislation, he was assassinated. Many scholars blame his execution on his outward support for civil rights and equality for Black Americans, since many Whites were against the end or racial segregation (Luders, 2010, Waskow, 1966). During the early 1960s The Democratic Party had out rightly expressed their disdain with racial segregation (Feldman, 2004). Critics may argue that the support from the political party towards ending racial segregation was fueled by the need for Black votes to secure elected positions. Regardless of the purpose behind the support, the Democratic Party was assisting black leaders in their struggle for equality and civility.

Lyndon B. Johnson stepped in as president in Kennedy's absence and was quick to support and push a strong act that would provide civil rights to Blacks, who before this date had been let down by previous legislation (Luders, 2010). The Republican Party and many private organizations opposed Johnson's efforts, arguing that any act limiting segregation would be an intrusion on the rights of private organizations and businesses (Lawson, 2003). However, supporters of civil rights legislation postulated that private business and organizations were supported and mandated under state regulations, ultimately making them susceptible to state polices and practices (Riches, 2004). On July 2, 1964, Congress passed the Civil Rights Bill, which Johnson signed, into law (Golulbuff, 2007). "In ten Titles, the Civil Rights Act attacked segregation in public education, housing, and public accommodations, enlarged federal authority in voting rights cases, and enabled the national state to combat employment discriminations" (Luders, 2010, p. 181).

Due to the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, affirmative action programs became a popular method used to make amends for centuries of racial inequality (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). These programs were focused at equalizing social status and opportunities for Blacks through governmental intervention and funding. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 eventually afforded Blacks with many new opportunities in gaining economic stability and social mobility. Many Whites accused these attempts to equalize the opportunities for Blacks as unfair and unjust (Waskow, 1966). This argument of reverse discrimination due to affirmative action initiatives has and continues to exist as an ongoing debate among politicians and activists alike. Although Blacks have experienced greater opportunities for success, much of the racism and oppression that currently exists has taken the form of systemic issues that continue to classify Blacks as a subordinate inferior class of people (Jeanquart-Barone & Sekaran, 1996; Omi-Winant, 1994).

Historically, The Civil Rights Act of 1964 has been perceived as the legislation that opened the door of access and opportunity for Blacks (Bowser, 2007). It can be postulated that it was designed to provide Black Americans with a chance to regain the civility and equality that had been stripped of them from their beginnings in the United States; focusing on building a society of fairness and justice. For centuries Whites had subjugated civil and human rights from Blacks through acts of racial discrimination and segregation. Over time, these acts of racism, discrimination, and prejudice transcended from overt acts of violence and degradation to covert methods of disguising racism and discrimination within institutional policies, practices and procedures. It would be unfair to state that racism ended with the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but it is fair to say that the study of racial integration and its impact and outcome on the Black community could readily be researched after its introduction.

Thus far racism, discrimination, and prejudice have been discussed through a historical lens, taking a holistic look at the concepts behind these acts and their negative impact on the Black community. The historical journey offered is intended to provide a foundational background of the transcendent nature of racism. Furthermore it is organized to allow readers to conceptualize this study using a contextual lens in their understanding of racists, discriminatory, and prejudicial phenomenon within our country. It can be inferred that experiences with racism, discrimination, and prejudice increased heavily with the integration of Blacks into higher education. For this reason it is important to spend more time discussing the integration of Blacks into higher education and their experiences. Following the intended purpose of this study, the integration of higher education will be discussed through a historical frame, ending with the current state of Black males on today's college campuses and their experiences with racism, prejudice and discrimination.

Racial Integration of Higher Education in the United States

Prior to the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision Blacks were typically educated at segregated institutions (Smith, 1995; Altbach, Lomotey, 2002). The passing of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, called for separate but equal educational facilities and opportunities for Black's. Although separate, these educational facilities and opportunities were rarely equal (Golubuff, 2007). Before the end of World War II, Blacks were largely enrolled in private Black colleges and universities. These institutions were typically founded and funded by northern missionary organizations, such as the American Missionary Association and The Freedmen's Aid Society (Anderson, 2002). Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and Wilberforce University in Ohio, were two of the first Black institutions founded before the end of the Civil War (Blackwell, 1991). A large majority of these privately-funded institutions were located in the south, where the majority of Black Americans resided and where the resistance towards educational integration existed in its greatest form. The founding of these institutions displayed a step towards equality. However, Black institutions lacked the same financial resources as their white counterparts and often provided a secondary education to students (Blackwell, 1991). These institutions relied on the financial support of philanthropic organizations and a new class of Black middle class who were often alum (Pratt, 2002). Although over time these institutions progressed, and began to implement a liberal arts education into their curriculum, financial support still remained as a challenge in the effort to equalize higher education for Blacks. Prior to the end of the Civil War, few historically White institutions allowed Blacks to enroll as students. Oberlin College, founded in 1833, was one predominately white institution that began accepting Black students in 1835 (Luker, 1997). Regardless of the existence of Black institutions, and the integration of a few white institutions, Blacks' involvement in higher

education was still very limited. Sollors, Titcomb, and Underwood (1993) concluded, "…during the first 230 years of American higher education (1636-1866), the nation's colleges and universities graduated a total of fifteen to twenty-eight African American students" (p. 5).

During the years between the beginning of the Civil War and World War I, American higher education grew tremendously (Anderson, 2002). The introduction of public taxes and the financial support of American millionaires such as Johns Hopkins, Andrew Carnegie, Leland Stanford, and John D. Rockefeller assisted in the growth of public higher education (Altbach, Lomotey & Rivers, 2002). These new institutions focused on meeting the economic needs within specific states and regions of the country, and were often governed by community members who formed institutional trustee boards. The passing of the Morill Land Grant Act of 1862 provided the creation and funding of institutions focused on agricultural and industrial education (Thelin, 1962). States that opted to use federal funding to establish land grant institutions were expected to divide the proceeds between White and Black institutions, which were often split unevenly. The state of Virginia divided allocated two-thirds of the funding for a White school, which is today's Virginia Tech, and one-third to a then recently-established Black school, which is known today as Hampton University (Wallenstein, 2006). The founding of these institutions expressed the United States' interest in maintaining farming and industrial technology as major impetuses in the economic infrastructure of American society. In 1882, twenty years after the enactment of the first Morill Act, 2243 American citizens were enrolled in land-grant institutions (Anderson, 2002). By 1890, The Second Morill Act, required states that imposed educational segregation, to ensure that Blacks had access to schooling at separate institutions (Wallenstein, 2008). These institutions, along with the founding of many state-supported colleges and universities, marked the emergence of a new type of higher education style, one filled with institutions that were

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publicly supported and served the cultural, economic and political interests of state and federal governments alike. However, the creation of publicly funded institutions didn't change many Whites opinions about providing Blacks with a higher level of education.

Many Whites, mainly southerners, were against the idea of publicly funding institutions of higher education for Black Americans and suggested that the education of Blacks be limited to elementary or secondary education (Anderson, 2002). When considering the institutionalized attempts to keep Blacks as subordinate members of society, it can be perceived that limiting their educational access was a ploy to prevent Blacks from becoming socially mobile thus fixating their position as second-class citizens. The North, which had proven to be more progressive, adopted many similar practices as their southern states, refusing to admit Black applicants (Riches, 2004). Unlike the southern states that refused admittance to Black students based on law, the northern states subscribed to institutionalized practices that made gaining admittance difficult for Blacks (Anderson).

Between the years of 1900-1950, the majority of Blacks enrolled in college were still attending privately funded Black institutions. Those Blacks who were enrolled in public colleges were enrolled at the elementary and secondary level, with a small percentage of Blacks enrolled in junior college courses (Blackwell, 2001). For instance, in 1916, ninety-nine percent of students attending public Black institutions were enrolled below the collegiate level (Anderson, 2002). The staggering percentages mirrored the role of racial discrimination within many of our social institutions like education.

With the growth and success Black organizations like the NAACP, in fighting segregation and discrimination, the goal of achieving equality in education continued to be a major initiative of many Black leaders. During the 1930's the NAACP began to focus much of

their attention on graduate and professional training for Black Americans. Although southern

states had made strides in providing undergraduate education for Blacks over the years, there

were still no opportunities for Blacks to receive graduate or professional training (Pratt, 2002).

Blacks who desired to attend graduate school had to attempt to gain entry into private

institutions; many of which still practiced discrimination towards Blacks in admissions practices.

In several cases between 1936 and1959, the Supreme Court concluded that if there were no

Black graduate or professional programs, then southern states would have to admit Blacks into

programs at White institutions (Goldstone, 2006; Pratt, 2002). It was common practice for

institutions to offer to pay the tuition of Black students to attend graduate or professional

programs at more liberal out of state institutions (Blackwell, 1991). This was an attempt to deter

Black students from pursuing admittance into institutions that historically denied them access.

Many states, like Missouri attempted to deny Blacks admittance to institutions, even when there

were not similar programs at a Black in-state institution. During the mid 1930s, Lloyd Gaines

applied to the law school at University of Missouri. University officials refused to consider

Gaines' application, and instructed him to apply to Lincoln University, which was Missouri's

state-supported Black institution or seek admittance to an out-of-state institution (Pratt, 2002).

The court concluded that the state of Missouri would have to open up a segregated law school for

Gaines to attend, or they would have to admit him into the university's law school.

This historical case, *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada (1938)* became the precedent for

many rulings in favor of higher education integration. A similar case took place in Texas with

the *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950) decision. Herman Sweatt applied and was rejected to law school at

the University of Texas (Goldstone, 2006). With the help of the NAACP, Sweatt sued the

university, in which the trial judge gave the institution six months to create a substantially equal

law school for Sweatt. The state legislature responded by setting up a temporary law school in the basement of a state capitol building. When the law school opened on March 10, 1947, the facility was insufficient, and only three instructors agreed to participate in this monstrosity of a law school (Pratt, 2002). The existence of unequal educational opportunities and facilities strengthen the NAACP's case against educational segregation because many states found it financially impossible to establish exact educational institutions for Black students (Riches, 2004). The NAACP appealed Sweatt's case, and on June 5, 1950, the Supreme Court unanimously ordered that Herman Sweatt be admitted to the University of Texas law school due to the unequal organization of the makeshift law school created by the state (Pratt, 2002).

With the success of the Gaines and Sweatt cases and other similar legal victories, the momentum needed to finally reach integration in public higher education was created (Blackwell, 1991; Goldstone, 2006; Pratt, 2002). These cases forced several states to make improvements in public education for Blacks, and made others rethink the idea of racial integration within their educational systems. In 1954 the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision formed the legal bases for enabling Black students to seek admissions to historically all-White colleges and universities in southern states (Anderson, 2002). Although racial discrimination had now been made illegal, many southern states created other practices that impeded Blacks' ability to gain acceptance into white institutions of higher education (Riches, 2004).

Many southern colleges and universities developed admission processes that were almost impossible for Blacks to navigate. Requiring recommendations from alum, misplacing admittance materials, threats of violence, and displays of public disapproval were methods used to deter Blacks from applying from many southern institutions (Myers, 1989; Pratt, 2002). Even after the Brown Decision and the striking down of educational segregation, the social acceptance

of educational integration was low in the south, and the threat of violence and protest made the idea much more unbearable for many Blacks. Many southern states like Georgia, attempted to pass legislation that would limit the amount of Blacks who were able to apply for college admissions (Goldstone, 2006; Pratt, 2002). In 1959, Georgia's Governor, Vandiver, attempted to promote the passing of the maximum age bill, which would establish 21 as the maximum age for undergraduate admissions and 25 for graduate or professional school admissions (Pratt, 2002). During this time, many Blacks attempted to attend college at an older age. Whites who opposed educational integration hoped that acts of this nature would negatively affect Black Georgians ability to gain admission into historically White institutions. Not deterred by such efforts, Black legal leaders continued to push for equality in education by continuously searching for states that continued to practice some form of segregation in their admissions practices. It was common practice for Black leaders to seek out young Black applicants who were academically strong and emotionally able to participate in the educational integration movement (Blackwell, 1991). Students were often selected by national and local leaders because of their academic ability and their desire to assist in embarking change within the higher education system. Selecting these students placed institutions in a difficult situation because they often met or exceeded admissions qualifications, and by law could not be denied acceptance into state funded institutions (Anderson, 2002). Many institutions still attempted to keep Blacks from attending by falsifying school policies or procedures. When Charlyane A. Hunter and Hamilton E. Holmes, two of Georgia's brightest Black students attempted to apply for undergraduate admissions at The University of Georgia, the registrar reported that the university had no additional residential space for the two students (Pratt). At that time all students were required to live on campus, unless they were residents of Athens, Georgia. Hunter and Holmes were residence of Georgia

cities other than Athens, which according to school policy required them to reside on campus. These practices were not uncommon and for the next decade institutions across the south used them to limit the number of Blacks who could gain admittance into historically White colleges and universities (Riches, 2004).

Over time, and by the mid 1960s, many Blacks had broken down the barriers into many historically White institutions. As more Black students enrolled into historically White colleges and universities, the backlash from community members, university officials, and students grew in severity. According to Riches (2004), James Howard Meredith applied and eventually gained admissions into The University of Mississippi after futile attempts from state legislation to keep him from attending the institution. Outraged, state politicians and community leaders rallied residents and students in a violent display of condemnation due to Meredith's admittance into the university. The governor at the time, Ross Barnett, was at the forefront of this protest, appearing on local television demanding that citizens of Mississippi take action towards this atrocity. Barnett also attempted to pass a law that prohibited any person who was convicted of a state crime from admission to a state school (Kean, 2008). This law was directed at Meredith, who had been convicted of false voter registration.

Over the span of a few weeks, Meredith's admittance into The University of Mississippi had received national attention, which caused the government to get involved to ensure the safety of Meredith and other Blacks within the surrounding community that may have been harmed due to the anger behind the integration of the university. On September 30, 1962, Meredith was flown in to Oxford, Mississippi, escorted by 170 federal Marshalls (Wallenstein, 2008). He was met with a mob, which later escalated into a race riot throughout the town. Riches (2004) provided an account of the day's events:

A mob of students, joined by outsiders started a riot throwing bricks and setting fires. The

highway patrol was withdrawn, not strengthened, and this seemed to be the green light

for major violence. The use of tear gas only made matters worse. By nine o'clock that

evening the first fatality occurred when Paul Guilhard, a reporter for the Agence France

Presse was shot in the back. An Oxford resident was killed and many others were

wounded either from rocks or gunshots. The rioting lasted through the night and order

was not restored until nearly seven in the morning (p. 66).

Occurrences such as these were common across many southern states as students attempted to

enroll as the first class of Black undergraduate students to attend historically White colleges and

universities in the South (Goldstone, 2006; Kean, 2008; Pratt, 2002; Samuels, 2004; Wallenstein,

2008). Black students who were able to enroll were often met with violence, and campuses were

unprepared structurally or culturally for their attendance (Samuels, 2004).

After a tumultuous registration experience, Charlayne Hunter encountered mobs of

students outside of her residence hall protesting her enrollment at The University of Georgia

(Kean, 2008; Pratt, 2002). She had already been assigned to a dormitory room removed from her

White peers, which was an attempt to limit her visibility and the opportunity for violence and

backlash from students and outside community protesters. According to Pratt (2002), racial slurs

and threats of violence were often made towards Hunter and her Black classmate, Hamilton

Holmes. During this time White community members often threatened those Black Athenians

who assisted Hunter and Holmes. White organizations like the Ku Klux Klan threatened to bomb

the home of the family Holmes resided with during his first year at The University of Georgia

(Pratt).

The experiences of Hunter and Holmes illustrate those of many Black students during the initial stages of integration in higher education. Racism often permeated every facet of Black students' experiences on White college campuses. Black students were often required to sleep in separate residence halls, eat in different dining facilities, and were often taunted by professors who were unsupportive of the newly gained right to attend historically White institutions (Pratt, 2002). In addition, they were often banned from participation in any social or co-curricular activities held on campus. During the formative years of higher education integration, it was common practice for professors to award Blacks who had traditionally been high achieving students low course grades in hopes that institutions would suspend them due to low academic achievement (Kean, 2008). The overall belief of many Black students was that white institutions only mirrored and perpetuated the prejudices and discrimination of the larger society (Blackwell, 1991).

Although Blacks were now legally allowed to attend historically White institutions, Black colleges and universities still enrolled a larger percentage of Black students during the early 1960's (Bowser, 2007). According to Blackwell (1991), in 1960, Black colleges and universities enrolled more than half of all Black college students in the United States. It can be inferred that the racial inequalities and the environmental incongruence that existed on many historically White institutions may have caused Blacks to feel uncomfortable and unwelcomed at White institutions. Additionally, it was still common practice for many institutions to create conditions that would ultimately deter Blacks from applying or completing their degrees (Myers, 1989).

Black enrollment during the early 1960s remained steady until the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. According to Williams (1987), Title VI of the Civil Rights Act required public institutions to implement affirmative action plans to attract more Black students. Those

institutions that did not abide by this mandate risked the chance of losing federal funding (Myers, 1989). Due to many new programs that supported and recruited minority students, historically White colleges began to see a growth in the enrollment of Blacks (Simpson, 2003). According to Williams (1988) "… the federal governments student financial aid programs for low income college aspirants are credited with having accelerated Black enrollment, since so many students at that time required financial assistance in order to afford the costs of college attendance" (p. ix).

Since the introduction of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and many other governmental and social initiatives, traditionally White colleges and universities have seen a growth in Black enrollment (Altbach, 1991; Myers, 1989). According to Colon (1991), by 1978, more than 50 percent of all Black college students were attending White colleges and universities. Additionally, between 1965 and 1980 Black enrollment in college doubled from 600,000 to 1.2 million, with over 80 percent of those students attending traditionally White institutions (Chesler, Lewis, & Crowfoot, 2005). Over time, this increase of Black student enrollment has caused college campuses to create methods to better meet the needs of the Black student population. Many colleges and universities have attempted to foster educational environments where Black culture is ingrained into the social and academic fabrics of an institution by creating Black Cultural Centers and Black history academic programs (Blackwell, 1991). By 1971, over 500 traditionally White institutions had established academic programs in Black studies (Colon, 1991). However, looking at the trends of racial inequities that have continued to plague college campuses, one could argue that such infrastructures were designed to appease an unsatisfied student population and not created to create a cultural pluralistic environment. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Black students were determined to gain the same opportunities and

benefits as their white peers, and the introduction of Black social life through the founding of

Black Greek lettered organization chapters, and Black student unions, allowed Black students to

finally find their place within institutions that had historically refused their enrollment (Yamane,

2001;Williams, 1997). Due to the overwhelming numbers of Black students entering

traditionally White Institutions due to affirmative action programs, many White college students

began to become frustrated with the policies that in their eyes gave Blacks an unfair advantage in

the college admission process (Cahn, 1993). Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s many

college campuses experienced racial tensions resulting in increased racists encounters for Blacks.

According to Yamane (2001), "…between 1986 and 1988 alone, more than 200 incidents of

racism or racial conflict received media attention, and certainly others occurred that received no

media coverage" (p.29). Additionally, The National Institute against Prejudice and Violence

estimated that at least one in five minority students experience racism through lethal assaults,

classroom and resident hall harassment, personal insults, graffiti, and property damage (Yamane,

2001). During the mid-1990s it was common for Black students to find racially charged

messages spray painted on campus buildings, and displayed through satirical cartoons in campus

newspapers (Aguirre & Messineo, 1996). During the 1990s well-known institutions such as The

Citadel, the University of Michigan, Princeton University, the University of Texas, and the

University of California at Los Angeles "… all experienced racial incidents ranging in severity

from the distribution of racist literature, to name calling, to physical attacks" (Allen, 1992, p.

27). These acts of bigotry caused many Black students to mobilize and to protest racial campus

inequalities and injustices within the universities communities. During this time, Black students

often reported a higher frequency of racially charged incidents with campus police, staff, and

faculty (Williams, 1997).

Racism, Discrimination and Prejudice on Today's College Campuses

Regardless of the ability of Blacks to achieve educational integration, racism, discrimination, and prejudice still continued decades after the passing of the Brown Decision and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Today's traditionally White college campuses have become more diverse, educating more Blacks than ever before (Biasco, Goodwin, Vitale, 2001). Today, almost 25 percent of college students are members of historically underrepresented populations (Mmeji, Newman, Dennis, Kramer & Pearson, 2009). According to Broido (2004) the percentage of Black students in higher education is estimated to reach 13.2 of the total student population by 2015. Since 1976, the population of Blacks enrolling in higher education has increased from 943,000 to nearly 2 million, which is a 107 percent increase within a three-decade period (Strayhorn, 2010). Although these numbers express an increase in Black student enrollment, they still reflect the low percentage of Blacks represented in higher education. Regardless of these gains in college attendance acts of racism, prejudice, and discrimination still plague traditional White institutions (Chesler, Lewis & Crowfoot, 2005; Simpson, 2003). Moreover, institutional and individual racism can still be found on college campuses across the country. Institutional policies, individualized discrimination, and campus cultures and norms all reflect various levels of racial inequalities for Black students. The increase of Black students over times, has not necessary translated into increased intergroup acceptance and interactions (Broido, 2004).

College campuses have been challenged with creating cultural pluralistic environments that incorporate and appreciate the cultural contributions of a diversified student population (Dey & Hurtado, 1995). This has been challenging considering the social and institutionalized structures that keep race related inequalities alive and prevalent throughout our larger society.

Racially segregated residential neighborhoods, school districts, and centers of religious worship continue perpetuate the state of segregation that currently exists within our country. Even though today's generation of college students have been widely exposed to diversity through the media and other vignettes of multiculturalism, and report a greater acceptance of diversity, a large percentage of Black students still report dealing with issues of racism, discrimination and prejudice on today's college campuses (Broido, 2004; Mmeji et al., 2009). In a study conducted by Ancis, Sedlacek and Mohr (2000) on student perceptions of campus climate by race, Black students consistently reported more negative race related experiences than any other group. In addition, Black students reported "… greater racial-ethnic hostility, greater pressure to confirm to stereotypes, less equitable treatment by faculty and staff, and teaching assistants, and more faculty racism than did any other groups" (Ancis, Sedlacek & Mohr, 2000, p.183). According to Aguirre and Messineo (1996) Black students are at risk to experience racist encounters because they are strangers in an institutional environment dominated by majoritarian beliefs and values.

American higher education has been developed based on the customs, values, and the social norms of White America (Chesler, Lewis, Crowfoot, 2005). Educational pedagogy, curriculum, and campus policies, have traditionally subscribed to White culture, which often create environmental incongruence for many Black students (Feagin, 1992). Black students are often left to navigate campus environments where Black culture is not a prominent component of the institutional infrastructure, which may lead to feelings of isolation and incompatibility (Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Demacela, Portillo, Rowan & Andrews-Guillen, 2003). In a study on campus climates conducted by Cabrera and Nora (1994), their results concluded that minority students, including Blacks, perceived racism and discrimination from three different dimensions or sources, including: (1) racial/ethnic climate on campus, (2) prejudicial attitudes of faculty, and

staff and (3) discriminatory experiences in the classroom. According to a study conducted by Ancis, Sedlacek and Mohr (2000), Black students reported experiencing more interracial tensions in their residence halls and while navigating campus social life than any other group involved in the study. In addition, a study conducted by Biasco, Goodwin and Vitale (2001) around students' perceptions of affirmative action and discrimination found that non-Black students felt that Blacks experience racism at a greater level than other minorities on campus.

Acts of racism, discrimination and prejudice are often heightened due to the overwhelming assumptions that White students have about the role of affirmative action initiatives in increasing Blacks' chances of gaining admittance into predominately White institutions (Smith, 2006). Additionally, many White students enter the college campus embodying a sense of traditional prejudices that have been developed throughout their upbringing (Sax & Arredono, 1999). Historically, a vast majority of White Americans have held onto a predicated assumption that Blacks generally do not share mainstream American values of hard work, self-reliance, and individualism (Bowman & Smith, 2002). These attitudes have gained momentum throughout history, plaguing the minds of many generations of White American citizens, which has transversely affected their perception of Black Americans and Black culture. Although, according to Altbach, Lomotey and Rivers (2002) "student attitude surveys continue to show that White students remain liberal in their attitudes about race relations, an undercurrent of resentment against affirmative action and other special programs for underrepresented populations show a certain callousness on the part of many White students about race relations" (p. 31). White students often report high levels of acceptance of racial equality when participating in racially-focused questionnaires and research studies but respond differently during personal interviews with researchers who belong to the White race. For

instance, in a study conducted by Bonilla-Silvia (1998), 90 percent of white students reported

being accepting of interracial marriages; when those same students participated in personal

interviews, only 30 percent reported levels of acceptance or tolerance for interracial marriage.

Additionally, a study conducted by Biasco, Goodwin, and Vitale (2001) at the University of

West Florida concluded that 85 percent of students felt that racial hostility was still felt on

campus, although not openly expressed.

The inability of Whites to openly express racist attitudes can be attributed to numerous

social movements geared towards valuing equality, pushing citizens to personify political correct

views and ideologies (Smith, 2006). It can be inferred that political correct ideologies are often

espoused more frequently, than they are adopted. Many White Americans, including college-

aged students, may internalize racist ideologies, which affects their ability to adopt racially

equitable mindsets. According to Aguirre and Messineo (1996), racial bigotry is a strategy used

by White students' to attack the presence of minority students on college campuses. Thus,

college administrators are challenged with navigating diversity issues between students who may

not desire the racially equitable outcomes multicultural initiatives attempt to create. Conversely,

college administrators' first have to recognize and admit to the existence of racial inequalities

and discrimination on their campuses, before they can attempt to resolve the issues of racism and

prejudice that exist for Black students.

Undergraduate Black Men on Predominately White College Campuses

When considering the strikingly low percentage of Black undergraduates attending

predominately White institutions, the effects of these acts can be compounded when you

consider the gender imbalance of undergraduate Black men and women in higher education.

According to Cuyjet (2006) Black men have the lowest male-to-female proportion in comparison

to all other ethnic groups, making Black men the only ethnic group in which men do not outnumber women. The population of Black undergraduates at predominately White institutions typically account for less than 10 percent of the entire student body (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003). Out of that small percent of Black students, undergraduate Black men typically account for less than 5 percent of the Black population on some predominately White college campuses (Allen, 1992). In 2004, undergraduate Black men only made up only 2.8 percent of the enrollments at the fifty flagship universities across the country (Porter, 2006). In addition, Black men from urban areas make up even a smaller population of today's undergraduate student population (Altbach, Lomotey & Rivers, 2002). These disparities are caused by two main factors: (1) societal issues preventing Black men from pursuing college as a life choice and (2) the unpreparedness of Black men, which affects their ability to navigate the college choice and admissions process (Cuyjet, 2006). With the challenges that already exist in recruiting and attracting undergraduate Black men, experiences of racism, discrimination and prejudice can negatively affect an institutions ability to retain, and support the unique needs of this particular student population (Harper, 2006). Although, all Black students may experience the negative effects of racial stereotypes, Black men are much more likely to be negatively stereotyped based on societal messages sent through the media and other forms of communication that portray stereotypical images of Black men as non-intellectuals (Smith, Solorzano & Yoso, 2007). The prevalence of media images that depict Black men as athletes, rappers, and street-savvy drug dealers has ultimately, affecting the way in which Black men are perceived and received in our country. Racism and discrimination are not only experienced from White peers. Faculty and staff often subscribed to stereotypical views when dealing with Black men due to the vast amount of social science research that depicts the abilities and social adaptabilities of Black men as

maladaptive (Cuyjet, 1997). A deficit model is often incorporated when discussing the existence of undergraduate Black men, thus creating undertones that convey inferiority and incapability. Additionally, systemic infrastructures within our country have created negative images of Black men, which have impacted their ability to become socially mobile, thus locking them in a substandard position as citizens.

The existence of these societal informalities has created challenges for undergraduate Black men, making it difficult for them to be viewed as true contributors to the collegiate experience, therefore creating the need for special programs and initiatives to help them adjust and handle the collegiate community (Cuyjet, 1997). It is often difficult for Black men to find community within a student population due to the low percentage of undergraduate Black men on White campuses (Allen, 1992). Additionally, the existence of environmental incongruence can cause higher levels of psychological stress, which can affect their desire to persist and ultimately effect their academic achievement (Greer & Chwalisz, 2007). In a study conducted by Banks, Kohn-Wood, and Spencer (2006), Black men felt more likely to encounter everyday racism, which caused increased levels of anxiety and psychological stress.

Due to the incongruence of the environment, and the pressure to cultural transform, Black men often experience lower levels of academic achievement and face issues integrating into campus culture and traditions (Howard-Hamilton, 1997). Black men typically associate academic and social success with levels of self-esteem and ability. Those who perform poorer academically are more likely to develop a lower sense of self and perceive their collegiate experience as uninviting; resulting in higher rates of attrition (Smith, Solorzano & Yoso, 2007). These disparities can have significant implications on social status and employment. The existence of low academic performance can have lasting effects on undergraduate Black men,

making them unable to reach higher levels of social status and career advancement, thus perpetuating a cycle of lower class status for Black men (Cuyjet). Without intervention, this cycle will continue to place many Black men in lower levels of social acceptance, hence continuing the prevalence of racism, discrimination and prejudice within our country's social structure towards this population.

Acts of racism, discrimination, and prejudice can have lasting effects on undergraduate Black men. These acts can ultimately affect their ability to develop and achieve desired student outcomes while attending college. Many undergraduate Black men come to campus understanding the educational inequalities that exist between themselves and their White peers. This can create what is called "anti-self," which causes them to internalize the world's negative view of them as Black men, causing them to develop a consistent personification of doubt and inability (Howard-Hamilton, 1997). Unfortunately, the existence of this ideology may, impact their desire to pursue leadership opportunities and become fully engaged in the co-curricular offerings within their university. Additionally, much research has been conducted about the positive benefits of becoming fully engaged and involved while attending college (Astin, 1991; Pascerella & Terenzini, 2005). The more students become actively engaged and involved on their campuses, the more likely they are to be retained and experience desired student development and learning outcomes. The existence of racial inequities on campus may affect the ability of undergraduate Black men to become fully integrated into the campus culture, which could result in lower levels of development and growth. Research on student retention concludes that in order for students to persist towards graduation, they need to need integration into formal (academic performance) and informal (faculty/staff interactions) academic systems and formal (extracurricular activities) and informal (peer-group interactions) social systems (Tinto, 1993).

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Racially charged occurrences have proven to effect students' ability to successfully integrate into academic or social systems, creating a greater opportunity for undergraduate Black men to depart from their collegiate experience.

Summary

Racism, discrimination and prejudice have plagued our country for hundreds of years. From the introduction of slavery, to numerous attempts to equalize social existence and opportunity, Blacks have continued to feel the traitorous effects of racism. Transitioning from overt forms of racial violence to subtle and covert forms expressed through the creation of institutionalized polices; racism has continued to rear its ugly head throughout the Black experience. The integration of college campuses and other social institutions brought about hope of equality and justice for Blacks, although these achievements have historically been met with resistance and fear from White Americans. The integration of higher education has presented many challenges for those professionals who strive tirelessly to create college campuses that appreciate and celebrate cultural diversity. This feat becomes even more challenging when considering the role racism, discrimination, and prejudice have played in the socialization of the American culture and its citizens. Black undergraduates have incessantly been faced with the burden of navigating unwelcoming, unfamiliar campus environments, and Black men have been subjugated to the highest forms of racism, discrimination, and prejudice, which have affected their ability to achieve higher levels of social mobility. Perceived as everything this country despises and fears, Black men continue to enter college campuses in attempt to transcend thinking patterns and stereotypical ideologies but are often met by unsupportive peers, professors and administrators. Furthermore, this dissertation is an attempt to expose the harsh and

sometimes silenced experiences of undergraduate Black men as they navigate the college

experience, and as racism, discrimination and prejudice haunt their everyday lives.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The previous review of literature revealed the contextual and subjective nature behind

racist, prejudicial, and discriminatory experiences for Black Americans. Reviewing the literature

provided a holistic perspective of how racism, prejudice, and discrimination have impacted the

lives of Blacks since their introduction to this country. Additionally, these experiences have

impacted the ability of Blacks to achieve social mobility within societal infrastructures, resulting

in Black Americans' inability to become respected contributors to American culture. These acts

of bigotry and degradation have been ingrained into many societal structures within our country,

including higher education. Within the institution of higher education, racism, discrimination,

and prejudice have historically impacted the ability of Black students to fully engage and

integrate into campus environments, affecting their ability to completely benefit from the

collegiate experience. These experiences have had a more surmountable effect on undergraduate

Black men due to the low percentage of Black males enrolled in institutions of higher education.

This chapter will fully introduce the purpose of the study and methodological traditions

incorporated to further explore the nature of racist experiences for undergraduate Black men.

Moreover, this chapter will also provide an overview of the proposed methodological framework

for this study, including a description of the epistemological stance, the data collection and

analysis process, an outline of the site and participant sampling procedures, and an overview of

the concept of theoretical sensitivity. Additionally, data collection methods traditionally

incorporated within a Critical Race Theory methodology, including, narratives and story telling, will be introduced as tools used to uncover the nature behind racist experiences for Black male students. Ethical considerations and methods used to increase trustworthiness will be discussed so that rigor is neither assumed nor dismissed as an element of this study.

Purpose of the Study

Using Critical Race Theory as a methodology, this qualitative study attempted to incorporate the use of personal narratives to constructively explore racist experiences of Black undergraduate men, hoping to reveal the intricate details behind the experience, thus uncovering the true nuances behind incidents of racial inequality and bigotry towards this student population. Furthermore this study attempted to uncover the nature of racist experiences, the meaning that undergraduate Black men make from them, and their perception of racial tensions that may exist on their perspective campuses. These areas of concern should lead to a greater understanding of racism as it exists on today's college campuses. Ideally, educators will be able to use the results of this study to develop a greater conceptualization of the experiences of this student population, which will hopefully affect or influence policy change and campus cultures and norms that perpetuate racism, discrimination and prejudice. Considering the intended purposes behind this dissertation, the following research questions where used to guide the qualitative exploration of this phenomenon.

RQ1: What is the nature of a racist experience for Black undergraduate men?

RQ2: What meaning do Black undergraduate men make of racist experiences?

RQ3: How do Black undergraduate men perceive their campus climate in terms of race relations between Black males and their white peers?

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These research questions are designed to allow participants to constructively develop their own sense of the meaning behind encountering a racist experience. Additionally, the suggested research questions caused participants to reflect and process the impact of these experiences as they consider the effect of racist experiences on their perception of campus climate. Before delving into the numerous methodological components involved within this study, it is important to ground this study within the qualitative traditions best suited to answer the proposed research questions.

The Qualitative Tradition

As this study attempted to uncover the nuances behind racist experiences for undergraduate Black men, it was important that a research design be adopted that supports true exploration of the topic based on personal experiences and meaning making processes. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world, representing true occurrences through personal interactions with those who live them. In other words, qualitative research studies a phenomenon in its natural setting, followed by an in-depth interpretation of events based off the meanings develop from them. Creswell (2007) provides a more exhaustive description of qualitative research by stating "…qualitative research begins with assumptions, a world view, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of a research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p.37). Qualitative research also recognizes the self-reflective nature of research and emphasizes the role of the researcher as an interpreter of the data and an individual who represents information (Creswell, 2007).

Additionally, a qualitative approach acknowledges the importance of language and discourse, as well as issues of power, authority, and domination that exist within research

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Clarke, 2005). Within the field of education, "… qualitative researchers continue to ask questions of people they are learning from to discover what they are experiencing, how they interpret their experiences and how they themselves structure the social world in which they live" (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007, p. 8). Considering the vast presence of racism across higher education and its variant effect on undergraduate Black men, a qualitative research design allowed for true exploration of a racist phenomenon through the eyes of those who experience them, allowing them to construct individual meaning and importance from the experience.

Epistemological Stance

An epistemological stance within a qualitative research study attempts to validate the nature of knowledge, its possibilities, and the general biases that accompany the overall conceptualization of the study and the knowledge generated from the research process (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998). According to Maynard (1994) "epistemology is concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate" (p.10). As one of many epistemological stances, constructivism postulates that the human world is different from the nature, physical world and therefore must be studied differently (Lincoln & Guba, 1990). According to Creswell (1997), qualitative studies grounded in a constructivist epistemology research the "… multiple realities constructed by people and the implications of those constructions for their lives and interactions with others" (p. 96). Crotty (1998) provided a detailed ideology of the foundational aspects of constructivism by stating,

> Constructivism rejects the views of human knowledge. There is no objective truth waiting
> for us to discover it. Truth or meaning comes to existence in and out of our engagement

with the realities of the world. There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not

discovered, but constructed. In this understanding of knowledge, it is clear that different

people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon

(p. 9).

A constructivist epistemological stance was imperative to the intended outcome of this

qualitative study because of the complex nature of racism, and the contextual existence of racist

experiences, which have historically oppressed Black Americans. This study was designed to

allow participants to construct personal meaning related to their experiences with racism, or

related occurrences, in addition to providing a platform to define the meaning of these acts

within the social world as they currently exist within it. In other words, this study afforded

undergraduate Black men the opportunity to share stories about their encounters with racist acts

within the context of their personal experiences and perceptions. Ideally, this permitted for an

exchange of dialogue that supported true exploration of the topic under investigation. Although

there is extensive amount of research and literature in regards to racist experiences of

undergraduate Black men on predominately White college campuses, this study was designed to

unravel and uncover the meanings developed from participants, thus shedding light on the

incalculable nature of racism as it relates to the population under investigation.

Data Collection Methods

In an effort to uncover the stories behind racist experiences for undergraduate Black men,

various data collection methods were adopted within this study, given that qualitative research is

rooted in the extensive collection of data associated with the tradition (Creswell, 2007). Since

this study was designed to explore the nature of a racist experience for undergraduate Black men,

and constructed meaning, one-on-one interviewing was one of the primary methods of data

collection. Interviewing in qualitative research forwards the researcher the opportunity to enter into the world of the participant by accepting their insight as meaningful, and knowable (Patton, 2002). Conducting one-on-one interviews, instead of group interviews, created a safe space for participants, thus making them feel comfortable to share stories of racial occurrences they may consider personal or private. In qualitative research, interviewing consists of either a structured, semi-structured, or an unstructured format which provides the opportunity for intentional dialogue to take place between the researcher and the participant (Creswell, 2007). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated "… the interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subjects own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (p.103). Unstructured or semi-structured interviews can provide a greater breadth of dialogue and information than other more structured types of interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2008). As a method of inquiry, semi-structured interviews neither question nor answer the predetermined categories as they rely on social interaction between the researcher and the informant (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1990). According to Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Arora & Mathis (2007) "the semi-structured interview is designed to cover a common set of themes but allows for changes in the sequencing of questions and the forms of questions, enabling the interviewer to follow up on the interviewees' answers" (p. 311). A semi-structured interview protocol was useful in uncovering the nature behind a racist experience, and the meaning made, which lead to further areas of interest that may not have considered by the researcher when designing the interview protocol. Using interviews as the primary source of data collection, participants had the opportunity to go into great depth about a specific experience and the meaning constructed from their experience.

Staying in line with the foundations of Critical Race Theory as a method, interview questions were designed to capture first-order participant narratives about racist experiences and the meaning they made from those encounters. Incorporating many of the traditions and methods associated with qualitative research, Critical Race Theory as a method subscribes to the use of narratives and storytelling as tools to reveal the injustices behind racial inequalities and inequities that exist within our society (Lynn et al., 2002; Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001/2002). First-order narratives focus on the individual and the story they share about themselves and their personal experiences (Creswell, 2007). Framing interview questions so that stories reveal themselves made it easier to deduct the nature and meaning of a racist experience. According to Riessman (1993)…"the purpose, [of narrative research], is to see how respondents in interviews impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and accounts in their lives" (p. 2). Furthermore, the narrative approach of qualitative inquiry examines participants' stories and "…analyzes how it is put together, the linguistic and cultural resources it draws on, and how it persuades a listener of authenticity" (p.2). Within the methodological traditions of critical race theory, counter-storytelling has been traditionally used as a narrative approach to inquiry that focuses on exposing the stories of those who do not belong to the dominant group (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001/2002). According to Delgado (1998), counter-storytelling is used to tell the stories of those experiences that are often not told. A counter story or a counter narrative challenges majoritarian stories, and the preconceived understandings of events, by placing a cultural perspective provided by those who live through and experience race as an everyday component of their lives (Delgado, 1993). This is important since much of what our country has been taught about racism and the effect it has had on Black Americans has been told through the voices of non-Black researches, which are often second

hand accounts of participants' experiences. According to Delgado & Stefancic (1993) "…counter-narratives or counter-storytelling, by its very nature, challenges the majoritarian story or that bundle of presuppositions, perceived wisdoms, and shared cultural understandings persons in the dominant race bring to the discussion or race" (p.462). Counter-stories can serve at least four theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical functions:

> (1) they can build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice; (2) they can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems; (3) they can open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing the possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position; and (4) they can teach others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct another world that is richer that either the story or the reality alone (Solozrzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 475).

In researching the experiences of Black Americans, counter-storytelling has been most successful in relaying personal messages of racism and other forms of bigotry (Bell, 1987). Incorporating counter-storytelling allowed for the unaltered voices of those with firsthand experiences with racist encounters to share their stories without interpretation. Participants' existence as Black American men, forwarded them the ability to construct meaning and describe the nature of the experiences within their contextual and subjective perception of racism within our country, which will hopefully assist with the deficit of race-related literature developed from those who undoubtedly experience racism.

In qualitative research, interviews may be used as the dominant strategy for data collection,

or in conjunction with participant analysis, observation, or other techniques (Bodgen & Biklen, 2007). Although interviews were used as the primary source of data collection, other methods, including photo elicitation and a reflective free-write, were used to inform the structure and context of the interview process. Additionally, these methods were used to strengthen the description of the narratives shared by participants. Participants were also interviewed in regards to these methods of inquiry.

Photo elicitation.

Photo elicitation is a visual method of data collection that focuses on capturing stories and other contextual meanings through the use of pictures and other visual representations (Harper, 2008). According to Bodgen and Biklen (2007) qualitative research has historically used photography as a method of subjective inquiry because of the strikingly descriptive data that can be gathered, understood, and analyzed inductively. In regards to photo elicitation, Harper (2002) stated,

> Photo elicitation is based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview. The difference between interviews using images and text, and interviews using words alone lies in the ways we respond to these two forms of symbolic representation. This has a physical basis: the parts of the brain that process visual information are evolutionarily older than the parts that process verbal information. Thus images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness that do words; exchanges based on words alone utilize less of the brain's capacity than do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words. These may be some of the reasons the photo elicitation interview seems like not simply an interview process that elicits more information, but rather one that evokes a different kind of information (p.13).

Photo elicitation was incorporated within this study to assist in uncovering participants'

perceptions of campus climate in terms of race relations between Black males and their White

peers. Participants were provided a camera and asked to take pictures of images that reflect their

perception of the campus climate. The photos provided a diverse perspective of how participants

conceptualize this phenomenon, thus strengthening the researcher's ability to fully appreciate

their stories and experiences. Once completed, participants were asked a serious of interview

questions to assist the researcher in deciphering the reasoning participants used in selecting

specific images or items to photograph as representations of campus climate. The responses to

these questions assisted in creating a more holistic understanding of how participants perceive

the campus climate from their contextual existence.

Reflective free-write.

In an attempt to understand the meaning making process experienced after encountering an

act of racism and their overall feelings about racism on college campuses, participants were

asked to participant in a reflective free-write. By participating in this activity participants had the

opportunity to process and reflect about their experience and express their feelings about racism,

as it exists on their perspective campus. The information shared during the free-write not only

strengthen the ability to understand and deduct from the narrative shared, but also provided

participants with an alternate method to express the nature of the racist experience, and the

meanings constructed from it. It can be assumed that individuals express themselves through

various forms of communication. Along with the semi-structured interview, and the photo

elicitation, this reflective writing activity was designed to provide those who may need an

alternate method of expression and reflection with an outlet to do so. Once completed, this

reflective free-write served as a document, which was useful in deciphering the phenomenon of a

racist experience, and the meaning constructed from it. Conventionally, documents have been employed within qualitative research as a data collection tool used to develop a better comprehension of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2007; Prior, 2003). For many participants, this may have been the first time they were asked to discuss and internally process their racist encounter. For this reason it is necessary to recognize the impact of the interview process on the outcome of the reflective activity. Since the subjectivity of the researcher and the theoretical framework adopted within this study impacted the construction and tone of the interview process, researcher subjectivity, in terms of theoretical sensitivity, will be shared during the later part of this chapter.

Interview Protocol

According to Glesne (2005), interview question formulate what the researcher asks participants in order to gain an understanding of the phenomenon. Additionally, interview questions tend to be more contextual and specific then research questions and should be framed around the experiences and behaviors, opinions and values, feelings and knowledge, and background and demographics of participants (Patton, 2002). Additionally, perceptive and sensory-focused questions also create opportunities for an easy exchange of knowledge between the participants and the researcher (Patton). Interview questions were assembled in order to discover the nature of a racist experience for undergraduate Black men. Additionally, questions were constructed to allow participants to think about their experiences, and the impact of those experiences on their meaning making process. Additional questions were created to afford participants the opportunity to reflect on campus racial climate as it relates to undergraduate Black men. Incorporating the use of Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework, interview questions were designed while considering the conceptual underpinnings of CRT work and

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theory, which has been described and explained throughout the organizational components of this study. The intersections of race and gender, which align with the premises of CRT research, assisted in the creation of a semi-structured interview protocol that would best answer the proposed research questions.

To ensure an accurate account of the exchange of dialogue during the interviews, all interviews were recorded, using multiple digital recorders. Interviews with participants where then transcribed verbatim, ensuring an easy transition between the data collection and data analysis phases of the study.

Data Analysis

The transcriptions created after the data collection process consisted of information gathered from the questions asked during the semi-structured interview process. Additionally, participants' description and explanation of their photo elicitation process were also transcribed and prepared for analysis. The reflective free write was already typed, since participants used a computer to express their reflections about their experience and racism in general. Holistically these sets of data were used to analyze the nature of their experience, the meaning participants constructed from their experience and their perception or feelings about the campus racial climate.

Since CRT studies adopt the analytical tools associated with narratives and storytelling, narrative analysis (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) was incorporated to reveal the nature of the phenomenon under investigation. The analysis of numerous forms of data were analyzed in attempt to create a composite story or narrative, which according to Solorzano and Yosso (2002) "composite stories and narratives draw on various forms of data to recount the racialized, sexualized, and classed experiences of people of color" (p. 33). Narrative analysis in itself

consists of a range of techniques for interpreting the meaning of texts with the structure of stories (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). Personal narratives and stories reveal cultural patterns through the lens of individual experiences (Patton, 2002). Narrative analysis was extremely important in uncovering the existence of racism on college campus as the analysis focuses on creating personal testimonies and stories about racial occurrences and the meaning constructed from them. According to Patton (2002), the data collected needs to be analyzed for the story, focusing on a chronological account of unfolding events and turning points and epiphanies.

There are numerous approaches to analyzing narratives or stories (Ricoer, 1985). According to Watson (2005), the selection of an analysis approach depends on what the researcher wants to examine and why, which in turn, influences the way text is selected and analyzed. For the purposes and intent of this study, the life-story method of analysis was adopted. Reissman (1993) and Burck (2005) suggested that within the life-story method of analysis, the researcher constructs and translates an account from the text of the interview and retells the person's account as if in their shoes and then examines the story told. The co-constructed nature of this analysis method accounts for the role of the researcher in relaying the constructed messages and intent behind participants' story. Depending on the researcher's subjectivity, the accounts shared and emphasized may be biased or misconstrued seeing as researchers do not have direct access to participant's experiences (Reissman, 1993). The inability of the researcher to obtain direct access results in an analysis based off of the interpretation of talk, text, and interaction. Reissman (1993) provided five levels of representation, termed *The Representation Experience*, in which the researcher attempts to recognize the interjection of the their personal ideologies into the analysis process; attempting to limit their role of biasness and overly dramatized interpretation in the research process. These levels include: (1) Attending to

the experience, (2) telling about the experience, transcribing the experience, (3) analyzing the experience, and (4) reading the experience. The following section is a brief explanation of each level of representation, describing the importance of each area as it relates to a research project grounded in narrative inquiry.

Attending to the experience.

During the first level, the researcher attends to and makes discrete certain features of the data into a stream of consciousness, which includes reflecting, remembering, recollecting occurrences into actual observations. By attending to the experience, the researchers make certain phenomena or occurrences meaningful by recognizing their role with the story being shared. During this process, there is no choice what the researcher notices, because the focus is on the experience in its entirety, and not specific excerpts.

Telling about experience.

During the second level, the researcher presents the ordered events in a narrative manner. Specifically, the researcher re-presents the events, already ordered, paying attention the discourse and conversations that appear within the story. At this point in the process, the researcher begins to recognize and describe the setting, characters, and the unfolding plot, in an attempt to stitch together a story that speaks to the experience of the participant and the interpretation of the researcher. Although this level is influenced by the researcher's cultural context, the researcher must recognize the gap between the lived experience and the way in which they, the researcher, chose to communicate it. Overall, this level is about the interaction and integration of the participants' accounts within the researcher's ability to freely interpret the occurrence or experience holistically.

Transcribing experience.

During the third level, the researcher attempts to represent the conversational transactions captured during the interview processes in some kind of text, which will creation a fixed account of the spoken words or speech given during the interview. Because transcribing is still considered an incomplete representation of a secondhand account of a lived experience, the researcher must attempt to account for every vocal inflection that a participant may provide in attempt to give the most accurate account of the lived-experience. Although, not perfect, incorporating the use of audio or visual recording is usually the best and most accurate account of participants' experience. According to Reissman (1993) the research must attempt to edit their selves out of the transcription process by using loose oral narrative to summarize the participants' perspective and accounts of their experience. Specifically, loose narrative means being very transparent in accounting for the instances of tone changes and moments of silence, which may reflect a shift in thought or feeling. Accounting for these occurrences will impact readers' ability to understand the truth and authenticity behind the narrative.

Analyzing experience.

During the fourth level, the researcher must be sure to account for critical moments of meaning and reality alike. Additionally, the researcher must pay extra attention to turning points or epiphanies that the participants may have experienced during the interview process. The challenging part of this level of representation is the attempt to identify similarities across lived moments, so that those occurrences can be placed into an aggregate summation of representation and interpretation. During this stage in the process, decisions about formatting, ordering, and styling have to be made so that a true representation is given; and not a subjective account of the lived experience. Personal values and ideologies must be placed aside so that the research can

attempt to master the art of presenting a holistic account of another's lived experience.

Reading experience.

The fifth and final level recognizes that all text created as a secondhand account of someone's experience is up for individual interpretation. Even an individual account of a lived-experience is subjected to our contextual and perceptual knowledge base and is affected by our ways of being within the world. Overall, these inconsistencies should allow the researcher to understand the inability to create a master-narrative, a true holistic account of a lived experience. Each reader will create and uncover different meanings from the accounts shared during the research process, and truths will arise within in individuals' subjective existence.

The strategies and methods provided during the representation process should be followed throughout the entire research process, but become even more imperative during the analysis phase because of the ability to misrepresent the narrative or story shared by participants (Reissman, 1993). There are numerous specific methods to analyze narrative data, and selecting a method depends on the desired or intended outcome of the study (Creswell, 2007; Reissman, 1993; Patton, 2002). Since this study is an attempt to provide a very detailed account of a racist experience for undergraduate Black men, the holistic-content perspective (Leiblich, Tuval-Mashoach & Zibler, 1998) will be adopted as the primary analysis method.

The Holistic-Content Perspective

According to Leiblich, Tuval-Mashoach and Zibler (1998) the holistic-content perspective of analysis will provide a very detailed account of a lived experience by identifying holistic global impressions about the narrative shared, following by at thematic breakdown of major ideas or occurrences found within participant stories. This process is conducted continuously for each participant until you have a massive account and interpretations of each participant's

narrative, typically related to the same theme or concept. Within this perspective of analysis, there are five suggested steps offered to begin the journey of holistic representation. First, the researcher must "…read the material several times until a pattern emerges, usually in the form of foci of the entire story" (Leiblich, Tuval-Mashoach & Zibler, 1998, p. 62). The researcher must listen carefully with an empathetic mind, believing in their ability to detect the meaning of the text.

During the first stage there are no clear directions, but the researcher must pay attention to aspects of the story that speak to the contextual purposes of the study. Secondly, the researcher must put initial and global impressions of the case into writing. The researcher must note and account for expectations of general impressions as well as usual features of the story such as contradictions' or unfinished descriptions. Additionally, the researcher should note any instances of disturbance that produce disharmony or dissension for the participant. This process will help the researcher in interpreting global or overall impressions influenced by the narrative of the lived-experience. Thirdly, the research must decide on special foci of content or themes to follow as the story evolves from the beginning to end. The ability to identify a focal area or areas is typically strengthened during the second stage of the analysis process. Themes or focal areas are typically repetitive and can be easily identified through the amount of detail a participant provides about a topical area. For the purposes of this study, racist experiences were the main focal point of interest. During the fourth stage, the researcher should begin to mark and record various themes found within the narrative. Transcripts and other forms of data can be highlighted based on key themes and occurrences. According to Brown et al. (1988), this method is most useful in assisting in what is similar to the coding process used within grounded theory research. The fifth and final stage, involves the researcher keeping track of results by following each

theme throughout the entire narrative, and noting occurrences of indifference or alternate ideologies or concepts.

Incorporating the use of the three sets of data gathered during the collection stage allowed for a holistic representation and co-construction of the story shared by participants. Since the CRT methodological traditions were incorporated within this study, participants' narratives were analyzed through a critical lens, paying extra attention to the dynamics of race, class and gender in the interpretation of participants' stories and narratives.

Theoretical Sensitivity

Although, CRT acknowledges the inequities or race (Bell, 2009), it is important for the researcher to out rightly state their position and level of conceptual entry into the topic (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). This can be achieved by incorporating the concept of theoretical sensitivity, which according to Strauss & Corbin (1990) is,

> a personal quality of the researcher. It indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data. One can come to the research situation with varying degrees of sensitivity depending upon previous reading and experience with or relevant to the data. It can be developed further during the research process. Theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that, which isn't (pp. 41-42).

As reflected in the narrative shared in the introduction of chapter one, I am a Black man, who has been abused by the existence or racism and tarnished by the negative outcomes associated with racial inequalities that are existent within our society. I entered this study with years of built up internal and external passion for this topic due to my personal experiences. As the researcher for this study, my sensitivity to the topic may have impacted the outcome if I did not appropriately

address my sensitivity to the topic. As a Black man, I enter into this study acknowledging and witnessing the weight of oppression many African American males experience. I have experienced what many within the African American community would describe as indirect segregation and bigotry. I have encountered the effects of stereotypes and unfair criticism. In addition, I have witnessed and experienced the positive and negative aspects associated with being a Black man in this country. Even though some of those experiences and realities have been negative, they have contributed to who I am today. I am able to realize and understand the implications of being a part of this cultural group. Being a part of the group I am studying does affect where I entered this study, but being true to the purpose of this research and remaining objective proved to be much more beneficial to the students and professionals that I hoped to impact by conducting this study.

Although I did not attend a predominately White institution as an undergraduate, I have heard the countless cries of many young brothers who desire a voice; an outlet for someone to understand, respect, and appreciate their experience as college men. Additionally, I recognized the need to give a voice to those who may be too afraid to go against a system that has historically muffled and discounted their accounts of inequities and injustice. As a student affairs' professional, my work philosophy is geared towards ensuring equality for undergraduate Black men; assisting them in their psychosocial development during their undergraduate collegiate experience. Ensuring that this student populations experience equal opportunities is a priority of mine due to my belief in social justice. Marginalized student populations are made up of students who not only belong to groups that have been rejected by society or social institutions, but have been denied access to the experiences that assist in creating a level playing field for all American citizens. I incorporated the use of bracketing to address all of the biases

and assumptions that could affect the outcome of this study.

From my perspective, the aforementioned experiences and ideologies qualified me to researcher and investigate the phenomena under study. Within a Critical Race study, theoretical sensitivity allows for the researches voice to be heard throughout the study, not just as the researcher, but also as a member of the researched population (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). My experiences, my ideologies, and my passion for the topic and this population allowed me to become fully engulfed within the contextual and subjective nature of a racist phenomenon, which created an environment that supported a transparent account of experiences, concepts, and meanings.

Participant Recruitment and Ethical Considerations

To ensure that participants met the intent behind the study, purposeful sampling was used to select individuals to participate. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). This study explored the nature behind a racist experience, the meaning constructed from the experience, and the perception of racial campus climate. To gain a better understanding of this topic, it was necessary to select individuals that fit a specific criterion, and who could provide rich data that directly related to the research questions. Research participants' self-identify as Black men who where also classified as undergraduate students at a predominately White Institution. Since this study was conducted during the beginning of the academic year, first-year students were excluded from potential participation since they had less than one semester of experience as an undergraduate student. Although, first-year students may have experienced a racist encounter, it was much more likely that continuing students had encountered a racist experience, and have had the time to process

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the meanings associated with the experience. Additionally, participants must had experienced a racist encounter, and be willing to fully disclose and discuss the ramifications behind that event.

Potential participants were recruited through referrals obtained by professionals working in various student affairs offices within the research sites and may include, but were not limited to: African American Cultural Centers, Black Student Unions, Campus Life offices, and other university entities that work directly with undergraduate Black male students. These professionals served as gatekeepers, establishing initial contact with potential participants and then providing leads to others (Creswell, 2007). Once participants were found, a snowballing method was incorporated, which is the technique of asking participants for other leads to individuals that fit the research criteria (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Using a gatekeeper and incorporating snowballing to recruit participants ensured that potential participants fit the research design criterion for this study.

Qualitative research studies focus on few individuals, but collect extensive details about each individual studied (Creswell, 2007). The purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize the information gained from conducting the research, but to focus on the specific details provided from participants (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). Using this rationale, a sample size of eight participants was the initial target for this study, even though participants were recruited until saturation was reached.

Data collection sites were selected that met the needs of the study, and that provided a conducive environment for interviewing participants. Sites included, but were not limited to, residence hall conference rooms, student organizational offices, and library study rooms. Participants were provided with the list of potential sites and had the opportunity to select one that meet their specific needs. Sites were selected that are quiet, clean and comfortable, which

allowed for a healthy exchange of dialogue between the researcher and the participant (Bodgan

& Biklen, 2007). Initially, the researcher scheduled an orientation meeting with participants,

providing them with the necessary research materials and gaining their willingness to participate

through the use of a consent form. At this orientation meeting participants were given a camera

and a set of instructions for the photo elicitation process. Additionally, a follow up meeting was

scheduled two weeks after the orientation. At the second meeting participants were interviewed

about their racist lived-experience and asked to discuss the meanings behind their photos. At the

conclusion of the interview, participants had the opportunity to participate in the reflective free-

write exercise.

Ensuring the privacy of participants was a major aspect of this study. Participants had the

opportunity to share stories or experiences that may have caused them to be easily identified by

readers. For this reason, participants had the opportunity to create a pseudonym, which assisted

in protecting their identity throughout the study. Organizational and individual names were also

be assigned pseudonyms to further protect the identity of participants and the institutions. The

names of institutions, campus buildings, or other identifiable locations were altered to protect the

anonymity of participants. However, since participants were asked to take photos and provide

descriptions of areas or items on campus, which reflect areas of racial tensions, some aspects of

participating institutions identity were hard to protect. Through the use of ethical judgment, the

researcher attempted to protect the identity of all participating parties to the best of their ability,

while staying true to the intent and purpose of the study. Participants were also be asked to

refrain from taking direct pictures of peoples faces or other items that may make individuals

identifiable, which assisted in strengthening anonymity within the study. Participants also

received a consent form. The consent form stated their rights as participants and provided

specific details about the voluntary nature of this study. In addition, an application was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for each research site to ensure that all aspects of the study were within the ethical standards of a project grounded in social science research. Information that was gathered through the study followed proper protocol to ensure that participants were not identifiable.

Validity and Reliability

Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research requires that attention be paid to issues pertaining to internal validity, external validity, and reliability (Creswell, 2007). Often times, internal validity is defined as "…the true causes of the outcomes that you observed in your study" (Validity: Internal & External, Retrieved October 11, 2010). External validity is said to "…address the ability to generalize your study to other people and other situations" (Validity: Internal & External,). Joppe (2004) defined reliability as:

> The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable (p. 1).

These definitions are not easily transferable to the rigor and purpose of qualitative research and were developed to serve the purposes and intent of quantitative research, which is generalizability. The qualitative research world has experienced much criticism for the lack of ability to ensure the validity and reliability of research methods, design, and results, based on positivist perspectives (Creswell, 2007). Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner and Steinmetz (1991) asserted that using quantitative terms tends to be a defensive measure that muddies the water and that "the language of positivistic research is not congruent with or adequate to qualitative work"

(p.95). To combat these criticisms, qualitative researchers developed terms that met the needs of ensuring internal and external validity and reliability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) used terms such as creditability, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as equivalents for internal validity, external validity and reliability. Creswell (2007) stated, "rather than reliability, one seeks dependability that the results will be subject to change and instability" (p. 204). These definitions have allowed qualitative researchers to ensure the scholarly nature of their work while remaining true to the naturalist approach of qualitative research. When discussing the need to ensure internal validity and external validity and reliability, there are many methods that may be incorporated within a qualitative research design. Many purposeful techniques include prolonged engagement in the field and the triangulation of data sources, methods, and investigators (Creswell, 2007).

   To ensure trustworthiness within this study, various methods were incorporated, including the use of triangulation and member checks. Triangulation is the use of multiple data sources, methods, and or investigators to ensure creditability of a study (Creswell, 2007). Multiple data sources or participants were used within the study to ensure the research findings are congruent with reality. Participants were also asked to participate in the member check process by reviewing transcripts developed from their recorded interviews. As the researcher, I attempted to increase internal validity by submerging myself in the current data and literature that exists on the topic, and by spending an extended period of time in the data collection phase, hoping to capture substantive feedback from participants.

   Ensuring external validity will be accomplished by providing rich, thick description of the accounts shared by participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By providing detailed descriptions, the reader is able to transfer information to other settings to determine whether findings are

transferable (Creswell, 2007). The use of multiple sites, data collection methods, and scholarly perspectives were incorporated to increase the transferability of the study. By using diverse literature and a variety of perspectives, the study provides a comprehensive view of the phenomenon being studied, allowing readers to develop a broad understanding of the topic through various lenses.

The reliability of the study was strengthened through the use of peer examination. Using peer review or debriefing provided an external check of the research process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined the role of the peer reviewer as a devil's advocate, an individual who keeps the researcher honest, asks hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations. As the researcher, I also shared my position or stance within this research by acknowledging my theoretical sensitivity in conducting this study by sharing the personal framework that I used in selecting my research design. Clarifying researcher stance from the beginning of the study is important so readers understand the researcher's position and any biases or assumptions that may impact the study (Merriam, 1998). In this clarification, the researcher comments on experiences, biases, prejudices, orientations, and other factors that potentially shaped the interpretation and approach to the study (Creswell, 2007).

Incorporating these methods in the study ensured the transferability and creditability of this study and provided readers with a scholarly understanding of the phenomenon at hand. Even though the purpose of this research was not to generalize the topic, readers should be able to identify areas of familiarity that relate to the population being studied, hopefully impacting their own underlying knowledge or perceptions about the needs of those students within this study.

Study Limitations

All research designs have limitations (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007). Within this research design, few limitations existed that affected the breadth of opportunity in encountering a wide variety of participants. Literature already speaks to the declining percent of undergraduate Black men on college campuses (Guiffrida, 2003; Cuyjet, 2006; Harper, 2006), which may have limited the ability to locate purposeful participants. However, through the methods discussed earlier, the researcher was able to fully recruit and attract the desired number of participants sought out for this study. Additionally, research concludes that Blacks, with a more central and salient racial identity are typically more likely and willing to discuss issues of racial inequalities and inequities (Sellars et al, 2003; Sellars & Shelton, 2003). There was no way to assess the centrality and saliency of participant's racial identity within the constructs of this study, thus making it difficult to guarantee participants willingness to divulge information about their lived experience. Nevertheless, regardless of participants' level of racial centrality or saliency, each individual was successful at openly articulating and expressing their racist encounter and the meaning they constructed from it.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the methodological traditions incorporated through the organization of this study. Using a qualitative methodology, this study employed the use of critical race theory as a method, which subscribes to the traditions associated with narrative research and story-telling. Incorporating the use of a semi-structured interview protocol, photo elicitation, and a reflective free-write, this study incorporated the use of the holistic-content approach, to uncover the nature behind a racist experience for undergraduate Black men, as well as uncovering the meaning constructed from the lived experience, and the perceptual stance on

the racial campus climate. In attempt to uncover the true nature behind the experience, purposeful sampling was used to recruit potential participants. Thick-rich description, and peer examinations were introduced as methods of increasing research validity and reliability. Incorporating the use of data triangulation, and member checks were also incorporated as methods used to improve and increase the trustworthiness of the study.

CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANT NARRATIVES AND FINDINGS

Introduction

Using Critical Race Theory as a methodology, this qualitative study incorporated the use

of personal narratives and storytelling to constructively explore the racist experiences of Black

undergraduate men, hoping to reveal the intricate details behind the experience, thus uncovering

the true nuances behind incidents of racial inequality and bigotry towards this student population.

Furthermore this study uncovered the nature of racist experiences, the meaning that

undergraduate Black men made from them, and their perception of racial tensions that may exist

on their perspective campuses. Considering the intended purposes behind this dissertation, the

following research questions were used to guide the qualitative exploration of this phenomenon.

RQ1: What is the nature of a racist experience for Black undergraduate men?

RQ2: What meaning do Black undergraduate men make of racist experiences?

RQ3: How do Black undergraduate men perceive their campus climate in terms of race

relations between Black males and their white peers?

Based upon an extensive series of individual interviews with eight participants, a reflective free-

write activity around the meaning constructed and a photo elicitation activity developed to

understand their perception of campus climate, this chapter aims to highlight each participant's

story as it relates to the topic.

Before going into great depth as it relates to participant's narratives, it is important to

explain how the findings are organized throughout the chapter and the process used to structure

and shape each participants story. In addition an institutional profile will be provided; making it easier for readers to grasp a contextual understanding of the data collection site.

Organization of the Findings

Following the process outlined in chapter three, each participant's interview was transcribed verbatim. The transcription of the interview data allowed for the researcher to develop a more subjective understanding of their experiences, which made it easier to piece together eight holistic stories. The data collected from the interviews also provided an in-depth explanation of the campus climate, as participants were asked a serious of interview questions in regards their pictures. In addition, participants were asked to reflect about the meaning of their experience and their overall opinions about racism, as it exists on today's college campus. These three sets of data; the interview transcripts, the explanation of the pictures, and the personal written reflection, were all used to answer the suggested research questions. Each participant's transcript was read numerous times and was then highlighted and organized into four topical areas, which included, background information and experiences with racism, the nature or description of their racist experience in college, the meaning derived from the experience, and the description of the pictures reflecting their perception of the campus climate. The separation of the data allowed for pertinent components of the story to be pieced together in attempt to answer each research question and provide a holistic description of their experience.

Throughout this chapter, each participant will be fully introduced using journaling notes and reflections developed from the researcher. In attempt to provide a comprehensive narrative, the researcher participated in a written reflection after each participant interview. In conjunction with background and life story information collected during the interview, the journaling notes will exist as a transitional component between the introduction of each participant and the

description of their experience. Once participants are fully introduced, a complete account of their experience will be provided; followed by a description of the meaning made from the racist experience. A description of participants constructed meaning was developed through a conglomeration of their personal reflections and any information collected around meaning during the interview process. As an attempt to increase the authenticity of the findings, participant illustrations were used throughout the description of their experience and their constructed meaning. Once participant narratives are shared, their perception of campus climate will be provided through personal illustrations around their reasoning for selecting specific items to photograph in attempt to portray their feelings towards campus climate. To conclude each participant's story, the researcher will provide an explanation of any significant themes or trends that emerged from the data.

Description of the Data Collection Site

In attempt to protect the anonymity of the participants and the institution involved in the study, the description of the data collection site was constructed broad in nature. No definite information, enrollment statistics, of descriptions was provided. Although the researcher used documented resources in attempt learn more about the institution, researcher ethics influenced the decision to not use specific descriptors or references that could potentially reveal the identity of participants and the data collection site. However, throughout the photo elicitation process, many participants provided examples of areas, or items on campus which may make participating institutions much more identifiable and recognizable to readers. It was the researches goal to ultimately protect the identity of participating institutions, which is relevant through the use of pseudonyms and aliases within the description of participant's stories and experiences. Nonetheless, regardless of the effort set forth by the researcher, readers may be able

to ascertain institution specifics throughout the examination of the findings.

During the time of the study, all nine participants were students at a research extensive state flagship institution in the southeast. Founded in the late eighteenth century as one of the first state-supported institutions of higher education, Southeast University is comprised of sixteen colleges and schools, which provide undergraduate, graduate and professional educational opportunities to students. The University lies within a small college town with a large variation of socio economic status between white residents and those of color. Although diverse in number, the small college town struggles with shrinking the socioeconomic gap that exists between many of its residents. With an undergraduate enrollment just over 25,000, Southeast University is one of the largest state flagship institutions in the southeast region. As one of the more competitive institutions within the state higher education system, Southeast University's students typically rank among the top of their high school graduating class, with a class SAT average over 1200 and an average high school grade point average over 3.5. Students within the university's honor program faired even higher academically with an average SAT score close to 1500 and an average high school grade point average of over a 4.0. Southeast University's undergraduate population is comprised of over 80 percent of students with in state status, with over 97 percent who receive a state governed tuition scholarship.

As an institution that has only been integrated for around 50 years, diversifying the student body has been an uphill challenge for Southeast University, which is reflected through a student body in which Whites make up over 75 percent of the undergraduate population. Although the university has attempted to become more attractive to students of color through creating programs, offices and services to assist them with issues related to their minority status, Black students still enroll in small percentages. The current enrollment of Black students at Southeast

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University only comprises about 10 percent of the student population. In terms of Black males, the struggle to attract and retain this student population has been even more of a challenge. Black men only comprise less than 2 percent of the entire student population. During the fall of 2009, Southeast University admitted approximately 5,000 first year students. Out of that population, 104 were Black males, making black males just two percent of the incoming class population. Considering these low numbers, issues of racism, discrimination and prejudice could negatively impact the transitional experience of many black males at the university; thus making the intent behind this study detrimental to the success of black males on this campus and other campuses with similar environments.

The remainder of this chapter will provide a detailed view of the experiences of the nine participants involved within this study. The organization of this chapter was designed to give readers a detailed, holistic look at the life experiences and constructed meaning of the nine participants as it relates to racism, discrimination and prejudice. Additionally, participants' stories and exemplars' about the campus climate in regards to racial tension will also serve as contrivance; allowing readers to conceptualize race relations as it currently exists on a predominately white college campus.

Introducing Hamilton

I have to say that conversing with Hamilton was one of my most enlightening interviews. Prior to today, we had only interacted because he responded to the email invite that I sent out on the campus Black male listserv. I met him about three weeks ago to gain his consent to participate and to provide him with the disposable camera for the photo elicitation component of the study. I knew when he asked if we could initially meet in the library, that he was an upstanding young brother.

Before our interview today, I was volunteering at Petzone, a local no kill dog shelter; visiting my close friends, Sparky, Nutmeg, Hanna, Trooper, and Bandit. After leaving there I stopped by Chick-Fila to grab some lunch; a number seven with a fruit cup. Before heading to the meet Hamilton, I decided to swing by my place to use the restroom and regroup before the interview. Thus far, my day has been long and to be honest, I didn't really feel like interviewing. Prior to arriving at Petzone this morning, I stopped by a friend's to help her load her moving truck; this was 7am this morning. I then spent four hours at Petzone, walking, feeding and cleaning up after rambunctious dogs. But, since it is finals week, and I know Hamilton is serious about his schoolwork, I was committed to conducting the interview today. When I arrived in my office suite to conduct the interview, I found one of my classmates using the conference room I had reserved for the interview. He was in there working on a grueling statistics final. I looked at him and thought, "Man, time flies, I remember just a year ago I was in there working on the same final, and now the only thing that stands in my way of this PhD is this dissertation." After asking him, my classmate, to relocate, Hamilton called and said he was at the front door of the building. I was slightly embarrassed to interview today, because I hadn't had time to change after community service, so I reeked of bleach, dog feces, and cleaning supplies, but I figured I had to do what I needed to do. As I met Hamilton at the door, I noticed that he was dressed in a grey Terry College of Business t-shirt, a pair of blue jeans, and a black jean jacket. He looked pretty stylish for late fall Saturday afternoon.

As we began the interview, I could feel that this was going to be one of my longest, which it turned out to be; lasting 1.5 hours. Hamilton's enthusiasm and excitement exuded through his presence as he sat across from me eager, jumpy and somewhat fervent. Hamilton shared a many stories about his childhood and his past experiences with race and racial

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inequality. He was very eloquent and expressive and really delved into race, but spoke from a very multicultural lens, focusing on equality and fairness and not the subjugated effects of his racist experiences. I actually felt like I was speaking with one of my doctoral peers and not an undergraduate. At the conclusion of our interview Hamilton thanked me for inviting him to participate, and asked me about mentorship, which I advised him on the positive and negative aspects of mentoring someone. He left, and I thought about how bright he is and how successful he will be. His positive disposition and his desire for equality and acceptance made it clear that his future would be fruitful. I am excited to share his story.

Why can't we all get along? Hamilton's story

Describing Hamilton as bright would be an understatement. As a 20-year old junior, double Accounting and Management Information Systems major with a 3.73 cumulative grade point average, Hamilton has to be one of the most goal oriented and driven students I have ever met. Born in Detroit, Michigan, Hamilton began his life with an appreciation for diversity and people; concepts he learned from his mother, who served as his pre-school teacher at an all-Black charter school in Detroit. Although the school was majority black Hamilton said:

> My mom was my teacher, so I mean it was a thing were I didn't really look at things from a racial context at that point. I have a lot of memories from Michigan, I can remember a whole lot of things, but don't remember anything particular from a racial context, but it may have been because I wasn't looking for any because we were all the same, although I had friends who were all colors.

At a young age, Hamilton recalls that he and his family, which consisted of himself, his mother, father, and his older sister, lived in an all black neighborhood, were racial indifference

wasn't much of a concern, but "My second home," Hamilton exclaimed, "was my grandmother's house, which was a couple blocks away. There I remember seeing a lot of White people."

The openness and acceptance Hamilton learned at a very young age followed him as he and his two college-educated middle class parents relocated to a mostly white suburb outside of a major metropolitan southern city. "I'd have to say damn near 100 percent White; it was completely Lilly White," was the statement Hamilton used to describe his new neighborhood. Although this was definitely a change from his urbanized experience back in Michigan, at the age of six, he wasn't intimidated by the racial difference he recognized in his new home. Beyond racial difference Hamilton recounted the cultural difference he noticed in his new suburban neighborhood:

> I noticed [there was a difference] just because the culture was different. I was 6 or 7, so I mean, I just noticed that there was a difference in the way we talked and acted versus the way everybody else talked and acted. So I didn't notice that it was more White people, or more Black people, I just noticed that the south had a completely different culture.

As a young child Hamilton remembers a group of older White women knocking at his door offering his family baked goods and other food items in attempt to welcome them to the neighborhood. Hamilton discussed the experience "…we got a knock on the door and it was four old White ladies holding cake, and Jell-O," and with a southern accent he imitated the women, "We just wanted to welcome y'all to the neighborhood!" As Hamilton reflects about that experience he felt that it was just odd at the time because it was a practice culturally unknown to him and his family before they relocated to the south. Living life in a major metropolitan city in the north had allowed him the ability to develop friends of various races, but had limited his direct interaction with such hospitable treatment from Whites; especially adults. So the

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welcoming demeanor of the four older White women allowed Hamilton to feel much more at ease about his new environment; for he felt that all of his neighbors and peers would reflect the same behavior.

However over time, Hamilton began to realize that everyone in his "Lilly White" neighborhood did not have the same ideologies and welcoming demeanor as the four older women. As Hamilton thought reflectively about his experiences as a child, he recalled:

I can remember, growing up in the neighborhood that I lived in; it was mostly adults, so it was not very many children. I would ride my bike around, you know after I experienced the old ladies with the Jell-O, I'd ride my bike around houses and just knock on doors and just say, "Hey what's going on? I'm Hamilton!" This is before fifth grade, even before I became fully aware of racial differences. This was in the third or fourth grade, you know, and sometimes parts of second grade when I was just kind of starting to get acclimated with being where I was and the differences between where I was from. I would just knock on the door and say hey to people or whatever. And I remember being dismissed a couple of times. There were multiple instances from different people; and the same people multiple times. I would just say, "Hey, I'm Hamilton, I live down here; tell me what's around here?" I was kind of dismissed. And it could have been because I was a little Black boy rolling around randomly on a Saturday afternoon. That was an experience that I could remember being like, "Why are people doing this?"

Around this age, Hamilton began to understand the differences in race, which was strengthen by his experiences in school. Hamilton reminisced:

I remember being put in situations where I had to prove my worth in front of people, in front of teachers in elementary school. But I just gave them the benefit of the doubt. I was

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young and I mean I might have been a little a cocky, so I might have perceived it as being a racial thing, but because of these experiences I started gaining racial consciousness in fifth and sixth grade.

Overtime, Hamilton's neighborhood and school district saw an influx of Black families moving into the area. Hamilton attributed this move to the re-gentrification of the major city located just thirty minutes from his home. His introduction to new Black southern friends exposed him to new ideas about racism and cultural differences. Hamilton described his process:

It was the beginning of that transition. It was the beginning of that change and other people kind of brought that mindset into me. These are people who are coming from downtown; from the city. Moving down here into this area where it's cheaper real estate. They tried to raise prices to get all the Black people out [of the city] for the Olympics. You had all these kids who were coming from the heart of the city, coming down here. I feel like their parents where a little bit more blatant with them; you know telling them about racism and letting them know about what's happening. So their kids brought that to me. My peers and classmates made me a little bit more aware, and at the same time I was also noticing the transition between where it had come from being almost all White, to being kind of poke-a-doted, and then kind of checkered. So it wasn't all White to all Black immediately, but it I started to notice that people were different. There were different kind of shades of people and stuff like that. That's when I started to become aware.

As Hamilton matured and entered middle and high school, he recalled his parents beginning to have conversations with him about racism, and the effects of being Black in America. Prior to this time Hamilton's parents worked hard to shelter him from racial

indifferences by limiting their conversations about the topic in his presence. Leaning back deep in his chair, Hamilton stated:

> As I started to get older, we definitely started to have more conversations about it [racism]. My parents were just telling me that because of the fact that I was Black, I have to be twice as better as of everyone; as a white person who's on my level. I just have to because being born Black people tend to overlook us. Sometimes people try regard us second class citizens, and it's your responsibility by using your head to make people realize that that's not the case. So they [my parents] said that if someone is doing good, and someone's on your academic level you have to push harder to do better than them; you have to do twice as better, you have to be twice as good, just because you're not going to survive unless you are.

Although Hamilton hadn't experienced any overt forms of racism at a young age, he respected his parent's guidance and was able to relate their advice to other more subtle experiences he had encountered.

As his high school years went by, Hamilton proved himself to be academically strong, which allowed him to develop relationships and friendships with other students from various multicultural and ethnic groups who too performed well academically. Hamilton appreciated the diversity that his high school experience provided him, allowing him to develop bonds with students from all races and ethnicities. When asked about the diversity of his high school social circle, Hamilton replied:

> My whole friend group, we took the top 10 ranked positions in our class. I talk about how all Black my school was and everything, but you know what was interesting is that my actual friend group was like the United Nations. I had, multiple Black people, there

where white people, Asians, Indians and Hispanics too. I mean, we'd been through

classes all up through senior year. We also where kind of unified through an organization

I was a part of in high school called the Technology Student Association, TSA. I did a

whole lot with that organization, I held some leadership positions. So I mean I was even

stronger friends with that group [of friends] because we were all a part of that

organization.

Toward the end of high school Hamilton began the college choice process, which was

exciting. Ranking number five in his graduating class and ending his high school career with

over a 4.0 cumulative grade point average, Hamilton's father assured him that he would pay for

all of his college application fees. His father's commitment urged Hamilton to apply for several

private and public school throughout the country; although he knew along he would end up at

Southeast University; which was the state flagship institution with a great academic reputation.

When explaining his decision process, Hamilton exclaimed:

> I applied to like eighteen schools. I have no idea why I did that. No I do know why, it
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> was because my dad told me to apply for as many schools as I could. He said, "Don't
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> worry about the application fees," so I listened and applied to a bunch. Any school that
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> sent me any letters or anything, if they sent me material saying, "Apply to our school;"
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> like the promotional kind of stuff, I applied. I applied to Southeast University, applied to
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> Emory University, applied to a bunch of private schools, but I kind of knew that I was
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> going to end up at Southeast, which is okay. It ended up being the cheapest without
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> scholarships. I had HOPE, it was the cheapest school and I had been up here. And I mean
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> it's a great school, nice campus, so I was okay [with going here].

Although Southeast University was predominately White, Hamilton never considered the lack of diversity when deciding to attend. His experiences in high school and his multicultural friend circle made him feel as if his college experience would be similar. He described his thought process:

> I never took into consideration the racial thing because I had glorified college. Coming from my high school I glorified college, expecting that it was going to be this universal experience. I thought that in college everybody's cool with everybody kind of thing, you know. So I was expected to go and talk to anybody who I wanted to and just walk up to them and say, "Hey," while starting up a conversation. So again, I didn't think of race, but I thought of it in the sense that it wasn't going to be an issue; it wasn't going to matter.

The beginning of Hamilton's freshmen year was full of new life lessons and experiences when it came to realizing the role of race on the campus of Southeast University. He was surprised by the lack of diversity in the study body, especially when it came to black students. As a resident of the state, Hamilton had prior exposure to campus through minority focused recruitment programs, but he had not ever experienced the university in its holistic form. He described his first reaction:

> It was a shock. I feel like you can kind of tell by my story about applying to schools that I really didn't take as much time as I should have looking into schools and figuring out what I wanted to do and where I wanted to go. Along with that, I didn't take time to look at the facts, on how many students were here or the racial make-up. I didn't look at that stuff at all. And when I got here it seemed like a spec of Black comprised the entire African American population in a sea of white. I was just dumb-founded. Now, it wasn't like it

didn't scare me, and it didn't raise any concerns, but I mean, it just was surprising. And
then going from a high school senior to a college freshman it was just shocking. I had
participated in Southeast Days; I had the exposure to the Black side before going to
Southeast. So when I got here for orientation, I was just like, "Wow!" But again race
wasn't of any concern at that point. I had just noticed a slight change in the demographic
make-up.

As Hamilton attempted to attack socialization in the same fashion he had attacked it back at
home he was met with hesitation from some students. He soon realized that the inviting nature
that he had assumed college was ended up being more of a cliquish experience in which people;
mainly white students, stayed within their homogenous social circles. He described the fraternity
culture and how his inability to force entry into these groups caused him to recognize the
separateness associated within the collegiate setting.

I didn't realize that there was a huge cultural change associated with all the White people
being here, like the fraternity culture. Everybody was a part of their fraternity, and the
cliquishness nature wasn't something I expected because like I said before I put college on
a pedestal. I was expecting everybody was going to be cool and it wasn't going to be an
issue, but I got here and realized that, "You only hang out with the Pi Kappa Alphas, and
the Lambda Chi's hang out with the Lambda Chi's, and the Fiji's and all that other
fraternity shit." And I thought this was a lot. Then I started hearing about certain ones
having reputations for being a little bit discriminatory, you know like Kappa Alpha. I kind
of heard about things and then I tried to reach out; trying to find people to develop friend
groups with. I would put myself in situations where I could see people where a little
uncomfortable with me being there. And at this point I began picking up on it. So, those

experiences my freshman year were kind of a struggle just because I was trying to lay my

roots somewhere; trying you know, establish a new group of friends, a new base of friends

and it was hard. I was going out everywhere and sometimes, you put yourself out there and

you're going to get bitten.

Although Hamilton had experienced a sense of social isolation from White peers, he did not

encounter anything that he would label as racism until his sophomore year.

Hamilton's Experience

It was the fall semester of his sophomore year. Hamilton was ecstatic about being out of

the somewhat uneasy transition he experienced during his freshmen year. As a stellar student,

Hamilton began the first week of school by attempting to purchase his accounting book; the one

last book he needed to complete his collection of necessary reading materials for the semester.

He parked his car in one of the resident hall parking lots and walked through the outskirts of

campus to reach the campus bookstore located in the center of campus. Seeing as the semester

began in mid-August, the summer mid-afternoon heat hit Hamilton hard as he dredged the short

distance across campus. After entering the bookstore and being greeted by an empty accounting

section, Hamilton began his journey to other off campus bookstores in hopes that he would be

greeted with the presence of cool air and an unsold accounting book. Instead of walking back to

his car, he decided to hike up the hill towards the outskirts of campus where a cluster of three

bookstores stood along a hilly road. As he walked he realized that traffic was somewhat busy

that day, full of rushing students traveling up and down the busy street. As he walked up the

steep hill towards the cluster of bookstores and other student friendly establishments, a dark blue

late-modeled Ford Mustang sped by. With the driver's side window rolled down, a male voice

with a strong southern accent belted out, "Nigger!" After shouting the obscenity the driver of the

Mustang sped off leaving Hamilton dumb-founded; unable to catch the face of the culprit, but from a distance recognized a pale white elbow emerging from the driver's side of the car. "I wanted to beat the shit out of this man. I wanted to just run and fight," Hamilton recalled as his first reaction. When going further into his gut reaction, Hamilton explained, as he slapped his hands together and gritted his teeth:

> It's just like you're almost trained when you hear that word to want to fight, let's go, that's it; all bets are off. So that was my first reaction. But then I started questioning myself, "Did that really happen?" Is it really like 3 o'clock on a Monday and this man is just driving down the street and called me a Nigger?

Hamilton continued down the long hilly street towards one of the many bookstores in hopes that his accounting book would be available so this good day turned bad could end. As he walked he contemplated the reality of this situation as he thought to himself, "I can't do this man, I don't know what's going on, I can't be here with stuff like this going on." After about five minutes and once Hamilton had reached the bookstore, his initial anger subsided

> I felt like that it was an isolated incident. I felt like somebody just thought it was going to be funny to see how I would respond. He might have gotten dared to do it. I just feel like he was being stupid. And I was just thinking, you know it's going to be more of an issue on him in his future than it is on me. All that matters is how much am I going to let it bother me.

Although Hamilton initially considered turning away from the store when he entered and saw an entire staff of white students, he decided to continue on his search. He found his accounting book at the bookstore and headed home. As much as he attempted to leave the situation in the past, his mind continued to race about the incident and the white males' ignorant attempt to degrade him

as a student and even more as a man. Hamilton arrived home to his white roommates and a house full of friends. "Soon as I got home I walked in the door and told everyone what happened," Hamilton explained. "I had some friends there, and my roommate was there and I told them all. I told them all, because although I tried, I was not done with it. I brushed it off five minutes later, but I came back and revisited it as I drove home." The diverse group of friends displayed a sense of disbelief; somewhat taken a back by Hamilton's description of the incident. Two friends in particular, a black female friend Hamilton befriended, as a student at Southeast and, a White male who Hamilton had been friends' with since middle school, seemed to be the most concerned. Although they attempted to console him, their questioning and disbelief became somewhat irritating to Hamilton causing him to take retreat in his room. Hamilton attempted to describe his feelings after his experience:

It took a while for me to be okay with the fact of the matter; it took a couple of days definitely. A couple of days later, I'd be on a bus and, I might kind of look around to see if anybody is looking at me. A couple days' after the incident I was a lot more receptive to any potential racism experiences. But after that, I started to kind of develop more of a sense of resolve for it. And I was kind of able to continue on as normal. I slowly came to terms with all of it, with the whole shebang.

After the experience Hamilton took some time and was really able to process what he had went through and the affect it had on him. He attempted to vocalize and bring sense to the meaning he made of this experience by stating:

I didn't change my feelings or opinion about white people in general. I didn't because, the people who are racists, I mean it's typically the same type of guy. You know your typically south Georgia frat boy who doesn't know anything. I mean he probably came

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from the exact same type of upbringing. His dad was probably in the same kind of

fraternity; probably had the same kind of ideas, probably a Southeast grad. They're

probably old money and they probably; you know that's probably all they know. And that

doesn't make it okay, but I just realized that not all of them [White people] are the same

and just avoid that kind of group of people. Or no don't avoid them, just don't be afraid

of them and don't be ready fight when they act a certain way because that's just the way

that they're going to be. I'm just going to accept the fact that certain people have

different walks of life and they have different opinions and let them go about their

business. So unless they have something to say or do to me, then I'm not going to let it

bother me. So, this was kind of that transition that I was starting to realize beginning of

my sophomore year. Now, it [the racist experience] was a little setback that happened at

that point of time. I had started to kind of relax because I was becoming more focused on

less on the social aspect, and more about getting on my grind because classes started to

get hard. The people who I met in my classes, most of them are white, but most of them

where cool.

Through his actions and his outlook Hamilton seemed to remain very positive after his

experience. He didn't allow the occurrence to alter his desire to pursue his collegiate career at

Southeast, and he remained optimistic in terms of the effect the experience had on his future. He

continued to explain his feelings when he stated:

As it died down I was starting to realize that I was just kind of over reacting a little bit.

And, I mean, I do think I was over reacting about how I felt about it initially, but I was

overreacting by questioning if maybe I should go to Southeast, because some random

dude called me a Nigger. Yeah, I was thinking that, I just felt like it would probably be

the same everywhere, unless I went to an HBCU, which is a private school, which is more expensive, and I wasn't going to do that. So, I just figured it was an isolated experience and I felt like reacting in the way I did by trying to question whether or not I needed to change schools, might have been a little bit out of line.

It seemed that over time Hamilton was able to transition from a moment of anger to a moment of learning; where he realized that although others may have contrasting views or perceptions about race, he wouldn't allow those views or actions to deter his aspirations or goals. When asked to reflect in written form about his feelings about the experience, Hamilton's response yielded the same sentiments:

My thought about racism in regards to my experience is that it happens. Experiences with racism in progressive settings make you stronger. It allows you to see that it still exists. I learned to take it in strides, and worked to develop a sense of acceptance. This does not mean give up the fight, but realize that racism will make the person suffer more than yourself in the long run, you must always fight it; attempting to change the perception. Other Black men on campus should be afraid of racist encounters because everything happens for a reason. Remember to not react to words, react to actions and respond with reactions.

Overall, it seemed that the meaning Hamilton constructed resulted after he had the opportunity to process and reflect about his experience. Although he initially felt feelings of anger and violence towards the culprit, he was able to use those feelings to develop a greater sense for what was more important to him as an individual. He was able to set negative feelings and emotions of reluctance away as he understood the learning that took place from his experience. His ability to develop such a strong sense of acceptance about the racial occurrence

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may have been due to his upbringing and his past experiences with diverse individuals. He understood that racism and racial bigotry are not trends or norms for an entire race of people, but stem from the ignorance of unexposed individuals who often belong to the dominant race. He was able to understand the long term of effect of his actions, and realized that his actions and decisions are much more important than the negativity that someone else could bring into his life. Hamilton summarized his thoughts about his experience by concluding:

It showed me that, it's all what I make of it. You're going to have lots of different outside influences and what matters is how you react to those influences and the fact that I started off all puffed up; puffed my chest out and upset and then later on, I was just asked myself, "What effect has that had on my life, outside of the fact that it happened for five seconds and that was it?" I thought about it and the answer was none. Now I'm not going to continue to worry about it. Am I going to continuing stewing over it, or am I going to just chalk it up as a learning experience? That's how I have learned to react to things. You know, it was either one of those two things. From now on I don't look at cause and effect and look at it as something happens, and what matters is how I react to it. So I learned all of that from my experience.

Hamilton's Perception of the Campus Climate

When asked to share his perception of the campus climate after his experience, Hamilton remained pretty positive. His negative experience with racism didn't have an altering impact on his opinion about the university because he had already decided that racism was an issue prior to his experience. However, the racist encounter did open his eyes to the possibility of being exposed to outright racism on campus. As a freshmen Hamilton dealt with rejection when he attempted to befriend many White students. The social rejection, along with his racial encounter

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caused Hamilton to question if he belonged. Although Hamilton accepted his racist experience as an isolated event and still had an overall positive opinion about the university, his experience did cause him to become more leery about the campus and his White peers in general. When asked if his opinion about the university had changed after his experience, Hamilton stated:

> No, it didn't. At that point I had already kind of finished transitioning my opinion about the university. Like I said, freshmen year, as I was working to try make these new friends and not succeeding, I developed a negative opinion about the university because my perception of it was bad; I was having trouble making friends and you know I was being put in these situations where I felt like my race was an issue. The summer before my sophomore year, I was starting to kind of understand that and even though it's not okay, the way some of these people act on campus is not the way that all of these people act.

Hamilton went into greater detail about his leeriness as it relates to campus when describing his experience as a Black male student attempting to enter the student gate at home football games. Although football games are open to all students and are a time to celebrate university pride and moral, Hamilton described his experience with entering the game (see figure 1) as offensive and unacceptable.

Figure 1. The student gate

When attempting to describe his experiences and perception of the student gate, Hamilton explained:

> When attempting to enter the student gate, I've been searched a couple times. And, by a couple times, I mean more times than I think I should be searched. So, sometimes I feel some discrimination. I feel like people tend to search Black people a little bit more often. And this again happened more my freshman and sophomore years, you know getting searched a little bit more often. It might have been because of the way I dressed, but that doesn't make it okay because it's offensive and unacceptable. You know, it might have been because I wore jean shorts and stuff like that. I wore the stereotypical stuff and they may have had an image of a Black person and their actions. So because I fit that image I feel like they searched me more. So yeah coming through the student gate I just noticed

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that sometimes things are a little fishy, let me just put it that way. I don't have any sort of proof to confirm this. It may not be so, it may all just be in my head; but it's something that I've noticed.

In addition to experiencing the discriminatory treatment when entering the game, Hamilton discussed feeling a sense of discomfort and awkwardness from students while attending the game and sitting in the stadiums (see figure 2) designated student seating. When describing his experiences at the game Hamilton recognized the prejudicial treatment forward him, but like in the past, he was able to look past it and accept it as just part of his overall experience at the university.

Figure 2. The stadium

As Hamilton scrolled through the pictures he explained the picture of the stadium, while describing how he felt that his peers and other white fans didn't respect his right to be there as a fan and as a student:

> I took the pictures of the stadium because I wanted to represent the sports fans because I just feel like sometimes Southeast fans are from all walks of life and are all types of people. I took a picture of the actual stadium to just symbolize that I've noticed sometimes that when I'm at games people don't always respect my right to be there. Sometimes I can tell that others feel uncomfortable with me being there. Well, with me being on the same row as them or behind them. It'll be some white girls they'll have their purse. She'll turn around and notice I'm there so she'll pick up her purse and put it underneath the seat or whatever. And this happened to me, and one of my friends and I was just like, "Really?" That's one of those things where it's like okay fine, it's not on me; that's on you. If that's the way you're going to behave, who can help you? So, it bothered me at the time, but a short period of time later, I was okay.

As a highly active student on campus, Hamilton recently decided to join a national honors business fraternity. As part of most collegiate fraternity processes, Hamilton and his fraternity members were asked to put together a presentation of new members to be performed in front of the more seasoned fraternity members the following week. One evening the group of 25 newly initiated members decided to practice their presentation on campus. As usual, Hamilton was one of few Black students in the group, but had developed a sense of comfort and trust for his fellow intake members, so at that point; acts of racism were the furthest things from his mind. Additionally, Hamilton was pledge class president, which was a challenge itself, but one he took with great pride; as it demonstrated the respect his pledge class members had for him. As they

were practicing the university police entered the parking deck where the group was practicing (see figure 3).

Figure 3. The police

Hamilton decided to go back to the site of the incident and take a picture of an identical campus police car as it entered into the same parking deck. He went on to describe the event in great detail and provided rationale for taking the picture of the campus police car:

> We were in the parking deck one time practicing our presentations. And the cops came up
> while we were practicing and whatever. So since I was pledge class president I figured it
> was my duty to make sure everything was cool. They had come the night before too. I
> had talked to them first time, and you know it wasn't a problem. So, I talked to them the
> second night, or I was going over there to talk to them, and then my friend who's a white

dude, walked over to them and talked to the guys and then they drove off. My friend who was also part of my pledge class came back and comes up to me and he's like, "Man, dude, Southeast police are kind of racist." I was like, "What happened?" My friend walked up and told him [the police officer] that we were with our fraternity and we're just practicing right now. He said the cop replied, "Oh okay man that's fine, we we're just trying to make sure that there aren't any Black people or Hispanic people trying to break into things because we've heard some reports about people breaking into things." I was just thinking to myself, man, and the university really lets people with that mentality carry a gun? You can carry a gun and you have this opinion about people. And you're at a university? I feel if you're university police and you are supposed to be delivering justice to the university, how can you do that when you hold stereotypes and prejudices against groups of people? I just feel like universities tend to be places where thinking is a little bit more progressive and I feel like if you are in an organization that is supposed to protect the university, I feel that you're supposed to be progressive, the fact that they weren't made me uncomfortable. I was shocked. I was like, damn! I was like man. I was super-super-super shocked. And I wasn't as angry; well I was a little angry, and a little mad. I'm not going to lie, but I was more so disappointed because I know racism is still there and anybody who says that its not, they're a lie. But I mean, to have made it so prevalent in an entity that shouldn't be that way, like in a police force it's just not good. So, I definitely felt uncomfortable afterwards.

Summarizing Hamilton.

Hamilton's pictures and illustrations provide a small view of his perception of the campus climate as it relates to race relations. Although he discussed many other symbolic areas

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or items on campus that remind him of his minority status, the three photographs offered provide a very diverse look at the gamete of ways in which the campus climate has made Hamilton feel uncomfortable as a Black male on campus. Although he received what he considered discriminatory or prejudicial treatment from various institutional stakeholders, Hamilton always remained focused on his desire to be fully integrated into the campus culture by engaging in student organizations and other social events. It could have been much easier for Hamilton to leave Southeast University, blaming his decision on environmental incongruence or acts of racism. Instead he has remained steadfast in his efforts to pursue higher education and has used his experiences with racism as opportunities to learn more about himself. Additionally, Hamilton verbalized his views on how he felt his white peers perceived undergraduate Black men:

> I feel like by the masses of white students, Black men are revered as these mysterious creatures because I feel like the large majority of white people just look at them as being these cool, stylish kinds of people who are on their game. I notice that if I'm going out, and I'm downtown or whatever at a bar dancing, people stop and look at like me dance. And I'm like, "Why, can you stop?" So I mean in a social setting, we're covenant almost. We're kind of perceived as the life of the party sometimes when were out.

Although Hamilton mentioned how undergraduate Black men are often treated as stars in mixed social scenes, he also described the struggles of black undergraduate men to be accepted academically or professionally while in the classroom. Individually, Hamilton had not been faced with being undermined in academic settings because he had worked hard to prove his academic ability since arriving at Southeast. However, he did understand how difficult it has been for other undergraduate Black men to gain the confidence of their White peers when it came to challenging academic assignments or projects because of White peers attempts to stereotype

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them. Hamilton best summarized his feelings towards the campus climate racism when he
shared:

> I feel like God is putting these putting these people and experiences in my life just so that
> I can see a glimpse of all types of people so that I can learn how to live with them. Shit,
> next year, I'm probably going to encounter a student who wants to be a member of the
> damn KKK. This seems like this is the trend, you know, I feel like I'm getting all of these
> different experiences. But I mean I feel like all of these different experiences are making
> me a strong; making me a better more socially responsible person and though its still not
> okay, it is still messed up that it happens, I still think it all depends on how you perceive
> it. I perceive the fact that I have allowed that person to see a new side of people, so I feel
> like I've done my job as a Black person. I feel like I've done my job as a citizen, as just
> as a person; just showing people that not everyone is the same.

Emerging Trend from Hamilton's Story

Racist experiences as educational opportunities.

Throughout Hamilton's story he continuously referenced the importance of learning and or
education. Although Hamilton recognized his experiences as negative, he seemed to use his
experiences as opportunities to learn and develop into a stronger individual. When discussing the
meaning he constructed from his experiences he often referenced the need to educate others
about the positive aspects of diversity, which he hoped would decrease the manifestation of
racism. When specifically asked about what could be done to help eliminate some of these issues
of racial conflict on campus, Hamilton presented a situation he had gone through with one of his
roommates who he felt had been unexposed to cultural and racial differences before attending
college. Throughout the story Hamilton continually referenced education as the solution to

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combating stereotypical or racially motivated ideologies. When narrating the story, Hamilton stated:

I think education is missing. I think that not enough people. I think that there are too many close-minded communities and individuals in groups. I think there are just too many close-minded clusters in Georgia. I mean, just having conversation with my old roommate, who's a guy from South Georgia is challenging sometimes. So, I feel like I've brought a new perspective to the front of his brain, because he straight up told me that he was like everybody who he went to school with; everybody who he grew up with. He said they all, grew up with the exact same group of people from birth to graduation and we were all bread with a specific set of ideas, morals and opinions. So you're going to have it [racism] here and it's going to flourish when you have young people who grow up in these communities where you have older people who feel a certain way because their fathers felt that way, and their fathers that way. They're just perpetuating racism. So, I feel like what's missing is education. I feel like people need to get a damn TV or a computer or something and see what the world is like. And by education people need to look at the best and brightest people and look at what people bring from different backgrounds because it'll help them make better decisions. I think people in close-minded communities need to understand, that things are changing and if you don't change along with it, then you're going to be left behind. I think that education is severely missing. People need to get out and do something; catch a plane, go to a different state, see something, see the world, and see where we are so they can see what they're going to need to do to stay current.

When asked about the impact of these racist encounters, Hamilton was quick to discuss his ability to learn from them. He was able to use his experiences as a mechanism to become a

stronger person; a person that was less focused on the effect, but focused on learning from the cause of the incident. Although, his experiences did not alter his perception of the university, they did teach him about racism and the need to reflect and make well thought out decisions when faced with occurrences of racism. Specifically, Hamilton shared:

What effect has that had on my life, outside of the fact that it happened for five seconds and that was it?" I thought about it and the answer was none. Now I'm not going to continue to worry about it. Am I going to continuing stewing over it, or am I going to just chalk it up as a learning experience. That's how I have learned to react to things. You know, it was either one of those two things. From now on I don't look at cause and effect and look at it as something happens, and what matters is how I react to it. So I learned all of that from my experience.

Introducing Ace

The interview began on a Sunday afternoon around 3:05pm. Ace, being one of the students I am familiar with through an organization I advise, needed a ride to the interview site. It was seasonally cold that day, so I wore a red and white zip up sweats shirt, with blue LRG jeans, and a pair of red and white low top throw back Jordan's. Ace had on a Southeast University sweatshirt, a pair of oversized black basketball shorts, some high sweat socks, and a pair of brown loafers; definitely an outfit only a college student would wear. I picked Ace up from his job in the student recreation center, and as always, the first thing he commented on was my music. I happen to be listening to the rap artist Drake, and in Ace's eyes, he was always astonished when he found out that I listened to the same music as he and his friends. As he got into the car, he said, "Damn Jamie, that's what's up," which is phrase that shows approval or acceptance of someone's' action, decision, or just about anything that's positive. As we arrived

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to the interview site, I set the recorders up, and Ace texted on his temporary cell phone. He had lost his phone the week before and was using a loaner from a friend. I bring that up because reaching him in regards to this interview was difficult, because although the friend gave him the phone, he didn't provide him with the charger to accompany the phone; how brilliant was that? We began the interview by discussing his background, and he shared something with me that I had been unaware during past conversations and interactions with Ace. Although he is Alum of a major metropolitan inner city school district, his mother is a renowned attorney, which speaks to his level of economic privilege. I have known Ace for a year or two, and he never spoke about that component of his life, but he decided to share it today. Throughout our conversation, it became evident that Ace's family meant a great deal to him, especially his mother. Her influence on his personal ideologies is surmountable. His mother and his life experiences prior to college shaped his opinions about racism, White Americans', and just life in general. He came to college holding judgments about White's, which were confirmed based on many of his experiences. His ability to articulate the impact, or lack thereof, of his racist experiences on his identity as a Black man was astounding. I developed a lot of respect for Ace during our meeting because I felt like I was talking to a peer, a young man that recognizes the injustices and inequalities that exist for Black Americans. The interview itself lasted about 45 minutes, but his perceptions and remarks will greatly impact my understanding of what young Black men go through on predominately White college campuses. He spoke about the normalcy of racist experiences and ignorance, and how he and his Black peers and friends discuss these occurrences and have started to become accustomed to them. I think it's sad, but it's their reality.

The Militant Millennial: Ace's Story

Ace, a 20-year old junior pre-med major from the state capitol, is very witty and opinionated, as well as bright and insightful. Ace grew up in a major metropolitan city in the southeast region of the country. For greater part of his life, Ace had been educated at predominately Black schools in areas where majority of his peers were at or below the poverty level. Ace describes his schooling experience by stating:

> I went to an all Black high school, with about 2,000 students in the Westside, Abernathy
>
> High School; The Astros. So I graduated there in 2008 and I've been here at Southeast
>
> University since. I remember only one non-Black student at my high school and he was
>
> in the special education program. My middle school was mixed; about 65 percent Black
>
> and 35 percent White, but I don't remember exactly because I was too young.

As a younger child, Ace attended an all Black private charter school where he was educated about Black history and the continuous contributions of Black Americans to this country. His exposure to this elementary school and his residence in a majority Black neighborhood, shaped his opinions about race and racism from an early age.

However Ace's unique experience as a child abled him to cross the lines between lower class and upper middle class. This opportunity granted Ace access and exposure to resources and experiences that were not available to majority of his childhood peers and classmates. In a hesitant tone, almost a whisper, Ace confessed:

> Don't tell anybody this, but I say I'm from the Westside, but my mom is a lawyer. I
>
> consider myself to be from the Westside. I went to school there because and I used, my
>
> grandmother's address and she stayed inside of the city. But in all honestly, I stayed in a
>
> nice comfy house in Brown County. But I just went to school in the Westside every day.

Ace recognized the disparities of economic class between his peers and classmates, which made him reluctant to allow others from his school to know his mother was a successful attorney. He yearned to fit in and didn't want to be judged as a, "sell out or white boy," he explained. "The majority of the people who were at my school…

> Were from Boren Holmes, or from Bankhead, you know the projects that you hear in the songs. It's pretty bad; it's not the best area in the world. But you know, I guess they had people who cared for them and at the end of the day, who cares if you can't afford everything in the world."

Ace's parents divorced when he was seven years of age. From that point on Ace was raised mostly by his single mother, who established her own ideas about racism as a result of her personal experiences as Black female lawyer in the south. As Ace's sole guardian, she instilled many values and ideologies about race relations in him at a young age. Ace described the role of his mother and his all black elementary school in shaping his early views about race relations and racism in America:

> Well you know, my mom, she isn't a racist, she's a realist; she will let you know and I have heard say many of times that she does not like White people, she does not trust them, and you know, I listen to that. Like I said, I went to an elementary school that echoed the same thing. It was an all-black school, small private school in Cascade area of town. So I heard the same thing from my teachers there. Until I got older, I started to see things for myself that confirmed my mom's and teachers' thoughts and ideas were true.

Throughout his childhood, Ace was exposed to many positive images of Black men. Along with his mother and his experiences at an all Black elementary school, numerous black male coaches, teachers, and religious leaders had a formative impact on Ace. Through his

interaction with these men, Ace was able to develop a strong sense of self and pride as a young Black man. The males who entered into Ace's life reflected positive images of Black men, which resulted in Ace developing a strong concept of what it meant to be a Black man, in addition to developing stalwart feelings about the role of Whites in oppressing and subjugating Black Americans. Ace spoke specifically the Black men who heavily impacted his life during his high school years:

> Well you know in high school I was mostly around a lot of positive men because I played football, which took a lot of time during the summer and spring. So I was always around Black men, you know, Q-dogs. They were real Black men from what I saw. They had families, taking care of everything, you know, I really didn't face any negative stereotypes about Black men because all the one's I knew were positive role models and examples of men, which impact me greatly.

Toward the end of high school Ace began the college choice process. Although he considered attending many other schools, he always knew he would end up at Southeast because of its affordability. His mother was also alum of Southeast, which heavily impacted his decision. Although his mother talked frankly about her personal experiences with racism as a student at Southeast, she expressed how beneficial it would be for Ace to attend the state's top public institution of higher education. He talked candidly about his decision to attend Southeast University and the preconceived notions he brought with him prior to his enrollment:

> I'll put it like this, the only reason I came here because it was the cheapest. It is also a good school and my mom went here. She went here and graduated from undergrad and went here for law school too. So, I was just following in her path. I already came in with many preconceived notions. I already knew that it was going to be a lot of white people

who aren't going to know anything about me. They're going to look at me and not be intimidated, but be afraid, just because my presence alone, just me being here.

When Ace began at Southeast he confined himself to socializing with only other Black students. Even though Ace had been exposed to White people through his middle school education and a multicultural church he attended as a child, he remained very uncomfortable and reluctant to establish any meaningful relationships with his White peers. He admitted to not having a disdain for all White people because of his positive relationships with Whites who attended his church. However, many of his notions about Whites were proven once he began college. Specifically, Ace shared:

> My perceptions about White people were proven, and they were changed. I'll put it like this, when I went to church, and it I went to a mixed church, I learned to love all those people, White or Black. I feel when you come to a broader spectrum of people, like in college; you get a lot more different people. The majority of the White people that I've encountered before here were nice and open to everything, but it wasn't until here, when that minority of Whites who are racist showed their face; you know rednecks, those with confederate flags on their cars, those who hate affirmative action. It was those people I encountered.

Prior to college Ace hadn't been in environments were racial tension was high, but during his first year in college, he experienced what he considered to be his first bout with racism.

Ace's Experience

It was the spring semester of Ace's freshmen year. As part of his core requirements, Ace was enrolled in a contemporary English class; English 1101. His instructor, Ms. Myers was a 30 something, White female graduate student who was completing her PhD in English. According

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to Ace he enjoyed her as a professor because of her transparency and openness. She often discussed her life events in attempt to connect with the students, which included her weekly discussion about her upcoming marriage to her college sweetheart Mike. Ms. Myers class was held in Park Hall, which houses Southeast University's English Department. "It's [Park Hall] old and raggedy, so it kind of smells," Ace said in the midst of a chuckle. As one of only three Black students in the class, Ace often felt unable to discuss his views on topics or conversations that may deal with sensitive subjects like race. This was the same for the other Black students in the class, one other male and a female. However, Ace considered himself to be the only Black male in the class. He explained why:

> There were two of us, Black men. Well honestly I consider myself being the only real
> Black man in that class. The other guy just had Black skin, he didn't have the same
> experiences I have, trust me I could tell.

Ace talked about how at times he and the Black female in the class would look at each other in disbelief when their White classmates would make somewhat colorful remarks about issues of race and ethnicity. The other Black male never attempted to develop a sense of camaraderie with Ace and the Black female and would often attempt to engage in conversations with the White students in the class. These actions of the other Black male in the class made Ace skeptical of him; thus causing him to establish a disregard for him. The class was fairly small, "maybe about 30 people," according to Ace. This class, like most of Ace's classes was made up of a slew of sorority and fraternity women and men. Ace's stereotypes and assumptions about his White peers strengthened his level of discomfort in engaging in class discussions. So on a typical day, Ace would sit somewhere in the back of the class and only involve himself in the happenings of class when called on specifically by the professor.

On this specific spring day during the middle of the semester the class engaged in a conversation about connotations of words. Ace vividly recalls:

> So Ms. Myers was leading a discussion or somewhat of debate between herself and the class about connotations of words. The word that we were writing, reading and discussing was the word cunt. We were discussing how it is often used to describe females. Then the conversation flipped and we begin discussing what other words we though were appropriate, you know that have different connotations to them. And the N-word came up.

This topic sparked Ace's attention. He was already sensitive about being in this class as one of few Black students, but felt extra tension once he knew that the word Nigger was going to be discussed among his White peers. He looked around as majority of the class seemed hesitant to comment on the word, but he decided that today would be the day that he spoke up if anything in appropriate or out of line was said. Initially, Ace described his preliminary feelings:

> I mean, I really didn't want to say anything 'cause you know, I already had certain views about White people and I already had perceived notions about the sorority girls who were in my class and some of the frat boys. I already thought they were racist, so I didn't want say anything to make myself look like an angry Black man, so I just kept it cool. And I didn't open my mouth until home girl said that Nigger was a positive word.

A white female classmate of Ace's, a short statured brunette, stated that she thought that the slang term for Nigger, "Nigga," was positive since it was used in songs and seemed to be a cool term to used in describing close friends. Specifically Ace recalls, "She said she hears it in songs, and since you know how White folk want to be like us all the damn time. So she said it was a positive word, because we sing it and she doesn't see anything wrong with using it."

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Ace became internally enraged, to himself he though, "White girl, whoa girl whoa. First of all you have no business saying the word!" Ace noticed that the other students in his class remained unmoved or unaffected by the young women's comments as they engaged in dialogue about the appropriateness of using the word. According to Ace:

> I mean they really didn't get silent. It was like they somewhat agreed with her. As she said it she kept on going and they joined in with her. I could tell that Ms. Myers was sort of taken back a little bit. So then she [Ms. Myers] asked how anyone else felt about it.

Ms. Myer's invitation to speak was all Ace needed to state his feelings about his classmates statements and the word Nigga in general. Ace recalled his statements in class that day:

> I just said it's not a positive word at all coming from your mouths as White people. I went into a little more detail than that, but my statements kind of made everybody a little awkward because everybody got silent, but that's good because I decided I had to let her and the rest of them know.

Ace looked for the familiar face of the Black woman, but this time she looked down at her desk in some sort of embarrassment or shame. He wondered what she was thinking; if she was upset with him for taking a stance, or was she that harmed by the opinions of her White peers about the use of the term Nigga.

After the event the young women who made the initial statement sat in her seat looking somewhat flabbergasted. "She just said okay to my statement. She didn't really say anything back, because you know White people are already scared of Black men," Ace explained when asked about his classmate's response to his rebuttal. Since he assumed that his White peers subscribe to the negative images portrayed of Black men; images of violence, anger and rage, he was not surprised that no one was bold enough to debate his stance on this issue. So from that

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point on the class remained quiet and Ms. Myers did her best to re-engage the class for the rest of

the period. Ace reminisced about his thought process throughout the rest of the class period:

> I kept sitting in class. I mean I ain't scared of nobody or their opinions. So I just told her,
> and pretty much told every other white person in there, don't you say it, that word has
> nothing to do with you. I know where they can get the idea that it's okay to say, cause'
> they hear us using it all the time. My grandparents used it as I was growing up, so I don't
> see anything wrong with us using the word because they've been using it and their
> generation has been around 60-70 years. So if they use it and they are not offended when
> they say it to other Black people, then I can say it to other Black people. But that's
> between us, as Black people. Not across cultural and racial lines. So I just felt like I had
> them all know.

After the experience, Ace met up with a few of his Black high school friends who also

attended Southeast, to tell them about the events that took place in class. "I told my people from

high school, "Ace explained, "I told Michelle; she's a friend who went to high school with me,

and I told my friend Shannon." Ace's friends were not surprised about his experience in English

class. They too had consistently been faced with racially charged conversations in class and had

begun to feel like this was part of the Black experience at Southeast University. Ace recalled the

response of his friends:

> They were just like, "Well you know this type of stuff happens all the time." They had
> already had other experiences, because we always talk about after it happens. For
> instance, the semester before Michelle was in a political science class or something like
> that and White boy said that all Black people were criminals. So as freshmen we already
> had to have discussions about racist instances piling on. My other friend Shannon talked

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about how she was in her political science class and one White guy said during a break

out group session that the only reason Black people were here at Southeast was because

either we played ball, or because of affirmative action. In my mind I was like these folk

have lost they minds.

Ace went on to discuss the feelings he and his friends have about having to deal with racial

charged conversations in class:

As juniors, we have just had to learn to deal with it. I mean most of us went to all Black

high schools where we didn't have to deal with this. Others went to mixed high schools,

and were used to interacting more with Whites. But you know in some sense, we already

knew what the deal was before we came here, so we just have to deal with it.

In Ace's eyes the occurrence in class didn't have an altering impact on him. The meaning

he constructed from the experience only solidified his views about majority of his White peers,

which made him much more reluctant and apprehensive about socializing or interacting with

Whites. However, Ace had recently accepted a job in the campus recreation center where he has

to interact with other student employees, who happened to be White. His positive interaction

with them has somewhat altered the meaning he constructed from his experience although he still

holds onto many of the preconceived notions he had adopted before attending Southeast

University. Specifically Ace recalled:

So it [the experience in class] hasn't really affected me at all. I already had perceptions,

so it just confirmed them. If anything, I would say, it just further concluded what I

already felt. But it only furthers my resolve, my drive. It showed me what they really

think about us so I decided that I'm representing not only myself, but also my people, my

race, the black man. So, I try to, you know, I try to edit myself around them because I

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don't want them to develop any other stereotypes about Black men. At work I'm not

hopping and hollering loud and stuff. I turn it off. Because like I said, I don't hang out

with white people, the only white person I hang around is Johnson, and he's in a Black

lettered fraternity and was raised in a Black community. So, I mean, besides when I

started working, that's pretty much the most time I had ever spent with White people.

The White people at work are somewhat cool, but I still don't really want to establish any

real friendships with them. I mean, like I said I have friends at home who are white, and

you know I talk to them; I love them to death. But when I came here and I've

experienced what I have, I don't want be bothered with them, so I just stay within my

clique of Black people, unless I'm at work. And I'm reluctant after my experience

because they don't know what it's like to be Black. That is my biggest thing and why I

got mad at ole' girl because they don't know what it's like. They don't know what my

people went through, you know, with that word and what comes with it.

Ace's feelings' towards his White peers has only gotten worse since he has been a student at

Southeast University. His strong feelings of disdain and dislike have caused him to cut off all

unnecessary interaction with Whites. He attempted to express the meaning he made from the

experience and his overall feelings about racism on campus, in which he stated:

Because I already had preconceived notions about the fairer skin, my interactions and

experiences with them have only furthered my resolve that some white people out there

are ignorant fucks and don't know that they can be offensive and hurtful. I have white

people in my life who care about me, and visa-versa but whom I encounter the most are

the minority of white people, which in essence is still a great number of people, who are

racists. As I see it, white people are on a leash with me, which they are already on the

short end of, especially when we first interact because I can't forget the past and my present and future perception will always be marred by it.

It is evident that Ace's experiences have had a negative impact on his perception of his White peers and his university. Although he already had developed a negative opinion about Whites before attending Southeast University, his encounters with his White peers have not provided him the ability to construct any alternate ideologies about White Americans.

Ace's Perception of the Campus Climate

Earlier during the interview, Ace expressed his sole purposes for attending Southeast University were affordability and his desire to follow in his mother's footsteps. Since enrolling in Southeast he has never fully integrated into the campus culture, as he has decided to remain engaged with the Black culture that exists within the university. Though Ace is involved in student organizations, his experiences on campus have resulted in his decision to only join those student groups that strive to serve the Black student population. As the current Vice-President of the African American Male Leadership Society, he attempts to rally and advocate for other Black students who experience acts of racism, discrimination and prejudice on campus.

When expressing his perception of the campus climate as it relates to racial tensions he experiences as a Black man, he opted to take a picture of a student license plate (see figure 4). Ace discussed the feelings that resulted from students placing license plates that reflect a history of racism and hate on their cars.

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Figure 4. The license plate

When describing the intent behind the license plate, Ace stated:

> The only reason I took it was because a lot of people advertise things on their cars with
> decorative license plates. I've seen, on countless occasions, confederate license plates on
> their cars. My biggest thing is that, I know you have pride in your heritage and everything
> like that, but we don't know what part of that heritage your pride entails. And so, when I
> see it, I'm thinking, the person in the car is racist, and theirs a lot of those confederate
> license plates on cars around campus; I see those everywhere. I see juniors and seniors,
> and some teachers with them. I see it a lot of the times. I mean for the good bit where I'm

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working, is trying to change my perception of White people a little, but when I see stuff like this so often it just makes me feel like I'm around a bunch of rednecks.

Ace also discussed his disapproval of buildings and other artifacts on campus named after people who have been publicly documented as racists. He felt that it was unfair that he and other Black students had to take classes in buildings named after state and or university officials who publicly opposed the integration of the Southeast University or who had openly expressed feelings of inferiority about Blacks. For an example, Ace used Baldwin Hall (see figure 5), the location of his class where he first experienced racism on campus.

Figure 5. Baldwin Hall

Although Ace used Baldwin Hall as an example, he specifically discussed many other areas or items on campus where racism became a constant reminder because of the individuals associated

with those areas. In an emotional explanation, Ace shared:

> Let me tell you about Baldwin Hall. We've got a street and a building named after Baldwin. I know he was the first president, but he was a stone cold racist. I was in an African American studies class and we were reading *Passage Ways* by Palmer. And a little passage came in one part of the book where Abraham Baldwin was talking about slaves and feeding into stereotypes about how Black men were incompetent, simple minded, sexed crazed beasts who can't be around their White women; all that racist Sambo stuff. The professor pointed it out to us; she said, "Hey does that name look familiar to y'all?" It was Abraham Baldwin; the man who has a building named after him around here. And I was just like, damn, she's right. So this man is a racist and we, as Black students have to go in and out of his building all of the time for class. In some sense we're honoring him. Baldwin isn't the only building named after a racist, but I didn't want to take a whole bunch of pictures of racists people on buildings. I also live in a racists building; Earnest Vandiver, who was a racist too. I mean, first of all, I think its racist of the university because they don't even care what they are doing by naming these buildings after these people. I'm sure they don't care because they probably have stereotypes about Black people themselves. Secondly, we, the Black students don't even know, and don't do our research. That African American history class opened my eyes. I'm just walking around and going into these buildings named after people who done probably killed my great-great grandfather or raped my great-great grandmother, and I'm walking in this hall, walking in this building, writing his history.

Ace talked frequently about being subjected to stereotypes and assumptions related to being a Black man on campus. During our conversation he recounted many instances where

White students questioned him in regards to being an athlete on campus or if he felt he had gained admission to the university because of affirmative action initiatives. Ace took a picture of his university ID card (see figure 6) in an attempt to express his inability to be seen as an individual. He told stories of a few particular instances where he thought his identity as a Black man affected the way he was treated by White peers.

Figure 6. Ace's university ID card

Ace also discussed how as a Black male on campus you are rarely given the opportunity to celebrate your identity and the contributions that Black men have made to this country when in class. From his perspective White students were not aware of the contributions of Black men, which often frustrated him and reminded him that he wasn't appreciated or valued as a part of the American society or the universities history. Ace felt that Black students were only

celebrated and acknowledge for one month a year, which is another way in which he is

constantly reminded of his minority status on campus. Expressively, Ace explicated:

> As a Black man on this campus people already have stereotypes about me. I remember
>
> one experience in general. I lived in Regan Hall my freshmen year. I was walking into
>
> my dorm, and we had one of those keyless entry systems. Sometimes people don't take
>
> their IDs and we usually just let each other in. Me and my friend Catherine were trying to
>
> get into the building, because she lived in Regan too. So as we were walking around to
>
> the front of the lobby where the keypad thing is, the side door opened. So we just decided
>
> to go through there instead. As we approached the door this little white girl came out and
>
> she said, "Can I see you guys student ID's?" She looked at us in a funny way, like we
>
> didn't belong there. Inside I was like whoa, are you serious? She continued on to say, "I
>
> just need to make sure that you all live here or even go here." I was pissed and I was like,
>
> "What the fuck! Are you for real? Yeah we go here." Catherine knew I was heated, so
>
> she grabbed my arm and we just walked around to the front entrance. And this happens
>
> all the time, you know, people; they see me a Black man coming down to come through a
>
> door or get on an elevator, and wont have the common courtesy to save you ten seconds
>
> by holding the door or elevator for you. They see you coming down the hallway to try to
>
> get to the elevator; they hop in quickly and don't hold it. Because I'm a Black male,
>
> that's all people see. They don't see Ace, they don't see my major or anything like that,
>
> and they just see a Black male. When you're a Black male they see you; they always
>
> make a note. One time I was in the elevator with one little white girl and she gives me
>
> glances and overlooks to make sure I'm not getting to close to her or something. So it just
>
> reminds me how we are not valued or celebrated. That reminds me, when I was in my

History 2112 class we talked about how in Germany, they don't teach anything between 1933 and 1941 because that's a dark past for that country because it affected a lot of people in a negative way, which made me think about how slavery affected millions and millions of people, not only Black people, but white people too. Yet we still honor those people, and we're constantly reminded of them in our classes. I know I have to learn about who's the first president of the school, Abraham Baldwin, or who was the third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, but these men were racist; all of them. I know I have to learn that history, but we rarely talk about Black history as American history. For instance, in class we were talking about the picture of John Carlos, and Tommie Smith; they call it the unity Black power picture from the Olympics in the 70's. Not only did no one know who they were, they automatically assumed they were terrorists. These White students are coming here and they've never been taught about Black history outside of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and that just pisses me off to know they discount us as Black men as part of history. We matter too.

Summarizing Ace.

Ace enrolled in Southeast University embodying ideologies of racism and hurt that stemmed from the lessons he learned as a child from his elders. Although Ace had contact with few Whites whom he felt were genuine people, the lessons he was taught from his mother as an younger child impacted his ability to look past his preconceived notions. As a child Ace was immersed within the Black community, thus developing a strong sense of pride for his people and their contributions to the American culture. His negative experiences while in college have only worsened; creating feelings of apprehension when considering developing relationships with white peers. Additionally, the centrality of his racial identity has made him much more

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aware and open to recognizing instances of racism, discrimination and prejudice. His overall

opinion about the university has been thwarted due to negative interactions with White students,

leaving him uninterested in engaging and involving himself with the university.

Emerging Trend from Ace's Story

Negative impact of preconceived notions.

Though Ace has encountered positive experiences with White peers, he has decided to

not establish meaningful relationships with anyone new. The occurrences of racism on campus,

coupled with the stories and lessons he acquired from his mother have caused Ace to create a

disdain for interaction with White students. It can be inferred that regardless of what he positive

encounters Ace may have with White peers while in college, he will hold on tightly to the

messages he learned about race during his childhood. This phenomenon becomes evident when

Ace discussed his church home. Although he encountered a majority of white people who were

genuine and caring, he reluctant because of the small minority of White peers who have

displayed racist attitudes towards him. Additionally Ace discusses the positive impact that his

work relationships have had on him. However, even with his ability to recognize the positive

nature behind those individuals he remains apprehensive about developing friendships with

them. This can be illustrated when Ace was asked about his involvement in the class

conversation about the word "Nigga." Ace responded by stating "…

> I mean, I really didn't want to say anything 'cause you know, I already had certain views
>
> about White people and I already had perceived notions about the sorority girls who were
>
> in my class and some of the frat boys. I already thought they were racist."

In this instance Ace had already assumed that his White peers were racist prior to their

involvement in the conversation. Later during the interview Ace acknowledged that he had met

some genuinely favorable White peers, but was accustomed to running into those who were racist, which confirmed his apprehension to develop relationships with them. Specifically Ace stated:

> I went to a mixed church. I learned to love all those people, White or Black. I feel when you come to a broader spectrum of people, like in college; you get a lot more different people. The majority of the White people that I've encountered before here were nice and open to everything, but it wasn't until here, when that minority of Whites who are racist showed their face; you know rednecks, those with confederate flags on their cars, those who hate affirmative action. It was those people I encountered. It was those people that confirmed that I didn't need to develop a mass of relationships with white folks.

On another occasion, Ace recognized the fact that through work he had met White peers who may have been able to change his overall view about developing friendships with Whites. However before fully validating the opportunity to encounter a set of White students who could change his perception, he was quick to revert to his earlier views and apprehensions. When describing his peers at work and their impact on him, Ace explained, "… working where I work now, is trying to change my perception of White people a little bit. They seem pretty cool, but overall, I just feel like I'm around a whole bunch of rednecks."

Introducing Andre

My interview with Andre began at 10:02am on a cold Wednesday morning. I interviewed Andre in the same location I've used throughout the data collection process. Andre, just like many of my other participants, is student staff member in residence life. I was running a little behind his morning, because I didn't want to get out of the bed; but when I arrived at 9:55am, Andre' was already in the conference room awaiting my arrival. As I walked into the door and

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saw Andre in the office suite conference room, my phone chimed with an incoming text from my suite mate, informing that Andre had arrived. I quickly stuck my head into the conference room to let him know that I'd be right in. I scurried to place my belongings on my desk, and grabbed the digital recorders and my laptop so I could promptly began our conversation. I was dressed in a very small brown, Old Navy long-sleeved tee, a pair of wrinkled light brown cargo pants from the gap, and my Timberland boots. My outfit was evidence of my rushed attempt at getting ready for today's interview. Andre wore a cream Ralph Lauren Sweater, with a red button up tee underneath. He also wore a pair of blue jeans, and tan loafers. He was dressed like a true collegiate. As always, Andre greeted me with a big smile. Throughout our conversation I came to the conclusion that Andre's striking appearance and good looks seem to have benefited him throughout his life. Andre struggled a little bit to discuss racism, which I feel mainly comes from his status as a biracial man. Although Andre personally feels a stronger tie to his Black identity, he has never fully felt the tension of being a full-blooded Black man in our society, which may have attributed to his inability to thoroughly discuss racism. As a person who has naturally been able to integrate himself within two different racial communities, Andre seemed to be very inexperienced with discussing race related issues, and desired peace and harmony among all, including his friends; regardless of their race. Due to his light toned skin and his high socioeconomic status, Andre has gained entrance into many social circles' that often purposefully exclude Black Americans. Discussing the details behind his social balancing act was definitely educational and enlightening. I enjoyed my conversation with Andre because it provided a different perspective on racism and its existence on college campuses. It seemed that Andre had never experienced any differential treatment because of race before his experience at Southeast, and has often be able to navigate his involvement within White and Black

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communities on campus. The interview lasted only about 45minutes, but was very interesting because of his ability to navigate the segregated social scene on campus, thus influencing his ability to fully articulate the existence of racism on campus. Andre's story is just as unique as he is as an individual.

The Best of Both Worlds: Andre's Story

A native of Kenwood, an upper middle class suburb outside of a major southern metropolitan city, Andre has experienced the nuances of being a biracial individual raised within a mostly White environment. "It's mostly White," Andre exclaimed. As Andre went on to describe his hometown, he stated, "It's got a pretty good population of Black people though, seeing that it's so close to the city. So it's pretty good; kind of like the racial make-up of Southeast University; maybe a few more Black people, Asians, and Indians." As the 20-year old son of a Black father and a White mother, Andre received very few messages about race relations and racism throughout his childhood. The third-year honors student and Accounting Major, was a star athlete and an accomplished academician during his childhood and high school years. His natural athletic and educational talent matched with his inconspicuous racial identity allowed Andre to navigate existence between two altering racial communities. Andre's light almost White complexion forwarded him the opportunity to develop a personal perspective and appreciation for multiculturalism and diversity. "I've always been open to having friends of different races," Andre explained, "Black and White."

Although Andre recognized from a young age that his parents were from different races, it wasn't until he entered middle school that he learned to understand that he too was racially different. It was during this time that Andre remembered his parent's teaching him about being

open-minded and accepting to all individuals regardless of race. When describing the role of race and racism in his upbringing, Andre explained:

> It [race] wasn't a big thing that we talked about a lot. I don't even know. It just wasn't a big topic in our house. But you know growing up it wasn't talked about until middle school, which was kind of the time when I realized that I was Black, and these people are White; you know, stuff like that. But I mean my parents have always just taught me to stay open and you know and have friends with as many people as possible and different types of people.

As a child, Andre does recall his father discussing the lack of Black people at his job in corporate America, which caused Andre to ponder about the inequalities between Whites and Blacks. Through his father's messages, Andre began to recognize that as a Black male, it too was his duty to combat the racial inequalities that face many Black men. He also remembered his father and mother urging him to be the best person he could be regardless of race. Nevertheless, Andre felt that his father's overall message was not coming from a place of racial responsibility, but around the act of being the best he could regardless of his racial identity. Andre shared:

> I mean basically, I was always just taught to try my hardest. You know, present myself well regardless if I'm Black or mixed, or whatever. The race part wasn't real important. I remember my dad definitely talking about being Black and stuff like that. I mean he would always talk about how there weren't other Black people at his job, but he wasn't always like, you're a Black man and you have to do this. So it wasn't really strong like that, but I gathered a lot from those stories. So I always just kind of wanted to be as good as I could. I guess to not add to any negative stereotypes that existed about Black men; try and dispel any other stereotypes that people have.

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It was also in middle school that Andre began to identify more with the Black aspects of his racial identity. He explained, "…I've just always been that way I guess. One, it's who I am, and two, it's just because it's different, and it's kind of cool being, the minority, instead of just being like everybody else." In an environment where there was very little racial diversity, Andre found that his minority status allowed him to stand out and be recognized as different. Andre also developed a much more salient perception or his Black racial identity because he often spent much more time as a child visiting his father's family during holidays and summer vacations. "We would see my dad's side of the family a few times a year up in Ohio," Andre explained, "My mom's family is more spread out, so we didn't see them quite as much, but you know we tried to see them. My mom has a twin sister that we probably saw once a year; she lives in Colorado."

As Andre transitioned from middle school to high school his academic and athletic abilities allowed him entrance into various social circles in school. Although his neighborhood was mostly White, he was able to meet and establish many new friendships with Black students who were bused into his school from the nearby city. Andre noticed that although his high school was much more diverse than middle school, students remained segregated in their groups. Though Andre was still able to gain entrance into both White and Black social groups, he recognized the separation that took place during high school. According to Andre:

> High school was really good. I did well in school and played football, basketball and ran track. So you know in sports I did well, and in school I did well, which meant I did well socially too. Since they started busing in kids from the city, a good amount of Black people started going to my high school. So all the Black people hung out no matter what pretty much; no matter where they were from. I mean there wasn't any big separation, but

the White kids didn't necessarily hang out with the Black kids mostly, but it wasn't like any negative view either way; not anything that was noticeable.

During high school Andre began to question racial differences when he noticed that there were not many other Black males in his honors or advanced courses. He recognized that Black men dominated in numbers on all of his school's athletic teams, but lacked in representation in academically centered activities. While Andre came to these realizations, he still felt that his school was an open-just environment where no real dilemmas existed due to racial incompatibilities. When speaking about this realization, Andre reflected:

> I definitely noticed there weren't other Black men in my classes, but I considered myself Black and I didn't notice a big difference in how I was treated compared to the White people in my classes or at my school. In my opinion, there weren't a whole lot of race issues at the school and everybody was pretty open.

Though Andre felt that racial differences were of little worries during his high school years, he did encounter a struggle with his racial identity. Being academically talented set Andre apart from majority of the other Black males in his high school. This caused some of his peers to view him differently, perceiving him as an exception to the images and ideologies that had adopted about a high school aged Black male. In addition, being raised in a majority White neighborhood contributed to Andre's proper accent, which made him susceptible to taunting from Black and White peers who felt that he was acting "White." He struggled with this since he identified more so with his Black racial identity and was confused about the differences between he and other Black males who attended his school. He understood that he was different racially, and his abilities were somewhat against the norm, so he concluded that he was being taunted

because he wasn't subscribing to the stereotypes that he had worked hard through out his life to dispel. When attempting to articulate his thoughts during this time period, Andre shared:

Sometimes in high school, more so like freshman year, people would be like, Andre's White, or Andre acts White and stuff like that. That kind of bothered me at times because I would be like, well what am I suppose to act like? What does a Black person act like? It could have been because of not fitting stereotypes. I guess in middle school and in my neighborhood I didn't have a lot of Black friends at that point because there weren't quite as many Black people around in middle school that I knew, so people always said my accent and mannerism were like a White boy. But I was trying to represent myself in a way that showed people that we as Black guys aren't all the same; that it's okay to do well on the field and in the classroom.

Andre continued to excel throughout high school, graduating top of his class with a 3.9 cumulative grade point average, in addition to a stellar athletic record. When it came time to begin the college selection process, Andre was adamant about attending an institution that would challenge him academically. As a native of the state, Andre was familiar with the great academic reputation of Southeast, but decided early on in his selection process that Southeast University was not the school for him. In an exciting tone, Andre sat forward with wide eyes and explained:

I remember it was summer after my junior when I visited here. I also visited University of Florida first, and I loved it. And then I got to Southeast, and it was during the drought, and the campus wasn't very green on north campus, so I didn't want to go here at all. I never wanted to go to Southeast. I guess growing up my whole life and watching Southeast fans at sports events and hearing about their reputation, made me feel like this school was definitely not for me. But I since my grades and test scores were high, I got

the HOPE Scholarship, I got into the honors program, it was close to my family and my close friends where coming here too. So I figured it would be the best place in the long run. Duke was also a big choice. I really wanted to go there, but it's a lot per year and I just felt like it wasn't really worth it; maybe for grad school though.

During high school Andre heard rumors about the reputation of Southeast University. One rumor he had heard from Black classmates was the existence of racism and other discriminatory practices that took place on campus. Although he had never experienced racism, prejudice or discrimination prior to college, coming to Southeast worried him. However, he was somewhat excited to begin college at Southeast because he desired to have the opportunity to meet other Black students who were academically strong during their pre-collegiate education. He knew that Southeast was one the most selective public schools in the state, which meant that he would have the chance to interact with other Black scholars who too gained admittance into the university. Explicitly, Andre shared:

> I had heard things about fraternity parties and like, SEC schools not being really open to Black people, so I was kind of worried that there would be more closed-minded people, like more so than in high school. I really wanted to come here to meet other Black people who really valued education, and stuff like that. So I was definitely looking forward to that, because my best friends in high school where Black, but none of them got into Southeast. So I was just hopeful that I would meet some Black kids that really worked hard towards their education and their goals.

Freshmen year Andre decided to room with a high school friend, a White male he had known since middle school. Having a familiar face as a roommate made the transition to college much easier for Andre, lessening his anxiety about making new friends. Throughout his

freshmen year Andre was able to make friends with a diverse group of individuals, and similar to high school, was able to integrate into Black and White social circles. Socializing with his White peers had never been an issue prior to his experience at an all White fraternity party.

Andre's Experience

The fall semester had just started at Southeast University, which meant weekends of tailgating, athletic events and fraternity and sorority parties. Being that Southeast is the state flagship institution, football weekends were a time for students, alum, and football fans alike to celebrate and enjoy the many athletic festivities. This particular weekend was a huge deal for the small college town, because it was the kick-off game to what many hoped would be a successful football season. Andre, being a native of the state, was just as excited about the game and opted to invite a high school friend in town for the weekend so he too could experience the nostalgia that came along with Southeast football, or as affectionately called by students and fans, "Lion Football." Andre had been to a Lion's game as a child, but never as a student. His high school friend Cody, a student at a regional university about an hour's drive from Southeast, was just as excited to attend the season opener. So to kick the weekend off, Andre and Cody planned to attend a fraternity party that Friday evening. One of their mutual high school friends, Mathew, had recently rushed a fraternity. He invited Andre and Cody to the party thinking it would be an opportunity for them to catch up and see how things worked in a fraternity house. So after hanging out with some other friends during the late afternoon, Andre and Cody meander around campus until later that evening when it was time for them to head over to the party. As they are getting ready and hanging out in the Andre's room, Cody decided to call Mathew to make sure they would be able to get into the party. When the plans were developed Mathew told Andre and Cody that they would need wristbands to get into the fraternity house, since the party was strictly

for members and their invited guests. The two friends decided to call Mathew before making the

trip over to the house to make sure that everything was a go in terms of securing wristbands.

Andre reminisces:

> My friend, Cody was visiting me from GCSU, which is like an hour and fifteen minutes
>
> away from Southeast. Cody's one of my best friends from high school. He and I were
>
> going to go this fraternity party, which is the fraternity that one of our friends from high
>
> school is in. He's a year older than us. We were getting ready and about to leave, to meet
>
> Mathew because we had to get wrist bands from him. So my friend Cody was on the
>
> phone with Mathew. So Cody called Mathew to tell him we were on the way when
>
> Mathew told Cody to tell me to just to be cool, because some people might say
>
> something. He said, "You know some people might say some stupid racist stuff or
>
> something like that. But just tell him, most of the people aren't like that. So you know tell
>
> him to just to be chill, just in case."

With a stark look on his face, Cody hung up the phone and shared the information

Mathew had shared with Andre. After hearing the news Andre shared his first thoughts:

> I was just like; yeah something racist could probably happen. I wasn't like oh my God I
>
> can't go the party now. I mean, I wasn't reluctant to go because although he warned me, I
>
> was like it probably won't happen, and two if something does happen, I'll be with them,
>
> so I wasn't really worried about it. I had been to plenty of parties before college, when it
>
> was mostly White people, and I had never had issues.

This was going to be Andre's first college fraternity party, and his excitement allowed

him to put aside any reluctance he had about attending. So dressed in a green polo and a pair

Khaki shorts, Andre and his friend Cody began their journey, on a muggy summer's evening, to

the fraternity house which was located on the outskirts of campus; about 10 minutes from where Andre's residence hall was located. The two men were overly excited about the party, for they both had seen the stereotypical examples of college fraternity parties on television and as freshmen they could hardly believe that they were about to experience on first hand.

As the two men approached the fraternity house they could hear the sounds of bass thumping and voices chattering. They took a short cut through the back of campus, which placed them at the rear of the house. The backyard of the fraternity was filled with people as they conversed throughout the yard and on the back deck. As they walked through the yard, Andre could hear country music and rock blaring from somewhere inside the house. Once Andre and Cody got to the deck stairs, they stopped to call their friend Mathew, who brought out their wristbands a short while later. Andre recalled that night's events:

We cut through and went down Church Street, by the Papa Johns, and went up through some streets and found the house. So once we entered the back yard we called Mathew and he met us outside. That's when we got the wristbands and we were able to go inside the house. When I first got in I just kind of walking around with Cody, just kind of seeing what was going on. And then we went outside to the front deck. We were just hanging out; talking with some people I knew from school and that's when this pretty tall black haired muscular kid was like, "Hey come here." You know "hey," something like that. There were a million people out there, so I was thinking that he probably wasn't talking to me, but though he was talking to these girls right next to me, and so I just kept talking to Cody. And then, because I kind of looked over there and I saw him again and he was like, "Hey." So I looked, and I was like "Me? And he said, "Yeah, come here." So I like looked over to Cody and then went over there kind of confused. And then the guy was

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just like, "Hey man, do you have a wrist band to be here, because what are you doing

here?" He went on to say, "I don't know who you are and why you're at my frat party?" I

was like, "Yeah, I have a wristband." I showed it to him. Then he asked who I knew

there, and I told him I was there with Mathew King. Then he looked excited and was like,

"Mathew King; he's my little brother in the frat!" After that he was he was all nice to me

and he offered me a beer or whatever.

Andre was somewhat taken aback by what had just happened. He attempted to make sense of it

during our conversation when he said:

I felt he definitely said it because I looked not white. You know I don't know what he

thought I was, might of thought I was Puerto Rican or something, but, I think it was

definitely because I wasn't White. He didn't even call Cody over there; and he was

standing right next to me. And Cody doesn't even go here, so I know he didn't recognize

him. So yeah I felt that he saw a Black person or someone non-White and he didn't think

they had a reason to go to his White frat party.

After the encounter with the fraternity member, Andre walked back over to Cody and explained

what happened. He shared:

I went over and told Cody about it, I'm trying to think. I was probably kind of laughing to

cover up the fact that I was a little mad. Yeah, I was a little mad, I wasn't like really

flustered about it, but I did think, wow, that's kind of ridiculous for him to call me out

with all these other people around; with everybody right here. It just made me think about

all the stuff I had heard about fraternities at Southeast before coming. I guess some of it is

true.

Cody, looked at Andre in slight disbelief, and attempted to make his friend feel better

about the situation. The two began to walk around; looking for their friend Mathew who had a

personal connection with the fraternity member who had just questioned Andre about his

whereabouts. Eventually, Andre and Cody found Mathew in a crowd of people, and begin

describing the situation to him. Andre recalled Mathew's response:

> Yeah we found him and I told him what had happened since the guy said he was
>
> Mathew's bigger brother, you know for the fraternity. Mathew was just like, "Yeah, he
>
> probably did call you out because you were Black, that's how that guy is; that guys an ass
>
> hole sometimes."

Andre and Cody decided to leave the party, "The party was not that fun anyway, explained

Andre, "like it was kind of people just walking around drinking and talking, although music was

on no one was really dancing or anything like that. So I was kind of like alright, this sucks, let's

go." Andre's hopes of a great fraternity experience were affected by his experience with what he

considered to be racism. As they walked home, Andre received a phone call from one of his

Black friends who happened to be leaving an event on campus and offered to pick them up and

drive them back to Andre's residence hall. Andre explained:

> We like walked down the street, and my friend I had met during orientation had picked us
>
> up. We were with him for a minute and he got to meet Cody, which I was happy about
>
> because this guy ended up being actually one of my best friends. But yeah so as he was
>
> driving, I told him about the story too. And he was just like, "Wow, that's what happens
>
> here." But again to me it wasn't like a huge deal.

> During our conversation, Andre attempted to articulate his feelings about the incident.

Although it seems that the encounter didn't have much effect on Andre, it did cause him to feel

uncomfortable, resulting in his decision to leave the party early. Additionally, it did cause Andre to consider how he too could experience racism even though he had always been able to successfully navigate social encounters with Whites prior to college. After his experience he was left somewhat confused about the fraternity members reasoning for wanting to make sure he had a wrist band. Overall, although Andre has been able to successfully go throughout his life without encountering a sense of oppression. The experience at the fraternity party opened his eyes to the realities of racism, regardless of his status as a bi-racial individual. His experience also strengthened his desire to prove people's assumptions about Black men false. He really developed a greater understanding of what he could do to assist in creating a more positive image of Black men on campus. Specifically, Andre stated:

> The experience just kind of surprised. Inside, I was just like wow, really? It's not like I was doing something crazy, and he had a reason to ask. I was just me, standing there and out of everybody he picks me, the one person of color to pick on. As I think about it I wonder why he would even care if a Black guy was at his fraternity party. What really made him call me over there to see why I was there? Why would he invest so much energy to see why this one non-White dude was at his fraternity party? In my eyes, I guess he didn't think that a Black dude had a reason to party at a White frat part and a Black dude isn't welcomed. It just really opened my eyes because I'm biracial and people must not see that. It's funny that people still do stuff like that. Like I said it also made me want to do better. When I have a temptation to do something bad, or to be lazy and not do something that I should or that I don't want to, it makes me think that since I'm a Black male people are going to think negative of me anyway, and I don't want to be just another stereotype; like mistreating girls, and you know trying to use girls and stuff like that. I

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just definitely want to stay as far away from contributing to those stereotypes, so I try to do the opposite so I don't add to them. But I mean luckily it hasn't had any big impact on me and how I feel about White people. I still I think most of the people here are good. I definitely talk to some of my Black friends sometimes, and I'm just like white people, some of them are so closed-minded. It's just kind of stupid to me; I mean why do they still have that mentality about Black people? Overall, my experience just made me realize that some kinds of racism still definitely exist. The fact that the guy called me out on a deck full of other people showed me that minorities aren't always welcome as much as white people at fraternity parties. Once he found out that I had a wristband and knew a brother in the fraternity, he acted like I was completely welcome, but my opinion of him had already changed and I didn't really want to hear any of his friendly offers of beer and fun.

Andre's Perception of the Campus Climate

Andre has been able to steer his involvement and friendships within Black and White social circles. Besides his encounter with racism his freshmen year at the fraternity party, Andre has enjoyed his experience at Southeast University. He has remained engaged in the campus, and recently became a Resident Assistant, in which he mentors Black first year students. Although Andre's overall perception of the university was unaltered due to his experience, he was able to identify campus areas or items that reminded him of his status as a minority student. To express his feelings about the campus climate, Andre opted to take a picture of his academic college, the Terry College of Business (see figure 7). Andre has never experienced racism while a student in the college of business, but has constantly reminded of his identity as a Black male because of the low percent of Black males enrolled in the college.

Figure 7. Terry College of Business

When describing his reasoning behind taking the picture of the college of business, Andre

replied:

> I definitely don't feel any racism from the college of business, but I definitely feel
>
> awkward sometimes in a lot of those classes because I'm usually the only Black male in
>
> my classes. This semester there is a Black girl in one of my accounting classes, which is a
>
> change, but usually I'm the only Black person period. I definitely notice that and at times
>
> I wonder why. But like when I have to work with other people on group projects, I
>
> always wonder if they're thinking that I might not be as smart or whatever, just because
>
> I'm Black. If I had other Black males to work with, I might not have that feeling.

Andre also decided to take a picture of a fraternity house (see figure 8) on campus to represent his feelings about the Greek social system. Though Andre has continued to attend parties at fraternity houses, he has noticed the lack of diversity in those who attend. He realizes that the culture at Southeast doesn't promote inclusivity when it comes to Greek Life, but he is concerned with the lack of social integration between White and Black students. Additionally

Figure 8. Fraternity house

Andre has noticed how reluctant his Black friends are to attend White fraternity parties with him. He attributes their hesitation to the lack of communication and socialization that occurs between White and Black students. When discussing his feelings about the evident disconnect, Andre explained:

This picture represented fraternities and Greek life in general. Just like my story I just

shared about what I experienced at a fraternity party. Basically when Black students' go

to a frat event like a party and there's not any other Black people there, racist things can

happen, which can keep them from wanting to go back. For instance, I've taken some of

my Black friends to White frat parties, because, I'm pretty good friends with a lot of frat

guys. And initially they will be like, "Oh God, hopefully nothing crazy is going to happen

to me," but my White friends treat them nice and like my Black friends too, even those

who are darker. I'm guessing they are scared sometimes because on this campus Black

and White students don't really interact unless it's forced in class or something like that.

So it's probably the unknown to them, but once they go, hopefully nothing racist will

happen so they can tell their other Black friends that all of the White frat guys aren't

racists.

Summarizing Andre.

As a biracial male, who identifies as Black, Andre has been able to develop lasting and

meaning relationships with Black and White peers. Although Andre has witnessed and

recognized the divide that exists between racial groups, his experience on campus has proven to

be a positive one. Even after experiencing an act of racism, Andre has not developed any ill

willed feelings toward other White peers or the university in general. Andre's experiences have

allowed him to conceptualize racism from a different lens than once before, realizing that

although he may not agree; race still plays a role in the socialization and integration of his

classmates. During our conversation he revealed that from his perspective, the biggest race

related issue on campus was the separation that exists between various racial groups. As an

individual who socialized with peers, both Black and White, he felt that students on each end of

the spectrum don't desire to develop meaningful relationships with one another. When summarizing his feelings in regards to this issue, Andre shared:

> I think the biggest race issue on campus is that people don't feel comfortable around people of a different race. White people stick with white people and black people stick with black people. There are cultural differences but I think that the main thing is that they don't feel comfortable around each other. Maybe one day, something can be done to make students feel more comfortable around each other. Until that happens racism will keep going on.

Emerging Trend from Andre's Story

The role of social separation.

As a student at Southeast, Andre feels that racism is perpetuated through the social divide that exits between White and Black students on campus. He has noticed that students do not share a collective social experience and often separate themselves into racial groups. Andre has continuously made it a priority to interrelate his social circles in hopes to create a more accepting and inclusive campus environment. Regardless of his attempts, Andre's friends still remain hesitant to integrate across races socially. When discussing his efforts, Andre explained:

> I mean on a big scale, it's hard to do something about making the campus a more comfortable place for everyone. I always just try to get my different friends together, because I think it's just about being comfortable around people who are different. I mean even I was uncomfortable around some White folks before because I thought they were going to judge me, but once I stepped out there and tried, I realized that everyone was real cool pretty much. But now, I'm just comfortable it doesn't matter and if they judge me then it is what it is; that's not going to stop me from making new friends though.

Andre also discussed his desire to integrate his social circles when he shared his attempts in getting his Black friends to attend a White fraternity party, even though they had some internal hesitation. As aforementioned, Andre hoped including his Black friends in this activity would allow them to feel much more comfortable about interacting with their White peers. When discussing his efforts, Andre shared:

> I've taken some of my Black friends to White frat parties, because, I'm pretty good friends with a lot of White frat guys. And initially they will be like, "Oh God, hopefully nothing crazy is going to happen to me," but my White friends treat them nice and like my Black friends too, even those who are darker. I'm guessing they are scared sometimes because on this campus Black and White students don't really interact unless it's forced in class or something like that. So it's probably the unknown to them, but once they go, hopefully nothing racist will happen so they can tell their other Black friends that all of the White frat guys aren't racists.

Introducing Marcus

My conversation with Marcus began today around 3:05pm. It was one of the milder days this fall. Earlier this morning, I had an NCBI meeting on north campus, and had to run to Walgreens on the Westside to pick up the remaining participant's photos. Marcus had his first final of the fall semester prior to our meeting, so I was sure to ask him how he did. He assured me he did well. When he walked into the office suite together, I could see he was a little uncomfortable because my classmate, who happens to be a White male, was working at his desk. I could sense that Marcus was a little nervous to engage in an conversation about racism with this random White man sitting nearby, so I quickly escorted him to the conference room and then asked my classmate if he minded relocating to another area for a while; which he agreed. During

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our conversation, I realized that Marcus is a very respectful and polite young brother; which I think stems from his Nigerian upbringing. I have been fortunate to have brothers participate in this study who identify with various ethnicities within the Black culture. It has been interesting to learn how many of my participants navigate racism and discrimination when they internally identify with their ethnicity more so than their race. Learning about the salience of their ethnicity has been an eye opening experience. Anyway, I digress. As I stated earlier, today was actually one of the warmer days; it reached about 50 degrees. My attire as well as Marcus's definitely reflected the balmy weather. I wore a Black LRG cardigan, with a black American Apparel thermal underneath, a pair of grey LRG jeans, and my black and silver Prada shoes. Marcus wore a green thermal, a pair of jeans, and a blue cap. While observing Marcus, I noticed his head was spotted with grey hairs. Today was my first time seeing his hair and I'm assuming that the grey is a birthmark of some sort, since he's only in his early twenties. The interview went well and I learned a great deal from talking to Marcus about his experiences with racism as non-native of the U.S. Marcus moved to the states less than 10 years ago, which has affected his ability to speak clear English. His strong accent made him somewhat difficult to understand at times, but overall, I was able to make out his words and understand his explanations. I am kind of jealous of his accent because I thirst so much to have that connection to my ancestry, and I feel like as a Black American I am living a lie; existing in someone else's reality. Marcus was the first brother to talk about the election of President Obama, and the reaction of his white peers and classmates the days after the election. He described his feelings, emotions and disdain for his White peers after the made their hurtful remarks. He was very eloquent in describing his experiences, which allowed me to develop a rich understanding of the feelings and emotions developed after witnessing the hate that took place on campus as a result of President Obama's victory. I was

curious about his ability to navigate his identity as a Black male and a Nigerian man when speaking about racism. Marcus learned many lessons about race in this country because of witnessing the oppressive nature of many whites; again, another experience that saddens me. When reading his reflection, tears swelled up in my eyes, and still do as I sit here and think about his words "…My feelings about racism make me hate the fact that I am black." Why do we allow our brothers to carry this pain? He should not hate being black because of the ill-natured treatment of many Whites. This has to stop; our brothers should not have to bare this kind of pain any longer.

A New World and New Racism: Marcus's Story

As 21-year old junior at Southeast, Marcus's pre-collegiate experiences were very different than most of his peers. Raised in Nigeria, Marcus had not been introduced to many of socially constructed institution existent in the states until he and his family moved to the U.S. when he was 14. As he removed his hat and wiped his forehead, Marcus explained:

I'm originally from Nigeria; was born in Nigeria and moved to the United States when I was 14. At first we moved to Lincoln Heights, GA for a year. My mama she worked in Lincoln Heights, and then she got a new job, so we moved to Hamilton. I lived in Hamilton my sophomore, junior, and senior years of high school. When I came to the states I moved with my parents and siblings. My mama, she was here for like six months before I came. Then my older sister came, my younger sister came, and then my dad came later. So we all came together as a family.

Moving to the states at 14 was a difficult transition for Marcus, although he was excited about the new experience, he was nervous about being accepted in a new country and a new culture. Additionally, just like any teenager, Marcus was distraught about leaving his friends

because he knew he would have to attempt to make new friends with American peers who may not understand his ethnic and cultural differences. In attempt to articulate his feelings about this time, Marcus shared:

> I was excited in the beginning, than I got to the airport; the same day and I was like man, I don't want to go. I'm going to miss my friends and I don't know how these American kids are going to accept me since I'm Nigerian. Then I got on the plane, and then I really realized that I was going to miss Nigeria. When I got here to the states it was very different man; it was very different from Nigeria. I mean Nigeria is nice, but there's more, its more development here than Nigeria. The educational system here is kind of better than that of Nigeria's, definitely. And of course, the social scene here is different in a big way. When I got here I was surprised to see what everybody had. Here everyone has the telephones; cell phones, computers, and Internet. In Nigeria it's kind of hard to have that you know. I mean some people have that, but here it's much better.

When Marcus arrived in the states, he was enrolled in a majority Black high school in Lincoln Heights. The transition was a difficult one for Marcus. During his first year of high school Marcus encountered taunting and teasing from his peers, mainly because of his strong accent and the presence of evident differences that existed between Marcus and his peers. Even more so, majority of the teasing came from other Black peers, which initially affected Marcus's perception about Black Americans. He reflected:

> Yeah, they were joking about me a lot. Sometimes they made fun, but I felt like it was from them being scared of me, but it was cool man; I got used to it though. You know they used to say I ran around with tigers, lions and deer and stuff like that. And this was mostly from African American's then, which made me think badly about Black

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Americans at first. I mean most of the whites there, they were okay man, they were

decent about it. Sometimes they asked me the same questions like the black people asked

me like, do you run around naked or stuff like that man. That used to really bother me

because it's sad that they just thought that's all Nigeria was about. They thought that was

true man. Sometimes they'd ask me how's Africa? Is Africa like a country? And I'm like

it's a continent man; they got a bunch of countries in there. They ask me all these weird

questions.

Regardless of the treatment he received from his peers, Marcus remained pretty positive

about his identity as a Nigerian, and attempted to find positive aspects about himself that made

him feel confident about who he was and his unique differences. Specifically, Marcus shared:

I thought I was unique and I liked that. I had the accent too, so they tried to make fun of

my accent. I mean, I'll admit it used it be very thick, like thicker than this. One time I had

a presentation in class in ninth grade and everyone was just cracking up and laughing at

me. They were saying, "What the heck is this dude saying," but it was cool because, I

liked it man; I liked being different.

In some ways, Marcus was prepared for the treatment he received from his peers.

Through conversations, his family and Nigerian friends had exposed him to some of the

stereotypical ideologies that existed about Black Americans. These were messages they received

through movies, television shows and news broadcastings that depicted Black Americans in a

negative manner. Although Marcus's views of perceptions changed a little once he attended

school in the states, he felt that many of them were confirmed by his classmates' actions and

many of the events he witnessed in his new school. Somewhat hesitant, Marcus discussed:

When I heard about Blacks in America I heard about violence. You know because we watched movies in Nigeria and the Black movies always had all those shootings and stuff like that. I also heard when I first got down here from a bunch of Africans and from my African-Nigerian Auntie, she was like, "Hey, watch out. Some African Americans are not serious about their studies and are kind of lazy." And I kind of saw that in my freshmen year of high school. Like, when we had an assignment, a lot of them would be like, "I don't feel like doing this man." They would just be kind of lazy in that area. But some of them really worked hard so, not all of them are lazy. So that showed me a different side than what I had heard.

During the summer before his sophomore year, Marcus's mother got a new job, which caused his family to move once again; although this move was within the state, it would still cause Marcus to attend a new school. Due to his experiences at Lincoln Heights High School, he was able to develop a stronger sense of identity and became pretty immune to any teasing or negativity directed towards him.

Being raised in Nigeria, and attending a majority Black high school during his first year in the states, allowed Marcus to remain oblivious about racism and the racial inequalities that existed between Whites and Black Americans. Prior to moving to a majority White suburb, Hamilton Township, Marcus had only learned about racism through films he had previewed in school back in Nigeria and from stories his parents shared with him as a child. Both of Marcus's parents had attended graduate school in the states and had experienced the effects of racism throughout their educational experience. Marcus described his experience and knowledge about racism before moving to the states:

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I mean in movies I saw what racism was, about the 60's and how it was here at that time.

One time I was in middle school in Nigeria, and I saw this Martin Luther King Jr.

documentary about his life and his efforts. That junk almost made me cry man, like when

he got shot and everything, I was like dang man; this is real serious; crazy. I didn't

understand what was going on until my parents explained it to me; that he helped African

Americans get their civil rights, and was in charge of the civil rights movement. I didn't

understand it. That's the only time I really saw racism, and I was like hey man, they must

be racist over there in the states. And you know I think my parents' kind told me about it

because they used to come to the United States and they talked about what happened

when they were in grad school over here. So they kind of warned me.

When Marcus began high school at Hamilton Township High School, he realized soon after that

he was very different. His new neighborhood and school district was about "…90 percent

White," Hamilton described. He felt very uncomfortable especially after the fore warning he

received from his parents. His parents were also nervous about what Hamilton and his siblings

may experience as students in a mostly White upper-middle class school district, but they rest

assured that they would do what they could to assist him in his transition. While he tapped on the

table and stumbled over his words, Marcus shared:

I didn't fit in with anybody man. The most I fit in was with like the other African folks

who were there too. There was this Asian dude that I actually talked to and he was cool. I

didn't actually fit in. Normally the only time I talked to white folks would be when I was

in class and I would ask hey do you know these assignments? But not like developing any

friendships. There was this one dude, he was a white dude, and we're still friends; he

goes to Southeast too. We're still cool man, but other than that; I didn't actually develop

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any relationships with White folks. I mean the White folks they here really cool, but they never tried to be my friend and, I'm not close friends with any of them now. It's not like a life-long kind of friendship that I have with not any of them man. Actually my parents took me shopping to get new clothes because they were like, you know, you're going to be in front of white people and you don't want to be looking all shabby and everything; you don't want them judging you. I was kind of taken aback by that because they didn't care how I dressed when I went to the all Black high school in Lincoln Heights. But to be honest, I liked the Black school because they had this sense of uniqueness. I mean they fought each other a lot, but, you know but they were actually together; there was like a brotherhood thing between the Black dudes. When I go to the white school it was like, all white, different groups and stuff like that, and I wasn't invited into any of them.

Marcus's inability to make friends with his White peers existed throughout his high school experience. He was often taunted and teased by his White peers because of his ethnicity. Although he had been teased while attending his all Black high school in Lincoln Heights, he felt differently about being teased by his White peers. Their teasing made him feel uneasy about race and made him feel that racism was still very much alive in America. Marcus shared one experience that he could recall that made him feel very uneasy and uncomfortable about being Black and being Nigerian:

I remember once one of my classmates teased me and I can still remember the way it made me feel today. I was in my chemistry class, I think it was my sophomore year and, my chemistry teacher liked animals. So at home he had cages with snakes and multiple other reptiles. One day my teacher brought this big cage to class with a big snake in it. So this one white dude was like, "Hey man Marcus, why don't you to go in there and get the

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snake," or something like that. "I mean you're from African, you can do it, you should be used to that type of stuff." Being from African doesn't mean I can get the snake. The White people in class all laughed and they kept making jokes about it for the rest of the class. I didn't like that he stereotyped me that way. It showed me that White people still wanted to treat Black people different, just because cultural differences. So I felt that racism was real at that point.

As Marcus came toward the end of high school, he and his family began discussing his decision to pursue college. Marcus knew that his family would push him to attend a university with a stellar academic reputation because his grandparents were teachers back in Nigeria and education had been something that his parents had always been passionate about. As the first born, his parents expected him to do well academically; even entertaining conversations about graduate school during his senior year. Marcus was raised in a very traditional Nigerian household, which meant that he would do whatever pleased his parents regardless of his personal feelings or desires.

Marcus had always heard about Southeast University and from conversations with his parents, he knew they were adamant about him enrolling. As an academically strong student, Marcus and his family knew he would have no issues gaining admittance to Southeast. Additionally, with the help of the in-state tuition scholarship offered to academically strong students, Marcus knew that Southeast would be the most logical choice. By visiting the university's website and going on numerous campus visits, Marcus became somewhat reluctant about attending Southeast. When discussing his thought process, Marcus explained:

Man, when applied I was scared! I thought I was going to be the only Black person, no lie. It's kind of weird, when I came to visit the campus I saw few Black people and when

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I did, I was like, "Oh some more black, okay its more black folks here." Well, I was really scared, honestly. I thought I was going to be the only Black person here. To tell you the truth man, I thought about not coming here when I went on the website and I just saw white, white, white, you know. I saw one Black dude. But, I think my parents where like, "Hey, you should go to Southeast, it's a nice place to go and you can get a scholarship." But I was like aye man; I don't want to be the only Black person here. Yeah, but I got used to it once I got here; used to the low numbers of Black people.

As he stated, Marcus got used to being one few Blacks at Southeast University. Between his experience living with a White roommate and being one of few Blacks in most of his classes, Marcus eventually developed a sense of comfort at the University. During his junior year he became a Resident Assistant and committed himself to helping other Black students that may feel the same racial strain he felt during his freshmen year. Overall, Marcus developing an appreciation for his experience at Southeast and had not been faced with racism; until the 2008 presidential elections, which took, place his freshmen year.

Marcus's Experience

During the fall of 2008, the U.S. was taken by storm by the first African American presidential candidate who seemed to have the ability to successfully win the presidency. According to Marcus this was a huge topic of discussion in his classes, especially as a political science major. On the Tuesday afternoon of Election Day, Marcus sat in a political science class as the professor attempted to engage his students in a conversation about the presidential race. To orientate the students into the discussion, the professor had the class of mostly White third year political science majors watch Fox news, which that particular day was broadcasting a debate between several political news reporters; majority of whom were on the opposing side of Barak

Obama, the abovementioned African American presidential candidate. They also tuned into the Election Day poll coverage, which allowed the class to visually conceptualize the potential outcome. Marcus described the environment in class that day:

> I was in political science class that Tuesday of the election and the professor had us watch the election debate on Fox News. During the conversation between the reporters, people in the class where saying stuff like, "Hey man, Barack Obama is not from the United States; he wasn't born here, he'll suck as president." While we watched poll coverage, White folks would make comments when they announced that President Obama had won Some other folks were laughing and were like, "He's Black, there's no way he could be president," you know little racist stuff like that.

After engaging the class in a heated conversation about the elections, the professor dismissed class and urged the students to be prepared to discuss the outcome of the elections during Thursday's class. Marcus left class feeling uneasy and appalled by the remarks of some of peers. Although he had never developed any relationships with anyone in this class, he felt that they would have at least respected him enough not to make racial comments or slurs about Barak Obama in his presence. He was also disappointed in his professor, who allowed students to make candid remarks about the African American presidential candidate. Marcus left class feeling confused and hurt.

Later that evening around eight o'clock Marcus, his roommate and some of his Black friends decided that they were going to go watch the Election Day results on one of the quad of one of Southeast's residential communities. The Department of Residence Life was sponsoring a program that evening and had set up a huge screen on the lawn of the Samson Community for students to view the outcome of the elections. Marcus and his friends were excited about the

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potential outcome of the election, for many political analysts had forecasted a victory for Barak Obama. Marcus and his friends desired to witness history together. Once they arrived on the lawn, they felt very uncomfortable. There were few Black students at the event, and the White students who were present were displaying their support for the opposing candidate, John McCain, by wearing anti-Obama paraphernalia. Marcus and his friends decided to go to the room of a mutual friend who lived in Samson Residential Community to watch the elections.

After hours of anticipation, the announcement was made; Barak Obama had won the presidency. Marcus reminisced about that evening:

My roommate, who's actually African American, he was very excited man. Residence Life had these huge screens on Samson Quad and where showing the Election Day poll results. So we went there to watch it and weren't comfortable because of some of the anti-Obama stuff we saw; like signs and posters and t-shirts. So we went to a friend's room to watch it, she lived in Samson Hall. We all watched it there, and when it said he won, I was inside and then went outside on the quad with everybody else. As soon as I went out there I stood next one of my white friends, a girl, she had a pencil in her hand and just threw it at the screen, and she was like, "Damn it!" I know she was like cussing and stuff like that; you could tell she was angry, she was like, "Oh my GOD, I can't believe he won!" Then she saw my face, and she just got quiet. So I just left from standing next to her and walked somewhere else and was celebrating with all the other folks that were there. I called my parents because they were actually following the elections too. They were real excited as well. But, I mean some white folks where excited out there, but most of them where angry, they laughed when they saw he [Barak Obama] won and they just walked away back to their rooms.

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Marcus was angered by the outrage of so many of his White peers. After hearing the comments made in class Marcus felt that they were more upset because a Black man won, and not because they felt that John McCain was a more suitable candidate. After a brief celebration with other Black students on Samson Quad, Marcus retired back to his room for the evening. He logged on Facebook so he could join in the discussion about the election outcome. As he opened his Facebook account, Marcus was horrified by the comments he was seeing. What upset him most was the fact that people who he had considered friends were on Facebook publicly bashing President Obama; often making racial charged comments about the newly elected president. Marcus described what he saw:

> I was on Facebook the night, after Barak Obama had just won, and I was seeing all these comments my friends had made like, "How is this Black Muslim going to be our president?" and, "I'm White, I refuse to have a Black president, they aren't smart enough." One of my closest White friends said, "I can't believe my president is Black, I'm moving to Canada." It was just a lot of Stuff like that man. I was like, who the heck, all of this just because he's a Black dude? Somebody else said, "America's going to die; we have a Black president now." I was like, damn man, it ain't that serious. There were things much worse on there, but I can't even remember or I don't feel comfortable even speaking those types of things.

Marcus was astonished by the comments, and just furthered his belief that racism was existent on the campus of Southeast. He could hardly sleep that night. He was so bothered that he had befriended individuals who thought so badly about his race of people. He wondered "…if they were really my friends and if they felt the same way about me, which they probably did because Obama is brilliant, so if they feel like that about him, they must about all Black people."

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The next morning campus seemed different to Marcus. He recalled more police presence and many White students wearing anti-Obama shirts that read, "Nobama." Many Black students were ecstatic about the outcome and were dressed in Obama t-shirts, pens, and other supportive paraphernalia. He remembered feeling nervous that morning because he felt a tension between many White and Black students and noticed an increase of hostility on campus. Marcus shared his thoughts as he walked to his real estate class that morning:

Campus was so quiet; it was gloomy. I saw police patrolling everywhere and people were either wearing stuff supporting President Obama's victory, or against it with shirts and pins that said, "Nobama." Then when I got to my first class; my real estate class the conversation got heated. People had copies of The New York Times and USA Today because they carried the election. They were reading it and making sighs and shaking their heads. Then before class this guy was like, "Man I cant believe he won man!" He was like, "Barack Obama, who the hell is he, I mean listen to his name, and he's Black." After that most of the white people started yelling and screaming and clapping. I was uncomfortable and there was only me and another Black girl in the class.

In a class with about 60 of his White peers, Marcus was hesitant to comment on their remarks that day because he felt as a minority; they would gang up on him and make derogatory marks about him as well. He looked toward the professor to correct or reprimand the students for their colorful comments, but instead the professor provoked students by saying that he felt that John McCain should have won the election and that they were right by feeling that Barak Obama was not qualified. As Marcus sat in class flustered, a White male classmate who sat next to him leaned over and began a conversation. Marcus shared his statements:

The guy sitting next to me leaned over and whispered to me, "Hey man, I knew he was going to win the election. McCain was talking about the same stuff that Bush was and then we won't even talk about Sara Palin, man." He was like, "Man, that's what got us messed up man. She messed it up for him." Then he was like, "Don't be bothered by all their comments. It's sad, but some White people still think like it's the 60's and segregation and shit." I was like, wow. But hey, at least he's telling the truth.

Marcus spent the next hour in class disgusted by some of the things he heard from his classmates. From his perspective, it was like he wasn't even there. His classmates and his professor continued to go on to bash Obama. He noticed that at one point the Black female in the class got up and walked out of class. Marcus envied her, wishing he too had the courage to get up and remove himself from the insensitivity that was taking place within that classroom. After enduring the oppressive nature of the classroom discussion, Marcus walked across campus to his next class with a sense of anxiety. He hoped he would not have to endure such conversations in the rest of his classes. He was truly distraught about what had just taken place in his real estate course, and tried to move on from the mental strain that he was dealing with due to his classmate's comments. On his way to his next class, he called his roommate to inform him about what had just taken place in real estate class. "I knew that was going to happen," Marcus's roommate told him. "I knew that when he got elected that they were going to be saying stuff about him. Man Marcus, it's just something we have to get used to here."

When attempting to articulate the effect of the experience on him as an individual, Marcus expressed:

Man, that experience all together made me scared and I was nervous after listening to their comments and seeing all the negative responses, this guy, President Obama might

actually get killed. White people seemed that angry with him winning. It began when he

was elected, I even heard some White folks say that they hope that he gets killed. I also

thought that this made me realize that racism is not done. Because I used to think before

moving to the United States that racism was okay now and it was something in the past;

like it wasn't that bad. I figured it was bad sometimes, but overall I thought and felt that

White people were pretty acceptable of Black people. But after the elections I thought

like hey man, it's still here in this country; it's still here at Southeast for sure. Overall, the

whole situation made me get back to that reality; made me realize that racism is still

around and I don't think that it's going anywhere.

Marcus was evidentially affected by the events that took place on the campus of

Southeast University as a result of the 2008 Presidential Election. The racially charged

comments of his peers caused him to recognize racism, as it exists on the campus of Southeast

University. It also made him question his friendships with many of his White classmates and

reluctant to establish new relationships with others. The blatant disrespect and racially charged

comments of his White peers on Facebook made him reconsider their genuineness as friends.

When asked to reflect on the meaning he constructed after his experience, Marcus shared:

My feelings about racism make me hate the fact that I am black. Being black is my

heritage and culture but I hate it when racism makes me feel lesser than a white man. My

feelings after the election still remain the same. Now that it has been some time since the

election I have learned to love being black and I am glad that my president is black.

Although some white folks are cool, it's the other ones who make me feel like they're

better than me because of their socio economic privilege and their culture that I don't

care for. I just hate that Black people still have to go through this. I will never forget Nov.

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4th 2008 because I saw how racial tension could cause a divide at Southeast University at

it made me feel uncomfortable being here.

Marcus's Perception of the Campus Climate

It is quite evident that Marcus's experience during the 2008 Presidential Elections caused

him to develop a new understanding of racism and how it exists on the campus of Southeast

University. His experience had such an affect on him that his level of comfort at the university

was negatively altered. Since his experience he has developed a new outlook on many campus

spaces that were once locations he considered safe and welcoming.

When asked to take pictures that represent his feelings about the campus climate, he

opted to take pictures of locations in which the aforementioned alter in feelings occurred. One

space that Marcus used to frequently visit, prior to the events on Election Day, was a study space

in his residence hall (see figure 9). Prior to the 2008 presidential election, Marcus often used the

space to prepare for tests and complete course assignments, but the level of slander and racially

charged comments Marcus encountered in the study space the days following the election of

President Obama, made him no longer desire to make use of the area.

Figure 9. Basement study space

When articulating the events that took place that evening, Marcus shared:

A couple of days after the election maybe like two or three days later, I was sitting down in the study space in the basement of my residence hall; I was trying to study for a class. There's a small room next to the space I usually sit at and this guy; this white dude was in the study room with some friends talking about the elections and he was really angry. I'm sure he thought I wasn't listening, but I was listening to everything he was saying. He was saying some really vulgar stuff; like some real racist stuff. I don't think I feel comfortable saying it. He was saying stuff like, "Why'd that blank have to become president, like that blank is not even qualified." I don't feel comfortable saying the word he used so I won't, but he was talking to a bunch of other White people who were in there with him. They all had racist things to say about President Obama. These guys were

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studying, and then they keep quiet and shut the door once they realized I was there, but I could still hear them talking about it and cursing. I was like dang man; I was really sad about what I heard them saying. You know that made me feel like I wasn't like really proud of being black in that time man. I was like man; I can't believe he just said that. But in a way, I was happy because Obama won so a Black man is president; so it was like in your face, for all you are saying, he's still president.

Marcus also decided to take a picture of Samson Quad (see figure 10), the same quad where he and other students watched the broadcast of the Election Day results.

Figure 10. Samson quad

Although Marcus was already skeptical about socializing on Samson Quad because of the historic perception that Blacks didn't socialize there, the events that took place on the evening of

the presidential elections, made Marcus feel even more uncomfortable about the space. He shared:

> Samson Quad, that was where we watched the election when the results came out. The Black folks where jumping and yelling, you know we were very happy. The White folks where very quiet, they were looking at us in anger and some were cursing. There usually ain't no black people on Samson Quad anyway, so we were already uncomfortable being there. But that day we were so excited we just were like forget it. Usually the White folks just play Frisbee and anytime any Black folks try and use the space, they say that they are about to use it or we're in their way. When I stayed over by Samson Quad, some friends and me would try and play football there and we would be told that they were about to use the entire space. It's an unspoken rule on campus that the only time Black folks can use Samson Quad is for tailgating during homecoming. That's what people say.

Summarizing Marcus.

As a child, raised in Nigeria, Marcus only learned about racism as a result of conversations with his family and through documentaries viewed at school. It wasn't until he moved to the states and attended a majority White high school that he learned about the nature of racism as it exists in the U.S. Once he became a student at Southeast, Marcus dealt with the anxiety of transitioning into an environment where he recognized the small percent of other Blacks. However, Marcus was able to successfully integrate himself into the campus by establishing meaningful friendships with peers. It wasn't until the 2008 presidential election; which took place during his freshmen year, that Marcus experienced what he felt was racism. The effect of the occurrence of events that took place was insuperable, resulting in feelings of fear and self-degradation for Marcus. Marcus began to dislike his identity as Black man and

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develop feelings of indifference towards his White peers. Regardless of these feelings Marcus kept a positive outlook on Southeast, developing more of an appreciation for the academic experience and less for the social. Marcus reflected about his feelings about Southeast after his experience and discussed his apprehension towards his White peers:

> I still like Southeast pretty much. I mean there's a bunch of folks at Southeast that are still cool. I still go to football and basketball games with my friends and we have a good time. I don't love Southeast, but I love the educational part of it because it's kind of challenging in a way and it's preparing me for my career. I feel like at Southeast if you come from the purposes of studying and getting your degree than you can't be concerned about the other stuff that comes up. The racist stuff is just what we have to deal with. So I don't feel bad about being here Southeast and I'm not angry about Southeast, but after that experience during my freshmen year with the election, I'm still not like extra excited about it either. My feelings about White folks here are mixed man. I feel like some white people are really; they're nice man, and then I've seen some White people that are crazy man, like, oh Jesus. Some of them are crazy they just do and say stuff and don't think about it before hand. They say racist and they don't think about how it will hurt people; but it does hurt somebody. And then there are some white people who don't even care at all about hurting us.

Emerging Trend from Marcus's Story

Declining sense of pride.

Throughout Marcus's story he often referred to disliking his identity as a Black male due to the racially charged events that took place during the 2008 presidential election. Although Marcus was taught by his parents to be a proud strong Black-Nigerian man, Marcus allowed his

White peers negative images and perceptions of Blacks affect his personal sense of pride and esteem. When asked to reflect about how his experiences affected his feelings about being a Black man in America, Marcus shared:

> Man, I'm not going to lie; it's scary man. In a way I feel like we as Black men have a lesser chance of getting a really good job here in America. That makes me dislike the fact that I'm Black sometimes. I mean, I've taken classes now and I've seen a lot of studies and they say even a white male with a criminal will get a job faster than a Black man without a criminal record. So hearing that and seeing what people think about us as Black men has made me really scared and very skeptical.

When asked about how the process of taking the photos made Marcus feel, he shared:

> I mean, when I was taking the pictures and thinking about all the places on campus where I felt racial tension, it actually reminded me of being black man and how hard it can be. It made me think about how it would be easier sometimes if we didn't exist because so many people seem to think negatively about us.

Marcus also discussed the existence of negative self-imagery in regards to being a Black male when he told the story about over hearing his White peers discuss the election results while he was studying in the basement of his residence hall. It can be inferred that Marcus's positive sense of self as it relates to being a Black man has been negatively affected by his experiences with racism on campus, and have caused him to question many of the inequalities that exist for Black men in America.

Introducing Remy

My interview with Remy began, today, Thursday, December 2, 2010 somewhere around noon. Although the sun was shining brightly, a frigid chill still existed within the air. The cold

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wind, hit my clean and raw shaven face as I traveled along the bus route to meet with Remy this morning. My interview with Remy was actually scheduled for tomorrow, but since he had a death in the family, we had to reschedule our meeting for today. I arrived in the office a little early and prepared myself for the conversation that was soon to take place. Remy showed up early as well. He arrived seeming nervous and somewhat timid. I could sense a fear and anxiousness in his eyes so I spent some time making sure he was comfortable, and ensuring that he felt capable of actively participating in the study. I realize that discussing racial issues can be stressful and rather scary for some. Since I would tell by his demeanor that he was fairly uneasy, I didn't want to pressure him into doing anything he wasn't comfortable with. After cracking a few jokes to lighten the mood, I could tell that Remy was on board and ready to begin our conversation.

As the conversation began, the interview questions followed a very natural, effortless flow. Remy spoke very highly of his hometown. Although he did recall the existence of subtle racist experiences, he didn't recognize the existence of any overt occurrences of racial inequalities throughout his upbringing. Through his description of his high school years, Remy attempted to personify a very strong demeanor. He explained that he doesn't involve himself with conflict and or drama, which are values he acquired from his parents. From my perspective, Remy comes off as a peacemaker; one who will set his personal feelings aside to ensure that there is peace and calmness. He also came off very young and inexperienced, which in my opinion may have affected his readiness to discuss the racial inequalities he had experienced. Throughout his life, Remy has considered himself a role model and a leader, and has been independent due to his parents' professional responsibilities in the military. Remy struggled a little to articulate himself about his experience, which may come from his lack of experience

with racism, or his lack of processing after the occurrence; since he confessed that he had not discussed the event after it had taken place. Overall, Remy seemed very optimistic about life and about people in general, and appears to be growing into a very confident man. Although it seems that Remy's experience with racism did not result in any meaningful epiphanies, he was able to move forward without experiencing any negative outcomes associated with a racist encounter. His ability to do so speaks volumes.

Small Town, Big Experience: Remy's Story

Remy, a second-year student at Southeast hesitantly sat across from me and began to tell his story. Somewhat timorous and indifferent, Remy started off the conversation:

My name is Remy and I come from a small town called Poplar. Everyone knows everyone in Poplar; it's a nice place. The people there are nice as well; it's a really great place to live. I still have my friends there and we all get along regardless of race. It's down to earth, really southern, tons of farms. Poplar used to be the place to go; the place you wanted to be. There were tons of things to do and as time went by all that deteriorated when we had a tornado come through in 2007; it basically destroyed the city. Many Businesses went out of business and the only thing there that really makes it an attractive place is the good school system. So, there's not really much where people can just have an interest and try new things because there's not much going on anymore.

As a small rural town in the southeast region of the state, Poplar provided a level of comfort and familiarity for Remy. Although, small and rural, Poplar was home to what Remy considered to be a diverse population of residence. "Poplar is about 50 percent White, 30 percent African American, and the rest is others such as Mexicans and Asians," Remy explained. Remy recalls the town being a place of harmony and equality, not able to recollect on any evident issues of

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race related issues as a child. However, growing up Remy did recognize the social economic differences that existed between different racial groups. He shared:

It was a mix. The rich ones are mainly those that own the business and can afford to live in the city. Most of them are White and some Asian. They can also afford for their kids to go to the private schools In Poplar; which are really good. Some Black people in Poplar are middle class, I mean not too rich, but not too poor. However, there are more independent ones; those who make little to no money. You know those who can barely get by. There's also Mexicans in the poor class, because there are a lot of projects in Poplar, there are a lot of housing projects, a lot of lower class. So, it's a mix.

Regardless the socioeconomic gap that exists between various racial groups in Poplar, Remy could only recall one incident when he felt race was a factor in the way he was treated by his peers. He described his feelings:

Poplar is that town where everyone, knows everyone, and everyone is really friendly so, it's really hard to come across racism. That doesn't mean it doesn't occur because there are some places where it can occur in town. I can give an example. There's a private school in Poplar that's majority White. Out of like 1000 students there's probably like one of two African Americans there throughout the entire K-12. I had some friends who went there and I went there one day after school just to have fun with some of my friends from my high school; Poplar-Sumter High School. I was the only African American in my group of friends. And I noticed when we were hanging outside of the school that I was given some really uncomfortable looks because I guess they don't normally see an African American there and they were looking like, "Wow, who is he?" But I guess that's due to beliefs and the fact that the richer White people didn't really deal with a lot of the

African Americans a lot, and haven't since the past. But besides that, it was very rare that you come across racism in Poplar because everyone knows and loves everyone.

Remy, the youngest child of two military parents, was raised to be independent and self-sufficient. His parents' busy work schedules often kept them away from home, leaving Remy to be raised mostly by his two older sisters. You could tell by the spark in his eyes that his family and his sisters meant the world to him. When asked to discuss the importance of family, Remy shared:

> I'm big a family guy. I am nothing without my family, especially my two older sisters; I love them dearly. As I was growing up I did not have the common childhood. My parents both worked for the government so, I rarely got a chance to see them. And so I was basically independent since I was a younger kid, and once my sisters were off to college and moved out. I had a set routine every day. I'd just wake up, go to school, comeback home, feed my dog, do homework and go to bed. And so, that's was basically it. I did not get to see my parents as much, so they were not as involved in my life. I don't blame them for it, it's just they had to do some things they have to do and I respect them for that because they've taught me to have high morals, standards and to set goals. As I got older and it was time for me to go to college I knew that I had to set very high standards for myself; so I knew I had to really set the bar high for myself. So I kept making the grades in school; I had the many friends, people who liked me and stuff. I got involved in the community and it benefited in the long run. I learned how important that was through the lessons I learned from my parents.

As a child, Remy learned little from his parents about the existence of racism in America. Being raised in a close-knit small southern town, Remy's family felt little need to discuss racism

with him as a child. As a semi-segregated city, Poplar residents typically resided in homogenous neighborhoods and spent little time socializing across racial groups. However, the diversity within the town's school district allowed for students from varying ethnic and racial groups to socialize; which from Remy's perspective, allowed for the decrease in racist experiences.

As Remy grew older he recalled his parents discussing racism as an inevitable aspect of American culture. Although they never provided any contextual examples of how racism has impacted Black Americans, he recalls instances in which his parents conversed about the daunting existence of racism in America. In spite of their personal feelings about racism, Remy's parents encouraged him to remain open-minded and welcoming to all individuals regardless of race. "I wouldn't say they taught me anything specific about Racism," Remy shared. He continued to explain:

> Their lessons were more a general outline of how to treat people. I was told that I would probably encounter racism during my life, you know, it's going to happen; it's something that can't be controlled. However, I was told to always remain on the high road and never look down on others because of race; always treat them respectful.

In high school Remy was able to develop friendships with his White peers. Seeing that Poplar was a small town, he had attended school with majority of his high school peers since childhood. Remy's social life flourished in high school, as he involved himself in numerous clubs and community service opportunities. As a self-proclaimed leader, peers considered Remy a role model. Remy continuously sought to exemplify high moral and ethical standards through his actions and everyday decision-making.

As Remy ended high school, he began the college selection process. He knew that his parents expected him to attend college, and was given full autonomy to select a school that best

met his academic and personal needs. Growing up in a small town, Remy desired to attend a large institution, preferably out of state. However the convenience and affordability of Southeast made his decision to attend much easier. Remy went into great detail about his though process as he considered his education options:

> Before I came to Southeast I realized that, it was not my first choice. I know that sounds really bad seeing that I go here. My actual first choice was the University of Texas. I love Texas and though that it was an amazing school, but I knew that it would be really expensive. Plus Southeast is the best college in the state and has really high standards, like the Terry College of Business and the Law School. So I was like, okay, why not go. I knew going to Southeast would be different because Oxford is a really big classic city of lights and Poplar is not. It's small and really country.

With the hesitation of attending college in a large city, Remy arrived on freshmen move in day and was astonished by what he found. Although many of Remy's high school friends were also attending Southeast, he developed a sense of hesitation when he recognized the large percent of White students who made up the majority of the undergraduate population. Remy was accustomed to a much more diverse education environment and was somewhat disillusioned when he recognized few other Black students moving into his residence hall. He also experienced some difficulty transitioning because of his inability to connect socially with some of his White peers. In high school race was not a variable in establishing new friendships, but as Remy recognized the hesitation of Whites to engage with him socially, he began to question the role of racial stereotypes as a factor in limiting his ability to develop meaningful relationships. He described his feelings during his first year transition:

I came to Southeast and I moved in during freshmen move in day, I was blown away because I look around and didn't see any other African Americans moving in. This is freshmen year, in Abbott Hall. I looked around and I saw many Whites. It was really overwhelming because I rarely walked across an African Americans; let alone African American males. When I got to my room I found that my roommate was a White guy. He gave me no initial problems when moved in; we got along fine. But I did feel like he never wanted to hang out with me around campus. When I got here I think that I found it hard socially. I found it hard to make friends with white students, like my roommates friends. They just acted like they didn't want to be friends with me. I think socially, I stuck out like a sore thumb. I was stereotyped a lot. I hate to say it, but my roommate's friends stereotyped me a lot. I would get called out a lot because of my country accent; you don't hear many country accent individuals here, so for me to come here and have it and for them to hear it, I just got called out a lot. I feel like they heard my accent and saw I was African American and thought I was dumb or something. Then with that going on, it was hard to walk around campus and never walk across an African American male. So socially I was not happy because I could see that the White students did not want to be around me. I was able to develop friendships with other African American students, but I was used to being friends with everyone.

As Remy's freshmen year progressed, he continued to experience issues developing friendships with his White peers. His inability to construct meaningful relationships with Whites ultimately affected his perception of the social climate, causing him to discontinue any efforts to establish new associations. Remy remained close with high school friends, socializing with them often. Although, Remy had experienced subtle discrimination, he hadn't dealt with any overt

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forms of racism until he decided to escort a group of White female friends to a fraternity party one Friday evening during the spring semester of his freshmen year.

Remy's Experience

As a loyal friend, Remy felt obligated to escort his three female friends to their first fraternity party. According to Remy, these were three friends he had known since high school. He explained, "One of the girls went to the private school I talked about earlier in Poplar; we were in a city-wide organization together and so we became great friends. The other two went to my high school." Although the fraternity scene conflicted with Remy's personal morals, he felt compelled to ensure his high school friends got to and from the party safely. Remy explained, " My friends felt that I was responsible and knew that I didn't drink, so I was designated as the driver; they wanted to go to a Pi Kappa Phi party. And since I care about my friends, I agreed." So that evening Remy drove over to pick his friends up from their residence hall. As the three friends entered the car he could smell the strong sent of hard alcohol secreting from their pours. At that moment Remy rest assured, knowing that his decision to accompany them was advantageous to their safety. As the three women giggled and joked as Remy drove to the party, he became hesitant. He thought, "How is this going to go? I mean, I've tried to be friends with frat guys and they never are open to it, so how are they going to treat me at their own party?" Nevertheless, Remy knew that his sole purpose for attending the party that night was to take care of his friends. Remy discussed his lack of reluctance during our conversation:

> I didn't think about it initially; my first concern was their safety. I wanted to make sure
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> they were able to get home and not get in trouble. I'm not much of a partier and I was not
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> planning on partying or drinking or any of that. I really didn't care that it was a White

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fraternity at first until I thought about how they may treat me. But I just stayed cool

because their safety was the only thing on my mind.

The fraternity house was only about a five-minute ride from campus. As Remy pulled up the

party he noticed the party was crowded, which was evident by the countless numbers of cars

jammed into an awkwardly shaped parking lot located behind the house. As Remy helped his

three stumbling friends out of the car, a knot began to develop in his stomach. He recognized that

all the other students entering the party were White and he suddenly became overtaken by fear as

they walked toward the front door. Remy described his first reaction when entering the party:

> So I went to this party and I made sure they were okay. I look around and it was crowded
>
> and the music was blaring, but sadly I didn't see any other African Americans. As we
>
> walked through the foyer, I got looks and I heard whispers. I felt awkward and kind of
>
> uncomfortable as well. I mean this was the first time that I had tried to party with frat
>
> guys since coming to Southeast and I could tell that it wasn't going to turn out pretty, but
>
> I still kept going in; I made sure I stayed with my friends.

After walking through the crowd, Remy separated from his friends. "They wanted to dance and

walk around, and I just wanted to find a seat and wait until they were ready to go," he explained.

Remy found a seat on an old hunter green couch in one of the side rooms. Although the room

was crowded and the music was piercingly loud, it was one of the only available seats in the

house. Remy sat down alone and began to observe the semi-old house. "It was pretty dirty,"

Remy described. "There were beer cans everywhere and food and trash, and on the couch I was

sitting on there were old stains. Overall, the house was in bad shape."

As Remy sat on the couch, occasionally checking his cell phone for new text messages, a

group of three White males walked by and halted when they spotted Remy. "They were

obviously drunk," stated Remy. "They were leaning on each other to keep from falling and they had beers in their hands. One of them had a cup in one hand and a beer in the other." Remy did not recognize the guys, but figured they may have recognized him from class or from his residence hall. All of sudden, out of nowhere the guy in the middle said, "Oh my God, there's a Nigger here." Remy was shocked. "That was my first time actually hearing that come out of anyone's mouth, so it was kind of overwhelming," Remy explained. The two other guys laughed, whispered something to each other and walked off leaving Remy dumbstruck and alarmed. Remy sat there and pondered the event that had just taken place. He reminisced about his reaction:

> At the initial time I felt uncomfortable, even more uncomfortable than I already did and I wanted to leave. However, I knew that I had the keys and I was designated driver and I told my friends that I would drive them, so I decided I had to stay. However, I wanted to go find them and lash back, but I didn't because that's just not my style and because I was the only African American there and I was doubtful that no one else, except my friends would have had my back. So, I just, just kept going with the night and let that one go.

> Remy continued to sit on the couch for what seemed like few hours until his friends came and found him half asleep. He could tell they were having a great time and didn't want to ruin their evening by sharing his experience with them, so he decided to keep the experience to himself. He shuffled his overly intoxicated friends back to his car, drove back to campus, escorted them safely to their rooms and continued his journey back to his residence hall.

> As Remy lied in the bed that night, he pondered about his experience. Between the struggles he had encountered when attempting to make friends with his White freshmen peers

and being called a Nigger, Remy questioned his purpose at Southeast and felt hurt about having

to deal with such racism. As Remy reflected on his experience and the impact that it has had on

him since, he shared:

> Overall, it was disappointing because I didn't think anyone would stoop that low to say
>
> racial names, especially at a college such as this. I had already accepted the fact that
>
> many of my White classmates were uneasy about being my friend, but I would have
>
> never thought that anyone would have used the N-word against me. I just didn't expect
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> for people to go so low to state such a thing about me and I just don't tolerate stuff like
>
> that, but understanding where I am and as a minority, I had no choice but to accept it. So
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> it took a lot for me to just to accept it and move on. Maybe it is not always direct racism
>
> on campus, but there is a vibe of racism that I feel here. It is a strong vibe and it is
>
> something that I took much time to get use to and cope with throughout my time here. I
>
> have learned that there are some individuals who lovingly accept me for my African-
>
> American background, but there are also those individuals who still question my
>
> existence and whether I will make it here. I have learned to just stop caring what they
>
> think or what they do and just do what's best for me regardless.

The meaning Remy constructed from his experience negatively impacted his perception of the

campus climate as it relates to racially charged incidents. He was able to conceptually develop a

tolerance for racism, which caused him to accept these acts as normal and excusable.

Furthermore, Remy's experience allowed him to develop a greater sense of self gratification by

focusing more energy on what was best for him and worrying less about the ideas or actions of

others.

Remy's Perception of the Campus Climate

Although Remy has felt isolated from developing meaningful relationships with many of his White peers, he has still been able to successfully involve himself in many campus organizations. As an active member of the Student Alumni Council, Student Academic Honesty Council, and the Economic Society, Remy developed an appreciation for the benefits of student involvement and engagement early in his collegiate career. Developing friendships with fellow organization members who belong to other multicultural populations has been somewhat simple for Remy, but making connections with White peers within his student groups has remained a challenge. His experience in establishing friendships has been troublesome for Remy, causing him to create an uneasy feeling about student organizations that racially segregate their memberships, which from his perspective happens quite frequently within historically White fraternities and sororities. When attempting to describe his feelings about the campus climate as it relates to race relations between Black and White students, Remy elected to take a picture of a fraternity house (see figure 11).

Figure 11. Fraternity house

The combination of his negative experience in developing friendships and the occurrence of a racially charged event caused Remy to grow an unfavorable perception of the campus social life. Although he appreciates his educational experience, he has deemed his social experience as "uneventful," which in turn caused him to develop an adverse opinion of the university. When describing his internal feelings about members of White Greek lettered organizations and their effect on the campus climate, Remy shared:

> I don't want to be associated with the White Greek organizations on campus. I don't want to have to even come in contact with them or do anything that is associated with them because I know and I've experienced some crazy things that go in their house that are race related. Since there aren't many African Americans involved with those groups, they

are not adding to the diversity on campus; and they probably don't care to anyway. I

don't see the point of them. I mean this is not an attack on African American fraternities,

because I've actually come in contact with an African American fraternity that has a few

Whites in them, but the White fraternities and sororities don't ever allow African

Americans in their organizations. I understand they're social groups, and it's evident that

they want to only socialize with their race, but if we're supposed to be supporting

diversity on campus, I think they are not helping by discriminating against Blacks. To be

honest, I think any and every White fraternity is part of the problem because there

shouldn't be an organization or group on campus for just a certain race and that makes

others, such of myself feel isolated because when I see someone who is part of Pi Kappa

Alpha in their house and their wearing the gear and showing themselves off it makes me

feel like I can never be a part of that because I'm Black.

Summarizing Remy.

Prior to enrolling at Southeast University, Remy had constructed pre-conceived notions

about White fraternities and sororities from stories he had heard from friends. Remy's resolve

about White Greek lettered organizations once he enrolled in Southeast had a lasting impact on

his perception of the campus climate. In addition, Remy felt that the lack of Black students who

attended Southeast made it more socially challenging for those who attended. Additionally, as a

Black male on campus, Remy felt that as a group, Black men were considered "academically

weaker," and weren't perceived to capable of competing scholastically with their White peers. In

attempt to express his overall feelings, Remy explained:

The campus climate is hard because there aren't enough Blacks who get in here. I

understand that maybe it's due to the requirements and that's understandable. But the

school should do a better job; there just needs to be an increase. Honestly, Southeast could become a better place. I would like to see over probably the next 20 to 40 years, a major increase in number of Black males at Southeast, because there aren't many here. For instance, in my entering freshmen class last year, there was only 6.7 percent Black males; which for a large campus like this, that's not a lot. This affected how I felt about Southeast. Initial did not like it, but I've grown to like some aspects of it because I've gotten more involved and made some friends. Well, I wouldn't say I like it, I just like the academic side of it, but the social side is still something that I feel like needs to improve. And being a Black male on this campus is a whole other story. In terms of Black males, I just think we're probably seen as the weaker group, weaker academically. I don't consider myself to be weak, but I feel like some of my White classmates feel that way. They look at you crazy on the bus and don't want to work with you in class, its real noticeable. I'm one that has to show that I'm weak, no matter what it takes.

Being raised in a semi-diverse community caused Remy to feel comfortable developing meaningful relationships with diverse groups of people. However, the opposition he experienced from many of his White peers once arriving to Southeast, impacted his feelings about the university; allowing him to develop a greater understanding for the effect of racism on the socialization of Black students on a predominately White college campus.

Emerging Trend from Remy's Story

The importance of developing friendships.

It became evident throughout Remy's story that the ability to develop meaningful relationships was of great importance to him as he transitioned into his new environment. Remy shared numerous accounts of his desire to develop friendships and the struggles he experienced

when attempting to bond with his White peers. His inability to make friends with his White peers had lasting effects on his opinion of the institution. This phenomenon can best be illustrated best when Remy was describing his inability to establish a friendship with his roommate and his roommates closest friends. Although Remy desired establish a social relationship with this group of students, he was met with hesitation. Remy shared:

> When I got here I think that I found it hard socially. I found it hard to make friends with white students, like my roommates friends. They just acted like they didn't want to be friends with me. I think socially, I stuck out like a sore thumb.

Remy also expressed his inability to develop friendships with White peers when he described the overall effect of his racist experience. He stated:

> Overall, it was disappointing because I didn't think anyone would stoop that low to say racial names, especially at a college such as this. I had already accepted the fact that many of my White classmates were uneasy about being my friend, but I would have never thought that anyone would have used the N-word against me.

Introducing Mansie

Today is the third day of below freezing temperatures. Today's high is actually 30 degrees, which is kind of rare. Around this time of year temperatures are usually a cool or balmy 50-60 degrees. Needless to say, I bundled up again today. I went to the gym this morning for a grueling fight club class, which is a mix of cardio, weight lifting, and kickboxing techniques combined to make one horrible hour of physical training. The class began at 9:30am, and by 10:00am I was ready to go. I decided to grab a kiwi-strawberry smoothie on my way out of the gym. As I walked to my car in the 25-degree weather I suddenly became excited to conduct today's interview, partly because I know today's participant personally. He is the president of the

student organization I advise, and I have never had a conversation with him about this topic. Secondly, I was anxious to hear another story about how these young brothers deal with issues of racism, discrimination, and prejudice on today's predominately White college campuses. It baffles me, well, no it doesn't, it pisses me off that young Black undergraduates still face some of the same issues and treatment as their predecessors who were only granted admission to these large flagship southern institutions less than 50 years ago; it makes no sense at all. It takes so much for me to not get angry during these interviews. It takes everything I have to not input my own comments or ideologies on them. I just think back to my first Qualitative class, Qualitative 8400 with Dr. Patricia Reeves, and her emphasis on not influencing the comments or remarks of participants for the reason of validity and reliability. Anyway, I digress. After the gym I went home pulled out my grey Banana Republic turtleneck sweater and a pair of grey express jeans, and my black Nike sneakers. Before deciding to battle the cold air, I put on my Black Old Navy Pea coat, and my grey and red H&M scull cap. Let's just say I was styling today. I decided to take the bus to my interview site because I got a ticket yesterday for parking in an undesignated parking lot, what a way to start out the holidays. As I got off the bus and headed towards the interview site, I decided to run into one of the many dining halls on campus to have a quick lunch before my interview. Besides the smoothie I grabbed after the gym, I hadn't eaten all morning. I scurried into the dining hall, to find it overly crowded. I wasn't up to navigating my way around the cafeteria to find a table, but I decided to go ahead and tough it out because I only had 30 minutes to get a wholesome meal, relatively speaking. I grabbed a piece of "herb baked chicken," some mashed potatoes and gravy, and salad from the salad bar. I already had my sustainable water jug with me so my drink was all set. I found a seat, which happened to be at a table with a young woman that was in the fight club class with me earlier at the gym. When I

spoke, she slowly recognized me, and told her friends she didn't recognize me with clothes on, which I found quit funny. I wear clothes in the gym, just limited amounts. Anyway, I looked at my watch and it was 1:15pm, which meant I needed to walk across the street to the interview location. I arrived, set up, and waited on Mansie, who like always was a little early for our interview. He wore a pea coat, a pair of blue jeans, a black scarf, and a random Southeast t-shirt.

As our interview began, I knew that it would take a little coaching to get Mansie engaged in the interview. Although I knew he was very passionate about the topic, he and I had never discussed his experiences. After coaxing him a little, and cracking a few jokes to set his mind at ease, he fully engaged, and shared a lot about his experiences and opinions. Overall, the interview was great and lasted about 45 minutes. I am excited about my findings this far, but I am even more excited about sharing them with others because these stories and situations are real and professionals, students, and society in general need hear about what young brothers are facing as they pursue higher education. One thing that Mansie said to me today was about the roadblock that racism places in front of many undergraduate Black men. He explained that no matter how smart or driven they are, undergraduate Black men not only have to deal with the transitional and life issues that all college students face, but they have to constantly be concerned about their non-black peers treating them different because of the color of their skin. His comments were moving and powerful to me. If only more professionals, and administrators could have heard him make that statement. I guess it is my job to make sure they do hear it through his narrative.

The Added Pressure: Mansie's Story

As an academically strong third-year political science major, Mansie has come a long way from his days of living in a lower class neighborhood in Opelousas, Louisiana. Mansie can

vividly recall his days growing up in an all-Black neighborhood, witnessing the occurrence of illegal activities that often take place in many poverty-stricken Black neighborhoods. However, Mansie remembers a strong representation of blue collared and other working professions who attempted to fix the many issues that plagued his neighborhood. Mansie describes his days as a child living in Louisiana:

> I am originally from Opelousas, Louisiana; which is a mostly Black town outside of Baton Rouge. Opelousas actually, was like all Black; you know I actually rarely saw a white person anywhere. In the neighborhood we lived in it was mostly lower class and growing up I remember seeing a lot the illegal activity going on. But there were also a lot of people who had they typically like 9 to 5 job, who worked hard in blue collared type work. There was also an elementary school down the street, and I remember some of the teachers living in our neighborhood. They tried to mentor and clean up the neighborhood, but it was pretty hard for them because they were outnumbered. But it wasn't anything major like that. Most of the people in my neighborhood actually taught up the street at the elementary school, so I had a lot of teachers in my neighborhood also.

Being raised in a majority Black neighborhood kept Mansie somewhat sheltered from any direct experiences with racial inequalities. However, as a child Mansie often wondered why the Black people within his neighborhood struggled economically in comparison to some of his White classmates families who seemed to be financially well off. During our conversation, Mansie recalled one instance in which he learned as young child that race was a factor. He described that experience:

> There was one incident when race and racism first became apparent to me. I was in elementary school and my grandmother taught me in elementary actually and the

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assistant principal wrote me up for a fight that I was even involved in. So when I went

and told my grandmother that I wasn't even there on the playground when the fight

happened. My grandmother went to the assistant principal to find out what had happened

and was like, "How is this possible because Mansie was in class during this time?" And

the assistant principal said that all she knew was that it was a group of Black kids who

had started the fight, and apparently I had to have something to do with it because all of

the Black kids egg on fights at the school. I wasn't there and I didn't even know who was

fighting or what was even going on. After school that day my grandmother was upset and

told me that its sad that racism still affects how even teachers and administrators treat

students. She apologized to me for it happening and was just like make sure you hang

with the right group of people because even though I wasn't near the fight, just the fact

that I'm Black will make people always accuse me of things.

Toward the end of elementary school Mansie's mother was ready for a change in environment.

The crime in her neighborhood and the glass ceiling that seemed to keep her from progressing,

urged her to make a very difficult decision. Additionally, Mansie's mother was determined to get

her son out of the crime stricken neighborhood in Louisiana so he may have a chance to secure a

better future than many of his peers and family members. So around the age of twelve, Mansie

and his mother relocated to a diverse middle class suburb located in the southeast. Located only

20 minutes from a thriving urban metropolis; Brownstone offered a new opportunity and new

chance at life for Mansie and his mother. Mansie described his transition to his new

neighborhood:

When I moved to Brownstone, it was a huge transition. And even though in my

neighborhood everybody was welcoming and everything it was still different to what I

was used to. So it was a culture shock for me when I came here. The community was actually very diverse, a mixture of Black, White, Asian and Hispanic. We had a mixture of everyone. It wasn't predominately white, not predominately black, so it was good and I was glad to be able to meet friends who weren't all like me.

Mansie's desire to interact with a diverse group of peers was due the influence of his mother and grandmother. Being raised solely by his mother and grandmother, allowed Manise to develop a great deal of respect and admiration for their personal beliefs and ideologies around race relations. Although, Mansie has embraced the ideas of his mother and grandmother, his personal perceptions, opinions and experiences have jaded his ability to fully immerse himself in the objectiveness of their beliefs and ideologies. Specifically, Mansie shared the messages he received as a child about the treatment of all people:

> They [mother and grandmother] taught me to be open; to just be open-minded with everything and everyone regardless of their differences. That was coming from my grandmother, who was a teacher, so she had to learn to be open and excepting of everyone. Overall, they just wanted me to adopt that type of state of mind. Then my mom, she the police, she had to be the same way. She taught me to just be open-minded. But I don't know if they experienced things I've experienced as a Black male, so as much as I appreciate and have adopted their stances, I can't just accept that approach.

During high school, Mansie became adequately adjusted to the cultural differences that existed between his community in Louisiana and his new environment. The diversity Mansie recognized throughout his high school, allowed him to develop a new appreciation for the benefits of socializing and befriending those from various ethnic and cultural groups. Mansie went on to describe his perceptions of his experiences in high school:

I thought High school was fine. I learned a lot about other races and I appreciated that.

There were a lot of people I could relate to in high school regardless of their race, which

was a good thing. The White people there were fine and we all got along. I had a lot of

honors classes with a lot of them and I didn't ever feel any type of racism or anything

with the group of people I had in high school. Actually, I had more White friends there in

high school than I do now in college. I will say that many of the White and Black

students didn't hang out a lot though. The White students were always in the honors

classes, and they only knew a few of us, Black guys, who were in honors classes too. So

if you were a Black dude and you weren't in their classes than they probably didn't know

you. I mean in my school we also had the Black guys that fit the stereotypes; walking in

the hall twisting their dreads and outside smoking somewhere, so I'm sure if it wasn't for

the few of us in the honors classes they probably would have thought we all were like

that.

Mansie's academic ability during high school set him apart from many other Black males in his

school. He was often type casted as "different," and often carried the burden of being a role

model and example for his other Black peers. His White classmates frequently referred to him as

"different," which caused him to wonder what they really thought about Black men in general.

This became the point in which Mansie began to really question the role of stereotypes in the

perpetuation of racism.

As Mansie continued to do well academically throughout high school, he concluded that

Southeast University would be the only school in the state that he felt would challenge him

intellectually. Additionally, he was able to secure a scholarship that covered tuition as long as he

was able to maintain a cumulative grade point average above a 3.0. Although Mansie had heard

from friends about the low percent of Black students who attended Southeast, his ability to develop comfort with Whites during high school made him feel much more capable of navigating the university as a minority.

Once enrolled at Southeast, Mansie was able to develop many relationships with other Black students on campus, but found that the Whites who attended Southeast weren't as open and accepting as his high school friends. This dynamic affected his opinion of his White peers, causing him to totally immerse himself within the Black culture and community at the university. He found relief form the predominately White campus by engaging and involving himself in activities sponsored by the Black Cultural Center on campus. "I joined only Black organizations," Mansie shared. " I joined Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated, and became the president of the African American Male Leadership Society." Overall, Mansie was pretty content with his college experience and did not experience anything that he would consider racist until the fall semester of his junior year when he was left unselected for a group project.

Mansie's Experience

It was the fall semester and beginning of Mansie's junior year at Southeast. He was excited to begin his first semester of courses strictly around his major, Political Science. "There's not many Black political science majors here on campus," Mansie explained. "So I was somewhat nervous because politics can be a scary topic when you add race on top of it."

Mansie awoke that Thursday morning, and prepared for his first class of the day. "This class, Political Science 4070 started at 9:45am on Tuesdays and Thursdays in Baldwin Hall," Mansie shared as he attempted to provide detailed descriptions of his experience. It was the third week of the semester, and according to the syllabus, today's class would be focused on a voting project, which required the class of mostly White third year students to organize themselves in

groups of four. It was a hot September morning, and as Mansie drove to campus that morning he thought, "Man, I wonder how class is going to go today? I mean talking about voting is never an easy subject, especially in a class full of conservative southerners." Manise had experienced heated conversations in class before, but had rarely commented due to his level of discomfort in the class. He discussed his feelings in class:

> There was only me and another Black girl in the class, and I was always reluctant to talk because I feel like they were going to jump on me or judge me and my opinions. I'm sure they already thought I was the angry Black man.

Mansie went on to describe the events that transpired in class this specific day:

> I was just a regular day, regular Tuesday, Thursday schedule, so before heading to class I was at home getting ready. In class, we were discussing a project we had to do about voting and we spent the class talking about how voting is really a waste of your time. That idea is what our professor was trying to get us to see through the discussion. And so after we, or should I say the class, talked for awhile, he was like, "Okay, I need you all to divide yourself into groups of four." And the project was to come up with pros and cons for like voting and also to talk about demographics as to who would be more willing to vote and stuff like that. And so, as the class is mostly white, and there's like me and one other African American female in the class, so I was hoping I wouldn't have problems finding a group because this was our first project. So I sat in my seat and was just searching around for a group. I thought that I would have just been in a group with the people who sat at my table, but it didn't go that way. And so, they all got into a group with people around the room, and whatever. I don't know if they knew each other from pass levels of classes or whatever, but they ended up getting in different groups. None of

the three white girls I sat with at my table even looked at me or asked me if I wanted to

start a group. Two of them started a group together, and the other one went and joined a

group with two other White folks. So after it was all said and done, it was just me and

one other person, an older Asian man, without a group.

Without a group, Mansie sat at his table confused and perplexed. He wondered why his three

White peers who sat at his table didn't want to work with him on the project. He had sat with

them for two weeks and had actively taken notes and paid attention during class, so he knew that

they couldn't have thought he was incapable of completing the tasks associated with the project.

He explained:

I mean I was confused because I've talked to them before in class. And they see that I'm

on my business. I take notes, pay attention and participate. So I don't know why we

didn't form our own little group together. In my opinion it was because I was the one

Black dude in the class and it was obvious that they didn't want to work with me.

Puzzled by the events that had taken place, Mansie approached the professor about his inability

to secure a group. Dr. Gilmore, the professor, instructed Mansie that he would assign him to a

group next Tuesday when class resumed. Mansie knew that the project was due the following

Thursday, so putting him into a group on Tuesday would present an obstacle since he would only

have one day to contribute to the assignment. But entrusting his fate with his professor, he left

class still confounded about what had transpired.

Mansie arrived early to class on Tuesday to ensure he could talk to Dr. Gilmore before

class began. The syllabus that day instructed teams to sit together and use class time to work on

their projects. As his classmates filed in and sat in their groups, Mansie recognized many groups

of only three people. He knew that his classmates had saw him sitting alone the week before and

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wondered why no one had offered him to join their group. Mansie went on to describe what happened next:

> Once Dr. Gilmore entered the room, I reminded him that I wasn't in a group. He was like, "Oh yeah I assigned you to this group right here." He pointed to a group of three White girls on the right front side of the class. They looked up when they saw him point to them, and one of them actually looked at him and said, "We already have a group together that we're comfortable with, and we don't want to work with him." I was shocked they said that, but not surprised. White folks always think that we're not smart or able, like we didn't get accepted for the same reasons they did. Dr. Gilmore didn't respond, and just repeated, "He's in your group." I walked over there and humbly introduced myself, even though I was pissed at what they had said. They introduced themselves in a half ass manner and then they gave me a rundown of everything they had done. Their run down was real basic and they didn't want me to really do anything. So it was like they thought that I was stupid or something, like I wasn't able to handle any real responsibilities. I had to keep asking questions and offering to do more. They kept telling me that they had it, so they didn't need me to do more.

Class ended, and Mansie left feeling baffled and angry. He thought, "How could these White girls treat me like I'm stupid; like I don't have a 3.8 grade point average, a grade point average probably higher than theirs." Their treatment confirmed his thoughts about his White peers. "I always felt like they thought I was stupid because I'm a Black man," Mansie shared. "Like we aren't capable academically, like the only thing we can do is run at this school is run a football."

Mansie walked across campus to the one place he felt welcomed and comfortable, The Black Cultural Center. There he found comfort from a small group of friends who were

congregating in the lounge area. Mansie couldn't wait to share his experience, although he knew that his peers would have no compassion for him, since instances like these were common on the campus of Southeast University. Mansie sat on the couch with somewhat of a defeatist attitude. He reflected, "It's my junior year, and I'm still dealing with being under-estimated and undervalued, it makes no sense to me; when will this change?" Mansie's friends, quietly listened to his story, and shook their head as he explained his experience in Political Science 4070. During our conversation he summed up their overall statements:

They basically said, "You're the token Black person in class most times. And they didn't think that Black dudes here take school serious." Overall, they felt that this is just what we have to deal with on campus, it's not going to change, and we just have to be there for each other to make sure we can make it until we graduate.

Since the incident in class, Mansie has had time to reflect about the experience and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the meaning he has internally constructed due to his encounter. His feelings about his experience added to the pressure he already felt as a minority at a predominately White university. Although he has attempted to create a supportive network of other Black friends and classmates, he has still internalized feelings of oppression garnered from the maladaptive mentalities of his White peers. When attempting to verbalize his feelings about the experience, Mansie shared:

Dealing with incidents like this, incidents of racism and discrimination are just extra roadblocks that we as Black students have to deal with basically. I think t's worse as a Black guy because society already paints a bad picture of us, and then we come here and all of these White kids believe it; like I'm a dumb-ghetto drug slanging, thieving, thug majoring in Political Science. When you're in school you already have to deal with and

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getting adjusted and making friends, and different organization stuff, and then on top of

that, people treat you different in class. And the entire time, I'm doing all the same things

they're doing and for some reason I'm different; it doesn't make sense to me. Its been

something that has bothered me since I've gotten here, and I guess it will bother me until

I graduate, because I's evident that it's not going to change.

Mansie's written explanation of his feelings after the experience mirrored his above sentiments.

Specifically, Mansie provided the following statement:

The experience that I had in my classroom was very interesting. It was quite upsetting to

see that fellow classmates of mine would think I wasn't qualified to help in a group

project. I was the only person assigned to a group by the professor, which made him think

there was something wrong with me. I felt that it was wrong and that it was clear that I

wasn't chosen because of being a black male. I was one of two African Americans in the

class and people in class selected the other but she was a female. It as if being a black

male they thought I wasn't able to carry my weight in the group. I do the same amount of

work as them and participate in class daily. They will never acknowledge that they didn't

choose me because I was black but the stereotypes they've developed about black males

definitely caused them to not select me the first time. I have to continue to prove myself

to my classmates to show that I am just as capable of doing something as they are. No

matter the color of my skin or gender. I can do just as much as you or even better.

Mansie's Perception of the Campus Climate

Mansie's experience during his Political Science class was not his first incident on

campus where he felt marginalized or stereotyped as a Black male. When asked to select items,

or areas on campus that remind him of the racial tension he encounters on campus, Mansie opted

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to take a picture of a Southeast University Police Car (see figure 12), which represented an experience he endured during his freshmen year, which made him feel uneasy when walking around the university campus.

Figure 12. *Southeast University Police Car*

When describing his experience with the police, Mansie shared:

>One day during the spring semester of my freshmen year, it was late, around two o'clock in the morning, and I was walking back to Roberts Hall, my residence hall, from the Library from studying because it was finals week. And as I crossed the street, the Southeast Police stopped me. And the police officer was like, "There has been some reports of a black males on campus causing trouble. What's your name, where are you from, and what are you doing on campus?" I told him that I was a student and where I

was coming from and all that. His look on his face seemed like he didn't believe me, so then he asked to see my Southeast ID. So I showed it to him, and then he let me go. It was odd to me because I had a backpack and was obvious that I was studying. There were White kids around, but I guess he didn't stop them because he was looking for any and every Black man on campus. I feel like they [Southeast University Police] act different towards students of color, but most of them unfortunately are athletes. I always have been leery of police because of family incidents actually and I've seen the way they have treated other Black males in my family. I feel like police in general focus on you just because you're a black male, you know. Or they're trying to get their numbers, because I mean I'm taking crime and punishment now, so I know how all the correctional stuff works and so its real, they do assume a lot about Black men and its no different on campus. I just think it's sad that those of us here trying to get a degree have to feel uncomfortable like that.

As a member of historically Black fraternity, Mansie had experienced racism, discrimination and prejudice through institutional structures that placed more value and worth on the experiences and needs of those students who belong to traditionally White fraternities and sororities. Mansie felt underserviced and underappreciated as a member of a historically Black fraternity, and discussed the lack of services and financial resources offered to Black groups on campus. When attempting to express the environmental press he felt in the Greek Life office suite, Mansie opted to take a picture of a group of White sorority women using the Greek Life conference room to hold a meeting about rush (see figure 13).

Figure 13. *White sorority women*

Mansie went into greater detail about his rational about taking the picture and the feelings felt when using the office space for organizational needs. Specifically, Mansie shared:

Of course we, the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), share an office with Pan-Hellenic Council and the Inter fraternity Council (IFC) and all of them sometimes are very protective with their things when we all come out of our NPHC meetings. They like, grab their stuff and just move it over or put it under their seats, like were going to steal their stuff. It seems like they're not comfortable, like they feel like, "It's too many of them, so lets just move over to the side or whatever so we don't have to be bothered." Us all sharing the office space is good on some days, but when they have their rush going on,

its like we get strange looks for even being in there. I feel like we, the NPHC, have to

walk on eggshells when they have their rush going on. Because they're giving tours and

all that type of stuff and meeting, so it's like we just really have to be on our best

behavior and it's like it's not even our office space anymore, they become 100 percent

priority. And I'm not surprised about that because at Southeast, the university thinks and

cares more about Pan Hellenic groups and the IFC, and the NPHC is just an afterthought.

We all notice it and we try so hard to make everyone think that we're just as good as they

are and worth the same attention and investment, but that's not what happens. And of

course they get more resources than NPHC. They get more publicity. Overall, they just

get all the stuff that a Greek organization should get while we make it with little

assistance and little support from the university. And I'm not to say that they don't

deserve it, but we do just as much, but it just gets swept under the rug. I mean we do

community service; we go out and do programs for the campus and stuff like that, but we

definitely don't get as much attention as Pan-Hellenic and IFC. Maybe it's like

everything else on this campus, they just feel like we're not able; like we're not able to

compete with them or we're not qualified.

Mansie's opinion about the campus environment was wavered after his experience with

the police his freshmen year, although he has enjoyed the educational experience he has received

at Southeast, his social experience has been limited to interaction and involvement with other

Black students and Black organizations. He has lost all interest in interacting and socializing

with his White peers, which has caused him to perceive that all White students subscribe to

stereotypical images and ideologies about Black males. Throughout his experience he has been

bombarded with messages that rely the idea that Blacks are unqualified and ineligible to attend

Southeast University. When sharing his overall opinions about the campus climate, Mansie explained:

> The experiences I have shared have affected me a lot actually and my perception of the university. Because when I'm talking to other Black people, mostly high school student who are thinking about coming here I'm quite honest with them. I tell them unless you can handle being the only Black person in your class, and White people thinking you're like not as good or as smart as them, then you should really chose another school. If you want to be treated equally, this is probably not the school for you. I do feel like there are wonderful opportunities here, but like I said, there is added pressure to you as a Black guy, and if you can deal with it, you're fine. Honestly, sometimes it's hard and if it wasn't for the Black organizations that I've gotten involved in or my Black friends, I probably would have transferred by now. It's hard. I just feel like they think that we're not the same as them, like we're not as smart as them. So, that's why I say we have to continue to prove ourselves because they think we shouldn't really be here. They think we're just here because the university needed numbers. That was actually published in student newspaper long ago. There was article about Blacks and affirmative action and how this student felt bad applying to law school because of Blacks taking having better chance of getting in and taking his spot. I mean having to open up the newspaper and read something like that at the school I attend makes me slightly upset because I'm tired hearing this over and over again. First of all, that tells me that he doesn't think we're equal because if we were equal, his chances would be just good as ours. So he's thinking that we have this extra little added advantage or whatever because we're Black, that's just not right. And that's definitely not the case.

Summarizing Mansie.

Mansie's experiences prior to attending Southeast University caused him to develop a healthy appreciation for the benefits of diversity and multiculturalism. During high school Mansie was able to develop a diverse group of friends and associated, which he assumed would be the same when attending Southeast. Upon his arrival and after the effects of many racially charged encounters, Mansie decided to immerse himself into the Black culture and community on campus and has decided to not pursue any informal interaction with his White peers. His experiences have also negatively affected his opinion about the university, which has made him hesitant to recommend the institution to other potential Black male students. Although Manise understands his own ability and talents, he continues to deal with the added pressure of proving himself able and capable to his White peers.

Emerging Trend from Mansie's Story

The need to feel equal.

Throughout Mansie's story he continuously discussed his efforts at making his White peers feel as if he was equally capable of achieving their same level of academic achievement. He also desired to receive the same level of recognition for successes he experienced within his Black student organizations. Not receiving these external confirmations added pressure and stress to Manise's collegiate experience. The burden created from this phenomenon can be expressed best when Mansie shared the feelings he developed after not being selected for a group project in his political science class. Specifically, Manise shared:

> I was the only person assigned to a group by the professor, which made him think there
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> was something wrong with me. I felt that it was wrong and that it was clear that I wasn't
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> chosen because of being a black male. I was one of two African Americans in the class

and people in class selected the other but she was a female. It as if being a black male they thought I wasn't able to carry my weight in the group. I do the same amount of work as them and participate in class daily. I have to continue to prove myself to my classmates to show that I am just as capable of doing something as they are. No matter the color of my skin or gender. I can do just as much as you or even better.

This trend also emerged when Mansie discussed his experiences as a member of a historically Black fraternity on campus. Mansie explained the specific areas where he feels NPHC organizations are not equally valued or recognized as the historically White Greek organizations on campus. When describing his feelings, Mansie stated:

We all notice it and we try so hard to make everyone think that we're just as good as they are and worth the same attention and investment, but that's not what happens. And of course they get more resources than NPHC. They get more publicity. Overall, they just get all the stuff that a Greek organization should get while we make it with little assistance and little support from the university. And I'm not to say that they don't deserve it, but we do just as much, but it just gets swept under the rug. I mean we do community service; we go out and do programs for the campus and stuff like that, but we definitely don't get as much attention as Pan-Hellenic and IFC. Maybe its like everything else on this campus, they just feel like we're not able; like we're not able to compete with them or we're not qualified.

Introducing Pierre

The interview with Pierre began today, Tuesday, December 7, 2010 at 2:44pm. Today is another day of below normal temperatures; reaching only a chilly 30 degrees as a high, however, I am definitely dressed for the weather. Pierre must have also recognized the low fridge

temperatures because he walked into the office suite bundled up in a Black American Eagle pea coat; white sox fitted baseball cap, a grey thermal, and a pair of blue jeans. Pierre too is a student staff member in the department of housing, so it was easy for him to find the interviewing location. Today the location seemed a little warm. I guess the cold temperatures caused my suite mates to turn up the temperature.

As the interview got started, Pierre seemed overly excited to participate. As a young man who was raised in a Nigerian household, racial inequalities were something he had not been exposed to prior to college. He went through the entire interview excited to participate and share his stances on racism because he didn't solely identify as Black man, but identifies as Black Nigerian man; which has influenced his ability to recognize racism, discrimination, and prejudice. I am ecstatic about sharing Pierre's story because he provides a very interesting perspective between the nuances of race, ethnicity and culture.

I'm Black Too: Pierre's Story

Pierre, a fourth year double engineer and Spanish major, has experienced all the privileges of being raised by two college educated parents in an upper middle class home in Greensboro; an affluent suburb located about 10 minutes away from a thriving major metropolitan city in the southeast region of the country. Although raised in Greensboro, Pierre was born in Nigeria, which he values deeply. "I classify myself as Nigerian," Pierre explained during our conversation. He continued on to share, "I grew up in the U.S., but in a Nigerian household so although we were here, it seemed like my home was in Nigeria." Pierre, the second youngest of five, learned little about racism throughout his upbringing. As the son of a Pentecostal-Nigerian pastor, majority of Pierre's life lessons were grounded in the traditions and

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norms his parents subscribed to through their Nigerian culture. Outside of school, majority of

Pierre's interaction was strictly with other Nigerians. Pierre explained:

> We mostly socialized with other people from Nigeria. My father was the pastor of a
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> Pentecostal church that he started. I mean the church was open to all nationalities and
>
> ethnicities, but naturally, you know; if the pastor of the church is Nigerian a whole lot of
>
> Nigerians are going to come by to worship.

As a child, Pierre considered his neighborhood and school district to be diverse, but as he

matured he noticed an obvious incline of Blacks moving into the community. He recollected:

> In the beginning when we moved to Greensboro we had a lot more White neighbors, and
>
> then as we grew up, I guess it starting filling up with Black people. In school, I remember
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> kindergarten was probably the most diverse grade that I've ever been in. And then it
>
> started trickling down, more black people, more black people, as you know, it got higher
>
> and higher and higher as I got older.

Pierre couldn't recall any instances in which racial tension existed between he and his White

peers. However, he also saw himself as Nigerian and not Black, which psychologically caused

him to separate himself from the possibility of experiencing acts of racism. In Pierre's eyes he

and his family allowed their cultural, ethnicity and heritage to overshadow their race. Pierre's

parents, two American educated professionals, taught their children to be accepting and open to

all regardless of skin color. Pierre described the lessons he learned as a child:

> I had a very protective upbringing because, I was always taught to treat everybody fairly
>
> and race was never a big issue. My parents were never worried about us being Black and
>
> others being White. I never had one of those issues or one of those situations where I
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> recognized that I was different than my classmates in elementary school. I mean I know I

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looked different, but I was never treated different. But I think it stems from me seeing

myself not as an American, but as Nigerian. It was a cultural because in my family

culture superseded race. I didn't consider to be from this country so if anybody would

have said something racists, I wouldn't have thought they were talking about me because

I'm Nigerian. Well. I think its because my parents they separated. Growing up it was

you're Nigerian, and these are Americans. So it wasn't just like the white people said x,

y, and z and feel negative towards you and all Black people. It was just the Americans. I

mean they did break it down to Black Americans and White Americans and other

Americans, but it was still after the end of the day I was just taught about Americans

overall.

By the time Pierre reached high school, the diversity he recognized during his elementary

and middle school years had dissipated and his community and school district had become

majority Black. Pierre attended Michelson High School, where he excelled academically and

socially. Pierre went throughout high school without experiencing any instances of racism,

discrimination and or prejudice. Being a student at a racially homogenous high school provided

Pierre the chance to develop a high sense of esteem and ability as an academically strong

student.

However, it wasn't until college that Pierre recognized the racial similarities that existed

between him and his Black American peers. Before enrolling at Southeast University, Pierre had

never socialized with many Whites, which kept him shielded from experiencing racism. Through

the actions of his peers he learned that his cultural identity could no longer safeguard him from

racist encounters. During orientation Pierre recognized many White students seemed reluctant or

uninterested in conversing or socializing with many of the Black students. He also recognized

the lack of social activities that catered to the cultural interest of Black students. Pierre described his though process at the time:

> I didn't even realize that I was the same as Black Americans until way up to college because I never had contact with a lot of white people. Because of that I had never experienced anything that felt like racism; or anything to make myself say, okay, oh I've just been discriminated against. But in college that's when I first realized some different things, when I saw the blatant disrespect and disregard for my race.

Although Pierre recognized the presence of racial inequities, his desire to experience the benefits of diversity superseded any internal feelings towards race relations on campus. Attending a majority Black high school caused Pierre to yearn for the opportunity to socialize and interact with a more diverse group of peers. "Meeting people from various cultures and backgrounds was one of the main reasons that I came to Southeast," Pierre shared. "I didn't want the same demographics that my high school had; I wanted to see what I called it, quote on quote, "the real world."

Due to his strict and controlling Nigerian upbringing, Pierre was excited about the freedom that college provided. His interest in diversifying his social experiences prompted him to participate in random roommate selection, in which he was assigned a White roommate named William. Pierre was able to develop a decent friendship with William, which caused him to feel a little more comfortable about interacting with his White peers and the overall existence of perpetuated racism on campus. In spite of Pierre's feelings of comfort with his roommate, an encounter with one of William's fraternity brothers opened Pierre's eyes to the existence of racism on the college campus.

Pierre's Experience

One late fall Saturday afternoon, Pierre's roommate, William and one of his fraternity brothers decided to study in William and Pierre's slightly cramped and somewhat messy residence hall room; room 236 in Park Hall. "My room was never just like trashy, just a little junky," Pierre explained. "Overall we had a pretty clean room. Both beds where lofted and futon was under my bed; it was on the right side of the room." William a tall-hefty brown-haired guy from Philadelphia and his frat brother, a fairly muscular blond, sat on Pierre's side of the room, on the futon, as they prepared for a calculus test. Pierre entered the room from a shower to find the two arguing over the correct answer to one of the proposed questions. Pierre slept in that morning and was preparing to head to a program sponsored by the Black Student Union. Pierre described the events that led up to the experience:

> When I walked in they were just about to take a break. I heard them arguing in the hallway about who had worked through the last question right. I was just getting out of the shower and came in the room in my towel and stood at my mirror messing with my stuff; you know my toiletries. So I guess they decided to take a break, and his frat brother shuts his book, and he closes his book and he was like, "Lets smoke some weed, some crack Nigga!"

Shocked and slightly anger, Pierre stood in his mirror in awe as he attempted to digest what he had just experienced. He was somewhat conflicted internally, because for the first time in his life he had experienced an overt act of racism. Due to his competing identities as a non-American Nigerian and a Black male, he was not sure of how to react. Before this encounter he had never conceptualized being called a Nigger; for in his mind that term was used to describe Black Americans and not Nigerians. Pierre went on to describe his initial reactions:

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They both starting apologizing, my roommate started apologizing and he was like,

"Pierre, I mean, it's nothing, he didn't mean it man." I was blown away. That was the

first experience that I've ever had with any sort of racism, well overt racism. I had never

heard a white person say, Nigga or even Nigger before. What really got me was, the way

in which he said it. I wondered, "Is that what you think of Black of people? Like all we

do is smoke crack, or do crack?" I mean I was offended, but not blatantly. I was kind of

confused as to not knowing what do, because this had never happened before. I always

considered myself Nigerian and never thought about being offended by someone using

that word, but I was. I didn't know how to respond so I just stepped out the room.

Shocked and rather confused, Pierre stepped out of the room into the empty cold hallway. Still in

his towel and slightly damp from his shower, Pierre contemplated his next move:

After starring in my mirror for a minute, I stepped out the room and closed the door. My

first thought was to walk down the hall to tell one of my hall mates about it, one of my

Black friends who lived on the floor. I was going to knock on his door and be like,

"Guess what just happened, this boy just said blah blah blah." My friend was one of the

people that grew up differently than I did; he was American or Black American so he had

deeper feelings about racism than I did. So, I wanted to be like, "Guess what he did like?

What happens now; what happens after that? How am I supposed to feel and what am I

supposed to do?" But I just stood in the hall to compose myself for a minute, and then I

heard my roommate and the dude in the room talking.

Pierre pressed his ear to the door in attempt to hear the conversation between his roommate and

his fraternity brother. He stood at the other side of the door filled with a mix of emotions and

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decided that it was best for him to calm down before he acted out of resentment. In an attempt to describe his response to the experience, Pierre recalled:

> I was outside the door and just wanted to hear what they were going to say afterwards, so I stayed outside and I was listening and my roommate was like, "Man why did you say that? What's your problem? Didn't you see him standing right there?" After I heard that I went back in the room and I told the dude he needed to listen to what I was about to say. I was pissed, so I know they were probably like, "Whoa!" I said, "You need to really mind where you are and what setting you're saying stuff in because if I was one of those people who got really angry, I would beat your ass." He was sitting there all red and looking embarrassed and he was like, "Okay, I'm sorry, my bad, my bad, my bad, really." I told him he had to bounce, like leave. So when he was leaving, my roommate was leaving with him, he was like, "Are we cool?" I said, "Man, get out of here." That was it and the last time I saw him in our room.

Pierre's experience caused him to re-consider his ideology about being unsusceptible to racially charged events because of his internalized identity as a Nigerian. Although he had witnessed subtle acts of racism prior to the aforementioned experience, he had never encountered an instance in which racism was blatantly displayed. In an attempt to digest and process his experience, Pierre shared:

> I was kind of stunned because I never thought that I would be exposed to anything blatantly racist because I thought others recognized that I was Nigerian and not a Black American. I guess they don't though. I realized that here in this environment we are all grouped together. I don't know if that's the right way to say it, but it's really how I felt. I mean, if I grew up differently and had experienced something like that before or if I've

come in contact with people who had that type of mentality I may have not been so shocked. But race was not something that I really talked about as a child. We never were taught to be like, "Oh that's a White person, you know, or that's a Black person right there." It wasn't anything like a big-huge topic of discussion. So, if I would have known how to react, or how to react better or quicker if I grew up differently. My Nigerian identity and ethnicity was always more important to me and to my family. So race was just not something I knew how to deal with. But since experiencing everything I think my eyes have been open; I'm not as naiveté as I was before. Now that I've had some experience under my belt dealing with some racism I realize that it's something that I I can always turn into a positive. If anybody comes to with me, "Pierre, guess what happened to me, what am I supposed to do?" Or, hopefully not, what am I supposed to do, but like, just wants to express their feelings, I can say, "I kind of understand what you're feeling because I went through the same thing." And I mean, I can just turn these negatives into a positive; a chance for me to learn and grow into a better person.

Pierre's Perception of the Campus Climate

Even after his experiences with subtle and overt forms of racism on campus, Pierre remained extremely positive about his perception of the university, which permitted him to fair well academically, while becoming fully engaged and involved within the university community. Throughout the remainder of his collegiate experience Pierre had become active in numerous student organizations, although majority of them are organizations targeted at meeting the cultural needs of students of color. During his sophomore year he joined a historically Black Fraternity and became active in the Southeast University Chapter of NAACP. Additionally he became a Residents Assistant, in which he focuses his energy at ensuring the smooth transition

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of Black first year students at the university. By and large, Pierre has enjoyed his experience at Southeast, even though he has continued to encounter racism even after his first encounter during his freshmen year.

In an attempt to express his overall feelings about the campus climate as it relates to racial tensions he experiences as a Black male, he shared a story about an incident that took place within his residence hall, where he serves as a Resident Assistant. The encounter took place in the community style restroom (see figure 14).
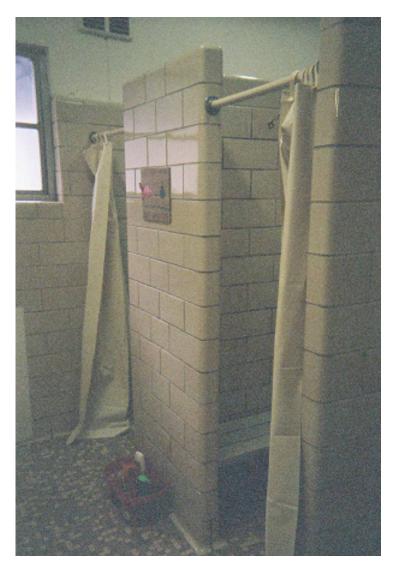

Figure 14. Community style restroom

He decided to take a picture of the shower stall where he encountered his experience. Sitting foreword with what seemed to be a newfound sense of confidence, Pierre shared his story:

I'm a CA, C.L.A.S.S. Advocate; Continuing the Legacy of African American Student Success, which is basically a Resident Assistant that works specifically with Black freshmen. I am in the same building this year that I was in last year; this is my second year being a CA. Last year we had a situation where I was not here one weekend; I went home. When I arrived back in my residence hall, I went to my room, put my stuff down and ran to the community bathroom down the hall. I had been holding it since I left from home, so I had to go pretty bad. When I opened the door to go in the bathroom, I saw spray painted in purple, "Fuck Niggers," one of the bathroom shower stalls. There it was in the stall area, "Fuck Niggers," was on the side, and then KA, which is the Greek Letters for the fraternity Kappa Alpha, was written below it. And this is me being naïveté again, I was like why did they write this? I didn't feel targeted, but then again I was the only black person on my hall so they had to have been directing it toward me. I've been the only Black person on my hall for the past two years. I don't know why I didn't feel targeted but I guess it was because I thought I was still kind of different than other Blacks because I identified as Nigerian and Nigger was a Black American thing. I know realize that too White people my skin is Black so regardless of thinking I'm different, I am Black so I can be a Nigger too; I understand that all know. I left the bathroom and told my boss; the GR or the Graduate Resident in the building. He came up and took pictures and called the police who came and did an investigation and were asking people on the floor questions and stuff like that. Nothing came out of it. No one was caught and no one was

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reprimanded. I mean. Some of the fellow RA's in the building that I told, I told me what KA was, because I didn't know that KA was a fraternity on campus and they had a history of being very racist. I knew some people on the hall where in KA. So I mean, it all started to fit together.

Pierre was greatly affected by observing the racially charged attack against him in his residence hall. He became uncomfortable living in that space and often would go to other floors to use the bathroom. He shared how the experience affected his ability to gingerly perform his functions as a CA and greatly impacted his relationship with his floor mates:

Before this I thought everybody on the hall was cool; I thought I had a decent rapport with the White students on the floor. I mean I didn't know anybody personally because my job is to make the African American residence feel comfortable. But even though I am a CA, these were my hall mates and I had to at least get to know these people on a speaking basis. I mean we were all cool, I said hi to everybody. So, before this incident I was very chill; I was very lax. I would see people make policy violations, but I wouldn't say anything or write them up. I would be like, "Oh, okay, just turn your music down a little bit, not too loud," or "Alcohol in the building, don't worry about it, never do that again; keep it at that." After this, I was like, "Okay, nice Pierre is gone!" I was determined to get every single body that was violating a policy, which affected my relationship with them. I'm sure they really started hating me after that, but I didn't care because I was overly offended by the fact that someone spray-painted that on the shower and then none of them even reported it. I was trying to be nice before and I don't know what I did for somebody to put that on the wall but it just made me be like, "Okay, I'm just going to go hard at it from here on out."

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In addition to experiencing racial tensions in his place of residency and employment, Pierre also deals with the daily reminder of his status as a minority during his classes as a student in the engineering program at Southeast University. The engineering building (see figure 15) is one place on campus where Pierre recognizes the greatest clash between his ethnic and racial identity and the norms and traditions of the university.

Figure 15. Engineering building

Although Pierre has performed well academically, he still deals with taunting and micro-aggressions as many of his White male classmates subscribe and adopt stereotypical images and ideologies about Black males. When discussing his experience as an engineering student, Pierre shared:

> Drift-Myer Engineering Center is where I take my classes as an engineer major. And so far it has been the least diverse place that I've seen on campus. Most of my classmates

are mainly white men. There is only one Black faculty member, Dr. Mitchell, but I've never been able to take any of his classes. I haven't really talked to anybody in the building really. I mean I just go to class there and hang out with my friends afterwards. Some of the folks in the program are friends, but I'm never included in any of that. This year, last semester and this semester, I've started taking more classes than I ever have in the engineering building, so I'm there every day. So I've got to know some students in class and I'm a very jokey person; I like to joke around and play around a lot. But some of the students, I guess they realize that I'm Black because I'm the only Black person in the class and when I make a joke to break the ice, they pop in and make a joke about race. They say stuff like, "Pierre, are you going to use your little card to get a good grade on this test?" Or "Are you going to use your black card so you can pass this class?" They just say some real inappropriate stuff. There's this one guy who constantly makes a racist joke; especially about Black people. He does this in the computer lab where everybody goes to finish schoolwork. I really honestly thought that he was racist for the longest time. And I never said anything to him, because I wouldn't laugh when he said any jokes and I was out numbered so I was uncomfortable. And then culturally I don't fit in. The conversations that they have don't relate to me, and my experiences. I really honestly tried this semester to actually get to know people from my school. I joined the engineering club, joined this other engineering club. But it didn't help. All the things that they talk about are very foreign to me, like hunting and I've never been hunting a day in my life. Like, fishing, hiking and camping, and I've never camped or fished or hiked. All I don't get them at all; shooting or owning a gun, not things I'm accustomed to. Most of the guys in the school carry a knife around with them. And this is not no a regular knife.

It's one of those flip out long dangerous knives. And I'm like, "Why do you have a knife?" I seriously had a conversation with this guy named Doug, I was like, "Why do you have this knife?" He was like, "Oh you use it to open boxes." And I was confused like, "When do you need to open a box in class?" So that's just an example of how I feel like I don't fit in. It's been real uncomfortable to me, but I've made it this far, so I guess I just have to deal with it until I graduate.

Regardless of the incongruence that existed between Pierre and many campus spaces and locations, his opinion and perception of Southeast University has remained positive. Pierre has also recognized the role of stereotyping on campus in creating an uncomfortable reality for many of his Black peers. Given his realizations, he has not allowed his encounters with racism to affect his feelings about the university and has remained actively engaged and involved within the campus. When processing his overall feelings, Pierre shared:

I don't have a negative taste in my mouth for Southeast, so in my opinion it's not bad. The way I see it as any White school that you go to there will be issues with racism. I realize that there are people who have not grown up with the same values that I have and who are negative. But, at the same time, I've had some great experiences here on campus that can't just be dulled by the negative experiences. I definitely think that stereotyping happens. And it seems like every time a white person is talking about a black person, or needs to talk about something where is race implied, it seems like they're stepping on eggshells; like they really aren't saying what they really feel. I feel like they make their opinions about us, based on what they see on the media. And that's one thing I can say that a lot of people in the engineering school do. They are very ignorant of the Black culture. Whatever they see on the media is what they assume as to be true.

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Summarizing Pierre.

Growing up in a Nigerian household, Pierre had never conceptualized racism as it related to him as a Black man living in America. It wasn't until Pierre entered college that he was able to recognize the existence of racism, and its harmful effects on undergraduate Black students. Additionally, Pierre wasn't able to conceptualize his Black identity, as it exists in American until he experienced the social constructs behind a racist phenomenon. Although Pierre has encounter racism, he has remained optimistic about his perception of the university and his willingness to engage with his White peers and professors. Even though Pierre's view of the university remains positive, his experiences have caused him to remain somewhat reluctant when establishing a rapport with White students or faculty members. Specifically, Pierre shared:

> In the back of my mind I'm always thinking what they [White peers and faculty] really think about me. Do they think less of me just because of the color of my skin? I try to think like some of my friends or acquaintances with some White students, but not too much because I'm nervous they may really have negative opinions about me. And when my professors or peers say something out of line about race, I always wonder if they are relating that to me. So it just makes me just want to back away and not really develop many close relationships. I mean, I'm open to it, but I still say that anybody can do anything. So nothing is impossible and I've seen that come true through what I've experienced here at Southeast.

Emerging Trend from Pierre's Story

Unable to recognize racial identity.

Throughout Pierre's story he often referred to his inability to recognize racism because of his internal identity as Nigerian and not Black. It wasn't until he experienced numerous

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occurrences of racism that he understood that he too could be victimized by the socially

constructed parameters set by racism. This idea can best be illustrated when Pierre discussed his

feelings during the spray-painting incident in his residence hall bathroom. When discussing his

inability to process the act of racism, Pierre shared:

> I didn't feel targeted, but than again I was the only black person on my hall so they had to
>
> have been directing it toward me. I've been the only Black person on my hall for the past
>
> two years. I don't know why I didn't feel targeted but I guess it was because I thought I
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> was still kind of different than other Blacks because I identified as Nigerian and Nigger
>
> was a Black American thing. I know realize that too White people my skin is Black so
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> regardless of thinking I'm different, I am Black so I can be a Nigger too; I understand
>
> that all know.

Pierre also expressed his state of confusion with handling and processing racist experiences

when he shared the story about his roommate and his fraternity brother and the reference of

drugs being used to represent Black cultural norms. When sharing his first thoughts after the

experience, Pierre expressed:

> I mean I was offended, but not blatantly. I was kind of confused as to not knowing what
>
> do, because this had never happened before. I always considered myself Nigerian and
>
> never thought about being offended by someone using that word, but I was. I didn't know
>
> how to respond so I just stepped out the room.

During the beginning of Pierre's story he explained how he was taught about racial difference as

a child. His cultural and ethnic differences outweighed his racial difference, which in turn

affected his ability to understand his susceptibility to acts of racism, discrimination and

prejudice. This can best be illustrated when Pierre discussed his parent's lessons and his perception of their messages. Specifically, Pierre shared:

> I mean I know I looked different, but I was never treated different. But I think it steams from me seeing myself not as an American, but as Nigerian. It was a cultural because in my family culture superseded race. I didn't consider to be from this country so if anybody would have said something racists, I wouldn't have thought they were talking about me because I'm Nigerian. Well. I think it's because my parents they separated. Growing up it was you're Nigerian, and these are Americans. So it wasn't just like the white people said x, y, and z and feel negative towards you and all Black people. It was just the Americans. I mean they did break it down to Black Americans and White Americans and other Americans, but it was still after the end of the day I was just taught about Americans.

Introducing Adam

With the completion of Adam's interview, my data collection journey officially ends today. I began back in November and have been taken through an emotional journey as I listened to these young brothers share their stories about racism, discrimination and prejudice. You would think that in 2010 young brothers wouldn't have to deal with the emotional torment that comes along with anguish and bigotry, but it's still evident that it lives strong within the walls of today's colleges and universities.

I was somewhat excited to meet with Adam today. He is one of the brightest young brothers on campus and has lived a life of academic privilege and success, or so I thought before our conversation. My day started as usual. I overslept by an hour; I got up at 8:30am instead of 7:30am, like I originally had planned. I spent last night trying to analyze Hamilton's transcript after a grueling workout last night; so needless to say, I was drained this morning. But I decided

to head over to the student recreation center for a quick on-hour workout before my one o'clock

meeting with Adam. Our interview started at 1:04pm. He was a little early, which is what I

expected since he is very accustomed to meetings and other events. Adam came bundled up, as

so did I because today was one of the colder days that we've had this week. As I sat everything

up so we could began the interview I could tell that Adam was a little nervous, so I made it my

goal to make him feel much more comfortable by breaking the ice with some casual conversation

about his day and the recent lost that our basketball team experienced the night before. As we

began our conversation I knew that his story would resonate with the many others I had heard

throughout this process. He shared the same feelings and emotional distress as many other

participants had. I just hope that I am able to tell the stories of these young brothers in a way that

will open the eyes of those who continuously oppress them. I am somewhat glad that Adam was

last because his story serves as a culmination of what each and every other one of my

participants said. Racism, prejudice and discrimination are still very much alive in our society,

and those who come to college still experience the injustices that exist within our society,

regardless of their ability, inability, background, or status. When and how can racism end? I ask

myself as I tell you Adam's Story.

I Will Change the Image of Black Men: Adam's Story

Adam Thomas, a second year biochemical engineer major, grew up in a predominately

Black suburb located about twenty minutes outside of the state's capitol. Adam's family resided

in an upper middle class neighborhood, which was comprised of the neighboring cities most

influential doctors, lawyers and politicians. As the second youngest of five children, Adam

became educationally and socially privileged within their community. His involvement and

engagement with community and school based leadership and academic enhancement programs

allowed him to fair well throughout his schooling, causing Adam to consistently be ranked as one of the top two students throughout his secondary educational experience. To some, Adam lived a privileged life.

Prior to college, Adam had never been exposed to White's his age since his school district mirrored the racial make-up of his community. The only interaction Adam had with Whites was through teachers, counselors and school administrators. Although Adam had not been exposed to a diversified education that included Whites, he did recognize the variation of other ethnic cultures that had been present during his pre-collegiate years. His exposure to various other cultures and ethnicities made Adam feel that although Whites were not present, he had still benefited from a multicultural educational experience. Adam explained:

There were Caucasian teachers in my high school, but I think there were only two White people in my whole school. The rest of the school identified as Black or from an ethnicity or culture of people who also had colored skin. Some of them could have been Latin American, or Caribbean; or even South American. A lot of my friends were Guianese and some of them were Belizean. So it just depends, but they all looked alike to me, Black. I think that still meant I had a diverse or multicultural educational experience because just because there weren't any White people, I still learned a lot from the different cultures that were there.

The lack of visual ethnic diversity that existed within Adam's high school allowed him to forgo any experiences with racism, discrimination and or prejudice. However, he did recognize the existence of racial inequalities when it came to the allocation of fiscal resources to schools in the district that serviced minority populations. He addressed this phenomenon during our conversation:

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My high school was pretty comfortable because in my school district I think the teachers who wanted to work with African American students came to the African American schools, while the teachers who wanted to work with predominately White, or Asian students went to the other schools in the district. Even though I went to a magnet school in South Michaels County, we still got the short end of the stick when it came to funding. The difference between the magnet school in South Michaels County and the magnet school in North Michaels County was the demographic of the students. Most of the Black students lived in the southern part of the county and a lot of the Whites and Asians lived in the northern part. It seemed that a lot of people accredited the North Michaels County magnet school to be better because of their diversification of the people there. But it really wasn't diverse, it was mostly White and Asian with a few others maybe. In my opinion, we weren't treated fairly because we didn't have diverse group and because it was mostly African American. I didn't get it because both of the programs were magnet, but they got more attention, acclaim and more funding. It just seemed to me that it was racially focused because the only difference between the two schools was who went there.

Growing up Adam developed many of his ideologies and values from his parents. His parents emphasized the importance of hard work, which aided Adam as he pursued academic excellence. At home, Adam learned much about racism through conversations with his parents. His mother and father both openly discussed the existence of racial injustices with Adam and his siblings. His parents were raised during the end of the civil rights era, which heavily impacted their stance on the existence of racial inequalities as they have transitioned and morphed over time. Adam shared the first lessons he learned about racism in America:

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Growing up, family was the most important to me. My parents instilled in me the majority of my personal values, traditions and concepts. I mean if I really think about it, my mother and my father were my first teachers before I even went to school. So anything that I initially learned, it came from them. My innate academic abilities were guess motivated by them as well because they pushed me to do well in school. They enrolled me in private school when I was younger, and transitioned me into public school when they felt like it would provide a competitive experience for me. I learned a lot about racism from my mom specifically. She works for the federal government and I recall her talking about how even public figures tend to treat African American women and men different then they do Caucasian women or men. She would say she would see it in their behavior, and that they would often make racial stereotypical comments about African Americans. They would also extend certain privileges to White people that they wouldn't to Black. She even talked about growing up in Alabama; she grew up in Selma, Alabama, where a lot of racial turmoil took place. She would say even at school, even though she excelled, she was number two in her class; she would still be treated different than the white students at her high school. She got so fed up with how she was treated in high school that she went to a predominately Black school, Clark-Atlanta University, where she could still see the inequalities that existed between her all Black school and other White schools in the same city. She said that even though segregation had ended legally, it was still tension between White and Black people. Yeah the law said that segregation didn't exist, but that's just the law saying you cant segregate yourself, but you still have people that chose to segregate themselves. So segregation by force still ended and became segregation by choice.

As a high performing Black male within his community and school district, Adam received positive affirmation from community members and religious leaders alike. He developed a sense of responsibility; feeling that it was his job to change the stereotypical images of Black teenage men, which had negatively impacted the mentality of many of his Black male peers. Due to the support of his community and family, Adam developed a positive self-image, and continuously strived to develop himself into a better student and individual. During our conversation, Adam candidly spoke about the nature of this occurrence:

> In my community society if you did well you got put on a pedestal kind of sort of because you basically were proven the stereotypes or the status quos wrong about teenage Black men. In many people's eyes, as a teenage Black man, I should have been in jail or should be dropped out of school. I should have had three kids right now or be on the corner selling drugs. So, if you were in school doing something positive they really appreciated it because they realized that we did determined the future, as they grew older. So I basically grew up feeling like I had the big task ahead of needing to change the way society viewed the black man as dangerous man to be reckoned with. My generation grew up in a time where the media and stations like BET [Black Entertainment Television] and MTV [Music Television]; portrayed the black male as someone who's harsh or a thug, or someone who is a gangster and raps and or athlete who's not smart. So it came off like as a Black mane you had to overcome a lot to be successful. But I wasn't a thug, I wasn't an athlete, I didn't sell drugs. In my high school it was usually the black males that got in trouble most of the time, so when the teachers saw a black male coming down the hallway, they were like, "Oh, he must be up to trouble." So I worked really hard in high school to change that image that teachers saw of a black male. I graduated

first in my class as valedictorian; I was president of five organizations. I also taught dance in high school. So I tried to do everything that society thought that we shouldn't do.

The positive affirmations he received from family and various members of his community, created a sense of responsibility and accountability within Adam. Adam learned even more about his role as a Black male through his involvement with a high school leadership organization. Adam's participation in this group caused him to develop an appreciation for providing positive educational experiences for Black males. He committed himself to ensuring that other Black young men had the opportunity to develop an appreciation for academics and hard work. Specifically, Adam shared:

> From my family I basically learned to do the best I could. That's all they expected from me; they just wanted me to do my best. From my mentors they were like, "You can do better." They wanted me to grow as a Black man and to be more than what I was and not just to be complacent. I was also part of a leadership organization, and it really taught me a lot about brotherhood, academics, success, achievement and basics behind being a role model for the rest of the community. The organization really benefited me. We did community service projects and we had leadership summits. We too the black males in the surrounding community out of the hood and talked to them about doing something positive in their neighborhood. That's what I really enjoyed about the program because of what they stood for and what they did for the surrounding community. Through being involved I became committed to mentoring Black males so they can experience the same things I did and live successful lives.

As stated earlier, Adam ended high school as the valedictorian of his graduating class. His commitment to high scholastic achievement made his college selection process much less challenging and difficult since he could pretty much get into any school of his choice. Adam considered enrolling at numerous out of state and private institutions across the country, but when considering the costs associated with living away from home; he decided to focus his search on institutions within his state of residence. Adam shared how he came to attend Southeast University and his experiences in class when he first arrived:

> I initially didn't want to come to Southeast University. I think I applied to twelve schools, one of which was Urban Tech, and another was Wallace University. Both schools had good engineering programs, which is why I applied. I would have chosen Urban Tech over Southeast University, but when I went to tour the campus I really didn't like the atmosphere and the way the people described it seemed kind of cut throat; people were for themselves and it wouldn't have the type of support network that I think is needed as an undergraduate; especially in a hard curriculum like engineering. Then Wallace University gave me all institutional grant money and I had outside scholarships so they said I still had to pay $5,000.00 a year. I didn't want to be in debt from having to take out student loans to go to Wallace, so I came to Southeast University. The transition here was okay at first, but it was really difficult with my classes, I had never been in classes that difficult. When I took the math placement exam I was placed in pre-calculus while the rest of the engineering people were in calculus because they had taken calculus in high school. From being placed in pre-calculus, I got this image in my mind that I was behind everyone else, so I had to work that much harder to catch up. Being in the engineering department and seeing majority of the people who were White and from country towns;

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some of them had never seen Black people in their life until they came to Southeast University. That was hard. I just thought these people are on the total opposite side of the spectrum, but when I thought about it I hadn't been in the class with a white person before and they haven't been in the class with a black person, let alone seen a black person. I would get looks in class and when I went into the computer lab. I would sit down to do my work and everyone would just stop, turn around, and look at me. Or when I was in class and trying to get study groups together or group projects, people would say, "No," or "I don't want to work with you," or, "I'm already working with these people," or even when it came down to our final exam project; only because the two people sitting next to me, I knew, they were willing to work with me. The other people had got their group of White friends that they were comfortable working with and I just felt that it wasn't fair. Even when it came down to my final exam, everyone in my group got an A on their final except me, I got a B. But the final was a project so all the grades should have been the same, or at least around the same number; not a difference between a letter grade. So I just feel that racist things have been part of my experience from the beginning; even if it's just a nasty look. I mean, looks can hurt if you walk into a room and everyone's just looking at you and you're like center of attention, especially when you're the only Black person and nobody wants to work with you.

Adam's freshmen year at Southeast proved to be somewhat difficult. One top of having struggles in class as one of few Black men; he had a challenging experience with his roommate who was an international student from China. Adam's roommate had only been exposed to Black Americans through media, and adopted many of the stereotypical ideologies that Adam spoke of earlier in his story. Adam found refuge from the environmental incongruence he experienced

through friendships he developed with other Black first year students. When in smaller class, the level of discomfort Adam felt was surmountable since he was often singled out and asked culturally insensitive questions. Due to these occurrences, Adam enjoyed larger classes with lecture style seating, because he was able to hide within the large number of students who sat on the various levels of rows. Adam explained his experiences in class:

I actually felt better in the larger class because I didn't have to necessarily see people looking at me in the class. When I was in smaller classes with like 30 people, everyone would be looking at me awkwardly because I was the only black person. If something came up in class about Black people, the class would all look at for me to respond. Sometimes the professor would even call me out and ask me to answer the questions. A lot of my friends told me stories where they experienced the same thing; they'd be in class and the conversation would move to something about black people and someone would call on them. In my experience, the professor or other students would say, "Well could you give us the black perspective?" As if I'm the spokesperson for the entire black race. So I never had that fear in my larger classes because I knew the teacher would never call on me and I felt that I was just a number so my race didn't matter.

Adam's experience in his classes transcended into issues he faced within the entire engineering program. Although he was a stellar student, the academic rigor required to be successful within his program, proved to be difficult to Adam; causing him to seek out of class assistance. As Adam attempted to get assistance with class, he began to recognize occurrences in which he was treated differently and unfairly. These experiences were Adam's first time dealing with racism, discrimination and or prejudice.

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Adam's Experience

Adam enrolled in an introduction to Chemistry course during his first semester. Although, Adam excelled academically in high school, he found the course work at Southeast University to be challenging and cumbersome. In attempt to improve his ability to be successful in the course, he decided to attend help sessions led by the class instructor and tutorial sessions led by graduate students. Adam experienced differential treatment when seeking assistance, which caused him to develop a disdain for his academic program. Adam explained his experience:

> When I recognized that I was struggling in the class, I decided to attend some help
> sessions, which was basically the teacher revisiting the notes. The help sessions were
> Monday and Wednesdays from 6 to 8 o'clock. Because doing well was important to me, I
> would even go to get extra help through private tutoring which was offered through this
> company off campus. All you had to do is schedule it and it was free. The College of
> Engineering also offered tutoring sessions, a study hall, which graduate students
> facilitated; I went to those. They were held on the top floor of the chemistry building
> twice a week. So I utilized all the avenues to get help, but when I would go to ask for
> help in the study hall, I was treated differently than everyone else. When I was in the
> tutoring center there would be a group of students, mostly White. There were tables and
> there were usually five or six students at each table and the tutors would be at the front of
> the class. Sometimes students would be around the tutor's tables asking them questions
> about the homework. So I would sit at my desk and attempt to do the homework on my
> own and if I had a question, I would raise my hand to get the tutors attention. It never
> failed, the tutor would look up at me, but instead of calling on me like they did the White

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students; they would look back down and keep doing their work. I would be shocked and sit there and watch a White person raise their hand and the tutors would get out of their seats to help them or tell them to come up. Most of the time I'd have to say something to get their attention before they would acknowledge me. And when they came to help me it wasn't like the same help that they provided the White students. Sometimes the answers they would give me to the problem were wrong when they were helping me, and then when I'd go ask the person that they just helped on the same question, they have the right answer. It made me feel like they were just trying to set me up for failure? I felt like they had this assumption that because I was black I did not do my work and I didn't study, so they were just going to ignore me at the tutoring sessions and let me struggle. Sometimes, when I'd go to ask them questions they'd ask me, "Did you read the chapter?" "Did you already do the work?" They didn't give that same kind of positive attitude that they gave the White students. Overall, I just felt like I was singled out because I was the only Black person. I had to work much harder in chemistry while the white people in my class were getting the help that they needed from the tutors. It really seemed like they didn't want to help me.

In addition to Adam's experiences in the tutoring center, he recognized the stratification of available academic resources. Many of the other engineering students were members of historically White fraternity and sororities. Adam often overheard them referring to having access to past tests and study guides, which gave them the ability to spend less time preparing and completing assignments. He became slightly resentful, as he watched their ability to party during the week in lieu of studying because of the access to materials from past classes. Adam recognized the variation on cultural capital that existed between he and his White classmates. He

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recognized that even if he desired access to those materials, he would never be accepted into the historically White social circle that controlled the flow of resources and information. He shared his thoughts:

> The frat boys and the white sorority girls would have tests and study guides in their sorority houses, plus additional resources that I didn't have. And I know that they would party all the time. You can go down Brown Street and see the trash bags put up in the yards, which they used to hide their parties during the weekday. I always thought, "If this was any other house; a Black fraternity house, would this be happening or allowed?" And I could hear their conversations when they'd be together in the engineering building. I have white sorority friends and I would go to breakfast with them after class and I would sit there and hear their conversations and how their whole life revolved around socials and how class and studying was just put on the back burner. They would be like, "Oh I have a test to study for, but I'll just wait 'cause I know I have the old test in the basement and I can just study from that." Or, "I really don't care what I'll get on the test." It just bothered me that they could be so carefree and have all these resources that I would never be able to have access to. I mean, if I could have old tests and study guides, I probably would have got an A in that class. It's just not fair. Even if I wanted to join their groups, they wouldn't let me.

These encounters with racism were new to Adam, for prior to enrolling at Southeast University he had never encountered what he considered racism, discrimination and prejudice. As a first semester student in a new environment, Adam developed damaging feelings about his White peers. Due to the inequities and unfair treatment, Adam began to feel that his White peers

thought negatively about Blacks and were granted privileges in life that he could never obtain. When sharing the impact of these experiences, Adam shared:

I just feel that they look down upon black people as if we're like just the scum of the earth. I guess because of what happens on the media and who's on the news all the time, White people have developed these negative images of who we are. It seems like they allow those images to treat us a different way and to think negative about us. It made me feel like I was worthless. Those tutors just sat there, looked at me raising my hand, and ignored me. Then my White classmates just boast and brag about things that they have access to, and I will never have. They're afforded a lot of other opportunities that I didn't even have that I will ever have access to. Even if black students got this feeling that they wanted to apply for a white fraternity, they wouldn't even get a second look. So I mean, it's just like even if I wanted to become a part of your organization, I probably couldn't. The White sororities are the exact same way. It's just like they're afforded these options because of their status, the amount of money they have and their color. And I mean yeah they may have more money than me, and may be a different color, but I don't think that they should get treated any differently or get more opportunities than anyone else.

Regardless of the negative tone of Adam's experience, he was still able to develop positively from these encounters. Just like in high school, Adam dedicated himself to amending the negative images of Blacks at Southeast. He felt that it was his obligation to assist other Black students as they experienced racially charged transitional difficulties in and out of the classroom. When discussing his newfound commitment, Adam explained:

Initially when it all happened, I was angry; but I wanted to change it. I realized how much I couldn't really change their actions because there was no way for me to prove it

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or to show others how I was being treated; it's not like I could record them. Even if I recorded their actions how would that prove that they were being racist to me? So when I thought about what else I could do to make an impact it basically made me want to help African American students at Southeast even more. As an African American student, I felt that we aren't afforded the same privileges or benefits as the white students. So to help with that, I realized that I could always lend a helping hand to somebody else if they need it. I mean just today someone asked me could I help with their chemistry work. When they asked, it just brought to my mind them going to the study hall and experiencing the same thing I did. So I just decided that even though my schedule is busy, I was willing to help them. I want to change the way White people think about us here. A lot of us are just as smart, if not smarter than them, but we get treated as if we're lazy and unable to do our work. So I mean, I try my best to fit people around my schedule, even if I am packed because I know that they may not get the help that they need going to the resources that are available to them because of prejudice.

Adam's Perception of the Campus Climate

Prior to Adam's freshmen year and his experiences with what he felt was racism; Adam was somewhat oblivious about the existence of racial inequalities, as they exist within the American Culture. Although he had heard stories about racism from his mother and had recognized subtle forms of racial discrimination within his school district, he had never felt personally targeted or affected by racism. Regardless of his experiences, Adam continued on to become fairly active and engaged on campus. He became involved with undergraduate research, and many honors and scholastic organizations around his major. However, after experiencing differential treatment, Adam's image of Southeast University was greatly impacted. He became

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observant and recognized the underlying racism and discrimination that existed within the institutional values and norms. As a result of his experiences, Adam convinced himself that racism was something that he had to experience as a result of his decision to attend a predominately White university. Additionally, he felt that neither the students nor the administration cared to improve what he felt were obvious areas of racial conflict. When he described his beliefs around this subject, he shared:

> I think racism; discrimination and prejudice are just a part of life here at Southeast. I think if you talk to any black student they would tell you they have experienced racial conflict in some sort of way. And I am sure that majority of them haven't talked to anybody about it because it's just assumed that everyone knows that this is what happens but the administration doesn't do anything about it. Let's say if you were to tell anyone, what action would be taken to correct it, or how could it be corrected? I often talk to my mom and my brother about the racial things that go on here and they say the same thing; they just say it's a part of life because even outside of Southeast University they experience racial problems; racial conflicts in the work setting, going to the grocery store outside of the predominately black area, going to a rural towns in-state, going to a restaurant, going out at night; racism is everywhere. So I mean I think black people have experienced racism in the south for such a long time that it just has become a societal norm even at universities.

In attempt to portray the racial tension experienced on campus, Adam decided to take a picture of The Arch (see figure 16). The Arch is a historical and meaningful symbol for Southeast University and is assumed to represent many of the positive overarching morals and

values of the university. However, Adam recognized a number of contradictions and

inadequateness as it related to the intentionality of message behind The Arch.

Figure 16. The Arch

When speaking specifically about the message he felt The Arch sent to Black students,

Adam shared:

> The arch is basically the symbol of Southeast University, so everything that the arch
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> stands for; the three pillars of the arch, just reminds me that everything the university
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> stands for isn't actually followed through and it doesn't resonate in the heart of those who
>
> go to this school. People always say what The Pillars of the Arch mean all of the time,
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> wisdom, justice and moderation, but in action they don't show them. People are still
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> racist towards Black students. Black students still deal with discrimination and different

treatment from their roommates, their classmates and their teachers. I just see The Arch as fake, especially the pillar about justice. There is nothing just about what goes on here and I'm only a sophomore, so I would hate to think about everything I have to experience before graduation. So overall, it really just recalls to my memory everything that the university says it stands for and how the people that are here don't follow it and don't treat others the way they should.

In addition to the tension Adam felt as a result of the university's espoused values, he recognize messages of oppression and inferiority being sent to White students through the hiring of countless Black Americans in service positions around the university. Adam discussed how he felt as he witnessed hundreds of Black men and women working in low paying jobs around the university. To personify his feelings, Adam decided to take a picture of one the many dining halls on campus (see figure 16), which represented one of the places of employment for a large portion of the Black Americans employed by the university.

Figure 17. The dining hall

In addition, Adam recognized the impact of this phenomenon on his White peers perception of

Black Americans. When discussing this ongoing practice, Adam shared:

> When I see the dining halls, I think it's where White people imagine were a black person
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> should work. I mean when you go to the dining hall, the majority of the people who work
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> there are black. They live in this surrounding community, which is very improvised. I get
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> the feeling that White students just think that this is what we should be doing. I see how
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> they treat some of the workers with disrespect, and it makes me think they feel less about
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> those who work in those types of positions. To be honest, it brings kind of sadness to my
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> heart seeing that these are the only people that work here and we're serving them; White
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> people. I feel like the university is putting us as Black people in our place. It's like they

are perpetuating the stereotypes that society already creates about us. Their opinions transfer to how they think about black students; like we're a charity case, or here because of affirmative active or to just make quota. I think they look at us as uneducated, and undeserving of the same opportunities.

Even after recognizing the existence racial inequalities on campus, Adam continued to have a somewhat positive opinion about the university in general. Although he acknowledged the existence of social tensions on campus which were grounded in racial inequalities and differences, he still believed that the academic experience he was receiving was top notch; worth all of what he had encountered thus far in his collegiate career. Over time Adam experienced being stereotyped by his White peers, which only strengthen his beliefs about the social inequities, as they existed on Southeast's campus. When attempting to articulate these feelings, Adam shared:

I think Southeast is still an academically sound school. I don't look at it any differently in that perspective. In regards to social relations between students, I think there's a lot more work that needs to be done with the students here. I don't know if there could be any done to change the way individuals feel about others because of what they learned during their upbringing. I personally really do think that people are a product of their environment, so the individual who have racial beliefs or racial conflicts with African Americans; they were raised to think like that. So yeah, I think for the most part the social structure between the students is really what makes it hard for African American males at Southeast University. And it's not necessarily from the professors, because if I had racists professors I think I could get over that, more than the racial conflict with the students, because I come in contact with students the whole time I'm here. I don't live off

campus, so I can't get in my car and drive away; I can't leave my problems. Here at

Southeast I think stereotypes fuel racism. I think that White students think that we [Black

males] are athletes, thugs, or we got here on a charity case. Well someone actually asked

me on the bus if I was an athlete. I had on some jogging pants and something, I don't

even wear jogging pants; I think I was coming from the gym. Someone was like, "Do you

play a sport here?" I'm just like, "Can I be here on academic merit?" And then they asked

me what was my major and I said I'm biochemical engineering, they really just looked at

me like, "You do that; How can you do that?" And then I said I was scholarship here and

they really seemed like they were so upset, they were just like, "I didn't get a scholarship

to go here." He then said, "You probably only got the scholarship because you were

Black, because I'm sure I did better than you in high school." I was left fueling and

shocked. It just goes to show how they think about us, and its part of everyday life here at

Southeast.

Adam's negative social and academic experiences at Southeast did not seriously alter his

opinions about developing relationships with White peers. He understood that the actions of a

few did not represent an entire race of people. However, his experiences and overarching

feelings about the university strengthened Adam's desire to work harder at disproving any

negative stereotypes associated with Black males on campus. Although this had been a feat of

Adam's since high school, his dedication to positively impact the view of Black men on campus

grew tremendously. When speaking about his efforts and his feelings about his White peers,

Adam explained:

My feelings about White people haven't really altered, I mean I stay on my P's and Q's

majority of the time; trying to make sure I don't say anything that'll upset their thought of

the African American race because they think when they see one person, this one person stands for the entire race, or their actions stands for everything that we as African Americans believe in. But I mean, it hasn't really changed my ideas about the entire race as a whole because I think that what happens at Southeast University is just what happens because of those few people who were raised to be racists. That doesn't mean that this is how the whole race acts; or every white person I see is going to be racist toward me. So I think my experiences has been a learning experience for me where I mean sometimes I just have to turn the other cheek and just keep walking. But it really hasn't changed my perspective of the white community because I feel that I can't just base my beliefs on the white community off of what happened to me at Southeast University because this is not even a whole one percent of the total population of white people in our country. I think I have about the same amount of white friends that I do black friends. It hasn't changed my perspective of them in any way. I mean I still view them as equals; I view my black friends just like I view my white friends. We go out, we hang out, we go to the movies, and I invited them to my birthday just like I did my black friends. So I mean, it hasn't changed my interaction, even the kids that I may think that are racist, if I have a questions I'm still going to ask them, whether they like it or not.

Summarizing Adam.

As a high achieving student, Adam was raised in a majority Black community where he was praised and celebrated because of his academic ability. Although as a teenager Adam recognized the existence of racial inequalities within his school district, it wasn't until he reached college that he was exposed to more overt forms of racism, discrimination and prejudice. Adam's experiences in college did result in him establishing a negative perception of the campus culture,

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but did not have an altering effect on his opinion to remain at the university and persist through graduation. Adam remained optimistic about his decision to attend Southeast University because of the stellar academic reputation of the institution, but felt that there needed to more efforts placed toward creating a more accepting and tolerant campus environment.

Emerging Trend from Adam's Story

Changing the image of Black men.

Throughout Adam's story he consistently commented on his desire to change the image of Black men. According to Adam, many of the issues of racism that existed on campus stemmed from the stereotypical images that were displayed about Black men through the media. By dedicating himself to achieving high levels of success in and outside of the classroom, Adam felt that he could assist in amending the countless negative images that have plagued many Black men as they pursue higher education. Adam spoke about his decision to become a role model when he discussed the activities that were taking place in his high school. Specifically Adam stated:

> I basically grew up feeling like I had the big task ahead of needing to change the way society viewed the black man as dangerous man to be reckoned with. My generation grew up in a time where the media and stations like BET [Black Entertainment Television] and MTV [Music Television]; portrayed the black male as someone who's harsh or a thug, or someone who is a gangster and raps and or athlete who's not smart. So it came off like as a Black mane you had to overcome a lot to be successful. But I wasn't a thug, I wasn't an athlete, I didn't sell drugs. In my high school it was usually the black males that got in trouble most of the time, so when the teachers saw a black male coming down the hallway, they were like, "Oh, he must be up to trouble." So I worked really

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hard in high school to change that image that teachers saw of a black male. I graduated first in my class as valedictorian; I was president of five organizations. I also taught dance in high school. So I tried to do everything that society thought that we shouldn't do.

Adam also spoke about his desire to change the image of Black males on campus when he discussed his commitment to assisting other students as they struggled with coursework. His experiences in class caused him to recognize that his Black peers did not have the ability to gain access to the same resources and materials as Whites. From this, Adam felt it was his responsibility to ensure that other Black men had the assistance necessary to be successful, thus the creation of another academically strong Black student who could also assist in amending the stereotypical images of Black males at Southeast University. Explicitly, Adam shared:

As an African American student, I felt that we aren't afforded the same privileges or benefits as the white students. So to help with that, I realized that I could always lend a helping hand to somebody else if they need it. I mean just today someone asked me to help out with their chemistry work. When they asked, it just brought to my mind them going to the study hall and experiencing the same thing I did. So I just decided that even though my schedule is busy, I was willing to help them. I want to change the way White people think about us here. A lot of us are just as smart, if not smarter than them, but we get treated as if we're lazy and unable to do our work. So I mean, I try my best to fit people around my schedule, even if I am packed because I know that they may not get the help that they need going to the resources that are available to them because of prejudice

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND PROFESSIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Researcher Reflection

Interviewing participants, listening to their stories, interpreting their meaning and

internalizing their pain, often made this research experience unbearable and disheartening. I, a

young Black male graduate student, had experienced and internalized many of the same feelings

as my participants. Experiencing racism on a predominately White college campus was more

than just an occurrence for participants, and for me. It was an eye-opening experience, an event

that caused cognitive dissonance and internal reflection. It did not alter my feelings about my

purpose for attending a predominately White institution, but it did make me more sensitive and

more uneasy about the educational environment in which I was to matriculate and persist

through. To hear some of the most intelligent young men discuss their in-class challenges as

many of their White peers overlooked them when organizing into teams for class assignments; to

learn that in 2010 Whites still have the audacity to bellow out the term Nigger as a young man

attempts to purchase text books for an accounting class; to realize that vandalizing a restroom by

spray painting a racial charged message on a shower stall is still a method used to spread hate; to

be made aware that undergraduate Black men cannot attend a White fraternity party without

fearing disrespect or marginalization; to discover that Black men dealt with racism as they

attempted to celebrate a moment of American history; to recognize that even in educational

settings Black men are placed in situations where the ignorance of others supersedes the

opportunity for true learning and dialogue; to deal with not only interpreting these occurrences by digesting them has been an life altering process and has solidified my desire to work to create change. All of the experiences shared are current; they are real and regardless of the work we do in student affairs in an attempt to create inclusive, friendly, welcoming environments; undergraduate Black man still encounter racism within every facet of their collegiate experience. It baffled me that participant's experiences ran the gamete in terms of where and when they experienced racism. If asked to develop a thematic interpretation on where and how these experiences took place, it would be almost impossible because participants encountered racism in classrooms, in residence halls, at social events, and even walking down campus streets. They were not safe anywhere they traveled on campus, which is a poignant conclusion.

Before beginning this research I was very supportive and confident in the work we do as student affairs professionals around diversity and difference. But after the alarming response from undergraduate Black men who confirmed that they had experienced racism; desiring to share their stories, I have become pessimistic and critical around our efforts to really create and support an inclusive environment. As a profession, we have hidden behind the terms multiculturalism, access and diversity too long. We have allowed ourselves to be bullied by upper administration and accreditation association, urging us to blanket and hide racism by facilitating programs and activities that attempt to lightly expose and celebrate cultural differences without attacking the true issues at hand, which include imbedded racism, bigotry, prejudice and discrimination. We have not holistically tackled racism; feeling that developing practical competencies would help elevate the level of pain and degradation that many Black men experience on college campus. However, the results of this study prove that our efforts are not being well received and are not having the affect or outcome that we desired. After learning

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of the realities of my participants, I have concluded that it is time for us to reconsider not only

learning, but also diversity and multiculturalism.

Introduction

Throughout this chapter the researcher will interpret and discuss the findings by critically

examining racist experiences by interweaving related literature related to the phenomenon.

Ideally, the findings in this study will allow student affairs professionals to understand the

variation of racist experiences that may take place on the campus of predominately White

institutions located in the southeast region of the country. The eight narratives shared should

provide a contextual understanding of the everyday experiences of many undergraduate Black

men and the effects of racism on their perception of the campus climate. It should be noted that

the narratives and stories collected during this study only represent these participants, but may

illustrate the experiences of other undergraduate Black men who attend similar institutions. The

chapter began with a reflective piece designed by the researcher to provide holistic feelings and

interpretations about the overall topic and the findings specific to this study. Throughout the

remainder of the chapter, each research question will be discussed holistically; contrasting and

synthesizing the findings of the study in comparison to related literature. Additionally

implications and suggestions for future research will also be provided.

The Nature of a Racist Experience

Prior research has shown that Black students who attend predominately White institutions

are often more susceptible than any other cultural group to experiencing racism and other racially

charged occurrences (Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Ancis, Sedlacek & Mohr, 2000). Although

these experiences occur, research does not provide an explanation of the myriad of racist events

that could take place on the campuses of predominately White institutions. Additionally, acts of

racism discrimination and or prejudice are often grounded in stereotypical images that impact the way in which Whites view and perceive the abilities and characteristics associated with the Black culture (Alexander, 1970; Bates-Dodd, 1993; Bell, 1987; Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Frazier et al., 2003). Black men are often victimized by these ideologies due to the existence of stereotypical imagery placed on them by the media and other vignettes of institutionalized hypocrisy (Cuyjet, 1997; Harper, 2006; Howard-Hamilton, 1997). The concepts offered by the aforementioned concepts align directly with the findings of this study.

Holistically, the narratives provided display the varying nature of racist experiences that exist for a portion undergraduate Black man on predominately White college campuses. Based on the description provided within the literature review around the differences between overt and subtle forms of racism, participants encountered incidents that can be either categorized as overt forms of disrespect and racism or subtle forms of bigotry, which were often hidden within the actions, perceptions or stereotypical ideologies of their White peers. The breadth of these experiences ranged from incidents involving the use of derogatory language to the adaptation of actions that reflected ideas of inferiority towards Black men. For instance, Hamilton, the participant who's narrative described his experience being called a Nigger while walking to a local off campus bookstore would be described as more overt, whereas Mansie's experience was much more subtle; being left out of group selection during class because he felt that his classmates adopted stereotypical ideas about the work ethic of undergraduate Black men. Although each participant categorized their experience as racist, the differences between the encounters reflect a wide range of racially charged experiences encountered by participants. The interrelatedness connecting participants' encounters with racially charged events provide evidence supporting Katz and Taylor (1998) and Delgado and Stefanic (1993; 2001) who found

that there is an inability to separate encounters grounded in racism, discrimination and prejudice since each result in a similar experiences or effect regardless of definition or intent.

A vast majority of participants experienced more subtle forms of racism, with only three encountering what literature would consider more overt. According to Solorzano, Ceja and Yoso (2001) Black students on predominately White college campus are much more likely to experience subtle forms of racism over experiencing overt racist actions. These encounters are often categorized as microaggressions, which according to Davis (1989) is the "… stunning, automatic acts of disregard that stem from unconscious attitudes of White superiority and constitute a verification of Black inferiority" (p. 1576). Through findings from a qualitative study around students of colors experiences with racially motivated incidents on predominately White college campuses, Aguirre and Messineo (1997) concluded that Black students often experience racism in one of three forms: (1) Person focused, which include individualized encounters and often incorporate the use of racial slurs; (2) Cultural bias, which incorporate the use of stereotypes and negative ideologies about the Black race or culture, and (3) Structural bias, which is the use of superiority and inferiority within an institutions structural or social networks that limit viability for Blacks to navigate many internal infrastructures. If attempting to create a thematic representation of the findings, the narratives collected in this study fall align with the aforementioned categories suggested from Aguirre and Messineo.

Within the confines of the campus community, participants were not protected or sheltered from racism. All areas and territories on campus proved to be an opportunity for racist acts to occur. Participants were predisposed to experiencing racism regardless of their socioeconomic background, academic ability or even cultural identity. Two of the eight participants, Marcus and Pierre, personally identified as Black, but also had a very salient connection to their ethnic

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identity. Andre, a bi-racial Black man, experienced a life of economic and social privilege prior to attending Southeast University. Once enrolled, he was easily engulfed by the tyrannical ideologies and treatment associated with the Black experience. Additionally, the varying nature of experiences with racism prior to college did not have an effect on participants' ability to recognize incidents where their racial identity played a role in the creation of a racist experience. Through their narratives many participants shared stories or accounts where they felt that racism had been an issue once before in their lives, but for the majority, identifiable racism had not experienced or encountered until they reached college.

Overall, the diversity of the experiences and the immeasurable differences between the backgrounds of participants show that it is somewhat difficult and likely impossible to categorize the nature of a racist experience for these participants. Each young man was vulnerable and inclined to experience racism within every facet of their membership as students at Southeast University. Membership within various social groups or identities didn't eliminate their chances of experiencing racism. Even more important than uncovering the vast nature of racist experiences is understanding and conceptualizing the effect of these experiences, since research shows that Black man are more prone to experiencing racism than their peers, which can affect the retention of this already small student population (Albach, Lomotey & Rivers, 2002; Allen, 1992; Porter, 2006; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003).

The Meaning of a Racist Experience

Studies around the effects of racist encounters on undergraduate Black men have shown that experiences similar to the participants of this study can bring about psychological concerns, which include anxiety, stress and lowered levels of self-efficacy, ability and esteem (Banks, Kohn-Wood, & Spencer, 2006; Howard-Hamilton, 1997; Greer & Chwalisz, 2007).

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Additionally, racist encounters can produce higher level of attrition for undergraduate Black men, causing them to see the environment as hostile and incongruent with their personal and social needs (Smith, Solorzano & Yoso, 2007). Through processing the effects of a racist experience, undergraduate Black men are likely to develop what is called, "anti-self," which is an internalization of society's negative view of them as Black men (Howard-Hamilton, 1997). When considering the breadth of negative effects of racism, it can be inferred that students' ability to develop traditional student development outcomes can be heavily affected, especially when considering the importance of person and environment congruence in creating opportunities for healthy development.

Similar to the wide range of experiences encountered by participants, the meaning constructed and overall effect of the experiences was individualized and incalculable for each participant. Parallel to what the literature provides, Black men within this study experienced higher levels of anxiety and sensitivity around racism and racial bigotry on campus. Participants shared stories of how they became extra anxious and uncomfortable after the encounter and even developed reluctance when interacting with White peers and faculty. For some, there was a sense of shame or doubt as it related to intersection of their gender and racial identities; which draws a parallel with the development of ant-self provided by Howard-Hamilton (1997). These experiences caused large levels of cognitive dissonance within participants. They were conflicted with personal and prior perceptions and views of Whites in comparison to what they had personally developed based on their experience. A few participants had never been faced with contemplating the role of race as it relates to their interaction with peers. For the first time they were challenged to create new ideologies and perceptions about the White race, which seemed to be an uncomfortable process for those affected. For some, the experience allowed them to

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transcend into greater thinking patterns, as they understood that one experience didn't represent the ideas and thoughts of an entire race. For others, their experience caused them to revert into a state of separation, desiring no contact with peers or other individuals belonging to the White race. Considering the array of meanings constructed, developing a holistic or singular meaning from a racist experience is challenging. Participants varied in their meaning making process, which could be a result of the different stages of personal refection and digestion of the experience. Additionally, although racial salience was not a component considered within this study, the level salience and centrality of one's racial identity can potentially impact one's ability to process and make sense of an experience grounded in race (Sellars et al, 2003; Sellars & Shelton, 2003). Furthermore, those participants who regard their racial identity at higher levels of salience and centrality may be more prone and sensitive to constructing a more pronounced meaning or conclusion from their experiences, whereas those with lower levels of salience and centrality may not construct the same level of meaning or importance.

On the contrary, many participants were able identify opportunities for personal growth and development after their experience. They viewed their encounter as a reminder of their role in eradicating the stereotypical images of Black man, as they currently exist; they committed themselves to participating in activities and opportunities to expand their ethical and moral development and considered it their responsibility to prove to their White peers that Black men were more than the stereotypical images seen on television and through other forms of media. If any positivity came from these experiences, it was the ability for many participants to remain neutral, as many of them did not develop negative or unconstructive feelings about Whites. Regardless of the level of severity, many participants continued to view their experience as isolated and continued to pursue the same level of engagement and interaction with their White

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peers and instructors as before. Although many participants weren't able to express much disdain about the meaning of their experiences, they were all able to identify areas on campus in which they felt tensions due to their racial identities. Their abilities to consider the campus climate hostile and uncomfortable may conclude that the effects of the experience have not been fully understood or connected to their perceptions of the campus climate.

The Perception of the Campus Climate

Through the use of photography and reflection, participants were asked to describe their perception of their campus climate in terms of race relations between Black males and their white peers. As stated earlier, overall participants remained optimistic about their decision to attend Southeast University, although a few of them initially questioned their choice directly after their encounter with racism. Regardless of the impact of their experience on their personal ideologies and constructed meaning, participants still valued the educational experience they were receiving at Southeast University. However, many of them did recognize levels of racial difference and oppression in terms of the social atmosphere and campus culture. This is demonstrated through the ability of each participant to identify items, traditions, or locations on campus that reflected a sense of discomfort for them as they attempted to successful matriculate throughout the university. One similarity that stood out among several participates as it relates to racial tensions experienced on campus was the role of historically White fraternities and sororities in perpetrating and breading racism within the campus climate. Several participants identified members of these organizations as the culprits responsible for initiating their racist experience or participating in the pain felt after the encounter. Through discussion, many participants expressed levels of discomfort and disdain for the White Greek system at Southeast University, which caused them to take photographs of Greek houses and other items that

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represented the racial tension and oppression they felt these groups disseminated around campus.

Additionally, many participants identified other areas of concern, which included, campus

police, residential communities, classroom settings, athletic events and overall institutional

traditions and norms. Several participants identified diversity messages established by the

university as more espoused values and norms, lacking action and substantial implementation

throughout the university community. Specifically, Adam mentioned that he felt that the pillars

of the arch, an establish list of values ascribed to by the university, where not reflected in the

treatment and experiences of undergraduate Black men and other students of color on campus.

He discussed that the middle pillar, justice, was something not represented in the social

interactions and systems that were established at the university and felt that justice had not been

achieved for all students, especially those from underrepresented populations. The feelings and

emotions expressed by participants through their photographs align directly with what research

provides; stating that Black students are more prone to perceiving the campus climate is

culturally incongruent and hostile since majority of predominately White institutions are founded

upon majoritarian beliefs, norms and customs (Aguirre & Messineo, 1996). Additionally,

predominately White university campuses also provide three areas of climate incongruence for

Black students, which include, racial and ethnic differences between peers, prejudicial attitudes

of faculty and staff, and discriminatory experiences in the classroom (Ancis, Seadlacek & Mohr,

2000). The findings of this study correlate with the aforesaid areas of concern, proving that harsh

and uninviting campus climates still exist regardless of efforts to diversify campus by

incorporating equitable admissions policies or providing programming and services around

inclusivity and acceptance.

Historically, student affairs professionals have incorporated the use of many theoretical

frameworks and models around person and environment interaction in attempt to design environments concerned with the learning, development and growth of undergraduate students (Walsh, 1978). One model in particular developed by Stern (1970) postulates that behavior is an outcome of the relationship between the person and their needs and the environment, which presents a level of challenge or press onto the individual. When considering the level of environmental press experienced by participants due to encounters with racism, it would be easy to conclude that their behavior within that environment could be altered, resulting in lower levels of academic performance, social integrations and increased levels of attrition. Congruent with the concepts presented by Stern (1970), Tinto's (1993) theory of student departure suggests that the attrition can be largely attributed to a lack of fit between the student and the institution. According to Tinto college students who perceive their norms, values and ideas as congruent with those at the center of the institution are more likely to become academically and socially integrated into the institution. Those students who perceive incongruence between themselves and the institution will experience more difficulty becoming integrated, and therefore, are less likely to persist. According to Guiffrida (2003) encounters with an environment where racial discrimination and prejudice are components of the institutional experience and culture present challenging obstacles for undergraduate Black men, directly impacting their level of integration into the university. Additionally Harper (2006) concluded that experiences with racism and other racially charged encounters could negatively impact an institutions ability to retain this specific student population. All eight participants were able to identify areas or items that displayed a level of environmental incongruence. Whether it was tensions experienced within an academic setting or incidents of indifference during social events, all either indirectly or directly identified a level of incongruence. However in lieu of the results of prior research, it became evident

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through their personal stories, that participants had decided to make a valiant effort to persist through out graduation and decided to use their experience as an opportunity to either help others or grow individually. Additionally, participants made a conscious decision to remain enrolled even after their experience, displaying a level of commitment and drive towards their personal goals and aspirations. Furthermore, none of the eight participants expressed a concern with the effect of their experience on their ability to achieve academically. Although they did allude to the additional challenges faced in class due to the level of press placed on them, they were able to use the environmental press as motivation to work harder and succeed regardless of racially charged encounters. Moreover, seven of the eight participants maintained cumulative grade point averages over a B average, reflecting no serious impact on academic integration. Social integration for some was more of a concern than for others, but each participant was able to find community within various facets of the campus community. For some, involving themselves in predominately Black student organizations was a way to cope and ease the strain of environmental press placed on them. According to Guiffrida (2003) cultural groups prove to be the best option for undergraduate Black men when attempting to socially integrate and develop community within a majority White educational environment. For other participants, developing a diverse social network of friends and peers who were sensitive to their personal experiences and needs proved to be beneficial in coping with environmental incongruence. Overall, participants perception of the campus climate, whether it positive or negative, did not seem have an impact on their ability to successfully integrate with those whom they felt most comfortable socializing with. Ideally, a campus environment should allow students to socialize and interact with whomever they desire, but within the context of this study, the reported effects of an incongruent campus environment didn't have similar impact on participants.

Implications for Practice

Participants within this study were able to successfully navigate the campus climate regardless of the stress caused by their experience or the level of environmental press experienced based on incongruence. However, the effect of additional levels of anxiety coupled with the constant reminder of their minority status as members of the campus community should be considered areas of concern for educators and practitioners a like. Regardless of the ability of these eight individuals to successfully navigate the many roadblocks recognized within the environment, research shows that there many others who are negatively affected by environments that bread racism and discrimination (Cabrera et al., 1999; Davis, 1994; Guiffrida, 2003; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). The variety of events and occurrences experienced by participants was insurmountable. Besides the consistent mention of historically White Greek organizations, the findings did not produce many identifiable similarities around the nature of a racist experience, which makes it difficult to streamline suggestions or concepts that could assist in the eradication this phenomenon on college campuses. Even more so, providing a list of anecdotal methods or programmatic interventions around limiting occurrences of racism would be belittling the issue in some sense, because as a profession we have continuously designed initiatives around diversity and inclusiveness, which based on the results of this study, haven't been fully accepted or successful. The issue of racism is much larger than the institution of higher education. Historically, racism has permeated its ugly existence throughout many, if not all of the social institutions and systems that we have established in this country (Bell, 1987; Bowser, 2007; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller & Thomas, 1995). Within the institution of education, we have blatantly hidden the existence of racism behind a value of multiculturalism and diversity

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(Ladson-Billings, 1998). We have limited our efforts at exposing students to various cultures, ideas and identities without considering the baggage that they bring with them. For student affairs professionals and many higher education educators, we are left to challenge and transform 17 to 18 years of life lessons, ideologies and stereotypical images through exposure and loose conversation around diversity and inclusivity. The narratives and stories shared within this dissertation reflect the need for greater exertion of tactics and ideas. No longer can we rest assure that students are absorbing and digesting the messages of equality that we attempt to spread through the use of offices, programs, and professionals that whole-heartedly believe in the severity of acceptance and equitability. Our efforts and internal commitments have to produce results because if not, students similar to these involved in this study will continue to attend institutions expecting to be oppressed, accepting racism as a component of the collegiate experience. As an institution, education in its entirety may need to revisit efforts at developing multicultural competency and racial acceptance among students. Waiting to have challenging conversations around racial differences is ineffective. Conversations with students need to be undertaken as they matriculate through elementary school and continue throughout the pre-collegiate experience. Empowering teachers and counselors to begin discussing and challenging issues around racial difference could potentially assist student affairs professionals as they work to create more inclusive and inviting campus environments.

Developing multicultural competency in professionals is a somewhat new initiative in student affairs; created to equip professionals with the knowledge and compassion necessary to work with increasing complex and growing dynamics of multicultural students on college campuses (Pope, Reynolds & Mueller, 2004). Student affairs divisions and professional associations attempt to expose professionals to varying student groups and subculture, while

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engaging in surface level conversation about personal biases and stereotypes about various populations. Some may argue that these efforts are effective or ineffective in establishing true competency, but the fact that there is a valiant effort to expose professionals to these conversations and concepts is somewhat commendable. The challenge comes when attempting to develop the same level of intimacy with students around topics such as racism and race. As a profession we have incorporated the use of student development theory as a foundational baseline for the intent behind our educational initiatives. Sanford (1967) developed his theory for student development based on equilibrium of challenge and support. He concluded that too much support with too little challenge creates a comfortable environment for students, where development opportunities are lessened. However, too little support with too much challenge makes development an impossible and potentially negative experience. Considering the components of Sanford's theory, student affairs professionals may not be providing enough challenge for students to grow, which could potentially stifle the renovation of old ideologies around race and racism. Before making any elaborate programmatic changes, professionals should attempt to assess the cultural climate on campus in terms of race relations and concerns. Incorporating the use of diverse assessment and research methods should assist in uncovering the existence of racial inequalities and inequities on college campuses. Consulting and collaborating with internal and external institutional stakeholders in an effort to learn about the disequilibrium that exist between students and institutional culture, norms and traditions could also assist in creating the dynamics necessary for conducting an assessment. Throughout the assessment process, institutions must begin to overtly evaluate the true intent and purposes behind centers, programs and services that attempt to foster inclusiveness and acceptance on campus. Although these initiatives are often successful at providing students with the resources and tools necessary

to create community within the larger institutional context, the educational component is often missing, limiting the opportunity for discussion around the nuances around racial inequalities and racism. Initiatives around multiculturalism should begin to foster discussions around difference, challenging students to divulge and discuss issues or concerns with cultural and ethnic dissimilarities.

In addition to assessing the campus culture, professionals need to become stringent about the judicial process and university response when it comes to encounters with racism or other acts of hate and bigotry. Creating a strong message of disdain and low tolerance in terms of actions of racism can assist in spreading the message that these actions are not tolerated or supported within specific educational environments. Ideally, this message will pervade throughout the institution, causing students to understand the severity of these acts, limiting the viability of racism on campus. It should also be noted that an educational component should accompany this concept. Through the use of counseling services, offenders should engage in conversations and dialogue with professionals about their personal perceptions and ideologies, creating conversations fostering change, growth, and development. If possible, challenging conversations with incoming students should be conducted prior to enrollment or during orientation. A strong message of inclusivity and acceptance needs to be sent prior to students' arrival, ensuring that family members and students alike understand the institutions commitment to limiting acts of racism on campus.

Throughout participants' narratives, historically White Greek organizations were often mentioned as the conduits of racism, discrimination and prejudice on campus. Professionals who work directly with these groups should re-assess and re-evaluate the importance of multiculturalism, diversity, acceptance and inclusiveness within the organizations they advise.

Reconsidering the level of challenge placed on students in these areas could potentially assist in adjusting and eliminating past ideologies about racial differences and discriminatory ideologies.

Overall, the concept of racism is very much alive and viable on predominately White college campuses similar to Southeast University. Regardless of the initial effect of these experiences on students, the long-term effects of racism have proven to affect the quality of life of Black men (Biasco, Goodwin & Vitale, 2001; Greer & Chwalisz, 2007); making initiatives around race and acceptance much more important and detrimental to the success of this particular student population. Beyond creating new programs and services, campuses climates need to be assessed so professionals can learn more about the disparities that exist among racial groups. Assessing students' personal ideologies about racial differences has to be at the forefront of professionals' agendas if eliminating experiences similar to the participants of this study is an institutional priority. Institutions must uncover if these concerns exist as priorities on their campuses, and if they do not they must ask themselves, why not?

Suggestions for Future Research

Although this study touched on numerous areas and focuses around racism, discrimination and prejudice on predominately White college campuses, each research question in its entirety should be studied holistically to develop a more succinct and concise understanding of that specific phenomenon. Designing a longitudinal study around the nature of racist experiences for undergraduate Black men would permit professionals to develop a much more contextual understanding of where these occurrences are taking place more frequently, allowing them to tackle functional areas of concern. Additionally, incorporating the use of multiple institutions across various regions may assist in creating a general understanding of the root of these experiences. This concept would lend itself to identifying key student groups, disciplines and

social experiences where undergraduate Black men encounter the greatest level of racism and discrimination.

Following the same premises as above, longitudinally studying the life-long effects of racism on this student population, may lend itself to a greater understanding of their holistic meaning making process as it relates to concerns with self-efficacy, esteem and ability. With the use of innovative collection methods, researcher could provide potential participants with the opportunity to reflect and display the variations of meanings these experiences and the impact they have had on their lives. The results from a study designed in this nature could provide some key implications for programmatic and educational interventions for Black men. It may be beneficial for researchers to assess the centrality and salience of participants' racial identity when attempting to discover the meaning constructed from an experience since salience and centrality directly correlate with one's ability to process meaning from a racist encounter (Sellars et al., 2003).

Assessing and researching campus culture in its entirety as it relates to Black men could potentially present some new opportunities for growth and enhancement within a higher education academic and co-curricular curriculum. Although campus climate studies are extensive and often daunting, it seems to be one of the only methods to really capture the aspects of the environment that present unbearable and stressful levels of press on undergraduate Black men. Considering the variation of experiences encountered on campus, it would be important for institutions to take a holistic look at the educational program and identify key areas of concern and trepidation for undergraduate Black men. Creating a comfortable, inclusive and accepting environment may not be imperative for healthy academic integration for undergraduate Black men, but it would improve their ability to integrate socially into peer groups to which they may

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not have access to based on racial ideologies and differences.

Incorporating the use of qualitative and quantitative methods in any follow up study could provide a diverse look at the levels of difference and effect of these experiences. Additionally, the use of a larger diverse sample of participants may permit future researchers to make more generalizations around programmatic implications or interventions. Although this study incorporated the use of a qualitative methods and traditions, and involved the use of one data collection site, it provided a framework which to grow and develop future studies around the same phenomenon.

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Participant Email Invitation

Black men of UGA,

I hope all is well and hope that your semester has proven to be successful academically and socially. I am emailing you to request your participation in a ground breaking research project that I am currently working on. I was given your name from a student affairs professional that you may work with in one of your student organizations, or that you have developed a relationship with since attending UGA.

First, let me introduce myself. My name is Jamie R. Riley, I am a 3rd year African American male PhD student in the College Student Affairs Administration program here at UGA. I attended Tennessee State University for my undergraduate and master's degree, and worked 3years professionally in student affairs before coming back to school as a full-time graduate student. I am currently working on my dissertation and hope to graduate in May with my PhD.

Since entering my doctoral program my research interest have been targeted around creating environments conducive for the success of Black males who attend Predominately White Institutions (PWI's).

Currently, I am interested in learning about acts of racism, discrimination, and prejudice and the existence of these acts towards undergraduate Black men on predominately White college campuses. Additionally, I am interested in learning more about the meaning Black men develop from these experiences and their perception of the campus climate and environment as it relates to the racial tensions between Black males and their White peers. Ideally, this research will open the eyes to higher education professionals who are unaware or uninterested in the existence of racism, discrimination, and prejudice on today's college campuses.

The results from this research will be kept strictly confidential, and will possibly be used by student affairs professionals to impact policy change and to open the eyes of those who feel that racism is no longer present on our college campuses. You have the opportunity to make history and embark change.

The criterion for this research is as follows:

1. Identify as a Black male
2. Be an undergraduate student at UGA 18 years of age or over
3. Be a continuing student (first year students are not eligible for this study)
4. Be willing to discuss and reflect on an act or racism, discrimination or prejudice experienced while attending UGA

5. Be willing to participate in a 60 minute one on one interview with me.
6. Be willing to take photos on campus of things that reflect your feelings about the racial tensions that exists on campus

Brothers, I hope that this opportunity seems like something that you would be willing to participate in. **WE** can change things and create environments that will allow more of our brothers to feel comfortable and appreciated on college campuses across the country! If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity or just need a brother/mentor, please contact me via phone; **(615) 300-2082 or (706) 389-6204**; email jriley2@uga.edu or jrriley03@gmail.com; or Facebook. I look forward to hearing from you. Take Care.

Sincerely,

Jamie R. Riley
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services

APPENDIX B

Participant Consent Form

Acts of Racism, Discrimination and Prejudice Research Consent Form

I, _____, agree to take part in a research study titled,
"**Acts of Racism, Discrimination and Prejudice: Through the Voices of Undergraduate
Black Men,**" which is being conducted by the University of Georgia, through the Department of
Counseling & Human Development Services under the direction of Diane L. Cooper, Ph.D., 706-
542-1820.

I understand that I do not have to take part in this study; 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 information related to me returned, removed from the
research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of this study is to explore racist experiences of Black undergraduate men, hoping to
reveal the intricate details behind the experience, thus uncovering the true nuances behind
incidents of racial inequality and bigotry towards this student population. Furthermore this study
attempts to uncover the nature of racist experiences, the meaning that undergraduate Black men
make from them, and their perception of racial tensions that may exist on their perspective
campuses. I will not benefit directly from this research. However, my participation in this
research may lead to information that could benefit future generations of college students.

If I volunteer to take part in this study:

(1) I must be at least 18 years old when I participate in the interview.

(2) I will be asked to participate in an interview where I will be asked to speak about a racist
experience I have encountered while attending The University of Georgia. This interview should
last no more than 60-90 minutes and will be digitally taped. If necessary, I may be contacted at a
later date to clarify information or to answer additional questions. These contacts will be by e-
mail

(3) I will be provided with a disposable camera and asked to take photographs of those things
that represent my feelings about the campus climate and environment as it relates to the racial
tensions I experience and encounter as a Black man. I understand that I will be asked to provide
a description and an explanation of why I select certain items to photograph during my interview.
I will avoid taking pictures of people's faces, including my own.

(4) At the conclusion of the interview I will have the opportunity to participate in a reflective free-write activity. All identifiable information revealed during the free-write will be changed to protect my anonymity.

 (5) No discomforts or stresses are expected. No risks are expected.

(6) Any individual-identifiable information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with me will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with my permission or as required by law. Participants will never be mentioned by name in any published results, and only general statements will be used.

(7) Audio tapes will be kept in a locked area and will be transcribed. Transcripts, audiotapes, reflections and photos will be kept until the end of the spring 2014 semester and then destroyed.

The researchers will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project. Contact the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at (706) 542-1812 or email the co-researcher, Jamie R. Riley at <jriley2@uga.edu>.

My signature below indicates that the researcher has answered all of my questions to my satisfaction and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   Date   Signature of Researcher   Date

_____
Signature of Participant   Date

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu

APPENDIX C

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

RQ1: What is the nature of a racist experience for Black undergraduate men? (Semi-structured Interview)

1. **Let's start off with you telling me a little bit about yourself?**

    a.   Major, Activities/Organizations, Grades, etc.

    b.   Tell me about your hometown

        i.   The demographic make up

        ii.   Race relations between Blacks and Whites

        iii. Socio-economic class of Black & White residents

    c.   What about your family and friends and their importance to you?

        i.   Growing up what did you hear and learn about racism?

    d.   Tell me about your life prior to UGA (high school years)

        i.   How was being a young Black man in your high school and community?

        ii.   How were Black men perceived at your high school

        iii. What messages about being a Black male did you receive through out your schooling before attending college?

2. **Talk to me about your racist experience? (Be as specific with the details as possible)**

    a.   When did it happen? (i.e. freshmen year, last month)

    b.   Where did it happen? (i.e. in class, residence hall)

    c.   Who were the culprits? (i.e. students, faculty members, staff)

    d.   What role do you feel your identity as a Black man played into the occurrence of your experience?

    e.   Describe the environment? (Ex: Weather, How were you feeling?)

    f.   What were you doing before the occurrence?

    g.   What did you do after the occurrence?

        i.   What was your first reaction?

        ii.   What ran through your mind?

  h. Who did you talk to about the occurrence?

    i. What advice did they give you?

  i. Where others around, how did they respond?

    i. How did their response/involvement make you feel?

RQ3: How do Black undergraduate men perceive their campus climate in terms of race relations between Black males and their white peers? (Photo Elicitation-Please choose 2-3)

1. Please explain how each photo describes how you feel about race relations between Black men and your White peers?

 a. How does this picture make you feel as it relates to race relations?

 b. What influenced you to take this picture?

 c. What about the items in the picture spoke to you about race relations on campus?

2. How was the process of taking pictures of items that describe race relations?

3. How has your feelings about the racial climate effected your overall opinion about your college and or university?

4. In your opinion how do White peers perceive Black men on campus?

 a. How do you feel this affects how White peers and White faculty treat Black men on campus?

 b. How do you feel this affects how Black men are valued on campus by students?

 c. How do you feel this affects how Black men are valued on campus by faculty and administrators?

5. In your opinion, what are the current race related issues or challenges facing Black men on campus (ex: combating stereotypes)

 a. In your opinion, how are the issues facing Black men in higher education related to racism, discrimination, and prejudice?

RQ2: What meaning do Black undergraduate men make of racist experiences? (Reflective Free-write)

6. How did you feel after the experience?

 a. What were your first reactions?

 b. What affect has it had on your life since?

 c. How has this experience it made you feel about being a Black man?

7. How did the occurrence alter your feelings about White people?

      a.   Did you feel positive, negative, or indifferent about White people based on your racist experience?

      b.   How did it affect your interaction or willingness to interact with white peers?

      c.   How did it affect your interaction or willingness to interact with White faculty and administrators?