WHAT CAN WE DO? A CRITICAL MULTICULTURAL RESPONSE TO THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK MALES AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

by

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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the dissertation of Daymond Glenn for the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership presented October 2009.

Title: What Can We Do? A Critical Multicultural Response to the College Experiences of Black Males at Predominantly White Institutions

Studies on Black males at various types of colleges have been conducted; however, there has been little research on Black males at private, predominantly White institutions of higher education in the Pacific Northwest. Given this, we know little about their status and experiences in these environments. This study focused on the experiences of eight Black male undergraduate students from four private, predominantly White institutions (PWIs) of higher education in the Pacific Northwest. This study examined the utility of a critical multicultural perspective in making recommendations for the experiences of these students.

Five overarching categories of experience were investigated in this study (Identity Development, Classroom Experiences, Multicultural Awareness, Campus Climate, and Peer Relationships). These provided the structure for in-depth interviews, data analysis, and informed the development of the recommendations.

Among the findings are the following: The students found the term *Black* to be complicated and difficult to define; social science courses seemed to increase their chances of a negative classroom experience; they understood multiculturalism generally as the study of other cultures; being one of few Black males on campus was frustrating and perplexing; and race was often a significant factor in establishing supportive friendships.

This research revealed that Black males have complex and varied experiences on campus and inside the classroom at PWIs in the Pacific Northwest. On the basis of the findings, recommendations are that colleges need to be intentional on providing spaces for cultural affirmation and cultural education, as well as provide mentoring opportunities from Black professionals who understand the experiences of Black males at PWIs. PWIs can wittingly and unwittingly bring a variety of experiences to the educational lives of Black males, which can either help them expand their intellectual paradigms and social networks, or reproduce negative stereotypes about their culture, causing them to isolate themselves socially.

DEDICATION

To all the Black males in the world who never had a chance to realize their full potential.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

APPENDICES

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Setting the Context

Some educators believe that colleges are structured in a way that minimizes the chances of academic achievement for Black males (Banks, 1996a). In general, higher education, known to some as the *ivory tower*, has always received some form of attention regarding how it poses certain challenges for all students, as only 55% of students receive college degrees within 6 years of entering college (United Press International, 2009). However, multiple studies have illustrated some of the unusual challenges that Black males face while attending predominantly White institutions[1] (Allen, 1992; Bailey & Bonner, 2006; Brown, 2006; Cuyjet, 2006; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Harper & Nichols, 2008; Hefner, 2004; Laster, 2006; Tatum, 1997), and these challenges seem to reoccur from decade to decade and from generation to generation. According to Fries-Britt (2000), Black students are of interest for research because, "as Black students gained access to predominantly White institutions in the United States, their presence underscores their significant differences and needs relative to White students" (p. 55).

The introduction of multicultural education at colleges and universities has been a popular decision, and over the past 20 years, proponents of multicultural

[1] For this research study, a predominantly White institution (PWI) is defined as a college or university that has 75% or more White students.

education have been very influential on these campuses (Banks, 1996b). Due to this popularity, some colleges have been diligent about preparing their students for careers in multicultural education (Gay, 2004), while others have offered programs and classes that focus on educating students on what it means to be an effective global citizen, preparing them to live in a diverse world and attempting to raise their levels of consciousness about multiple issues that affect society.

Multicultural education in higher education can be defined as a "systematic blending of academic programs, recruitment, retention, policies, and curriculum that provide college students with an enriched multicultural environment for learning" (Ervin, 2001, p. 764). It is also one of the key avenues through which colleges address the issues of Black students, abrogate racism, race-based prejudicial tendencies and other forms of oppressive behaviors on their campuses, and "multicultural requirements, programs, and policies also have been implemented at many of the nation's research universities" (Banks, 1996b, p. 4).

However, research has shown that student concerns on college campuses are less about the existence of multicultural education than about deciding what form the multicultural education should take (Ravitch, 1990). Many students of color, Black students in particular, criticize multicultural education for being mere window dressing, not addressing conflictual issues between groups, and doing very little to address the overall cultural ethos on a college campus (Ervin, 2001). McLaren (1994) argued that multicultural practices that do not intend to transform the usual politics of institutional culture will only lead to assimilation of people to the dominant status quo.

Purpose of Study

There have been studies on Black males at various educational institutions, but little has been written about Black males at private PWI's (Harper & Nichols, 2008) in the Pacific Northwest. Given this fact, there is inadequate research that addresses and describes the status and experiences of these men in these environments. This research study described the stories and perspectives of eight Black male undergraduates, illuminated some of the challenges these men faced, and galvanized more effective strategies to improve the experience, recruitment, retention and graduation rates for Black males attending PWIs. Because of the challenges inherent to recruiting, retaining and graduating Black males at these institutions (Harper & Nichols, 2008), it was paramount this study understand the complexities that exist within this group. In addition, it was extremely important to understand what was happening on these college campuses from the perspective of the Black males in attendance.

To respond to the needs of Black male undergraduates at PWIs, the researcher developed a conceptual framework for multicultural perspectives, and utilized the critical perspective from this framework to assist in making recommendations to college administrators, faculty, and staff on the data that were gathered as part of this research. To this end, the general purpose of this study was to explore how a critical multicultural perspective could assist in making recommendations based on the experiences of Black male undergraduates at private PWIs in the Pacific Northwest.

This chapter presents (a) alarming data on Black males, (b) challenges Black males face at PWIs, (c) campus initiatives addressing the needs of Black males, (d)

multicultural education, and (e) criticisms of multicultural education on college campuses. In chapter 2, this study offers a more in-depth analysis of the challenges faced by Black males attending PWIs, which leads into the argument for a critical interpretation of multiculturalism, the development of an original conceptual framework for multicultural perspectives, and the utility of a critical multicultural perspective to respond to the needs of Black males on the campuses of PWIs.

Alarming Data on Black Males in College

It is important to begin with defining the term *Black*, as it is used throughout the research study. For the purposes of this study, the term Black means both African American males and Black males born outside the United States. According to Tatum (1997), to think of Black as anything other than a social construct is irresponsible. She explained that all race is "a social construction that has little biological meaning" (p. 168). While there are differences between groups of people along lines of "hair texture, skin tone, facial structure, or blood type, most biologists and physical anthropologists tell us that there is no such thing as a 'pure' race. All human populations are 'mixed' populations" (p. 168).

Research describing the experiences of matriculated Black males shows that this demographic of students disproportionately underperforms when compared to their White peers. In 2002, African American students comprised only 11.9% of all students enrolled in college (Seidman, 2005), and African American males comprised only 4.3% of all African American students enrolled in college (Harper & Nichols, 2008). Currently, African American male students hold the lowest college completion

rate (32.8%) among all racial/ethnic/gender groups in higher education (2006 Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac, as cited in Davis, 2008, p. 360). This is a significant statistic, considering how in 2005 The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac (as cited in Cuyjet, 2006) released a report that delineated the number of students attending college (16,611,700) by gender and into six racial categories (American Indian, Asian, White, Hispanic, Foreign and Black). According to the 2005 Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac (as cited in Cuyjet, 2006, p. 7), the numbers for college attendance were as follows: American Indian, 39.6% of males and 60.4% of females; Asian, 46.9% of males and 53.1% of females; Hispanic, 42.1% of males and 57.9% of females; White, 44.0% of males and 56.0% of females; Foreign, 55.3% of males and 44.7% of females; Black, 35.8% of males and 64.2% of females. These data show that out of the 11.9% of all Black students enrolled in college, only 35.8% of the students are male. As stated earlier, of that 35.8%, only 32.8% will graduate. Even Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are facing challenges recruiting and retaining Black men, as only 29% of Black men graduate within 6 years from HBCUs (Associated Press, 2009).

Data continues to indicate that Black males are more likely to be killed or incarcerated rather than attend college (Hefner, 2004; Wilson, 2000). This point is well illustrated with a brief historical snapshot of how Black males' college attendance aligns with Black males who are incarcerated. Clarence Page (as cited in Cuyjet, 2006), a columnist for the Chicago Tribune, described disparities between Black males attending college and those who are incarcerated. Page wrote:

> In 1980 there were three times more black men enrolled in colleges and universities (463,700) than in prisons (143,000), the study said. By 2000, Black male numbers grew to 791,600 in prison, but only to 603,032 on campus. Although the two groups are not directly comparable, since the college figures count a narrower student-age population, the numbers do dramatize a disturbing trend. (pp. 7–8)

Because of the inextricable link between education and social advancement (Darder, 1991; Freire, 1993; Giroux, 1994; McLaren, 2007), there are tremendous implications to be found in the disproportionately high percentage of Black males who do not go or fail to complete college.

Black Males at PWIs

Recent studies have shown that Black males at PWIs experience high levels of negative emotions that are not conducive to maximizing their learning potential (Brown, 2006). Also, on numerous occasions, Black males at PWIs have expressed that their campus and classroom cultures are unwelcoming, and in addition, some feel that PWIs are hostile environments (Bailey & Bonner, 2006; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001). Black males at PWIs often feel as if they have to prove themselves more than others in the college classroom, and that their intellectual paradigms are consistently being challenged by the professor and other students (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001). Walter Allen (as cited in Tatum, 1997) offered a unique look at this group when he explained that:

> On PWIs, Black students emphasize feelings of alienation, sensed hostility, racial discrimination, and lack of integration…Consistent with accumulated evidence of human development, these students, like most human beings, develop best in environments where they feel valued, protected, accepted, and socially connected in our society. (pp. 79–80)

These peculiar challenges for Black males are highly specific to their experience at PWIs. Allen (1992) posited that "studies on African American students suggest that many have negative, anomic experiences in White institutions and that they suffer lower achievement and higher attrition than White students" (p. 27). Considering the sparse numbers of Black males who attend PWIs, there are deep concerns about the psychological impact that these institutions may have on the identity development of these students (Fleming, 1981; Laster 2006). Fleming (1981) argued, "there is social-psychological evidence that many black students in white colleges undergo a classic identity crisis that interferes with academic functioning" (p. 308). Additionally, there is an ongoing concern about the minimal amount of research that addresses these issues directly (Laster, 2006).

Campus Initiatives Targeted at Black Males

Some colleges support initiatives targeted at addressing the variety of issues that disproportionately affect the Black males on their campuses. Laster (2006) reported that Black male "student involvement and feelings of belonging are key factors in [their] student development, matriculation, and graduation" (p. 290). This study selected six self-identified successful programs targeted at Black males on college campuses (Bailey, 2006; Bledsoe & Rome, 2006; Catching, 2006; Hill, 2006; Laster, 2006), including a program designed by the researcher, to see what types of areas were important for college personnel to consider when establishing a program to increase the levels of involvement and belonging for this group. In this program analysis, six themes were identified that consistently emerged and intersected through

the various programs. In their programs, this research study found the themes supported by these particular campuses to be: (a) Academic Support, (b) Leadership Development, (c) Mentoring, (d) Community Service, (e) Social Support and (f) Networking.[2] However, within the common themes of the programs, there still were some differences from program to program. An explanation of each identified theme follows.

Academic Support

Academic support refers to assisting students with their classroom work to help improve their grades. Academic work can also be understood in broad terms as increasing levels of critical thinking (beneficial for classroom work), and providing supplemental books, texts or articles that can increase the intellectual ability of a given student on a variety of subjects and issues. Some examples include:

- Weekly study groups where students share knowledge and tutor one another
- Participating in first-year college orientation courses designed to address the needs of Black males on campus
- Inviting a faculty member to a group meeting to discuss in detail his/her particular academic interest

Leadership Development

Leadership development refers to initiatives designed to encourage students to take an active role in creating or maintaining various initiatives that concern their campus and in the greater community. It is a way for students to have a voice and

[2] Note: Spiritual development was also identified as a theme in one of the programs. However, only one program had initiatives targeted at the spiritual development of its students.

involvement in important topics, a way to bolster their communication skills, and a way to ensure their maximum effectiveness in future jobs. Examples of leadership development include:

- Encouraging students to apply for various campus student leadership positions and helping them to identify their personal leadership characteristics
- Supporting students in coordinating projects, cultural events and activities for the group, college campus and extended community
- Working with the local community on community service projects

Mentoring

In these types of programs, those which focus on mentoring are attuned toward establishing relationships between peers, establishing relationships between college students and professionals, or establishing relationships between college students and K-12 students. These relationships are typically established in such a way that one person has more experience in a given area than the other, to better facilitate the more experienced person to help the less experienced person. With regard to these programs' impact on Black male students, activities which are typical of these mentoring programs include:

- Inviting K-12 Black males to visit college campuses
- Working peer-to-peer to increase academic performance and expand social networks
- Tutoring Black students at local middle and high schools

Community Service/Outreach

Community service programs are designed and implemented toward efforts to positively effect the local community. Programs of effective outreach and community service, when implemented with the interests of Black male students, can include:

- Volunteering or working outside the college community to provide guidance to younger Black males
- Working with local nonprofits on community related projects
- Designing programs to assist high school students who plan to attend college within 2 years, as well as provide assistance to their parents

Social Support

Social support refers to the emotional, intellectual or physical support that is provided by friends or through an extended community. This concept also refers to professionals, acquaintances and friends spending time discussing issues that are important particular to a specific group. With regard to Black male students, social support efforts can include:

- Regular meetings convened to discuss social issues that specifically affect Black males
- Regularly-scheduled community dinners and potlucks organized around themes of community building

- Social outings such as movies, sports, games, trips, and other organized activities designed to expose students to different environments and expand their horizons of activity and ability

Networking

Networking is the act and process of meeting new people in a professional or social context. The maintenance of effective networks is essential in the social and professional success of most college students, so it is necessary to establish these skills in Black male students. Programs which emphasize this skill will often include such activities as:

- Building relationships with professionals, Black and otherwise, outside of the college community
- Establishing long-lasting mentor and advising relationships through one-on-one mentoring or advising by faculty or staff of color
- Encouraging Black male students to work with students at other colleges or universities

Table 1 highlights the six programs and illustrates some of the themes they have in common in addressing the needs of Black males on college campuses. This table is designed to identify the major themes that could be supported by colleges that are concerned about the success of Black males on their campus.

Table 1

Six Programs and Their Common Themes

Successful Program	Academic Support	Leadership Development	Mentoring	Community Service	Social Support	Networking
Program 1 *SAAB*[1]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Program 2 *BMO*[2]	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Program 3 *BMC*[3]	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Program 4 *B-MRS*[4]	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Program 5 *Sons of Alkebulan*[5]	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Program 6 *BMG*[6]	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

[1]Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB)
[2]The Black Man on Campus (BMOC)
[3]Black Men's Collective (BMC)
[4]Black Male Rap Session (B-MRS, pronounced *Beamers*)
[5]Alkebulan is said to be the original name of Africa
[6]Black Men's Group (BMG), which was developed by the researcher

Although the majority of these programs have different ways of addressing the common themes, all of the programs embody the same cultural ethos of establishing and maintaining brotherhood within their respective groups. The table does not suggest that these themes are the only ideas or methods that can have a positive impact on the lives of Black males at PWIs; however, they are important areas to consider when developing a program for Black males on college campuses.

Multicultural Education in the United States

Multicultural education is discussed in various contexts, but these are often disconnected from the story of how this concept formed in our society. Multicultural education is inextricably linked to the time from which it emerged, but it seems to constantly evolve and take on new interpretations from decade to decade. From the beginning, multicultural education was concerned with the social, political and racial underpinnings in our society, and was highly influenced by the struggles of Black Americans (Banks, 1992). Both past African American scholars and the emergence of ethnic studies programs were crucial in the development of multicultural education (Banks, 1996a).

The movement toward an integrated idea of education was born out of the race riots during the mid-1940s in cities like Los Angeles, New York City, and Detroit, where Black people had begun arriving from southern states in large numbers. Out of this chaotic wartime atmosphere came the "intergroup education movement...[whose aims] were to minimize ethnic cultures and affiliations [and] to help students become mainstream Americans and effective citizens," regardless of their race (Banks, 2004b, p. 21). Banks (2004b) regarded the work of Gordon Allport's 1954 book *The Nature of Prejudice* as an important index for this movement. In the *The Nature of Prejudice*, Allport's *contact hypothesis* argued that

> contact between [racial] groups will improve intergroup relations if the contact is characterized by these conditions: (1) equal status, (2) cooperation rather than competition, (3) sanction by authorities such as teachers and administrators and (4) interpersonal interactions in which students become acquainted as individuals. (Allport as cited in Banks, 2010, pp. 21-22)

The intergroup educational movement was a movement that was developed primarily by White community members, and it eventually lost momentum and dissipated over time for not being connected to Black people and other marginalized groups (Ramsey, Williams, & Vold, 2003).

Multicultural education continued its development during the racially charged 1960s and early 1970s. As a result, multicultural education was heavily influenced by the civil rights movement, which had its roots in various forms of social injustice and inequality (Montecinos & Sleeter 1999). As such, the developments of multicultural education and cultural diversity took shape during a time of conflict, cultural resistance to the status quo, integration and a time of rapid social transformation. Multicultural education received much momentum from racial groups that were experiencing extreme levels of racism and discrimination in American society. During this time, women were also exploited and oppressed in a variety of ways; hence, the feminist movement also contributed to certain aspects of multicultural education (Sleeter, 1996). Notable authors in this period include James A. Banks, Carl Grant, Gwendolyn Baker, James Boyer, and Geneva Gay (Banks, 1996b; Ramsey et al., 2003). They came to see educational equality as their primary goal, with multiculturalism's purpose being to

> sensitize all individuals toward ethnic and racial differences and to increase individual awareness of cultural traditions and experiences [while helping] all individuals understand their own race and culture, including language and socialization experiences. (Ramsey et al., 2003, p. 17)

A wide range of authors from other racial minorities soon furthered their concepts of multiculturalism.

As changes in the political and social landscape formed, multiculturalism was also subjected to multiple interpretations that conflicted with individuals, institutions and society (Banks, 1996b, 1999; Goldberg, 1994; Shohat & Stam, 1994; Sleeter, 1996). Multicultural education always was anchored in the ideals of equality, and it "served as a mobilizing site for struggle within education" (Sleeter, 1996, p. 10). However, some educational institutions, especially those with a primarily White student population, found difficulty in justifying the expense in money and faculty for programs that would serve a minority of the student body. In addition, some administrators opposed multicultural education on personal grounds. For these reasons, many educational institutions had a difficult time embracing this new educational movement, and the ideas of multiculturalism put forth by its early advocates were often met with institutional resistance (Sleeter, 1996). Ramsey et al. (2003) cited the early work of Carl Grant as describing the implementation process for multicultural education programs within schools. Grant's process was anchored in the ideals of cultural pluralism and democracy, which he argued for:

1. Staffing patterns and composition throughout the organizational hierarchy reflect the pluralistic nature of American society.
2. Curricula are appropriate, flexible, unbiased, and incorporate the contributions of all cultural groups.
3. The different languages of cultural groups are seen as assets, not deficiencies.
4. Instructional materials are free of bias, omissions, and stereotypes; are inclusive rather, than supplementary; and show individuals from different cultural groups portraying different occupational and social roles. (p. 18)

As multicultural education was developing in America during the late 1960s and early 1970s, other countries such as Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom also developed their own context for multiculturalism that helped to address the needs of marginalized and disenfranchised groups in their societies. Emerging issues concerning the plight of marginalized groups served as the impetus behind the theoretical underpinnings of multicultural education as implemented by educational institutions in these countries (Grant & Sachs, 1995). Although not uniformly, it appears as though other regions of the world also experienced similar cultural conflicts as those which were happening in the United States. As a result, this new idea of multicultural education had relevance beyond American academia.

Criticisms of Multiculturalism on College Campuses

Multicultural education has been in constant change since it began in the late 1960s, and there is now a vast array of multicultural perspectives (Banks, 1996a, 1999; Goldberg, 1994; Shohat & Stam, 1994; Sleeter, 1996). Multicultural education has become a buzzword for some aspects of educational reform, but many college educators have a narrow view of what form it should take (Banks, 2004a). Some may view multiculturalism as political, and others view it as academic. This radical duality of interpretation makes the term *multicultural education* highly polarizing and commonly misunderstood (Stotsky, 1991). Multiculturalism is a complex term that is defined and interpreted through a variety of paradigms, so establishing a consistent and explicit theoretical framework throughout a given college is an area that requires attention. Because of the many goals and interpretations of multicultural education, it

seems commonplace for differences to surface. As such, it finds itself in a very precarious place, and receives criticism from both supporters and detractors.

Multicultural education on college campuses receives a fair amount of criticism, as many colleges view multiculturalism as merely adding a few ethnic voices, women's perspectives and other cultural narratives to the curriculum (Banks, 2004a). Some critics view multicultural education as a field which offers a wider understanding of differences between peoples, but fails to deliver on these promises and in practice is no more than an intellectual exercise with little practical purpose (May, 1999b); or they only "see [multiculturalism] as a means of reducing prejudice and stereotyping among individuals, as an attempt to learn to overlook differences in an effort to allow Americans of color to 'progress' in the historic manner of white ethnic groups" (Sleeter, 1996, p. 13). Others view multiculturalism as having too much of its focus on classroom teachers, largely due to how a vast array of multicultural educational literature "has been written for classroom teachers" (Grant, Sleeter, & Anderson, as cited in Grant & Sachs, 1995, p. 92). Because of this, a constant challenge faced by proponents of multiculturalism is overcoming the great amount of attention it pays to classroom curricula while emphasizing how oppression affects students (May, 1999b).

Multicultural education on college campuses has shown a propensity to offer faculty/staff of color employment opportunities or an opportunity for faculty/staff of color to progress further in their current field of employment (Wallace, 1994), however it still receives criticism for the ways in which it addresses the needs of

people of color by minimizing the importance of ideological diversity and failing to incorporate the contributions and ideas of people of color into the larger system (Wallace, 1994).

Summary

In this chapter the researcher explored the purpose of this study, alarming data on Black males, challenges Black males face at PWIs, and campus initiatives targeted at addressing the needs of Black males (including those that emphasize academic support, leadership development, mentoring, community service, social support, and networking). This chapter also explored the history of multicultural education in the United States, and some criticisms of multicultural education on college campuses. This information presented in this chapter has framed the discussion for the literature review in chapter 2, and is the impetus for this research study that is designed to create an original conceptual framework for multicultural perspectives and to use the critical multicultural perspective as a lens by which to respond to the experiences of Black males attending college at private PWIs in the Pacific Northwest.

Past research has shown that many of the challenges confronting Black people can be eliminated if Black intellectuals used their work to help empower and better the lives of other Black people (hooks, 1995). Most early Black scholars were educators who tried through their scholarship to empower the masses of Black people (Banks, 1996a), as in the beginning, the charge for educating Black people was directly linked to helping Black communities address the social inequities that disproportionately affected them (Hefner, 2004). This perspective puts a moral imperative on the

researcher, who is Black and has access to various types of cultural capital (such as higher education), and to use his intellectual resources in a creative manner to assist Black people who are struggling. It is important to note that leveraging intellectual capital to empower Black people does not necessarily mean a split has to exist between Black people and people who are not Black, as Black people can work to empower their communities while simultaneously addressing the needs of the larger community.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the relevant literature from the perspective of educators and faculty members at schools similar to those that comprise the bulk of this study. This literature review explores the difficulties faced by Black males at PWIs through the domains of Identity Development, Classroom Experiences and Climate, Multicultural Awareness, and Peer relationships. This chapter also explores the concept of critical multiculturalism, and the development [by the researcher] of an original conceptual framework for multicultural perspectives. The critical multicultural perspective in the researcher's conceptual framework, which is undergirded by knowledge construction, culture, power and privilege, is the lens by which this study makes recommendations to college administrators, faculty, and staff on the data that were gathered as part of this research.

Domains of Concern for Black Males at PWIs

As this study began to explore the challenges faced by Black males while attending PWIs, certain themes began to emerge that the researcher felt required further investigation. Although there are multiple ways to describe the experiences of Black males at PWI's, the researcher deduced, in preliminary inquiries and through the literature presented in chapter 1, that the most relevant domains concerning the challenges of Black males at PWIs were: Identity Development, Classroom

Experiences and Climate, Multicultural Awareness, and Peer Relationships. The following review is organized along these fields of interest and relevance. Each of these domains is discussed briefly here.

Black Identity Development

It is necessary that this study first consider racial identity, and in particular the various models that track its development. Among these identity models (e.g., Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989; Helms, 1995; Parham, 1989; Phinney, 1990), one of the most helpful for this study is the Black Identity Development model of Cross (1971), which was revised in 1991. In his 1971 article *The Negro to Black Conversion Experience*, Cross outlined what he described as the five stages that Black people go through when changing from an often negative White frame of reference with regard to themselves to the more positive Black frame of reference that can be a source of pride and satisfaction. The five stages as outlined by Cross are *pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, internalization, and internalization/commitment*.

This first stage, *pre-encounter*, begins with the assumption that Black people have unwittingly absorbed many harmful facets of the dominant White culture. The most damaging element concerns the idea that their Blackness is *wrong* while Whiteness is *right*, and this can be displayed through minimizing certain aspects of Black culture while uplifting various aspects of White culture. For Black people who are unaware or who do not acknowledge these internalized stereotypes, Cross (1971) described them as seeking acceptance by White people and as distancing themselves from other Black people or Black associated activities. The second stage, *encounter*, is

typically set off by events that force a Black person to acknowledge the racism and stereotypes that are inherent in their own life and social interactions. The second stage, *encounter*, can be prompted by: (a) some sort of experience that impels a Black person to look at their Blackness more critically, which (b) opens up the possibility for them to renegotiate their former frame of reference about their Blackness. This experience also allows them to focus on their Black identity in ways that were previously absent. The third stage, *immersion/emersion*, is marked by two impulses: (a) a Black person's desire to involve themselves in many aspects of Black identity, Black culture and Black related activities, but also (b) their simultaneously avoiding symbols of Whiteness, White culture or anything associated with minimizing the experiences of Black people. This step is generally characterized by a drive to malign White culture, but at this step much of the energy that a Black person may put into this anger is instead used to affirm Black culture. The fourth stage, *internalization*, can be marked by Black people having "a feeling of inner security and [being] more satisfied with themselves" (p. 21.) This stage sees a Black person as ideologically committing to positive and progressive aspects of the Black experience, however there ideological commitment may be disconnected from their actions. The fifth and final stage, *internalization/commitment* describes a Black person as being "committed to a plan. He [or she] is actively trying to change his [or her] community…He is going beyond rhetoric and into action and he defines change in terms of the masses of Black people rather than the advancement of a few" (Cross, 1971, p. 23). At this stage, a Black person has a positive frame of reference about his/her own racial identity.

On Campus and in the Classroom

According to Watson (1998), Black students at PWIs face unique issues, particularly a need to assimilate in ways that are not required of White students. Watson explained that "many Black students at PWIs have reported that they have not really felt welcome on campus and have been treated like uninvited guests in a strange land" (p. 80). This lack of comfort in the college community causes Black students to have to undergo an often-difficult process of assimilation before they are able to excel in academics, social situations, and extra-curricular activities. Of particular note to Watson is Fleming's (1981) research that showed that Black students can often under-perform or face *intellectual anxieties* at PWIs because their "energies appear to be diverted from academics to self assertion in the face of an unresponsive hostile environment" (p. 309).

These factors often culminate in a general sense of academic difficulty held by Black students at PWIs. Watson (1998) explained that at PWIs, "being a minority on [these] campuses inhibits…educational gains" (p. 84), as these closed environments will tend to emphasize "supportive and personal relationships within the campus community" (p. 84) and this emphasis may "contribute more to gains for the majority than for the minority students" (p. 84). In addition, according to a study by Allen (1992), Black students who attended PWIs reported lower academic achievement than those who attended historically Black colleges or universities (HBCUs). However, as mentioned in chapter 1, HBCUs are currently confronting their own challenges when it comes to the graduation rates of their Black men.

For these reasons, Watson (1998) described Black students at PWIs as often paying "a high adaptation cost in terms of [their] dissatisfaction, marginal performance, instability, and avoidance of the environment" (p. 80). Why is it so difficult for this group? According to Jaynes and Williams (1989), these difficulties begin with public grade schools, which leave Black students disproportionately unprepared for higher education. In addition, they explained that "Blacks on average enter [PWIs] with substantial disadvantages in socioeconomic backgrounds and in tested achievement levels, [and the schools often fail to] compensate for these disadvantages" (p. 378). By the time Black students graduate high school, they may lack many socialized elements of college preparation that are common to White students.

Further, according to Shears, Lewis, and Furman (2004), where White students at PWIs benefit socially and academically from the racial composition of their school, "integration may not come easily for African-American students" (p. 3) and *social integration* can be seen "as a significant problem" (p. 3). Shears et al. (2004) referenced a study by Allen that showed that

> African-American…students seem not to be thoroughly integrated into the social life of their respective schools [with] only 20 percent [experiencing] a sense of belonging on campus while twenty-five percent of African American students reported feeling excluded by faculty. (p. 3)

These discrepancies can be exacerbated in the classroom of the PWI where Black students are often treated not as individuals but as representatives of their race. When this attitude is worsened not by students but by White instructors as well, this

can be very detrimental to the educational experience of a Black college student. Fleming (1981) noted that explicit or subtle forms of oppressive behaviors from White professors to Black students will most often lead to establishing an environment which minimizes the academic potential of the Black student.

Multicultural Awareness

As discussed in chapter 1, according to Ervin (2001), multicultural education consists of a "systematic blending of academic programs, recruitment, retention, policies, and curriculum that provide college students with an enriched multicultural environment for learning" (p. 764). This is almost always implemented bureaucratically as a top-down program and a system-wide attempt to train future graduates on how to think critically about race and culture. These programs are implemented with the best of intentions and most proponents of multicultural education would argue that these programs serve to bridge gaps between racial communities at most schools, particularly PWIs.

Ervin (2001) explained that students of color attending PWIs "have less than positive feelings toward diversity, [and often feel that multicultural education] is a facade…that does not help to solve the problems of intergroup conflict" (pp. 774-775). This sentiment is reflected in how Black students often report feeling a great burden to have to "'teach' their White peers about the importance of diversity" (p. 765) in a way in which other minority groups (Ervin offered the example of Asians) are not required. To Ervin, multicultural programs have their challenges, and have caused Black students to establish a healthy, realistic view about the ability of diversity and

multicultural programs to improve relations on their campuses, explaining that "racially motivated hate crimes, verbal abuse, and harassment incidents are steadily on the rise across the nation's academic campuses" (p. 765)

Peer Relationships

It is important that this study consider the peer relationships held by Black students at PWIs. For those who espouse multiculturalism, they believe that it is beneficial that these students establish friendships and relationships with White students, but the reality is that Black students are more likely to relate with other Black students, even at small PWIs. This is not a matter of them having difficulty in establishing friendships and social relations with White students, but of Black students creating a subgroup within a larger structure for support. Bennett (1998) submitted that "African American students share a common history, experience and understanding…so they will include [only] other Black students, faculty, staff, and administrators" (p. 126) as part of their social group at a PWI. This can often disappoint college personnel as some view this general "embrace of the African American culture as [a measure which] automatically denounces the European culture" (Bennett, 1998, p. 126). This is hardly the case, though. Allen (1992) explained that "Black students will find it necessary to create their own social and cultural networks to remedy their exclusion from the wider, White-oriented university community" (p. 29). This creation of a Black community, no matter how small and excluded from the larger White community is typically necessary to provide the support that these students need to thrive, and is often necessary for them being able to

graduate from these PWIs. These students are not cutting themselves off from the rest of the school community out of spite, rather, they are choosing to "associate with people who make them feel the most comfortable" (Bennett, 1998, p. 130).

The main problem with PWIs for Black students lies in how these institutions can often be havens for prejudice, racial ignorance, and places that foster a lack of understanding for Black culture and heritage. This prejudice is often compounded by Black students' lives prior to entering college, as being Black in America comes with its own challenges. West (1993) provided an interesting account of the psychological state of Black America when he writes that "the accumulated effect of the Black wounds and scars suffered in a White-dominated society is a deep seated anger, a boiling sense of rage, and a passionate pessimism regarding America's will to injustice" (p. 28). In schools and the greater society, Black males constantly fight against negative stereotypes, negative media images and narrow representations of their masculinity and identities. A major concern for PWI matriculated Black males is not only to resist the negative perceptions that the dominant group may have about them, but also to resist often-similar negative perceptions within their own cultural group (Cuyjet, 2006).

Establishing a Critical Multicultural Perspective

There is no one definition for critical multiculturalism. Like broader, more mainstream notions of multiculturalism, *critical multiculturalism* is a term that has many meanings and interpretations which serve to meet the needs and interests of those affected by this concept. Many scholars define this term as a hybrid of other

critical multicultural definitions, the majority of which articulate a need to transform unjust places into places where equity can exist for all.

Critical multiculturalism is highly influenced by the school of thought known as critical theory. Defined by Horkheimer (1972), critical theory provides a *unifying* theory of socialization, and not only critiques and analyzes social elements, as traditional theory would, but provides frameworks which are designed to change society as a whole. Some of Horkheimer's core concepts for critical theory can be defined as follows: (a) Critical social theory must aim to encompass all society as it exists at the moment of analysis, and (b) critical theory must seek to better society through integrating all major theoretical disciplines (such as sociology, history, and political science). This intellectual structure is then used to critique inequality in social structures. As described by McDowell and Fang (2007),

> Central to critical theory is the social critique of how societal processes and institutions maintain material inequities by reproducing class structures. The many critical discourses share an interrogation of systems of thought and action that promote oppression, and a commitment to develop concrete strategies to reform social structures that maintain inequality. (p. 553)

Since its inception, critical social theory has begun to reveal the need for individuals' voices to be affirmed and analyzed if researchers ever hope to understand their experiences and perspectives (Okolie, 2005).

Critical Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism can be considered critical when it seeks to interrogate cultural norms, seeks to build bonds across different cultural and racial identities, and concerns a shared language of resistance for all marginalized groups (Chicago Cultural Studies

Group, 1994). In addition, multiculturalism can be interpreted differently from traditional views when it is situated within a critical context (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993). Critical multiculturalism expands beyond merely analyzing a problem or an unjust situation, seeking instead to fully understand the complexity of cultural phenomena and transform it when necessary.

The word *critical* does include analysis and understanding of cultural phenomena, but is used largely to describe transforming unjust and oppressive situations into those that are socially just, equitable and liberating for all members in society. Critical multiculturalism can also educate students about social justice, equality, community building and about what it means to be a participant in a democratic society (Shapiro, 1995). Also known as *resistance multiculturalism*, critical multiculturalism "does not see diversity itself as a primary goal, but rather argues that diversity must be affirmed within the politics of cultural criticism and commitment to social justice" (McLaren, 1994, p. 53). In this way, critical multiculturalism uses diverse perspectives as a lens to analyze and address issues of social injustice, which generally exist in a radical departure from mainstream interpretations of diversity. In critical multiculturalism, diversity is not an aesthetic, but a way of thinking and engaging.

Given these important aspects of critical multiculturalism, separated from mainstream and *generic* definitions, there are further details that identify how this perspective applies to education. Most notably, critical multicultural education must intentionally address issues of inequity and injustice, and proponents must be explicit

about how they aim to challenge social oppression, on both a micro and macro level (Sleeter, 1996).

Multiculturalism: Tying It All Together

Multiculturalism can be considered a noble effort designed to satisfy the need for institutional definition among marginalized groups, as a champion of the marginalized and a wonderful way for the long-maligned to bring their unique perspectives, values, and cultures to the fore. It can also be seen as an intellectual exercise which provides little of value to racial and cultural discourse and merely hides existent cultural biases and prejudices under a cloak of political correctness. Both are true, in one way or another, and it is for this very reason that multicultural education is both useful and pointless, depending on the perspective of the participant.

It is an intellectual exercise, but not one without value. Multicultural education begins a dialogue on an issue which is often complicated and difficult to discuss. Importantly, this is not just about marginalized or minority groups, but offers the opportunity to consider the idea of *Whiteness* or *dominant culture* in a way that may ultimately lead to good ends. Where there is room for improvement is in the dissemination of this information, which is entirely too dependent on teachers and educators, who often exhibit the same biases that they are required to address.

Conceptual Framework for Multicultural Perspectives

Based on a synthesis of the literature presented in this research, this study now describes the researcher's own [original] perspective on this issue. As this study began to develop an original conceptual framework for multicultural perspectives, certain

areas were of particular interest and became the undergirding ethos of the critical perspective in the framework. In grounding the critical multicultural perspective for this study, the primary areas of focus were: (a) knowledge construction, (b) culture, and (c) power/privilege. For this study, the three areas are interpreted as follows.

Knowledge Construction

Critical multiculturalism is primarily concerned with knowledge construction. Proponents often posit that an individual cannot view knowledge as having a neutral or objective agenda, and as a result, critical multiculturalism views knowledge as anchored in historical, political and social movements which serve the interests of particular individuals or groups (McLaren, 2003). As an extension of this idea that no knowledge is objective, McLaren (2003), drawing on Habermas, distinguished between three forms of knowledge. The first is *technical knowledge*, and is quantifiable fact that one can assess by statistical instruments such as microscopes or standardized measurement. The second is referred to as *practical knowledge* and is gathered through more qualitative measures and concerns making sense of daily actions so individuals may better understand how they relate to the world. An example of practical knowledge can be found in a case study or observation of how a group of students behaved with a substitute teacher. The third type of knowledge, which critical multiculturalism espouses, is *emancipatory knowledge*. This type of knowledge attempts to move beyond the dichotomous relationship between technical and practical knowledge to help scholars and researchers to understand how social elements and cultural standards can be affected by power and privilege.

Culture

Within this context, culture is best defined by McLaren (2003) as "a set of practices, ideologies and values from which different groups draw to make sense of the world" (p. 74). Culture can also be seen as the ways in which different social groups understand and relate their experiences to the broader world (McLaren, 2003). Any definition of culture disconnected from the full body of politics in society will often disempower marginalized groups and ultimately silence them (Sleeter, 1996). In an attempt to fight this cultural instability, critical multiculturalism challenges both dominant and minority groups to question their own culture and perspectives, and to use this knowledge as a basis toward the establishment of a more common cultural democracy (Turner, 1994).

In the context of education and society, a greater sense of multiculturalism would allow members from all groups to explore the complex and subtle nuances that connect and separate various cultures and other socially constructed identities (May, 1999a). This would require moving beyond the discussion on how people are different from one another, and force all participants to take an active role in transforming aspects of society that are oppressive or harmful to individuals or groups (Giroux, 1994).

Power and Privilege

Power, as described by Arendt (1970) is "the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together" (p. 44). As such,

power is a central component that can be analyzed and critiqued using a perspective of critical multiculturalism, as power serves as the basis for one group to have control over another.

This view on power is important because all forms of oppression, domination, subjugation and exploitation involve some form of power, and an interrogation of power dynamics will address the larger societal influences that can impact an education environment (Nieto, 1999). Because social structures can normalize values, ideals, beliefs and behaviors, unjust power relationships can be unwittingly exercised by one group over another. Wink's (2005) definition of *hegemony* provided an additional lens with which to view the complexity of power and explained how dominated groups can propagate their own domination. She submitted that "[hegemony] is the domination of one group over another with the partial consent of the dominated group" (p. 45). During this process, the dominated group is usually unaware of their complicity in this process.

In addition to power being a central component that can be investigated through a critical multiculturalism perspective, *privilege* is a significant and related component of this discussion. The unconscious or subconscious normative state of privilege is embodied by individuals taking for granted advantages that "work to systematically over-empower certain groups" (McIntosh, 1998, p. 81). This is an important component to recognize in this study, as privilege can be misunderstood and misinterpreted as *earned strength* or *earned power*, and either of these interpretations can allow for dominant groups to unwittingly express dominance over others.

McIntosh (1998) made a distinction between earned strength and *unearned power* when she wrote that "power from unearned privilege can look like strength when it is in fact permission to escape or to dominate" (p. 81).

Multicultural Perspectives

As stated earlier, multiculturalism is constantly evolving and as such there are no concrete definitions regarding its meaning, ideas and goals. Creating a conceptual framework for multicultural perspectives is a good place for college administrators, faculty and staff to structure a conversation about ways to improve the experiences of all students on their campuses, and particularly Black males. The researcher's conceptual framework for multiculturalism is an original development and has been informed by a synthesis of the research presented in this study. Cited below are the basic tenets of this conceptual framework, and the critical perspective is the lens by which this research study provides recommendations on behalf of the experiences of Black males attending PWIs: (a) pseudo-multiculturalism, (b) quasi-multiculturalism, (c) mainstream multiculturalism, and (c) critical multiculturalism. Proponents of these categories tend to exhibit the following qualities.

Pseudo-Multiculturalism

- View Western European thought (Whiteness) as acme of intellectual thought
- View Western European identity as the apotheosis of cultural identification
- Consider Western European ideals, values and beliefs the norm; assume the role of everyone is to adapt and assimilate this norm

- Judge other races/ethnicities against the benchmark of Western European (White) culture
- Refuse to question Whiteness as our social norm
- Refuse to look at how knowledge is constructed and which social members benefit most from its construction.

Quasi-Multiculturalism

- Adds discussion of women and people of color to the curriculum but believes European thought is still the center of learning; possibly addresses class issues
- Acknowledges and celebrates differences in people
- Establishes cultural celebrations, programs, groups; encourages students to eat various cultural foods
- Tries to reduce prejudices and stereotypes
- Establishing an *I don't see color* ideological framework
- Hires more professionals of color and other minority groups
- Recruits more students of color to educational institutions
- Looks at multiculturalism only in terms of race, gender and maybe class

Mainstream Multiculturalism

- Generally critiques Western philosophy, Eurocentrism, White privilege and the overall concept of Whiteness
- Generally critiques conservatism, right-wing politics and ideas associated with maintaining the current societal power structure
- Supports the idea that marginalized groups should have an equal voice

- Affirms and recognizes the cultures of historically marginalized groups

Critical Multiculturalism

- Is concerned about how society and institutions maintain inequity that benefit some at the expense of others
- Is concerned about how power and privilege operate within various contexts (i.e., individuals, groups, institutions and society)
- Questions thoughts and actions that contribute to oppression, domination, subordination, exploitation and overall harm that hinders the progress of an individual or group
- Develops strategies to transform any cultural area that produce (and reproduce) beliefs, behaviors and ideals that maintain inequality
- Challenges any cultural norm that maintains inequality
- Views cultural identity as a means of establishing bonds across cultural differences
- Moves beyond merely acknowledging differences and analyzing stereotypes
- Seeks to understand the systems of thought that establish stereotypes
- Analyzes how and why knowledge is constructed and who benefits from its construction.

Critical Multicultural Perspective

The critical perspective in the conceptual framework for multiculturalism is designed to tease out the details of how societies in general and educational institutions in particular maintain inequalities that benefit some at the general expense

of others; it is also concerned with defining the different ways in which power and privilege operate with regard to individuals, groups, institutions, and society as a whole. This perspective explores thoughts and actions that are often exercised by those dominant individuals and which contribute to the general oppression, subordination and exploitation that will hinder the progress of individuals and minority groups.

The critical multicultural perspective offers the view that cultural identity is a means of establishing bonds across cultural and racial differences, and acknowledges that in order to meet this end, we must move past the mere acknowledgment of differences or analysis of stereotypes. We must move to explore how knowledge is constructed and socialized, and determine who it is that benefit from these discursive constructions. In addition, this perspective requires that we develop strategies to transform elements of culture that produce beliefs, behaviors, and ideals that maintain inequality, as well as challenge any culture norm that maintains any level of inequality.

It is important that the researcher provide an original conceptual framework for this study, as the critical perspective in the framework provides the lens by which recommendations will be made to college administrators, faculty, and staff based on the data that were gathered as part of this research.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Interview Methodology

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative interview methodological approach to understand the differences experienced by eight Black male undergraduates attending four private PWIs in the Pacific Northwest. With regard to concerns about small sample size, qualitative studies lean toward depth of understanding of a few cases at the expense of generalizability. Nevertheless, previous researchers conducting similar studies have found that a smaller number of participants can be used for the research, as "studying smaller and distinct populations of students can provide tremendous insight into how students learn and how to create environments to improve their intellectual development" (Fries-Britt, 2000, p. 55). The researcher chose this method because a quantitative study could obfuscate important information (Weiss, 1995) such as students' perceptions and opinions behind certain situations or experiences on their college campuses. For this reason, a qualitative interview is helpful in uncovering a given participant's back-story (McNamara, 1999).

Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people experience, interpret and make sense of their world in specific contexts (Merriam, 2002), and interviews are designed to produce these specific perspectives (Weiss, 1995). A

qualitative interview methodology produces a process that aims to explicate and understand the themes experienced and shared by its participants (Kvale, 1996), and is the best way to understand and describe phenomena that may not otherwise be understood. This method is best as it "[probes] the meanings different individuals attach to their experiences as they take place within a sphere of personal interaction" (Tinto, 1993, p. 53). This study sought to understand the college experiences and perspectives of eight Black male undergraduates from four private PWIs in the Pacific Northwest and to "make sense of the phenomena from the participant's perspective" (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). Particular to this study, it is Cuyjet's (2006) belief that the only way to minimize the often misguided and narrow perceptions of Black males in American society is to have a positive interaction with them.

A convenience sample was created, so the researcher was able to easily maintain personal contacts with both the colleges and the participants. The schools were chosen because they all had a population which was at least 75% White, and the schools were also chosen because the Pacific Northwest is predominantly White with small pockets of Black populations. These demographics are significant. They will inform the cultural preconceptions of the faculty, staff and administration of local universities and colleges as well as the perceptions of Whiteness and Blackness held at these institutions; and in turn should shape the experiences of Black males on those campuses. These schools being primarily White institutions will impact the experiences of Black males on those campuses, and this study aims to understand the

nature of these impacted perspectives and experiences shared by this unique and small minority population.

Interview Design

First, it is important to mention that the interviewer is Black, and the interviewer was the primary person who collected data (Merriam, 2002). This is first because the researcher and author of this study is Black, but is also for purposes of maximizing interview results, based on the theoretical work of Okolie (2005). It is Okolie's belief that the results of research interviews are maximized when the interviewer has shared identities (race, class, gender, etc.) and experiences with the participants in the study. To this end, this researcher's Black identity ideally situates him to use the type of qualitative research methodology for the study.

However, there is also a bit of caution when having a shared racial identity with the participants, as the participants may feel a cultural bond, assume the interviewer has similar experiences, and for this reason minimize explanations of shared experiences under the assumption that these experiences don't require attention. This study attempts to reduce the chances for such minimized interview explanations through an acknowledgment of likenesses between the interviewer and participant at the start of the interview, and a maintained reminder to the participants when necessary throughout the interview.

Using an inductive process for data analysis, this basic interpretive study described connected themes and used them to draw conclusions and make recommendations. Inductive data analysis is explained by Glaser (1992) as one where

researchers attempt to determine which patterns, hypotheses, and concepts emerge from a given set of data. The researcher decided to use both a standardized and open-ended format in interviews, which provided data for this study. Through this format, the same questions were asked to each participant and the researcher allowed each the freedom and flexibility to provide a response that adequately reflects their thoughts, perceptions and opinions about an experience. Depending on length of answers, some questions were followed up with additional questions to get more detail or explanation. This interview style allowed for a systematic process of data collection and analysis, and it assisted in keeping each interview within the established timeline (McNamara, 1999; Weiss, 1995).

The questions and interviews were designed and organized in such a way that the interviews were as free of bias as possible. This is significant because most critical scholars reject *positivist* ideas of complete objectivity, and according to Okolie (2005), critical theorists

> Reject the positivist and even Weberian notions of objectivity and value neutrality, but they do recognize that the results of research should be grounded in reality, so that efforts to uplift people, especially people's struggles to liberate themselves, would be based on reality, and therefore, be more useful. (p. 242)

For this reason, when the interviews were conducted, the researcher attempted to remain as neutral as possible, and not to lead the participants with framing questions in a way that would elicit a specific response. The researcher took special care to edit the questions to exclude any trace of research bias. An example of a biased question that was eliminated is: Can you tell me some problems you face as being one of the only

Black males in your college classes? The unbiased question was substituted: Can you share some *typical* experiences you go through as being one of the only Black males in your college classes? The researcher also designed the questions to be open-ended enough that if the answer to one question elicited a different question than was next on the list, it would be all right to pursue this new line of questioning. This is in keeping with how "in qualitative research, data analysis [must be] simultaneous with data collection" (Merriam, 2002, p. 14), meaning that any set of questions cannot be too rigorous.

The information that the researcher obtained in this study provided a richly detailed account of the participants' experiences at PWIs. This was accomplished by seeking detailed expressions regarding participants' experiences and perspectives (Weiss, 1995), and each interview lasted about 2 hours.

Setting

The interviews were one-on-one and conducted in the home office of the interviewer, and the researcher conducted each interview. However, due to the fact that the interviews took place during the summertime and some students were not geographically able to meet face-to-face, half of the interviews had to take place over the phone. For the interviews that took place over the phone, the researcher reminded the participants to be available in a room or space that offered the least amount of noise and distraction, as each interview was being audio recorded. The timeframe for each interview was 2 hours, and all interviews stayed within the allocated time.

Before each interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the interview, explained that the interview was to be audio recorded while the researcher took notes, re-provided researcher contact information and reassured each participant of the confidentiality agreement. Next, the researcher explained the standardized, open-ended interview format and timeframe allocated for the interview, and stated that the researcher would ask only one question at a time. This was important for the interviewees, as they could gauge how long they wanted to respond to each question. Before the interview began, the researcher answered any additional questions from each participant.

Participants

The participants for this study were eight self-identified Black males. For the purposes of this study, the term *Black* means both African American males and Black males born outside the United States. According to this framework, six of the participants are African American and two are international, but all of the participants are Black. The participants are all currently traditionally aged (18-24) full-time, undergraduate college students from four private PWIs in the Pacific Northwest.

The researcher will now offer a brief background on the African American participants. Jacob is a third-year student from California who intends to graduate with a degree in physics. Michael is a third-year student from California who intends to graduate with a degree in art history. Joshua is a third-year student from Washington who intends to graduate with a double major in English and communications. Ethan is a third-year student from Oregon who intends to graduate with a degree in

communications. Daniel is a third-year student from Oregon who intends to graduate with a double major in business and communications. Alex is a third-year student from Texas who intends to graduate with a degree in math.

The two international students, Will and Matt, are from Barbados and Ghana, respectively. Will is a third-year student who intends to graduate with a degree in biology, and Matt is a second-year student who is studying toward receiving his degree in information systems.

The researcher recruited the participants from four different PWIs, which have been designated Crater College, Trail College, Corridor College, and Mountain College. Crater College has an enrollment of 2000 and a 2% Black student population, though its White population is 84%. Joshua attends Crater College. Trail College has an enrollment of 1,400 and a 2% enrollment of Black males, and its White population is 75%. Jacob, Michael, Alex, and Will attend Trail College. Corridor College has an enrollment of 1730 and a 2% enrollment of Black males versus a White enrollment of 76%. Ethan and Matt attend Corridor College. Mountain College has an enrollment of 1,700 and a 1% enrollment of Black students versus an 85% White enrollment. Daniel attends Mountain College.

Tables 2 and 3 help describe the interview participants.

Table 2

Participant Status

Participant	Status	Ethnicity	Home Region	Major
Jacob	Junior	Afr. Am.	California	Physics
Michael	Junior	Afr. Am	California	Art History
Joshua	Junior	Afr. Am.	Washington	English/Comm.
Ethan	Junior	Afr. Am.	Oregon	Communications
Daniel	Junior	Afr. Am.	Oregon	Business/Comm.
Alex	Junior	Afr. Am.	Texas	Math
Will	Junior	Caribbean	Barbados	Biology
Matt	Sophomore	African	Ghana	Information Systems

Table 3

College Information

College	Total Enrollment	% White Enrollment	% Black Males
Crater College	2,000	84	2[1]
Trail College	1,400	75	2
Corridor College	1,730	76	2
Mountain College	1,700	85	1[1]

[1] This percentage also includes females, as gender data was not available.

Through some consulting on Black males at colleges, this researcher was able to meet Jacob, Michael, Alex and Will. The researcher asked if they would be interested in providing perspectives and insight regarding their experiences at a Predominantly White college for a doctoral study, and they obliged. These students were identified through this researcher's consulting work, but not as a product of this work. Joshua, Ethan, Daniel, and Matt were selected through an open invitation by professional colleagues of the researcher to participate in a doctoral research study. The study was presented to this second group of participants as a study that would help to foster a greater understanding of the experiences shared by Black males at

private PWIs in the Pacific Northwest. The researcher had a meeting with each individual before the interviews, either by phone or email, the aim of which was to discuss the parameters of the research study. In addition, this preliminary meeting was designed to determine whether the participants who had been selected met the study's criteria.

According to the criteria, participants must be current undergraduate students at a PWI in the Pacific Northwest and they must self-identify as a Black male. Also, they must be between the ages of 18-24 and agree to commit 2 hours to the doctoral study. In addition, the participants could be excluded from this study if they were not within the established age range, if they did not self-identify as a Black male, if they were not current undergraduate students attending a PWI in the Pacific Northwest, or if they could not agree to the interview timeframe.

The researcher revealed to participants that this study was designed to understand and share the experiences of Black male undergraduates attending private PWIs in the Pacific Northwest. In addition, the participants were informed that this study could have a potential impact on improving the experience and multicultural awareness of all groups attending college.

Research Questions

The interviews were one-on-one and conducted in the home office of the interviewer, and the researcher conducted each interview. The timeframe for each interview was 2 hours, and all interviews stayed within the allocated time. The researcher developed some categories that would help to establish a framework for

interview questions which examine the multiple challenges that Black males face at PWIs. The questions were designed to elicit concrete and detailed responses from the participants, as the questions are designed to "know how people do things, and what meaning they give to their lives" (Merriam, 2002, p. 19). The questions for the semi-structured open-ended interviews were grouped by the following categories [Identity development, Classroom Experiences, Multicultural Awareness, Campus Climate, and, Peer Relationships].

Identity Development

1. When identifying yourself as Black, what does the term Black mean to you?
2. What impact has attending a PWI had on your definition of the term Black?
3. How do factors that exist outside of the college environment contribute to how you identify yourself as a Black male?
4. How do factors that exist outside of the college environment contribute to how your college environment perceives you as a Black male?

Classroom Experiences

1. How does it feel when you are the only Black male in the majority of your college classes?
2. Can you share some typical experiences you go through as being one of the only Black males in your college classes?
3. Does the college curriculum affirm your experience in this society? If so, how? If not, what is missing?

Multicultural Awareness

1. Can you tell me how you interpret and define the term multiculturalism?
2. How do you see your definition or interpretation of multiculturalism manifesting itself in your college environment?
3. How relevant do you think multiculturalism is to understanding your college experience?

Campus Climate

1. How does it feel to be one of few Black males on your college campus (outside of the classroom)?
2. What has your experience been like so far (outside of the classroom)?
    a. What have you liked about your college experience?
    b. What have you disliked about your college experience?
3. What type of support have you received (academic, social, personal, etc.) in your college experience?
4. Is there any additional support would you like to receive with regard to your college experience?
5. What types of programs are you involved in on campus and why?
6. Are there any programs you wish existed on your campus?

Peer Relationships

1. Can you tell me about your experiences with other students on your campus (in and outside of the classroom)?
2. Can you talk about how you build peer relationships on your campus?

3. Can you talk about the programs on campus that help you build positive relationships with your peers?

Data Analysis Method

To ensure validity, the researcher used triangulation in the analysis of the data gleaned from this study. Triangulation is a means by which researchers in qualitative studies can combine different viewpoints in an attempt to reduce bias. This concept is better described by White (2005), who described this idea as "a means of determining precise targets with limited information" (p. 67), using a process by which researchers may "combine multiple viewpoints, theories, methodologies, or empirical models in an effort to overcome weaknesses or intrinsic biases" (p. 67) from any method that involves only a single observer or a single theory.

Toward this end, the researcher enlisted the help of the participants to participate in a member checking activity to read their own interview transcripts. Four of the participants agreed to this checking activity. Those who agreed to this activity were first asked to make sure they were not misquoted or if they had been quoted improperly, and were asked for comment regarding the answers they provided. In addition, the data they provided were checked to make sure the participants agreed with how the researcher transcribed and interpreted the information from their interview.

All interview data were transcribed and "inductively analyzed to identify patterns or common themes that cut across the data" (Merriam, 2002, pp. 6-7). The researcher was assisted by Brett, an educational colleague who is a

teacher/administrator in the K-12 school system and holds a master's degree in Human Development, to help code the data. Brett had used interviewing and coding in his master's thesis, so there was familiarity with this procedure. The data were coded according to themes that emerged from the transcript analysis, as coding was an important way to organize the collected data from this study and allowed for the researcher and educational assistant to systematically build themes and make strategic recommendations for any discovered phenomena.

Before the coding began, the researcher discussed coding in detail with Brett, making sure the grouping and labeling of the data would be consistent with both transcript coders. The researcher and Brett both had a copy of each participant's interview transcript, and went through each transcript with a different colored highlighter for each interview category. The researcher and Brett highlighted what appeared to be significant themes or statements from these transcripts. After the researcher and Brett identified these themes, and labeled each significant word, statement or paragraph, both compared and contrasted transcripts which "enabled [both coders] to group similar events, happenings, and objects under a common heading or classification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 103).

After the coding was complete, Brett provided his coded transcripts and the researcher reviewed both sets of coded transcripts for verification and clarity. On two separate occasions, the researcher asked Brett for clarity and perspective on how the data were being coded and interpreted. In essence, the researcher asked clarifying questions to make sure the themes aligned. This process helped to eliminate areas of

uncertainty about meanings and provided a more accurate account of the interview participants' perspectives.

CHAPTER IV

DATA FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The students who participated in the study appeared to speak openly and honestly during the interviews, and none appeared to have trouble answering any questions asked by the researcher. As the researcher concluded each interview, each student was asked if he would like to provide more information or add to what he already communicated. Although not all students felt the need to add additional comments, some shared that during the identity development portion of their interview, defining the term Blackness or discussing what it meant to be Black were difficult tasks.

Since the researcher chose to ask questions already identified by categories in this study (i.e., identity development, etc.), it seems most effective to share the themes that emerged during the current interviews under the pre-established domains. To illuminate the findings in more detail, the researcher presents excerpts from the participants' interviews to underscore important points and to allow more insight into the participants' thought processes. Using the participants' own words will also allow each to have a *voice* in the data analysis process. All identifying information regarding the students or their colleges has been deleted. The results are detailed below.

Identity Development

Each student had a different way to define and/or interpret the term Black (or Blackness), but each agreed that such a definition was complicated to find. As a result, one major theme emerged when students discussed their interpretation of the term Black/Blackness:

- *Theme 1 – Defining or interpreting Blackness is a complicated process.*

Many different words or phrases were associated with the term Blackness by the students. Words such as *global*, *African decent*, *self identity*, *ambiguity*, *struggle*, *slavery*, *civil rights*, *bringing your "A" game*, *being the best*, *never at the bottom*, *being different*, *a way of life* and *Black ancestry* were used to describe their definition of Blackness. Instead of using narratives to describe their interpretation of Blackness, students seemed most comfortable listing words and phrases.

When the students spoke about attending a PWI, and whether it had impacted their definition of Blackness, all agreed that it had. Some students felt as though their college's environment reinforced negative stereotypes about Black people, which were directly related to how they felt their campus community perceived them. Others believed that their schools helped them to reimagine the full range of heterogeneity among Black people as a whole. As such, two major themes emerged. The two themes appeared to contradict each other, but this captured the different aspects of how PWIs can impact the definition of Blackness for Black males:

- *Theme 2 – Attending PWIs had a negative impact on students' definition of Blackness by reinforcing negative stereotypes.*

- *Theme 3 – Attending PWIs had a positive impact on students' definition of Blackness by expanding their view of Black people.*

Regarding theme two, Ethan articulated his view about how he thought his college campus reinforced negative stereotypes about Blackness when he said, "It has changed with my definition a lot. White people view Black people with hip-hop, baggy clothes, messed up families. A culture that views things that I don't agree with."

Joshua thought his college was trying to do more about recruiting more Black males to his college. However, he felt that most of the Black males who were being recruited to the college were there to play sports. This reinforced negative stereotypes about Black males as only being in college for their athleticism, and not for their minds. He said:

> The positive spin is that the school is working on trying to increase diversity, and there is not just the focus on recruiting Black males. However, how Black males are recruited is sort of swept under the rug. Most African American males are recruited to play sports. The school doesn't want there to be tension and focus put on all how it seems they put all of their Black students in sports.

Regarding theme 3, the idea that PWIs were improving students' definition of Blackness, some students had a more positive view of how their particular college impacted their view of Blackness. Matt felt as if his campus expanded his view of Blackness when he said that "you see Black people from all walks of life here…It shows me that there is much more variety then what I actually thought. There are Africans, African-Americans and all of us have a story." Will added to this sentiment, saying that

> I guess attending this school I've met a lot of Black people from different places. As before, when I would say the term I would think of people whose ancestry who was Black in America. I didn't put much thought into it. I think it has expanded since I've been here. It is broader as far as thinking about different experiences people have had in different countries in Africa and Caribbean countries.

Jacob further explicated how he believed attending a PWI impacted his view of Blackness,

> I live in an urban area, and I call it the hood. I grew up in a black neighborhood and now going out in the world and meeting all types of African-Americans, I get a better perspective. Before attending my college, I felt that my image of Black people was skewed. It was heavily influenced by the media. The media portrays Black people as hood, ghetto, over-masculine, over-violent and over-sexualized.

When the students were asked about factors outside of their college environment that contributed to how they identify themselves as Black, they overwhelmingly identified either a significant moment in their K-12 education, significant neighborhood experiences, or the influences of mass media and popular culture. As a result, three new themes emerged:

- *Theme 4 – K-12 schools contributed to how students identify themselves as Black males.*
- *Theme 5 – Neighborhood experiences contributed to how students identify themselves as Black males.*
- *Theme 6 – Mass media and popular culture contributed to how students identify themselves as Black males.*

Students discussed experiences in their K-12 education, in their neighborhoods, and the impact of media and popular culture on the ongoing

construction of their Black identity. The students shared that their childhood education through high school played a pivotal role in how they constructed their ideas and perceptions about Blackness; explaining that if they went to a school that had a high concentration of Black students, then Blackness to them was played out in more stereotypical ways. Similar sentiments were echoed when they referred to their neighborhoods.

However, if students went to schools with a larger White population, their Blackness would often be questioned because it did not coincide with stereotypical ideas most of their White student counterparts held about Black males. In addition to having their Blackness questioned at White schools, some students felt as if the White students had no concept of who they were as Black males, which led many to an identity crisis at some point in their schooling. Michael explained how:

> My social economic status was upper middle class and going to private school I didn't talk or act like other people as I grew up with students who didn't talk like they were part of the Black community. People made fun of me saying I didn't talk Black, didn't dress like them so I wasn't Black like them. So, going into college after that happened, I had to think about my identity as an African –American male and if I really counted. And of course I did. Because historically you would be considered Black if you had a drop of blood but I was considered not Black enough.

Ethan reported that it was a combination of his neighborhood and his schooling that affected his identity when he explained that "my middle school and the inner city I grew up in helped to develop my Black culture, and now it doesn't help me in a lot of ways." Ethan is referring to how his college was structured more for what he considers the *White* world. Therefore, his growing up in a Black community and getting

acculturated with Black values seems useless to him when he tried to navigate the predominantly White culture of his college.

When speaking about the influence of his neighborhood and education, Daniel recalled how growing up in a White neighborhood impacted his interpretation of Blackness,

> I was raised in an area where Black was out of the norm. I grew up in an environment like that. So, forming a basis of how I find myself as a Black male was somewhat different…I was 1 of 4 colored people in my school. I was different. I remember being young and being around the kids, and they would say my skin looked dirty and why didn't I take a bath because my skin is dirty; they would also ask why my skin was dark. That [different treatment because of my skin color] escalated as I got older. As a young teen, I started to realize that I was being followed in certain stores.

Regarding the sixth theme [Mass media and popular culture contributed to how students identify themselves as Black males], the students spoke about how the media's influence and popular culture impacted their view of Blackness. Daniel said that "things such as the media, celebrities and sports had a huge impact on how I identify as a Black male." Michael added, "I guess most people's experiences comes from the media, hip hop, magazines, television, radio shows, stuff that is in popular American culture."

Matt explained how popular culture impacts the way he thinks that society perceives him:

> Whenever I walk around in shorts and a tee, I think they [White people] think he is typical Black dude and was selling crack and is going to smoke blunts, drinks beer and is going to be involved in a shoot out…Whenever I meet people when I'm dressed in a way, I have to prove that I'm not a drug dealer, pot head or a rapper because that is seen as someone who is very negative and

> I have to prove that I'm respectable. It gets tiresome. People do not think and are more likely to presume.

So, as the students articulated the impact mass media and popular culture have on their perception of Blackness, some even made connections on how they believed that perception extends to other members in our society: namely, the White students in their college community.

Although most of the students mentioned their neighborhoods, K-12 education and the media, it is important to note that church was also brought up by one of the students. Churches have long been a part of the Black experience and have dramatically contributed to how many Black people in America construct their identity. Despite this legacy, only one participant mentioned *church* when talking about social spaces that contributed to their construction of Blackness. Joshua provided this perspective, which differed slightly from how the rest of the students made sense of the cultural polarity they experienced. Even though Joshua grew up in a majority Black neighborhood, he stated,

> I was brought up in a church in a poor black neighborhood. Blackness for me kind of got distorted along the way. Even though the church was in a predominantly Black neighborhood, it was diverse. There were people of diverse abilities and identities. People from different ethnic and racial identities.

Due to this ongoing experience with a diverse group of Black people, including a Black mentor that did not represent the stereotypical Black male image, Joshua seemed to have a wider view of how he interpreted Blackness, and did not seem to let narrow perceptions of Blackness exert too much influence how he perceives it for

himself. If anything, his different experiences added to the ambiguity of how he defined Blackness, indicated by how he said that "Blackness in itself is a question mark because of the ambiguity of what it means to be Black in America…it is a little bit of a question mark."

As for external factors that contributed to how the students believe their college perceives them as Black males, one major theme emerged:

- *Theme 7 – Mass media and popular culture were the external factors that contributed to how they believed their college environment perceived them.*

Daniel shared insight into this experience when he spoke about how his college peers receive their information about Black males,

> There are a lot of things that can be good and incredibly bad on how people perceive Black people. For example, the music. I hear a lot of people at my college say that Black people are generally rap artists. I believe this to be an incredibly false statement but that is what my age groups are exposed to. Seeing MTV and Black males rapping and perceiving to be the Black identity. I think that a lot of it misrepresents people. Not everyone is going to be wearing a big chain. Another thing is sports. There were four people and the NBA Draft was going on and someone made a joke about it being my culture's sport. He said it was my race's national draft. I knew he was joking but that was a great influence on him.

When speaking about the perceived negative stereotypes college students get from the media, Jacob added,

> I think that people believe in these stereotypes and it is detrimental to them. It creates what a model is for them. So, if you aren't this, then you see someone else. They won't see you as black. Because I don't do this or don't talk this way. People are trying to define your blackness and they aren't black. People outside of college view me or other people as less black.

Ethan explained this point about mass media and popular culture's influence on his college environment,

> Oh my gosh! BET, MTV, going to the malls, people watching BET and seeing Black guys with saggy jeans and think that is a Black guy. Going to the mall and seeing Black people talking loud and I think they get it from TV and going to the mall. Just as much as they see Black people on TV and not interacting with them.

Joshua claimed that Black people are often grouped into a mass by the media, and argued that there is no overarching *Black experience*:

> It seems that my college seems to have a lack of experiences with Black people or Black Americans so they seem to be overly excited or to hear the experiences of Black people. They want to see what the world has to offer and clearly what they have been brought up with is narrow…It also comes from the news. They look at the news sadly and pin it as a Black experience. They don't pin it as that is one particular Black person's experience, but get it from current events, news and they get very little of it from the college itself. The college doesn't have it as a focus and it should have it as a focus. The college doesn't want to step on the boundary. We have different types of initiatives, but just looking on it as a broad world focus. They don't take one session and focus it on the Black experience. A lot of it comes from current events or news; whether it is good or back.

Classroom Experiences

When students talked about being one of few (or most often the only) Black males in many of their college classes, most of the students shared the need for more Black male representation in universities. Two major themes emerged when students discussed their typical classroom experiences:

- *Theme 8 – Students overwhelmingly experienced the impact of being one of few or the only Black male in their courses.*

- *Theme 9 – Students taking hard sciences (math, biology, chemistry, etc.) did not feel as if their Blackness contributed to any consistent or recognizable differences, however it was still in the back of their minds.*

Regarding the eighth theme, students felt that professors would often look to them to speak on behalf of, or as the voice for the entire Black population. In some instances, professors and students would assume (by looking in their direction or asking them directly) that they knew the answer to questions related to Black culture. Because of these experiences, many of the students felt pressure to figuratively shoulder the weight of the Black community when attempting to answer or respond to these questions. Joshua noted that:

> The teacher will look to you as the Black experience; the person that is supposed to represent the Black experience but in reality there are many different people with different experiences. In most classes, anytime we study a certain theme or activity that is the Black experience, I really see that teachers look to me; I don't think they mean to do it. But when they make a point, for example, in my literature class when we read a story about two Black people and no one else knew about it, the teacher assumed that I knew. They gesture toward you or look at you. In the English we were reading and discussing Harlem, and they sort of gesture toward you. In a large part, that is always sort of happening in class.

Jacob offered a similar perspective,

> I mean, it's hard. You feel like you are representing every other Black person out there even though you are not. You have to work twice as hard or be twice on top of your game then anyone in your class. Also, if there is a Black issue, you feel you need to be informed on these things. What if you didn't know? I would be viewed as less Black or less informed as other Black males on campus. So, it is a lot of extra pressure or extra weight to do better in these schools because you are one of few that attend higher institutions of learning.

Ethan's response seemed to sum up the experiences when he added that, "If I look good, then I let Black people look good. If I look bad, I'll make Black people look bad."

Regarding theme 9, the students who were taking courses in the hard sciences, or more specifically, courses outside of the social sciences, did not report any particular racial differences as stressed by teachers or administrators. They felt that the hard sciences treated every student the same. However, they did feel that race still played a factor on certain topics. Will described an interesting exchange he had with one of his professors:

> There is always something in the back of my mind. Like in a math class if you have a question or do something on the board, you kind of think about it. Also, the other day, I was hanging out doing some work with my professor and I asked him about which graduate schools had good math programs. He mentioned that there weren't many Black people in mathematics. So sometimes I feel I do have something to prove…If you are the only one of that certain race, there is a stigma. You are underrepresented.

Alex reported ambivalence about being the only Black male in his courses, particularly hard science and social science courses. He stated,

> I don't care. It doesn't make a difference. The questions that are asked doesn't matter. Sure, I would like more Black students in my classes because if some things are said then there would be solidarity involved. Most of my classes are science based like math and chemistry. There are some things that come up but for a class that sits around and talks, you have to take a class like sociology.

Michael indicated slightly different classroom encounters, but acknowledged that his experiences may be an anomaly:

> For the most part, I haven't had any experiences like my other [Black] classmates. I haven't noticed many differences but perhaps I haven't paid attention to the same situations that other people do. I guess sometimes if race

> didn't play into one of conversations, I try not to focus on it. Although sometimes, I do feel like I have to repeat myself because they don't understand me the first time. I wonder why it happens more so with me than others.

This perception is interesting because Michael is not a hard science major. His courses do not consistently address issues of marginalized populations, which might be the reason he has not had the same classroom experience as the other Black males that were studied.

When the students addressed whether the curriculum in their classes affirmed their own experience in society, the majority of the students had the same reaction. As a result, one major theme emerged:

- *Theme 10 – Curriculum does not affirm the experiences of Black males in this society.*

Many of the students had very strong convictions when discussing the topic of affirmation through the curriculum. When the students talked about the curriculum in their classes, short phrases such as, "not at all," "completely not," "are you kidding me" and "not much affirmation there" were typical. Jacob was clear in his view about how he thought his college and his college classes completely missed the mark in affirming his experience,

> Of course not. My institution is very much in the western traditional curriculum. We don't have black studies, women studies, or any other culture studies except western studies at my institution. So, no, I don't think my studies have been affirmed at all.

Matt felt similarly, explaining that

> I don't feel like it does at all. It makes you uncomfortable. There are many differences. There isn't much opportunity to express myself and how I'm

> proud to be Black. It's something I have never been ashamed of. I can't change it. I can't change it. It's how God made me. When I get the chance to express it, I grab it but it gets taken away. I hate blending in…this is my experience and this is what makes me different. I've never been given a chance to share it.

Ethan added to these sentiments,

> For me the college curriculum is for White people. In truth, it gets you ready for the world because the world is White. I mean, what you read, what you write and how you talk kind of prepares you for the White world. It says it is getting me ready for the real world, but for the White world. A lot of things I learn I can probably use in a big company, but I can't use it back in my community. I can't use it at all because it is so different from the culture of my community.

Even though one dominant theme emerged from this question, it is important to note a few of the students expressed ambivalence about their perception. For example, phrases like "yes and no" and "it depends on the class" were mentioned when students were asked whether they felt affirmed and represented by their curriculum. When given time to elaborate, the students indicated their college's curriculum did not affirm their experience, although most mentioned that a few classes referenced Black people in some inconsistent capacity. For example, Daniel stated,

> Yes and no I guess. Now days in classrooms it is more open within school culture and how to present information such as in history classes. The historical events that occurred to create our country are now talking about how people are abused and it gets discussed. That conversation about the history of our country kind of evens the playing field. It isn't displayed that America is some great country and George Washington was fighting off the British. There are some other underlying things that happened. Whites, Blacks, Native Americans all had a huge impact on where America stood 200 years later.

While Daniel reported that the Black experience was mentioned in class, his affirmation was somewhat muted by the opinion that it was only discussed in passing.

Therefore, the underlying ethos of how he sees himself currently represented in this society was largely missing from the curriculum.

Multicultural Awareness

When the students were asked to interpret or define the term multiculturalism, each offered different responses, but most expressed "the need to understand other cultures." As a result, the common theme that emerged was:

- *Theme 11 – There is no common definition of multiculturalism, but "understanding other cultures" is crucial to multiculturalism.*

When students discussed the term *culture*, it was within the context of how "multiculturalism was a means to understand other cultures." For example, Ethan explained that "multiculturalism is a way to appreciate, develop and to understand cultures that aren't your own." Similarly, Joshua stated that "multiculturalism is many shades of grey, it is not just worried about one culture." Jacob added further insight when he stated that:

> I feel that multiculturalism is defined as cultures. Everyone has a culture. The overarching idea is to try and bring cultures together. I don't think everyone is on the same page but it is meant to bring cultures to come to some sort of space and interact with each other respectively and share background ideas to create more conducive or more community environment.

The students often departed from a concept of multiculturalism as being just the study of other cultures and went on to offer additional perspectives. Their answers ranged from "a different color in the rainbow" to "trying to see the world through what is really is." Will stated that multiculturalism was, "…a school of thought. How it values other people." Matt added, "Giving everyone a chance to unite. Giving everyone a

chance to see what it is like coming from somewhere else." Michael stated it was about, "…race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, etc. Forming networks of support, but mainly networking, systems of support and education."

When students were asked if they felt their own definition of multiculturalism was manifested in their college environment, the overwhelming response was no. The small group of students who did see some multiculturalism in their college environment still thought that their college needed to significantly improve in this area. As a result, the researcher found this emerging theme:

- *Theme 12 – There is little evidence of multiculturalism manifesting itself on the students' college campuses.*

Regarding theme 12, even given the students' multiple interpretations of multiculturalism, they were adamant about there being little evidence of multiculturalism on their campus, regardless of their interpretation. Jacob stated,

> It [multiculturalism] doesn't exist at my college. I think that multiculturalism is intended to create equality or fight for social justice for all. That is a big part of multiculturalism. It fights for equality and differences for everyone. So, in my college it doesn't do that. I go to a college that thinks it's the end all be all, and it doesn't accept that many minority students. Also, I think that there has been so many racially charged incidents that I don't think multiculturalism has really been valued.

Ethan gave a quick snapshot of his college when he claimed "No. Not at all. Not on the campus. Not in the classrooms. Not in the lunchrooms. No [multiculturalism] isn't there at all." Daniel added that "the multiculturalism isn't happening. It isn't happening at my school and it isn't happening with it being such a low percentage of

diverse students." Will shared that he "wouldn't say that I see multiculturalism manifesting itself. I wouldn't say it has much of a presence at this school."

Interestingly, two of the students were not so quick to write off their college's multicultural efforts. Instead, they saw the multicultural efforts at their colleges as having room to grow and improve. Alex stated,

> There is something missing. Everyone has their own different perspectives, but it is like everyone is talking for the sake of talking and no progress is being made. It's like we are going in circles. For example, they wanted a [name of multicultural initiative] here. They had it here in the past, and now it is gone. And if they bring it back, they will probably take it away again. The question is who is listening. I don't think anyone is.

Joshua offered a bit of hope about his college's multicultural efforts,

> I do. Increasingly more. When I first came, I don't think it was that set. Most students thought it was good, and we should have it. But more and more people are raising the question and are at the table for discussion. I think the school has made some strides in it and students are now saying I don't want to make it just a slice, but they want to view the entire sphere of multiculturalism. I think that the activities are starting to manifest themselves.

When the students were asked about the relevance of multiculturalism in their understanding their college experience, all thought that it was indeed important. As such, the one major theme that emerged was:

- *Theme 13 – Multiculturalism is very important in understanding one's college experience.*

Regarding this theme, although responses varied, all students had their reasons for why they thought multiculturalism was an important factor in understanding their college experience. Jacob said,

> I think that understanding different cultures I can better interact with different people. I will listen to what anyone has to say. At [college name], I focuses too much of the college experience on intellect. A college experience shouldn't just be about your intellect. It should also be about understanding different opinions that don't align with my own.

Ethan claimed,

> It's huge. If you don't understand different cultures, you miss what the world has to offer. Bigger schools like state universities force you to go outside your boundaries. They do it at bigger schools and their culture is quite different than the culture of my school. We are supposed to love and accept with our beliefs but we don't do it. Bigger schools do it. We are a school that professes the importance of unity, but we are not doing it like the bigger schools.

Daniel stated,

> I believe it is incredibly important. The fact that I believe this opens my mind to being more accepting to approach people that aren't part of my similar background. I think that it is important for everyone to understand where people come from. There are people that look exactly like us that don't have much of an understanding of human beings.

Michael said,

> I think it is absolutely relevant. If you didn't understand how all of these issues affect within the school that you were attending, you didn't really go to college or you were stupid and your eyes were not wide open. This is part of the college experience to understand how things are operating…A lot is lost in understanding how to respect, treat and communicate and live with members of the community when true multiculturalism is not present.

Again, the students had various ways of communicating the relevancy of multiculturalism to their college experience. They did all agree that if multiculturalism was missing from the college, their whole campus community was missing out on an opportunity to learn and grow.

Campus Climate

When the students were asked about how they felt being one of the few Black males on their college campus outside of the classroom, their responses were mixed. Responses ranged from some liking the experience, to others finding it interesting or perplexing, to some enjoying what they referred to as a *unique* experience. As a result, three major themes emerged:

- *Theme 14 – Enjoyment of the unique experience of being one of the few Black males on campus.*
- *Theme 15 – Finding the experience of being one of the few Black males on campus interesting and perplexing.*
- *Theme 16 – Not liking the experience of being one of the few Black males on campus.*

Regarding theme 14, those who expressed enthusiasm or delight in being one of few Black males on their college campus were quick to point out how they could see other Black males finding the same environment challenging. Ethan stated,

> I like it. I don't mind it. I love it. I see how it could be hard for some people. They are forced to talk or forced to shelter themselves. The question would be if they choose to be with someone of a different culture. Outside of the classroom it is probably the toughest thing. Not for me but for other people.

Daniel also shared that he liked the experience, but realized how it could be hard for others,

> It is different. I don't particularly mind. It is entertaining to stand out amongst the rest of them, and I allow myself to. I have power. Being one of them allows you to have power on how people think of you…I enjoy the uniqueness about it, but I guess I've become used to it and have adapted to it. It's not frustrating,

> it's not. I guess it could be annoying, but I have to get used to it. Things aren't going to change dramatically during the time I will be here.

Alex echoed the sense of uniqueness and enjoyment expressed by Ethan and Daniel,

> You feel special and unique. You feel like there needs to be more like you. College is a great opportunity. You are there for the experience. There are some things that you are used to and if there is change it is a bit awkward. Personally, I didn't find that it made me stop and have a huge breakdown and stop and wonder what is going on here. That didn't happen here. It was like, all right I'm among people that are different, that like different things and come from different backgrounds. I tried to find things that I could appreciate instead of the differences. Sure, my freshman year I spent my time around the people like me, but as time progressed, I tried to have friends who were White, Asian, different walks of life. I wanted to see what they had to say.

Regarding theme 15, a few of the students reported ambivalence about being one of the few Black males on campus, and this ambivalence caused them to feel perplexed or to have a sense of ambiguity regarding the experience. Michael shed light on this ambiguity,

> I guess it is an interesting kind of thing. The Black males at [name of college] are in some ways kind of different. You see the difference between the variety of Black males. When I talk about being a Black male, I talk about being an African-American male…My experiences are someone between the urban youth, the Black male of popular culture and the artist…I try to meet my college at its comfort level. If they aren't comfortable then I won't fulfill that role…to wrap it up into one clear sentence is to navigate social spaces; I shift depending on who I'm in dialogue with.

Michael's notion of being multi-contextual needing to act as a *shape shifter* to fit into his college's environment seemed to drive his confusion regarding his experience. Joshua provides another angle regarding this situation:

> It is interesting. People are interested in you; in your story…It's really interesting. People are excited and look towards you to speak towards that Black experience, but the other hand it is heartwarming. They aren't just there for you to be a puppet, but that they care about you and want you to do well. It

> has been good for me. I've heard a few others [Black males] had bad experiences, but I haven't. You see that there are 6 black males at a party and realize that those are all of the 6 black males on campus. I don't really notice it, but maybe it is because how I was raised. My mother always said it doesn't matter if I'm Black, White or purple; you are all God's children. You treat people how you want to be treated. That experience has helped me with my mind set on campus. I have a unique experience and am fortunate that I am a Black male on a predominantly White campus.

In theme 16 a few of the students communicated a dislike for being one of the few Black males on their college campus. Because of Matt's dislike for being one of the few Black males on his college campus, he seemed to feel disconnected from his campus environment. Further, this disconnection led to a feeling of loneliness for him. He stated:

> I didn't hang out on campus. It didn't give people a chance to get to know me. They didn't understand my behavioral patterns and get to really know me. When people don't really know you, it is a big barrier and it creates a sort of ignorance and when you leave and come back they still don't know you…and when no one knows me I'm all alone. Sure, we like to talk but in the end I'm one of few on the campus.

Jacob indicated that he wanted to connect with his peers in various social spaces on his college campus, but still felt disconnected because of the campus's culture. While explaining the cultural disconnect he experienced on his campus, he expressed how he was typically careful of his behavior, as he was quite concerned about how his college peers might perceive him. He shared that,

> I think it is a different kind of challenge. I like to dance and do different things. I don't feel like they share my experiences, understand where I'm coming from or like the kinds of food I like. I want to eat Fried Chicken and they look at me strange. I tell them this is how I grew up eating, and I enjoy it. I don't feel like there is a home feeling, and I don't feel socially supported. Like I said, I want to go dancing and listen to hip-hop and there aren't individuals that support that or others that say it isn't even music. So, that is difficult. I think that being

> at a white school you kind of want to blend in and you don't want to be the individual that stand outs. I'm aware of how I approach someone and don't feel like I can be aggressive. I don't want to be the angry Black guy.

As the students continued to speak about their experiences outside of the classroom, they became more specific about their likes and dislikes. Several identified similar conditions about their college environment that they disliked. When asked to remove themselves from the context of their experiences as Black males, their dislikes centered around the lack of ethnic diversity on campus. Michael talked both about the importance and the need for more ethnic diversity on his campus, but mentioned how he still enjoyed the uniqueness of being one of the few Black males at his school:

> One of the cons has been coming back from [home city] and seeing the lack of diversity on my campus; not just black but people, but people of color in general. When you have more of a mixing pot things are vibrant and things are a lot more exciting and a lot more things are going on. I guess in some ways, I feel kind of special for being one of the proud few Blacks on campus, but then sometimes it is gloomy because this is all we've got.

Daniel also expressed his dislike for the lack of ethnic diversity on his campus when he stated that he "[disliked] seeing all similar faces…I would enjoy having more people of color to expand the thinking."

Other students shared a dislike for their college's efforts to address raising ethnic representation. They felt that these efforts did not address the real needs of students of color. Many of these objections were addressed in a previous section, when students discussed these experiences vis-à-vis their general experiences as Black males.

As for what the students liked about their college experiences, the perspectives varied. The students' responses included: Being involved in student government; Enjoying the internships the college provided; Views about Black people as a monolith have been torn down; Hanging out with people who do not think exactly the same; People want to get to know you the person; Being able to change negative perceptions about what it means to be Black; Being able to be who you want to be.

When the students spoke about the support they received as opposed to the support they wish existed on their college campus, most mentioned how supportive their professors or advisors were. Unfortunately, while many of the students felt that their professors or advisors were there for them academically, they still felt a cultural bond missing from the relationship.

Some of the students spoke about being involved with, and receiving cultural support from, a Black Men's group on their college campus. When students discussed what type of support they would like to receive on their college campus, they described a group that directly supports and addresses what it means to be a Black male in college and in society. Students also commented on how they wish they could have a weekly check-in or visit with a Black male staff or faculty member who could identify with their struggle as a Black man at a PWI. As a result, three themes emerged:

- *Theme 17 – Professors/advisors helpful, a cultural bond is missing.*
- *Theme 18 – College campuses should have a support group for Black males.*

- *Theme 19 – The need to connect on a regular basis with a Black male administrator or faculty member who understands the experience of Black males at PWIs.*

Joshua spoke about the support he receives from his advisor and professors, but noted that he wished his college had a support group for male students of color:

> My advisor is incredible and keeps in touch with me and asks me how I'm doing. The faculty is always willing to come and meet with me more. I remember last year (they don't have it this year), my college had a group for male students of color; different faculty would meet with that group and check in. They don't have it this year, and it is sad; I hope they have it this upcoming year.

Joshua mentioned a support group for students of color that no longer exists on his campus, and a few of the students mentioned how being involved with a Black Men's Group on their campus provided them with social and cultural support. When asked to share more about the Black Men's Group on his campus and what it offered, Jacob shared that:

> The Black Men's Group is a group of Black male students and one Black male administrator. It started my freshman year to support Black men because Black men are underachieving in society and college. We created a mission of what we wanted to do and we have done it. It is a great support system. It is only once a week and it is a good way to get away from the drama and stuff that has to deal with being Black at a White school. You feel transported in a different environment being safe.

Michael also shared his perspective about the Black Men's Group on his campus:

> It is a discussion group to discuss the plight of the Black male in our society, and what it is like to be a Black male on [college name] campus. So, there are a small number of students and one administrator. In The Black Men's Group, we educate ourselves and the [name of college] campus. We bring people (authors, professors, etc.) to campus, have had dinners, discuss multiculturalism and in some ways we have tried to reach out to other Black

> males on different college campuses. But it has been difficult because there are only so many of us.

The Black Men's group appears to be a group where these Black men's identity can be affirmed. In addition to providing identity affirmation, these groups also seem to have an ability to establish cultural bonds. Many of the students found that cultural bonding was an important element for overall student support. Although the students acknowledged the strong level of support they received from some of their professors and advisors, they still indicated that a cultural bond was missing from that relationship. Matt elaborated upon this point,

> Your college tries to create a bond and it goes back to how you are doing. They want to know is there something going on, how they can help you out, and is there something they can give you? The professors give you emails, a personal sit down, but I don't feel like it has anything to do with my race. The bond is still missing.

The students also discussed various programs in which they were involved at their respective schools: Student government; Mentoring program; Housing assistant in residence life; Black Men's Group; Intramural sports; Organized team sports; Student groups that worked on issues of social justice. One might think that the students would want to get involved with their campus's version of a Black Student Organization. However, a few students mentioned why they choose to not participate in such organizations. Joshua reported that,

> At [name of college] it was hard to see why we are here, and what we are doing wasn't clear. They have a mission statement and call themselves [name of group], and they say they are trying to be a voice for all students on campus…but there are not that many Black students on campus and they need an outlet. It doesn't seem like they want to say they are here for the Black experience and that is what I mean when I think they have a hard time defining

> themselves. It doesn't seem like they want to say they are here for the black students.

Michael offered this perspective on his experience with the Black student organization on his campus,

> I think we had a [name of organization]. I wish we had a better [name of organization]. Black people are a common denominator, but there are different types of Black people around the world. To say that there are certain types of Black people creates a divide. I think that if we have a [name of organization] we need an administrator that values that. I don't think we have that. I think some of the ideas turned into dance parties, etc. I don't understand their issues and what it all meant, and that is why I had to leave. To create a new [name of organization], it would be nice to see an administrator that knew what they were doing.

For other students, they either echoed the sentiments of Michael and Joshua, or their campus did not have a registered Black student organization. Regarding the notion of adding more programs on campus, Ethan stated,

> I don't know if I would want to have new programs, but I think we should build the programs that we already have up. I think we already have good program ideas, so if we added new ones we could lose focus on the ones we already have. We need to build the old ones up.

Although it is not clear if all students would agree with Ethan's sentiments, he provides an interesting viewpoint on programmatic efforts that would probably have relevance on many college campuses across the nation.

Peer Relationships

When students spoke about the environments they established peer relationships with other students inside and outside of the classroom, most experiences would mirror the typical experience of college students on a college campus (e.g., study groups, playing sports, parties, social events on campus, library, cafeteria, etc.).

They made comments such as, “I don’t have any enemies,” “I have a lot of friends,” “for the most part they are good,” “a typical college experience,” “I have a lot of friends on Facebook,” “not all great but valuable,” “there are a variety of different experiences” and “different experiences with many different people.”

However, when the students shared their experiences, it was evident that for some race was a primary factor in how they built their peer relationships. It also seemed that race was not a factor for others with whom they built peer relationships. As a result, two themes emerged. The two themes appeared to contradict each other, but this captured the complexity of the student experiences on building relationships:

- *Theme 20 – Race was significant when peer relationships were established.*
- *Theme 21 – Peer relationships were established without considering race as a factor.*

Regarding theme 20, the students discussed how their peer relationships were established. They noted the emergence of a reciprocal process, as their friends also wanted to spend time with people who had different perspectives and experiences from their own. This was in no way a minimization of the importance of connecting with one’s own group. Instead this was a way for students to expand their views about the world and share their perspectives with their peers.

The students commented about how their relationships became stronger if their friends were concerned about “who they are.” Jacob talked about how he felt when he believed his peers were authentically concerned with learning about him when he stated that “…there are positive interactions when people are trying to understand me;

trying to support me with the best of their knowledge." Matt had similar experiences and explained them as, "…one thing I noticed is that the White people who made a genuine effort to get to know me, the relationships have been more solid." Ethan added, "My relationships have been good because students have been so willing to understand me and my culture. They want to spend the night over my house and understand what it like to be from my community."

Regarding theme 21, a few students commented about how they sought out experiences with peers who did not consider race to be a factor in their relationship. As a result, they had a sense of their race being rendered invisible by their peers. Michael shed light on this:

> I have a lot of friends…I think in all of these relationships they think of me as [Michael] and not [Michael] the Black guy. The discussion of race for me as an African American male doesn't come up. Maybe that is because I don't initiate that conversation, but I haven't had anyone initiate the conversations either.

Other students shared perspectives on how race plays out in their experiences with the other students on campus. There was a sense that race can be obscured because it had not created any noticeable divisions between themselves and other White students. Overall, they felt race can be a bond of connection or a bridge of division with peers.

The majority of students had similar ways of building peer relationships on their campus. Students shared that they build peer relationships in classrooms, dorms, through other friends, at classes, at meals, at sporting events, and in other similar social situations. The general response from all students on how they engaged in relationship building activities as well as with social moments or in social spaces was

that they did so in a way that did not deviate from the common interpretation of how a *typical* student builds relationships or makes friends in a college environment.

When students talked about programs that helped them build relationships on campus, they expressed using mentoring programs, first-year programs, sports teams and organizations, student government, orientation, meals, sponsored multicultural events, and other student organizations to reach out to other students. These represent organized campus-sponsored initiatives or activities where the students and other students from their campus have a similar interest or focus. As a result, relationships were able to be established, and bonds were able to be built.

Summary of Findings

Attending a PWI does have a significant impact on how Black males engage, perceive, and conceptualize their academic and personal spheres. The ways that students perceive their college environment can have a strong impact on the way that these students are able to engage, conceptualize, and make sense of their college experience. The more effectively students are able to navigate academic and social obstacles, the better a chance they will have at academic and career success. For this reason, it is necessary that Black male students at PWIs receive better support.

Identity Development

All students agreed that the term Blackness was a complex concept to comprehend or explain, and that trying to define it was a difficult process. Because of the ambiguity around what it means to be Black as well as the negative stereotypes about Black males that are so rampant in society, the students credited PWI's as social

spaces that could serve to either eradicate or reinforce the negative stereotypes about Black males. Lastly, K-12 schools, neighborhoods and media/popular culture were also identified as assisting Black males with the construction of their identity through historical education, empowerment seminars, and racially-diverse characters in a wide variety of roles in popular television shows and movies.

Classroom Experiences

Most of the students described being one of the few, or perhaps the only, Black male in most of their college classes. The specific courses they took did contribute to the emotions experienced by each student. Those who took courses in the social sciences (such as psychology, sociology or anthropology) tended to have more negative experiences in their college classes. By contrast, students who took courses in the hard sciences (such as math, biology or chemistry) did not report any negative experiences, although some explained that race was always in the back of their minds. The majority of the students in this study were adamant that their college classes and curriculum had failed to affirm their perspective as Black males.

Multicultural Awareness

All students had various ways of interpreting and defining the term multiculturalism. Most seemed to link it back to *the study of other cultures*. The majority of the students did not see their definition, or any other definition of multiculturalism, manifest within their college environment. A few students noted that their college was making an effort in the area, but that there was still much room for improvement. Lastly, each student indicated an important need for multicultural

education and programs to be present on their college campus. When students were asked which form these programs would take, they suggested lectures, seminars, and cultural events, all which could increase multicultural awareness among non-minority groups.

Campus Climate

Students were divided on how they experienced being one of the few Black males on their college campus. Some students thought it was an interesting, perplexing experience, and a few did not like the experience at all. Most of the students shared a dislike for the lack of diversity on their campus, and felt their college needed to improve in this area. Students overwhelmingly thought they received good academic support from the faculty and advisors, although they felt a cultural bond missing from the relationship. Lastly, some of the students noted that their cultural affirmation was helped through participation in a group for Black males, and others wished such a group existed on their campus. In addition to a group for Black males on their campus, students saw the need to regularly connect with a Black male administrator or faculty member who understands the experience of what it means to be a Black male at a PWI.

Peer Relationships

Most of the students agreed that race was significant in their peer relationships. Race was either used as an intentional component of building relationships, or it was discounted as a factor by those with whom they established friendships. The majority of the students used traditional ways of building peer relationships on their campus,

and most noted that their colleges did not have many programs designed for helping them build peer relationships.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research study involved eight Black male undergraduates sharing their experiences about what it was like to attend college at private, predominantly White institutions in the Pacific Northwest. Throughout this research study, five overarching categories were identified (Identity Development, Classroom Experiences, Multicultural Awareness, Campus Climate and Peer Relationships) and have been the impetus for framing the discussion around the experiences of Black male undergraduates at PWIs. These categories are relevant to the discussion because they offer a concentrated list of issues that should be considered by administrators, faculty, and staff at PWIs. These issues are often considered, but rarely with sufficient energy and vigor to meet the needs of minority students.

The overarching question for the study was: *How can a critical multicultural perspective [developed by the researcher] assist in making recommendations based on the experiences of Black males at private PWIs in the Pacific Northwest?*

This study developed an original conceptual framework for multicultural perspectives that used the critical multicultural perspective in the framework to make recommendations to college faculty, staff and administrators in an attempt to help assist them in improving the experiences of Black male undergraduates on their campus. Although the recommendations presented by the researcher in this chapter

can be interpreted as mandates, they are however thoughts and ideas that are highly encouraged for college faculty, staff and administrators to consider when addressing the needs of Black males on their campus. A synthesis of the critical multicultural perspective and recommendations follow.

Critical Multicultural Perspective

The critical perspective in the conceptual framework for multiculturalism was designed to tease out the details of how societies in general and educational institutions in particular maintain inequalities that benefit some at the general expense of others; it is concerned with defining the different ways in which power and privilege operate with regard to individuals, groups, institutions, and society as a whole. This perspective explores thoughts and actions that are often exercised by those dominant individuals and which contribute to the general oppression, subordination and exploitation that will hinder the progress of individuals and minority groups.

The critical multicultural perspective offers the view that cultural identity is a means of establishing bonds across cultural and racial differences, and acknowledges that in order to meet this end, we must move past the mere acknowledgment of differences or analysis of stereotypes. We must move to explore how knowledge is constructed and socialized, and determine who it is that benefit from these discursive constructions. In addition, this perspective requires that we develop strategies to transform elements of culture that produce beliefs, behaviors, and ideals that maintain inequality, as well as challenge any culture norm that maintains any level of inequality.

The review of the critical perspective in the conceptual framework is important in this chapter because it provided the lens by which the recommendations were made in each established interview category. The following is a review of the five categories, a synthesis of themes that emerged in the interviews, and recommendations made to faculty, staff and administrators at PWIs.

Identity Development

Defining and interpreting what it means to be Black in American society proved to be a difficult task for the participating students. The ambiguity that surrounds the concept of Blackness still seems to be in effect, even for students who live it every day. Unfortunately, according to the students, many colleges are not dealing with the social construction of Black identity, nor are they examining how Black identity impacts students inside and outside of the classrooms during their college years.

As a result of this deficit, Black male students' perceptions about themselves can appear shallow and narrow, thereby diminishing opportunities for them to maximize their potential in educational settings. While identity development is a salient feature for all traditionally-aged college students, colleges must be intentional about how they address the needs of minority students, particularly Black males through their programmatic efforts and services. This might mean that colleges would offer a disproportionate amount of attention to this demographic of students, it is through the current *business as usual* campus politic that many colleges deny their Black male students the opportunity to challenge the negative stereotypes that

individuals, groups and structures maintain within our society. With expansion of this line of thinking, colleges may allow their undergraduate Black students to expand and interpret many cultural variants and features of what Blackness means within a societal context. Using the critical multicultural perspective, it is recommended that college administrators and faculty consider the following suggestions:

1. University faculty and administration are encouraged to be intentional and actively engaged in providing education that reflects broad experiences of what it means to be Black in American society, through classroom emphasis, additional lecture programs and seminars, and campus events. Failure to reflect minority perspectives in the curriculum, programs, services and institutional culture of these schools, perhaps by unwittingly elevating the experiences of certain individuals and groups who identify and support the current power structure, will lead to Black males being denied opportunities in various educational contexts.
2. The classroom education of Black males must address the issues of power and privilege (inside and outside of the group), where hierarchies can be broken down, and bonds can be established between groups.
3. Colleges must make use of information (such as that provided in this study) when addressing which representations of Blackness are used as benchmarks for recruiting, retaining and supporting Black males on their campus.
4. The study of Blackness must be emphasized by faculty and administration across all fields of relevant study. College administration should reflect this

emphasis in their scheduling of events and lectures, and faculty should make a concerted effort to reflect various dimensions of Blackness in their classes. Professors should also make use of their students and attempt to foster concern and curiosity among their students with regard to learning from (not just learning about) the experiences and contributions of Black people in American society.

5. Now colleges must analyze the curriculum in their courses to see if the values, beliefs and ideals reported in scholarly studies of Blackness are integrated in a way that does not exoticize differences, but rather adds to the growing body of intellectual work already present in the course.

Classroom Experiences

Being one of few Black males in a PWI college class is to be expected given the demographics of these schools. However, negative experiences should not be associated with the education of Black males at PWIs. This research study has shown that certain classes taken by Black males at PWIs had the potential to increase the chances of their encountering a negative classroom experience. Courses in the social sciences field (psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, etc.), which invite multiple interpretations and perspectives, tend be problematic for students whose voices and stories have been historically marginalized or silenced in this society. Not only are students not finding their experiences affirmed by the curriculum in these courses, but many of the narratives can devalue the experiences and perspectives of Black students in general.

In addition to curriculum narratives devaluing the experiences and perspectives of Black people, college professors are often complicit in the creation of a classroom atmosphere that maintains the cultural status quo, resulting in conditions that minimize the complexity of Black experiences and aspirations. Subsequently, this practice can treat Blackness as a monolith by asking one individual Black student in a class to speak on behalf of, or be the voice for, the entire Black community. Using the critical multicultural perspective, it's recommended that college administrators and faculty consider the following:

1. Colleges and faculty members need to be concerned about how some curricular narratives can elevate the experience and perspectives of certain groups over the experience and perspectives of others. This practice will usually devalue and delegitimize the experience and perspectives of historically marginalized groups.
2. Faculty members must be aware of their own power and privilege in the classroom. They must consistently monitor how both these traits have the power to influence their students, especially their minority students. If teachers engage with their marginalized students and encourage them to engage with the classroom environment, they can exercise a positive impact on these students.
3. Faculty members must consistently question the selection of books and course materials used for their classes. Course materials must be analyzed for the

presence of outright bias, as when certain racial groups or ideas are emphasized at the expense of others.

4. Curriculum should address the way multiple voices and perspectives can bring additional insight and intellectual ingenuity to analyzing or solving complex social issues and problems.
5. Curriculum narratives should analyze and critique how any perspective can have the potential of exploiting, oppressing, or dominating others, even if the intention is to unify or liberate. For well-intentioned faculty members, having routine check-ins with students can help to assess the differences between their intent vs. their impact.

Multicultural Awareness

Because of well-intended but often misguided efforts of multicultural services in higher education, college students can potentially miss out on an ideal opportunity to elevate their level of consciousness about the historical, political, economical, and cultural influences that contribute to their socially-constructed realities. Without institutional intentionality when addressing social injustice and multiple forms of oppression, students can be denied the opportunity to use college as a social laboratory within which they may question the relationship between power, privilege, knowledge, and the inextricable entanglement of all forms of oppression operating within our society. Many individuals who approach multicultural education for the first time often miss connecting the movement with struggles of individual, institutional and

societal inequity, so their understanding and implementation of multiculturalism can be perceived as shallow or superficial.

If multiculturalism is to be taken seriously, it must "address issues regarding group differences and how power relations function to structure racial and ethnic identities" (Giroux, 1995, p. 118). However, institutions and students must not become paralyzed by the discussion of differences. Rather, differences must be studied to understand the variety of stories, experiences and perspectives provided by marginalized groups. Multiculturalism should address structural inequalities, racism, and all other forms of oppression that effect minority students (May, 1999a), and these studies should be used to forge a sense of interconnectedness and shared struggle among all students.

In this study, students reported that many schools' multicultural services failed to provide programs or assist students with multicultural awareness, identity affirmation, and social development. On the theoretical level, administrators of multicultural services should be concerned with helping students link their ideas of multicultural development with the concept of transforming unjust practices. Administrators should challenge inequitable power relationships and attempt to build communities across differences within schools and society. Because this education is relevant for all students, this should not exist merely for minority students. Using the current critical multicultural perspective, it is recommended that administrators of college multicultural services consider the following:

1. Multicultural services must strive to educate its campus community about the ways society and institutions maintain inequities that benefit some at the expense of others. This is a primary role for the office of multicultural services and not faculty because these campus organizations have the power to reach many students who otherwise would not take classes emphasizing multicultural education.
2. Administrators of multicultural services should analyze how power and privilege operate in various contexts (i.e., individuals, groups, institutions, and society), but especially on college campuses, which was the central topic of this study.
3. Administrators of multicultural services should continually explore and question their own thoughts and actions which contribute to the oppression, domination, subordination, exploitation, and/or overall harm hindering the progress of an individual or group. While they may have little trouble promoting these concepts, they must understand stagnation in there own views and constantly guard against developing these detrimental biases.
4. Administrators of multicultural services should work with students, staff, and faculty to develop strategies that transform cultural areas on campus that produce beliefs, behaviors, and ideals that maintain inequality.
5. Faculty and administrators who offer multicultural education should view and study *cultural identity* as a means of establishing bonds across cultural differences.

6. Administrators of multicultural services should analyze and evaluate their programmatic efforts to determine if they are actually changing systems of thought or merely acknowledging cultural differences. Mere acknowledgment can lead to the reinforcement of stereotypes, where effective programmatic efforts should seek to change the systems of thought that establish these stereotypes.
7. Administrators of multicultural services should ask how and why knowledge is constructed in our society and also determine who benefits from its construction. With this knowledge, they can offer concrete evidence of real-world bias to their students, in an effort to offer them a more realistic view of the world in which they live.

Campus Climate

The lack of ethnic diversity on the campuses of PWIs continues to be an ongoing area of critique and criticism from students in the ethnic minority. The lack of such diversity can create a campus climate that is perceived as representing only the interests of the students in the majority. Some Black male students appear to be divided in their perceptions regarding how well their campus environments provide them the nurturing, caring, and hospitable support that are necessary to maximizing a student's potential to learn. Feelings ranged from "perplexed" to "outright hating" their college environment because of the lack of cultural identification, cultural affirmation, and cultural bonding. These are noted areas for improvement at PWIs.

Faculty and advisors on the campuses of PWIs explored in this study are acknowledged for providing good academic support for Black males, but there still seems to be a significant cultural element missing in the relationship between the college staff/faculty and Black students in this study. Because of this, PWIs must increase the number of Black male faculty, administrators, and staff members who can directly relate to the experiences of the Black male students on their campuses, and also to serve as mentors for the Black male students.

Lastly, Black male students at PWIs need some form of cultural support group that can affirm their Black identity but can also educate them regarding a variety of social issues, connect them to a broader community of Black people, and support them by establishing bonds across cultural differences. Using the critical multicultural perspective, it is recommended that college administrators and faculty consider the following:

1. College administrators must be diligent in analyzing how their campus culture can create bonds of exclusion when there are not dedicated spaces for historically marginalized groups to have their identity affirmed, their experiences supported, and their culture used as means to establish bonds across cultural differences.
2. College administrators must be hard working in their recruitment efforts to make campuses more ethnically diverse. There should be a genuine effort to recruit ethnic minorities as to allow more voices to help shape their campus.

3. The efforts of college administrators to hire a more diverse faculty, staff and administration must also reflect the diversity of the students that are currently enrolled. These hiring practices should also target personnel who can best relate to the current groups of minority students, as these minority professionals can also help recruit future minority students.
4. Faculty, staff, and administrators who understand and can relate to the experiences of historically marginalized groups on their campus should serve as mentors for students who are from those groups.

Peer Relationships

In this current era of political correctness, color blindness, and the idea of society as being *post racial*, multiculturalism should be an area of deep concern and intellectual inquiry for institutions of higher education. As the research revealed in this study, the notion of "race" being an invisible feature when building relationships can possibly do more harm than good, and to minimize or render invisible one of the most salient features of a human being can obscure some of the most important contributions that a person has to offer.

Students from this study did not see race in and of itself as the problem. However, they did communicate how categorizing and allocating an assumed idea of who and what a person is and of what they have to offer [based on race] could have a deleterious effect upon the establishment of a relationship with that person. The potential harm in carrying such assumptions can come to fruition when an individual tries to establish a cultural bond based upon false assumptions, narrow cultural

perceptions, and negative stereotypes. Through this research study, it has been learned that peer relationships seem more authentic and supportive when individuals are generally concerned with learning from and about a person that has a different cultural background from their own. These connections have been found to provide a reciprocal process of support, meaning that both individuals will learn and grow from the relationship.

Black males on PWIs seem to establish and build their relationships in the typical or traditional ways of most college students. It is noted that there are not many structured programs on their campuses that increase their ability to positively build peer relationships inside or outside of their cultural group. Using the critical multicultural framework, it is recommended that college administrators consider the following:

1. Colleges must establish mentoring programs that help all students to build positive peer relationships among and across cultural differences. These mentoring programs should help students understand the importance of how cultural attributes are an important component of building authentic and supportive peer relationships.
2. College faculty, staff, and administrators must provide students with opportunities for authentic experiences which will not let cultural differences over-determine or under-determine a potential relationship with a peer. However, students should still understand the importance and significance of how a peer's cultural identity is part and parcel of who they are as a whole

person, as peer relationships are maximized, more authentic, and more supportive when they are established in a genuine effort to get to know one another.

3. College faculty, staff, administrators, and students need to recognize that when a student from a historically marginalized group has their cultural identity obfuscated in an attempt to build a positive peer relationship, the values, beliefs, ideals, and behaviors of the dominant culture will become the terms by which the peer relationship will be established. To rectify this, college administrators must provide adequate support to programs and education that emphasizes a more critical interpretation of building peer relationships.

Implications

Although the researcher's critical multicultural perspective was used to make recommendations for the experiences of Black male undergraduates at private PWIs, the perspective can also be used to make recommendations on the experiences of students from a broad range of backgrounds. College multicultural services, educational curriculum, diversity polices, and other services or programs that try to ensure equity within an educational or community context can also benefit from utilizing this model.

This study was intentional about reporting how the critical multicultural perspective can specifically address the experiences of Black males at PWIs, and this report was articulated in the recommendations section under Identity Development. However, with the four other identified categories, the critical multicultural

perspective led to recommendations that could have relevance when addressing the needs of all students who are from historically marginalized groups.

Theory to Practice

Examples of how the recommendations might actually look on a campus:

1. A college could create a Black studies course or enhance existing course offerings. Most often, courses are situated in an already established discipline such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology. Black studies courses could focus on the contributions, perspectives, and experiences of Black people providing additional insight and intellectual ingenuity to this discipline. For schools that already have an existing Black studies course or program, they could modify its content to reflect a critical multicultural perspective, instead of the mainstream anthropological or sociological perspective.
2. When selecting books or course materials, academic departments could ensure the syllabi or course descriptions include caveats that the selected material represents one of many intellectual perspectives. They should also note that there are more perspectives in the field that challenge or support the ideas.
3. Multicultural service centers could provide workshops or programs that explore the complexity of how all groups can be well-intentioned, but can unknowingly contribute to harming, oppressing, or minimizing a person's ability to maximize their potential in a society. These workshops or programs could explore the subtle contradictions in the philosophies of different groups claiming to fight for social justice.

4. When deciding on how to allocate funds to student groups or clubs, multicultural offices and administrators need to be clear to their campus community that the goal of their funding is to help groups or clubs (not solely, but with an emphasis on historically marginalized groups) build unity across difference on their campus.
5. When campuses are trying to hire more professionals of color, they must not make the *aesthetic of color* the only factor upon which to base their decision. Hiring decisions must be based upon employees providing a different and much needed perspective that can expand the ideological trajectory of the campus. This more authentic understanding of the complexity of multiculturalism must also encompass the views and experiences of the historically marginalized groups of students on the campus.
6. When a mentoring program is developed for historically marginalized students, it must not solely focus on how marginalized groups can build relationships within the group. A college mentoring program should focus on how historically marginalized groups can build relationships within the group and across cultural differences.

Further Research

Although this research study used a critical multicultural perspective to make recommendations on behalf of the experiences of eight Black males from four PWIs in the Pacific Northwest, future studies are needed. Specifically this researcher suggests that an in-depth investigation at a single, individual PWI where data from the entire

Black male student population on the campus can be gathered. This way, recommendations can be more specific and strategic to meet the needs of the particular campus or institution.

Also, there does not appear to be a wealth of research on Black male undergraduates' perceptions of multiculturalism, how it is developed, or the relationship between their understanding of multiculturalism and how they conceptualize the importance or significance of attending a PWI. A greater understanding of how Black males and other marginalized populations understand multicultural issues, perhaps through additional interviews and studies, would provide much-needed context and further information that schools could use to refine their multicultural perspectives. As this is a long-term process and cannot be solved overnight, many schools would benefit from any additional research.

Lastly, in light of the noted challenges and experiences Black males face on the campuses of PWIs, future research should also examine the costs and benefit of attending a PWI.

Conclusion

Multiculturalism was established as a form of resistance to all forms of oppression, specifically racism. In recent years, it became the study of different groups, the acknowledgment of differences, cultural celebrations, and other factors that removed the historical focus of eliminating the suffering being endured disproportionately by certain groups. The critical multicultural perspective was

developed as a way to bring multiculturalism back to its roots and preserve the original integrity of such a grand movement.

The critical multicultural perspective was developed through re-centering multiculturalism to one of its original objectives and structuring its analysis on all facets of oppression. This perspective was created in order to make recommendations on behalf of the experiences of certain groups who were disproportionately being underserved or who were underperforming in a specific educational context. Because of the researcher's own educational experiences at PWIs and visceral connection to Black males in education and society, it seemed most appropriate to conjoin the two for this research study.

This research study has clearly shown that, indeed, Black males do have complex experiences on the campus and inside the classrooms at PWIs in the Pacific Northwest. However, this study clearly indicates that all experiences of Black males at PWIs are not bad ones. PWIs can intentionally and unintentionally bring a variety of experiences to the educational lives of Black males, which can help them expand their intellectual paradigms and social networks. However, these experiences can also subject them to negative stereotypes about their culture and cause them to retreat into an isolated social shell.

There will never be one answer to address the complex educational and social phenomena that confront Black males in this society. By using the critical multicultural perspective developed by the researcher, college faculty, staff, and administrators may be able to make a positive improvement toward holding everyone

accountable while helping to maximize the potential of Black males at predominantly White institutions.

CHAPTER VI

MULTICULTURAL AFTER-THOUGHTS

As a Black man living in America, it was hard to not look at race as the nexus of oppression, but through my research and personal/professional experiences, I have learned to not single out any single form of oppression when one is searching for a perspective on multiculturalism that focuses on creating an equitable society. I maintain that it is very important to study specific marginalized groups to understand trends, differences and the varying complexities of a culture, but those studies should be used to show how oppression is constantly entangled and interconnected in all marginalized groups. Being a Black man who has attended and graduated from a PWI, worked in multicultural offices, and is currently a professor at a PWI, studying the term multiculturalism was one of the things that made my experiences less daunting. However, it was not until I had a critical interpretation of multiculturalism that I felt I could understand better the complexities of education and how oppression exists in our society.

Why So Critical?

Some educational critics believe that schools are systems of conformity that exist to assimilate students to the ideas of the dominant culture (Darder, 1991; Freire, 1993; McLaren, 1994, 1997). McLaren (2007) detailed this analysis when he wrote that "…schooling always represents an introduction to, preparation for, and

legitimation of particular forms of social life" (p. 188). Unfortunately, there seems to be a deficit in the multicultural literature that speaks to this interest. Grant and Sachs (1995) wrote that much of this literature is concerned with "a normative politics of cultural difference in the form of practical concerns for teachers and administrators. Such orientation renders silent or ignores developments of the critical perspective of multicultural education" (pp. 89–90). The complexity of multiculturalism leads me to commit to educating students about the importance of being critically conscious citizens, as well as challenging them to reimagine a more equitable and just society and to transform the inequities and injustices that exist in our society.

Educators need to redefine multiculturalism so their institutions can allow everyone to connect and reflect on how cultures may engage in critical conversations across cultural differences. Moreover, educators must dismiss any form of multicultural education that views differences as merely exoticism and does not address larger power structures that cause many such differences (Giroux, 1995).

This chapter shares some of my multicultural after-thoughts on multicultural services, multiculturalism's need for attention to Whiteness/dominant culture, the challenges of liberal and conservative multiculturalism, and a new definition for multicultural education.

Multicultural Services

Because of multiple perspectives in the field and individual/institutional biases, the search for appropriate multicultural theories to anchor a given college's multicultural services is an arduous task. As with most biases and perspectives, many

multicultural services on college campuses make their concepts and ideas malleable to fit their own institutional goals. As such, there seems to be a disconnect in how colleges link their multicultural understanding to addressing the individual, institutional and structural inequalities so rampant in our society.

Colleges depend on multicultural services to provide their students with multicultural programs and initiatives aimed at affirming the institutions' commitment to diversity and their support of historically marginalized students. On some college campuses, multicultural services are reduced to a room, lounge or some form of dedicated space for students or student groups who want to speak, reflect and strategize about ways of making their college campus into more equitable places for learning and communication. Many multicultural programs and initiatives are implemented with extremely different priorities, and can be seen as reproducing stereotypes by implementing programs that focus on cultural songs, dances, eating ethnic foods and participating in foreign cultural celebrations. These multicultural contributions are seldom discussed within the context of understanding how oppression and power operates, and exercise minimal effect upon raising a community's consciousness about issues of marginalization. If a college has not clearly defined how it is going to embed and implement multiculturalism into the fabric of its institution, most of the students who receive multicultural services will reproduce the status quo by default, and campus communities will be disempowered.

Through some observations and experiences with multicultural services, I have come to see many forms of multiculturalism as politically correct machinations or

cheap diversity initiatives that silence the constituents that, on a regular basis, use or engage in the services of departments of multicultural affairs. Students have commented to me regarding how multicultural services are poorly funded, are understaffed, and exercise no real institutional power. They have complained that token representations usually make little or no difference in the recruitment or retention of students, staff and faculty of color. I have also been privy to more aggressive claims purporting that multicultural services are stagnant areas where the institutional power structures can keep an eye and ear on faculty, staff, students of color and other marginalized groups that see this work as imperative to maximizing student success.

It is often the norm on some college campuses for different marginalized student groups to gather with their own self-defined group underneath the banner of multiculturalism. Such students will engage in much individual and group affirmation as well as initiatives targeted at sharing their group's views on campus. On one hand this makes sense, given the historical and institutional gag that has been faced by many marginalized groups. However, criticism must also be delivered to many of these marginalized student groups, as they are sometimes unknowingly guilty of mimicking and replicating some of the dominant cultural postures they claim they want to see eradicated on campus and in society. Although highly important, marginalized student groups should never limit their scope to merely affirming their differences. It is important to define the strengths and weaknesses of our own perspectives to best address the biases that may be embedded within them (Bartolome,

2007). Many of these historically marginalized student groups are so busy trying to be heard, respected and affirmed that they blur the line between exercises that are informative and those that merely indoctrinate.

Within this complex matrix of higher education, multicultural administrators are often part of the dominant cultural system. As many of these leaders are socialized through America's dominant culture and values, many are, wittingly or unwittingly, complicit in the lack of institutional transformation and for the underdeveloped levels of critical consciousness among students who attend their respective institutions. Kanpol and McLaren (1995) argued "Individuals are now 'produced' within Western forms of hegemony that make them less capable of dismantling their ideological scaffolding and developing strategies and practices of resistance" (p. 2). I understand that multicultural administration can be a challenging task, as many college administrators do not receive the financial support necessary to maximize the multicultural efforts on their respective campuses. However, college administrators do not need large amounts of money to develop a vision, goal or theory for effective multiculturalism on their campus, but they do need some funding to maximize the implementation of these ideas and efforts.

Multicultural education has been hindered by a disconnect between theory and practice and a reluctance to discuss how its theory connects with institutional outcomes (May, 1999b; Sleeter & Grant, 1987). Because of a lack of combining theory with practice, colleges often face challenges when trying to articulate a multicultural framework that will serve as a vehicle to engage their campus

community. Colleges need to reconceptualize their theories on multiculturalism, and emerge with new ideas that address oppression, power, privilege and other forms of injustice at the individual, institutional and social level. I have spoken with a number of college personnel who believe that having a vision for multiculturalism will express to their inner and outer campus communities their college's commitment to the issues of diversity and multiculturalism. However, my experiences have also shown that a college will openly embrace celebrations of differences and *feel good* melting pot notions of multiculturalism, but their policies, procedures, values and norms will continue to minimize opportunities and impede the progress of certain minority populations. Unfortunately, these inequities, masked under the umbrella of multiculturalism, often go unchallenged.

In higher education, college constituents comprise multiple generations of thought, ideas, and experiences. As such, their opinions will vary widely on issues of diversity and multiculturalism. In addition, schools are situated in different cultural contexts, so this will affect how they conceptualize these terms. Uniformity in thought has contributed to antiquated views on how multicultural and diverse perspectives should be conceptualized (Stiehm, 1994). Students must be invited to reconceptualize their understanding of multiculturalism and reflect upon the development of their own social identity, as multiculturalism itself is going through a co-opted and commodified state that often obfuscates the identities of marginalized groups. The new multiculturalism is rapidly transforming into a feel good movement unlikely to be truly empowering to most students on college campuses. Like most other things in a

capitalist society, multiculturalism is being co-opted and commodified by the very institutions that once supported its liberating possibilities. When multiculturalism is co-opted, it becomes a more commercial concept, such as the popular Benetton ads that promoted an aesthetic of cultural plurality (Shohat & Stam, 1994).

Whiteness/Dominant Culture

The field of multiculturalism must explore how it discusses the issue of Whiteness vis-à-vis its discussion of Blackness and the identities expressed by other marginalized groups. As most multicultural education narratives center their analyses and queries on the experiences of marginalized groups, the language is written in a way that often fails to interrogate the subtle nuances of how dominant culture and values come to prevail (Giroux, 1990). Multiculturalism needs to concern itself with an understanding of Eurocentrism, in which European thought is viewed as the acme of intellectualism and apotheosis of cultural ideology and identity (Shohat & Stam, 1994).

Multicultural education must also explore the intricacies of how Whiteness operates and is understood within a dominant cultural context. The concept of Whiteness within the United States would benefit from being explored. It is important to note that this form multiculturalism is not an attack on Whites, but a lens of critical inquiry into the concept of how Whiteness has emerged as the dominant cultural force in the United States. Multiculturalism should also explore how some of the values, beliefs, behaviors and ideals associated with the concept of Whiteness can harm, oppress and impede upon the progress of individuals and groups in society.

Furthermore, attention must be paid to how White values, beliefs, behaviors and ideals have been institutionalized and normalized in the United States culture.

Liberal and Conservative

The field of multicultural education receives criticism which ranges from it being regarded as either too liberal or too conservative. Multiculturalism is an important issue that should not get used as political discourse to be exclusively appropriated by liberals and conservatives, and some critics still feel that multiculturalism is inherently biased toward liberal schools of political thought. Many American citizens only look at discourses on liberalism and conservatism in terms of their own electoral politics, and giving their allegiance to one over the other will usually abbreviate the necessary dialogue among the collective members in a community or society. What is often missing from this conversation is that both conservative and liberal thinkers can fail to behave in ways that properly reflect the emphasis on multiculturalism that should be in place in education. Multicultural education is hardly limited to those educators and administrators with any sort of political ideologies. Dichotomizing multiculturalism into defined left vs. right constructs typically fails to recognize the inherent power relationships present on either end of the political spectrum. As such, a holistic, unfettered criticism of multicultural education is more helpful in assessing the current needs of a particular environment, and this critique of multicultural education should be more concerned with all forms of oppression and domination on both ends of the scale.

I affirm West's (1993) notion that "the liberal/conservative discussion conceals the most basic issue now facing Black America: *the nihilistic threat to its very existence*" (p. 19), in that the current political climate is fragmentary and tends to focus on minor issues of fleeting importance. In this way, the American population in general is segmented into extreme, polarized and opposing viewpoints, which renders any form of a larger social community a virtual impossibility. As the field of multiculturalism continues to evolve, I am hopeful that it will focus more of its criticisms on injustice, oppression, power relationships and subordination on all levels without attacking political views to make a point. To do this, multiculturalism must rest on what has been learned from a historical perspective, and not fall prey to the narratives it seeks to eradicate.

Defining Multiculturalism

In light of my reflections and research conducted in this study, I can assert a fresh definition for multiculturalism: A form of resistance to all forms of oppression (individual, institutional and societal), actively engaged in minimizing any value, belief ideal or behavior that can minimize the potential of any individual or group, and building bonds across differences. This definition highlights the research and findings from this study and echoes the concerns of educators who see educational environments as sites of possibility to maximize the learning potential of all students.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Please acknowledge that you have read and agree to each paragraph by initialing next to each number.

1. I consent to participate in this study that researches the experiences of Black male undergraduate students attending private Predominantly Whites Institutions (PWI's). I understand that I will be expected to participate in an interview that will last no longer than two hours. I also understand that the interviews will be audio recorded, and I have the option of reviewing the recorded materials before the information can be used.

2. I understand that some aspects of this research study may have the possibility of increasing my frustration levels, but that these feelings should dissipate over time. If these feelings do not dissipate, I understand that there are services available to assist me, and that I can contact these services if I feel I need assistance. I am aware that if I would like to utilize the services of a mental health expert, I can contact my college's Health Center or Counseling department.

3. I understand that I may terminate my involvement in the research study for any reason at any time without penalty. I understand that there will be no payment for participation in this study.

4. I understand that the researcher is willing to answer any questions that I might have after I have participated in the study. The researcher reserves the right to answer questions regarding the findings of the study until after the study has been completed.

5. I understand that no individual data will be reported, and that the researcher will not share my individual results with me either during or after the project. However, the researcher may use direct quotes from my interview for this study. Pseudonyms will be used to maintain confidentiality, and all information (i.e., audio recordings and notes) will be locked inside the researcher's home office. Audio recordings will be destroyed after one year. I permit publication of the results of the experiment with the agreement that participant and institution confidentiality is ensured.

6. I understand that matters relating to this study can be directed to (researcher) Daymond Glenn at dglenn@lclark.edu. If I have additional questions or concerns about this study, I can contact the Faculty Advisor Tod Sloan at (503) 768 – 6066 or sloan@lclark.edu. My concerns can also get addressed by the Lewis & Clark College Human Subjects Research Committee at (503) 768-6124 or irb@lclark.edu.

7. I acknowledge that I am eighteen years of age or older, and that I have read and understand the above explanations.

8. Again, I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I have the ability to withdraw at any point.

_____	_____	_____
Participant's Name (print)	Participant's Signature	Date

I have presented this information to the participant and have obtained his voluntary consent.

_____	_____
Researcher's Signature	Date

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

Identity Development:

1. When identifying yourself as Black, what does the term Black mean to you?
2. What impact has attending a PWI had on your definition of the term Black?
3. How do factors that exist outside of the college environment contribute to how you identify yourself as a Black male?
4. How do factors that exist outside of the college environment contribute to how your college environment perceives you as a Black male?

Classroom Experiences:

1. How does it feel when you are the only Black male in the majority of your college classes?
2. Can you share some "typical" experiences you go through as being one of the only Black males in your college classes?
3. Does the college curriculum affirm your experience in this society? If so, how? If not, what is missing?

Multicultural Awareness:

1. Can you tell me how you interpret and define the term "multiculturalism"?
2. How do you see your definition or interpretation of multiculturalism manifesting itself in your college environment?
3. How relevant do you think multiculturalism is to understanding your college experience?

Campus Climate:

1. How does it feel to be one of few Black males on your college campus (outside of the classroom)?
2. What has your experience been like so far (outside of the classroom)?
    a. What have you liked about your college experience?
    b. What have you disliked about your college experience?
3. What type of support have you received (academic, social, personal, etc.) in your college experience?
4. Is there any additional support would you like to receive with regard to your college experience?
5. What types of programs are you involved in on campus and why?
6. Are there any programs you wish existed on your campus?

Peer Relationships:

1. Can you tell me about your experiences with other students on your campus (in and outside of the classroom)?
2. Can you talk about how you build peer relationships on your campus?
3. Can you talk about the programs on campus that help you build positive relationships with your peers?