

**“GOING INTO BATTLE”-- AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS’  
PERCEIVED FAMILY INFLUENCE COPING WITH MARGINALIZED  
CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES AT A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE  
INSTITUTION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

by

Sharelle L. Guyton

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Human  
Development and Family Studies

Fall 2016

© 2016 Sharelle Guyton  
All Rights Reserved

**“GOING INTO BATTLE”-- AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS’  
PERCEIVED FAMILY INFLUENCE COPING WITH MARGINALIZED  
CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES AT A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE  
INSTITUTION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

by

Sharelle L. Guyton

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ruth Fleury-Steiner, Ph.D.  
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bahira Sherif-Trask, Ph.D.  
Chair of the Department of Human Development and Family Studies

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Carol Vukelich, Ph.D.  
Interim Dean of the College of Education and Human Development

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ann Ardis, Ph.D.  
Senior Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Education

## **DEDICATION**

To my father and mother, Anthony and Donna Law, thank you for illustrating the greatest example of love. My fascination with families began because of how much I loved my own. The sacrifices you both made so that I could have the privilege to attend college have not gone unnoticed. You are my hope and my encouragement; I could not have made it this far without you. I love you!

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am thankful to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for being my ultimate sustainer and solid rock.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis committee, beginning with my chair, Dr. Ruth Fleury-Steiner, for her professional integrity and guidance throughout my journey through this entire thesis process. Her caring disposition inspired and motivated me to persevere through whatever adversity I had to endure, which made the journey pleasant despite the trials. I also extend my sincere appreciation to Dr. Barbara Settles and Dr. Bahira Trask for offering their guidance, research expertise, and exemplary skills in editing and recommendations, which enhanced the quality of my performance on this journey.

Thank you to my loving husband, for supporting me as I sojourned through this process. I thank you for your encouraging words and faith in me. Thank you to my dear friend Charlotte Marshall, who was and remains my constant sounding board and moral compass. I extend special thanks to Dr. Carol Henderson, for reminding me of my worth, aptitude and to keep my faith and family first throughout this process.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
ABSTRACT .....	x

### Chapter

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	Background/Context of the Study .....	1
	Defining Family and Family Values .....	2
	African American Family Influences and Education.....	4
	Theoretical Framework .....	7
	Symbolic Interaction Theory .....	7
	Critical Race Theory .....	9
	Intersectionality: Extension of Critical Race Theory .....	12
	Statement of Research Problem .....	12
	Purpose of the Study .....	17
2	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	19
	Introduction .....	19
	Coping with Racism as a Family .....	21
	African American Family Education Socialization and Philosophy ...	22
	Family Value Influence and College Student Experiences .	24
	Predominantly White Institutions and Race Dynamics .....	26
	Race in the College Classroom .....	27
	The Effects of Imposter Syndrome .....	30
	African American First Generation Students .....	31
	Family Influence on Being First Generation.....	34
	Chapter Summary .....	36

	Research Questions .....	37
3	RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....	38
	Introduction .....	38
	Phenomenology .....	39
	Phenomenology and Focus Groups.....	40
	Research Design and Rationale.....	41
	Focus Groups .....	42
	Data Collection.....	43
	Participants .....	45
	Procedures .....	50
	Instrument .....	51
	Data Analysis .....	51
	Themes .....	52
	Researcher Perspective/Positionality .....	55
	Trustworthiness and Reliability .....	58
	Ethical Consideration .....	60
	Chapter Summary.....	61
4	FINDINGS .....	63
	Introduction .....	63
	Theme #1 – Family Values Provide Tools to Succeed at a PWI .....	65
	<i>Respectful Comportment</i> .....	66
	<i>Racial Teaching Responsibility</i> .....	69
	<i>Embrace Your Black Identity</i> .....	75
	<i>Preparing for Racial Injustice</i> .....	79
	Summary .....	82
	Theme #2 – Family Values Increase Sense of Racial Difference in the Classroom.....	82

Summary .....	88
Theme #3 – Lack of Classroom Inclusivity Interferes with Education Quality.....	89
<i>Imposter Syndrome Gets Validated</i> .....	89
<i>Distractions from Microaggressions and Microinvalidations</i> .....	91
<i>Pressures from Being Tokenized</i> .....	95
<i>The Impact of Teaching Characteristics</i> .....	97
Summary .....	102
Theme #4 – Family Eases the Discomfort .....	102
Summary .....	106
5 DISCUSSION .....	108
Summary of Study Findings.....	108
<i>Research Question #1: How do African American/Black undergraduate students describe their role as a student based on their family values?</i> .....	109
<i>Research Question #2: How do African American/Black undergraduate students describe how their family influences coping with negative experiences with professors and students?</i> .....	109
Implications for Practice .....	111
Significance of Research Findings.....	116
Implications for Future Research .....	118
Implications for Theory .....	120
Limitations of the Study.....	122
Conclusion .....	124
REFERENCES.....	128
Appendix	
A. INFORMED CONSENT .....	158
B. FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL.....	162
C. RECRUITMENT EMAIL .....	164
D. IRB APPROVAL LETTER.....	165

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Original Focus Group Participant Representation .....	47
Table 2	Representation of Participants Chosen for Present Study .....	49
Table 3	Classroom Inclusivity, Teaching Style/Characteristic and Student Comfort .....	113



## **ABSTRACT**

African American/Black students face unique challenges at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI's). These added stressors, based on racial and cultural differences, have been shown to intensify the difficulty of college adjustment and successful degree completion. The historical kinship and collective supportive nature of African American families have been shown to aid in buffering the negative racial encounters students may face from professors and students in the college classroom.

The purpose of this qualitative investigation is to explore the voices and lived experiences of African American/Black students and their perceived levels of college classroom inclusion at a PWI, as well as the students' perspectives of how their family values impact their identity as a student and their decisions to cope with marginalized classroom experiences with professors and peers. This research study utilized a qualitative phenomenological methodology. The data were analyzed using the modified form of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen (SCK) method originally created by Mousakas (1994) and later modified by Creswell (2007).

The results explain how family support and values both buffer students' negative encounters and also influence their decisions in how to respond to these racially charged classroom experiences. The following four themes emerged to support the claims: (1) Family Values Provide Tools to Succeed at a PWI; (2) Family Values Increase Sense of Racial Difference in the Classroom; (3) Lack of Classroom

Inclusivity Interferes with Education Quality; and (4) Family Eases the Discomfort. The meaning of these themes is discussed in relationship to how PWI's could better understand and serve this population.

## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background/Context of the Study**

The transition to college is a multifaceted phenomenon. For many students, college begins on the cusp of emerging adulthood (ages 18-25), since 60% of students attend college immediately following high school (Arnett, 2000; 2014). In addition, the nature and dynamics of a trajectory in higher education varies greatly for each individual student. Some of the prominent differentiating factors include the students' family, social, and educational background along with the type of institution attended (Fromme, Corbin & Kruse, 2008; Stewart, 2015). For this reason, many variables influence the experiences, expectations, aspirations, and values of the student (Darensbourg & Blake, 2015; Kranstuber, Carr, & Hosek, 2012).

A college campus is a unique environment that hosts both traditional forms of knowledge dissemination thorough textbooks and classrooms as well as self-exploration (DeWitz, Woolsey, & Walsh, 2009; Humphreys & Davenport, 2005). New skills surface and are honed through experimentation with content from different courses and through relationships with both peers and professors (Lancaster, 2014; Swenson, Nordstrom, & Hiester, 2008). This includes universal skills such as time and financial management and personal development. Students are cultivated in a diverse

setting that encourages self-sufficiency and the ability to thrive independently (Arnett, 2014; Terenzini et al., 1994).

### **Defining Family and Family Values**

Family relationships and family values play a vital role in the approach that students use as they matriculate through the college system (Wu & Hou, 2015). How students define and describe their family and support systems can differ considerably. Similarly, among researchers the term “family” is also in persistent debate (Hotlzman, 2008; Sappenfield, 2002; Seligmann, 1990; Thornton, 1989). A spectrum of opinions co-exists in the national discussion. First, there is the traditional concept of the nuclear family from the 1950s. Second, is a more structural approach related to the guidelines based on the development of government family policies (Coontz, 1992; Popenoe 1991, 1996; Popenoe & Whitehead, 1999). For many, the term “family” has become an all-inclusive expression that encompasses multiple meanings, incorporating individuals more broadly outside biological relationships such as friendships and even pets (Trost, 1990, 1993). However, “family” commonly is understood as a domestic group where people live together in a household, operate as a cooperative unit, and share economic resources (Popenoe, 1993).

For the purposes of this study, the working definition of family is “a relatively small domestic group of kin (or people in a kin-like relationship) consisting of at least one adult and one dependent person” (Popenoe, 1993, p. 529). The U.S. Census Bureau (2013) defines family similarly, though a slightly more traditional fashion “...a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth,

marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such people (including related subfamily members) are considered as members of one family....” The goal of blending these two definitions is to take a more comprehensive than traditional approach of defining family solely as the parent-child relationship. The working definition for this study will intentionally include blended families, single parent households, non-married couples, and other households that involve dependents. Furthermore, these family relationships are comprised of people who were vital in raising and rearing the students but who may not necessarily be their biological parents. More importantly, they were critical in socializing the individual and aided in instilling and influencing social rules, norms, cultures, traditions, and decorum for the family household (Parsons & Bales, 2014).

In society, individual value systems explain people’s core thinking and impact their attitudes, opinions, and how they operate and interact with the world around them (Smolicz, 1981). In the family, components of individual values are constructed and influenced by the norms and social system of the family unit. The agreed upon ideals provide a sense of identity development to its members and affect varying aspects of their life outside the family (Cox, 2006). For example, parents play an influential function in student academic achievement. Their behaviors, attitudes, and values related to school impact their child’s educational success (Wang, Peterson, & Morphey, 2007). This includes the child’s motivation and educational philosophy (Darensbourg & Blake, 2014). Essentially, parents are a huge factor in the educational socialization of their child, both directly (e.g. assisting with homework) and indirectly

as they become older (e.g. emotional support, encouragement and validation).

Johnson, Gans, Kerr and LaValle (2010) describe the impact of students' perceptions of their family environment as linked to academic achievement. The level of family cohesiveness is a determining factor in college adjustment and transition. Students who perceive their family as cohesive and expressive with less conflict have higher levels of academic and social adjustment coupled with less distress.

In sum, students' perceptions of family environment are linked to academic achievement, college adjustment, and college transition (Johnson, Gans, Kerr & LaVelle, 2010). Additionally, parental influence plays an important role in college adjustment (Turner, Chandler & Heffer, 2009) and more parental support equates to higher social competence and psychological well-being for college students, particularly during their first year (Kenny & Donaldson, 1991).

### **African American Family Influences and Education**

Across cultures, the nuances of parental influence differ. Strong kinship relationships are often noted as a central component to the strength of African American families (Hill, 1999). Parental involvement in education has been found to positively relate to adolescent and elementary age students' educational aspirations and outcomes (Nichols, Kotchick, Barry & Haskins, 2010; Pallock & Lamborn, 2006; Taylor, Hinton, & Wilson, 1995). There is conflicting research about the relationship between Black families and child academic achievement. Some suggest that parental expectations influence child expectations and are related to academic outcomes (Taylor, et al., 1995). Others claim that, though there are links, they do not predict

academic change (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2004). The research on African American/Black family values as it relates to student influences has mixed perspectives. Considering ethnic differences, Seyfried and Chung (2002) found there was a weaker relationship for Black populations; however, Hill, Castellino, Lansford, Nowlin, Dodge, Bates, and Pettit (2004) found that it was stronger for Black students than for White students. There is a discrepancy in the research between the relationship of Black families and its relationship to child academic achievement. However, Darensbourg and Blake (2014) found that parental values significantly affect achievement values for Black middle school students and continuing parental involvement is integral in maintaining future academic gains.

In sum, the varied results suggest that further research would be useful in better understanding the relationship between parental values about education and Black adolescent academic achievement and beyond into emerging adulthood. There is a gap in the literature on African American family relationships and academic outcomes of college students (Brooks, 2015; Darensbourg & Bake, 2015). Furthermore, many studies are mostly sampling from White populations (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Roeser, Strobel, & Quihuis, 2002; Rouse & Austin, 2002). There is a void in the literature as it relates to the perceptions of the students, Black family values, and academic achievement in higher education from a qualitative approach (Ford, 1993; Howard, 2003).

Moreover, much of the literature on African American families in the family studies field is from a relationship deficit perspective instead of a relational strength

based viewpoint (Hill, 1999). Additionally, there is minimal literature exploring parental relationships and the adjustment of college students, including expanding the definition of family beyond parents (Guiffrida, 2005; Love, 2008; Mounts, Valentiner, Anderson, & Boswell, 2006; Zhang & Smith, 2011).

It is necessary to ground the experiences of African American students in the historical context of the world renowned *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruling, which ended racial segregation in the American school system. Over sixty years later, PWI's are still experiencing lasting consequences from inequitable racial composition in schools and its negative effects on academic achievement. After the ruling, integration was a slow, gradual process, continuing over the course of the next 15 years. It was not until the 1970s that racial segregation decreased significantly. However, currently public schools are still mostly racially segregated (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2002).

The decision to integrate schools provides a contextual backdrop for this present study because this ruling changed enrollment patterns throughout the country at all levels of education. Particularly, African Americans are still experiencing the consequences of inequitable education and African American boys are behind in educational achievement (Guiner, 2004; Harper & Davis III, 2012). The research suggests that once students are already behind at the middle school level, their lag is likely to persist as they advance through the education system (Bennett et. al, 2004; Darenbourg & Blake, 2015; Hill & Tyson, 2009). This current study will add to the knowledge of how the families of African American/Black students impact their



experiences, educational socialization, and philosophy, specifically in the context of their college classrooms at a PWI.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical frameworks setting the foundation for this investigation are Symbolic Interaction Theory and Critical Race Theory. Both of these theories provide systematic conceptualization of dynamic human interactions that can be useful in explaining perspectives from diverse populations. These frameworks are complementary, but they also aid in providing insight from different viewpoints. Symbolic Interaction Theory heavily focuses on individual perception and Critical Race Theory grounds the historical and societal context of human interactions based on race. Coupling these frameworks is crucial in exploring student experiences around the associations between relationships in the college setting, race, and family influence.

#### **Symbolic Interaction Theory**

Symbolic Interaction Theory postulates that meanings emerge from reciprocal interactions among individuals in social environments. The theory seeks to understand the infinite interchange between meanings that are guided by symbols based on interactions between people. According to Blumer (1969), this theory is based on three working principles: “(a) Humans develop their attitudes towards things according to the meanings that things propose to them. (b) These meanings are inferred from the ‘interaction of the one of them from its addressees’ (c) These meanings change within an interpretive process” (Askan, Aydın, & Demirbukan, 2009, p.903). Human

experiences are not random and unrelated. They form the meaning behind objects, other human interaction, events, and social interactions in a web-like manner (Aksan, et al., 2009)

Simply, as individuals grow and develop they learn to make meaning of their experiences and interactions. From the influence of society they eventually acquire a sense of self and social norms and they cultivate meaning by way of their dealings with other people (Smith, Hamon, Ingoldsby, & Miller, 2012). Symbolic Interaction Theory is useful in understanding racially marginalized groups and their family dynamics because it explains how meaning is attributed to different elements (Benzies, 2001). The unique experiences of racially marginalized, African American/Black students, along with their family backgrounds, are specialized scenarios that, if explored, can uncover how the students and their families make meaning of the connection between education and oppressive experiences. The social environment of a PWI is a prominent factor that will impact this group of students in a distinctive manner. Their perceptions, interactions, and relationships on campus with peers and faculty impact their ability to navigate the college experience successfully. Through this theory, the students will explain how they understand their environment and the comparisons between their family and school climate (Solorzano, Allen, & Carroll, 2002).

One of the main critiques of Symbolic Interaction Theory is that it does not focus on the source of meanings and interpretations such as social structures (Kuhn, 1964, Meltzer, Petras, & Reynolds. 1975). This is problematic because larger societal

contexts are not explored. More so, the meaning of interaction is solely based on the perspective of the person. Because of this gap in the framework, Critical Race Theory will be used in conjunction with Symbolic Interaction Theory to further explain the societal component of the construction of race and the way in which it impacts interactions. In order to understand human behavior, it is important to comprehend the foundation of social definitions and meanings that are involved in affecting interpretations of the individual. Particularly for this study, it will assist in explaining the way race influences African American/Black students at a PWI.

### **Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory is a progressive civil rights discourse developed by a group of scholars in an array of disciplines with a similar agenda to deconstruct the notions of race and its effect on Blacks in American culture. The foundation of the theory is framed by a few fields, such as legal scholars (Crenshaw Gotanda, Pellar, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefanicic, 2000), race and stratification theorists (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Feagin & Bennefield, 2014), and feminist family scholars (Collins, 2000; De Reus, Few, & Blume, 2005; Dill & Zambrana, 2009). However, the family studies literature using Critical Race Theory is deficient compared to the other disciplines (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Hordge Freeman, 2010).

Critical Race Theory was developed to deconstruct, provide understanding, and offer relevance to the construct of race, and make meaning of how race is defined contextually and socially. The concept of race is a socially amassed phenomenon that is not fixed and is continually evolving. It is a representation of prestige and power

incorporated into social organizations, families, and overall existing systems (Burton et. al, 2010).

There are four core relevant themes tied to Critical Race Theory. First, race and racism are social constructs that are historically embedded into the fabric of American culture. These infrastructures are present and interwoven in social interactions and relationships. Racism is beyond individual prejudices and entrenched in the social structures of society. Critical Race Theorists challenge the notion that people of Color are responsible for their experiences of oppression but rather hold accountable the larger institutional, economic, and political practices that are coded in a racially unjust fashion. Second, this theory is grounded in lived experiences of subordinate communities; knowledge is gained by the narrative accounts of marginalized racial experiences. Third, the approach is interdisciplinary and spans scholarship from social, economic, and political perspectives. Finally, both quantitative and qualitative measures are used in the methodological practices to capture social phenomena that cannot be quantified and lived experiences that are more appropriately investigated in a narrative fashion (Hatch, 2007).

The crux of Critical Race Theory provides a basis for a deeper understanding of the disparities between the African American/Black students and the White majority in higher education. It brings relevance and understanding to the necessity of speaking more openly about microaggressive racism, the “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and

insults toward people of color” (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007, p. 271). These microaggressions are theorized to manifest behaviorally or verbally in three forms: microassaults (racially derogatory statements), microinsults (rudeness and insensitivity to demean the victims culture) and microinvalidations (minimize the perception of experiential realities) (Sue et al., 2007). Additionally, Critical Race Theory provides a foundation for developing practical avenues in combating these encounters.

These two concepts will set the foundation for a qualitative exploration based on focus groups of student experiences among a racial group that is historically underrepresented on college campuses. This approach affords students the opportunity to conceptualize their collection of narratives and give a comprehensive depiction of their lived experiences in the classroom (Hughes & DuMont, 2002). Their group accounts will produce multiple insights from different perceptions based on the interpretation of their experiences as an African American/Black student and the impact of family values on how they comport themselves in the classroom. Due to the nature of a qualitative forum, the participants are not limited to only discussing race and could also mention other attributing influences which shape their experiences and perceptions, such as socioeconomic status, gender, and interpersonal relationships. Students are not restricted to only these few categories; however, their reported racial experiences will be emphasized for the purposes of this study.

### **Intersectionality: Extension of Critical Race Theory**

Intersectionality asserts that individuals cannot be simplified to one category of being, such as race or gender, and that our experiences are developed through the multiple lenses in which we are associated socially and intrapersonally (Crenshaw, 1993). This approach provides a foundation for examining the constructs of race and other identities such as gender within the context of community and families (Few-Demo, 2014). Intersectionality emphasizes the impossibility of separating one identity from another, because each identity category influences the understanding of the other (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality is seen as an extension of Critical Race Theory because of the complexity of understanding race. This framework is an underlining foundation to this investigation because the participants expressed the meaning and essence of their racial experiences grounded in broader structural, societal and communal contexts.

### **Statement of Research Problem**

In the United States, the shortage of African American/Black students in higher education is often attributed to the lack of resources to prepare and train for collegiate readiness (Davis, 2008). In comparison to the representative population in society, at selective research institutions there is an underrepresentation of African Americans/Black students. Currently, the number of African Americans/Blacks in higher education is greater than any other time in history and, at some high-ranked schools, African Americans have higher graduation rates than the majority (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education Foundation, 2008; 2009). Nevertheless, this is not the

norm across most institutions within the United States. The nation-wide graduation percentage for this population is on average 45%, which is astoundingly lower than the 64% rate of the majority (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education Foundation, 2008; 2009). The U.S. Census (2015) reports that the college education gap between African Americans and Whites is still stable. The rate of Whites graduating with a bachelor's degree or higher is 36% and for Blacks it is about 22%. Due to the historical legacy of racial oppression, underrepresented college groups, such as African American/Black students, have unique marginalized experiences in the college classroom that Whites are not facing. These unique challenges can contribute to less successful college matriculation and partially explain the percentage gaps (Rankin & Reason, 2005).

Stemming from a privileged racial hierarchical societal structure that has subjugated the African American/Black race, this phenomenon is also perpetuated on university campuses, which is often magnified at PWI's and which plays a role in the experience and success of the students (Allen, 1992; Harper, Davis, Jones, McGowan, Ingram, & Platt 2011; Thompson & Fretz, 1991;). The numbers of African American/Black students continue to steadily increase; within the United States about 2 million are enrolled in higher education, but at many majority institutions they are not completing their degrees. African American women have a 13% higher chance of degree completion than African American males (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education Foundation, 2008; 2009). Unfortunately, the discrepancies show that African Americans overall have a lower higher education completion rate and are less

enrolled at the graduate level (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education Foundation, 2006).

Behaviors such as racism and microaggressive racism are often still apparent on majority campuses and college classrooms, but are suppressed and rarely discussed. Needless to say, this has large adverse effects on marginalized students as a whole. Research suggests that these adversarial effects influence higher education by decreasing enrollment and degree completion (Cowan & Maguire, 1995; Journal of Blacks in Higher Education Foundation 2008; 2009). Nonetheless, microaggressions can sometimes be over identified and other issues play a major problematic role, such as the lack of economic support and authentic affirmative action. For example, White women are the top benefactors of affirmative action and a deficiency in economic resources is often a huge concern for many Black college students (Leonard, 1989; Pierce, 2013; Strayhorn, 2012).

Effective mentorship appears to be one valuable avenue when attempting to retain and assist racially marginalized students. Research has shown that students who participate in student engagement and collaborative learning receive better grades and do better overall in school (Wasley, 2006). This finding is more pertinent to students who are from racially underrepresented backgrounds that come to college less prepared than their peers. Mentorship is an avenue of collaborative learning that can give the students access and networks within the university and create opportunities for further success and professional development. Frierson, Hargrove, and Lewis (1994) concluded that Black students with a same race mentor had a more positive



outlook on academia compared to those that were mentored by a White male.

However, cross-race mentorship is valuable when White faculty members are sensitive to their students' diverse backgrounds (Dahlvig, 2010; Davis, 2008). Concluding that when Black students are in a more inclusive environment, they are more likely to thrive, which makes engaging mentorship one effective avenue of inclusion because it mirrors the innate collectivist and kinship nature of the students.

Another layer to understanding African American/Black students in higher education is their socioeconomic status. The proportion of Black students in poverty is higher than that of Whites, meaning many of the students coming into college are facing dual stressors (Gradin, 2012; Strayhorn, 2012). Their family's financial condition presumes their lack of resources and also their parent/guardian's inadequate ability to prepare them for the college experience. Many African American/Black students have to deal with the stress of most likely being a first-generation student and being taken outside of their hometown comfort zone, which pulls them away from their network and community (Woldoff & Washington, 2011). Many out-of-state students experience culture shock during their first semester. For them, this leads to feelings of isolation and a lack of unity with the campus community. This combination of stressors is a dangerous recipe for poor retention (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education Foundation, 2008).

The PWI environment yields a heightened sense of racial marginalization awareness among both the African American/Black students and their surrounding professors and peers, and for many, this creates negative environmental tensions that

can adversely impact the classroom and overall college experience (Allen, Epps & Haniff, 1991; Strayhorn, 2012). Students individually develop different methods of coping and supports that allow them to matriculate successfully or unsuccessfully. In some capacity for all students, family plays a critical role in influencing the life adjustments of the undergraduate college endeavor. Although there is some literature exploring family roles in college adjustment (Brooks, 2015; Kam & Bámaca-Colbert, 2012; Metheny & McWhirter, 2013; Wei, Yeh, Chao, Carrera, & Su, 2013), the dimensions are often not qualitative and do not focus on specifically African American/Black college students.

Much of the literature on African American/Black students describes differences in experience between PWI's and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), the differences in racial dynamics on campus (Gloria, Kurpius, Hamilton, & Willson, 1999; Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek, 2004; Harper, Davis, Jones, McGowan, Ingram, & Platt, 2011; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Steinfeldt, Reed, & Steinfeldt, 2010;), the trajectory of African Americans in academia and the link between African American students who are also first generation college students and their differing avenues of campus support and how it affects their mental health (Grier-Reed, 2013; Ishiyama, 2007; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Prelow, Mosher, & Bowman, 2006; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996;). Furthermore, Brooks (2015) found that African American students needed family support during their higher education pursuit, illustrating the importance of understanding how the family contributes to academic persistence for African

American college students. Based on the literature, the research on African American college students and families does not appear to specifically address family values and their impact on perceptions of marginalized experiences, particularly in the college classroom experience as it pertains to faculty and peers.

### **Purpose of the Study**

While there is a body of literature confirming the advantageous impacts of diverse institutions and the enhancement of the learning environment for students, there is less focus on the lived experiences of marginalized groups while in these classroom settings (Antonio et. al, 2004; Nagda, Kim, & Truelove, 2004; Marin, 2000). There is an expansion of literature, which has begun studying other underrepresented groups' classroom climate experiences; however, there is still a need for more research in this area (Adams, 1992; Laird, 2011; Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey, 2005; Pitt & Packard, 2012). Additionally, another overlapping element for African American/Black students is their likelihood to be disproportionately a first generation college (FGC) student and the unique challenges that are entangled within that experience, coupled with race.

This study focuses specifically on family value influence in college classroom adjustment. The purpose of this study is to examine the perspectives of African American/Black students at a PWI, to uncover how their family values influence how they understand their lived experiences as a student and in what ways their family socialization influences their choices to cope with oppressive experiences by professors and peers related to their racial identity. This investigation will provide

useful knowledge in how to create a more inclusive environment for historically marginalized students and create an awareness of microaggressive interactions. This knowledge will also serve as a base for understanding which family interactions are most advantageous for coping with oppressive experiences and add to the minimal literature from a positive and supportive family perspective compared to the majority of literature that is based from a deficit perspective (Hill, 1999).

Using the previous research as a foundation, this current study seeks to show how family influence impacts African American/Black students at a PWI, specifically, their coping mechanisms and decisions related to how they describe their role as a student and their marginalized experiences in the classroom. Additionally this investigation aims to understand how the influence of family socialization, through messages and practices, impacts college-aged African American students in the classroom. Specifically, how they manage racially marginalized experiences.

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

Social mobility and integration are an integral part of building and maintaining academic and career related success at the collegiate level. For racially marginalized students, being underrepresented adds an additional layer to college transition. Students have unique experiences with how they are perceived by faculty and peers. For African American/Black students, the difficulty of this process is heightened, especially at PWI's (Allen, Epps, & Haniff, 1991; Strayhorn, 2012). Many students leaving high school are not equipped with the skills necessary for postsecondary education and need some form of remedial assistance (Bettinger & Long, 2005). Initially, parents have an important role in supporting student success, but many are inhibited because of a lack of cultural, academic, and monetary capital. However, parents and families inherently provide their children with a set of racial and education socialization skills that will inform and shape their decision and perceptions in coping with their unique experiences (Parsons & Bales, 2014; Strayhorn, 2012).

At many PWI's, African American/Black students have a difficult time culturally transitioning (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education Foundation, 2008;

2009; Chavous, Harris, Rivas, Helaire, & Green, 2004; Harper, 2009; Strayhorn, 2011). Studies illustrate the role of cultural social organizations for African American/Black students as a way to enhance racially underrepresented degree completion. African American/Black students are less likely to drop out if they have a sense of cultural and social belonging (Journal of Black in Higher Education, 2008). One major component of this dilemma is illustrated in the lack of resources underrepresented students are able to access from their family, manifesting in academic delays (Strayhorn, 2011). These social organizations model the communal kinship students are culturally accustomed to prior to college and act a buffer.

Since many African American/Black students are also first generation college students they may not have access to the academic generational knowledge from their parents or other immediate members of their family (Ishiyama, 2007). In addition, each family has its own way of handling societal oppressions. Families assume that their college students may face some unpleasant experiences and provide practical advice or have instilled family mantras, values, or beliefs about living as an African American/Black individual in this society (Cichy, Stawski, & Almeida, 2012). All of these factors influence how the student perceives and copes with their experiences on campus and in the classroom. For example, Henson (2013) found that African American students at a PWI, who are highly sensitive to rejection based on race, experience less constraints in talking about their racial discriminative events with their social network, express less positive affect, and are less likely to forgive the perpetrator of racism. We can infer that families play a vital role in the student's

social network and impact the decision and perceptions of the student's experiences with these encounters on campus.

### **Coping with Racism as a Family**

Racism, "an organized system that leads to the subjugation of some human population groups relative to others" (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000, p. 244), is a systematic ideology in which human populations are ranked among one another.

Racial discrimination and/or racial prejudice can be prevalent and measured individually to examine or expose the presence of racism. For African Americans/Blacks this is a common and daily occurrence (Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli, 2000). Based on racial stereotypes, they do not gain equal access to education, employment, and advantageous government policies (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000).

Acts of racism have negative consequences for African Americans/Blacks, such as promoting negative mental and physical health (King, Williams, Amick, Levin, Walsh, & Tarlov, 1995; Sellers, Caldwell, Schmeelk-Cone, & Zimmerman, 2003). Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, and Bylsma (2003) found that African American/Black college students experienced the following four re-occurrences of racial discrimination: staring, verbal expressions of prejudice, bad service in public establishments, and miscellaneous interpersonal offenses. There is evidence that illustrates a link between higher frequencies of racial discrimination and less satisfaction with life and lower self-esteem (Fischer & Shaw, 1999).

The communal and collectivist nature of the African American culture has served as a buffer for the effects of racial discrimination (Daly, Jennings, Beckett, & Leashore, 1995). African Americans with high levels of hope are also more apt to deal with the negative stressors of racism as it serves as a protective factor (Adams et al., 2003). Parents are charged with the responsibility of preparing their offspring for a world where they are perceived as subordinate. Many tackle this task by instilling humanistic values and making their children aware of the differential treatment they are expected to experience growing up in this society (Marshall, 1995). However, there are instances where parents become concerned with their children deviating from their cultural and ethnic heritage because of PWI attendance and that can cause additional stressors. For example, Thompson, Lightfoot, Castillo, and Hurst (2010) found that African American students attending a PWI felt pressure from their families not to acculturate to the dominant group and to maintain their ethnic group's cultural specific traits, such as language.

### **African American Family Education Socialization and Philosophy**

“Racial/ethnic socialization is a process where parents shape their children's attitudes, beliefs and understanding about the impact of race in society through messages and practices” (Phinney & Rotheram, 1987 p. 11). These socialization practices include educating children about their culture of origin and its context in a culturally diverse society. For African American/Black families, racial socialization is an integral factor in the totality of the socialization process due to the societal structure of race and the specific consequences that impact the experiences of the family. Based



on the embedded connection of race and education, racial socialization will ultimately tie into education socialization.

For all age groups, racial socialization is related to academic and cognitive performance, and specifically for African American children and youth, parental racial/ethnic socialization messages are predictive of better academic performance (Huges, Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, & West-Bey, 2009). Particularly, socialization messages related to the awareness of racial barriers have led to better grades and higher academic performance (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Sanders, 1997).

Futhermore, paternal and maternal reports of the historical socialization of African American ancestry, heritage, and racial pride are positively correlated with better grades for adolescents (Brown, Linver, Evans, & DeGennaro, 2009). Racial socialization messages are critical to self worth and cultural pride and are associated with greater academic curiosity and persistence in the classroom (Neblett Phillip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006).

From what we know, parental involvement in education, such as direct school contact, is positively correlated with greater academic achievement, academic confidence, and grade retention (Barnard 2004; Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; McWayne, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004). Among racial/ethnic groups that have an historical lineage of racism and discrimination, like African American/Black individuals, racial socialization skills and practices are a critical foundation for children's ability to psychologically develop an adaptive concept of race (Lesane-Brown, 2006). For African American/Black students, racial socialization is

a pivotal component of parental involvement because parents actively provide messages about the significance of connection and belonging to their racial group, in relationship to the role of race in their family and the society at large.

Through parental interactions, children are exposed to both intra- and cross-cultural material which is embedded into parenting practices. However, less is known about the relationship between academic achievement and the racial socialization process over time as children mature into adolescence (Caugh et al., 2006). Cultural awareness and racial socialization can act as a buffering factor for African American children over time in maintaining positive academic achievement (Banerjee, Harrell, & Johnson, 2009). Adolescents are able to negotiate racial contexts, particularly in the social environment based on the tandom of parental practices related to racial socialization. Neblett Jr., Philip, Cogburn and Sellers (2006) found a similar finding that supports parental messages to children pertaining to race in that it may compensate for, or counteract, racial discrimination, correlating with positive academic achievement.

### **Family Value Influence and College Student Experiences**

The family of origin has been shown to be a driving impact in adolescent and emerging adulthood life adjustments. Families provide a primary environment where individuals are given a working set of resources and experiences that create a familial context. Context is created by an array of variables such as socioeconomic status, neighborhood, and educational attainment, along with attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about life experiences. This contextual nature influences navigation and

decisions throughout life. During their lifespan, individuals often revert to the familial context and family relationships when dealing with life's many circumstances.

For many, college adjustment is a critical period in the emerging adulthood trajectory. Family plays an important role in acclimation to the students' new environment (Erb, 2014; Galatzer-Levy, Burton, & Bonanno, 2012; Lee, Dik, & Barbara, 2015). Students who are identified as racially underrepresented have a unique set of racial and cultural college experiences, particularly at PWI's (Chavous, Harris, Rivas, Helaire, & Green, 2004; Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993). Research shows us that, although peers are influential in adolescent decision-making, parents tend to have more of a long-term effect in future choices such as success in school (Wang, Peterson, & Morpheys, 2007). Brooks (2015) found that for African American students' family support played an important factor in their persistence to finish their college degree.

Ethnic and racial discrimination have been associated with poor academic adjustment and success (Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). For African American students, racial discrimination is linked with negative mental health implications such as lower self-esteem and higher depressive symptoms (Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000). An investigation done on Mexican-origin students (another marginalized racial group at PWIs) and their parental influence in coping with racially discriminative experiences found that supportive maternal and paternal parenting moderated teacher discrimination and depressive symptoms (Kam, 2012).

### **Predominantly White Institutions and Race Dynamics**

A PWI's racial diversity in the classroom setting is often deficient. Research is clear about the benefits of different races not only bringing multiple visible distinctions but also variations in experiences that are communicated verbally during classroom discussion (Adams, 1992; Antonio, Chang, Hakuta, Kenny, Levin, & Milem, 2004; Nagda, Kim, & Truelove, 2004). Marginalized groups such as African Americans/Blacks often have different realities in classroom settings with their peers of other races. When the race of students impacts the learning environment and is not ignored and handled constructively, it can be a very positive experience (Pitt & Packard, 2012).

Unfortunately, experiences of microaggressions in the classroom during the interactions of students and professors do exist. These experiences taint the learning environment for African American/Black students and do not provide the necessary atmosphere for constructive and inclusive learning. Some African American/Black students report that faculty were often demeaning and diminished their intellectual capacity and capabilities. Students recognize that these actions from faculty are not necessarily intentional; however, they do cause negative effects (Chesler, Wilson, & Malani, 1993).

Students express that they felt clumped together as a group, singled out as the spokesperson for their race and excluded with low expectations from faculty. Other students felt the curriculum was non-inclusive; faculty appeared to fear them and Black students experienced problematic relations with White students. Although there

were negative experiences, students did express positive interactions with faculty when the curriculum was all encompassing and diversity issues were not negated but welcomed into the conversation (Henson, Derlega, Pearson, Ferrer, & Holmes, 2013; Pitt & Packard, 2012).

### **Race in the College Classroom**

Historically, racial oppression in the United States is a societal plight that continues to linger and cause adverse effects to marginalized groups in this country (Pittman, 2012). According to Pittman (2012), “oppression includes institutional and interpersonal actions that block access and resources for the oppressed groups... [it] may occur as discrete or chronic events; however, its effects are cumulative and widespread” (p. 82). One form of oppression is microaggressive racism. Particularly at PWI’s, these occurrences are more prevalent due to the large noticeability of group differences. These injustices can cause marginalized groups challenges that affect their college experiences not only on campus but also in the classroom (Pitt & Packard, 2012).

Pitt and Packard (2012) explore dimensions outside assumed physical racial features and their impact on perceptions and actions of students in the college classroom. They propose that those of different races not only bring multiple visible distinctions but also variations in experiences that are communicated verbally during discussion. The researchers note that there is not a spokesperson for an entire race and that everyone has individual experiences; however, research shows that in aggregate those of the same race do experience similarities.

They found that there was some overlap in the contributions of Black and White students; however, there were indeed significant differences between what was discussed by both. Black students were able to add real life experiences and examples from their own life of racial injustices to the conversations on social phenomena. These disclosures were emotional experiences that White students may not have had the opportunity to be exposed to before hearing their classmates' stories.

Moreover, the multidimensional approach and emotional tones the students take in discussing these personal experiences also combat assumed stereotypical responses. On the contrary, Whites were more passive about expressing first hand experiences; however, Whites were brought back into the discussion of race, as were other races and ethnicities through second hand experiences and observations. One form of interaction is not highly favored over the other, but they are both encouraged and embraced. The difference in interactions between races is what makes the learning environment more enriched. Pitt and Packard (2012) illustrate a few different ways that race of students impacts the learning environment and when not ignored and handled constructively it can be a very positive experience.

Chesler, Wilson, and Malani (1993) gathered experiences from students of Color and their perceptions of faculty. Fifteen different focus groups were asked the following four questions: Have you ever been made uncomfortable by assumptions or comments in the class related to race/ethnicity? Do your instructors expect you to do well? Are there ways in which the faculty could make the subject matter of certain courses more meaningful to you? Has an instructor done something constructive about

race relations in or out of class? Each of the focus groups was comprised of a homogenous collection of 3-5 students who were the same race, including African American/Black, Latino/a, Asian American, or Native American. A person whose race matched the participants facilitated the focus groups.

Students reported faculty were often demeaning and diminished their intellectual capacity and capabilities. Students recognize that these actions from faculty are not necessarily intentional; however, they do cause negative effects (Chesler, Wilson, & Malani, 1993). Some of the students expressed that they felt clumped together as a group, singled out as the spokesperson for their race and felt excluded with low expectations from faculty. Other students felt the curriculum was non-inclusive; faculty appeared to fear them and experienced problematic relations with White students. Although there were negative experiences, students did express positive interactions with faculty when the curriculum was all-encompassing and diversity issues were not negated but welcomed into the conversation.

Tuitt (2011) conducted 10 interviews with Black graduate students to investigate their experiences with having a Black professor at a PWI. Three themes emerged: “(a) are innocent until proven guilty, (b) will serve as role models who hold them to higher standards, and (c) will view Black students and be viewed by these same students as representatives of their race” (p. 192). The author found that there were positive responses of Black students’ access to a Black professor. This implication shows the importance of diversifying faculty, particularly at PWIs. Although this study was conducted on graduate students, similar implications will

most likely apply to undergraduate students at comparable institutions.

The research shows that African American students have different experiences in the classroom compared to White students. This includes interactions with other students and professors. They often feel less valued and are forced into combating issues of race while in the classroom.

### **The Effects of Imposter Syndrome**

Imposter phenomena was originally developed from a clinical sample of upper-middle class, high-achieving, and accomplished White women with many accolades who still did not internalize their successes. Imposter syndrome or phenomena derived from the psychological pathology of “perceived fraudulence” is a subjective experience where high achieving individuals have an inner inhibition where they feel like an imposter or a fraud. For instance, students who feel fraudulent have thoughts that they were admitted by mistake due to some error outside of their control, like incorrect grading or judgment from professors. Those experiencing imposter phenomena frequently exhibit other clinical symptoms such as generalized anxiety, lack of confidence, depression, and frustrations related to an inability to meet self-imposed standards or achievement (Clance, 1985; Clance & Imes, 1978; Harvey & Katz 1985; Kolligan & Sternberg, 1991).

There is evidence showing that imposter syndrome is also apparent in African American student samples. There are links to impostorism as it pertains to academic self-concept, racial identity attitudes, and worldview (Ewing, Richardson, James-Myers, & Russell, 1996). These aforementioned concepts were significantly



connected to feelings of imposterism. Additionally, Austin, Clark, Ross, and Taylor (2009) found that there was a relationship between imposter syndrome, survival guilt, and depression. This predicted symptoms of depression. Additionally, Peteet, Brown, Lige, and Lanaway (2015) corroborate previous findings that low self-esteem breeds greater relationships to feelings of misattributions of success, which is a direct connection to imposterism. Based on the literature, it is probable that students at a PWI may face feelings and perceived experiences of imposter syndrome as a negative effect of marginalized classroom experiences.

### **African American First Generation College Students**

Today, the postsecondary education student body composition is vastly different from its counterparts three to four decades ago. Women have outnumbered men for over 15 years and the underrepresented demographic has increased; this also accounts for first generation college (FGC) students (Carnevale & Fry, 2000; Terenzini, Springer, Yeager, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). “FGC students are educational pioneers” (Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007. p. 404); London, 1996). They are first or one of the first in their families to attend higher education (Billson & Terry, 1982; Ishitani, 2003). Some describe them simply as students whose parents did not attend college (Billson & Terry, 1982). The definition has been broadened by other scholars to include students whose parents may have attended college but did not graduate. Some suggest there are differences between students whose parents only have a high school degree or less versus those who have some college experience but did not graduate (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini,

2004). Inkelas and colleagues' (2007) definition includes both parents and guardians who received a high school diploma or less while excluding those whose parents have some postsecondary education experience. The research illustrates small discrepancies in defining the FGC student but the foundational crux of the construct remains consistently similar among researchers.

FGC students make up about 30% of the total college population (Strayhorn, 2006). Within eight years of high school, only 24% of FGC students receive a college degree. Unlike traditional students, FGC students encounter unique challenges and struggles for an array of reasons (Choy, 2001; Ishitani, 2003). They are more likely to be a part of an ethnic minority, speak a language different from English at home, and come from a low socioeconomic class (Bui, 2002). Research suggests that FGC students tend to have weaker cognitive skills in reading, math, and critical thinking. They also tend to have lower degree aspirations and are less involved with teachers and peers in high school (Pike & Kuh, 2005; Terenzini et. al., 1996). FGC students are less academically prepared and have less experience with honors classes (Hartig & Steigerwald, 2007). Their involvements with faculty tend to be overall less supportive encounters and they are more likely to experience racial, ethnic, or gender discrimination on college campuses (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Pike & Kuh, 2005).

When FGC students enter college, many experience culture shock because the college climate is significantly different from their neighborhood and family environment (Inman & Mayes, 1999; London, 1992). Many are more likely to find it

difficult to reconcile these grievances. This can lead to high attrition rates, which are 71% higher for this population than the traditional student (Ishitani, 2002), and low self-efficacy, “the belief in one’s ability to execute behavior that is necessary to achieve a specific outcome (Phinney & Haas, 2003, pg. 711),” that is, to be a successful college student (Aspelmeier et. al, 2012; Ishitani, 2002). Although Aspelmeier et. al (2012) suggest these differences are minor, others propose that by the end of the second and third year many differences between their peers subside (Terenzini et. al.,1996). Overall, FGC students are a lot more likely to be older, live off campus, and take less class credit hours than their peers. FGC students tend to have more dependent children, expect to take longer to finish their degree, and report less encouragement from their family to attend college (London, 1989; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005).

The unique challenges for FGC students vary on a large spectrum. They have less positive out-of-class experiences compared to their peers and experience feelings of isolation in their college communities (Terenzini et al., 1996). This may occur because they spend more time off campus in terms of both living and work and are more likely to work longer hours due to financial insufficiencies. They may find it more difficult to balance school, work, family, and friends because the American university system values individuality and many of their own cultures value community cooperation and frown upon separation (Hartig & Steigerwald, 2007). This all can lead to more emotional worry about failing out (Bui, 2002). Some research shows that FGC students are more likely to drop out after their first semester;

however, others disagree and find statistical evidence that shows FGC students were more committed to their institution and equally capable of academic success during their college term (Hartig, & Steigerwald, 2007).

### **Family Influence on Being First Generation**

Research on families and FGC students is not the main focus of this literature. However, there are investigations that attempt to conceptualize how families impact the FGC student experience (Hartig & Steigerwald, 2007; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). Family plays a large role in the students' decision to break away from home to attend school, deciding and describing their demographic importance, their contributions to academic success and attrition. There is a complex struggle between the FGC student's attempt to fulfill their own needs and also the needs of their family, which impacts their ability to be a successful student (Guiffrida, 2005).

The parents, families, and neighborhood of FGC students also can contribute to the difficulty of the college transition (Guiffrida, 2005). It is common for families not to value college education in the same way that the student does and not to have the capacity to completely understand the student's transitioning difficulties of the new campus, academic stressors, and environment changes (London, 1989; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). FGC students wrestle with feelings of 'survivor guilt,' feeling hope about their academic success and degree pursuit while their families are struggling to survive. These difficulties coupled with the regularly expected anxiety and concerns of being a first year student make the initial college experience much more difficult (Hartig & Steigerwald, 2007).

A study by Guiffrida (2005) assessed the differences in FGC student family support and academic success between high achievers with an average grade point average of 3.18, low achievers with an average grade point average of 2.14, and leavers who left prior to graduation. The leavers' grade point average varied from 0 to 3.86. The study shows families as both a supporting factor and a hindrance in the student's academic achievement. High achievers said that the emotional and academic support received from their families was one of the most important factors of their academic career. They received some financial support from their families, although many of them could not lend much and their families asked nothing from them but to do their best in school. Low achievers and leavers had similar findings. They felt guilty for being away from home and felt an obligation to help at home. They felt their parents could have done more to help and received little to no financial support. These students expressed feelings that their family did not value their academic pursuits and they felt guilty or selfish about asking for money. On the contrary, research shows that second generation college students felt supported while in school and were happy to receive help from their families during their college transitioning process. Studies show that parental involvement is a sound predictor for enrollment and academic success in postsecondary education (Guiffrida, 2005; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006).

Researchers also seek to understand what influences a student significantly enough to give them the confidence and perseverance to be the first in their family to attend college. Gofen (2009) recognizes that sometimes families and friends encourage children not to attend college. Going to school would force students to go

against family advice and reject their family culture. Also, parents lack knowledge about the college environment, which in turn makes it difficult for them to understand what their child is encountering and attempting to endure academically, socially, and culturally, compared to the familiar environment of their neighborhood. Some experience a lower level of family support and lower level of importance placed on college. However, some researchers disagree and find that many FGC families are informed and understanding (Guiffida, 2005). Gofen (2009) suggests the student's family or one member of their family was the reason for their breakthrough. The student had someone who instilled a positive attitude towards education, built a strong interpersonal relationship investment, and emphasized family values and support.

### **Chapter Summary**

African American/Black students have different experiences in the college classroom compared to White students. This includes interactions with other students and professors. They often feel less valued and are forced into combating issues of race while in the classroom. Daily, they are likely to experience racial discrimination through staring, verbal obscenities, and by differential treatment in public places. Parents of African American/Black students socialize their children to embrace their cultural and ethnic heritage and aid in understanding how to navigate their subordinate position in society. Racial socialization assists in preparing students to navigate in this country and particularly at school where they are a marginalized group. Parents are shown to influence their child's academic achievement and philosophy about education. Students of Color are more likely to be first generation college students.

This status presents its own unique set of challenges for both the students and the family.

Using the previous research as a literary foundation, this current study seeks to understand the essence of how family influence impacts African American/Black students at a PWI, as well as their decisions related to their coping mechanisms and how they describe their lived experiences as a student in context of their marginalized experiences in the classroom. Based on the aforementioned gap in the literature the following research questions will drive this scholarly investigation:

### **Research Questions**

R1. How do African American/Black undergraduate students describe their lived experiences as a student based on their family values?

R2. How do African American/Black undergraduate students describe how their family influences coping with negative experiences with professors and students?

## **Chapter 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

Merriam (1998) stated that qualitative research was “based on the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting in their social worlds” (p. 6).

Qualitative methodology provides descriptive data from individuals that are written, spoken words and observable behavior (Creswell, 2007). This research method is concerned with meaning people attribute to things in their lives, understanding circumstances from their frame of reference, exploring reality as they see it, and understanding how people think and act in their everyday lives. Qualitative research is conducted because the investigator wants to empower individuals to share their stories (Creswell, 2013).

Maxwell (1996) stated that the main benefit to conducting a qualitative study is that since the outcome of results and theories that are based on experiences, it gives an opportunity to improve practice, and an ability to collaborate with participants rather than just study them. Creswell (2007) explains eight key components that are characteristic of qualitative research: (1) the researcher must be a key instrument, (2) multiple sources of data must be used, (3) data analysis must be inductive in nature, (4) the participants’ meaning of the problem must be kept in focus, (5) the design must



be emergent, (6) the use of a theoretical lens may help keep the study in better focus, (7) inquiry should be interpretive in nature, and (8) the overall research should be holistic in its account.

### **Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is one form of qualitative research design. It was developed by Edmund Husserl in the mid twentieth century as a means to capture the abstractness of phenomena. Husserl found that quantitative methodology proved inadequate to holistically capture and accomplish the essence of meaning (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003; Powers & Knapp, 1995). Phenomenological research is discovery oriented and seeks to understand what everyday experiences are like and the meaning of these experiences by those who are living them (van Manen, 1990). The purpose of this design is to aggregate individual experiences to explain the universal essence of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

There are four approaches to phenomenology research. They include, traditional, experimental, hermeneutical, and empirical, which can also be referred to as transcendental (Klein & Westcott, 1994). Each of these four approaches serves a purpose in gaining a deeper understanding of phenomena, however, each approach has its distinctive characteristics. Mainly, the distinctions are based on the data collection process (Hein & Austin, 2001). For this study, empirical (also known as transcendental) approach to phenomenology was utilized.

Empirical phenomenology begins by identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing out the inquirer's experiences, and collecting data from several people who

have experienced the phenomenon in question (Creswell, 2007). The researcher identifies and pulls out significant statements to develop themes that describe the phenomena under investigation. This approach was specifically chosen for this study due to the aforementioned mentioned characteristics and for the clear guidelines and systematic steps in the data analysis procedures. Hence, the aim of this research was to fully understand the influences of family values for African American/Black students in coping with marginalized classroom experiences. Phenomenology is befitting for this examination provided that the main purpose of this type of research is to “determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13).

### **Phenomenology and Focus Groups**

Historically, phenomenological research data collection is done using individual interviews as the primary method. Webb and Kevern (2001) argue that in order to seek the essence of phenomena it requires individual descriptions that are uncontaminated. Therefore, they conclude that group data collection such as focus groups would be incompatible with phenomenological research.

However, Kookan Haase and Russell (2007) suggest that the research method approach should fit the research question and in their particular study, a group approach was fitting for their phenomenological investigation. Some of the recognized advantages of using focus groups with a phenomenology study are the following: enhancing the credibility of research by clarification of dialogue (Côté-Arsenault & Morrison-Beedy 2001), hearing the opinions of others allows participants to help

formulate their own (Krueger, 1995) and the presence of group participants allows elaboration, encouragement and also challenges from others about opinions and meaning. Additionally, the benefit of focus groups allows stimulation of discussion and opens up new perspectives and encourages conversation exchange (Spiegelberg, 1975). Essentially, the phenomena becomes alive within a group (Halling, Kunz & Rowe, 1994). Bradbury-Jones Sambrook and Irvine (2009) conclude that phenomenological centered focus groups enrich the data because the participants are reflecting, and clarifying the understanding of their shared experiences. Furthermore, they argue that the individual voice that is vitally important in phenomenological investigations can still be preserved in a group setting.

Phenomenology seeks to understand the essence of a shared experience (Patton, 1990). This methodology aligns with the goal of attempting to understand the lived experiences of African American/Black students' family influence coping with marginalized classroom experiences at a PWI. This qualitative study used a researcher-created, semi-structured focus group protocol as the sole data gathering methodology. Nine African American/Black participants, in five focus groups, provided the data for this study.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

Studying family relationships and interactions is a dynamic process. There are multiple dimensions in a family unit and each member provides a unique set of perspectives and experiential accounts (Zvonkovic, Sharp, & Elise, 2012). Qualitative methodology has set the foundation for family studies because of the inherent

challenges of quantifying family interactions (LaRossa & Wolf, 1985). The family is a complex phenomenon. Qualitative methods are seen as an especially fitting approach because responses are provided directly by the participants, typically, in their own words, as compared to imposed or highly inferred perspectives and reactions. Direct accounts serve as a rich additive to the knowledge of families in revealing new insights about the nature of the multifaceted interactions.

### **Focus Groups**

As presented by Kitzinger (1995), focus groups occupy a unique position in qualitative methodology. This approach provides a distinctive opportunity to explore the realities of a related group in a dynamic manner. It is particularly helpful within diverse cultural groups that are often positioned as subordinate in society. The researcher is given direct access to within-group language, concepts, and overall cultural knowledge. Furthermore, this method can encourage participation from those who may be reluctant to be interviewed on their own, or have difficulty offering information. Focus groups rely heavily on the group processes and were chosen to evoke a safe environment. They provide the researcher the opportunity to explore and clarify views that cannot happen in the same fashion as an individual interview.

The perspectives from the participants drive the exploration and the researcher is afforded the opportunity to investigate the nuances and complexities of the participants' lives (Hughes & DuMont, 2002). One main element to this research study is the importance of understanding the student's experience through a narrative platform. In order to capture the students' thoughts in an open forum that is unfiltered,

it is most beneficial to use a phenomenological qualitative research design. This format allows students to present their thoughts about their experiences in a descriptive manner where they are able to explain the distinctions of their interactions. Specifically, exploration can be executed in such a way that might be missed if quantified through numerical measurement and ultimately gain clarity on the essence of the phenomena.

The theoretical frameworks grounding the research study also nicely align with a qualitative focus group design and also coincide with a phenomenological methodology. Symbolic Interaction Theory and Critical Race Theory both emphasize narrative measures as the most efficient method of knowledge inquiry. Particularly, Critical Race Theory centers the racially marginalized person as the expert of their life and is partial to descriptive accounts of investigation (Hatch, 2007; Aksan et al., 2009; Burton et al., 2010). Focus group methodology creates a dynamic process that supports the position of both theories.

### **Data Collection**

The initial purpose of the data collection was a research study conducted by the University Diversity office to gain a more in-depth understanding of the broader experiences in and perceptions of the college classroom as a marginalized undergraduate student attending a PWI. It particularly included those representative of the following marginalized groups: African American/Black, Latino/a, LGBTQ, or Women. The original participant pool consisted of six focus groups (two from each aforementioned group). However, for the purposes of this study only a subset of the

participants, the African American/Black students, will be analyzed. Three of the students identify as both African American/Black and a member of the LGBTQ community. The same researcher collected and analyzed the data.

According to Krueger (2002), the optimal focus group design consists of participants that are carefully recruited and similar in type, groups consisting of 5-10 people, 6-8 preferred, in a comfortable environment with circle seating, and moderated with pre-constructed questions. Based on these suggestions, the students were broken up into groups based on race and sexual identity, in order to create an atmosphere of comfort assuming some form of aggregately similar experiences. The targeted size of the groups was 5-8 students, however, due to attrition the groups ranged from 2-7 people.

The researcher collected the data between April 2013 and May 2013. The focus groups were conducted on campus, in spaces familiar to the students. The focus groups for the African American/Black students were conducted in a meeting room in the Center for Black Culture, the Latino/a students met in a neutral building's conference room, and the LGBTQ students met in their designated registered student organization's (RSO) office space.

Students were instructed to feed off of one another's experiences and provide each other with empathy and support throughout the session. The focus group methodological format also allowed students to delve into different identities at any given point throughout the session. This characteristic was intentional and directly connected to the approach of Intersectionality, which suggests that individuals are

unable to separate their understanding and interactions of race from their other identities because it would be unauthentic and unrealistic to ask individuals to do so.

Additionally, the use of focus groups also relieved pressure on the students to only share when comfortable, instead of having the burden to answer each question without time to process. Different students also touched on unique racial, gender, or sexual identity experiences specific to them. Having an array of perspectives gave a larger spectrum of experiences because each student answered questions through multiple lenses at different moments in the session.

### **Participants**

The sampling strategy for this qualitative, phenomenological exploration included criterion sampling of participants who met the predefined criterion of importance (Patton, 2002): students who were of Color (African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino/a) or LGBTQ identified and attended the PWI. The researcher recruited students in person and by email announcements. Personal announcements were made in thoughtfully selected locations that would be conducive for finding undergraduate students of Color and queer identified students at a PWI. An announcement was made during the beginning of a Hispanic registered student organization (RSO) meeting and at a 400-level Race and Gender class (Black and Hispanic students were recruited in this location). Lastly, the president of the campus LGBTQ RSO was contacted to gain access to the email addresses of queer students on campus. All participants were notified of the fifteen-dollar gift card incentive for participating to a local campus bookstore. Snowball sampling was also used for each

group; participants were asked to forward the information to other students that met the target criteria to aid in increasing the sample number. Their information was given to the principal investigator.

The initial sample for the broader study consisted of 26 student participants and a total of six focus groups. There were two Hispanic/Latino groups; four attended the first group and seven attended the second group, two African American/Black focus groups, with three attending the first group and two attending the second group. There were also two LGBTQ focus groups consisting of one group of six and one group of four students. Five out of the six groups were homogenous by targeted identity (AA/Black, Hispanic/Latino and LGBTQ); however, one of the Hispanic/Latino focus groups ended up heterogeneous with two Hispanic students and one White and one Black student. The LGBTQ groups were heterogeneous by race and gender. Across all six groups there were a total of nine African American/Black students, nine Hispanic/Latino students, and eight White students. There was one transgender student. The students ranged from freshman to seniors (see Table 1).



Table 1

*Original Focus Group Participant Representation*

	Category	Race/Orientation	Gender	Participants
1.	AA/Black	Black	Women	3
2.	AA/Black	Black	Women	2
3.	Latino/a	Latino/a	2M, 5W	7
4.	Latino/a	2L, 1B, 1W	Women	4
5.	LGBTQ	1B, 5Wh	5W, 1T	6
6.	LGBTQ	2B, 2Wh	3M, 1W	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9B, 9L, 10Q</b>	<b>21W, 4M, 1T</b>	<b>26</b>

Notes: **B** = AA/Black, **L** = Latino/a, **Q** = LGBTQ, **Wh** = White, **W**= Woman, **M** = Men,  
**T**=Transgender

Pulling from the broader larger sample of six focus groups, this study will focus only on the African American/Black students. The participants span across five different focus groups. These consisted of two African American/Black focus groups, one heterogeneous (a mix of White, Latino, and Black) and one homogenous of all Black students. Additionally, three of the students originally fell into two of the LGBTQ identified focus groups, one student was part of one focus group and two students participated in the second LGBTQ focus group.

Intersectionality aids in informing this nuance of multiple focus group formats in the data collection process. Essentially, students spoke from multiple identities throughout the sessions; it was imperative to pay attention to these nuances when capturing their complete experience. The researcher took this into account throughout the analysis and discussion sections by identifying when the students associated other categories with their race (such as gender and sexual orientation). There were a total number of nine participants that matched the criterion of African American/Black identity. Phenomenological research method suggests a minimum total of three participants (Giorgi, 2009). According to Dukes (1984), three to ten participants are an adequate sample size for a phenomenological study (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Representation of Participants Chosen for Present Study*

	Pseudonyms	Gender	Classification
1	Cayden	Woman	Sophomore
2	Ebony	Woman	Sophomore
3	Terri	Woman	Senior
4	Evelyn	Woman	Junior
5	Felicia	Woman	Junior
6	Jasmine	Woman	Junior
7	Kendall	Trans*	Freshman
8	Blake	Man*	Junior
9	Levell	Man*	Junior

Note: All students are African American/Black; \*represents those who are also LGBTQ identified. The researcher assigned the selected pseudonyms.

## **Procedures**

The Institutional Review Board approved all of the research procedures. The participants read and signed an informed consent form prior to the beginning of the session. Each session was audio recorded, with extensive handwritten notes. The students were made aware that the study was voluntary and that they were not forced to participate. They were given the agency to stop the focus group at any time and leave. Students were encouraged not to limit thinking of their identity to just one category and to consider themselves holistically. It was clearly explained to the students that the content from the focus groups would be kept completely confidential, that the information would be used in aggregate, and no identifying names would be mentioned. Students were given pseudonyms during transcription to ensure confidentiality.

The researcher conducted all six focus groups. The focus groups ranged from an hour and seventeen minutes to two hours and two minutes. A co-facilitator took notes at two of the sessions: the African American/Black and the Hispanic/Latino session. The other four groups were run with only the main facilitator who took notes while also guiding the sessions. The facilitator and co-facilitator were both African American women in their mid-twenties. The focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed. A professional company transcribed the audio files a year later, because the originally intended study was delayed.

### **Instrument**

The researcher developed the investigation protocol based on Kruger's (2002) guidelines for creating focus group questions, using the diversity classroom inclusion literature to ground the inquiries. The instrument contained ten main questions with probes. The questions were open-ended, involved the students, and allowed them to be reflective about their experiences. The goal of the questionnaire was based on the broader initial research study to obtain information about students of Color and about LGBTQ students at a PWI about their experiences in the classroom with other students and professors. The questionnaire also sought to gather information about how the students' perspectives are shaped around their role as a student and how they cope with their experiences based on their family values. The questionnaire consisted of four main categories: diversity in the classroom, interactions with faculty, interactions with students, and family values (see Appendix B). The Institutional Review Board for human subjects approved the instrument as an expedited review (see Appendix D).

### **Data Analysis**

A modified form of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen (SCK) method originally created by Mousakas (1994) and later modified by Creswell (2007) was used for the analysis of this investigation. This method consists of six steps. They are as follows: (1) begin with full description of the personal experiences of the participants concerning the phenomenon (bracketing), (2) develop a list of significant statements (horizontalization of the data), (3) group the significant statements into "meaning units" or themes, (4) write a textural description, (5) write a structural description, and

(6) write a composite description of the phenomenon incorporating both the textural and structural descriptions (Creswell, 2007).

The five focus groups used for this study were originally conducted for another research investigation; therefore, the audio was dormant for twelve months before it was sent to a transcription company. The transcription company transcribed all five focus groups verbatim and time stamped each document every five to ten minutes. In order to ensure accuracy, the researcher listened through each focus group while reading along with the transcripts to account for possible misinterpretation or missing segments. The time stamps made it easier to revisit the audio, particularly when confirming the voice of a participant. Additionally, because the same researcher conducted all the focus groups and analyzed the data, they were familiar with each of the participant voices and were able to preserve the individual perspectives of each student, an important nuance in phenomenological research.

### **Themes**

Themes are generated from identifying significant statements in the focus group transcripts or other forms of data. These significant statements deal with how individuals are experiencing the phenomenon being studied. After this process has been completed, the significant statements are gathered in larger units of information, which are known as themes (Creswell, 2007).

For this study, themes were established through identifying the significant statements of each of the participants within the context of the focus groups. Those significant statements were then grouped into meaning units or theme areas. The

researcher then organized each of the theme areas into one of the four domains: family values, inclusion, exclusion, solution/practices. Theme areas were used as salient themes for the study if at least five of the nine participants shared experiences related to the identified theme area.

Initially, each of the focus group responses were summarized by interview questions to create a general breath of knowledge acquired from the participants. After initially reading through the data, the information was chunked into significant statements, going line by line in the transcripts and making a notation when a reemerging significant statement surfaced. These themes were determined by reoccurrence of statements unique to this study. They were compared and condensed into similar chunks or larger re-occurring themes. This process was continued multiple times until all the themes were condensed into a few large comprehensive themes with sub themes when necessary.

Additionally, each focus group was coded according to the research questions and theoretical frameworks and then organized into critical themes. Themes were to reveal the impact of family values on student's perceptions of experiences at a PWI. These themes were to be developed in seeking repetitive ideas about perceptions of lived experiences and practices that were revealed through participant responses. In developing the analyses for each focus group, the emergent themes were compared with existing literature and preliminary analysis of field notes.

Furthermore, significant statements in the transcripts were coded for analysis and the development of emergent themes in this research study. For each focus group, significant statements/domains were color coded, each domain having a different color. Then the segments were organized by their “idea” color to aid in clearly developing the emergent theme. The themes were arranged into a table for analysis. After establishing the emergent themes for each focus group, using a table for analysis, the themes were compared across focus groups to create an illustration for the entire sample. Similarities and differences were noted. The analysis findings were reported according to their relationship to the research questions of this study.

Each domain was identified by a different color with a matching significant statement that expressed the “what” and the “how,” ultimately revealing the essence of the phenomena. Questions pertaining to faculty and students were considered questions relative to the participants’ perceptions of inclusivity in the classroom. Questions pertaining to negative or derogatory experiences and their effect on academic achievement were considered questions related to participants’ perceived reality of racial injustices or exclusivity. Questions pertaining to the roles of family values and their impact on success at a PWI were considered relative to their thoughts on coping and resilience. Questions pertaining to strategies to buffer experiences of exclusivity were related to the participants’ solutions, actions, or practices used to create a more inclusive classroom environment at a PWI. Participants’ answers were color-coded according to the following categories: family values, inclusive or



exclusive experiences, solutions, and practices. After being coded, additional analysis was done to see where responses might overlap categories.

### **Researcher Perspective/Positionality**

Bracketing (epoche) is the process in which the inquirer sets aside his or her experiences, as much as possible, in order to take a non-biased look at the phenomenon in question. This is a key step in conducting empirical (transcendental) phenomenological research. Transcendental is defined as that “in which everything is perceived freshly” (Creswell, 2007, p 60). The goal of bracketing is for the researcher to set aside his or her experiences to be in a position that is as non-biased as possible. This state is seldom ever truly reached (Moustakas, 1994). One way that this process is demonstrated is by researchers bracketing out their view prior to moving forward with the lived experiences of others (Creswell, 2007). For this study, the researcher completed the bracketing process by writing down her experiences with the phenomenon in question prior to beginning the focus group process with the participants and hearing their lived experiences that dealt with the phenomenon at hand.

Patton (2002) contends, “reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of one’s own perspective and voice as well as the perspective and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports” (p. 65). The regular use of current literature was the tool used to reflect and monitor researcher biases, subjectivity, positionality, and evolution of the research study. The researcher

practiced regular reflection and maintained field notes, such as analytic memos, throughout the entire research process. The researcher additionally exercised reflexivity by practicing self-awareness and taking ownership of personal biases as well as self-questioning to develop a deep understanding of the data by keeping a journal of emerged biases as they arose.

In respect to the analysis of the data, it is important to mention that preconceptions and biographies are a large reality in interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2007). Among many, the few outstanding biases and preconceived notions that I brought into the analysis of the data are that students would suffer from many microaggressive and negative racial experiences on campus and that many would be first generation college students, be low-income, and have a supportive family guiding them through the racial obstacles experienced at the university. This was overcome by acknowledging my position and separating my experiences from those of the students. Although, there was some overlap, I made certain to pay keen attention to experiences that were outside of my own.

I acknowledge that my biases played a role in my observations and what stood out for me in the data. I was vigilant about my preconceptions and remained sensitive and alert (Erickson, 1986). I made a list of them and made notations throughout the collection and analysis process. Additionally, to the extent possible, I made sure to consider alternative views and options of interpretation. This process consisted of checking my own assumptions through shifts of awareness and understanding. Practically, this was accomplished through avenues such as consulting with peers and

mentors and reading additional literature.

Furthermore, as a first-generation African American college student, I was aware that my experiences and perspectives were also very relevant to this study. During my academic trajectory, I have attended three different PWIs. Although each university had unique characteristics, they also shared general similarities in regards to my perceptions of the inclusivity of the environment, such as being the only or one of few people of Color in a classroom, feelings of being swarmed by a sea of White, and experiences of microaggressions and microinvalidations. Additionally, my family values played a large role in my academic success by developing my belief in the importance of education and also how I conducted myself on campus. These experiences and biases I was unable to separate in the midst of facilitating each focus group.

However, to aid in neutralizing these factors, I made notations in the field notes identifying my assumptions and ideas and how my experiential knowledge was influencing the analysis (Maxwell, 2013). Additionally, I was able to leverage my experiences and prior knowledge as a platform to connect with the students and build a relationship. For instance, students were very candid about their dealings and discussion of race in the classroom.

They often included me in their discussion as an in-member. I was able to build a rapport and facilitate the discussion with heightened sensitivity and understanding. Students also used in-group language and verbiage because they assumed I would understand what they meant and felt less inclined or pressured to

code switch during the conversations (some explicitly stated how much they enjoyed the discussion and did not want to leave). I used wisdom and caution in attempting to balance the offerings and risks of self-disclosure and perspective into the research.

### **Trustworthiness and Reliability**

Research trustworthiness can be defined as the credibility of the research findings (Creswell, 2003). Credibility is attributed to the skill, competence, and rigor of the researcher (Patton, 2003). Trustworthiness is synonymous with what is known as research validity (Creswell, 2003). Patton (2003) described the researcher as the instrument of the study and further says the following about validity in qualitative research:

You realize that completely value-free inquiry is impossible, but you worry about how your values and preconceptions may affect what you see, hear, and record in the field, so you wrestle with your values, try to make any biases explicit, take steps to mitigate their influence through rigorous field procedures, and discuss their possible influence in reporting findings. (p. 93)

Triangulation was used as a technique in this study to limit researcher bias and justify the emergent themes in the data (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2003). Data from the focus groups were triangulated by the existing literature and field notes to crosscheck themes and patterns emerging from the data. Thus, as the students' responses were collected, through note taking, the researcher sought to identify consistent themes or reoccurring patterns across the data. For example, a number of students discussed how being a first generation student played a role in the development of their academic

identities. Being a first generation college student myself, as the researcher I was aware this would likely be a buzzword while I conducted the focus group discussions. While analyzing the transcriptions, the researcher sought out continued patterns. I analyzed their meanings to search for consistent phrases, concepts, and information across the responses of the students.

In order to provide credibility to the research findings and eliminate the opportunity for researcher bias, I used direct quotes from the subjects during data analysis and emphasized any similarities in language and word choices in establishing themes for research, ultimately to explain the what and how of the phenomena. In reporting the findings, negative and discrepant information to the established themes were shared to cover all perspectives; however, positive findings were also reported (Creswell, 2003). To increase the credibility of the research, peer debriefing and member checking were under consideration as well. However, member checking, which would have allowed the study participants to determine whether the study findings are an accurate depiction of their intentions, was not achievable due to the large lapse in time between conducting the focus groups and the analysis process. Peer debriefing involves a peer to review and ask questions about the research to make sure it is clear and comprehensible (Creswell, 2003).

In addition to triangulation, the use of a peer debriefer and content expert was applied to assist in validating the research results (Creswell, 2013). To increase credibility and confirmability throughout the study, I collaborated with a peer debriefer to help keep neutrality and remain free of assumptions that could have led to

imposing my perspective on the data. Through journaling, I sought neutrality, as my field notes also served as a resource to share with my chair, content experts, or peer reviewers. Throughout the process of this study, I held continuous communication with my chair, and solicited input from doctoral peers and work colleagues, for ensuring my own biases were controlled throughout the study by reviewing the procedures and evaluating the research process.

Additionally, I created paper format conceptual maps as a visual tool to provide clear understanding and analysis of the themes that existed within each focus group. Maintaining a relatively small number of themes helped for a “detailed rendering of people, places, or events in a setting in qualitative research” (Clark & Creswell, 2010, p.284). All data were analyzed immediately as I reviewed data for confirming or discontinuing evidence across different data sources.

Reliability is the ability to generalize research findings to other situations or contexts. According to existing research, PWIs have similar and distinguishable characteristics, which make data collected at this PWI comparable to similar PWIs within the same region. Although that data is not generalizable to all universities, there are most likely practical and actionable inclusivity tenants that will come out of this research study that would be applicable to other PWIs.

### **Ethical Consideration**

Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2013) suggest researchers follow sound ethical practices throughout their investigation when using human subjects. Researchers should safeguard data collection sites and their participants from

misconduct (Isreal & Hay, 2006). In order to follow these guidelines, the focus group locations provided visual and audible privacy. Participants were aware that their involvement was voluntary and that their confidentiality and anonymity would be respected. Moreover, the investigator assigned pseudonyms for the duration of the study. Additionally, the digitally recorded materials obtained from participants throughout the study, in accordance with research guidelines, will be destroyed in seven years.

I gave an explanation of rights to all human participants and encouraged them to sign the informed consent document (Appendix A). Other than possible emotional discomfort from possible marginalized experiences, there were not any invasive potential risks. Participants were told that the data would be published for the purposes of a master's thesis. Furthermore, I was aware of my biases when conducting the focus groups and consistently revisited them during the process of analyzing the data to consider how it affected the emerged themes.

All data were stored in electronic format using Microsoft Word and stored in a password protected Dropbox account. During the data collection and data analysis phases, all of the participants' information was maintained as confidential. Pseudonyms for participants were applied in the write-up of the data and focus groups and all information containing identifiers was removed from the data.

### **Chapter Summary**

I conducted the study at the PWI, I was currently attending, which impacts my perception of the school and experiences described by the students. Document

analyses were conducted to determine the perceptions of students' family influence in coping with the unique challenges of matriculating at a PWI as a member of a historically recognized marginalized group. Focus groups were conducted with students. Due to the initial nature of the focus group questions and intent, not all of the groups were racially homogenous. Two out of the five were mixed racially. This may have some effect on the nature of responses from the students. However, the African American/Black students appeared to answer honestly and freely even within groups of other races. The focus groups were conducted to gain an understanding of their perceptions of how their families influenced their coping through negative classroom experiences from professors and students. Data was analyzed by modified SCK and coding participants' responses into themed categories. The alignment of these themes allowed me to determine whether students of the same African American/Black race had similar experiences across classrooms on campus.



## **Chapter 4**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of the phenomenological qualitative investigation was two-fold. The first was to amplify the voices of and capture unexplored narratives of African American/Black students at a PWI by uncovering the essence of the perceptions of how family values affect their lived experiences as a college student. The second driving force for this study was to provide application information for professors and students at PWI's that will aid in creating a more inclusive environment for African American/Black students.

This chapter focuses on the nine participants from five different focus groups. The researcher used a modified SCK method of analysis (Moustakas, 1994) of phenomenological data to move inductively from significant statements to four themes: (a) Family Values Provide Tools to Succeed at a PWI (i.e., respectful comportment and racial teaching responsibility); (b) Family Values Increase Sense of Racial Difference in the Classroom (i.e., lack of connection with professors and students because of race); (c) Lack of Classroom Inclusivity Interferes with Education Quality (i.e. tokenizing and imposter syndrome validation); and (d) Family Eases the Racial Discomfort (i.e., acts as a sounding board and aids in emotionally neutralizing

negative interactions).

The conceptual frameworks, Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality as an extension of Critical Race Theory, and Symbolic Interaction Theory were necessary components for this study. These frameworks were used as a guide for analyzing the narratives of the students about their perceptions of inclusivity in the classroom based on their race as well as how their family values and interactions play a role in how they handle racially unjust experiences in the classroom at a PWI.

Symbolic Interaction Theory set the basis for understanding how students made meaning of their perceptions and interpretations of their experiences in the classroom; Critical Race Theory was a working foundation to present the reality of the individual's racial experience. Intersectionality as an extension of Critical Race Theory, further explained the complexity of defining race and understanding its meaning through the context of multiple identities such as gender and sexual orientation. Intersectionality reiterates the importance of allowing students to describe their lived experiences within the context of their full identities. Although students were aware that the main focus of the study was investigating their racial experiences, students used their broader personal contexts to give meaning to their lived experiences. Essentially, illustrating that it is impossible for students to describe their racial experiences without considering other aspects of their identity. Students often referred to their gender, class and sexual orientation in the contexts of their race. This was particularly apparent for the Black, gay men.

These theories provide systematic conceptualization of dynamic human

interactions that can be useful in explaining perspectives from diverse populations. These frameworks are complementary while also aiding in providing insight from different viewpoints. Symbolic Interaction Theory heavily focuses on individual perception and Critical Race Theory grounds the historical and societal context of human interactions based on race. Combining these frameworks is crucial in exploring student experiences around the associations between the relationships of the college setting, racial interactions, and family influences.

Throughout the chapter, quotations will be offered as evidence of the common themes. These quotations are not meant to serve as exhaustive examples of the influential factors that were shared during the focus groups. Instead, the goal of the quotations is to give the reader a flavor for the thoughts the students had about their own lived experiences around family influence coping with marginalized classroom experiences. The quotations that identify the thoughts and ideas of the participant serve as textural description of their lived experiences (the what). The quotations that detail actions that were taken or how different behaviors were manifested in their lives serve as a structural description of their lived experiences.

### **Theme #1 – Family Values Provide Tools to Succeed At a PWI**

Previous research illustrates that the combined racial and education socialization process for Black families impacts student success (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Huges et. al 2009; Neblett et al., 2006; Sanders, 1997). The current investigation presents an illustration of the different tools African American/Black families give college students, by way of instilling education values that increase academic

achievement. There are four different subthemes, which are identified as tools that emerged from this data. They include: Respectful Comportment, Racial Teaching Responsibility, Embracing Your Black Identity, and Preparing for Racial Injustice.

When students were faced with any unpleasant racially charged experiences they drew on their family values as a gauge and guide in deciding how to respond. The students exhibited an extreme measure of self-control when faced with challenging racial experiences and preferred to retaliate positively, even within potentially hurtful and painful environments.

### ***Respectful Comportment***

Students expressed an overwhelming sense of necessity to remain respectful even in undesirable situations. When they came in contact with professors or students that treated them with racially induced intentional or unintentional disrespect or lack of dignity, they clung to family values that have taught them the importance of maintaining honorable comportment by responding in a mature and respectful manner. Blake was clear about the expectations of respect towards others that his parents have imparted in him.

#### ***Blake, Junior***

“I was very much raised to be respectful of your elders, respect for the teachers that you work with, don't create waves or cause problems.”

Ebony discussed how her parents’ focus on instilling manners allowed her to be polite and respectful of others in any circumstance.

*Ebony, Sophomore*

“I think the way I was raised helped my experiences here like in terms of just like manners and being considerate of other people and just in terms of a lot of my manners definitely, like simple stuff like holding the door, saying ‘Please’ and ‘Thank you,’ like I don't know, I've developed a weird habit of saying ‘May I’ instead of ‘Can I’ like I don't know I just think the way I was raised have taught me to be polite, respectful, and not only polite because that's just how it's supposed to be. I'm polite because I'm a I-want-to-be-nice-to-people polite and I don't feel like if I'm upset about something, that I should take it out on other people. I mean, you know, like, I'm just like, that's just the type of person I was raised to be, polite, respectful, considerate, aware of themselves but also aware of other people....”

Parents also instilled in students the need to learn how to work the system.

Students were aware that tools such as *code-switching*, (“the practice of selecting or altering linguistic elements so as to contextualize talk in interaction” (Nelip, 2006 p.1), which simply means students reverted from their own cultural dialect to use the dominant culture’s language to become more relatable, are valuable when conducting themselves in classroom discussions. Students were crafty in utilizing code-switching and made it part of their daily interaction in the classroom. For students, this tool is a resource that allows them to communicate effectively with the majority race and makes an impression of being respectful for both students and professors. This method is something that the students have become fluent in and admit to using different

language and vernacular at home, with family or with friends of a similar race or culture. They found that it is almost impossible for students to succeed at a PWI and to appear respectful to others without the ability to mimic the mainstream culture or language.

*Cayden, Sophomore*

“My parents are first generation college, so...they said, ‘Okay if you want to go to college, this is how you have to make the system work for you.’ They’re very aware of that sometimes you’re going to run into problems in college and this is how you get around it, always ask questions and they were very, very explicit...My parents are immigrants, so I just have a different perspective on things and sometimes, I guess overtime really, I’ve learned to like, I guess it’s kind of a way of code switching, I don’t know, like I have to change some of the way would respond to things....”

Cayden reiterated that this method is vital for student success at a PWI.

*Cayden, Sophomore*

“You teach kids how to code switch, you don’t accommodate them because they’re not going to be able to. You might be friendly and welcoming in your class but when they move to the next teacher they might have the teacher who’s not going to be friendly and welcoming and accepting of them, and their culture and they need to know how to meet those standards.”

Blake added similar sentiments to Cayden’s argument.

*Blake, Junior*

“My family taught me how to code switch. It's just kind of a southern way...it is what we do because we are in their world...I just look at my experience and I've gotten code switching down into a science. I can turn to student number two and talk to them one way and then I can talk to student number three in a completely different manner because of their difference, and in my mind there is nothing wrong with that.”

Students are aware of how their learned family value of being respectful towards others and verbalize code-switching as one method of respectfulness, has shaped their ability to cope and function within an academic environment where they are culturally underrepresented.

### ***Racial Teaching Responsibility***

Although students did not directly say that their parents told them to teach other students about racial injustice, when students were presented with racially ignorant unjust comments or situations by both faculty and students, they felt obligated to challenge the comment or behavior. They also did not lose sight of their respectful comportment reiterated by their family when handling these difficult encounters. Students expressed their frustration with having to decipher when to address the issue or when to disregard it because of feelings of being burnt out by the overwhelming need to educate. When students were faced with these scenarios, they were not always sure how their opposition and constructive feedback would be received. They found that they received varying responses. They responded without

deviating from their family values and did so in a respectful manner free of malicious intent.

Additionally, all of the students experienced being the only or one of few African Americans/Blacks in almost all of their classes. Being the only African American/Black student was one of the most repeated concepts across all five focus groups. Ebony explained how confronting her White friends about racial injustices are important to her; however, she was cognizant to handle these topics without aggression. She noticed because these topics made them uncomfortable; they often got the wrong impression about her intentions because her perspective was different.

*Ebony, Senior*

“It’s just difficult sometimes...with a lot of my friends I feel, I’m just going to generalize and say my White friends, there's just this feeling that you shouldn’t confront people whereas, I’m not like that. And like if I feel some way I feel I can just say it around some of my friends.... More of my friends that are either they’re first generation American or they have another perspective, I can just say something that I’m feeling, but whereas with other students even though I’ve had classes with them since the beginning since freshman year, I feel like I have to be more diplomatic because I don’t want them to get the wrong impression. So or like to think that I’m being aggressive or I don’t like them or anything, which I don’t, I just have a feeling.”

Kendall gave an example of when her teacher asked a racially based question in class and she felt obligated to teach and correct the other students’ responses. In the



process, she ended up having an ironic moment with a friend who assumed her correction was a joke. Even among the intent to teach, it is not always taken seriously by other peers.

*Kendall, Freshman*

“I’m the only African American. So she asked the class ‘why do you think Africa has all these issues and why do you think they’re not doing well?’ and all these kids were like ‘because it’s corrupt, because they don’t have natural resources, because they don’t have the technology that we have because they are behind this many years and this and that.’ I was like ‘oh my God.’ So I turned to my friend next to me and said do you dare me and just say the real answer and just be like ‘because like colonialism’ and it was only six seconds ago I’m like what do you want, yeah a tiny portion of like 700 years, whatever. She’s like yeah, say it. So I raise my hand and I say it ‘probably because they are still suffering from the effect of the European colonialism’ and my teacher’s like [stuttering] of course. I’m like oh my God. I was like I feel so good saying that and I turn to my friend and I’m like ‘I’m so glad I said that’ and she’s like ‘Yeah, but do you think she knows you’re kidding’ What! I had faith in you! [laughter]”

Felicia mentioned that she leveraged the opportunity of being the only one in her classes to give students a different perspective and share new experiences with them, especially, if this was one of their first encounters hearing an African American discuss race. She was pleased that these topics were part of the class discussion and

was happy to have the opportunity to educate others.

*Felicia, Junior*

“I mean, I'm happy the classes that I've taken have been focused on urban environments so all of my classes really we have that open environment where we can talk about race and disparities or me as an African-American student in those classes. I'm comfortable talking about it because I feel like this is the platform when a lot of the students don't know about African-Americans and our experiences... Although it's not a homogeneous experience I still can give you more insight than you would have known before. So definitely when it comes to answering questions about race or hard topics in those classes I'm comfortable.”

Furthermore, students recognized and were aware of how they were being perceived by others in the classroom. They experienced a variety of responses to challenging racist opinions or microaggressions/microinvalidations, which sometimes made them hesitant to respond, in fear of a negative reaction or misunderstanding of good intentions. These students struggled with being in an environment privy to the Black experience and not giving other students the opportunity to see or hear another perspective regarding this topic, particularly, because many are prone to make ill-informed racial opinions with very little background or interactions with people of Color. Again, all of the students were often the only person of Color or African American/Black person in many of their classes; this can intensify the frustration and pressure to have racial discussions.

*Terri, Senior*

“Yeah, people tell me the way I speak sometimes kind of intimidates them so that could be it too. But I would feel more comfortable speaking if there were other people of Color in the room, but when there’s not it’s just like I feel it was a lot of pressure on me to either defend something or not defend something or speak or not speak, just depending.”

Felicia mentioned when she was exposed to microaggressions or microinvalidations in the classroom she felt obligated to educate her fellow peers with a more informed response.

*Felicia, Junior*

“I’m the only Black person and we have to deal with issues of race and I think it was a lot of insensitivity to what a lot of African-Americans go through. A lot of students in the class, I don’t think it was intentional, I think it was pure ignorance to a lot of the experiences. So I found myself when it came to students, having to rebuttal a lot of things or debunk a lot of things that they thought were a generalization for Blacks...you have to confront these issues because they are so pervasive but I’ve definitely been uncomfortable in terms of student classrooms because it’s that balance of wanting to represent the Black community but you don’t want to be seen as the angry Black person. But it’s like several times, I feel like they benefit by me being in the class because I can give you some truth to what you’ve been thinking or what you’ve grown up with or the nasty narrative that you are sold on.”

Evelyn explained why she was often intolerant of the microaggressions she experienced in the classroom and explains why she takes a different approach to teaching race in the classroom.

*Evelyn, Junior*

“I’m very quick to call people out... at a certain point you have to stop blaming your surroundings and say, ‘Well there are books, there are magazines, there’s the Internet. If you can take the time to learn about all of these other random nonsensical things online you can take the time to learn about somebody else’s life.’”

Levelle had a different perspective on the responsibility to teach other students on diverse perspectives. He is aware of being outnumbered in classrooms and the challenges that present when hearing problematic language and experiencing marginalization.

*Levelle, Junior*

“Everyone is coming from very similar backgrounds so the frequencies from which you’re going to hear some of these problematic statements is going to be incredibly high... I don’t necessarily find myself like one who like addresses those things with them because I feel like it’s not necessarily my responsibility to be the person who, because it happens at such a frequency to be the person that calls every single person out when he says something problematic because that is just draining. So for me it’s like okay I don’t have time to teach you these things because you need to be taught like, you opted

and go to the 101 that I went to so like you need to have the experience for yourself, you need to have to want that experience. So for me it's like I can't necessarily teach you because I have to focus on other things, in that regard.”

However, even though he feels that way daily, he does express feelings of guilt and helplessness in letting problematic language slide in the classroom. Although he does not have the energy to constantly correct others, it often resurfaces as a negative distraction in the classroom.

*Levelle, Junior*

“That's all I'm thinking about, I'm thinking about, ‘Oh my god this person is saying something so problematic,’ and I'm blaming myself because like oh my gosh I couldn't even check this person from not continuing to say problematic things in the world.”

The students each expressed an obligation and sense of responsibility to teach and correct racially marginalizing experiences and language in the classroom. They explain the extreme frequency of these reoccurrences and the pressures it places on their academic classroom climate.

### ***Embrace Your Black Identity***

Students were taught by family to take pride in their Blackness. Additionally, their families instilled that even though they might be treated differently for their race, their race does not hinder their ability to succeed in school or throughout life. Even while experiencing feelings of isolation, Blake's mother reminds him that his number one priority is education and the noticeable difference of his Black identity is no

excuse for not doing well in school, or forgetting his purpose of getting a college education.

*Blake, Junior*

“Like when I got here as a freshman and I was just like, ‘There are no brown people. I feel alone, I don't know why I'm here,’ and she is like, ‘You are there for an education. You do what you need to get by.’”

Felicia discussed how her family has enforced and reassured the goodness of her Black identity. Although, it may not be validated in the classroom she is confident in her racial identity because of her family and it buffers the negative messages that are contrary to her upbringing.

*Felicia, Junior*

“I think my family environment has helped me too, because my parents like always reassured us of like who we were. And like I have a big family, I have a lot of siblings, I don't know it's just I've never felt like, I never had an identity crisis. I've always been like comfortable with myself, comfortable in my abilities and my intellect so I think they definitely for whichever college environment I went to, I think I was prepared well for it.”

Ebony expressed how her beliefs growing up in conceptualizing attractiveness were not defined by race, but at this university she has encountered an incident from White males that made her question those inherent family values.

*Ebony, Sophomore*

“I just felt hurtful because it’s just like it kind of reinforce some of the beliefs I thought a lot of White people especially White guys, had growing up. Because like growing up, I never really thought attractiveness had a color, like it doesn’t matter what race you were, who you’re mixed with, what you’re mixed with. You can still be attractive regardless but attractiveness was just only a personal opinion...I grew up with those kind of beliefs that kind of developed over time and just what he said to me is just like made me think ‘Oh there are White guys that think Black girls are fatter, Black girls are ugly or Black girls are this.’ It made me feel bad inside, because I feel like that’s how a lot of White guys thought of me before....”

She went on to reiterate the ideal.

“Blackness isn’t like a bad thing, it just made me think about of those beliefs you know....”

Students also discussed their family beliefs about education and the importance of succeeding at it. They were reaffirmed to embrace their Blackness and although they might look different, or be the only one or one of a few in a classroom that it did not diminish their academic capability to succeed in school. Education is held in high regard and students found that compared to the majority there appeared to be some differences regarding their education values.

*Jasmine, Junior*

“My parents have always instilled in me that education is very important. No matter what, I came here to learn and get my education and that’s number one priority so any of that other nonsense that goes on, I tend to just not even focus on that and just focus on my studies.”

Ebony describes her appreciation for learning that was instilled in her upbringing. She has found that many of her peers have a different perspective about education and she finds it distracting in the classroom.

*Ebony, Sophomore,*

“Compared to majority of people I’ve come in contact with in my life and especially here at this university, I feel like as a student I have a higher appreciation for learning, I feel so engaged in the lesson, I really want to learn, I really want to pay attention even if I’m not going to need this subject next year or next semester or years from now. Like in every class, I really like to pay attention not even just because it will help my grade, it will help me understand something that I didn’t really know about before. It’s just that learning really makes me feel good and it just doesn’t make other people feel good. It’s more of an obligation and it’s just like yes it’s an obligation to me but it’s also something that I want to do. And that’s the difference between me and a lot of people, I want to learn, It’s not merely like I feel like I have to or my parents are making me like I have complete control over with I want to do with my life like I could have not went to college but I choose to go to college,



my parents didn't choose for me and it's like I just feel like people aren't as interested in education as I am. And I am. I really don't take it for granted you know.”

Cayden explains how her mother and father have affirmed her Blackness and reassures her that it is not excuse to be subpar, despite what others may think of her. Her mother states that her Blackness is not a limitation to her goals, ability or aptitude.

*Cayden, Sophomore*

“I mean, my dad is more of don't let it define you but be aware kind of thing so, but especially my mom is a big proponent of like so what if you're the only black girl in your major, that's no excuse for anything, for slacking, whatever, you still have your goals in mind, you don't let other people get in the way of that, so that has helped me...”

### ***Preparing for Racial Injustice***

Parents of African American/Black students are aware of the racial tensions we face in this country. They understand that sending their students to a PWI will likely mean that they will encounter racist experiences. Parents attempt to prepare their children regarding the racial obstacles they will likely face during their college term and also encourage them regarding these challenges. Students shared how their parents attempted to prepare them for the environment they would need to endure during their time in college. Terri explained how her parents warned her but she was still surprised by a blatant racist encounter on campus.

“My sophomore year like two years ago, there used to be like a truck, a white pickup truck that used to ride around with like a confederate flag, yelling like crazy, crazy things. And it was at night too and your parents kind of warn you about being careful, especially at a PWI, and then something like that happens and you don’t know what to do...and I am just really cautious, but still can’t believe this kind of thing still actually happens.”

Terri also shares how her parents have prepared her for differential treatment as a Black woman going to a school that is majority White and also a career field that is majority White men.

*Terri, Senior*

“So in the sense of like you know people are going to look at you differently because of your Color but don't let that limit you and at the same time knowing the obstacles you're going to have to face, I mean just going into the field that I want to go into, I want to go to Sports and Entertainment. Well it's full of rich, old White men so coming in as a young Black woman is going to be interesting, but I mean I've kind of prepared myself mentally for that and my parents have, and I don't really see an issue with it anymore. I'm kind of just waiting to see how everything plays out, so school has only been just kind of helping me gear up to that kind of situation.”

From Blake's perspective, his parents' form of preparation was not necessarily a means of coping or support. He also found that he does the exact opposite of the advice that he was given from his mom.

*Blake, Junior*

"It is very much the mentality of keep your head down, do your work, don't make waves, do what you need to do, stay there as long as you need, stay there until you can't be there anymore. That's it, there is no real coping or support. It's just this is what we do because we are in their world...So it's very much, 'Don't cause trouble for yourself,' it's a lot of what I was brought up hearing and it's kind of the opposite of what I do on campus."

Cayden added the specific advice she was given by both her mother and father in learning to deal and cope with being a member of a marginalized group at a PWI.

*Cayden, Sophomore*

"I mean my dad especially...he's always said the whole thing about making sure you always do your best as a Black student and you have a different set of standards you have to meet to the outside world kind of thing and you have to kind of be extra in some ways and...just to tell me and my brothers especially was he said I think about Black man's A is only as good as a White man's B and that we have to be aware of that. I mean, my dad is more of don't let it define you but be aware kind of thing so, but especially my mom is a big proponent of like so what if you're the only Black girl in your major, that's no excuse for anything, for slacking, whatever, you still have your goals in mind,

you don't let other people get in the way of that, so that has helped me. I think the thing that, I don't think it's hindered me but it's just that I have a different cultural perspective and my family is first-generation college.”

Students are aware of the racial differences they will be forced to face in an academic environment such as a PWI. However, their parents do their best to prepare them for what they may encounter and support them as best as possible.

### **Summary**

The students describe their lived experiences of being a marginalized group member at PWI. They are specific in revealing how their family has directly and indirectly guided them through this challenge as a Black student and how they understand their role as a student. The students describe how family values and support set a foundation for how students conduct themselves in the college classroom generally and particularly as it relates to difficult racial discussions and obstacles. The students find pride in their Blackness and are unwilling to dilute their cultural experiences even if it makes others uncomfortable, because they feel a social obligation to teach others about the importance of a diverse perspective. Students also describe the tensions they face being a Black student and their daily attempt in negotiating their family beliefs and the negative realities they face in dealing with their race.

### **Theme #2 – Family Values Increase Sense of Racial Difference in the Classroom**

Although embracing their Blackness and also proud of being Black at a PWI, students also recognize that being the only one in a class or one of a few people of

Color increases their awareness of racial difference in the classroom. The positive message about Blackness that was received from their families made them proud of their culture even in an environment where it was not necessarily seen as good. However, this notable difference often created a lack of connection with professors and students because of race. Blake explained how his experience at a PWI has given him more awareness of his racial difference.

*Blake, Junior*

“Yes, I know in my experience like this university has made me more aware of my culture and it’s made me hold on to my roots and get a better understanding of my history where my people come from like you know, embracing my ethnicity because very much of before it wasn’t a big impact for me. It was just like oh I’m queer and I happen to be Black, but now I’m a queer person of Color and so it’s a very big part of my identity.”

Cayden discussed that, overall, her experiences with other students were positive. She began to feel disconnected when there was discussion about race in the classroom.

*Cayden, Sophomore*

“As far as interacting with other students, I have pretty positive experiences. I think when we have to talk about dealing with student behavior in classrooms or dealing with diverse students in classrooms, that’s when I begin to feel a disconnect with me and the other students in classrooms. Just because my perspective is different....”

Cayden went on to give another example of feelings of disconnect in the classroom because of her cultural differences based on racial experiences.

“They understood that there’s a different value of beauty. We already agreed that this existed, that as soon as this data was thrown in front of them they were like ‘Oh no, it could be this, it could be this, it could be this’ and like they could’ve skewed the data. For me that was just like well if acting light exists why can’t this exist? Why can’t kids feel that a white doll is more acceptable than a black doll? Why isn’t that not in line with the other thing you just said? So I think in situations like that I feel like this disconnect between me and the other students.”

The participants also expressed a notable difference in how the majority of students interacted with them inequitably in the classroom. They were able to identify these nuances clearly when there were group assignments or group discussions.

*Ebony, Sophomore*

“I don’t know, it wasn’t even like about our project and it was just in general. Like I don’t really feel comfortable speaking to them, because they just seem to like when I sit with them at a table they just all seem to have conversations amongst the three of them and I didn’t really know what to say so I just didn’t say anything.”

Ebony elaborated a little further about her disconnection in class to other students.

“I don’t know it’s just weird like they were really casual with each other and I just didn’t feel that connection. It was fine when I talk to them during class when we didn’t have to work together, but with working with them it just kind of felt, I don’t know, it’s just weird....”

The students found that the large emphasis and value of Black culture in their home made it difficult to connect with other students. Additionally, they found that they were forced to appreciate and interact with White culture but it wasn’t reciprocated for their Black culture. There was awareness that Black students at the university do not have a choice in understating the mainstream culture and have to learn quickly to navigate it because the success of their education depends on it. However, there were extreme levels of frustration when White friends do not reciprocate the same efforts.

*Cayden, Sophomore*

“I’m involved in a lot of stuff with the gospel choir so we’re a very Black group of students, gospel choir [laughter]. I remember inviting one of my friends to come to our concert...and he was like I don’t know about it, I don’t understand it. I wouldn’t let him let it go...suddenly like oh he didn’t want to be the only white guy there and I was just like really? And it wasn’t like ‘Oh I’m uncomfortable I don’t want to be the kind of white guy there’ it was really? Kind of like ‘No, I’m not going to do that to myself’ kind of thing and I’m just like well. Because we went to the same school and I was the only black girl in our class...But that bothered me because even if I try to talk to him about like

a different perspective like he kind of dismisses it but then I'm just like but that's the same thing. If you invited me to stuff and if I said I don't want to be the only black girl there you would be kind of be like weirded you know that would be a weird concept for you but at the same time that was an illegitimate excuse, I don't feel like that was a good excuse. I think that kind of bothered me."

Evelyn discussed how her different perspective caused conflict and others students felt attacked by her varying experiences.

*Evelyn, Junior*

"They get offended. A lot of them get very, very offended. They get mad. They bring up other things. I hear this line a lot and the worst one of all, 'I feel like you're attacking me.' Well, welcome to the world. When they say, 'I don't like feeling like I'm the only one that has this question. I don't like feeling like the only of anything.' Then I get really mad because I'm like, 'Now wait a minute. You don't like feeling like an only? Are you mad? Are you upset? Like welcome to...like this is what it's like to be an other.' They get very, very depressed about it, they get mad and I don't care."

Additionally, students were cognizant of the intersection between race and class and observed the disheartening connection of many Blacks being low income and how it can stifle Black students.



*Evelyn, Junior*

“You may not feel that a professor can answer you or wants to answer you because they don't want to get into certain topics like racism, sexism, classism. If you approach something they don't want to talk about in an education class, if you approach classism that makes up low functioning schools they don't want to hit the nail on the head so you don't want to bother to ask the question because you know they are not going to address it in the way you want to address it.”

There appeared to be instances where positive family values, even related to education, were not always enough to mediate for Black students' success at a PWI, because of their lack of resources and parents being unaware of the best way to support their child during college and in this environment.

*Evelyn, Junior*

“I'm an education major. Spanish education. I won't even take Spanish education because it's just too small a section so I'll just take education as a whole. Essentially all upper middle class White females, I've never seen an African-American male education major in my three years. I think I know one - there's elementary and secondary education and I only know one secondary education African-American female education major. Generally the same socioeconomic status for everybody. If you're low SES, probably dropped out because the costs are astronomical, like exams. You have to have a car sooner

than later, the transportation, background checks every semester, TB tests. So it's hard to stay in the major.”

Students are aware of how their Black pride increases their level of difference in the classroom and creates more distance between the majority population.

Additionally, these differences cause a certain element of frustration. Students also describe how they have experiences and/or witnessed how their race is often coupled with additional challenges such as low socioeconomic status, which is component that is also noted by other scholars who have studied African American/Blacks in college (Gradin, 2012; Strayhorn, 2012).

### **Summary**

The students came from families where their Blackness was embraced as a positive part of their identity. However, being at a PWI, the students experienced an overwhelming heightened sense of their racial difference, which is concurrent with the existing literature (Guiffrida, 2005; Henson, Derlega, Pearson, Ferrer, & Holmes, 2013; Pitt & Packard, 2012). These differences created tension in the classroom when discussing racial and diversity issues. Students were hyper-vigilant of disparities in classroom discussion and felt disconnected from the main population based on those differences. There was an increased level of frustration because students were aware that they had to acculturate in order to succeed at a PWI; however, when the majority population makes little effort to learn more about their culture there is often some apprehension. This was upsetting to the students and they describe the constant battle between navigating as a college student and dealing with additional challenges that

arise during that process because of their race.

### **Theme #3 - Lack of Classroom Inclusivity Interferes with Education Quality**

The research is clear about the benefits of diversity in the college classroom and the way it increases the value of the education experience (Adams, 1992; Antonio, Chang, Hakuta, Kenny, Levin, & Milem, 2004; Nagda, Kim, & Truelove, 2004). However, the perception of the absence of racial and class diversity in the classrooms breeds some negative mental health effects for the students. These examples were organized into subthemes: Imposter Syndrome Gets Validated, Distractions from Microaggressions and Microinvalidations such as Pressures from Being Tokenized, and The Impact on Teaching Characteristics.

#### ***Imposter Syndrome Gets Validated***

Based on the past and present feedback from both professors and students, participants expressed the consequences they experienced in the college classroom by often being the only Black person in class. They exhibited feelings about being self-conscious about being smart. Or expressed some reservations or concerns about being stereotyped as the “smart Black girl/ know it all Black girl” if they were to speak up too often in class, compared to the majority of the students. These sentiments heavily align with the Imposter Syndrome literature (Ewing, Richardson, James-Myers, & Russell, 1996), and these examples provide real life scenarios on the impact on this dilemma. Terri describes her experience with answering questions too often in class.

*Terri, Senior*

“They be like 'oh, anybody else'. Some professors will say 'oh does anybody

else know?' kind of thing and it's like I'll stop answering....”

Cayden has similar experiences and describes dealing with the burden of being stereotyped as a know it all Black girl.

*Cayden, Sophomore*

“I've usually been the only Black girl in the class and I usually know the answers and I usually raise my hand to say the answers. So as far as being the know it all black girl I kind of gotten used to that, I was like well whatever I know the answer so. And you know I like that you don't have to deal kind of thing.”

Blake expressed feelings of needing to prove himself among his White peers to demonstrate his capability and capacity of earning the right to this same college education as them. He explained how his thoughts of inadequacy really interrupted the quality of his education experience.

*Blake, Junior*

“Yeah, you keep going into battle. I definitely...find myself over-compensating a lot of the time because very much so my like identities are on my sleeve. You've seen me, and there's an assumption. I am queer, you can see that I am a person of Color and then you know I'm a man. So I know in a lot of our classes there is a higher proportion of people of Color, but a lot of the time they are athletes. I get the question where we're in a group or a criminal justice class, ‘Oh, what sport do you play? Oh, you don't play a sport. How did you get in here?’ And then in the group that I have to overcompensate and prove to

them that I am not this lesser student because of the color of my skin that I am. I can contribute."

He further explains.

"Then I do more in the group to balance out and prove myself and then as I'm doing it I'm like, 'Why am I proving myself to these people?' And then it's just a battle, so do I stop now? But then do I become that lazy person that they thought I was originally? And then in terms of looking at it from the angle of my sexual orientation, if I do mention that I am part of Haven, the president of Haven 'Oh, I'm coming from the office blah blah blah,'"

Students explain how feelings of fraudulence interfere with the quality of their education and they decrease their sense of belonging in the classroom.

### ***Distractions from Microaggressions and Microinvalidations***

Participants were very vocal about the presence and distractions of microaggressions and microinvalidations and the way it affected their classroom-learning environment. These occurrences were experienced from both students and professors. Furthermore, students suggested that White friends and other students would often dismiss or combat discussions about race. Blake discussed how his noticeable difference and awareness of racial injustices in the classroom distract him.

#### ***Blake, Junior***

"There's still an ever-present thing. And one thing that someone says in class that can ruin the day for me and that's something that I know I'm working on as to get a thicker skin but because I'm an advocate and an educator and a

champion for diversity in inclusion it's just hard for me to turn that off when I'm in the room with them and they're saying those things so you know, I'm in class but I'm not paying attention or taking notes like I should be because I'm trying not to bust into tears because someone just asked why is porch monkey an inappropriate phrase to use as to describing an African American."

Blake also provides another example.

"The fact that people who often are not of Color think it's just appropriate to call each other that, to use it in reference to... because I'm in a class on the civil rights movement right now and so we had to do a small in-class discussion about Martin Luther King versus Malcolm X. We entered into the discussion and it's myself and another African American male and then a white guy. We are having this conversation and we turn the conversation from Malcolm X to Martin Luther King and not missing a beat, the Caucasian student goes, 'Yup, Martin, that's my nigger.' I'm just like, 'Have you watched the documentaries that I have?' Like, were we in the same class together, when we talked about the meaning of that word, and why it was so problematic? It just they don't care, they don't know and it's like all fun and games."

Levelle concurred with Blake and explained why these racial injustice experiences are triggering and distracting to the quality of education.

"For me it's just... it's triggering and it's distracting. It's like if we're supposed to be here and I'm all for it like, people getting a holistic college experience and people learning not necessarily specifically course material but also

learning about the experiences of others and how that encompasses their experience in college. I'm all for all those things but if I'm in here learning about stats, I don't need to be distracted by the fact that you're saying incredibly problematic things because they're triggering responses in me that make me either want to fight you or either want to cut you out.”

Jasmine explained how the mispronunciation of her name decreases feelings of inclusiveness in the classroom.

*Jasmine, Junior*

“Because I have African name, it's pretty long but if you just sound it out and take the time, you can pronounce it all...So I would just let anyone know, just call me such and such...Then I look at that the weird stares especially when it's a smaller class and the professor calls out everybody's name for attendance and it comes to my name he always has to stop for a little bit and take his time. He usually butchers it but not as bad and I just correct him and I would just say okay I have a nickname because I'm pretty sure he's not going to call me by my full name. I always get the stares like everyone's looking at me. I just look like I'm Black, I don't look I'm African. It's the same thing but you know.”

Cayden, explained that discussions about race are not optional and these issues need to be and should be addressed. Although her example is more of a blatant racist act instead of an intentional microaggression or microinvalidation, this is an illustration of the necessity of racial discussions.

*Cayden, Sophomore*

“So I walked in Gore one day and the Gore chalk boards are really hard to erase properly so somebody have written ‘niggers go’ on the chalkboard and then poorly erased it and like probably swept over it once or twice with an eraser so it was very clearly on the chalkboard. I remember we went in and I was with my friend Christina, and she was just like ‘Did you see that?’ and I’m like ‘Did you see that? That just happened,’ and then we just left. We didn’t really talk about it. It wasn’t like anything, but it was just weird because, I don’t know, we talk about race and we talk about racism I mean like something that doesn’t happen in real life right? That doesn’t happen, but it did and it was just, I don’t know. I don’t think a lot about going to a PWI. I don’t make it a big deal, but sometimes I feel like you can’t avoid it and so I think that’s the hardest part, trying to convey to my friends that are white, that sometimes you can’t avoid it. It’s not like I’m trying to bring up the race question all the time. I’m not trying to make them uncomfortable, but sometimes that’s not a luxury I have like sometimes some things just make me upset then they just confront me.”

Students also noticed that often the majority White population in class attempts to replace racism with classism in racial discussions. Additionally, they explained that their feelings about racial opinions are often not valued and misunderstood.

*Felicia, Junior*

“I was taking a lot of Black American Studies courses and then after those



courses I would go to Policy courses where I'm the only Black person and we have to deal with issues of race and I think it was a lot of insensitivity to what a lot of African-Americans go through. A lot of students in the class, I don't think it was intentional, I think it was pure ignorance to a lot of the experiences.”

Concurrent with the existing literature (Chesler, Wilson, & Malani, 1993) students discuss the frequency and distractions of being forced to encounter microaggressions in the college classroom at a PWI and described how it effects their learning environment and overall comfort level in the classroom.

### ***Pressures from Being Tokenized***

Another form of microaggression is the pressure students feel from being tokenized in the classroom. This perpetuates burdens to represent the Black race in an admirable light, especially when racial discussions are posed during class. Additionally, this creates many instances where students get tokenized in the classroom.

#### *Kendall, Freshman*

“I can tell that pretty much every African American student that I know has talked to me about experiences where they've been tokenized by their race.”

Blake describes how being a token Black person in the classroom often leaves him feeling outnumbered and somewhat powerless.

#### *Blake, Junior*

“Going into these classrooms where every day I have to flip on a switch where

I have to be you know the token Blake who gets through class, gets through these conversations with people who say problematic things and you can't really say anything about them because you're the only one in the room that finds it to be a problem.”

Terri gave an example of being singled out because of her race and explained how she chose to handle the situation.

*Terri, Senior*

“In class, we were discussing a case and it...was basically these six black guys in like a train, going on a train then calling up being accused of raping a white woman essentially, and the professor said the name of the case and then looked at me like ‘You don't know it?’ or kind of like waiting for me ‘Oh, does anybody want to describe this case?’ and I'm like ‘No, thank you,’ and it's just weird because I felt like everyone felt it because everyone kind of looked like ‘What’s going in here? I don't understand what this is’ awkward moment, and I was ‘No, no thank you.’

During interviewing, when the researcher clarified with Felicia and Evelyn if there were any instances where they felt like token or asked to speak for the entire race? They both responded.

*Felicia, Junior*

“Always.”

*Evelyn, Junior*

“Always.”

Felicia expanded on her response.

*Felicia, Junior*

“In Public Policy always because I'm the minority in those environments. So I'm sure a lot of times when I'm asked certain questions or when certain questions are asked everybody looks at me like I'm the voice of the black community or my statement and my responses is true for all African-Americans. So in Public Policy yes, absolutely.”

Evelyn's expansion was short and to the point. Further exuding her frustration with this reoccurring issue.

*Evelyn, Junior*

“Black people, we don't all think one way”

Students are clear in describing the high frequency of reoccurring microaggressions they face in the college classroom and how being tokenized is one way these instances manifest. Subsequently, they are also clear about the consequences these experiences cause for them.

### ***The Impact of Teaching Characteristics***

What was also found in the data analysis is that the professors' teaching characteristics are connected to perceptions of inclusivity. Despite the student's race, they found that a professor's teaching style can buffer a student's self-consciousness or lack of classroom confidence. Overall, students that had mostly positive experiences with professors, who were equated as more inclusive, and exhibited a more inviting and caring personality. More inclusive professors were perceived as

patient with questions that arose in the classroom and encouraged hearing a variety of voices. They were more likely to self-disclose about their own life and their student level of investment was clear and recognized as important. These professors were open and humble, showed genuine engagement, and gave students room to speak in the classroom. The students provided examples.

*Terri, Senior*

“It’s the way of like showing that I’m not going to do this work for you but then also showing that you care. You know like first they remind you of the office hours, kind of be like if you have any questions make sure like you come talk to me not like go figure it out in a book kind of thing.”

Ebony reiterates Terri feelings and describes how self-disclosure and humility made her more comfortable in the classroom.

*Ebony, Sophomore*

“The professors that really made me feel comfortable were the ones that very down to earth like the ones that would use like a lot of real life examples.”

Cayden gives an example of how she is aware of the professors’ level of student engagement and how more engagement equates with higher level of classroom comfort.

*Cayden, Sophomore*

“And I think that’s what’s important about a lot of professors because a lot of classes are very you know, this is the book, this is what you need to read, this is how you take the test, but then you don’t get a chance to apply it outside so

he would try to get your life together out after you leave, make sure your good you could still keep in contact with them, very easy going. So even though their teaching styles are very different, they're engagement with their students, kind of really help pull it in and make you want to learn and do well in their class.”

Professors that were equated with a more uncomfortable and having a less inclusive classroom environment exhibited characteristics such as being short-tempered and antiquated in thinking. This manifests in singling out students racially, cultural inconsideration, and minimizing or redirecting the intellect or opinions of students.

*Terri, Senior*

“I felt like one of them I don't feel comfortable speaking to because like he just seems very like he doesn't have a huge interest in interacting with his students really. Like doesn't really he talks like a lot of more than a lot of professors that I've had.”

Ebony describes an experience of a professor choosing favorites in the classroom and how it made her feel further excluded.

*Ebony, Sophomore*

“Because she play favorites so like I don't know like made me uncomfortable, she's playing favorites with people I don't even like... It was based on knowing them from before or how social they were or how many jokes they crack and

that was just annoying to me. I mean I just hope I never experience another professor like that you know.”

However, between both teaching styles, the student’s personality buffered the comfort of the classroom environment for both low and high levels of comfort. This makes the most difference for introverted students, because lower levels of inclusivity, which correlates with harsher teaching styles, more negatively affect them. The naturally outspoken student will more likely still speak up and challenge students and the professor, even if they are in a less comfortable environment. Felicia explained how her more forward personality allows her to speak up in any classroom environment.

*Felicia, Junior*

“My experience with it, I don't know if it's just a personality thing but I feel comfortable asking questions, answering questions. I guess with me it's more so being prepared to ask questions and answer questions. Honestly as long as... regardless of the race of the faculty, as long as I've done my work in preparation, I generally don't have a problem with asking or answering...”

Cayden felt similarly to Felicia regarding a more confident personality in the classroom setting. However, she mentioned that during her second year of college she’s lost some of her courage in speaking up for fear of others having wrong misconceptions and stereotyping her.

*Cayden, Sophomore*

“As far as asking questions in class I was a lot more confident about it. I think

when I was just a freshman which is interesting- this semester I have a lot of lectures and the thing I noticed about being a person that asks a lot of questions in a lecture hall class is that, I guess people start to notice you, recognize you and sometimes that can- I think it's for me I felt like it lead people assuming things about me like they would go 'your that girl that you know asks all the questions in class kind of thing' and I wasn't trying to be obnoxious, like I've really wanted to know.”

Ebony described feeling the exact opposite because of her personality.

*Ebony, Sophomore*

“I don't really feel comfortable, I've never really felt comfortable. I mean I felt fine with like going like asking before class or asking after class. But during class I don't usually feel comfortable like, I'm not the type of person who just feels comfortable just saying something. Like even when I want to say something I don't always feel comfortable enough to say it...I'm afraid to interrupt the lesson.”

Teaching styles appear to be an important element in discerning levels of classroom comfort and inclusivity for students. This finding is pertinent to the overall data because it provides practical measures for professors on how to make students of Color feel more welcome in the classroom. Generally, professors are charged with the task of building more genuine relationships and making student engagement a priority if they seek to truly encourage a sense of belonging, feeling of safety, and comfort in the classroom.

## Summary

Students expressed perceived encounters of racial injustices from microaggressions and microinvalidations, such as being tokenized during racial discussions, from both students and professors. Although most of their overall experiences with professors were positive, they were able to articulate which characteristics created a more inclusive environment versus exclusive. However, the lack of inclusivity in a classroom environment was a distraction to the quality of their education. Personalities of the students played a factor in the comfort level of discussions during class no matter the amount of inclusiveness of the environment.

### **Theme #4 - Family Eases the Discomfort**

The analysis has represented a clear illustration of the many ways that race impacts the experiences of students at a PWI, but furthermore, how family values play a role in the perceptions of both negative and positive experiences in the college classroom. The participants agreed that their family is a sounding board to ease and neutralize negative experiences. Some students felt more comfortable discussing the negative interactions on campus with their friends and community on campus and also viewed them as kin like support. Students who are first generation, find that even though their parents are supportive, they often do not understand the intricacies of their experiences. They instead will more likely lean on siblings for additional support. Overall, family is seen as supportive during times of racial tension.

*Felicia, Junior*

“I think when I first transferred here...It was definitely something that I would



go home and tell my siblings, talk to my parents about it and not in a sense of like, 'Oh, I need advice.' But more so like, 'Let me tell you this foolishness that happened today,' it was more like that. And I think with them it was just like, we would just laugh about it,..I'm first generation too, but my parents have always been as supportive as they could have been with different things."

Evelyn describes how her family perceives her experience at a PWI and how those perceptions impact her while attending school.

*Evelyn, Junior*

"In terms of my parents, I'm first generation. So they had an entirely different concept of racism and race relation. Even what it means to be in a university campus so they don't even understand like how I switch to different courses yet alone directions so it's just like off the radar for them. So we've never really talked about it like they'll talk to my little brother and he wants to go to school in the South. And they're like, 'Oh! It's racist!' Like it's a very blank statement, it's racist down there. That's all they can conceptualize so that, that's all they have, they just run on that but they never really ask me questions about it."

Kendall explains how her mother supports her in difficult moments on campus and knowing that she has that support while attending this school aids in getting her through the marginalization.

*Kendall, Sophomore*

My mom's so cool...I'm like 'mom, some kids are being mean to me.' She's like 'I'm on my way down there.' No, she's so cool like we are trying to get a person or a center or something for creative students developed at the University and when I told my mom that that didn't exist, she's like 'do you want me to write a letter, who do I have to call?' So all for it, she's so cool, she's a nice lady, I like her."

Jasmine explained how her family gave her support of facing the obstacles of being one of few people of Color on campus and in her classrooms.

*Jasmine,*

"I just call my parents, I'm like Ma, there's just a lot of White people here...thankfully I'm from [state] so a lot of my friends I went to high school with also came to the University here so I'm not all alone but honestly I feel like if I didn't have my friends from high school, I probably would have maybe one or two friends in my classes, whatever. My mom or my parents, they just both tell me, just kind of focus on your studies, don't worry about them and just do your thing."

Terri explains how she views her friends as family and uses them for support during these difficult racial encounters because her biological family is not in close proximity. Additionally, she has found that her friends, and school community, understand a little better the issues she's facing because they are facing similar experiences because they all attend the same university.

*Terri, Senior*

“My friends kind of became my family just because both my parents are outside the country, so I really depend on my friends for those conversations. Some of my friends, I don't like to bother them. I know they would listen and I know they would understand, but not kind of just like focus on the good because I don't want them to think ‘Oh my God, she's a subject of prejudice every day’ and I mean I don't want them to think like that. I know a lot of my friends have similar experiences that I do. They were all conscious of our Blackness, so I know those conversations they stimulate conversation for us so we almost enjoy those conversations and we thrive off of them and kind of empower each other off of them.”

Ebony has similar feelings to Terri and describes how she utilizes her friends and boyfriend as family support.

*Ebony, Sophomore*

“Well, I mean, I discuss things with my family sometimes, but I don't really say as much, good or bad, as I would say to my friend, like a few of my friends or my boyfriend, especially.”

Cayden explains that she really depends on her family to discuss the good and the bad and because she is a commuter she is with them very often and enjoys the safe and controlled environment her family provides her when discussing these issues.

*Cayden, Sophomore*

“I also commute, so I see them a lot more, but they are more of like my outlet so I can vent to them, especially with like a really interesting discussion like diversity in class or diversity in education or something and like I'm frustrated that I'm the only person this side of the issue whatever, and honestly sometimes I think it's just easier to vent to them and be able to have a controlled discussion just because they would understand my frustration and they would get it, and then I could just think through the idea, reevaluate the opposing points and then be able to handle a further discussion more professionally without letting the frustration getting in the way, I think. So, they've been invaluable, and I always talk to my parents about anything, good stuff and bad stuff.”

Students are clear about how their family has a direct impact as a support system in their college journey, particularly at a PWI. They express the way in which they lean on them and how vital their family, kin and community are in coping with marginalized classroom experiences.

### **Summary**

Overall, families understand the unique challenges that students are facing as a marginalized and underrepresented group at a PWI. Students greatly use their families as a resource to cope with the racial stressors, a finding, which was also concluded by Brooks (2015). Students' families, particularly their parents, appear to provide a great deal of encouragement and understanding regarding their dilemmas and do their best

to comfort their child during the process. Students go to their families to vent, share, and divulge concerns and difficulties they face in an environment that is predominantly White. Family values act as a gauge for students in deciding how to deal with difficult racial issues and for recharging from the support of their family. Families tend to remind students of their upbringing and challenge students to not retaliate in a disrespectful manner but to focus on the reason they are pursuing their education. Although students are physically in the classroom without their families, they still seem to express that their degree is a collective pursuit and often consider their families in the journey of receiving their degree.

## **Chapter 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Summary of Study Findings**

This research study set out to examine the perceptions of the lived experiences of African American/ Black students' in the college classroom at a PWI and how their family values influence their experiences. The following research questions were used to guide the study:

R1. How do African American/Black undergraduate students describe their lived experiences as a student based on their family values?

R2. How do African American/Black undergraduate students describe how their family influences coping with negative experiences with professors and students?

The study's findings were presented in Chapter Four. What follows is a summary of those findings grouped by each research question.

***R1: How do African American/Black undergraduate students describe their lived experiences as a student based on their family values?***

African American/Black undergraduate students in this study were able to describe their lived experiences as a student rooted in their family values. Students were able to identity their Blackness as a family attribute and characteristic that

connects them to their family unit in a particular way. Furthermore, they were able to construct meaning of their racial identity through the lens of their upbringing and the messages they received from their family regarding their race and education. The findings from this investigation echo the existing literature of the connection between racial and education socialization and academic attitudes (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Brown et al., 2009; Sanders, 1997).

Participants described their role as a student as important and non-negotiable. Their parents support their decision to attend school and most likely played a large role in making sure they receive a college education. Additionally, students described their support as a student in the context of their families and as a huge source of motivation and encouragement to keep pushing through difficult moments, which we also find in the existing literature (Brooks, 2015).

***R2: How do African American/Black undergraduate students describe how their family influences coping with negative experiences with professors and students?***

The students rely heavily on their family values pertaining to interactions based on negative racial prejudices and discrimination; they also described the ways they respond in the context of their family values. Many students choose to vent and seek support from their families around particular issues. Families provide their wisdom to help students persevere through these problems and also give them insight on what to expect prior to entering the University.

Across focus groups there was a clear illustration of the collective and communal family environment that is often described as an inheritance for African

American families in existing research (Franklin, 2007; Hill, 2009). Participants were clear about the collective nature of receiving their degree by way of family support. Specifically, regarding coping and buffering negative and racial injustices in the classroom, students explained that their families play a vital role in navigating these constant occurrences. This study found that family support manifests through the advice and emotional support given prior to college attendance and also throughout, consistent with the previous research that confirms the positive outcome of parental emotional support and college adjustment (Kenny & Donaldson, 2002). Students also mentioned mentorship as another means of communal support that acts as a campus resource supporting the success of their education, but also greatly aligns with the familiarity of their existing family values.

Overall, although there was an overwhelming consensus from the students gaining support from their families, there was some intra-group variability in terms of how and why the students utilized their family support. First, there were some differences between students that were first generation college students and who are second generation. Some first generation college students did not always want to burden their parents with too many negative interactions and preferred to sometimes refer to friends. Second generation students' families appeared to also give them a different level of insight on handling these issues and more detailed preparation. Students felt overall more comfortable discussing many marginalizing interactions with them.

Second, proximity of family appeared to make some difference for students.



Although many spoke to their families frequently, some students utilized their friendship community on campus in place of consulting with parents because they had physical and immediate interaction with them. Additionally, they had another level of understanding of their experiences by attending the same university. When convenient, close peers stood in place or in lieu of family support.

### **Implications for Practice**

Before discussing the implications for practice it is critical to describe the unique nature of the university setting where this study was implemented and how this context informs the experiences of the students. Specifically, between 1952-1969 only 37 African American students received a Bachelor's degree and 52 received graduate degrees. It was not until 1961 that Black students were allowed to room with White students and in 1968 there was the first campaign, program and policies with the goal of targeting Black students and other racially underrepresented groups (Inclusive Excellence: An Action Plan for Diversity at UD, 2016). The historical context of this campus sheds light on the possible lingering effects of racial integration due to its later integration and acceptance of Blacks at the university.

Additionally, these effects of late integration are apparent in the community where the university is nested. There are reports of Black racial hate groups marching on campus in the 1960's and 70's (personal communication, senior faculty member, August, 2016). This context gives a background for the narratives of the students but also how the implications were drawn. Additionally, these implications are most likely relevant to other universities with a similar historical background.

Based on the experiences of the students, participants revealed different areas of practical application for university professors, students and staff at a PWI. The major takeaway for universities is to understand that in order to gain and retain African American/Black students at a PWI, there needs to be more effort in creating familiarity with their culture on campus. Mentorship is one way to execute this. What this particular study has shown is that Black mentorship is a great avenue for making African American/Black students more comfortable on predominantly White campuses. However, cross-race and cross-cultural mentorship can also be highly effective if students are feeling genuinely supported. Many of the students are first generation college students coming into school with less social capital. Mentorship is one way of increasing the equity in this area.

Additionally, students were able to explain the qualities of teachers that create an inclusive classroom environment. Professors should take note of what African American/Black students say makes them more comfortable in the classroom. The table below illustrates the characteristics that portray both high and low levels of classroom comfort. The higher comfort is equated with higher levels of inclusivity and lower levels of comfort are equated with lower levels of inclusivity. Additionally, professors with harsh teaching styles should be aware that those characteristics can neutralize these positive effects if students are introverted.

Table 3

*Classroom Inclusivity and Teaching Style by Comfort Level*

Higher Comfort	Lower Comfort
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual student investment</li> <li>• Personal self-disclosure</li> <li>• Genuine engagement</li> <li>• Openness and humility</li> <li>• Students perceive room to speak</li> <li>• Noticeable inclusive efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ Short temperament</li> <li>☐ Singles out students racially</li> <li>☐ Antiquated in thinking</li> <li>☐ Cultural inconsideration</li> <li>• Opinions and intellect are redirected or minimized</li> </ul>

In regard to group work, professors should consider creatively negotiating group work based on racial discussion. Students expressed that, due to the extreme disproportionality of race in the classroom, they were often the only person of Color in their group. Therefore, professors should consider being mindful about the dynamics that may occur in regard to racial discussion in the classroom. Receiving feedback from students through anonymous evaluations could be an effective measurement to gauge the experiences of the students in these situations.

Participants were actually quite vocal about changes they felt should be enacted by the university to aid in remedying these issues. A few highlights from the students include the following:

- 1) Institutionalize the importance of diversity on campus to ensure that professors and students receive more mandatory information and training about handling issues of difference. For example, ensure that professors are ally trained so that they are more current with using the proper language for the LGBTQ community and that the required class for all freshmen will include standard comprehensive and experiential lessons on diversity and learning more about personal biases.

*Levelle, Junior*

“Equipping faculty with tools that are going to help them be able to teach these classes in a more culturally sensitive way, I think it's going to be important, and then therefore increasing the span of people who have exposure to that kind of material...and train them...faculty members need to be going through ally training.”

*Blake, Junior*

“Incorporating in conversation of privilege in [First Year Experience class] or some general welcome. Because we are talking about faculty, and in the classroom, FYE is in the classroom, every student has to take it. Whether it's the nursing FYE, the business FYE, the regular, I mean the articulated students FYE, or the athletic FYE, having a conversation about privilege

and diversity where it's not just like, 'There are people that look different than you. These are what they can look like? These are what you should call them, these are what you shouldn't call them?' But saying, you come into a room with a backpack of privilege, let's talk about what that mean and unpack all that backpack so we understand the space that we take up in a room."

- 2) Students hope to see not just more Black faces at the University but also diversity in lifestyles and economic class.

*Evelyn, Junior*

"In terms of the University like increasing diversity and I'm particularly invested in African-American students. Like I think that we should get more African-American students here, not just black face or brown face on campus and I think that we should get much more funding because a lot of the students that I've met, whether was like time passing or do like a research conference. It's like we would have no idea that we went here because we commute and I think so many of us that are from working class backgrounds have to commute so it's kind of like, we're like alienated I guess from the rest of the campus or we don't have the privilege of coming out to different like events."

In addition, increase the number of faculty of Color, so that students won't always feel outnumbered culturally. Research is clear about the benefits of same race mentoring and the positive effects it has on students, particularly at a

PWI (Dahlvig, 2010; Davis, 2008; Frierson, Hargrove & Lewis, 1994).

Students are also encouraged when they have faculty of Color because they can see a part of themselves in the professor and are given another element of hope of attaining their degree and moving forward to a successful future.

*Felicia, Junior*

“Outlets where you can go, you can talk to the staff...What I love to see is other African-Americans who have done what she wants to do and it’s like they guide you along that paths so that you can be sitting at their desk one day. And I would definitely say largely my mentor on campus has been probably the biggest part of the reason why I’m satisfied academically.

Because just teaching me the whole process of how I research, giving me opportunities to do summer research, be a teaching assistant, help develop a course, all these things have made me feel like I’m privileged in a sense to be here even though [university name] is not aware like, I didn't initially choose it. I do so privileged in a sense to be around black faculty who care so much about their students. So you know it’s not a lot of them here, the ones that are here are really invested.”

### **Significance of Research Findings**

The findings from this study are very consistent with the existing literature. However, this investigation does add new knowledge to the conversation. First, particularly in phenomenological research there are very few studies that deviate from using individual interviews and use focus groups as a data collection method. This

study illustrates the strengths of using this method in regards to understanding the essence of a phenomenon. The individual perceptions of students were not only identified but also expounded upon because of this methodology. Additionally, the inherited communal affinity in the African American heritage was evident in the focus groups and worked in favor of creating a comfortable setting to gain insight.

Furthermore, this study adds to the less prevalent literature of understanding African American families from a supportive perspective, particularly as it relates to college adjustment. This study not only gives a breadth of knowledge about the supportive characteristics of African American families, it provides narrative examples that are specific and rich because the study is qualitative.

Although previous literature has extensively reported on family influence and college student adjustment, this study provides great detail and nuances about how African American families are positively impacting students. The specific tools that were discovered in this literature are further expounded upon through the narratives of the students. This investigation reveals how families impact student's decisions to cope with marginalized classroom experiences and the choices they are making daily to combat these challenges. This study not only describes the student's experiences but also explains how they choose to respond. Practically, this information gives universities, professors, and staff more information in understanding African American/Black students' experiences at a PWI and why strengthening their communities on campus is a primary method to improve retention and increase feelings of inclusivity.

In regards to the significance of the findings and directions for future research, it is important to note that seven out of the nine students in the study were Black women, one person identified as transgender, and there were two gay men. Although phenomenological research is not conducted to generalize to an entire population, addressing the distinctions in this sample does provide relevance for possible gaps in the research findings. We have no representation from the heterosexual Black men on campus; their experiences would have added another element to interpretation of the findings.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The findings from this study hold several implications for future research in the field of family studies. First, using a strength perspective to study African American college students adds to the literature on African American families, mainly because most of the current content is from a deficit perspective (Hill, 1999). This implication is crucial because of the buffering impact families have for students attempting to deal with the unique racial and cultural stressors in the college classroom at a PWI. This study uncovers an array of positive factors that African American families contribute to the success of African American college students, such as strong family support, community, and close relationships.

Another implication for family studies is the impact of family on African American students' education perseverance. Although this was not a longitudinal study with distinct tracking of degree completion for the students, at the time of the study, students did mention of their families as influential in their remaining in college



and persisting through difficult racial encounters. Previous studies have typically focused on elementary aged students and adolescents (Nichols et al., 2010; Pallock & Lamborn, 2006). Additionally, few studies have investigated the relationship between African American family values and relationships and their influence on academic outcomes of college students (Brooks, 2015). This study addressed that gap in the literature on African American college students and family influence in academic success at a PWI. Furthermore, this study was focused in the college classroom, an area that is overlooked for family influence.

The findings from this study suggest that African American family values and relationships influence the success of African American college students. Many PWIs want to increase the retention and graduation rate of African American students. Incorporating the importance of family and community into new student transition programs could provide a sense of belonging and comfort.

Future studies should expand on this research by incorporating a longitudinal perspective between the connection of family values and African American student success. Additionally, studies should follow the change in impact over time, particularly as it pertains to managing and responding to negative racial encounters in the college classroom. Moreover, this study only scratched the surface of the effects of imposter syndrome and African American students; there is a deficit of research in this area, especially in the field of Family Studies. It would also be beneficial to tease apart the differences in race and class amongst first generation college students. Further quantitative and mixed methods may provide additional diversity in the data collection

and findings and offer more in-depth examination. Finally, future research may consider exploring African American college students and family value influence from different PWI universities, to allow more comparison across the population.

### **Implications for Theory**

The study is situated within the theoretical frameworks of Symbolic Interaction Theory, Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality as an extension of Critical Race Theory.

Symbolic Interaction Theory emphasizes individual perception, which is a major crux of this study and deeply aligns and echoes phenomenology. Individuals are the experts of reciprocal interactions between individuals in social environments (Benzies, 2000). This investigation sought to understand the racial perceptions from the students' peers and professors and their impact on their college classroom environment. Furthermore, the study sought to understand the perceptions students use to describe their family value influence in navigating the difficult racial encounters, which often manifest as microaggressions and microinvalidations. The research from this study does reveal how these perceptions affect the lives of African American/Black students and reveals their ability to cope and be successful despite the negative distractions. Students were very candid about their perceptions; it was evident that their opinions regarding these perspectives were real and greatly impacted their journey and adjustment as college students.

Critical Race Theory assumes that race is a socially constructed phenomenon and it is an ever-present ideology woven into all aspects of society (Ortiz & Jani,

2010). Additionally, it assumes that racism is common and “deeply ingrained in American life,” and grounded into the lived experiences of individuals (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, pp. 55-56). African American students at a PWI are subjugated to the consequences and realities of the historical context of this country. Individual acts of racism are not isolated but are a small contribution to the larger societal structure and institutional racial practices of white hegemony (Taylor, 1998).

Critical Race Theory assists in the understanding of the education environment of a PWI, where African Americans are a marginalized group; there is an expectation of racial oppression, often unintentional or seemingly ordinary to the oppressor. However, these negative racial encounters that are prevalent at PWIs are a distraction and decrease the quality of education for African American/Black students. This theory teaches of the structural embedding of racial ideologies and the effect they can have for racially underrepresented students. The findings from this study reveal to us that the assumptions from Critical Race Theory are actualized and heightened in the context of a PWI for African American/Black students and it allows us to understand the historical residue of racial injustices and also how they affect the individual and personal lives of the students.

Intersectionality framework was also evident in the responses of students. Students often mentioned their gender, class and sexual orientation in the context of their race. The students clearly illustrated that race is not a mutually exclusive identity but informs part of the entirety of their being. Although there was not complete consistency with the homogenous nature of the focus groups, African American/Black

students that were present in a heterogeneous focus group were still able to speak to their racial identity. Additionally, they understood their personal experiences and were not influenced by other participant responses from different gender or races.

Lastly, the African American/Black gay males appeared to greatly illustrate intersectionality because of how each part of their identity was experienced as marginalized at a PWI. These students were a great example of how their racial experiences on campus are directly connected to their gender and sexual orientation. Had these students not been in a heterogeneous group or not encouraged to give comprehensive accounts of their experiences within the freedom of multiple characteristics of their identity, the richness of their narratives may have been slighted or incomplete. By having a more holistic description the study was given a deeper understanding of their everyday lived experiences.

### **Limitations of the Study**

At the time of the study, I was a graduate student at the University where the data was collected. As a limitation, participants may have been reluctant to speak candidly for fear of not knowing my relationship with various professors and students on campus. She designed the materials to be non-threatening and emphasized how this research emphasizes the efforts the University is making to strive towards a more inclusive classroom and campus environment. I reiterated that the suggestions, concerns, and complaints from the students would be taken seriously and shared with administration. In addition, the students conducted focus groups in either a neutral and private space or a suggested place of comfort.

The expectation was that the data source was accessible and available. Due to the original intent of the study, this caused a few limitations regarding the format of the focus group questionnaire. First, a majority of the questions were geared towards racial injustices in the college classroom. The researcher was able to add two questions regarding family; however, it limited the time focused intentionally and specifically on students and family. This limitation slightly skews the focus of the results heavily geared towards race and inclusion and not more directly regarding African American student adjustment and families. Overall, the focus of the original study was classroom inclusivity and the family component was a small addition.

Second, there was no demographic data initiated for participants. This leaves blind spots for the specific age of the students, socioeconomic status, and where they grew up. This hinders the comprehensiveness of the data. However, students did mention perceptions about their family income and resources when responding to questions. Additionally, the focus of the study is from the perspective of the student, which means there was not input from the family regarding their aid and perspective of how they impact the adjustment of the students at a PWI, particularly regarding handling negative racial experiences.

Moreover, the students were all willing and eager to participate in this study. They believed that it was an opportunity to make change on campus. Their zeal and social justice inclinations may have made them more likely to contribute their negative experience, or it may suggest they are more aware of these types of events occurring on campus. Another limitation is the inability to generalize the findings of the research

to all African American/Black students at PWIs, although we are able to corroborate many of the findings with existing literature related to African American/Black students' experiences at similar institutions.

There are a limited number of participants in this study. The largest available number of participants was nine students. If this were a quantitative study, this sample would be small and the results questionable in transferability. The nature of this case study is qualitative. Although the sample is small, the participants provided a wealth of information for analysis and to draw viable conclusions. However, a phenomenological research design does not seek generalizability but instead understanding the essence of the phenomena based on the lived experiences of the participants in the investigation.

### **Conclusion**

This study set out to examine African American/Black students' experiences in the college classroom at a PWI. Furthermore, the study examined how their family values influence their experiences. This was done through conducting focus group interviews with students. Students were very open and vocal about their experiences about how their family values impacted their perceptions. The literature review reveals that family, particularly parents, play a critical role in the transition and adjustment of students during college. Additionally, Black families who positively racially socialized their children did feel more sense of racial pride. The literature also shows that Black students at a PWI do face a unique set of challenges based on their racial difference and as a result experience unique barriers in the classroom that can inhibit the

inclusivity of the learning environment

The students in this study echoed the findings from the existing literature but were able to add a few nuances from this specific study. First, students overall are pleased with the quality and rigor of their education. It is noted that much of the literature on African American/Black students at a PWI focuses mainly on the negative experiences that the students are facing. Although those interactions are vital to the reality of race relations in this country, the students were overall still mostly optimistic about both their education from this institution and hopeful about their future. Family support appears to play a role in the attitude of students about the importance of not only receiving a quality education but also about the implications of being a Black individual in this country receiving a quality education. Families buffer the negative effects many of the students face within their classroom environments because of mostly micro-aggressions and micro-invalidations.

Comparing the experiences of both students and professors in the classroom, students were generally pleased with the treatment they received from their professors. They did give specific characteristics about which teaching styles invited a more inclusive classroom environment, but found that the majority of their professors were providing quality classroom learning. However, students that identified also as a member of the LGBTQ community expressed more negative experiences and interactions with professors and students overall.

Professors and students seem to use more “problematic language,” as the students expressed, related to the LGBTQ community compared to race. Particularly,

the gay Black males expressed the highest level of exclusivity and negative interactions. They experienced both more racial and homophobic obscenities in the college classroom than Black straight women. There were no identified queer women to make the comparisons across gender. However, the one student who is transgender echoed similar sentiments to the gay men. Sadly, students who were LGBTQ identified were greatly impacted by the exclusivity in the classroom and experienced high levels of emotional discomfort. They were often brought to tears by the racial and sexual discrimination presented in the classroom.

Students were clear across focus groups that they had a more difficult time with inclusivity and negative interactions with fellow students. It was a unanimous finding that other students present most of the issues for these African American/Black students. They expressed that students are more likely to cause microaggressions and microinvalidations in the classroom. One of the major concerns from the students is the sameness that they experienced across campus. Although classrooms are mostly White, many of the students are coming from similar regions and socioeconomic classes. This plays an important factor in other varying levels of diversity that are not being represented in the college classroom.

Due to this deficit, students experience similar racial discriminations and prejudices in many of their classes, which has become an unnecessary distraction. Family values and family support play a large role in the perceptions and responses students choose to utilize when they experience any negative experiences. Family support was important and helpful in the students' persistence towards graduation.



This finding aids in understanding the importance of community building support programs for underrepresented students and the role it plays in mirroring the collectivist nature and kinship lifestyle that is inherent for African American/Black students. Additionally, this provides understanding in the experiences of the students that although they are on campus alone, they are still intimately connected and influenced by their family.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, M. (1992). Cultural inclusion in the American college classroom. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 1992(49), 5-17. doi: 10.1002/tl.37219924903
- Adams, V. H., Rand, K. L., Kahle, K., Snyder, C. R., Berg, C., King, E. A., & Rodrigues-Hanley, A. (2003). African Americans' hope and coping with racism stressors. *Between stress and hope: From a disease-centered to a health-centered perspective*, (pp. 235-249). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers
- Aksan, N., Kısac, B., Aydın, M., & Demirbuken, S. (2009). Symbolic interaction theory. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1(1), 902-904. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2009.01.160
- Allen, W. R. (1992). The color of success: African-American college student outcomes at predominantly White and historically Black public colleges and universities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(1), 26-45. doi: 10.17763/haer.62.1.wv5627665007v701
- Allen, W. R., Epps, E. G., & Haniff, N. Z. (1991). *College in Black and White: African American students in predominantly White and in historically Black public universities*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Antonio, L., Chang, J., Hakuta, K., Kenny, A., Levin, S., & Milem, F. (2004). Effects

- of racial diversity on complex thinking in college students. *Psychological Science*, 15(8), 507-510. doi: 10.1111/j.0956-7976.2004.00710.x
- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 469– 480. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469
- Arnett, J. J. (2014). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Aspelmeier, J. E., Love, M. M., McGill, L. A., Elliott, A. N., & Pierce, T. W. (2012). Self-esteem, locus of control, college adjustment, and GPA among first-and continuing-generation students: A moderator model of generational status. *Research in Higher Education*, 53(7), 755-781. doi: 10.1007/s11162-011-9252-1
- Austin, C. C., Clark, E. M., Ross, M. J., & Taylor, M. J. (2009). Impostorism as a mediator between survivor guilt and depression in a sample of African American college students. *College Student Journal*, 43(4), 1094–1109.
- Banerjee, M., Harrell, Z. A., & Johnson, D. J. (2011). Racial/ethnic socialization and parental involvement in education as predictors of cognitive ability and achievement in African American children. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 40(5), 595-605. doi: 10.1007/s10964-010-9559-9
- Barnard, W. M. (2004). Parent involvement in elementary school and educational attainment. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 26(1), 39-62. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2003.11.002

- Bennett, A., Bridglall, B. L., Cauce, A. M., Everson, H. T., Gordon, E. W., Lee, C. D., & Stewart, J. K. (2004). All students reaching the top: Strategies for closing academic achievement gaps. A report of the national study group for the affirmative development of academic ability. North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.
- Benzies, K. M., & Allen, M. N. (2001). Symbolic interactionism as a theoretical perspective for multiple method research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 33(4), 541-547. doi: 10.1046/j.1365-2648.2001.01680.x
- Bettinger, E. P., & Long, B. T. (2007). Remedial and developmental courses. *Economic inequality and higher education: Access, persistence and success*, (pp. 69-100.) New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Billson, J., & Terry, B. (1982). In search of the silken purse: Factors in attrition among first-generation students. A presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Colleges, 58, 57-75
- Blumer H. (1969) *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2009). Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States (2nd ed.). Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bowman, P. J., & Howard, C. (1985). Race-related socialization, motivation, and academic achievement: A study of Black youths in three-generation families. *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, 24(2), 134-141. doi:

10.1016/S0002-7138(09)60438-6

Bradbury-Jones, C., Sambrook, S., & Irvine, F. (2009). The phenomenological focus group: An oxymoron?. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 65(3), 663-671. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.2008.04922.x

Brooks, J. E. (2015). The impact of family structure, relationships, and support on African American students' collegiate experiences. *Journal of Black Studies*, 46(8), 817-836. doi: 10.1177/0021934715609914

Brown, T. L., Linver, M. R., Evans, M., & DeGennaro, D. (2009). African-American parents' racial and ethnic socialization and adolescent academic grades: Teasing out the role of gender. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 38(2), 214-227. doi: 10.1007/s10964-008-9362-z

Bui, K. V. T. (2002). First-generation college students at a four-year university: Background characteristics, reasons for pursuing higher education, and first-year experiences. *College Student Journal*, 36(1), 3-12.

Burton, L. M., Bonilla-Silva, E., Ray, V., Buckelew, R., & Hordge Freeman, E. (2010). Critical race theories, colorism, and the decade's research on families of Color. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72(3), 440-459.

Carnevale, A.P., & Fry R.A. (2000). *Crossing the great divide: Can we achieve equality when generation Y goes to college?* Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Chavous, T. M., Harris, A., Rivas, D., Helaire, L., & Green, L. (2004). Racial stereotypes and gender in context: African Americans at predominantly Black

- and predominantly White colleges. *Sex Roles*, 51(1-2), 1-16. doi: 10.1023/B:SERS.0000032305.48347.6d
- Chesler, M., Wilson, M., & Malani, A. (1993). Perceptions of faculty behavior by students of Color. *Michigan Journal of Political Science*, 16, 54-79.
- Choy, S. (2001). *Students Whose Parents did not go to College: Postsecondary Access, Persistence, and Attainment*. (NCES 2001-126). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Cichy, K. E., Stawski, R. S., & Almeida, D. M. (2012). Racial differences in exposure and reactivity to daily family stressors. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 74(3), 572-586. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2012.00971.x
- Clance, P. R. (1985). *The impostor phenomenon: Overcoming the fear that haunts your success*. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Pub Ltd.
- Clance, P. R., & Imes, S. A. (1978). The imposter phenomenon in high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, 15(3), 241. doi: 10.1037/h0086006
- Collins, P. H. (2005). *Black sexual politics: African Americans, gender, and the new racism*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(4), 2-14. doi: 10.3102/0013189X019005002
- Coontz, S. (1992). *The way we never were: American families and the nostalgia trap*. New York, NY: BasicBooks.

- Cowan, T., & Maguire, J. (1995). History's milestones of African American higher education. *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 1, 86-90.
- Cox, F. D. (2006). Human intimacy, relationships, marriage, and the family. In Human intimacy: Marriage, the family, and its meaning (10th ed., pp. 28–59). Belmont, CA: Thompson/Wadsworth.
- Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Pellar, G., & Thomas, K. (Eds.). (1995). Critical race theory. NY: New Press.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989) 'Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics, *University of Chicago Legal Forum*. (1989)138–67.
- Crenshaw, K. (1993). Beyond Racism and Misogyny. In M. Matsuda, C. Lawrence & K. Crenshaw (eds) *Words that Wound*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dahlvig, J. (2010). Mentoring of African American students at a predominantly White institution (PWI). *Christian Higher Education*, 9(5), 369-395. doi: 10.1080/15363750903404266
- Daly, A., Jennings, J., Beckett, J. O., & Leashore, B. R. (1995). Effective coping strategies of African Americans. *Social Work*, 40(2), 240-248. doi: 10.1093/sw/40.2.240

- Darensbourg, A. M., & Blake, J. J. (2014). Examining the academic achievement of Black adolescents importance of peer and parental influences. *Journal of Black Psychology, 40*(2), 191-212. doi: 10.1177/0095798413481384
- Davis, D. J. (2008). Mentorship and the socialization of underrepresented minorities into the professoriate: Examining varied influences. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 16*(3), 278-293. doi: 10.1080/13611260802231666
- De Reus, L., Few, A. L., & Blume, L. B. (2005). Multicultural and critical race feminisms: Theorizing families in the third wave. In V. Bengtson, A. Acock, K. Allen, P. Dilworth-Anderson, & D. Klein (Eds.), *Sourcebook of family theory and research* (pp. 447 – 468). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Delgado, R., & Stefanicic, J. (Eds.). (2000). *Critical race theory: The cutting edge* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- DeWitz, S. J., Woolsey, M. L., & Walsh, W. B. (2009). College student retention: An exploration of the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and purpose in life among college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(1), 19-34. doi: 10.1353/csd.0.0049
- Dill, B. T., & Zambrana, R. E. (2009). *Emerging intersections: Race, class, and gender in theory, policy, and practice*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Dukes, S. (1984). Phenomenological methodology in the human sciences. *Journal of Religion and Health, 23*(3), 197-203. doi: 10.1007/BF00990785



- Englund, M. M., Luckner, A. E., Whaley, G. J., & Egeland, B. (2004). Children's achievement in early elementary school: Longitudinal effects of parental involvement, expectations, and quality of assistance. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 96*(4), 723. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.96.4.723
- Erb, S. E. (2014). *The role of roommate relationships and family of origin functioning in students' mental health and college adjustment outcomes* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Mason Archival Repository Service.
- Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching (pp. 119-161). *Handbook of research on teaching*. New York: Macmillan.
- Ewing, K. M., Richardson, T. Q., James-Myers, L., & Russell, R. K. (1996). The relationship between racial identity attitudes, worldview, and African American graduate students' experience of the imposter phenomenon. *Journal of Black Psychology, 22*(1), 53-66. doi: 10.1177/00957984960221005
- Feagin, J., & Bennefield, Z. (2014). Systemic racism and US health care. *Social Science & Medicine, 103*, 7-14. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2013.09.006
- Few-Demo, A. L. (2014). Intersectionality as the “new” critical approach in feminist family studies: Evolving racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race theories. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 6*(2), 169-183. doi: 10.1111/jftr.12039
- Fischer, A. R., & Shaw, C. M. (1999). African Americans' mental health and perceptions of racist discrimination: The moderating effects of racial socialization experiences and self-esteem. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 46*(3), 395-407. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.46.3.395

- Fisher, C. B., Wallace, S. A., & Fenton, R. E. (2000). Discrimination distress during adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 29(6), 679-695. doi: 10.1023/A:1026455906512
- Ford, D. Y. (1993). Black students' achievement orientation as a function of perceived family achievement orientation and demographic variables. *Journal of Negro Education*, (62)47-66. doi: 10.2307/2295399
- Frierson, H. T., Hargrove, B. K., & Lewis, N. R. (1994). Black summer research students' perceptions related to research mentors' race and gender. *Journal of College Student Development*. 35(6), 475-480.
- Fromme, K., Corbin, W. R., & Kruse, M. I. (2008). Behavioral risks during the transition from high school to college. *Developmental Psychology*, 44(5), 1497-1504. doi: 10.1037/a0012614
- Galatzer-Levy, I. R., Burton, C. L., & Bonanno, G. A. (2012). Coping flexibility, potentially traumatic life events, and resilience: A prospective study of college student adjustment. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 31(6), 542.
- Giorgi A. (2009). *The descriptive phenomenological method in psychology: A modified Husserlian approach*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Giorgi, A. P., & Giorgi, B. M. (2003). The descriptive phenomenological psychological method. In P. Camic, J. E. Rhodes, & L. Yardley (Eds.), *Qualitative research in psychology* (pp. 242–273). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

- Gloria, A. M., Kurpius, S. E. R., Hamilton, K. D., & Willson, M. S. (1999). African American students' persistence at a predominantly White university: Influence of social support, university comfort, and self-beliefs. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40(3), 267-268.
- Gofen, A. (2009). Family capital: How first-generation higher education students break the intergenerational cycle. *Family Relations*, 58(1), 104-120. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2008.00538.x
- Gradín, C. (2012). Poverty among minorities in the United States: Explaining the racial poverty gap for Blacks and Latinos. *Applied Economics*, 44(29), 3793-3804. doi: 10.1080/00036846.2011.581219
- Grier-Reed, T. (2013). The African American student network an informal networking group as a therapeutic intervention for Black college students on a predominantly White campus. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 39(2), 169-184. doi: 10.1177/0095798413478696
- Guiffrida, D. (2005). To break away or strengthen ties to home: A complex issue for African American college students attending a predominantly White institution. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 38(1), 49-60. doi: 10.1080/10665680590907864
- Guiffrida, D. A. (2005). Preparing and supporting African American college students. *Journal of Higher Education*, 31, 99-102.

- Guinier, L. (2004). From racial liberalism to racial literacy: *Brown v. Board of Education* and the interest-divergence dilemma. *The Journal of American History*, 91(1), 92-118. doi: 10.2307/3659616
- Halling, S., Kunz, G., & Rowe, J. O. (1994). The contributions of dialogal psychology to phenomenological research. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 34(1), 109-131. doi: 10.1177/00221678940341007
- Hanushek, E. A., Kain, J. F., & Rivkin, S. G. (2002). *New evidence about Brown v. Board of Education: The complex effects of school racial composition on achievement* (No. w8741). National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Harper, S. R. (2009). Niggers no more: A critical race counternarrative on Black male student achievement at predominantly White colleges and universities. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 22(6), 697-712. doi: 10.1080/09518390903333889
- Harper, S. R., & Davis III, C. H. (2012). They (don't) care about education: A counternarrative on Black male students' responses to inequitable schooling. *The Journal of Educational Foundations*, 26(1/2), 103-120.
- Harper, S. R., Carini, R. M., Bridges, B. K., & Hayek, J. C. (2004). Gender differences in student engagement among African American undergraduates at historically Black colleges and universities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45(3), 271-284.
- Harper, S. R., Davis, R. J., Jones, D. E., McGowan, B. L., Ingram, T. N., & Platt, C. S. (2011). Race and racism in the experiences of Black male resident assistants at

- predominantly White universities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 52(2), 180-200. doi: 10.1353/csd.2011.0025
- Hartig, N., & Steigerwald, F. (2007). Understanding family roles and ethics in working with first-generation college students and their families. *The Family Journal*, 15(2), 159-162. doi: 10.1177/1066480706297955
- Harvey, J. C., & Katz, C. (1985). *If I'm so successful, why do I feel like a fake? The imposter phenomenon*. NY: Pocket Books
- Hatch, A. R. (2007). Critical race theory. *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology Online*, eISBN, 1764591339.
- Hein, S. F., & Austin, W. J. (2001). Empirical and hermeneutic approaches to phenomenological research in psychology: A comparison. *Psychological Methods*, 6(1), 3-17. doi: 10.1037/1082-989X.6.1.3
- Henson, J. M., Derlega, V. J., Pearson, M. R., Ferrer, R., & Holmes, K. (2013). African American students' responses to racial discrimination: How race-based rejection sensitivity and social constraints are related to psychological reactions. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 32(5), 504-529.
- Hill, N. E., & Tyson, D. F. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: a meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 45(3), 740-763. doi: 10.1037/a0015362
- Hill, N. E., Castellino, D. R., Lansford, J. E., Nowlin, P., Dodge, K. A., Bates, J. E., & Pettit, G. S. (2004). Parent academic involvement as related to school behavior, achievement, and aspirations: Demographic variations across

- adolescence. *Child Development*, 75(5), 1491-1509. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2004.00753.x
- Hill, R. B. (1999). *The strengths of African American families: Twenty-five years later*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Holtzman, M. (2008). Defining family: Young adults' perceptions of the parent-child bond. *Journal of Family Communication*, 8(3), 167-185. doi: 10.1080/15267430701856887
- Howard, T. C. (2003). "A tug of war for our minds:" African American high school students' perceptions of their academic identities and college aspirations. *The High School Journal*, 87(1), 4-17. doi: 10.1353/hsj.2003.0017
- Hughes, D. L., & DuMont, K. (2002). Using focus groups to facilitate culturally anchored research. *Ecological research to promote social change* (pp. 257-289). Springer US.
- Hughes, D., Witherspoon, D., Rivas-Drake, D., & West-Bey, N. (2009). Received ethnic-racial socialization messages and youths' academic and behavioral outcomes: Examining the mediating role of ethnic identity and self-esteem. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 15(2), 112. doi: 10.1037/a0015509
- Humphreys, D., & Davenport, A. (2005). What really matters in college: How students view and value liberal education. *Liberal Education*, 91(3), 36-43.

- Inclusive Excellence: An Action Plan for Diversity at UD.* (2016). Retrieved from [https://sites.udel.edu/diversity/files/2016/06/Diversity\\_Action\\_Plan\\_PDF\\_R7C-1usnpqm.pdf](https://sites.udel.edu/diversity/files/2016/06/Diversity_Action_Plan_PDF_R7C-1usnpqm.pdf)
- Inkelas, K. K., Daver, Z. E., Vogt, K. E., & Leonard, J. B. (2007). Living–learning programs and first-generation college students’ academic and social transition to college. *Research in Higher Education*, 48(4), 403-434. doi: 10.1007/s11162-006-9031-6
- Inman, W. E., & Mayes, L. (1999). The importance of being first: Unique characteristics of first generation community college students. *Community College Review*, 26(4), 3-22. doi: 10.1177/009155219902600402
- Ishitani, T. T. (2003). A longitudinal approach to assessing attrition behavior among first-generation students: Time-varying effects of pre-college characteristics. *Research in Higher Education*, 44(4), 433-449. doi: 10.1023/A:1024284932709
- Ishiyama, J. (2007). Expectations and perceptions of undergraduate research mentoring: Comparing first generation, low-income white/Caucasian and African American students. *College Student Journal*, 41(3), 540-549.
- Isreal, M. & Hay, I. (2006). *Research ethics for social scientists: Between ethical conduct and regulatory compliance*. London, England: Sage.
- Johnson, V. K., Gans, S. E., Kerr, S., & LaValle, W. (2010). Managing the transition to college: Family functioning, emotion coping, and adjustment in emerging

adulthood. *Journal of College Student Development*, 51(6), 607-621. doi:  
10.1353/csd.2010.0022

Journal of Black in Higher Education Foundation. (2005). Doctoral degree awards to African Americans reach another all-time high. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 50, 6-10.

Journal of Black in Higher Education Foundation. (2008) Race relations on campus. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 61, 91.

Journal of Black in Higher Education Foundation. (2008). Race-based affirmative action in college admissions appears to be declining. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*. 61, 36.

Journal of Black in Higher Education Foundation. (2008). The state of Black student freshman enrollments at the nation's highest-ranked colleges and universities. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (61), 44-54.

Journal of Black in Higher Education Foundation. (2008/2009), Black students show solid progress in graduation rates at highly selective colleges and universities. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*. (62), 48-58.

Journal of Black in Higher Education Foundation. (2008/2009). Number of Blacks earning doctorates in 2007 increases by 10 percent and nears an all-time high. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 36.

Journal of Black in Higher Education Foundation. (2008/2009). The persisting racial gap for students meeting the admissions standards at California's public universities. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*. 62, 39.



- Journal of Black in Higher Education Foundation. (2010). African Americans in higher education: Then and now. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*. 67, 7
- Journal of Black in Higher Education Foundation. (2010). State universities that are making the most progress in improving the graduation rates of minority students. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*. (67), 45-46.
- Kam, J. A., & Bámaca-Colbert, M. Y. (2012). Supportive parenting as a moderator of perceived ethnic/racial discrimination's associations with psychological and academic adjustment: A comparison between Mexican-Origin females in early and middle adolescence. *Communication Research*, 1-24, doi: 10.1177/0093650212441362
- Kenny, M.E., & Donaldson, G.A. (1991). Contributions of parental attachment and family structure to the social and psychological functioning of first-year college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 38(4), 479–486. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.38.4.479
- King, G., Williams, D. R., Amick, B. C., Levin, S., Walsh, D. C., & Tarlov, A. R. (1995). Race and health: A multidimensional approach to African American health. *Society and health*. NY: Oxford University Press
- Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative research. Introducing focus groups. *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 311(7000), 299-302.

- Klein, P., & Westcott, M. R. (1994). The changing character of phenomenological psychology. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, 35(2), 133-158. doi: 10.1037/0708-5591.35.2.133
- Kolligian Jr, J., & Sternberg, R. J. (1991). Perceived fraudulence in young adults: Is there an 'imposter syndrome'? *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 56(2), 308-326. doi: 10.1207/s15327752jpa5602\_10
- Kooker W.C., Haase, J.E., & Russell, K.M. (2007a) 'I've been through something': Poetic explorations of African American women's cancer survivorship. *Western Journal of Nursing Research* 29(7), 896–919. doi: 10.1177/0193945907302968
- Kranstuber, H., Carr, K., & Hosek, A. M. (2012). "If you can dream it, you can achieve it." Parent memorable messages as indicators of college student success. *Communication Education*, 61(1), 44-66. doi: 10.1080/03634523.2011.620617
- Krueger, R. A. (1995). The future of focus groups. *Qualitative Health Research*, 5(4), 524-530. doi: 10.1177/104973239500500412
- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2002). Designing and conducting focus group interviews. *In social analysis: Selected tools and techniques*, 4-23.
- Kuhn M. (1964) Major trends in symbolic interaction theory over the past twenty-five years. *Sociological Quarterly* 5(1), 61-84. doi:10.1111/j.1533-8525.1964.tb02256.x

- Laird, N. (2011). Measuring the diversity inclusivity of college courses. *Research in Higher Education*, 52(6), 572-588. doi:10.1007/s11162-010-9210-3
- Lancaster, J. R. (2014). *The influence of classroom engagement on community college student learning: A quantitative analysis of effective faculty practices* (Doctoral dissertation) Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Gradworks.
- LaRossa, R., & Wolf, J. H. (1985). On qualitative family research. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 47(3), 531-541.
- Leonard, J. S. (1989). Women and affirmative action. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 3(1), 61-75.
- Lesane-Brown, C. L. (2006). A review of race socialization within Black families. *Developmental Review*, 26(4), 400-426. doi: 10.1016/j.dr.2006.02.001
- London, H. B. (1989). Breaking away: A study of first-generation college students and their families. *American Journal of Education*, 97(2), 144-170.
- London, H. B. (1992). Transformations: Cultural challenges faced by first-generation students. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 1992(80), 5-11. doi: 10.1002/cc.36819928003
- London, H. B. (1996). How college affects first-generation students. *About campus*, 1(5), 9-23. doi: 10.1002/abc.6190010503
- Loreman, T., Deppeler, J., & Harvey, D. (2005). *Inclusive education: A practical guide to supporting diversity in the classroom*. New York, NY: Routelge

- Love, K. M. (2008). Parental attachments and psychological distress among African American college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49(1), 31-40. doi: 10.1353/csd.2008.0000
- Marin, P. (2000). The educational possibility of multi-racial/multi-ethnic college classrooms. *In Does diversity make a difference?* (pp. 61-83). Washington, DC: American Council on Education and American Association of University Professors.
- Marshall, S. (1995). Ethnic socialization of African American children: Implications for parenting, identity development, and academic achievement. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 24(4), 377-396. doi: 10.1007/BF01537187
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Maxwell, J.A. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- McCarron, G. P., & Inkelas, K. K. (2006). The gap between educational aspirations and attainment for first-generation college students and the role of parental involvement. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47(5), 534-549. doi: 10.1353/csd.2006.0059
- McWayne, C., Fantuzzo, J., Cohen, H. L., & Sekino, Y. (2004). A multivariate examination of parent involvement and the social and academic competencies of urban kindergarten children. *Psychology in the Schools*, 41(3), 363-377. doi: 10.1002/pits.10163

- Meltzer, B.N., Petras J.W., & Reynolds, L.T. (1975). *Symbolic interactionism: Genesis, varieties and criticism*. Boston, MA: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Metheny, J., & McWhirter, E. H. (2013). Contributions of social status and family support to college students' career decision self-efficacy and outcome expectations. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 21(3), 378-394. doi: 10.1177/1069072712475164
- Morrison-Beedy, D., Côté-Arsenault, D., & Feinstein, N. F. (2001). Maximizing results with focus groups: Moderator and analysis issues. *Applied Nursing Research*, 14(1), 48-53. doi: 10.1053/apnr.2001.21081
- Mounts, N. S., Valentiner, D. P., Anderson, K. L., & Boswell, M. K. (2006). Shyness, sociability, and parental support for the college transition: Relation to adolescents' adjustment. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 35(1), 68-77. doi: 10.1007/s10964-005-9002-9
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Nagda, A., Kim, C., & Truelove, Y. (2004). Learning about difference, learning with others, learning to transgress. *Journal of Social Issues*, 60(1), 195-214. doi: 10.1111/j.0022-4537.2004.00106.x
- Neblett, E. W., Philip, C. L., Cogburn, C. D., & Sellers, R. M. (2006). African American adolescents' discrimination experiences and academic achievement:

- Racial socialization as a cultural compensatory and protective factor. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 32(2), 199-218. doi: 10.1177/0095798406287072
- Nilep, C. (2006). 'Code switching'in sociocultural linguistics. *Colorado Research in Linguistics*. 19(1), 1-22.
- Nichols, T., Kotchick, B. A., Barry, C. M., & Haskins, D. G. (2010). Understanding the educational aspirations of African American adolescents: Child, family, and community factors. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 36(1), 25-48. doi: 10.1177/0095798409344084
- Pallock, L. L., & Lamborn, S. D. (2006). Beyond parenting practices: Extended kinship support and the academic adjustment of African-American and European-American teens. *Journal of Adolescence*, 28, 813-829. doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2005.12.003
- Pascarella, T., Pierson, T., Wolniak, C., & Terenzini, T. (2004). First-generation college students: Additional evidence on college experiences and outcomes. *Journal of Higher Education*, 75(3), 249-284.
- Parsons, T. & Bales, R. F. (2014). *Family: Socialization and interaction process*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications.
- Patton, M. Q. (2005). *Qualitative research*. Hooboken, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Peteet, B. J., Brown, C. M., Lige, Q. M., & Lanaway, D. A. (2015). Impostorism is associated with greater psychological distress and lower self-esteem for

- African American students. *Current Psychology*, 34(1), 154-163. doi: 10.1007/s12144-014-9248-z
- Phinney, J. S., & Haas, K. (2003). The process of coping among ethnic minority first-generation college freshmen: A narrative approach. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 143(6), 707-726. doi: 10.1080/00224540309600426
- Phinney, J. S. & Rotheram, M. J. (1987). *Children's ethnic socialization: Themes and implications*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pierce, J. L. (2013). White racism, social class, and the backlash against affirmative action. *Sociology Compass*, 7(11), 914-926. doi: 10.1111/soc4.12082
- Pike, G. R., & Kuh, G. D. (2005). First-and second-generation college students: A comparison of their engagement and intellectual development. *Journal of Higher Education*, 76(3), 276-300.
- Pintrich, P. R., & DeGroot, E. V. (1990). Motivational and self-regulated learning components of classroom academic performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 82(1), 33-40. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.82.1.33
- Pitt, N., & Packard, J. (2012). Activating diversity: The impact of student race on contributions to course discussions. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 53(2), 295-320. doi: 10.1111/j.1533-8525.2012.01235.x
- Pittman, T. (2012). Racial microaggressions: The narratives of African American faculty at a predominantly White university. *Journal of Negro Education*, 81(1), 82-92.
- Popenoe, D. (1991). Family decline in the Swedish welfare state. *Public Interest*,

(102), 65-77.

Popenoe, D. (1993). American family decline, 1960–1990: A review and appraisal.

*Journal of Marriage & Family*, 55(3), 527-542. doi: 10.2307/353333

Popenoe, D. (1996). *Life without father: Compelling new evidence that fatherhood*

*and marriage are indispensable for the good of children and society*. New

York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Popenoe, D., & Whitehead, B. D. (1999). *The National Marriage Project*. The state of

our unions.

Powers, B. A., & Knapp, T. R. (1995). *A dictionary of nursing theory and research*.

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Prelow, H. M., Mosher, C. E., & Bowman, M. A. (2006). Perceived racial

discrimination, social support, and psychological adjustment among African

American college students. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 32(4), 442-454. doi:

10.1177/0095798406292677

Rankin, S. R., & Reason, R. D. (2005). Differing perceptions: How students of Color

and white students perceive campus climate for underrepresented groups.

*Journal of College Student Development*, 46(1), 43-61. doi:

10.1353/csd.2005.0008

Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M., & Ormston, R. (Eds.). (2013). *Qualitative*

*research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*.

Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.



- Roeser, R. W., Strobel, K. R., & Quihuis, G. (2002). Studying early adolescents' academic motivation, social-emotional functioning, and engagement in learning: Variable-and person-centered approaches. *Anxiety, Stress & Coping, 15*(4), 345-368. doi: 10.1080/1061580021000056519
- Rouse, K. A. G., & Austin, J. T. (2002). The relationship of gender and academic performance to motivation: Within-ethnic-group variations. *The Urban Review, 34*(4), 293-316. doi: 10.1023/A:1021392000533
- Sanders, M. G. (1997). Overcoming obstacles: Academic achievement as a response to racism and discrimination. *Journal of Negro Education, 66*(1), 83-93. doi: 10.2307/2967253
- Sappenfield, M. (2002). In court, behavior trumps biology in defining "family. *Christian Science Monitor, 94*(1).
- Seligmann, J. (1990). Variations on a theme. Newsweek (Special Ed.: "The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Family," Winter/Spring 1990), pp. 38-46.
- Sellers, R. M., Caldwell, C. H., Schmeelk-Cone, K. H., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2003). Racial identity, racial discrimination, perceived stress, and psychological distress among African American young adults. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 44*(3), 302-317.
- Seyfried, S. F., & Chung, I. J. (2002). Parent involvement as parental monitoring of student motivation and parent expectations predicting later achievement among African American and European American middle school age students. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work, 11*(1-2), 109-131.

doi: 10.1300/J051v11n01\_05

Sirin, S. R., & Rogers-Sirin, L. (2004). Exploring school engagement of middle-class

African American adolescents. *Youth & Society*, 35(3), 323-340. doi:

10.1177/00441118X03255006

Smedley, B. D., Myers, H. F., & Harrell, S. P. (1993). Minority-status stresses and the

college adjustment of ethnic minority freshmen. *Journal of Higher Education*,

64(4), 434-452. doi: 10.2307/2960051

Smith, S. R., Hamon, R., Ingoldsby, B. B., & Miller, J. E. (2012). Symbolic

interaction theory. In *Exploring Family Theories*, (pp. 328-40). New York,

NY: Oxford University, Press.

Smolicz, J. (1981). Core values and cultural identity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 4(1),

75-90. doi: 10.1080/01419870.1981.9993325

Solórzano, D. G., Allen, W., & Carroll, G. (2002). A case study of racial

microaggressions and campus racial climate at the University of California,

Berkeley. *UCLA Chicano/Latino Law Review*, 23, 15-111.

Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial

microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African

American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 69(1/2), 60-73.

Spiegelberg, H. (1975). *Doing phenomenology: Essays on and in phenomenology*. The

Netherlands: The Hague

Steinfeldt, J. A., Reed, C., & Steinfeldt, M. C. (2010). Racial and athletic identity of

African American football players at historically Black colleges and

- universities and predominantly White institutions. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 36(1), 3-24. doi: 10.1177/0095798409353894
- Stewart, D. L. (2015). Know your role: Black college students, racial identity, and performance. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 28(2), 238-258. doi: 10.1080/09518398.2014.916000
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2011). Bridging the pipeline: Increasing underrepresented students' preparation for college through a summer bridge program. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 55(2), 142-159. doi: 10.1177/000276421038187
- Strayhorn, T. L., & Terrell, M. C. (2010). *The Evolving Challenges of Black College Students: New Insights for Policy, Practice, and Research*. Herndon, VA: Styles Publishing.
- Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, 62(4), 271-286. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271
- Swenson, L. M., Nordstrom, A., & Hiester, M. (2008). The role of peer relationships in adjustment to college. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49(6), 551-567. doi: 10.1353/csd.0.0038
- Swim, J. K., Hyers, L. L., Cohen, L. L., Fitzgerald, D. C., & Bylsma, W. H. (2003). African American college students' experiences with everyday racism: Characteristics of and responses to these incidents. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 29(1), 38-67. doi: 10.1177/0095798402239228

- Taylor, L. C., Hinton, I. D., & Wilson, M. N. (1995). Parental influences on academic performance in African-American students. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 4(3), 293-302. doi: 10.1007/BF02233964
- Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., & DeVault, M. (2015). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource*. Hoboken, NJ, John Wiley & Sons.
- Terenzini, P. T., & Pascarella, E. T. (1991). Twenty years of research on college students: Lessons for future research. *Research in Higher Education*, 32(1), 83-92. doi: 10.1007/BF00992835
- Terenzini, P. T., Rendon, L. I., Upcraft, M. L., Millar, S. B., Allison, K. W., Gregg, P. L., & Jalomo, R. (1994). The transition to college: Diverse students, diverse stories. *Research in Higher Education*, 35(1), 57-73. doi: 10.1007/BF02496662
- Terenzini, P. T., Springer, L., Pascarella, E. T., & Nora, A. (1995). Influences affecting the development of students' critical thinking skills. *Research in Higher Education*, 36(1), 23-39. doi: 10.1007/BF02207765
- Terenzini, P. T., Springer, L., Yaeger, P. M., Pascarella, E. T., & Nora, A. (1996). First-generation college students: Characteristics, experiences, and cognitive development. *Research in Higher Education*, 37(1), 1-22. doi: 10.1007/BF01680039
- Thompson, C. E., & Fretz, B. R. (1991). Predicting the adjustment of Black students at predominantly White institutions. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 62(4), 437-450. doi: 10.2307/1982004

- Thompson, K. V., Lightfoot, N. L., Castillo, L. G., & Hurst, M. L. (2010). Influence of family perceptions of acting White on acculturative stress in African American college students. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 32(2), 144-152. doi: 10.1007/s10447-010-9095-z
- Thorton, A. (1989). Changing attitudes toward family issues in the United States. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 51(4), 873–893.
- Trost, J. (1990). Do we mean the same by the concept of family. *Communication Research*, 17(4), 431-443. doi: 10.1177/009365090017004002
- Trost, J. (1993). Family from a dyadic perspective. *Journal of Family Issues*, 14, 92–104.
- Tuitt, F. (2011). Black like me: Graduate students’ perceptions of their pedagogical experiences in classes taught by Black faculty in a predominantly White institution. *Journal of Black Studies*. 1-21. doi: 10.1177/0021934711413271
- Turner, E. A., Chandler, M., & Heffer, R. W. (2009). The influence of parenting styles, achievement motivation, and self-efficacy on academic performance in college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(3), 337-346. doi: 10.1353/csd.0.0073
- U.S. Census Bureau (2013). *Families and living arrangements: About families and living arrangements*. Retrieved June 5, 2014, from <https://www.census.gov/hhes/families/about/>
- U.S. Census Bureau (2015). *Educational attainment in the United States: Population characteristics*. Retrieved July 15, 2015, from

<http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p20-578.pdf>

- Utsey, S. O., Ponterotto, J. G., Reynolds, A. L., & Cancelli, A. A. (2000). Racial discrimination, coping, life satisfaction, and self-esteem among African Americans. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 78(1), 72-80.
- Van Manen, M. (1990). Beyond assumptions: Shifting the limits of action research. *Theory Into Practice*, 29(3), 152-157. doi: 10.1080/00405849009543448
- Wang, A., Peterson, G. W., & Morphe, L. K. (2007). Who is more important for early adolescents' developmental choices? Peers or parents? *Marriage & Family Review*, 42(2), 95-122. doi: 10.1300/J002v42n02\_06
- Wasley, P. (2006). Underrepresented students benefit most from 'engagement'. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 53(13), A39-A40.
- Webb, C., & Kevern, J. (2001). Focus groups as a research method: A critique of some aspects of their use in nursing research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 33(6), 798-805. doi: 10.1046/j.1365-2648.2001.01720.x
- Wei, M., Yeh, C. J., Chao, R. C. L., Carrera, S., & Su, J. C. (2013). Family support, self-esteem, and perceived racial discrimination among Asian American male college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 60(3), 453. doi: 10.1037/a0032344
- Williams, D., & Williams-Morris, R. (2000). Racism and mental health: The African American experience. *Ethnicity and Health*, 5(3-4), 243-268. doi: 10.1080/713667453

- Woldoff, R. A., & Washington, H. M. (2011). Black Collegians at a Rural Predominantly White Institution: Toward a place-based understanding of Black students' adjustment to college. *Journal of Black Studies*, 0021934711400741. doi: 10.1177/0021934711400741
- Wong, C. A., Eccles, J. S., & Sameroff, A. (2003). The influence of ethnic discrimination and ethnic identification on African American adolescents' school and socioemotional adjustment. *Journal of Personality*, 71(6), 1197-1232. doi: 10.1111/1467-6494.7106012
- Wu, Z., Schimmele, C. M., & Hou, F. (2015). Family structure, academic characteristics, and postsecondary education. *Family Relations*, 64(2), 205-220. doi: 10.1111/fare.12112
- Zhang, P., & Smith, W. L. (2011). From high school to college: The transition experiences of Black and White Students. *Journal of Black Studies*, 42(5), 828-845. doi: 10.1177/0021934710376171
- Zvonkovic, A., Sharp, E., & Elise Radina, M. (2012). Introduction to the special issue:Qualitative methodology, theory, and research in family studies. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 4(2), 77-79. doi: 10.1111/j.1756-2589.2012.00121.x

## **Appendix A**

### **INFORMED CONSENT**

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form tells you about the study including its purpose, what you will do if you decide to participate, and any risks and benefits of being in the study. Please read the information below and ask the research team questions about anything we have not made clear before you decide whether to participate. Your participation is voluntary and you can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and a copy will be given to you to keep for your reference.

#### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

The purpose of this study is for the University's Diversity Initiative (UDI) office to gain a more in depth understanding of your experiences in and perceptions of the college classroom as an undergraduate student who is a representative of one of the following groups: African American, Latino/a, LGBTQQIAA or Women. In addition to the UDI office, these results will also be used and analyzed for a master's thesis, which will be published at a later date.

You are being asked to take part in this study because you are an undergraduate student at the University of Delaware and identify as a member of one of the four mentioned groups. There will be approximately 50 participants in this study, 5-8 in each focus group. The racial/ethnic, gender and sexual identity representation in the focus groups will not be mixed. This is to ensure comfort during the discussion. The main goal of the research is to gain a perspective of classroom experiences from those specific identities.

#### **WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?**

The focus group will take place in a designated location on campus. You will only need to participate in one session. This group will consist of answering questions in conversational style asked by the facilitator. There will be a co-facilitator taking notes during the session.

When you wish to speak to another student, please address one another by the numbers in front of them. It is also very important that we do not speak over one another. Only one person should be talking at a time. All opinions and thoughts are



welcome. You are free to disagree with one another person but please do so in a respectful manner. This focus group should last about 60-90 minutes, depending on how much you decide to share. What is disclosed in the focus group should not be shared between anyone outside of the group participants.

### **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?**

There are minimal risks associated with participation. However, discussing experiences could make you feel some emotional discomfort. If you do become uncomfortable you are welcome to leave at any time. If you stay at the end and realize you are emotionally uncomfortable we will provide you (at no cost) a recommendation to counseling, through the UD Student Counseling Center.

In order to assist with maintaining comfort during the session the questions asked were constructed so that they would not be too invasive and each group will only have other similarly identifying members. Participating in this study is a volunteer service and there is no charge to you.

### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS?**

You will not benefit directly from taking part in this research. However, the knowledge gained from this study will contribute to our understanding to classroom experiences of certain groups on campus. This information will be used to create more comfortable and enriching classroom climates as well as enhanced student-professor and peer relationships.

### **HOW WILL CONFIDENTIALITY BE MAINTAINED?**

The researchers will keep your responses confidential and anonymous to the extent permitted by law. We will ensure that any information we include in our report does not identify you as the respondent. Remember, you share only what you are comfortable with discussing. You will not be forced to talk about anything if you choose not to disclose. Your name will not be used at any time throughout the study or in the report; you will be given a pseudonym (alterative name) so that you cannot be identified. In the report direct quotes will be grouped and speakers will be identified using the pseudonyms.

We will be recording conversations using digital audiotape so that we do not miss any part of the discussion. It is important that you speak loudly so that you we are captured on the recording. The data will not be shared with any outside institutions. The audiotapes will be protected by being stored and locked in 109 Hullihen Hall and erased within a year of transcription. Future uses for the data by the University's Diversity initiative may include secondary analysis and producing other informational reports.

The University of Delaware Institutional Review Board may view your research records, but the confidentiality of your records will be protected to the extent permitted by law. There are no other sponsors or agencies that are capable of accessing the research data.

**WILL THERE BE ANY COSTS RELATED TO THE RESEARCH?**

Aside from volunteering your time, there are no costs associated with participating in the study.

**WILL THERE BE ANY COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION?**

You will receive a \$15.00 Barnes and Nobles gift card for participating in this study. You are entitled to this compensation even if you choose to leave during any time of the study. You will receive your gift card as soon as all the participants have arrived.

**DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

Taking part in this research study is entirely voluntary. You do not have to participate in this research. If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop at any time. If you decide not to participate or if you decide to stop taking part in the research at a later date, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with the University of Delaware

**WHO SHOULD YOU CALL IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?**

If you have any questions about your participation in this study, or any additional comments or concerns you would like to convey, please contact the Principal Investigator Dr. Margaret Andersen, Director of the University's Diversity Initiative at (302) -831-1509 or [mla@udel.edu](mailto:mla@udel.edu) or your focus group facilitator Sharelle Law at [sllaw@udel.edu](mailto:sllaw@udel.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board at 302-831-2137.

---

**Your signature below indicates that you are agreeing to take part in this research study. You have been informed about the study's purpose, procedures, possible risks and benefits. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the research and those questions have been answered. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.**

**By signing this consent form, you indicate that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study.**

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

---

Printed Name of Participant

## Appendix B

### FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

#### **Introductory Remarks (5 minutes)**

- Welcome and thank participants for coming
- Introduce self and note-taker
- Review informed consent: Collect signed consent forms, make sure all understand
- Hand out gift cards
- Hand out counseling resources on campus
- We want to hear from everyone!

#### **► Opening Question (5 minutes)**

- What prompted you to accept our invitation to this focus group?

#### **► Introductory Question (10 minutes):**

- Can you tell us your major and how many credits are you taking?
  - If you break them up by department art, sciences, humanities (where do they fall?)
  - I hear most are taking...reiterate what was heard, in “humanities” what does your typical class look like? How diverse? Which ways?

Thinking of your courses in your major (identify your major)

Think of a typical class in your major, how diverse is your classroom?

- [prompt] – In what ways?
  - racial/ethnic
  - class/socioeconomic
  - gender/sexual
  - intellectual
  - other...
- Using your typical class as a comparison, can you explain in what ways is it more or less diverse than your other classes?

#### **► Transition Question (10 minutes):**

- Now we’re going to turn and discuss your experiences with faculty. Think about your experiences with your professors.

- Can you talk about if you have or have not asked questions in the classroom? Why or Why not?
- What is it like when the professor asks a question?
  - Do you answer? Why or Why not?

**Core Questions (25 minutes)**

**► Interactions w/ Faculty**

- On a range of 1-10, how included and comfortable do you feel in the classroom by some of your professors?
  - Can you provide an example of what has happened to help illustrate your level of comfort and inclusion or exclusion?

**► Interactions w/ Students**

Now think about yourself as a student in your classes.

- How included and comfortable do you feel in the classroom with other students?
  - How so?
- Have you done group work in any of your classes?
  - If not please explain why.
  - When you are doing group work can you describe your interactions with your classmates?
- Have you observed that your experiences with group work are different from other students in the class?
  - How do you know that? – Give an example
- If any, what observations of actions or over hearing have you encountered of hurtful comments or derogatory statements/actions by students on faculty?

**► Family Interactions (5 minutes)**

- If they describe unpleasant/discriminatory experiences, do they tell their families?
  - What do their families say?
  - How has the way they were raised helped (or not helped) them to cope with negative experiences?

**End:** How satisfied are you with UD; what could be done that could make other students feel more comfortable on campus?

**Follow-up Questions (10-15 minutes)**

- Is there anything more you would like to add that we maybe did not discuss already?

## **Appendix C**

### **RECRUITMENT EMAIL**

Subject: \$15.00 Gift Card for 90-Minute Study

The University's Diversity Initiative Office (UDI) is conducting a study to gain a more in-depth understanding of experiences in and perceptions of the college classroom for undergraduate students who identify as one of the following groups: African American, Latino/a, LGBTQQIAA or Women. You will receive a \$15.00 Barnes and Noble gift card for your participation.

If you identify as one of the following identities and are classified as a junior or senior please reply letting us know you are interested and we will reply with more details. There will be a total of 8 different focus groups consisting of 5-8 participants. The focus groups will last about 60-90 minutes. You will be asked about 5-8 main questions with probes throughout. You will only need to participate in one session, only about 90 minutes of your time. Meeting times will be structured around participant availability.

This is a great opportunity to have your voice heard and contribute to creating a more positive classroom experiences for other undergraduate students.

**Appendix D**  
**IRB APPROVAL LETTER**

DATE: February 25, 2014

TO: Margaret Andersen, PhD  
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [552751-1] Teaching for Inclusion

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED  
APPROVAL DATE: February 24, 2014  
EXPIRATION DATE: February 23, 2015  
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review  
REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 6,7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use

the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Farnese-McFarlane at (302) 831-1119 or [nicolefm@udel.edu](mailto:nicolefm@udel.edu). Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.