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BECOMING TRANSCULTURAL: FILLING THE CULTURAL  
AND COMMUNICATION GAP WITHIN  
THE BLACK AMERICAN COMMUNITY

by

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M.A. University of Central Florida, 2005

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of Communication  
in the College of Arts and Science  
at the University of Central Florida  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to define transculturalism by exploring the Black experience through collectivism/individualism, Black identity and the ability to be transcultural. The study included 83 male and female Black American, college students, graduate students and college graduates. The participants answered a 4-part survey that measured collectivism/individualism, Black identity, the ability to be transcultural and minority hardships. Results revealed that the Pre-encounter, Immersion, Emersion and Internalization phases of Black identity are predictors of minority hardships. There were also significant results for the Internalization phase of Black identity and the ability to be transcultural. In conclusion, Black Americans that are secure with their identity have the ability to become transcultural.

Ever since I was little I had to constantly justify my behavior. From elementary until high school I came to class on the first day prepared to go to war. The school bell would ring, the teacher called attendance, and I was prepared to attack, ready to defend my Black heritage and ethnic name. I often wonder if my name was the reason I associated heavily with Black culture. Whatever the case may be I surrounded myself in everything Black-music, people and even stereotypical behavior. But I am what I am. However, I wonder where I would be without my parents and their unconditional love. Would I have been a statistic and considered uneducated because I preferred to use Black English? Regardless my parents loved and molded me into the well-rounded person I am. Never did they make me choose between my identification with Black culture and mainstream America. As a result, I have the ability to embrace characteristics of both world and the gift to be transcultural.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to define transculturalism by exploring the Black experience through collectivism/individualism, Black identity and the ability to be transcultural. Researchers (i.e., Dubois, 1953; Strom, Dohrmann, Strom, Griswold, Bechert, Strom, Moore, & Nakagawa, 2002; Thompson, 2000) have acknowledged the Black person that is fluent within two cultures; however, no term has been specifically coined for this process. A Black American that is aware of his/her ability to be fluent while switching between cultures should be considered transcultural. Collectivism and individualism is relevant because for generations Black Americans have been considered a collectivistic group of people (Nobles, 1991). However, this thesis suggests that there is a possible shift from collectivistic to individualistic tendencies within the Black American community. This assumption evolves from the increased popularity and current exploitation of Black culture (Coleman, 2003).

The decision to be individualistic or collectivistic could be based on Black identification which is shaped by minority hardships, family traditions and ecological factors (Yasui, Dorham, & Dishion, 2004). Black identity was broken up into five categories based on the Model of Nigresence (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991). The five phases are: Pre-encounter, Post-encounter, Immersion, Emersion and Internalization. The phases were used in an attempt to locate the point where Black identity meets collectivism/individualism and the ability to be transcultural. Overall, being transcultural is when a person makes an active decision to be competent and able to switch between two or more cultures instantaneously.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Becoming Transcultural

Transculturalism should be viewed as a capability within two ways of life (see Appendix A). Being transcultural is comparable to the process of code switching between two languages (Koch, Gross, & Kolts, 2001). For example, bilingual people speak two languages, and depending on the situation, they possess the ability to code switch. This is the same idea with being transcultural. A Black American, who depending on the situation, possesses the ability to fluently switch characteristics from mainstream culture to Black culture, is transcultural. Basically being transcultural is a capability that Black Americans can choose to develop and utilize. However, Black Americans have to be knowledgeable of the option in order to become transcultural. Ultimately, there is an undeniable wedge between Black Americans who heavily identify with the culture of mainstream America and Black Americans who cherish their Black culture (Dubois, 1940).

For instance, it is proposed that Black Americans placed to the left of transculturalism (see Appendix A) identify heavily with mainstream culture. Asante (2001) states that mainstream culture is a subtle way of saying White America. Mainstream culture is rarely inclusive of Black ideals, such as “African American poetry or people” (Asante, 2001, p. 22). There is a group of Black Americans that have opted to identify with mainstream America, by becoming successful while dissolving their roots within the ‘hood (Smitherman & Cunningham, 1997) choosing to be non-transcultural. W. E. B Dubois (1940) noted the cultural divide when he stated that if a Black person is educated, then



He is above the average culture of his group, he is often resentful of its enviroing power; partly because he does not recognize its power and partly because he is determined to consider himself part of the white group from which, in fact, he is excluded (p. 173).

Black Americans that find themselves to the right of transculturalism (see Appendix A) could be immersed in Black culture. This group of non-transcultural people may identify with the stereotypical ideals of being Black. For instance, there is a strong sense of community (Constantine, Gainor, Ahluwalia, & Berkel, 2003) and a connection with African cultural values (Fong & Chuang, 2004). Koch, Gross and Kolts (2001) found that even Black English is not viewed in a negative light but is appropriate depending on the situation. The younger generation prefers the Black English speaker over the Standard English speaker (Koch, & Gross, 1997). This supports Clay's (2003) idea that the more popular youth are the ones that can emulate a "hip-hop identity through the manipulation fashion, gestures and music" (p. 1355). According to Majors (1991) Black culture and pride is also expressed through animated behavior, hairstyles, flashy cars and sports. Binders, Collins and Rose (as cited in Clay, 2003) expressed that there is an ongoing identity struggle within the Black community that focuses on who is "authentic" and who is a "sellout".

The ideal solution could be to encourage the transcultural Black American who has opted to be fluent within Black culture and mainstream culture to become mentors to Blacks who are not aware of or have selected to be non-transcultural. Also, the transcultural Black American can be a mentor to Blacks that have assimilated into mainstream culture and no longer identify with Black culture (Smitherman & Cunningham, 1997). The transcultural Black American could be considered a bridge between non-transcultural people that have assimilated and those that have not.

Though not by name, the term transcultural has been illustrated in the movie *Boyz n The Hood*. In the movie the hood is a place where crime, drive-by shootings and unemployment are a daily occurrence. In this movie the character Tre Styles is heavily immersed in Black culture. Tre, unlike other characters in the movie has been taught by his father the importance of an education, morals and proper behavior for a gentleman. If it were not for his father, he could have followed the path of his friend Darin 'Doughboy' Baker -the local drug dealer. Overall the influence of his environment, friends and father allowed Tre to become transcultural. He was able to be a fluent member of the hood while embracing mainstream ideals by, choosing to attend college.

Although this idea is fictional it is an example of a method that could change the state of the Black American community. According to Cialdini (2001), people will be more susceptible to change if the speaker is like them or the listeners desire to be like the speaker. For instance, Cialdini's (2001) research supports the idea that people are more apt to be persuaded by others that are similar to themselves, attractive, or likable. Petty, Cacioppo and Goldman (1981) studied the idea that a receiver's personal involvement, opinion of the source (credible and non-credible) and personal relevance (high or low) influence the speakers power of persuasion. The golden rule of persuasion is that "people prefer to agree with people they know and like" (Cialdini, 2001).

The suggested solution to the gap within the Black community would be to encourage transcultural Black Americans to be a guide to both groups of non-transcultural Black people (those that have assimilated and those that have not). The logic is that transcultural Black Americans might have the opportunity to appeal to non-transcultural Blacks getting them to understand the importance of transculturalism. If

more Black Americans become transcultural, then the communication gap between Black Americans who are successful within mainstream America and Blacks fluent within Black culture could be bridged. Most importantly, the transcultural person might then serve as a mediator between government funded programs, nonprofit organizations and Blacks in need.

### **The Problem**

Black Americans have historical and cultural concerns that are connected to slavery and evolved from years of social, economic and psychological oppression (Allen & Bagozzi, 2001; Asante, 2003). This may possibly explain why Blacks receive higher percentages of government assistance than any other ethnic group. Based on the 2002 Statistical Abstract of the United States (SAUS, 2004) an estimated 522 million dollars was spent on programs to provide cash, goods or services to people who are not required to make payments or work in return. According to the Statistical Abstract (2004) these non-profit programs should focus on various societal issues, such as homelessness, childcare, drug abuse, domestic abuse, AIDS, teen pregnancy and education. The connection between government-funded programs and Black Americans is that Blacks have the second-highest percentage of nonprofit usage (Becker, 2002). In 2003, 35.9 million people were in poverty: White Americans made up 67.6%, Black Americans 24.4% and 8.2% for Latin Americans (SAUS, 2004). HUD also stated that in 1996, 47% of public housing was comprised of Black Americans (as cited in Fisher, 1998). The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported in 2000 that Black males were eight times more likely to be incarcerated as White males (as cited in Becker, 2002). Even the increased popularity of Black culture and Black Entertainment Television's increased AIDS

awareness campaigns fail to stifle the fact that 47% of the reported AIDS cases in 2000 were from Black Americans (SAUS, 2004). These dramatic statistics reflect the social ills within the Black American community.

Two theories are offered as the root of the Black problem. Black Americans are the victims of both projective identification and transubstantiative error (Horwitz, 1985 & Wells, 1985). A loose example of the projective identification theory is when a person wants to help or be supportive of someone but at the same time he/she unintentionally oppresses the person in need. Transubstantiative error asserts that in order to help a certain group of people one would have to be on the same frequency or possess mutual communicative patterns. The solutions to both problems may be to have a transcultural person act as a mediator between government programs, nonprofit organizations and Black Americans in need. Both the projective identification theory and transubstantiative error are now explored in detail.

Projective identification theory is defined as “a frequent occurrence between two or more persons and the projection of certain mental contents from one person onto and into another with a resulting alteration in the behavior of the targeted person” (Horwitz, 1985, p. 21). For example, the nonprofit organizations and government programs that are supposed to benefit Black Americans could be reflexively holding them down. Organizations are good at giving financial assistance to people in need but the patrons are not obligated to work or make payments (SAUS, 2004). Therefore there is a possibility that people take the money while gaining little or no self-sufficiency. Steele (2003) suggested that government “programs have removed the incentives to excellence in our best and brightest” (p. 198). The lack of education about accountability and self-

sufficiency could be reflexively holding down various non-transcultural Black people down. Horwitz continues by stating that projective identification is motivated by a need to dominate, devalue and control –based on primitive envy. The target of projective identification is often vulnerable and unable to prevent manipulation. By incorporating the logic of Asante (2001) one could assume from the above, that a deficient system has the ability to produce deficient people.

Unlike other dominant businesses, government programs and nonprofit organizations often claim to benefit the negligible political power of society (Asante, 2001). Whorter (2003) asserted that “welfare programs have not been successful with pulling Black Americans out of poverty” (p. 192). Robert Woodson the founder and president of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprises (NCNE) stated on *Tony Brown’s Journal* that government funding is often used by nonprofit organizations for the expansion of programs or to compensate employees versus solving the initial problem.

These organizations fail to realize that transubstantiative error occurs when establishments fail to recognize different communicative patterns and frequencies of knowledge that occur between their own groups and the groups they serve (Wells, 1985, p. 51). By applying the logic of Wells (1985) the problem within the Black American community is attempting to be resolved by people outside of their culture. Black Americans and mainstream America do not always possess the same communication patterns. In order to reach the Blacks in need, government programs and non-profit organizations need to acquire people on the same “frequency” to help throughout the organization (Cialdini, 2001).

Outside of the organizational perspective, the idea of projective identification and transubstantive error can be applied to Black Americans regarding other Blacks. Oftentimes successful Black Americans want to help by giving back to the community, but unconsciously they do not want to lose their place on the corporate ladder to another person, specifically a Black person (America & Anderson, 1996). Therefore, the Black American in the position of power will hire another Black person but he/she does not nurture the success of the associate (America & Anderson, 1996). An example based on Horwitz's definition of transubstantive error is when a Black American who only identifies with mainstream America tries to reach a Black American rooted in Black culture. How are they going to communicate when they are on different frequencies? For instance, Tiger Woods would be considered a credible source if he were a mentor for a golf program, but to motivate Black Americans to understand the importance of being or becoming transcultural when he primarily identifies with mainstream America could be considered hypocrisy. Although this is only an example it shows the importance of having transcultural Black Americans in positions where they can influence non-transcultural Blacks.

Therefore transcultural people should be considered for placement into job positions that utilize their fluent abilities between mainstream and Black culture. A transcultural Black American could benefit other Blacks because he/she is equipped to relate to various communication styles (i.e., Black English, Standard English or Slang) physical similarities (skin color) and life situations (minority hardships). Ultimately, "to deny a group of people their right to express their unique perspective of the world is to deny their humanity" (Weber, 1985, p. 277). Black Americans should have a

recognizable form of communication when dealing with non-profit organizations and government programs in order to increase success. This is why the transcultural person is suggested as a bridge between government programs, nonprofit organizations, Blacks that have assimilated, those that have not. The idea of being transcultural should be viewed as an additional characteristic that could increase opportunity, success, cohesiveness and interdependence within the Black community and non-profit programs. Before the idea of being transcultural can be fully understood, culture, Black culture, collectivism, individualism and Black identity must be explored.

### **Culture**

Culture is when two or more people interact over time and their behavior becomes a pattern (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Some view culture as anything that is human-made or as a system of shared meaning (Geertz, 1973). A deeper look into culture shows that it is verbal and nonverbal behavior that is meaningful to a group that shares traditions, heritage, language and similar norms (Fong & Chuang, 2004). Considering these definitions, it is evident that culture has the ability to flourish in a person's life because it is chosen by members of a group (Heath & McLaughlin, 1993). Ting-Toomey, Yee-Jung, Shapiro, Garcia, Wright and Oetzel (2000) showed that Black Americans do not have a strong sense of culture compared to other ethnic groups. Research shows that Black Americans relied heavily on religion and traditions with which they identified and established some form of culture (Constantine, Gainor, Ahluwalia, & Berkel, 2003).

## **Black Culture**

When dissecting Black culture it is vital that both the past and present are exposed. Black culture is defined as faith-based, built on harmony because of strong communal and religious preference (Constantine, Gainor, Ahluwalia, & Berkel, 2003). Religion is a central part of Black culture because it was an emotional stronghold during slavery. Slavery was an era when culture assisted in the survival of a group's identity (Orbe & Harris, 2001). Black Americans gathered to worship, testify and lean on each other during times of hardships. Fong and Chuang (2004) believe that identification with more than one person through historical events, such as slavery, physical features (race), celebrations (holidays), language (Black English) and family names (Black American surnames e.g., Jones or Campbell) is a form of culture. This strong cultural identification established communalism when Black Americans would view others as a part of self (Constantine, Gainor, Ahluwalia, & Berkel, 2003). Ting-Toomey et al. (2000) have categorized Black Americans as having a weak cultural identity while the change in times has showed an increase in a "conditional" Black culture. Nobles noted that the negative contact with European Americans did not result in the "total destruction of things African" (p.302). Over time Black Americans have learned to adopt their new circumstances; a degree of acculturation has occurred and Africans, over several generation of slavery, have become Black Americans (Cross, Parham & Helms, 1991). One of the inevitable outcomes of slavery is that Black Americans have had to adjust and adapt to mainstream America in order to meet society's standard of success (Nobles, 1991).



Mainstream American traditions have denied Black Americans their historical roots based on the ideas that European culture was the “right” culture and that Black Americans should assimilate into the “civilized” culture (Nobles, 1991). Despite the adversity, many aspects of Black culture have become a “cash cow” for mainstream America (Coleman, 2003). McLeod (1999) believes that Black culture (specifically hip-hop) is in danger of losing authenticity due to the fast assimilation into mainstream America. Coleman (2003) asserts that there is a current exploitation of Black identity for profit. For instance, Black music, (e.g., gospel, spirituals, blues, jazz, rhythm and blues, rap and hip-hop), spoken word poetry, urban clothing and Black English are identifiable, profitable traditions.

On the other hand, some Black Americans have completely mastered Standard English while others preserve their ethnic vernacular (Baugh, 1999). Clay (2003) discovered that there is an ongoing identity struggle within the Black American community. With this identification and understanding Black culture has assimilated into mainstream America (McLeod, 2003). Coleman (2003) asserted that particular attention is paid to Black Americans that “sell out” by crossing over into the mainstream for purposes of power or profit. In order to explore Black identity individualism and collectivism should be examined.

### **Collectivism vs. Individualism**

Regarding Black identity there might be a possibility that Black Americans are not as collectivistic due to the fast assimilation of Black culture into mainstream/individualistic culture. Ting-Toomey et al. (2003) support the idea that collectivism emphasizes the importance of “we” identity versus the “I” identity within a

group of people. Hui (1988) defined collectivism as a set of feelings, beliefs, behavioral intentions, and behaviors related to solidarity and concern for others. The collectivist asks, “What is best for the group?” This collectivistic identification with each other increased moral reasoning (as cited in Woods & Jager, 2003). Woods and Jagers (2003) consider Black Americans that identify with African cultural values as being Afrocultural or collectivistic. Being Afrocultural is based on the principles of “survival of the tribe and one with nature, there is a sense of cohesion, interdependence and collective responsibility” within the group (Nobles, 1991, p.298). Black culture is no longer a reliance on religion or an endurance of minority hardships (Contantine, Gainor, Ahluwalia, & Berkel, 2003). Black culture has evolved from past aggression into a mainstream way of life (Clay, 2003). Black culture might be influenced by mainstream America in the viewpoint that it has possibly become materialistic and competitive. Based on these ideas the expansion of the communication gap may perhaps be an indirect result of increased individualism within the Black community.

Black Americans that identify with mainstream American cultural practices are considered to be Anglocultural or individualistic (Woods & Jagers, 2003). Nobles (1991) advocates the idea that mainstream culture is guided by the principle “survival of the fittest” and “control over nature” (p.298). The mainstream values and customs have emphasis on competition, individuality, originality and the every man for himself complex (Triandis, 1994). Hofstede (1980) defined individualism as the emotional separation from groups, organizations or other collectivities. The increase in individualistic characteristics has caused a decrease in moral reasoning within the Black American community (Woods & Jager, 2003).

Could this new identification be the cause of the increase in crime? Is Black culture affecting how Black Americans identify with mainstream America? Why do some Black Americans heavily identify with Black culture? Where does the Black American sense of pride go for those who choose to identify with the mainstream American culture? Do minority hardships influence the decision to be Anglocultural or Afrocultural? How are Black Americans that have opted to participate in mainstream American culture as well as the Black American culture going to be defined?

As a result, the reality for Black Americans is the possible slow destruction of community and the creation of a conditional culture, that continues to evolve based on societal influences (Nobles, 1991). The communication and cultural divide could emphasize the importance of transcultural Black Americans. Black Americans that are transcultural have the ability to reach Blacks that are immersed within Black culture. There is an explanation within Black identity that illuminates why some Blacks maybe more successful than others within mainstream culture.

### **Black Identity**

Due to the increased popularity, Black culture (Coleman, 2003) could be shifting from collectivistic to individualistic tendencies. The decision to be Anglocultural/individualistic or Afrocultural/collectivistic is based on Black identity, which is shaped by minority hardships, family traditions and ecological factors (i.e., family environment, household members, school atmosphere and peer relationships) (Yasui, Dorham, & Dishion, 2004). Farr (2002) believes that identity is not something that is selected, it is formed by responses to various situations and constantly created and recreated out of social interactions (Bush, 2002). Communication identity theory holds

that identity consists of four layers and each of these layers individually and collectively helps illuminate an individual's identity (Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993). The first layer is personal, which concentrates on a person's self-concept and can be spiritually based. The enacted layer focuses on how messages express identity, while the communal incorporates how a group of people or a community contributes to an identity. Regarding Black identity, the relational layer is important because it focuses on the development of identity through relationships (Yasui, Dorham, & Dishion, 2004). A person's identity conforms to various relationships.

Each of these identity layers is comparable to socialization. According to Gudykunst and Kim (2003) socialization is the way in which human activity is coordinated or organized. For instance Montague, Magai, Consedine and Gillespie (2003) found that socialization for Black Americans focused on harsh discipline for behavior problems, higher levels of religious behaviors and a social, family-oriented network. These relationships, personal experiences and behaviors undoubtedly play a major role in shaping how a Black person will identify with mainstream America (Bush, 2002).

Regarding the socialization theory, teaching skills for survival in a discriminatory culture is a strong characteristic within the Black American family (Cauce, 2002). Some parents opt to use stringent discipline techniques to get children to understand mainstream America (Montague, Magai, Consedine and Gillespie (2003). For example a parent that has a positive outlook about mainstream America could be more likely to teach his/her child to understand its culture from a positive perspective. While a parent that has negative beliefs about mainstream culture has the potential to teach his/her child

from a pessimistic view. Ultimately a Black person's upbringing has an influence on his/her perception of mainstream culture (Montague, Magai, Consedine and Gillespie (2003). Perspective is not biological (Asante, 2001). For example, Scott (2003) states that Black Americans continue to be at risk for encountering day-to-day acts and experiences of discrimination. This could be an explanation as to why some Black people view life from a positive mainstream perspective increasing his/her chances of becoming transcultural. While other Blacks have been taught to recognize mainstream culture in a negative light increasing his/her chances of becoming or remaining non-transcultural.

Based on the Model of Psychological Nigrescence, Black Americans must encounter minority hardships before they are able to acknowledge their Black identity (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991). The five phases of the Model of Psychological Nigrescence are as follows:

**Pre-encounter-** the phase when Black people typically have anti-Black attitudes and perceive blackness as a stigma because of a lack of education within the school setting and home environment, misrepresentation within the media, or a strong identification with mainstream America.

**Post-encounter-** a critical personalized event. This event may be in the form of culture shock or experiencing a racist situation. These events stimulate various emotions, such as alarm, confusion, guilt, anger and anxiety. The emotions then motivate the individual to further explore his/her Black identity. Due to this emotional journey, the old identity becomes inappropriate and the new identity is deemed attractive.

**Immersion** -refers to the participation within Black culture, such as film, press, radio, literature and organizations. There is a sudden need to prove one's blackness.

**Emersion** -is a reverse or decrease in the intensity of immersion; it is often considered a hesitation toward the realization that openness to a new perspective is acceptable.

**Internalization and Commitment-** here the individual reaches a point of self-satisfaction with being Black.

The Model of Psychological Nigresence is a continuum that Black Americans may move backwards and forwards, while others stay in the same location (Resnicow, Soler, Braithwaite, Selassie & Smith, 1999). Viewing the Model of Psychological Nigresence as a continuum could explain why some Black Americans cherish their Black identity over mainstream acceptance. The rejection of mainstream culture and Standard English could stem from the idea that Blacks have never been viewed or treated as equals (Smitherman, 1986). Furthermore, the seizing of Black identity could be viewed as a Black person's way of claiming or stating his/her place in mainstream culture (Headley, 2002). According to DeVos (1980) some ethnic groups react to difference with defensive narrowness, which is non-learning due to a sense of threat to one's identity.

Boykin (as cited in Woods & Jagers, 2003) claims that a Black Americans cultural experiences influences his/her decision to follow the Anglocultural or Afrocultural. Other factors that influence Black identity include family influence, environment and education (Yasui, Dorham, & Dishion, 2004). These factors influence individualistic and collectivistic tendencies and as a result might contribute to a change within Black culture. For instance, what event determines whether or not a Black person will identify with Black culture or relate to mainstream American culture? For example, would a Black American that is discriminated against because of his/her skin color relate

to other Black Americans who have been discriminated against or use the negative experience as motivation to assimilate into mainstream America. This is an example of a negative event, but what happens if the encounters are only positive? What pushes Black Americans to identify with one culture over another? What is it called when a Black American can identify heavily with both aspects? Researchers (i.e., Dubois, 1953; Strom, Dohrmann, Strom, Griswold, Bechert, Strom, Moore, & Nakagawa, 2002; Thompson, 2000) have acknowledged the Black person that is fluent within two cultures; however, no term has been specifically coined for this process. A Black American that is aware of his/her ability to be fluent while switching between cultures should be considered transcultural.

Transcultural individuals should be able to identify with and succeed in mainstream America while maintaining their Black identification. Cross et al. (1991) believed that Black Americans tend to live in two material and cultural realities, realities that stand out at times and blend at other times to give the appearance of a common fabric. Ultimately, what does it mean to be Black living in a White America? This phenomenon has been labeled “double consciousness” by W.E.B Dubois (1953), and he described it as a peculiar sensation:

This sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring ones soul by a tape of a world that look on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (p.5).

This quote expresses what it is like to be Black in America and exposes the concept of being transcultural. The transcultural Black American is potentially divided between being an American and Black and subjected to possible criticism and rejection from non-

transcultural Blacks. Although it is not definite being transcultural maybe a promising asset that could be rejected and attacked by people that do not understand its importance. The transcultural Black person should be considered a mediator or messenger between two cultures; however, there is a chance that a transcultural person's blackness will be in question (Smitherman & Cunningham, 1997).

Even though there is no way to accurately define or determine a person's blackness, even Spike Lee (personal communication, February 02, 2005) stated that blackness is determined by the individual. Therefore most races are defined by stereotypes – “the assumed ideas about the characteristics of a group of people” (Triandis, 1994, p.107). These stereotypes are validated by empirical evidence and then become sociotypes. Bogardus (as cited in Gudykunst & Kim, 2003) defines sociotypes as stereotypes that involve substantially realistic assignments of traits to a group of people. An example of a sociotype would be the stereotype that Black Americans in the United States vote for the Democratic Party (Triandis, 1994). The following paragraphs are an attempt to define Black identity based on various stereotypes.

Blackness was exhibited during the 1950s and 1960s, when many Black Americans wore their hair straight or processed, but by the late 1960s the predominant hairstyle worn by Africans Americans was the Afro (Thompson, 2000). According to Majors (1991) being a Black American was not only displayed through Afros, and wearing dashikis, but it also included a mutual push for equality. Majors (1991) supported the idea that Black American culture was a “dynamic culture, rather than a static culture” (p.273). Black Americans have a forever-evolving identity, and this is



evident because many Black American women have let go of the Afro and have reverted back to wearing processed hair.

Outside of physical appearances being Black is an experience shared through events that evolve from the visibility of color (Cokley, 2002) and the trials and tribulations of living in two worlds, the Black community and mainstream culture (Strom, Dohrmann, Strom, Griswold, Bechert, Strom, Moore, & Nakagawa, 2002). This supports the idea that even if the non-transcultural person opts not to assimilate into mainstream culture or thrive within Black culture he/she is still inevitably living within two cultures. Black identification is important because it could help explain why some Blacks become stagnant regarding the Model of Nigresence as a continuum (Resnicow, Soler, Braithwaite, Selassie, & Smith, 1999). Whereas, transcultural Blacks have the potential to progress becoming satisfied with his/her ideas of being Black (Cross et al., 1991). Self-satisfaction might allow the transcultural person to embrace new ideas and more specifically –another culture.

Black identity is a continuous cycle that is visible through communication. For instance, Clay (2003) found that Black American youth take cues from other Black American youth on what it means to be “Black” in addition to what mainstream or dominant groups communicate to them about their particular racialized identity. Hecht and Ribeau (1991) support the idea that self-labeling is an indicator of Black identity and influenced by communication style. For example, in an investigation conducted by Fairchild (1985) Blacks were observed as being inactive, boisterous and impolite and Afro-Americans were identified as being talkative. Blacks often label or put each other into stereotypical categories based on a person’s clothes, automobile, verbal and

nonverbal behavior and skin color. Overall being Black is similar to the words stated by Espejo and Pheby (as cited in Eisenberg, 2001) the human subject should be construed as a multiplicity rather than a discrete identity.

### **Filling the Gap**

One belief within the Black American community is that full assimilation into mainstream America could not be reached while maintaining Black identity (Smitherman & Cunningham, 1997). Black culture was a constant reminder of “unhappy days.” These days are constant reminders of slavery, segregation and oppression (Allen & Bagozzi, 2001). Memories of slavery have evolved into the inability to respect Black American leadership, a failure to imitate White people and the tendency to view dark skin and nappy hair negatively (as cited in Allen & Bagozzi, 2001). The past cannot be changed and history unwritten. According to Nobles (1991) “to be is to be what people are because of their historical past as well as what they anticipate being in their historical future” (p.301). Therefore Black Americans can either dwell in the past or push on to happier days. Fong and Chuang (2004) encourage increased Black consciousness, which is “an understanding of history and the experience and knowledge of daily life” (p. 24).

Previously, Black Americans decided to embrace Black culture as a method of expressing their liberation -the “because I can” mentality (Major, 1991). Black Americans who were heavily rooted in and identified with Black culture usually spoke Black English (Smitherman, 1986). They considered Standard English an option but not a necessity (Smitherman, 1986). They were usually a spiritual people, deep into religion and they stayed within their own predominately Black communities (Constantine, Gainor, Ahluwalia, & Berkel, 2003). Others opted to assimilate into mainstream America, by

denying or suppressing their identification with Black culture in order to adopt the culture and language of the majority (Smitherman, 1986). Standard English became the language of choice for Black Americans that did assimilate. It should be clear that some Black English is readily identified with Black people whether they have mastered Standard English or not (Baugh, 1999). Black Americans who did assimilate into mainstream America became successful and dissolved his/her roots, becoming unreliable in the 'hood (Smitherman & Cunningham, 1997). These historical trials and tribulations strengthen the idea that Black Americans have never compared themselves with other ethnicities, but with other Black Americans (Rowley, Sellers, Chavous & Smith, 1998). One can even rationalize that the saying, "keeping up with the Jones's" is a possible result of the historical competitiveness between Black Americans (Rowley, Sellers, Chavous & Smith, 1998). Asante (2001) asserted that some scholars and artists rush to deny their blackness because they believe to exist as a Black person is equivalent to being a nonexistent -universal human being. The transcultural person could have the ability to restore credibility with the Black Americans that became successful and dissolved his/her roots within the 'hood (Smitherman & Cunningham, 1997). This way non-transcultural Black people will be able to view Blacks within mainstream America in a positive light.

Black Americans have reached a point in history where he/she has the option and resources to accept the values and cultures of both Afro-cultural and Anglo-cultural worlds (Thompson, 2000). Based on social identity formation, a person may identify as a member of a particular group, and at the same time, others may assign or identify this person with another group (Davis & Gandy, 1999). For instance, a Black American may identify with Black culture but inevitably has the potential to be identified or classified

with mainstream culture (Davis & Gandy, 1999). This is the point in life where it is possible to switch between cultures, but preferably not at the expense of displacing one's Black identity. This parallels the ability of Black Americans to code switch between Standard English and Black English (White, Vandiver, Becker, Overstreet, Temple, Hagan, & Mandelbaum, 1998; Koch, Gross, & Kolts, 2001). A Black American capable of code switching would be equipped to adjust to any conversation and situation (Koch, Gross & Kolts, 2001) while maintaining a sense of self (Hecht, Jackson & Ribeau, 2003). The same rule applies to being transcultural: assimilation should not mean Black people have to strip themselves of their heritage. Being transcultural should be viewed as an additional characteristic that has the potential to increase opportunities within mainstream America for each individual. The main requirement to become transcultural is that the person should be competent within both cultures. The ability to switch between both cultures should not be confused with being bicultural or multicultural.

One might question whether or not being transcultural is the same as bicultural or multicultural. Multicultural is when a person is culturally and ethnically diverse (Fong & Chuang, 2004). For example a person who is Black, Latin American, speaks "Spanglish" (a mixture of English and Spanish) and identifies with both cultures is considered multicultural (Fong & Chuang, 2004). Yordon (2002) states that multiculturalism is the awareness of the values and contributions of other persons and cultures for our own personal liberation. The acceptance of other cultures values, attitudes and beliefs enables the multicultural person to widen his/her perspective on life (Yordon, 2002). Beyond participating in outside cultures, a multicultural person understands several cultures that

interpenetrate yet are separate from each one another –it is a fact of life (McKerrow, Gronbeck, Ehninger, & Monroe, 2000).

Bicultural is living within two cultural realities has the potential to give the appearance of one common fabric (Cross et al, 1991). For example, Black Americans can be considered bicultural because many relate to mainstream culture and Black culture. Many Black Americans are bicultural because mainstream culture is dominant, and as a result there is little option for choice (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996). Black culture exists within mainstream culture, which means at some point or another the two cultures overlap. Fong and Chuang (2004) expressed that a bicultural person occupies two worlds, switching and altering his/her identity between social worlds. The switching and altering between cultures is what enables a person to be transcultural. For instance, a Black/Latin American is bicultural but may only be fluent in one of the two cultures. Because the bicultural person is not fluent within both cultures he/she would be considered non-transcultural. A Black American that is aware of his/her ability to be fluent while switching between cultures should be considered transcultural.

Transculturalism should be viewed as a revolving door that has Black culture located on one side and mainstream America on the other. For instance, when a Black American walks through the door he/she is fluent within Black culture. A transcultural person would then be able to continue through the revolving door and also be competent within mainstream culture. Overall, being transcultural is when a person makes an active decision to be competent and able to switch between two or more cultures instantaneously.

The growing popularity of Black culture within mainstream America could have altered previous perceptions of some Black Americans. Has this change in time allowed Blacks to see that they can assimilate and maintain their Black culture? Is the increased popularity of being transcultural a direct result of mainstream America embracing Black culture? There are many unanswered questions, but the solution is finding a balance. Flowers (1996) states that diversity does not erase heritage or culture. With this knowledge in mind, the following research questions were formulated:

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between Black identity and collectivism/individualism within the Black American community?

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between age and Black identity?

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between minority hardships and Black identity?

Research Question 4: Does age influence one's ability to be transcultural?

Research Question 5: What is the relationship between minority hardship, Black identity and one's ability to be transcultural?

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### **Participants**

The participants consisted of 83 Black American male ( $n = 29$ ) and female ( $n = 54$ ) undergraduate, college graduate and current graduate students. The undergraduate and current graduate students were currently attending a large southeast University. The participants' ages were 17-19 years-old (46%), 20-22 years-old (40%) and 23 years old and over (14%).

There were 160 surveys distributed in four ways. The African American studies classes completed 41 surveys, 28 surveys were collected from students within the communication department, 10 were from the Black Greek organizations and 4 were college graduates. There was a 52% return rate for the distributed surveys. Other demographics revealed that 70% of the participants were from the south versus the 30% from the East coast, North, Midwest and International.

Regarding race labels, 47% of the participants preferred the term African American, 36% Black and 17% comprised Black American, Bi-racial or other.

### **Procedure**

To target larger populations of Black Americans certain departments were selected for the distribution of surveys. The African American studies department allowed 60 surveys to be distributed during two classes that were predominately Black. The Black Greek Organizations were given sixty surveys during their monthly Pan-Hellenic meeting. Forty surveys were distributed to various classes in the communication department.

Participants from the African American studies classes and the Black Greek organizations were informed that they were assisting in a research project. They were told that the project focused on communication patterns within the Black American community. The participants were also informed that there was no extra credit or reward offered. The first sheet viewed by the participants was the consent form. The consent form was provided to ensure the anonymity and safety of the students. The consent form had to be signed before the survey could be completed. Due to time constraints and the length of the survey participants were instructed to take the survey home. A majority of the surveys were collected at the following class/meeting time. Although participants affiliated with the Greek organizations were given the additional option to mail surveys through the campus mail.

Within the communication department, professors received a package in their mailboxes with specific instructions on how to distribute the surveys. They were to inform the participants that they were assisting in a research project that focused on communication patterns within the Black American community. These participants were also told that they would not receive any extra credit or rewards. Due to the length the professors were instructed to distribute the surveys and collect them the following class time.

Participants that were college graduates were also instructed to complete the consent form before filling out the survey. These participants were selected because they were college graduates and over 25 years-old. There were no rewards or incentives given to these participants. They were allowed to take the survey with them and return it upon completion just like the current student participants.



## **Measures**

The student survey consisted of 92 items drawn or adapted from instruments used by Chan (1994), Helms and Parham (1996), Begami and Bagozzi (2000), and Nora and Cabrera, (1996). The scales were used to measure collectivism/individualism, Black identity, the ability to be transcultural and minority hardships. Collectivism and individualism for the participants were measured on a collectivism and individualism measure. Black identity was measured on a Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (BRIAS). The participant's ability to be transcultural was measured on the Organizational Identification scale. Minority hardships were measured on a Perceptions of Prejudice-Discrimination scale. Below is a detailed description of each scale

Collectivism/Individualism Measure is a revised scale used by Hui and Triandis (as cited in Chan, 1994) that utilizes attitude items to measure the individualism and collectivism construct. The scales is composed of 11-items and each item is responded to on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Half of the items are considered collectivistic such as, "Aging parents should live at home with their children." The remaining items were individualistic (i.e., "I would rather struggle through a personal problem by myself, than discuss it with my friends.") The five collectivist items were averaged to form a collectivistic index and the six individualistic items were averaged to an individualistic index. Collectivistic items were reverse coded for consistency with the scale. Cronbach's alphas in other studies using these types of attitude items reported in general relatively low, .41 and .46 for collectivism and .51 and .53 for individualism (Chan, 1994). The scale used in this study yielded reliabilities of .43 for the individualistic scale and .30 for the collectivism scale.

Overall, the alphas were relatively low and suggest that the indexes may be only moderately sensitive in measuring the construct (Chan, 1994). Mean scores for collectivism were ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = .71$ ). Mean scores for individualism were ( $M = 4.62$ ,  $SD = .76$ ).

Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (BRIAS) was used to measure people's attitudes about social and political issues through Black identification (Helms & Parham, 1996). The scale is composed of 60-items and each item is responded to on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale was broken up into five categories, based on the Model of Niegrescence Pre-Encounter, Post-Encounter, Immersion, Emersion and Internalization. Previous Cronbach's alphas for these categories were reported as .76 for the Pre-encoutner, .51 Encounter, .69 Immersion/Emersion and .80 Internalization (Helms & Parham, 1996). Cronbach's alpha in this study yielded a reliability of .68 for Pre-encounter, .73 for Post-encounter, .84 for Immersion, .71 for Emersion and .62 for the Internalization phase. Thus, all alphas were acceptable. Means and standard deviations for each phase were: Pre-encounter ( $M = 1.90$ ,  $SD = .40$ ), Post-encounter ( $M = 1.90$ ,  $SD = .62$ ), Immersion ( $M = 2.13$ ,  $SD = .52$ ), Emersion ( $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = .58$ ) and Internalization ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = .40$ ).

A revised version of the Organizational Identification scale (Begami & Bagozzi, 2000) was used to measure the participant's ability to be transcultural (switch between Black and White culture). Respondents were asked to rate the degree of overlap between White and Black culture depending on the given scenario. The scale is composed of fifteen situational items and each item was responded to on a 10-point scale ranging from A (far apart) to J (White culture only). A sample item is, "When I am at work talking

with my boss/supervisor.” A previous study by Begami and Bagozzi (2001) reported Cronbach’s alpha at .71. Cronbach’s alpha showed a reliability of .87 for this study. Means scores for Organizational Identification ( $M = 5.64$ ) and standard deviation was ( $SD = 1.65$ ).

Minority hardships were measured on a revised Perceptions of Prejudice-Discrimination scale (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). The revised scale is comprised of 4-items that focused on perceptions of racial climate and is a 5point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item is, “I have observed discriminatory words, behaviors or gestures directed at minorities.” Nora and Cabrera (1996) reported Cronbach’s alpha reliability at .85. Cronbach’s alpha for the measure used within this study revealed a reliability of .77. Means scores for Perceptions of Prejudice-Discrimination were ( $M = 4.40$ ) and the standard deviation was ( $SD = .67$ ).

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Research Question one inquired about the relationship between Black identity and collectivism/individualism within the Black American community. To test this, a Pearson correlation was used to explore the relationship between Black identity and individualism. Each correlation used an alpha level of .05. The correlation revealed that there is no statistically significant relationship between individualism and Black identity [Pre-encounter:  $r(76) = .053$ ,  $p = .65$ ; Post-encounter:  $r(76) = .16$ ,  $p = .18$ ; Immersion:  $r(77) = .11$ ,  $p = .35$ ; Emersion:  $r(77) = .07$ ,  $p = .57$ ; Internalization:  $r(75) = .10$ ,  $p = .40$ .] A second correlation was run between Black identity and collectivism. The correlation did indicate a positive relation between the Emersion phase and collectivism:  $r(79) = .24$ ,  $p = .03$ . There was no statistically significant relationship between the Pre-encounter:  $r(79) = .03$ ,  $p = .65$ ; Post-encounter:  $r(78) = .18$ ,  $p = .11$ ; Immersion:  $r(79) = -.14$ ,  $p = .23$ ; and Internalization phases:  $r(77) = -.19$ ,  $p = .11$  and collectivism.

Research Question two explored the relationship between age and Black identity. The results of a 3 (age) x 5 (Black identity) ANOVA revealed no statistically significant findings between age and Black identity [Pre-encounter:  $F(2, 75) = .238$ ,  $p = .78$ ; Post-encounter:  $F(2, 75) = .056$ ,  $p = .95$ ; Immersion:  $F(2, 76) = .278$ ,  $p = .06$ ; Emersion:  $F(2, 76) = 1.14$ ,  $p = .32$ ; and Internalization:  $F(2, 75) = 1.16$ ,  $p = .32$ .]

Research Question three asked if there was a relationship between minority hardships and Black identity. A linear regression was performed between the dependent variable (minority hardships) and the independent variable (Black identity). Regression analysis revealed that Black identity [Pre-encounter:  $R = .26$ ,  $F(1, 76) = 5.55$ ,  $p = .02$ ; Immersion:  $R = .22$ ,  $F(1, 77) = 3.93$ ,  $p = .05$ ; Emersion:  $R = .39$ ,  $F(1, 77) = 14.06$ ,  $p =$

.001; and Internalization:  $R = .30$ ,  $F(1, 75) = 7.3$ ,  $p = .009$ ] significantly predicted minority hardships on a level of .05. The Post-encounter phase of Black identity and age did not reveal significant results  $R = .026$ ,  $F(1, 76) = .053$ ,  $p = .82$ .

Research Question four asked whether age influenced one's ability to be transcultural. The results of a 1 (transcultural ability) x 3 (age) ANOVA indicated not statistically significant findings between the participants' ages and the ability to be transcultural:  $F(2, 70) = 1.9$ ,  $p = .14$  on a level of .05.

Research Question five inquired about the relationship between minority hardships, Black identity and one's ability to be transcultural. First, all three variables were run together and then the variables were analyzed separately to determine their individual affect on the ability to be transcultural. An alpha level of .05 was used for each statistical analysis.

There were no significant results for a linear regression on minority hardships and Black identity as predictors of transculturalism:  $R = .40$ ,  $F(6, 54) = 1.66$ ,  $p = .15$ .

Next a regression analysis revealed that minority hardships are not predictors of transculturalism:  $R = .078$ ,  $F(1, 71) = .434$ ,  $p = .51$ .

Finally, a regression analysis for Black Identity as a predictor of transculturalism revealed a statistically significant relationship between the Internalization phase of Black identity as a predictor of one's ability to be transcultural:  $R = .34$ ,  $F(1, 68) = 8.61$ ,  $p = .005$ . The remaining phases of Black identity were not significantly related to the ability to be transcultural [Pre-encounter:  $R = .197$ ,  $F(1, 69) = 2.79$ ,  $p = .10$ ; Post-encounter:  $R = .023$ ,  $F(1, 98) = .035$ ,  $p = .85$ ; Immersion:  $R = .083$ ,  $F(1, 69) = .480$ ,  $p = .50$ ; and Emersion:  $R = .160$ ,  $F(1, 69) = 1.82$ ,  $p = .18$ ].

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The current study explored the cultural and communication gap within the Black American community (see Appendix A). Although not all of the research questions yielded significant results, several significant relationships were found. There was an indication that a Black American's ability to be transcultural is linked to the Internalization phase of Black identity. It is important to note that minority hardships influence a Black American's position on the Black identity continuum versus their age. The findings for each research question are discussed.

Research question one asked about the relationship between Black identity and collectivism and individualism within the Black American community. The results for the Black identity and individualism indicated that there is no relationship between the variables. These findings support Nobles' (1991) idea that Black Americans have never been considered to possess strong individualistic characteristics. Therefore there was no indication of a possible shift from collectivism to individualism within the Black American community. There is a possibility that a relationship was nonexistent due to a low alpha reliability. The low alpha reliability could be the result of an absence of agreement or consistency between the participant's responses.

The second correlation revealed that there is a relationship between collectivism and the Emersion phase of Black identity. These results support Nobles (1991) and Boykin (1983) that Black Americans are a collectivistic group of people. More importantly, the Emersion phase is the point of hesitation when proving one's blackness is important. During this moment of self reflection a positive correlation occurs with collectivism. This means that at the moment of hesitation to explore one's Blackness

there is a strong set of feelings, beliefs and concern for others (Hui, 1988). Regarding transculturalism this means that the non-transcultural person at this point has a strong sense of community. A moment where “what is best for the group” could be the realization and acceptance of becoming transcultural. The Emersion phase is a good point for the transcultural person to persuade a non-trnascultural Black American to acknowledge, understand and consider mainstream culture as the greater good for the group. Because the non-transcultural person at this point is no longer immersed within Black culture this permits him/her to embrace a new idea. Overall, the Emersion phase of Black identity could be considered a window of opportunity to get more Black Americans to understand the importance of becoming transcultural. A future study should include a scale with a higher alpha reliability to better determine the relationship between collectivism and Black identity.

Research question two explored the relationship between age and Black identity. These findings revealed that the participant’s age is not a determinant of Black identity. It is interesting to note that basically there is no specific age that causes a Black American to experience life altering situations. Apparently, Black identity is influenced by a Black persons life experiences and not age. However, a future study age should measure actual age instead of age categories to increase the versatility of age during data analysis. Further explanation for this finding is offered in the discussion of research question three.

The third research question probed the relationship between minority hardships and Black identity. The findings indicated that the Pre-encounter, Immersion, Emersion and Internalization phases of Black identity can be predicted by minority hardships. This

strengthens the findings that life situations, not age, influence Black identity. A Black American can experience minority hardships at any time despite his/her age. These results support Farr (2002) that identity is not selected; rather, it evolves from responses to various situations and continues to be molded and shaped by social interactions.

According to Cauce (2002) Black American families use minority hardships as examples to teach their children survival skills in a discriminative culture. The participants perceived minority hardships as being discriminative words, behaviors, gestures or a general atmosphere of prejudice against their own race. The Pre-encounter phase is considered to be the escape from blackness due to the negative portrayal within mainstream culture. In order to escape from being Black a person has to know how to identify blackness. Cokely (2002) believes that being Black is an experience, both good and bad, shared through skin color. This strengthens the idea that minority hardships are a predictor of Black identity.

Immersion and Emersion are the points of Black identity where a person needs to prove their blackness by conforming to the stereotypes that attempt to define Black people. Oftentimes being Black within these two phases is the result of hardships from living in two worlds, the Black community and mainstream culture (Strom, Dohrmann, Strom, Griswold, Bechert, Strom, Moore, & Nakagawa, 2002). Ultimately, minority hardships are a possible stimulus for Black Americans to explore the more positive aspects of being Black.

Internalization is the last phase of the Black identity continuum. It is the point where a Black American reexamines the bicultural nature of Black existence (Cross et. al, 1991). Internalization is the time when a Black person accepts the best and worst of both



worlds, reaching self-satisfaction. Black identity at this point is the reflection of the past and the ability to foresee identity shifting situations.

The Post-encounter phase was not significant, likely because this phase of Black identity is the *result* of minority hardships that Black Americans experience in the Pre-encounter phase. In this phase there is uncertainty about truth and untruth, right and wrong. There is little time to focus on minority hardships in general because one's Black identity is in question. The Black person has to make an identity-shifting decision: to accept what he/she has been taught or decide to venture out and define blackness for him/herself. Overall minority hardships may not be the main influence on identity in general but regarding Black Americans it is a significant indicator of identity.

Research question four asked whether one's age influenced one's ability to be transcultural. Although there were no significant findings for age and transculturalism a possible explanation is offered in research question five.

Research question five inquired about the relationship between minority hardships, Black identity and one's ability to be transcultural. The regression analysis revealed that minority hardships and Black identity together are not predictors of transculturalism. A post hoc analysis of minority hardships and Black identity individually against transculturalism did reveal a significant relationship between the Internalization phase of Black identity and the ability to be transcultural, while the remaining phases did not.

There is a possibility that minority hardships, Pre-encounter, Post-encounter, Immersion, and Emersion phases of Black identity are points where a Black person's identity and perceptions are unclear. Whereas in the Internalization phase of Black

identity the participant is satisfied with his/her Black identification. Self-satisfaction increases security enabling the Black American to embrace other ideals and cultures – becoming transcultural. In order to become transcultural a Black person has to be secure or satisfied with his/her own culture before being able to explore other cultures. These findings are further support that age is not an indicator of one's ability to be transcultural. A person can reach the Internalization phase of Black identity at any point in his/her life, and that could be why minority hardships and life experiences are determinants of Black identity and not age. Without minority hardships there would be no incentive to examine Black life from a perspective outside of mainstream culture. Minority hardships should be viewed a stimulus for the Black American to learn more positive aspects of being Black. This sense of pride or self satisfaction then becomes an incentive to become transcultural at any age. Basically the findings revealed that when Black Americans become comfortable within their own skin there is a desire to explore and then internalize mainstream culture.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

As a novice researcher, there were unforeseen discrepancies in the initial phases of the thesis process. For instance, two of the initial research questions focused on the same subject matter. However, upon committee approval one of the two questions was excluded from the final draft. Also, there was an idea that was acknowledged throughout the literature review; however, it was not formally proposed as a research question. Therefore, research questions number five was added after data collection.

Another limitation was the length of the survey. Due to the length participants were able to take the surveys home. There was no way to monitor or control the

environment of the participants. Therefore, environmental consistency was not established. The length of the survey is a possible explanation of the low reliability for the collectivism and individualism scale.

Participants between the ages of 17 -19 years-old comprised 46% of the surveys. A future study should have a larger sample size and should be inclusive of Black Americans over 25 years-old. However, the participants means ( $M = 5.64$ ) revealed that most of the participants have a large to moderate overlap between White and Black culture. A study with older participants might reveal the specific age when Black Americans are able to switch between cultures. Also, a future study age should measure actual age instead of age categories to increase the versatility of age during data analysis.

Another restriction was that 70% of the participants originated from the south. To reach people from other geographic locations, the survey could be posted on the internet. Internet access might generate a larger sample size. Also survey distribution should not be limited to current college students.

More importantly being transcultural is not limited to a particular race, even though this study focused on Black Americans. A future study should be inclusive of other ethnicities. Transculturalism is a skill that can be acquired by any person. Therefore, being Transcultural is not limited to a specific ethnicity or culture. For instance, a future study could apply transculturalism to the culture of music (i.e., hip-hop, country, rap) or sports (i.e., soccer, basketball, football).

Also, the means of the phases of Black identity show that most of the participants are within in the Emersion and Internalization phases. Future research should focus on how results would vary if the participants identified more with the Immersion phase of

Black identity. The Immersion phase is important because this is the point where the non-transcultural person is heavily involved in Black culture.

### Summary

Black Americans have been taught that in an individualistic culture difference is good and to stand out is better. This idea is contradicted because Black Americans refuse to embrace their cultural differences by acknowledging its existence. Society has frowned upon Black culture since it first showed up from Africa. Black history needs to be told accurately even if it is a painful reflection because it is a positive marker for better days. The exploration of Black history is another method of exposing the positive aspects of being Black to Black people. Even the Bible says, “My people are destroyed from a lack of knowledge,” Hosea 4:6 (New International Version). Black Americans are going to have to acknowledge and embrace their cultural differences in order to reach our children, teenage mothers and gang members. In the words of Nikki Giovanni (1996):

we feed the children with our culture/that they might understand our travail/but children are not ours/they are future...we are past/how do we welcome the future/not with the colonialism of the past/for that is our problem/not with racism of the past/for that is their problem/not with the fears of our own status/for history is lived not dedicated (p. 223).

It should be understood that trying to be Black and being Black are two different walks in life. Mainstream America often perpetuates the “stereotypical” ideals of being Black, such as big flashy cars, excessive jewelry and “gangsta” rap. Why doesn’t society perpetuate Black hardship and strife? Maybe it’s because those who are not Black can’t fathom every aspect of being black. It is evident that society embraces Black culture to a financial extent (Coleman, 2003). When the comfort, enjoyment and financial gain of the commercialization of Black culture are gone where will Black people stand?

Transculturalism is offered as solution to the problem between mainstream America and Black Americans stagnant within the Emersion phase of Black identity. To get more Black Americans to understand the importance of embracing mainstream culture, transcultural Black Americans need to be hired to work within the upper management levels of government programs and nonprofit organization. For instance, if a nonprofit organization, church organization or government program were to place a person that is transcultural in a position where he/she can identify (through language and behavior) and relate (through life obstacles) with those in need, then the odds of successfully helping that person should increase. Not only will this benefit society, but if successful it has the potential to increase interdependence versus dependency within the Black American community. This event will also show the non-transcultural person that being transcultural (the ability to switch between cultures) is an asset and vital to assimilate into mainstream culture. Assuming the non-transcultural sees the value in assimilation. There needs to be a way to persuade or motivate the non-transcultural person to want to change. If the non-transcultural person identified with the transcultural person this could be one way to solve the gap between Black Americans that identify with mainstream culture and Blacks that heavily identify with Black culture.

The Black community has to fill in the cultural gap before the gap divides their race. Adult Black Americans need to be more understanding to the younger generation and the change in times. Transcultural Black Americans need to reach back to help non-transcultural Blacks, fulfilling W.E.B Dubois's the talented tenth vision. In retrospect, have Black American's been his/her brother's keeper? Or has Black American identification with mainstream American culture widened the cultural and

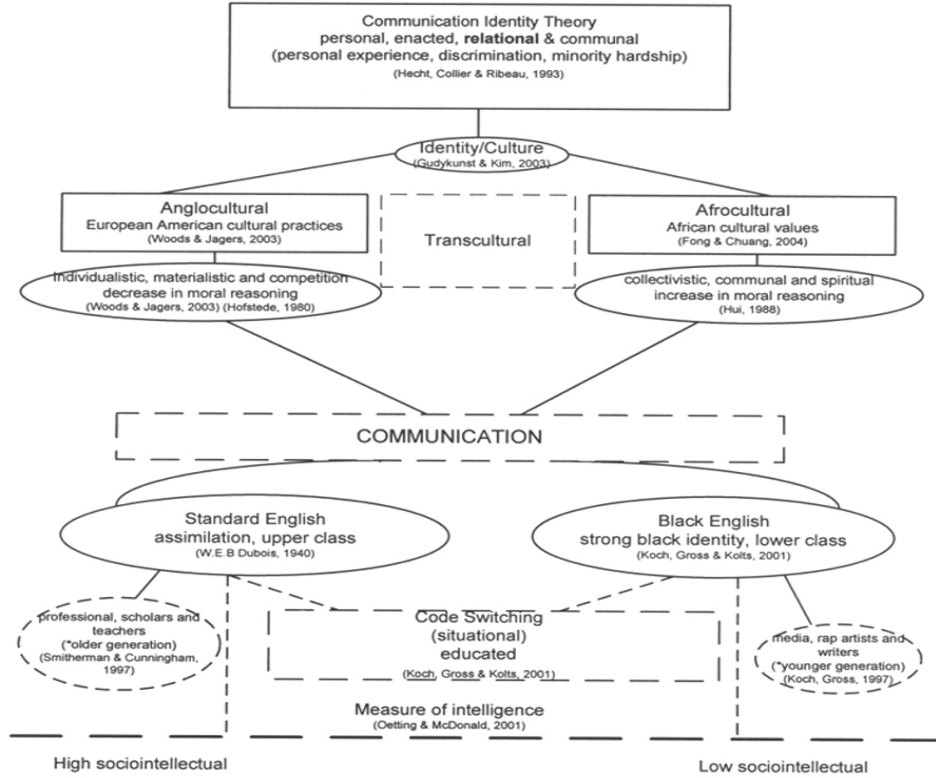
communication gap within the Black community? Black American's need to declare a restoration of the communal way of life, while fulfilling individualistic goals.

## APPENDICES

## **APPENDIX A: TRANSCULTURAL MODEL**



## TRANSCULTURAL MODEL



\*view language positively

**APPENDIX B: SURVEY PERMISSION LETTER**

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### Permission to Reproduce Research Materials

I/We, LeQuanda Baldwin, am requesting permission to reproduce the following measure(s): Racial Identity Attitude Scale

On a separate page provide a brief description of how you intend to use each measure or attach an abstract of your project.

I/We agree that in exchange for permission to reproduce the scales that I have listed, I will provide Dr. Janet Helms with the raw data involving her measures. Raw data means participants' response to each item rather than scaled scores. I also agree to collect demographic data from respondents to the measures including (but not limited to) the following: age, gender, ethnicity (e.g., Haitian, Italian, etc.), socioeconomic status, percentage of the respondents' last school (e.g. high school if the person is now in college) or work environment who were of his or her ethnicity. Please also include a copy of the version of the measure used in your study.

I/We understand that permission to reproduce the measures will only be granted for the project that I/We have described herein and that if I/We wish to reproduce the measures for other projects, I/We must obtain additional approval. I/We also understand this agreement does not include permission to publish the measure(s) in a journal or on-line.

[Signature] \_\_\_\_\_ Date 03/03/05

LeQuanda Baldwin  
Printed name of Requester

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Andrea Towers Scott Asst. Professor Nichols Sch. of Communication  
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I, Janet E. Helms, give the above signed person(s) permission to reproduce BRIAS for the above-described project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Janet E. Helms Date 3/14/05

**PLEASE RETURN THIS COMPLETED FORM TO:**  
Institute for the Study and Promotion of Race and Culture  
Department of Counseling Psychology  
Campion 318, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, 02467

**APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL LETTER**



March 9, 2005

Le Quanda Boldin  
7312 Golden Point Blvd Apt 206  
Orlando, FL 32807

Dear Ms. Boldin:

With reference to your protocol #05-2391 entitled, "Becoming Transcultural: Filling the Communication Gap Within the Black American Community" I am enclosing for your records the approved, expedited document of the UCFIRB Form you had submitted to our office. **The expiration date for this study will be 2/28/06.** Should there be a need to extend this study, a Continuing Review form must be submitted to the IRB Office for review by the Chairman or full IRB at least one month prior to the expiration date. This is the responsibility of the investigator.

Please be advised that this approval is given for one year. Should there be any addendums or administrative changes to the already approved protocol, they must also be submitted to the Board through use of the Addendum/Modification Request form. Changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received. Adverse events should be reported to the IRB as they occur.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 407-823-2901.

Please accept our best wishes for the success of your endeavors.

Cordially,

*Barbara Ward*

Barbara Ward, CIM  
IRB Coordinator

Copy: IRB file

## LIST OF REFERENCES

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