ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:	THE INTERSECTIONS OF MASCULINITY, GENDER, AND RACISM: EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES AND INTERACTIONS OF BLACK MALE GRADUATE STUDENTS ATTENDING A PRIMARILY WHITE INSTITUTION
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Negative perceptions of Black boys and men have persisted and have been analyzed through numerous studies over the years, showcasing both educator's low gendered schooling expectations of them and their racial trauma and stress they experience attending PWIs if they are able to graduate from secondary school. Placing Black men in deficit positions starts in our nation's PreK-12 public schools through their experiences in college, affecting their ability to participate successfully in the labor market, obtain higher earnings and savings, and their professional and personal mobility. Research that focuses on these negative perceptions impoverishes our understandings of Black men who do succeed in schools, from PreK-12 through doctoral study. The purpose of this collective case study was to explore Black male doctoral students understanding of their lived histories of masculinity, race, and racism through their connection with their childhood, schooling, and doctoral study. Data sources included an individual interview, journal entries, member checking, and a focus group. This study took place

at a primarily white institution (PWI) in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States and focused on three Black male doctoral students.

Through the adoption of racial/critical race literacy, Critical Race Theory, and Black masculinity literacy as theoretical frames, the findings highlight four common themes—or what I call "dimensions"—from participants' interviews and journal entries of their experiences and interactions with doctoral study based on their historical understandings of themselves: a) feelings of loneliness/not being able to forge closeness with other Black male doctoral students; b) negative perceptions of and racial microaggressions attending a PWI; c) the influence of Black masculinity to progress; and d) the ways PWIs can establish progressive spaces for Black men. One participant inhabited a dimension that was unique to him with how he claimed masculinity for himself based on his historical positioning and socialization: e) using traditional masculinity to claim manhood. The findings from participants' focus group highlight two common dimensions of participants' understanding of their experiences as they reflected together: a) reflecting and learning from Black masculinity in relation to white spaces; and b) recommendations for recruiting and retaining Black men in doctoral study. These findings show how Black male graduate students reflect upon their masculinity histories and schooling and connect them to their understandings of themselves as Black doctoral students.

This work contributes to our understanding of successful Black male doctoral students and breaks new grounds by showcasing that Black men do uphold ideals of progressive masculinity that do call for the liberation and protection of all people of color. It also shows how Black men are historically socialized and grounded as gendered and racial beings and how they view white spaces from these lenses as navigational tactics. It also demonstrates how Black men can and do communicate with each other when given the chances to, interrogating their own

masculinity practices in conjunction with modeling their own behavior in progressive ways for other Black men. Finally, this study advocates for educational stakeholders to act in concrete and tangible ways to increase Black male doctoral student presence at PWIs.

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LIVED EXPERIENCES AND INTERACTIONS OF BLACK MALE GRADUATE
STUDENTS ATTENDING A PRIMARILY WHITE INSTITUTION

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Chapter One: Introduction

Studies have continuously shown over the years the low gendered schooling expectations of and for Black boys (Hall, 2001; Hudley & Graham, 2001; Ross & Jackson, 1991; Wood, Kaplan, & McLoyd, 2007), the negative aspects of schooling for Black male undergraduate students pursuing higher education at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) and the racial trauma and stress these students experience as they complete their degrees (Boyd & Mitchell, 2018; Brown & Davis, 2017; Burt, Williams, & Smith, 2018; Craig, 2014; Hall, 2017; Harper et al, 2011; Harper & Newman, 2016; Martin, 2017; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; McGee & Martin, 2011; Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011; Smith, et al., 2016; Sawyer & Palmer, 2014; Strayhorn, Johnson, & Barrett, 2013; Watkins & Neighbors, 2007; Wood, 2014). These negative perceptions of Black boys and men have persisted throughout United States history. Harper (2004), speaking as a Black man, explains this phenomenon:

> It remains the case that Black men are continually reminded of our distress and subordination. In America, we have long been regarded as criminals, irresponsible fathers, descendants of dysfunctional families, self-destructive drug addicts, materialistic lovers of flashy possessions, and violent rapists of white women…These attributes are typically used to render us collectively undeserving of trust, respect, equitable pay and workplace promotion, and fairness. Perceptions of us, unfortunately, are hardly better in schools and colleges. The typical Black boy in a K-12 educational setting is taught almost exclusively by white women who combine an insufficient anticipation for his academic achievement with high expectations for disruptive behavior, intellectual stupidity, and a dispassion for learning that will ultimately culminate with high school dropout. His same-race male counterpart who makes it to postsecondary education encounters a different set

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of negative perceptions…[including being viewed as] underachieving and unlikely to

succeed. (p. 697-699)

According to Harper (2004), these views of Black boys and men and their educational

aspirations and success are situated in deficit lenses historically, and have led to research that

have depicted them as wayward, unable to be taught, and unwilling to be educated, leading them

to struggle through or drop out of school. These perceptions, as outlined below in the literature

review of this dissertation, have persisted through research agendas that have placed Black men

as either struggling academically through higher education because they were either ill-prepared

for college or dealing with negative stereotypes and gendered racism from white professors,

students, and educational stakeholders.

Because the academic success and failure of Black males has been a topic of discussion

in educational and psychological circles since the late 1980s (Polite & Davis, 1999), the

stereotype that Black male students do not have the intellectual aptitude to perform at the level of

other racial groups continues to persist. These negative stereotypes start at the schoolhouse door

when they are children and continue through adulthood. Of the 3.1 million public high school

students attending school during the 2011-2012 school year, Black students have the lowest

graduation rate of 68% (NCES, 2014), contributing to the narrative that these students do not

care about their education. The academic prowess and success of white students has become the

standard, accepted social norm, while it is believed that Black male students view academic

performance as a deterrent to racial identity and acceptance. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) brought

awareness to this topic by concluding that the cause of poor performance among Black males is a

coping strategy to contend with the burden of acting white and low expectations. Similarly,

Douglas (2007) acknowledged that Black males encounter difference and social stigmas unlike

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other racial groups. To be identified as Black and male in the United States education system has become an indictment rather than a positive description. Some scholars have indicated that this indictment in the public education system has been linked to educator's views of these students as lacking role models, productivity dysfunction, and parental low expectations, which can lead to internalizations of these negative stereotypes (Bailey, 2004; Harper & Palmer, 2016). This linking of schooling to Black male's college experience is important because it helps to reveal how these stereotypes persist throughout life.

Gendered Expectations as Children

The problem starts for these students in PreK-12 public schools. There are gendered differences in expectations as to how Black men are told to view education versus how other racial groups are socialized to view their education. Because they are less likely to complete school and college as compared to their Black female counterparts, Black men are less likely to enjoy the benefits associated with obtaining a college degree, such as successful participation in the labor market, higher earnings (Day & Newburger, 2002), higher levels of savings (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1998), increased personal and professional mobility, and more leisure activity (Wilson, 1996). Wood, Kaplan, and McLoyd (2007), in a quantitative study detailing the gender expectations for Black male students, hypothesize that not only do these students hold lower expectations of themselves for schooling, but so do their parents and teachers.

After obtaining data from an anti-poverty program called New Hope, located in Milwaukee, WI, the researchers probed the educational expectations Black male students—classified as urban and low-income—their parents, and at least two of the teachers of each student by sending questionnaires and surveys. As the researchers predicted, Black male students

reported lower expectations for themselves than did females. Parents of these students also reported lower expectations for their Black male children than they did their daughters, and researchers found that academic and educational background of parents were closely related to their expectations of their students. Teachers also reported lower expectations for their Black male students than they did their female students. Even worse, when comparing with the literature surrounding gendered expectations (Hall, 2001; Hudley & Graham, 2001; Ross & Jackson, 1991), the researchers found that by the time Black male students were 6 years of age, they were already experiencing lowered expectations from parents and teachers. Due to the extant literature on this subject, teachers and parents who do not expect their Black male children to achieve at the same level as their female counterparts help to internalize feelings of educational inferiority and a dispassion for school, helping to further negative stereotypes.

Not only do the deficit narratives surrounding the academic failure of Black boys/men have implications for their schooling in PreK-12 schools and higher education, but also more disturbingly, they have a direct correlation with the quality of life they face after unsuccessful schooling experiences. There is an increasing correlation between those students who drop out of school and those who become involved in the penal system. According to the Bureau of Justice (2004) statistics, Black men outnumber all other ethnic groups in the United States who are in prison, and they have a rate of incarceration five times higher than the rate of white men. Longitudinal research conducted by the Bureau of Justice (2004) revealed that in 1980, 463,000 Black men were enrolled in higher education while 143,000 were incarcerated. However, by 2004, the study found that 758,000 Black men were attending college while 924,000 had found themselves incarcerated. Over this 24-year period, for every Black man that entered college, three of them entered jail or prison (Howard, 2008). These troubling statistics have contributed to

not only how Black men are perceived in schools, but also how they are viewed in society and in research.

From Public Schools to Colleges: PWIs and Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs)

Despite the fact than more than 75 percent of Black college students attend PWIs, they continue to feel social isolation as well as other challenges that threaten their academic success (Pound, 1987; Turner, 1994). Although Black women report that PWIs can be chilly and unwelcoming environments (Fleming, 1984), Black men continue to struggle to overcome negative stereotypes and perceptions that envision them as dysfunctional, uneducable, dangerous, and threatening (Cuyjet, 2006; Gibbs, 1988; Majors & Bilson, 1992). Even those Black male students who are high-performing students report that they feel pressure to prove their intellectual ability to their white peers and professors (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007). Unfortunately, these negative stereotypes about Black male students have infiltrated research agendas, online and offline news articles, and the media, such as a television and movies. From just a cursory search online for articles detailing the experiences of Black male students reveal a number of works that place these students in deficit viewpoints: "Where are the Black Men on Campus?" (Roach, 2001); "The Missing Black Men" (Jaschik, 2005); "The Worsening Plight of Black Men" (McGlynn, 2006); and "Black Men: Left Out and Locked Up" (Nealy, 2008). Instead of highlighting the positives of the Black male life and experience, negative headlines, although statistically valid and sound, continue to dominate research and media.

Given that the extant literature and research agendas surrounding the Black male center on their alarming trends in their level of underachievement, disengagement, dis-identification with schooling, and over-identification as learning disabled (Hosp & Reschly, 2003; King, 2000;

Osborne, 1997; Wood, Kaplan, & McLoyd, 2007), there needs to be a more balanced approach to researching the experiences of Black males in every aspect of schooling—from childhood to adult college experiences. Although such studies have advocated for programs that support the educational trajectories of Black male students, they have contributed to a limited understanding of the ways in which these students really experience schooling outside of their "chronic and extreme" educational challenges (Davis, 2003, p. 520). These studies have fallen short of exploring how Black male students can develop a positive academic identity in the face of structural and cultural barriers to success, including white educators' and society's views of them to impact their trajectory from childhood to adulthood (Ferguson, 2000; Lopez, 2003; Noguera, 2008).

For Black males, their educational trajectory is even more complex than their white counterparts because not only do they have to negotiate their academic identity, they must contend with their racial and gender identity, often associated with negative stereotypes and pathology, in conjunction with expectations of schooling (Ferguson, 2000; Gibbs, 1988; Moore & Stuart, 2005; Noguera, 2008; Osborne, 1997). According to Harper (2009), there is a need for Black men to speak for themselves regarding their experiences, to challenge the ways they are represented in the media and in the literature, in order to add more voices to how Black men perceive schooling. Although college is supposed to be spaces Black men can challenge negative stereotypes and gendered racism, these sites—especially PWIs—ultimately reproduce the stereotypes that they must work to eradicate. Even when trying to challenge the literature surrounding Black males, there exists a body of work that continues to portray negative aspects of schooling for these students that eclipses the positives (Harper, 2009).

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have been found to serve the needs of Black students and have been pivotal access points for these students to experience high academic success in undergraduate studies and to obtain admissions at prestigious graduate programs. Black males who graduate from these colleges and universities are often competitive academically and enroll in prestigious PWIs to pursue advanced degrees (Gasman, Lundy-Wagner, & Commodore, 2012; Harper & Gasman, 2008; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Palmer & Wood, 2012). This is especially true of those Black male students who enroll in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs. Although the enrollment rate for racially minority undergraduate students has grown by roughly six million since 1979, minority students are still likely to enter university settings that are racially homogenous, and endure increased risks of stress and negative psychological symptoms during their collegiate experience (Greer & Brown, 2011; Housee, 2011; NCES, 2015).

But, what happens to those Black male students who graduate with undergraduate degrees and are considered high-achieving students? Those students usually go on to doctoral programs and experience some of the same gendered racism as their undergraduate counterparts (McCallum, 2016; McCoy & Winkle-Wagner, 2015; Winkle-Wagner & McCoy, 2016), although research on their experiences is *very* limited in this area. Most of the reason for this is that Black males are heavily underrepresented in doctoral programs as compared to their white and Black female counterparts. In recent years, there has been a steady increase in the number of graduate degrees earned by students in the United States (NCES, 2011). According to NCES (2011), of the 68,000 degrees awarded to all students during 2008-2009, Black students only accounted for 7% of those degrees. When accounting for Black male students, the numbers are even more dismal. When characterized by gender, Black female students earn more doctoral degrees than

Black male students. Black men account for fewer than 35% of the 4,434 doctoral degrees conferred to all Black students (NCES, 2011). This means that of all doctoral degrees earned, Black men only represent 2% of them. Because these students have successfully navigated undergraduate education to obtain a doctoral education, "assumptions are often made that their challenges are individualized, which places the onus of academic difficulties on the shoulders of Black males themselves. This perspective not only represents a deficit approach, it removes all accountability for students' success from college and university communities" (Burt, Williams, & Smith, 2018, p. 3). Still, they *are* completing degrees, so their experiences are warranted and should be added to the research literature. I attempt to add to the literature with this study.

Research Questions

In this study, I investigated Black male PhD students' lived histories understanding masculinity and gendered expectations of schooling and how these concepts have influenced their educational trajectory to become PhD candidates. I was also interested in their interactions with white professors and students. Finally, I sought to understand these students' views on how their PWIs, in light of their interactions with white professors and students, can recruit and retain more Black male students into graduate study. Thus, I was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Black male graduate students describe and understand their interactions with white professors and students, particularly as related to their race/ethnicity and gender?

2. What role, if any, does their masculinit(ies) play in their navigation of a primarily white institution?

3. In what ways do these students believe PWIs can recruit and retain more Black male students in graduate studies?

Research Design

Since I sought to understand an individual's historical meaning-making processes and culture, and taking into account how this phenomenon has mostly been studied, I took a qualitative, ethnographic approach to research (Miles & Huberman, 2019). In particular, I conducted this study as a qualitative collective case study. I focused on the intersections of masculinity, gender, and racism in the lives of Black male graduate students and how they connect to their practice as PhD students.

Scope of this Study

Gender, race, racism are key to understanding the schooling experiences of Black college students (Blascovich, et al., 2001; Chavous, et al, 2004; Howard & Hammond, 1985; Moore, Madison-Colmore, & Smith, 2003; McGee & Martin, 2011), but analyzing the experiences of Black female college students is beyond the scope of this research. Black female college students experience college in similar, but different, ways than Black male students, a phenomenon explored in recent research (Green, et al., 2018; Joseph, 2012; Rasheem, et al, 2018; Shealey, 2009). To this end, the purpose of this study was to investigate the intersection of masculinity, race, and racism in the lives of Black male college students who were born in the United States.

Significance of this Study

This study contributes to literature and practice in a number of ways. First, it positions Black male graduate students in the literature in ways that they have not been before. Palmer and Wood (2012) provide the most recent scholarship on solely Black male graduate students, but that research only provides context for these students at HBCU's. The limited literature impoverishes our understanding of the experiences of Black male graduate students attending PWIs, and this study hopes to add to the discussion. Secondly, allowing Black male students to

practice "memory work" (King & Swartz, 2015) and to write themselves in the literature gives them agency within the research process. Finally, this project explores the gendered life histories of these students in conjunction with their college experiences, establishing a research agenda that, until now, has not been explored.

Key Terms

 Black. Names and identities have continued to evolve throughout history, and complex conversations are constantly being had within diverse communities surrounding the names they claim for themselves. Because markers of identity and race were given to enslaved and formerly enslaved people of America to cement their status as property, the term "Black" emerged as the preferred term for people of the Black diaspora in the 1960s and 1970s (Quander & Froneberger, 2019). According to Carr (2019), although "African American" is used by some as an attempt to acknowledge the source of Black people's origins, "Black" is used as a sense of pride and empowerment and because it is more inclusive of the Black experience in America, regardless of origin. For this work, I use Black as a term to refer to my participants and in the analysis presented in my literature review. Additionally, my participants described themselves as Black rather than African American, given that they felt it was more inclusive of their experiences in America, and they identified its importance in referring to the wider diaspora.

 Male. The traditional view of analyzing the distinctions between sex and gender is that sex encompasses the biological aspects of the development of the reproductive system, while gender includes the psychology of an individual and the expected behaviors of sex, constructed by the culture in which an individual lives (Chau & Herring, 2002). However, the traditional view is not as straightforward as the more modern view. Delphy (1984) has argued that sex being a biological fact is only a fact of any interest because of the cultural importance attached to it;

essentially, when compared with the differences between humans and animals, the differences between men and women appear insignificant (Kimmell, 2000). With this in mind, I use the term "male" in this work, in my literature review and analysis of participant data, to refer to Black cisgendered and transgendered men and those who are non-binary who identify as male.

Masculinity. Masculinity is defined as a performed social identity by men that is controlled by socially ingrained notions of what it means to be a man (Anderson, 2005). I describe masculinity and the other concepts in this work as a "performance" because, in connection with Mutua (2006), men "act personally and in concert with other [men]" to prove their masculinity (p. 7). Traditional masculinity is a performance of masculinity that is in competition or opposition to femininity that tends to agree with hegemonic processes of domination, including sexism, homophobia, and heterosexism (Mutua, 2006). Men who practice progressive masculinity, then, are in direct opposition to traditional and conventional masculinity ideals, viewing traditional masculinity as stereotypical and they work to combat sexism, misogyny, and homophobia (Mutua, 2006; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). This work discusses the importance of masculinity in Black men's lives and how they eschew or conform to traditional masculinity and it investigates their understanding of progressive masculinity.

Chapter Two: Literature Review & Conceptual Framework

As stated above, the extant literature is limited on the experiences of Black male PhD students. To this end, most of the studies reviewed here focus on these students as undergraduates, but they do provide a necessary starting point. There are three broad categories in which researchers have studied, discussed, and analyzed the experiences of Black male students at primarily white institutions (PWIs) and their knowledge of gendered racism and negative stereotyping: (1) how Black male students detail their masculinity practices in conjunction with schooling, (2) the struggles of dealing with racial battle fatigue and trauma as a response to deficit viewpoints from white peers and professors, and (3) how Black male students use PWIs as sites for persistence, academic success, vulnerable masculinity, and friendship with other Black male students. I consider and review all of these lines of inquiry separately, detail how my research questions connect to each section, and then explain how they connect to my chosen conceptual framework for this study.

How Black male students detail their masculinity practices in conjunction with schooling

After exploring and analyzing the literature, there exists a mostly qualitative body of work that details the masculinity practices of Black males at the college level, specifically at predominately white colleges and universities. In the following section, I examine how researchers explore (1) how deficit views of masculinity and Black students have guided research and student progress (Ford, 2011; Harris, Palmer, & Struve, 2011; Strayhorn & Tillman-Kelly, 2013; Wilkins, 2012), (2) how researchers resist deficit views of Black male behavior to explore productive, progressive versions of masculinity among participants (Harper, 2004; Harper, 2009; Harper & Nichols, 2008), (3) how Black men inhabit an amalgamation of masculinity identities (McClure, 2006; Mincey, Alfonso, Hackney, & Luque, 2015), and (4) how

student organizations, such as fraternities, becomes sites of productive, progressive versions of masculinity (Dancy, 2011; Dancy & Hotchins, 2015).

Figure 1

How Black male students detail their masculinity practices in conjunction with schooling	
Research Question 1: How do Black male graduate students describe and understand their interactions with white professors and students, particularly as related to their race/ethnicity and gender?	
Research Question 2: What role, if any, does their masculinity play in their navigation of a primarily white institution?	
Deficit views of masculinity guiding research and student progress	Ford, 2011; Harris, Palmer, & Struve, 2011; Strayhorn & Tillman-Kelly, 2013; Wilkins, 2012
Researchers resisting deficit views of Black male behavior in favor of productive/progressive versions of masculinity and progress	Harper, 2004; Harper, 2009; Harper & Nichols, 2008
Black men inhabiting amalgamations of masculinity	Dancy, 2011; Mincey, Alfonso, Hackney, & Luque, 2015
Student organizations as sites of productive, progressive masculinity	Dancy, 2011; Dancy & Hotchins, 2015

Deficit views of masculinity guiding research and student progress

This exploration of the literature starts at how Black college men approach their masculinity, how they *perform* and *become* their masculinity, and the consequences and emotional costs of doing and performing it at PWIs. As Black men travel from adolescence to adulthood, what happens to those who fail to conform to standards of Black masculinity and what are the psychosocial implications of this negotiation process when Black male students enter college? In a qualitative study of 29 Black male college students attending a PWI, Ford (2011) attempted to answer these questions. After conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher found that participants performed Black masculinity in public spaces in the same ways: "black masculinity is personified in a dark-skinned, athletic, intimidating figure who

achieves and maintains status and peer approval through money, material possessions, attention from women, and tales of heterosexual encounters" (p. 44). In this sense, Black masculinity is a façade, a contrived heteronormative way to be a man that does not allow for emotional vulnerability, that leads to over-policing of other Black men who do not conform to that standard in Black social spaces on their campus. Although other forms of Black masculinity exist, the researcher found that most participants identified with the "thug" stereotype that is known and shown in media. In another finding, the researcher found that there were ramifications for Black male students who do not conform to the ideals of traditional Black masculinity, to include being perceived as gay or bisexual, or acting "white". In this sense, those students who attempted to practice their own constructed ideas of masculinity were shunned and not supported by other Black male students. Ford suggested that the relationship between the physical body and outward expressions of masculinity are important sites for either self-affirmation or self-degradation, and that there needs to be spaces on campus where Black men can learn to become more vulnerable in their expressions and affirm their own brand of what it means to be a man.

Harris, Palmer, and Struve (2011), in their qualitative case study of 22 Black male students at a private research university, explored the contextualized meanings of Black masculinity and the corresponding behavioral expressions of these participants. Much like Ford's (2011) work, the participants within this study seemingly conformed to the traditional standards of masculinity and Black masculinity. For example, concepts of toughness, aggressiveness, and strength were consistently offered as the required aspects of masculinities within their realm of past and present experiences on college campuses. To this end, most of the participants described the behavioral expectations of these concepts as sleeping with as many women as they could, holding leadership positions as a form of superiority over others, and internalizing a fear of

homosexuality and perceived femininity in other Black men. The researchers, understanding that behavioral expressions of masculinity connected to the participants' ideas of cultural norms of masculinity, suggested that college officials should provide multiple opportunities for Black men to express themselves in "more appropriate, positive, and less-destructive ways" (p. 57) and to address the structures and issues on their campuses that encourage men to rely on these strategies in the first place.

However, and especially in public and private white spaces, including PWIs, Black men have to practice emotional restraint as they enter dominant institutions as a way to survive. Investigating the intersection and nexus of race, gender, masculinity, and emotions, Wilkins (2012), in a qualitative study, explored the emotional restraint and masculine expectations of 29 Black male students at two PWIs. As a counterpoint to traditional Black masculinity described in the previous studies, the researcher asserted that participants practiced moderate Blackness (or the construction of a middle-class, upwardly mobile identity), which is the exhibiting of restrained emotions, temperate approach to Black politics, and the ability to get along with white people (p. 41). To this end, participants used moderate Blackness as a way to juggle concerns about racial authenticity, class mobility, and masculine control. Although Wilkins contended that this expression of Blackness and masculinity was positive in that the participants did not exhibit norms of traditional masculinity as a way to survive at their PWI, this behavior allowed them to "not see" racism as a problem or factor in their lives as a consequence of their code-switching. This behavior does not happen gradually; it is a strategic behavior that Black men use intentionally in conversation and interaction with white peers, administrators, and professors. Because of this intentionality, the participants claimed that they did not let racism bother them because they did not want to be seen as the "angry black man" (p. 38). However, this behavior is

not all positive—because of their ways of coping with traditional masculinity, the Black men push the pursuit of eradicating racism onto their Black female counterparts. It is important to note that most participants in this study were not student-athletes, so the researcher contends that they had more space to practice moderate Blackness and masculinity that, ultimately and unintentionally, positioned Black women to undertake fighting racism on campus without their input. Ironically, according to the researcher, this behavior, although positive, leads to racism and gendered stereotyping to go unchecked, creating identity issues for this minority population.

The discussion of how Black men become gendered beings on college campuses must also turn to how Black queer[1] men negotiate their masculinity as well. In an in-depth qualitative study, Strayhorn and Tillman-Kelly (2013) discussed the ways in which 29 Black gay male college students construct their masculine identities in academic spaces at PWIs. Results from the study indicated that a majority of the participants discussed the ways in which they adhered to and practiced traditional models of masculinity, which revealed how these beliefs had become internalized and shaped their behaviors in academic spaces. For example, some participants spoke of how they would join intercollegiate sports teams and brag about their falsely created sexual exploits with women in order to conceal their sexual orientations when interacting with other Black men. Also, when they felt that they were not acting in traditionally masculine ways, they would use their height or strength to overcompensate. However, in conjunction with exhibiting traditional behavior, participants sought to redefine it on their own terms and critique

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[1] The word "queer" emerged in the early 19th century, referring to something that was or someone who was perceived as "odd" or "strange." By the beginning of the early 20th century, however, "queer" became a pejorative for people who considered themselves homosexual or who were assumed same-gender loving (Barnhart, 2003; Jagose, 2013). In recent years, the term has become a reclaimed term in the broader LGBTQ community (Curtis, Dellar, Leslie, & Watson, 2000). In reclaiming it, the queer community has adopted different meanings to the term, both personal and political, and within academia, it has been used to challenge fixed expressions of identity and binary categories (Seidman, 1994). For this work, the term "queer" is used as an umbrella term to identify Black gay and trans men.

their behavior in subtle ways. For example, participants would pursue majors and participate in extra curricular activities traditionally viewed as feminine, such as majoring in music and nursing. Finally, a number of participants revealed how their amalgamations of masculinity were shaped by a myriad of social factors, sociopolitical contexts, and social identities of race and gender; these factors led participants to feel as if they were separate from Black men who identify as straight. These findings suggest that although Black gay students do inhabit traditionally masculine identities when they come to campus, they intentionally challenge hegemonic definitions of masculinity when interacting in an academic sense. The researchers maintain that administrators must understand the myriad ways Black men negotiate their masculinity and how they take from concepts of traditional and progressive masculinity instead of inhabiting just one space.

Resisting deficit views of Black male behavior in favor of productive/progressive versions of masculinity and progress

Research shows that not all Black men are the same or act in the ways that society depicts them. In Harper and Nichols's (2008) study, they discussed how the stereotypes of Black men being commonly cited as criminals, irresponsible fathers, descendants of dysfunctional families, self-destructive drug addicts, and manipulators of women (Anderson, 2008; Gadsden & Smith, 1994; Gordon, Gordon, & Nembhard, 1994; Jenkins, 2006; Mandara, 2006; white & Cones, 1999) are not only problematic, but also erroneous. In a study featuring 39 Black men attending private PWI universities, the researchers explored the diversities of thought and experiences among these students. Using the Heterogeneous Race Model (Celious & Oyserman, 2001) which "stresses the importance of recognizing how within-group differences and distinctions among individuals of the same race influence daily interactions as well as experiences with and

perceptions of each other" (p. 2), the researchers found that although the Black men under study understood that the white professors they took classes from viewed them in negative and stereotypical ways, they recognized the diversity of experiences amongst themselves (including the fact that some of them were born into privilege, while some of them came from poorer neighborhoods), they began to challenge the stereotypes they held about each other because of how white people viewed them, and because they were a small group on their campuses, they began to deconstruct why they competed with each other, which only served to create divisiveness among them and connected to the traditional viewpoints of masculinity they had internalized. The authors maintained that some Black men are bound together by common social interests and *not* stereotypical views of their behavior.

There are other researchers working in this line of inquiry to illuminate the ways Black men resist deficit views of their behavior. In a phenomenological study of 32 high-achieving college-aged Black men attending six predominantly white universities in the Midwest, Harper (2004), in individual interviews, found that unconventional and productive definitions of masculinity, when coupled with organizational involvement and leadership opportunities, were acceptable forms of masculinity and helped to promote healthy masculine identities for these students. For example, most of the participants consistently maintained that common stereotypes and definitions of masculinity did not apply to them—they did not tend to seek out sexual relationships with multiple partners, participate in competition such as sports and video games, and did not want to pledge in fraternities to meet other women. According to the high-achieving Black men in this study, maintaining a strong academic record, holding multiple leadership positions, and cultivating a high-profile status on campus because of these positions, "would not have made it into the African American male undergraduate male portfolio of masculinity" (p.

97). Harper concluded his argument explaining that there is a clear link between Black males practicing conventional masculinity practices on campus and their dropping out of school early. If colleges want to retain Black males, they must "implement effective programs that will assist these students in resolving identity conflicts and developing masculinities with which they are comfortable" (p. 103).

Harper (2009) used counterstory, a tenet of Critical Race Theory, to deconstruct the negative narratives around the Black male as confined to crime, drugs, athletics, and academic failure (Fries-Britt, 1997), which contributes to a scholarly agenda that focuses on deficit narratives of Black male behavior and advances a "doom and gloom trajectory for these individuals in the educational enterprise" (Jackson & Moore, 2008, p. 847). Using data from the National Black Male College Achievement Study, the largest empirical research study of Black male undergraduate students, Harper collected data from 219 students attending 42 universities and colleges across America. Using a phenomenological approach to qualitative inquiry, which focuses on the lived experiences of a group of interest, Harper attempted to highlight the successes of Black male students in higher education, rather than focusing on the deficits and disengagements of these students that is so prevalent in media and in research. "Successful" students were chosen, in consultation with educational stakeholders including deans of students, provosts, presidents, and senior student leaders, as those Black male students who had at least a 3.0 GPA, established lengthy records of leadership and engagement on their college campuses, developed meaningful relationships with campus administrators and faculty outside of the classroom, participated in enriching educational opportunities, including study abroad programs, internships, and summer learning, and earned numerous merit-based honors and scholarships in recognition of their college achievements. These Black students, who were successful and

achievers in their studies on campus, were interviewed in a face-to-face interview with subsequent interviews completed over the telephone, if needed.

Because this study was part of a larger examination into high-performing Black male students, Harper only chose to focus on five students. He found that they all have counternarratives to show the differences between how they behaved to how white people stereotyped them to be. In response to how colleges failed to recognize how intelligent they were, participants chose to join organizations and student unions that would showcase their talent, interrogate and deconstruct negative racial and masculine stereotypes about their behavior when they arose, and foster relationships with white administrators and professors who had grown accustomed to Black men on campuses being disengaged. Harper maintained that his results showed that "[participants'] experiences are often overshadowed by the master narrative that amplifies Black male underachievement, disengagement, and attrition" (p. 708). Also, he suggested that the "most talked about" problems of educational attainment, fatherhood, and leadership in Black communities can be solved by Black men who have excelled on college campuses. However, their ideas and expertise are rarely called upon to help solve those problems. Harper maintained that there must be a multi-pronged strategy to challenge gendered racism and encourage success for these students so that they can bring their success back to their communities after graduation.

Black men inhabiting amalgamations of masculinity

Black masculinity and masculinity are also constructs Black male students can draw upon in order to cope with and persist through college. In a quantitative study, using survey responses and examining masculinity as a coping mechanism among 162 Black male undergraduate students from HBCUs and PWIs, Mincey, Alfonso, Hackney, and Luque (2015), discussed the

differences between traditional masculinity and Black masculinity. While traditional masculinity suggests that men should be competitive, unemotional, in control, successful, white, and straight (Connell, 2002; McClure, 2006; Speer, 2001), Black masculinity can be defined through self, family, human community, spirituality, responsibility, maturity, accountability, and sacrifice (Chaney, 2009; Dancy 2011), which is different from how other researchers have defined it above (Ford, 2011), making definitions of Black masculinity a contested domain. The researchers reported, however, that Black men who face racial strife, racism, and white spaces do tend to revert to mainstream ideas of traditional masculinity. Although social class was not reported for each group, results from this study suggest that Black male students who attended PWIs identified with elements of traditional/mainstream masculinity as ways to cope through their respective academic programs while participants who attended HBCUs identified with elements of progressive Black masculinity. There was no statistically significant difference between class rank and masculinity, meaning that college racial makeup proved to be more significant. Coping strategies for participants included active engagement, positive reframing of masculinity, self-distraction, religion, and planning. The findings from this study indicate that the type of masculinity Black men relate to does influence the coping techniques they use for academic success. Findings also suggest that students who attend HBCUs identify with both traditional masculinity and Black masculinity because they are the majority on campus where they express communal involvement, but once they leave campus, they are the minority, meaning they have to subscribe to traditional masculinity standards to be successful.

In detailing the ways in which colleges become sites that socialize Black men as gendered beings, Dancy (2011), in a qualitative study, explored the ways in which constructions of manhood and masculinity influenced the collegiate efforts of 24 Black male students attending

PWIs across 12 PWIs and HBCUs who shared membership in the same fraternity. Dancy found that participants constructed their manhood around self-expectations—including being resilient in leadership, strength and self-pride—and being responsible and accountable for their actions. In another finding, participants expressed the need to be benevolent patriarchs of their family and as responsible sons and brothers, including protecting women and children. Finally, participants' worldviews and philosophies were linked to their masculinity development while in college, including their relation to a divine being, seeing religion as a common ground between Black men, and becoming culturally aware of their position to white people and how marginalized they and their actions are socially and culturally. Much like the last study discussed, Dancy saw a "double consciousness" (p. 488) of manhood in which participants understood white expectations of their masculinity, but struggled with whether they wanted to conform to those ideals or conform to another masculinity ideal of their own making. According to the researcher, those students who attended PWIs were much more likely to express themselves in relation to white expectations of their behavior, and those who attended HBCUs experienced double consciousness as well but not to a greater extent. Across all study participants, there existed contradicting messages on masculinity: "The result is added pressure to be 'hard', 'down', 'cool' and 'real' while also experiencing academic success as college students" (p. 490). In their communities, going to college was considered "white" and "soft", and it was seen as a violation of the hegemonic masculinity in which they were socialized, creating a situation that participants have to cope with conflicting messages about who they were supposed to be. The researcher suggests that more research should be conducted that explains how colleges shape masculinity perceptions among Black men.

Student organizations as sites of productive, progressive masculinity

Black fraternities are also examples, along with other programs for Black men, in which Black male college students can construct manhood and Black masculine identities in the face of racial stereotypes, gendered racism, and microaggressions at PWIs. In a multi-institutional qualitative study across 12 colleges and universities, Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs), and 24 participants, Dancy and Hotchins (2015) found that the Black male collective is a home place in fraternities that allows for a sense of camaraderie, trust, community, and brotherhood and that fraternity membership has myriad ways in which masculinity was either introduced or reinforced (including self-expectations, relationships to family and community, and worldviews and existential philosophies). For example, participants attributed their fraternities as teachers of persistence and resilience, which included teaching them how to be natural leaders, how to enhance their physical and mental strengths, how to bolster their self-pride, and how to try their best at everything they do. Most participants said that this finding helped them to become academically successful at their prospective universities and colleges in spite of how white peers and faculty treated them. The fraternity, also, was a site where negative, pervasive, and racist views of Black masculinity were dispelled and helped participants to expand their worldview of what Black men could be. Through this process, the participants were able to learn about diverse people and viewpoints that helped to change their own viewpoints. In conclusion, the researchers maintained that all educational stakeholders must strive to learn how fraternities can be sites for where Black men can construct diverse representations of their masculinity to dispel negative stereotypes of their behavior.

Discussion

In this line of inquiry, there has been a clear focus on how masculinity is lived, constructed, performed, and experienced for Black male students, heterosexual and queer

students. Although there are multiple definitions of masculinity that researchers use, there seems to be a consensus that Black male students either inhabit some characteristics of traditional masculinity as a form of domination over other Black men, or they borrow from traditional *and* productive/progressive forms of masculinity as a way to survive their college experiences. Even queer Black men, in an attempt to hide their constructions of masculinity from other Black men, draw upon some characteristics of traditional masculinity as a way to shield their behavior from other Black men. From here, we turn to how the literature has explained how Black men experience racial battle fatigue and trauma as a consequence of survival at PWIs.

The struggles of dealing with racial battle fatigue and trauma as response to deficit viewpoints from white peers and professors

In this line of inquiry, researchers detail how deficit viewpoints of Black men, their masculinity performances, and academic performances, lead to racial stress, racial trauma, and racial battle fatigue. In the following section, the literature depicts, (1) how negative stereotypes and gendered racism affect Black male student progress (Harper, Davis, Jones, McGowan, Ingram, & Platt, 2011; Harper & Newman, 2016; Martin, 2017; Wood, 2014), (2) how racial battle fatigue leads to racial trauma, internalized oppression, feelings of hypersurveillance and hypervisibility, and affects mental health (Sawyer & Palmer, 2014; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011; Smith, Mustaffa, Jones, Curry, & Allen, 2016; Strayhorn, Johnson, & Barrett, 2013; Watkins & Neighbors, 2007), and (3) the strategies Black men have used to persist through the negative stereotypes that hinders their academic success (Boyd & Mitchell, 2018; Brown & Davis, 2017; Burt, Williams, & Smith, 2018; Craig, 2014; Hall, 2017; McGee & Martin, 2011).

Figure 2

The struggles of dealing with racial battle fatigue and trauma as response to deficit viewpoints from white peers and professors	
Research Question 1: How do Black male graduate students describe and understand their interactions with white professors and students, particularly as related to their race/ethnicity and gender?	
Research Question 2: What role, if any, does their masculinity play in their navigation of a primarily white institution?	
Negative stereotypes and gendered racism affecting Black male student progress	Harper, Davis, Jones, McGowan, Ingram, & Platt, 2011; Harper & Newman, 2016; Martin, 2017; Wood, 2014
Racial battle fatigue leading to racial trauma, internalized oppression, feelings of hypersurveillance and hypervisibility, and affecting mental health	Burt, Williams, & Smith, 2018; Sawyer & Palmer, 2014; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011; Smith, Mustaffa, Jones, Curry, & Allen, 2016; Strayhorn, Johnson, & Barrett, 2013; Watkins & Neighbors, 2007
Strategies Black men have used to persist through the negative stereotypes that hinders their academic success	Boyd & Mitchell, 2018; Brown & Davis, 2017; Craig, 2014; Hall, 2017; McGee & Martin, 2011

Negative stereotypes and gendered racism affecting Black male student progress

There are adjustment periods that Black men go through when they transition from high school to college, indicative of how gendered racism and low expectations affect these students even before they get to college. In a qualitative study of 219 Black male students, across 42 college and universities in 20 states, Harper and Newman (2016), found that most of their participants had a number of challenges that they faced going to college, which hindered their progression through their chosen program of study. For example, most of the participants felt that they were academically prepared for the rigor of college. While some of them expressed that their high schools' curriculum had weak college preparatory work that contributed to their challenges in going to college, most agreed that they did have Advanced Placement courses at their high schools, but those classes were not as strong as they needed to be. Participants also

mentioned that they had unrealistic expectations of college level work, meaning that they had no clue that they needed to set aside time to study, did not think they would have as many assignments as they did, and thought their college courses would not move as fast as they did. The researchers also found that, while most of the participants were high performing in high school, they were no longer in that position when they came to college. Some also blamed their teachers for not holding high expectations for them, which led to them being high performing in high school, but not in college. All of this together, according to the researchers, led to participants to not join in on-campus activities because they were ashamed of their performances. Finally, the researchers found that students would also seclude themselves from social activities because their colleges and universities were majority white and there were not many Black men that they could socialize with. The researchers maintained that administrators must help Black male undergraduates "overcome challenges that threaten their academic goals in the first year" (p. 24) like implementing summer bridge programs to smoothen the transition between high school and college instead of ignoring them after they get accepted. In addition, they contend that teacher quality has a role to play; they must prepare their students for college by mirroring collegiate academic norms and expectations in the high school classroom. They suggest that teachers must teach students how to study instead of simply completing homework (p. 22) and teach in progressive ways that mimic college classrooms.

In conjunction with negative stereotyping and preconceived notions, Black male students can also feel disengaged with their studies, leaving them to be passive agents in their own success, which hinders their performance in higher education and impacts their matriculation through college at PWIs. In a qualitative study of 28 Black male students attending a primarily white community college, Wood (2014), discussed the identifying factors that impeded their

academic success. Possible factors of Black male disengagement included, according to the researcher, a nervousness to speak out in class because of a fear of their answers reflecting badly on their race, hesitancy to speak because of stereotypical perceptions of Black people's intelligence (Stevens, 2006), stereotype threat, or the presence of stereotypes leading marginalized groups to conform to them, leading to low academic performance and negative academic self-concept (Steel, 1997, 1999), and also threats to their masculine identity, meaning that Black men usually absorb, from a young age, that schooling is a feminized terrain; when men are engaged and successful in schools, they do so to the detriment to their male identity, which leads them to take on a disengaged persona (Harris & Harper, 2008). Findings from this study indicated that participants felt that academic disengagement hindered their academic progress and this finding was examined in three domains: participants' understanding of disengagement, students' reactions to disengagement, and the role of faculty-student interactions in amplifying the negative effects of disengagement. For example, participants felt apprehension of participating in class because they felt that their professors and peers would think they were academically inferior, which became internalized when their professors and peers reacted negatively to their answers. Because of this feeling, participants expressed that they would either obtain outside help from tutors instead of their professors or they would not seek out help at all. Finally, initial student-faculty interactions caused this apprehension because their professors expected them to "approach them first" (p. 795) to show determination to succeed. The researcher concluded by maintaining that although Black male students may be disengaged because of interactions with faculty, their apprehension may well lie in either their educators expecting them to be disengaged as children, or they were used to being disengaged in school because of fear of attacks on their masculinity.

In another study detailing the hindrances of Black men achieving academic success at a community college, how these men dealt with preconceived notions of their behavior and academic performance, and how their professors felt about their academic performance, Martin (2017), in his dissertation, found that participants' white professors thought they had the same equal academic abilities as white students and were supported by the institution at the same levels as their counterparts, which helped to contribute to negative stereotypes. Black male students, in order to combat and navigate through preconceived notions, would focus on time management, ask for help when needed, and get involved with campus activities to network as much as possible. Finally, after analyzing the responses of white faculty and participants, Martin found that both groups thought that preconceived notions of Black male students by faculty would stop if Black men take their education seriously, if they understand that they can ask for help if they needed it, community colleges need more diverse faculty to address their needs, and that faculty needed more opportunities to participate in conversations with diverse students in order to better understand what they need to be successful. Martin concludes by maintaining that in order to fully understand the experiences of Black men at PWIs, researchers must be cognizant of the viewpoints of white faculty as well. Eliciting the responses of white faculty members, according to the researcher, would provide another data point to compare and contrast the experiences of Black men dealing with preconceived notions of their behavior and academic success.

But gendered racism and negative stereotyping of Black men do not just affect academics and the classroom, they also affect the out-of-class social environments they interact with. In a qualitative study of the experiences of 52 Black male resident assistants at 6 PWIs, Harper, Davis, Jones, McGowan, Ingram, and Platt (2011), used counterstory methods to find that

participants had myriad racial and racist interactions with white peers while serving in their roles as resident assistants. Participants described how they are treated as if they were not intelligent based on how they look, how they dress, or how they talk. For example, in staff meetings, participants felt their white resident assistant peers would act surprised when they have something "thoughtful to offer" (p. 188) as if Black men are not supposed to be intelligent or share their thoughts with others. Also, like other studies detailing the experiences of Black men on white college campuses, most participants felt like they had no one to talk to about the issues as resident assistants because there was no one else that looked like them. For example, researchers found that there was a lack of representation in the participants' profession because most of the administrators (hall directors, area coordinators, and central life administrators) were white. In order to retain more minorities as resident assistants to curb negative stereotyping of Black male leaders, the researchers claimed that the administrators must hire more Black men in administrative positions first. In conclusion, the researchers suggested (like other researchers) that administrators must examine their assumptions about Black male behavior before implementing diversity initiatives within the student leader experience. There must be, according to the researchers, complex and hard conversations around gendered racism and administrators must allow Black men to lead those conversations. When those examples are completed, then changes can be made administratively, first, then initiatives to diversify student leadership organizations can follow.

Racial battle fatigue leading to racial trauma, internalized oppression, feelings of hypersurveillance and hypervisibility, and affecting mental health

The complex intermingling between Black men experiencing racism, success, masculinity, and the problems they can cause, can lead to racial battle fatigue and racial stress.

According to Smith, Hung, and Franklin (2011), Black men's lives are definitely racialized contradictions, which connects to what Harper (2009) found in his study. On one hand, they are told that contemporary educational and professional institutions, particularly PWIs, are places where, through hard work, they can achieve the American dream. However, these places usually come with gendered racism, blocked opportunities, and racial battle fatigue and stress. The researchers explained racial battle fatigue and stress as "the physiological, psychological, and behavioral strain exacted upon racially marginalized…groups. These excessive strains require additional energy redirected from more positive life fulfilling desires for coping with and fighting against mundane racism" (p. 66-67). This racial stress is caused by racial microaggressions, which are subtle verbal and nonverbal insults directed at people of color, layered insults based on someone's race, gender, or sexuality, and cumulative insults that cause racial stress (Pierce, 1974; Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano, 2006). Using data from the *African American Men Survey*, completed in 2006, the researchers analyzed responses from only the Black male participants in the study (n=1,328 Black men which included 400 Black men attending college).

In investigating the relationship between racial microaggressions and societal problems causing racial battle fatigue and stress, the researchers found that among Black men who had some college education, both contributed to their feelings of racial stress, significantly and positively, meaning that as the amount of these two attributes increased, so did feelings of racial stress. For those Black males who were high-performing college students at PWIs and graduated, racial microaggressions overwhelmingly predicted feelings of racial stress after controlling for age and annual household income. With everything else being equal, as Black men become more successful, attend primarily and historical white institutions like college, and graduate, they tend

to feel more racial stress than their counterparts and experience more racial microaggressions. Although college is supposed to be on the road to the "American Dream" for most students, it is not so for those students who identify themselves as Black men. If society and educational institutions are calling for Black people to go to college, the treatment they receive on campus needs to be interrogated and deconstructed as well. The findings within this study support the paradox that as Black men become more successful and graduate college, they still have to face common negative stereotypes about their behavior in the professional world, including having a "ghetto-centered" mentality, being violent, and not really obtaining their positions based on their hard work, but because of race-centered policies.

The paradox of school success and, ultimately, Black men still facing gendered racism and negative stereotyping, bears out qualitatively as well. In a study of 36 Black men enrolled in 5 selective PWI's, Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) used a racial battle fatigue and stress approach to examine the psychological effects of racial stress on Black men. The major themes the researchers found was that Black college-going men reported being under constant surveillance and control by community policing tactics on and off campus, including being told they "fit the description" (p. 562) of illegitimate members of the community who did not attend college and it elicited a psychological response, including frustration, shock, avoidance and withdrawal, anger, and aggressiveness. These responses created situations in which the men started to act in traditionally negative ways, which increased the surveillance they felt on campus. These responses led to anti-Black male stereotyping and marginality in three different spaces: academic spaces, social spaces like student organizations and parties, and also campus-public places, including restaurants in the college area. The authors find it pertinent, though, to stress that their study does not attempt to play the "oppression sweepstakes" (p. 553) in

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establishing that Black men experience the most oppression in American society, but they do stress that researchers need to clarify their experiences on primarily white campuses, especially since, currently, in some states, there are more Black men in prisons instead of attending college.

Because there are so few Black men attending PWIs, these students receive the most hypervisibility, racial microaggressions, and hypersurveillance. According to Smith, Mustaffa, Jones, Curry, and Allen (2016), the racial stress and racial battle fatigue of Black men is covert and overt, acute and/or chronic, and is deeply psychological (Pierce, 1995; Smith, 2004). In their qualitative study at seven elite Research I PWIs, the researchers detailed the experiences of 36 undergraduate Black men. Findings indicated, while using the research of Harper and Harris (2012) showing that only 33% Black men complete their undergraduate degrees within six years, that participants were structurally placed at the margins of their overall college experience. In one finding, participants detailed Black misandric[2] stereotyping as part of their academic experience. For example, students detailed their experiences with on-campus security and off-campus police officers, felt followed, and were expected to be know about gang activity when asked; for the participants, the only "relief" they felt was when those negative stereotypes focused on them being athletes, effectively taking away from their academic merit. In another finding, the perpetrators of these Black misandric stereotypes and hypersurveillance had some form of power, including white professors, staff, and police officers. For example, in classes their answers and participation were never acknowledged, while the perspectives of their white counterparts were, which positioned them as anti-intellectual and not deserving of their space on the college campus. Finally, the researchers found that, although the participants detailed their

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[2] According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term "misandry" refers to the dislike of and an ingrained prejudice against men and the male sex. For this work, I refer to Black misandry or Black racial misandry as an exaggerated pathological aversion toward Black boys and men, created and strengthened in societal, institutional, and individual ideologies and practices (Smith, 2010).

experiences of marginality and hypersurveillance on their campuses, they still strived to overturn them by exceeding at the highest levels. This behavior led to strategies to cope with their situations, to include processing, practicing self-care, confronting white professors and peers about the situation, or focusing on finding counterspaces. However, these coping strategies came at a deep cost; participants reported symptoms of withdrawal, frustration, shock, anger, and hopelessness. The researchers contend that there needs to be more research around the nuanced experiences of Black men outside of their racial identity to really explore how white supremacist ideology is a construct within their college experiences.

In another qualitative study of the racial stress and microaggressions that Black men face at PWIs, Sawyer and Palmer (2014), discussed how these constructs can lead to internalized oppression and can lead Black men to have gendered negative stereotypes about their own behavior. After interviewing two Black men at a private PWI, the researchers found that double consciousness existed for them. For example, they were confronted with representations of Black maleness that they did not understand: they were not athletes nor were they first-generation college students. These representations of Blackness followed them throughout their college experiences to the point where they began to conform to them, even though their experiences before college did not reflect that. Because of a lack of racial interactions on campus, the researchers found that these representations of Black maleness were entrenched for these two participants, therefore, creating a paradox between reality and fantasy. In another finding, being confronted with these representations created an internal struggle that the participants had to deal with; they were constantly carrying the burden of negative stereotypes of Black male behavior *and* the struggle on being academic successful and fitting in socially. Because of this, navigating college and identity became a complex situation in which participants began to believe what

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society and others said about Black behavior, and they would "other" and separate themselves from those Black male students who outwardly displayed those negative behaviors. The researchers maintain that these findings continue to add counterstories to the dominant narratives of failing Black men on college and predominantly white college campuses, and insist that instead of hosting forums on racial diversity, educational administrators must focus their priorities on creating environments where interracial dialogue can happen between white and minority students and faculty.

Although there is much research documenting how racism and negative stereotyping affect Black students, not much has been done on how Black male graduate students navigate their way through school. Burt, Williams, and Smith (2018), provide more insight into how 21 Black male Engineering graduate students deal with the impact of negative stereotyping of their behavior, structural racialized policies in admissions, and gendered interactions with professors and peers in their college. They maintained that there is an ecological factor that hampers persistence in master's and doctoral degrees, meaning that, although most Black male graduate students are STEM majors, there still exists a lack of ethnic diversity in those fields, which leads to racialized and gendered incidents. There are also sociological factors in play as well, leading to microaggressions, because there is a general mismatch between the racial make-up of advisors and professors and Black male graduate students. Utilizing the Bowman Role Strain and Adaptation Model (BRSAM), which emphasizes the social resources, psychological resources, and self-efficacy traits that people draw on to become successful through challenges (Bowman, 2006), the authors found that as their college began new recruitment practices while trying to avoid further attacks on affirmative action, the participants felt that there was underrepresentation of Black men in Engineering, which left them feeling powerless with how to

deal with negative stereotyping and racism. These new recruitment policies also led to lower

Black male enrollment, which led to racial isolation. Also, the Black men spoke of multiple

negative experiences with non-Black professors and peers that affected their persistence to their

degree and led to exclusion from study groups, which led to feelings of isolation. These findings

suggest, according to the authors, that researchers should look at other disciplines to see if these

results repeat themselves, and also should develop theories that show how Black men faced

gendered racism in white educational institutions.

Racial stress and gendered racism do not just affect Black male students, but also affects

those Black male students who were incarcerated before attending college. In a constructive

qualitative study, Strayhorn, Johnson, and Barrett (2013), in conjunction with university

organizations whose mission was to help those who were in prison transition to college, explored

the experiences of 2 Black male students who had been incarcerated and were now finishing

their academic degrees. The researchers found that their "ex-offender" label was an impediment

to their motivation and academic success, which affected the way they interacted with peers.

Participants shared how the label was often associated with stereotypes that they were murderers

or hardened criminals, how it affected how faculty viewed Black men in general, and how their

professors had low expectations for their success. For example, both participants spoke of how

they would hear professors saying, "It's expected of Black men" (p. 84) to be in prison and that

they would not be successful in obtaining their degrees. Researchers also found that participants

did not have any supportive networks they could draw upon to help them. While they perceived

that other Black male students had organizations they could turn to for support, there really was a

lack of resources on campus to help them with financial aid or to help them negotiate their

compulsive court visits in conjunction with attending their classes. Participants also had to

contend with trying to find housing as an ex-offender, were denied many times for leases off-campus and were denied on-campus housing, they had a lack of access to healthcare, and were restricted employment options. Through these challenges, participants felt that they had to have grit and resilience when dealing with these situations and to network with prisoner rights organizations that would help them out of their predicament, but they had to do all of this alone. Although possible limitations include the small sample size and the ongoing nature of their research in regards to finding more participants, college administrators, according to the researchers, should do more to soften the "prison-to-college" pipeline and reevaluate policies that would hinder the success of Black male previously incarcerated college students.

The combination of racial stress and trauma and the impact of masculinity stereotypes can also impact Black men's mental health. In a qualitative study examining 46 Black male undergraduate students' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes regarding their mental health, Watkins and Neighbors (2007), explored ways colleges and universities can provide culturally appropriate mental health options for Black men. Findings from this study indicated that participants had culture-specific definitions of mental health; for example, most identified mental health as the practice of concealing their emotions, which came from their family members before they attended college. The researches described this as the "mental toughness" (p. 275) that these students have come to expect of themselves and what others have come to expect from them as children. In another finding, participants defined depression through their and society's views of Black men and the social support they receive for it. Most participants identified that depression was something they had to consciously conceal from others based on messages about mental health they received before college and agreed that it was experienced differently by their group in comparison to white men; the researchers maintained that these thoughts on depression was

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something innate in most Black men. Finally, participants felt that, while they were comfortable in discussing mental health and depression with the researchers, they felt uncomfortable talking about it with other Black men or their families because they did want not to be perceived as "soft" or "effeminate" (p. 276), and maintained that there was no culturally appropriate therapy options for them on their campus. The researchers contend that in order for educational administrators to understand the masculinity standards Black men face before college and during college, they need to be able to provide rich mental health experiences to target their academic success. Illuminating the limitations of the study, the researchers discussed that most participants were psychology majors so that may have had more familiarity about psychology terminology than others; participants may have been limited in what they shared with researchers given the stigma of discussing mental health in Black communities; and, because of the nature of focus groups, participants may have been reluctant to disagree with each other, which emphasizes the need for more culturally relevant mental health spaces.

Strategies Black men have used to persist through the negative stereotypes that hinders their academic success

Along with Black men understanding the ways in which they can contribute to their college experience, they deal with racial stress by helping to dispel negative stereotypes by persisting. In a qualitative study including 6 participants, Boyd and Mitchell (2018), utilizing interviews and naturalistic observations, discussed the need for researchers to focus on the strategies Black men use to combat negative stereotypes and persist to be successful, rather than focus on deficit lenses of their college experiences, to include disengagement and academic failure. Using an anti-deficit achievement framework for Black males (Harper, 2012), which breaks questions down into three different categories to ask Black male students about their

experiences on college campuses (pre-college socialization and readiness, college achievement, and post-college success), and taking a phenomenological approach, which uses rich, thick descriptions of participants' lived experiences (Geertz, 1973; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2014), the researchers found that participants internalized their experiences with negative stereotyping by questioning themselves and others. When participants received messages about their lack of intelligence and were placed in areas of study that they had not chosen, they either confronted stereotypes as soon as negative interactions occurred or codeswitched or over performed in academic settings to prove their intelligence, and provided advice to younger Black men on campus to help them through the process of higher education. The researchers ultimately recommended that scholars continue to focus on how Black men succeed and persist in academic spaces instead of how they fail.

The ways in which Black men construct meaning of their experiences on white campuses and how they use them for academic success, is another form of persistence as well. In a qualitative study of 59 Black male students across 3 primarily white institutions, Brooms and Davis (2017) discussed *how* and *what* Black men experience in college spaces and how they inhibit or produce academic success. In an attempt to highlight the deficit perspectives Black men deal with across these campuses, the researchers discussed the numerous ways participants in this study persisted through these perspectives. Using an anti-deficient framework, the researchers found that participants experienced a range of challenges of campus. For example, they acknowledged a lack of societal integration between marginalized and minoritized students and white students, and how this phenomenon was much more significant for Black men. Even when participants wanted to lead organizations, they were always confronted with subtle messages that they should really focus their attention on minority organizations. Participants also

felt that they were over-policed on campus, including racial profiling and fractured conversations with white peers and faculty. Although over-policed and segregated, participants felt that they could only survive their campus climate if they decided to commune with each other. Through these social interactions with each other, participants were able to remain in their subcultures with people who looked like them as a way of coping with racial stress, and relied upon that subculture for social and academic assistance. Finally, through these social networks, participants were able to find mentoring opportunities with Black male faculty to assist them through the college process and to help them graduate. These mentorship opportunities helped participants to socially mature and develop the skills necessary to persist on a primarily white campus and to achieve their career goals after college. These findings, according to the researchers, help educational administrators to understand the supports Black male students need to achieve academic success and positive personal development.

Even when studying the effects of literacy and language, researchers have found that marginalized and minoritized students can persist through majority white spaces by utilizing critical literacies to increase their self-efficacy. In a qualitative study of a Black male student on academic probation regaining his space in a predominately white university, Craig (2014), discussed how this student effectively navigated asymmetrical power structures to achieve success. The researcher's participant was a student who, after failing a writing course, was on track to become academically suspended from college. For this student, literacy took on a new meaning; it was a way for this student to not only pass his classes, but to also increase his ability to navigate academic spaces and dispute his grade in the course. The researcher found that the participant used institutional literacies and critique to gain reentry into the college space. For example, the participant had to write a statement of purpose as to why he was disputing his grade

and why he should not be on academic probation. Using institutional discourse, the norms of writing, and merging them with his own voice as a Black man, aided in his persistence through the experience, while also helping him take control of his literacy experiences to return to class. The researcher maintained that this "critical code meshing created dialogue for how subaltern languages function as tools for institutional critique for Black college men" (p. 4). While in his composition class, the participant could not use his multilingual language of AAVE and Standard English, but he sought to show the power of his voice as he wrote his way back into college. Another finding indicated that the participant, frustrated with his college experiences, found on the university website the responsibility of teachers; after reading it, he realized that his white professor was grading him along the lines of his racial use of AAVE, and not on announced criteria and standards of academic achievement. With this finding, the participant was able to leverage his own language with intuitional literacies to "write" himself back into college. The researcher contends that there needs to be intentional policies to target Black male students so that they know their rights and responsibilities to persist through academic obstacles.

In another qualitative study on persistence and resilience, Hall (2017), discussed the characteristics of 10 Black and Hispanic male students that have helped them to persist through their studies at a PWI. Using CRT and racial microaggressions as part of the conceptual framework, Hall found that although racial microaggressions served as impediments to participants' progress, they ultimately redirected and used them as motivation to complete their collegiate studies. For example, the Black male participants (n=6) indicated that their professors automatically assumed that they were student athletes and academically inferior, thereby implying that they somehow got an acceptance to campus because of affirmative action or because they were only good at sports. The researcher also found that participants, especially the

Black male students, did not feel that they were involved in a extracurricular activities because there was not many that catered to Black men, outside of sports. Although these negative stereotypes affected them in various ways, they did come to understand how athletics supported them in their college studies because they were not the "only one" (p. 62) within those domains. In order to gain a sense of community, they had to participate in traditional activities, like athletics, because if they did not, they would be alone in their studies. The author offered that more research needs to be done comparing and contrasting the varied experiences of marginalized male students on multiple campuses and to take on a quantitative focus to see if the findings repeat themselves.

Another positive consequence of persistence leads to self-defined notions to achieve one one's own merits, instead of at the behest of others. McGee and Martin (2011), in a study of 23 Black graduate mathematics and engineering students from 4 different Midwestern universities, including 14 Black male students, discussed how Black students can persist through negative stereotyping even though they have keen awareness of their Blackness being undervalued and constantly undervalued in their educational pursuits. Using life-history methodology and semi-structured interviews, the researchers found that these students used their exposure to stereotypes to maintain high achievement, although with high and heavy psychological costs; for these students, higher achievement was in response to, but not limited to, negative cultural views of Black people. Although these students, according to the researchers, understood what negative stereotypes were, from a young age, they developed tactics to manage those stereotypes in order to be successful, although they were emotionally and psychological debilitating. In another finding, participants, in the face of stereotypes of Black inferiority in the STEM fields, persisted through their degrees to prove those stereotypes wrong, even though the rewards of that

persistence were few and, at times, not liberating. However, the researchers found that stereotype management, or the act of pursuing ways to deal with negative stereotypes, was too limited a finding for their study; they found that participants, in order to completely defy negative stereotypes, created their own definitions of success from their own self-determined criteria, instead of trying to prove themselves to others. While they could not *completely* escape the wants and ideas of others, they did enjoy fleeting moments of self-determined success. The researchers suggested that in order to reduce the marginalization that Black graduate students, and especially Black male graduate students, feel on white campuses, strides must be made to deal with the microaggressions they face.

Discussion

This section of the literature detailed the racial and gendered stereotypes Black undergraduate males have faced as they traverse the college campus. Unfortunately, there was only one study (McGee & Martin, 2011) that focused on the needs and experiences of Black graduate students, and even that study did not solely focus on Black males. Although the literature is focused upon the stereotypes and racial battle trauma this group of students face, there are bright spots as well. These students have the capacity to navigate PWIs successfully when they are given the opportunities for mentorship with other Black male students and Black male professors to persist through these stereotypes. The third stream of literature takes this idea further and provides an analysis of how Black men can define success for themselves in the face of racism and experiencing stereotypes.

How Black male students use PWIs as sites for persistence, academic success, vulnerable masculinity, and friendship with other Black male students

In this final section, the literature moves from deficit perspectives of Black male masculinity and the racial trauma these students feel at PWIs, to the positive ways they construct masculinity as a form of friendship and camaraderie for survival. In this line of inquiry, researchers have investigated (1) the ways in which Black men can thrive by fostering positive mentoring experiences with other Black men and professors (Alston, Guy, & Campbell, 2017; Cummings & Griffin, 2012), (2) how student organizations can be used as leverage for success (Harper, 2008; Harper & Quaye, 2007), (3) how programs targeting Black men leads to social cohesion, friendship, and camaraderie (Brooms, 2018; Brooms, Goodman, & Clark, 2015; Jackson & Hui, 2017), and (4) how Black men can control their own narratives by writing themselves into research (Ingram, 2016; McGowan, 2018; Woodward & Howard, 2016).

Figure 3

How Black male students use PWIs as sites for persistence, academic success, vulnerable masculinity, and friendship with other Black male students	
Research Question 3: In what ways do these students believe PWIs can recruit and retain more Black male students in graduate studies?	
Black men thriving by fostering positive mentoring experiences with other Black men and professors	Alston, Guy, & Campbell, 2017; Cummings & Griffin, 2012
Student organizations as leverage for success	Harper, 2008; Harper & Quaye, 2007
Programs targeting Black men leading to social cohesion, friendship, and camaraderie	Brooms, 2018; Brooms, Goodman, & Clark, 2015; Jackson & Hui, 2017
Black men controlling their own narratives by writing themselves into research	Ingram, 2016; McGowan, 2018; Woodward & Howard, 2016

Black men thriving by fostering positive mentoring experiences with other Black men and professors

To combat racial battle fatigue, racial stress and trauma, and experiencing the negative effects of racial microaggressions, gendered racism, and racism, some researchers have explored

the positive possibilities of making sure Black men have opportunities for mentorship with Black faculty at white educational institutions. Alston, Guy, and Campbell (2017), in a qualitative study of 16 Black male students, explored the nature of mentoring experiences of Black male STEM students. Data revealed that the participants felt that their race was inextricably linked to their development as scientists, career development, and the importance of finding positive mentorship experiences. For example, most of the participants expressed the need to finish their studies because they believed that there was underrepresentation of them in postsecondary education. In order to change it, they felt that they needed to graduate with their doctoral degrees and become professors. The researchers suggested that these wishes had numerical value: "Participants' gender identity as black men in STEM is characterized by lack of numerical presence, which they interpret as absence in science communities in the general society" (p. 57). The participants, according to the researchers, felt that they needed to become Black male professors because they enjoyed having other Black male faculty that looked like them on campus, and also preferred to have mentors and academic advisors who looked like them. The researchers maintained that in order to increase Black male enrollment, there needs to be more cultural sensitivity training for professors around Black male needs and that administrators should think closely on the importance of same-race/gender mentorship for these students.

Expounding upon the counterstorytelling method, Cummings and Griffin (2012) used principles of CRT and critical communication pedagogy (CCP), which advocates for communication to be at the forefront in the persistence and maintenance of institutional power, that communication should be contextual, that culture and language must be central, and that reflexivity and praxis are essential (Fasset & Warren, 2007), to illuminate the experiences of 29 Black male undergraduate and graduate students attending a PWI in the Midwest and 11 Black

male professors. The authors found, in students' counterstories, and while using focus groups, that although they had multiple negative experiences with disenchanting white professors (who they said did not understood who they really were), they all could draw on at least one positive experience with a Black professor to draw powerful comparisons. They also found that these students felt more comfortable attending classes with Black male professors because they held high expectations of them instead of the low expectations they had come to expect from their white professors. Similarly, they found that Black male professors taught their students from a place of love because they understood the negative stereotypes placed upon Black men. The authors maintained that the faculty saw that "critical communication pedagogy of love is not only important, it is imperative" (p. 101), especially when Black men have been inundated with messages that love was a feminine pursuit. They also espoused that Black men's reflections reveal how Black misandric ideology manifests and persists in traditionally white educational spaces and demand that administrators pay close attention to what Black male students and faculty have to say about their own experiences. Researchers acknowledged as a limitation that they failed to meet the average minimum of six participants per focus group, reflecting participant availability and scheduling conflicts that they accommodated.

Student organizations as leverage for success

Although inundated with negative stereotyping when attending college at PWIs, Black men find student organizations and other leadership opportunities that will allow them to express their Black masculine identities positively while working for social justice. In Harper and Quaye's (2007) qualitative study, student organizations become venues for Black men to express themselves outside of the stereotypes white administrators and students place upon them. In this phenomenological study, which attempted to provide a shift in perspective from quantitative

research, the authors interviewed 32 high performing—using the same definition from above in Harper (2009)—Black male students and found that each student was able to express their Black identities through student leadership in Black student organizations. These organizations provided ways to develop advanced cross-cultural communication skills that provided them the opportunity to understand others from different races and gave them ways to uplift the Black community, which helped to dispel negative stereotypes and open doors for other Black males. These students were able to perform positive aspects of their Black maleness when they were actively engaged in student organizations. They believed that if their colleges did not have any opportunities for leadership for them, they would have regressed in their studies, affirming the negative stereotypes about them. In order to create Internalization of positive Black identity (Cross, 1995), or when Black people begin to come to terms with their identity and develop a sense of peace and holistic understanding of what it means to be Black, Harper maintains that white stakeholders have to make student advocacy groups more visible for Black men if they really care about their retention rates.

In another qualitative study of Black men negotiating their identities within white institutions and using social networking and student organizations as leverage to be successful, Harper (2008), discussed the negotiating tactics of 32 high-achieving Black male student leaders attending PWIs. Using a social-capitol theoretical framework, which defines how participants use relationships with institutional agents and networks that afford access to resources and information for social progression towards goals (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986, 1987), Harper found that participants had access to high administrative figures who provided them with information on graduate schools and scholarships. For example, some of the participants expressed how they had a direct line to presidents of their schools and attended exclusive committee meetings with

administrators, affording them multiple opportunities to engage with other administrators to foster positive connections. The researcher also found that, through their positions as student leaders, participants were able to maintain relationships with older, Black male students who had been successful in and after college who could steer them into opportunities to engage with other high-achieving Black men on campus and helped them facilitate meetings with administrators.

Programs targeting Black men leading to social cohesion, friendship, and camaraderie

There have been initiatives, usually under the umbrella term, Black Male Initiative (BMI) programs, that target these students for graduation and graduate studies. They are used as social cohesion programs that help Black male students' retention and graduation rates. Using qualitative inquiry with 40 Black male students across 2 PWI's, Brooms (2018), found that BMIs play an important role in socializing marginalized students into college spaces, giving them access to social and cultural capital, while also honoring the cultural wealth Black men bring to primarily white campuses. For example, most participants stated that BMI programs provided them a safe space to fellowship with other Black male students and institutional agents, which helped them to foster community on campus with each other. Participants also expressed that the BMIs helped them create connections with faculty, staff, administrators, and student leaders. In this regard, participants gained social and cultural capital because they were able to gain better knowledge of resources on campus, tutoring sessions, scholarship opportunities, and opportunities to speak with professors about their academic problems if they had them. Because of BMIs, participants expressed that they received enhanced academic experiences, like out-of-class opportunities, which increased their academic performance. Finally, and the most important, Brooms found that this program allowed participants to gain a positive sense of self and create a collective identity with their Black male peers. This helped them construct their

notions of Black masculine identity, which for them, were accountability, responsibility, and positive sense of self. This also, according to the researcher, connects to vulnerability: "vulnerability as a masculine construct pushes back against hegemonic masculinity, which informs and encourages males to be tough and emotionless (p. 151-152). The researcher suggested that research needs to be conducted on how BMIs create a sense of positive masculine identity and affect Black male educational attainment.

In another study focusing on the experiences of Black male students in a Black Male Achievement Program (BMA), Brooms, Goodman, and Clark (2015), discussed the various resources and opportunities these types of programs can offer for marginalized students on primarily white campuses. After interviewing 16 Black male participants on one PWI campus and analyzing a questionnaire that had been give to them, the researchers evaluated the success of a BMA program on the academic trajectory and social capital of these students. Findings indicated that participants gained positive cultural connections with other Black male students, staff, and faculty. Through these connections, and knowing that they had the lowest graduation rate at their university, participants were motivated to finish their degrees and to excel at the highest levels. Another finding indicated that participants learned a lot about their own abilities and shortcomings and how to target both to be successful. For example, participants understood the importance of increasing their determination, drive, and practical skills in order to achieve their career goals. Finally, the researchers found that the program helped them to increase their understanding of their collective identities, and through this awakening, were able to interrogate negative stereotypes they themselves held about Black men. With the program, participants felt less restrained and felt that they could be who they wanted to be and increased their individual wants and potential in their career goals. By giving voice to Black men and their views of

collegial participation in a BMA program, learning from each other, gaining role models and

mentors, achieving their goals, and learning more about what Black men could be in contrast to

what they had grown up to learn, the researchers suggested that these findings demonstrated the

importance of engaging Black men in opportunities while in college to increase their potential.

These opportunities, according to the researchers, will encourage Black men to gain and leverage

their social capital as a way to open doors for and to learn about themselves.

Research also suggests that Black male students can focus on the camaraderie that they

have among themselves if they are truly supported when they enroll in primarily white

institutions. In a qualitative case study of 17 Black male undergraduate students at a PWI,

Jackson and Hui (2017), discussed the ways in which participants enrolled in a BMI forged

partnerships and companionship with other Black male students in the face of moving to a new

environment after high school. Findings indicated that participants joined the program because

they wanted to create lasting friendships with other Black male students. Because their campus

was predominately white, participants wanted to forge deeper connections with students who

looked like them. In another finding, researchers found that participants wanted to either create a

family they never had growing up or wanted to replace the ones they had left behind. According

to the researchers, like immigrant groups, participants created fictive kin groups in order to

incorporate themselves into college culture and to find the emotional and social support that a

family could provide. Finally, participants joined these programs because they wanted to be

close to academically successful Black men, gain mentors that would help them through the

process of schooling, and to obtain job opportunities after college by associating themselves with

their successful peers. According to the researchers, these findings suggest that, outside of facing

negative stereotypes and white faculty and peers, Black men create community on their own terms.

Black men controlling their own narratives by writing themselves into research

Along with mentorship opportunities, having Black male students control the narrative around their schooling, having them participate in research studies, and creating programs to specifically target them for higher education, is an important way to increase Black male enrollment in graduate programs and to also give them a chance to focus their attention on schooling while dealing with racism and gendered negative stereotypes. Woodward and Howard (2016), in an in-depth qualitative study of 20 Black undergraduate students attending a research course intended on shaping a desire for PhD education at a public, white research institution on the West coast, used data from two courses on their campus, "Black Male Experience," which was focused on helping Black male undergraduate students transition from high school to college and to also give them a chance as a collective to talk to each other about their college experiences, and "Black Male Research," which offered students the ability to gain important knowledge of research that would aid them in their college-going activities and, ultimately, convince them to attend graduate programs after graduating. After semi-structured interviews and member checking, the researchers found that the students had limited knowledge of research. Most of them believed that the word "research" was solely connected to the physical sciences and not the social sciences, but they expressed that they appreciated expanding their notions of research and becoming a part of it. Through the course, they also became well-versed to the challenges of Black men attending PhD programs; they discussed that there were few Black men pursuing graduate degrees because there was a lack of mentors that look like them, there was a limited understanding of the PhD process (which connected to their notions of what domain

research belonged to at the beginning of the course), and that there was a fear of being alone in the process. These findings mirrored, according to the researchers, the participants' own experiences as undergraduate students. The authors found that the participants appreciated the course because it gave them the knowledge of research and gave them research skill, something they would have never known if they had not attended the course. The researchers suggested that although Black male students at PWIs feel unsupported and that their advisors are not invested in their success (Wood, 2014), these institutions need to do better at socializing these students into research and learning communities in order to increase their representation in terminal degree programs; in order to socialize Black men into graduate education, they must be able to understand the characteristics of it to succeed (Gopaul, 2011).

Programs like BMIs and BMAs can help Black male students think about the progressions of their education and can lead them to obtain PhD's. Using personal narratives, Ingram (2016) discovered the factors that led 18 Black male students, enrolled at PWIs, to doctoral education. 13 came from two parent households, and the remaining five were raised in a single parent household. 10 identified as coming from a working-class environment, 7 as middle class, and 1 as coming from a poor/low-income environment. Findings indicated that participants had faculty advisors and mentors who identified their academic skills early and helped to shape their interests in doctoral education. For example, most participants identified that their faculty mentors were Black men who encouraged them through their undergraduate experiences. This finding underscores the importance, according to the researcher, of Black men receiving culturally relevant education from faculty mentors that are of the same race and gender of the students they serve. Black male professors were important to the academic trajectory of these participants as well. In another finding, with the help of mentors, participants wanted to pursue

doctoral education because of altruistic reasons; they wanted to take their education back to the communities that helped them go to college. As participants began to understand "their social responsibility to give back to their communities" (p. 8), they wanted to contribute to the betterment of Black people and help other children obtain college degrees as they did. Finally, participants had a personal motivation to pursue doctoral education. Because of the perceived lack of Black men obtaining doctoral degrees, participants wanted to better themselves by pursuing original research. Earning a PhD was a way for them to combat social issues and negative stereotyping of Black men. These three findings as to what motivated Black men to pursue doctoral degrees, is evidence, according to the researcher, of the importance of hiring high-achieving minority faculty members, creating opportunities for Black male students to engage in research, and conducting more research on the experiences of Black doctoral students. These findings, according to the researcher, can impact educational policies and procedures to target Black male students in undergraduate education to help them aspire to PhD degrees.

In another study exploring how Black male students interact with each other in the research process, McGowan (2018), discussed how it can help these students create meaning and develop masculine identity with each other. Using grounded theory, the researcher interviewed 17 Black male students (a mixture of heterosexual and queer students) at a public PWI in the Midwest and explored their stories of identity and masculinity development as children and adults and analyzed their photography that depicted their close relationships with other men. Findings from interviews and photo elicitation indicated that these men exhibited a level of vulnerability with each other and the researcher that they would not display openly to others. In one finding, participants revealed that, through the interview process, they were able to reflect on how their intersecting identities affected their interpersonal development and attachments to

other Black men, something they had not been used to in their past. Although they were uncomfortable at certain points of their interviews, most revealed that it was a cathartic moment for them. In another theme, the researcher found that participants were able to unpack troubled and unresolved aspects of their childhood. For example, those students who did not have the perfect father figure would intentionally seek out positive relationships with other men to resolve that issue. Participants also were able to differentiate between casual acquaintances and long-lasting friendships, which, for most of them, revealed that they had more acquaintances because of the lack of Black male students on their campus. Finally, after the interview and photography elicitation process was over, the participants felt more invested in the study's aims and outcomes because they had a positive space to express their emotions with each other, something they could not readily do in their daily lives. The author, though, did make sure to maintain that participants' vulnerabilities were exposed because he shared their race and gender, which could be a limitation for other researchers working in this area. He contends that researchers must make sure that participants know the aim of study of vulnerability to illicit the same responses he received. The findings suggest that researchers must continue to talk about how Black men come to value the research process and talk about their successes, therefore, developing a more vulnerable masculinity.

Discussion

It is clear, from an analysis of the literature involving Black male students at PWIs, that there is a tendency among researchers to focus on the deficits of traditional masculine behavior among Black men and the negative stereotypes affecting their persistence through schooling at higher education institutions. Only recently, in the last six years, has there been a focus on the positive trajectories of Black men's experience on college campuses, how student

organizations—made up of predominately white *and* Black students—can be leveraged for academic success and job placement after graduation, and how Black men benefit greatly from camaraderie and friendship with successful Black male college students as mentors and advisor-advisee relationships with Black professors, regardless of gender. The last stream of literature discussed and analyzed was the smallest part of this review, furthering the idea that researchers are only recently discovering the idea that Black men can and do positively navigate their college experiences as a form of survival and can leverage the "whiteness" of their campus communities to become academically successful—but only if they have the tools to do so.

To this end, I attempt to situate this study into the second and third streams of literature, thereby furthering the Black male college student research traditions in these areas. Although I focused on the negative experiences, if any, that my participants had in conjunction with schooling and attending a PWI, I did want to also focus on the positives that have come from their experiences on campus. However, my research study attempted to add another realm of possibility into how the literature should be advanced. For example, there are two studies reviewed above (Ingram, 2011; McGee & Martin, 2011) that focused on the experiences of Black male graduate students; however, one of those studies did not solely focus on Black males. After an extensive review of Black male college students at PWIs, their constructions and practices of masculinity, and the coping strategies they use, there was only one article (Ingram, 2011) that focused solely on the experiences of Black male graduate students. Not only do I attempt to add to the literature base surrounding Black male students, I also make an effort to fill a critical space and gap in the literature that need to be addressed. In the next section, I detail how my conceptual frameworks will help to fill that space.

Conceptual Framework

This study draws upon three different frameworks to describe the experiences of Black male PhD students. It draws upon (1) racial/critical racial literacy to explain the meaning of "memory work" and how marginalized communities can use it explore racism, (2) critical race theory to position race and racism as central to lives of Black students, and (3) Black masculinity to describe the dimensions of masculinity literacy for Black males. For this study, literacy is not just focused on the common tropes of reading and writing; it is tied to the individual potential for social and cultural critique, which involves a critical awareness of cultural competencies as they relate to issues of power and desire at their extremes (Cushman, Kintgen, Kroll, & Rose, 2001; Gutiérrez, 2008; Morrell, 2002)—criticality meaning how Black men become aware of their masculine literacies (including how they were shaped by their lived experiences) in conjunction with White graduate spaces and cultural competencies meaning how they demonstrate awareness of these literacies (including speaking and performing in the classroom with peers and professors).

Racial Literacy/Critical Racial Literacy

Because racism, or the maintenance of racialized hierarchies governing resource distribution, is not just borne of evil or intentional prejudice, but exists on foundational, constitutional, geographical, political, and economical grounds (Guinier, 2004; Horsford, 2009, 2011; Twine, 2004), there is a need for racial literacy in education. According to Guinier (2004), racial literacy seeks to decipher the dynamic interplay between race, racism, class, and geography, and how majority populations have historically used race and racism to stifle minority populations' progress in America and for social, economic, political relations to their benefit. Racism, then, normalizes racialized hierarchies and diverts attention from the unequal

distribution of power and resources in American society. Using race as a decoy offers white people, rich or poor, short and long-term psychological advantages, while masking common problems of resources that everyone must use to survive (Guinier & Torres, 2002). Guiner takes her concept of racial literacy further:

Racial literacy depends upon the engagement between action and thought, between experimentation and feedback, between bottom-up and top-down initiatives. It is about learning rather than knowing. Racial literacy is an interactive process in which race functions as a tool of diagnosis, feedback, and assessment. Second, racial literacy emphasizes the relationship between race and power. Racial literacy reads race in its psychological, interpersonal, and structural dimensions. It acknowledges the importance of individual agency but refuses to lose sight of institutional and environmental forces that both shape and reflect that agency. (p. 114-115)

Because racism is tied to power, a truly racially literate person will understand the need to situate their experiences within broader constructions of racial hierarchies, especially Black and Brown people navigating white spaces. As Guinier stated, it is important to understand how racism interacts within institutional constructs of power, how minority populations use racial literacy to navigate through these systems of power, and how their thoughts on their circumstances lead to action and/or inaction in the face of racism and racist policies. Even more importantly, there exists a clear link between how race and racism change as space and geography change. For example, Black and Brown people who position and move themselves in places of power where white people are dominant must contend with racism because they are the minority in those institutions. Racial literacy, then, becomes an asset in these situations. This is why racial literacy becomes an important part of this examination because, as Guinier (2004) says, "it is critical to

link race and class without losing sight of race in ways that invite the people most directly affected to speak for themselves" (p. 117). If minoritized people, according to the standards of racial literacy, are able to educate themselves on how racism continues to contribute to structural inequality and how it narrates economic success from minority groups, and if they can "speak" their own stories, they can understand their place within white spaces and can advocate for themselves. Once that education happens, the goal of racial literacy should lead to racial realism, racial reconstruction, and racial reconciliation—processes important in primarily white spaces. Drawing from Horsford's (2014) work on racial literacy in school leadership, racial realism is an acknowledgement of how racism is reproduced in education, racial reconstruction refers to how individuals move from deficit-laden stereotypes to construct new meanings of race, and racial reconciliation is the process of healing and reaching common ground.

Of course, the work of racial literacy is hard, especially for minority populations who are adversely affected by racism. This work, though, has political significance in that it becomes political race work to improve conditions for minorities, especially for those in primarily white spaces. Drawing from Guinier and Torress's (2002) work, Ladson-Billings and Donnor (2005), contend that political race work allows for minority populations to rethink and restructure systems of power, instead of merely dealing with them. In this way, we are "enlisting race" (p. 290) to fight racism in white spaces. It requires reaching out cross-racially with other white people and minorities, diagnosing the ills of the space, and organizing and working together to resist it. When speaking of political race work—which should be one of the positive consequences of racial literacy—Black and Brown people can bypass electoral and legal (and slow) ways to deal with their situation; in conjunction with racial literacy, political race work should attempt to change circumstances quicker and more efficiently.

Expanding upon the conventional ideas of racial literacy and the cognitive functions it produces, critical racial literacy focuses on how race not only influences, but transforms, the social, economic, political, and educational experiences of individual groups, people, and communities, especially for marginalized groups (Nash, Howard, Miller, Boutte, Johnson, & Reid, 2017; Skerret, 2011). As opposed to just acknowledging racial tension and strife, a critical race literacy lens demands acknowledging *and* confronting blind spots in others and racism, including subtle microaggressions. According to Nash, et. al (2017), critical race literacy is the next step of racial literacy, a humanizing epistemology that requires all educational stakeholders to recognize, refute, critique, and synthesize structures of race in daily life, moving from the theoretical to progressive action in curricula, communication, and restructuring of oppressive structures that will allow for equity. Critical racial literacy and racial literacy work together to deconstruct racist structures that have historically kept minorities from the same progress that whites experience.

Because racial identity formation and socialization occurs early in a person's lifespan and is learned over time as he or she moves in and out of spaces (Boutte & Johnson, 2013; Guinier, 2004; Howard, 2015; Nash & Miller, 2015; Tatum, 2017), critical race literacy requires memory work to "reconnect knowledge about the past that has been torn apart by Eurocratic narratives" (King & Swartz, 2015, p. 1). In this sense, minority communities under qualitative study must work to remember how racism has affected their lives and their movements across place, time, and spaces. Through memory work, teachers and families (as first teachers) can intentionally and consciously create safe spaces for all people that are continuous, progressive, and ongoing, as opposed to creating these spaces *after* racist events happen as a reactive and isolated practice. A critical race literacy not only understands race and racism, but also promotes action before

racism can ever manifest to "soften the blow" of negative experiences for all people. Memory work, then, allows for minorities to understand how racial binaries and racism are learned, how it leads to negative behaviors, and can spur active change, before and after racist events and issues happen.

Critical race literacy, however, is complex because people are complex. Because racial identity development is a dysfunctional process, especially for minorities at younger ages (Nash et al., 2017; Tatum, 2017), all people become socialized into "sociopolitical constructed racial discourses and identities" (p. 7) which are carried over into adulthood as socialized beings. For example, minorities can identify with white identity—the notion of a white creator in symbols and images and the positioning of whiteness as power and privilege (Helms, 1990)—as the norm because of their experiences with racism as young children. In this sense, racial identity is complex and contradictory considering how minorities attempt to assert whiteness as the norm in adulthood while also trying to keep their identities intact in white spaces. Understanding how the prescriptive notions and stereotypes of whiteness (Reid, 2013) affect minority communities is important for critical racial literacy. Through learning about the restrictive and contradictory nature of whiteness, those who are racially literate understand and recognize blind spots, or how racism operates in plain sight without being interrogated and confronted. In this sense, whiteness is routinely hegemonized and white people do not recognize the depth of their racial privilege due to their own limited consciousness (Allen, 2014). Those who practice critical racial literacy not only understand processes of domination, but can also act to dismantle them by partnering together to resist racial hegemonies.

Critical racial literacy is an important theoretical framework for this study because not only does it gets to the core of what racism is, how it affects the movement of minorities, and

how it interacts in white spaces, it also signifies the importance of memory work, or the reflecting and speaking on racism. In this framework, minority populations are given the chance to not only speak on their experiences, but also become active change agents in their immediate environments and spaces. This process transforms the educational experiences of Black and Brown people in addition to white educational stakeholders. This study attempts to illuminate the lived experiences and racial histories of Black male graduate students, allowing for racial and critical literacy to thrive. Although meaningful, this framework does not take into account: how counterstories deconstruct master narratives, the role supposedly colorblind law and policies play in maintaining white supremacy, and how intersections of race, gender, sex, class, and sexual orientation work together to produce inequality. For this discussion, we turn to another framework, critical race theory.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) guides this study because it provides a framework and explanation for how pervasive, pernicious, and embedded race and racism is in America and its school systems, public, charter, and private. Originally developed in the legal field due to the works and scholarship of Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, and Alan Freeman (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Deldago & Stefancic, 2001), it was eventually introduced to education via the scholarship and research of Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006). Although CRT was borne out of the need to rectify the pervasiveness of racism in law, its goal in challenging dominant discourses of race and racism provides an appropriate framework for the field of education (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Although there are multiple tenets of CRT, the main elements that are important to this analysis are, as developed and discussed by Solórzano (1997; 1998) that inform theory, policy, research, pedagogy, and curriculum:

1. The endemic nature and intercentricity of race and racism.
2. The challenge to dominate ideology.
3. The centrality of the experiential knowledge of minority communities.
4. The commitment to social justice.

The endemic nature of race and racism. Much like my discussion of critical racial literacy, CRT starts from the premise that race and racism are central, endemic, permanent, and a fundamental part of defining how American society functions (Bell, 1992; Russell, 1992). CRT acknowledges the intersections, tangles, and involvement of subordination based on gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, and sexuality, all in connection to race and racism (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993; Valdes et al., 2002). In this study, I explore Black male graduate students' history of racism in their college experiences, how their identities of Black maleness connect to it, and how racism has shaped their educational trajectories. Using this tenet helps to understand the struggles they face when confronted with whiteness at PWIs.

Challenging dominant ideology. CRT challenges white privilege and refutes educational institutions' claims of colorblindness, objectivity, meritocracy, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. Through this tenet, CRT also challenges the historicity of neutral research, objective researchers who avoid intertwining or discussing their lives in relation to their participants, and exposes deficit frameworks and research that distorts the lives of Black and Brown people, positioning them as inferior to white people with negative and gendered stereotypes and tropes (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000). It argues that the history of meritocracy and supposed colorblindness of educational admission policies and neutral research camouflages the real issues that minorities face and upholds the standards of dominant white ideology (Bell, 1987; Calmore, 1992; Solórzano, 1997). In this vein, critical race theory provides a critique of liberalism and the colorblindness used in research and by educational institutions. For educational stakeholders, race neutrality is supposed to allow for equal

opportunity for all; however, given the history of racism in America, these colorblind research agendas and educational policies have served to term minority students as the "Other" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 29), exclude them from educational opportunities and robust research agendas, and ignores the permanence of racism. Although liberalism and colorblindness have been used to address and correct racist policies in education and education research (Gotanda, 1991), they ignore that inequity, inopportunity, and oppression are historical artifacts that cannot be remedied by ignoring race in contemporary society (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004). With these notions, gains for marginalized groups must come incrementally in order to appease white stakeholders, which only upholds white supremacy and slows the academic success of minorities.

For this study, I attempt to illuminate the experiences of Black male graduate students grappling with colorblind admissions policies, struggling with their research agendas in the face of whiteness, and maintaining their relationships with their white peers and professors in the face of the permanent and endemic nature of racism in society and on their campus. This facet of the framework helps to structure this discussion around how Black male graduate students cope with primarily white spaces and how their research agendas and performance in class challenges colorblind and race neutral policies and dominant ideology.

Experiential knowledge of minority communities. Much like how "memory work" functions in critical racial literacy, critical race theory recognizes that those who suffer from racism in America should be the ones telling their stories about their experiences of racial subordination and racialized hierarchies. This element has roots in multiple streams of research, from the ways teacher's identities are structured through counterstories (Downey, 2015), from how culturally responsive white teachers challenge or uphold white supremacy in the classroom (Bloom, Peters, Margolin, & Fragnoli, 2015; Fasching-Varner, 2012; Lapayese, Aldana, & Lara,

2014; Matias, 2013; Seattlage, 2013), from detailing the culturally relevant practices of teachers of color (Cook & Dixson, 2013; Hayes, Juarez, & Escoffery-Runnels, 2014; Kynard, 2010), and detailing the experiences of Black students navigating white spaces (Henry, West, & Jackson, 2010; McGee, 2015; Terry & Howard, 2013). This tenet of critical race theory, utilizing methods of counterstories that deviate from racist master narratives of minorities, uses family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, and chronicles and narratives that explicitly draws from the experiences of minorities (Bell, 1987; 1992; 1996; Carrasco, 1996; Delgado, 1989; 1993; 1995a, b,; 1996; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Espinoza, 1990; Montoya, 1994; Olivas, 1990; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000; 2001; Villalpando, 2003).

The goal of minorities speaking counterstories is to tell their untold stories and to disrupt the majoritarian narratives of colorblindness, meritocracy, and post-raciality (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Because counterstories generally serve to explain what life is like for marginalized people (although white people can tell allied counterstories), they are about the substance of the stories that are told and about the people who are telling the stories (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Through this study, Black male graduate students are able to speak upon their lived experiences as Black men and tell stories that disrupt the deficit narratives of Black maleness. I elicit their stories because those who are marginalized must have the space and opportunity to speak on what racism means for them and how it has affected their educational journeys, especially for those who have to navigate educational white spaces. By listening to their counterstories as they perform "memory work", they gain agency and own their lived experiences.

The commitment to social justice. Finally, critical race theory is committed to, through the experiential knowledge of marginalized people and challenging dominant ideology, social justice and offers a liberatory and transformative response to racial, gender, and class oppression

(Matsuda, 1991). Through this research agenda towards social justice, the politics of "interest-convergence"—or the theory that civil rights gains for Black and Brown people are obtained because they align with the self-interests of white people and because they do not disrupt the normal lives of white people (Bell, 1987; DeCuir and Dixson, 2004)—work towards the elimination of racism, sexism, and poverty, and seek to empower marginalized communities through the use of their own stories and experiences (Freire, 1970; 1973). Using this tenet of critical race theory is instrumental to this study because of how it connects with memory work of racial literacy and counterstories of marginalized people. Through this study, I hoped to illuminate the ways Black male graduate students advocate for social change on their college campus, disrupt majoritarian narratives of their behavior, and use their knowledge to empower themselves and move toward academic success.

For this study, I analyze how Black male graduate students attending a PWI speak on how race and stereotypes impact and affect their trajectory through their studies. Critical racial literacy and critical race theory are lenses in which I explore how these students speak for themselves, use their own stories to talk about their experiences, and how their thoughts can advance and spur action. Through the iterative and interactive process of interviewing, a construction of learning and racial literacy—co-created between the researcher and participants—can lead to agency, especially when participants are allowed to speak for themselves on how racism impacts their journey through school. Although important conceptual frameworks for this study, racial literacy and critical race theory do not tell the entire story of every facet of what it means to be Black and male in America. While race and racism are important to what it means to attend PWIs as a minority student, it does not take into account how masculinity interacts with a Black maleness identity. In the next section, I discuss the

dimensions of masculinity, Black masculinity and identity, and how masculinity is a form of literacy.

Black Masculinity Language/Masculine Identities

  Black masculine language. Before one can talk about what Black men *do*, one must discuss what they *say* and how it informs masculine identities. According to Kirkland (2015):

> As soon as they hear Black males, they either shrink or scowl (or do both) because the particular dark-shaded phallic rhythms that rise from our bellies make many people uncomfortable. They hear our Father Tongue through the same veiled deficit prisms through which they see us. In fact, the deficit prisms guiding their (mis) conceptions of Black males are so pervasive, so entrenched, and so unbelievably fastened to our most egregious associations of human behavior that we (all of us) rarely recognize these unconscious and negative associations with Black Masculine Language (BML) as a problem (Noguera, 2008). (p. 834)

As Kirkland contends, I must talk about the language Black men use because it guides how white people see them and informs masculine identities. Instead of something to affirm and value, BML is considered a "sociolinguistic deformation" (p. 384) that has to be loathed and despised. Kirkland theorizes BML as a practice associated with Black male identities (Smitherman, 2006; Young, 2004) and that anyone can co-opt and use it for themselves. It is a *genderlect* (p. 835), an offshoot of Black language, a site from where many behaviors of Black masculinity can be compared and ascribed linguistically and fluidly. Like Black language, according to Kirkland, BML can shape shift, change, and alter cadences of languages to fulfill a variety of functions tied to different aspects of Black identity. In this sense, Black men can use BML with their Black male peers or other groups of people, depending on the circumstances that it is used—a sort of

linguistic code switching. In BML, words that are used to degrade Black men (such as the *n word*) are transformed to give the user agency to change, disrupt, and interrupt the negative and racist connotations of the behaviors associated with the word. In another example, by using the word *brotha* instead of *brother*, Black men use BML to transform the ideas of the term from meaning male sibling to specifically capture Black masculinity, connoting close friendships with other men. Although this expression of language has been policed throughout history (Alim, 2005; Foster, 1995; Kinloch, 2005; Paris, 2009), research cannot deny the linguistic diversity of BML and how it has transformed social life for Black people and white people who have adopted the language. Although the relationship between BML and Black male identities is contested (as not all Black men use BML), not only does language connect to Black masculinity as performance, but it also is a strategy for which Black men navigate the world, it is system for expressing Black manhood, it is form of resistance of mainstream language practices, and it is a posture of aggression, strength, and power (Kirkland, 2015).

While not all Black men use BML—because of the negative stereotypes the language system evokes and denotes—and although non-Black men can and have co-opted the language as a form of fetishism, making them the "Other" in their own language and literacy practices— this study must address how issues of language intersect with power over who can successfully use that language, action, and performance, and how it is viewed in the eyes of white people. As Kirkland (2015) contends, BML invokes a masculine identity for Black men and connects to how they perform (or not perform) their masculinity for others. This study addresses how participants have used or not used BML in the form of their memory work and counterstories.

Black masculinity literacies. Masculinity is defined as a performed social identity by men that is controlled by socially ingrained notions of what it means to be a man (Anderson,

2005). I describe masculinity and the other concepts below as a "performance" because, in connection with Mutua (2006), men "act personally and in concert with other [men]" to prove their masculinity (p. 7). Traditional masculinity is a performance of masculinity that is in competition or opposition to femininity that tends to agree with hegemonic processes of domination, including sexism, homophobia, and heterosexism (Mutua, 2006).

After reviewing the literature on the gendered lives of Black men, multiple, varied definitions of masculinity, manhood, and maleness exist. This is a consequence of many academic disciplines examining, explaining, and producing research that have defined masculinity in contradictory and competitive ways (Kimmel & Messner, 2004). For this study, I work from the idea that what it means to be a man is socially constructed—meaning, individuals learn what it means to be gendered beings from parental and guardian influences, peer-to-peer interactions, and media messages about what is expected of them to become gendered beings. To this end, one is not born a man; one becomes and performs what it means to be socially accepted as a man (Butler, 2008; Connell, 2005; Harper & Harris, 2010; Kimmel & Messner, 2004). Quite plainly, historically, men are socialized into and rewarded for hegemonic masculinity, which relies on homophobia and misogyny to enforce rigid norms of gender expressions, reinforce the oppression and marginalization of women and men, and places limitations on all people (Connell, 2005; Harper, Harris, & Mmeje, 2005; O'Neil et al., 1986) which does not leave enough room for alternate forms of masculinity, especially in minority, Black communities.

In understanding the ways Black men construct manhood or become men in the face of racism and gendered sexism, though, not only do I focus on how they practice hegemonic masculinity, but also how they construct progressive masculinities. This practice, in part, is a way to move from deficit notions of Black maleness to address progressive assets that Black men

exhibit and act. To this end, this study relies strongly upon Mutua's (2006) definition of progressive Black masculinity, which states:

> Progressive [Black] masculinities, on the one hand, personally eschew and actively stands against social structures of domination and, on the other, value, validate, and empower [Black] humanity ... and multicultural humanity of others in the global family. More specifically ... at a minimum, [they are] pro-[Black] and antiracist as well as profeminist and anti-sexist ... They are decidedly not dependent and or not predicated on the subordination of others. (p. 7)

More specifically, in accordance with Mutua (2006), I define progressive Black masculinity as the performance of masculinity among Black men that intentionally and consciously resist social structures of domination and sees the shared humanity of all versions of Black existence and humanity. In essence, this form of progressive, Black masculinity attempts to reorient Black men's perception of ideal masculinity, usually focused on domination of women, children, and other men (Mutua, 2006), to a more progressive form of masculinity that upholds all expressions of masculinity. Mutua describes progressive Black men as men who understand that patriarchy and white supremacy are mutually connected historically to each other and contribute to negative assumptions of domination among Black men that have consequences—including racism, sexism, and homophobia—for Black women and men. Progressive Black men also recognize that to embrace patriarchy and domination is to undermine the effort of social justice among all people, especially Black people. The three theoretical tenets, taken from Mutua's theory, guiding this study are: 1) American ideal, or hegemonic, masculinity is a hindrance to progressive masculine practices, 2) progressive Black men stand against racism, sexism, and homophobia, and, celebrate the diversity of masculine expressions among Black men, and 3) progressive

Black men are pro-Black as well as pro-feminist and realize that men are not, by nature, an enemy of antisexist struggles.

How can Black men practice progressive masculinities and become pro-feminist? Put simply, they must be able to talk about and analyze their gender development from childhood to adulthood. Many Black feminist authors have discussed how Black men have gender privilege within Black communities and how that privilege—without ignoring the influence of racism on Black male lives—leads to domination of nonheterosexual Black men and women (Collins, 2004; Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 1990; 2004). They argue that the true liberation of *everyone* in the Black community can not happen due to just the eradication of racism; it must happen due to the ways Black men use their masculinity as dominance over Black people. However, although Black men can become socialized into hegemonic masculinities, these scholars do argue that a revolutionary change and conscious shifting can happen through conversations as to how masculinity is constructed and performed (hooks, 1990; 2004). To Awkward (1995), "there is great potential psychological and emotional benefits of reexamining one's past as a knowledgeable, articulate adult armed with greater insight and a workable, clearly defined agenda" (p. 10). Much like Awkward, McGuire, Berhanu, Davis, and Harper (2014) contend that qualitative researchers must create space for Black men to critically self-reflect upon their gender socialization and how those experiences are linked to the present constructions and performances of masculinity. In this sense, not only is there a personal dimension of Black men reflecting upon their experiences, but it also becomes a political act in that this speaking of lived histories and their constructions of masculinity can lead to active change in Black communities. These discussions will allow for Black men to challenge essentialist representations of Black masculinities to advocate for progressive masculinities. As McGowan (2018) found in her study,

discussed above, Black men do have the capacity to speak on their performances of masculinity and can become vulnerable throughout the research process. Through this process, they are able to *write* and *speak* themselves into the research literature as a form of action *and* teaching.

The conceptual frameworks of racial and critical racial literacy, critical race theory, and Black masculinity literacies work together to truly understand the gendered lives of Black men, their perceptions and understanding of how racism and race work in their lives, and how they can tell their stories to write themselves into the research to challenge dominant ideologies. I must use them together in concert with one another because they attempt to tell the entire story of how Black men become gendered, racial beings, and how they contribute to action and performance. In chapter three, I use these frameworks as support for my chosen methodology and how they are used to inform my research design. Figure 4 depicts this conceptual framework, showing how each one overlaps with each other to show how Black men become gendered and racial beings and how it connects to their doctoral education:

Figure 4

Conceptual Framework Illustration
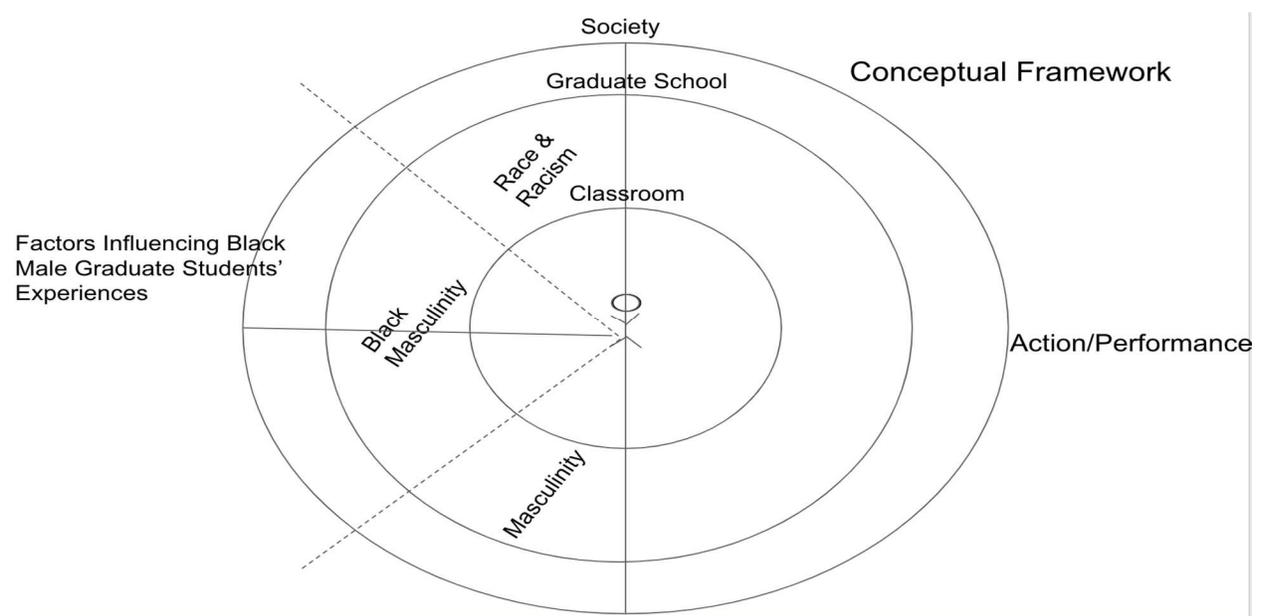
Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into Black male doctoral students' historical conceptualizations of masculinity and how their gendered lives are either constrained or affirmed as they pursue a graduate degree at a PWI. In this regard, I was interested in investigating the ways Black males perform "memory work" to reveal their lived histories as gendered beings, how their stories become counterstories to deficit views of Black masculinity practice and performance, and their capacity to *write* themselves into research, making this process iterative and participative. In this sense, I sought to add to the literature base on Black male students at PWIs, but also strengthen it by eliciting the responses of Black male doctoral students, students who are rarely explored in the literature. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Black male graduate students describe and understand their interactions with white professors and students, particularly as related to their race/ethnicity and gender?

2. What role, if any, does their masculinity play in their navigation of a primarily white institution?

3. In what ways do these students believe PWIs can recruit and retain more Black male students in graduate studies?

Research Design

In an effort to answer these questions, fulfill the purposes of this study, and to understand the contexts in which Black male graduate students practice their masculinity and experience racism and gendered racism at a PWI, I took a qualitative approach to research, which was optimal for this study considering how Black men have been studied in the literature reviewed

above. More specifically, this study was constructed and conducted as a qualitative case study. According to Morgan (2011), qualitative research "encourages people to make sense of experiences as [they] develop in the course of daily life" (p. 1). This case study focused on the intersections between masculinity, gender, and racism in the lives of Black male doctoral students.

A qualitative case study design provides a framework to erect and extract a wealth of information from participants (Berg, 2016; Merriam, 2019). In this sense, the *case* has to be a unit of analysis that is an identified system bounded by its uniqueness (Merriam, 2019; Stake, 2017), such as the experiences and perceptions of Black male graduate students attending PWIs. Because Black male graduate students are the only group of people uniquely positioned to speak on their experiences, a qualitative case study design was appropriate for this study. According to Stake (2017), a case study plays a key role in informing the researcher of a large-scale issue or problem. Although I steer away from generalizing to all Black male graduate students, a case study allowed me to gain an insight into the experiences, lived histories, and perceptions of at least *some* of these students and allowed me to generalize across my participants' experiences. By gaining insight into the memory work and counterstories of Black male graduate students, a scholarly perspective was gained into the educational aspirations of these students, the restrictions placed upon them in the form of gendered racism, negative stereotypes, and microaggressions, their interactions with white professors and peers, and the ways in which they persist through college to graduation. Thus, the aim of the present study was to systematically investigate the experiences of Black male graduate students with regard to race in the educational domain.

While this study did not seek to understand the experiences of Black male graduate students at a grand level to create sweeping theories, it did take an ethnographic approach to case study. Ethnography includes the study of sociocultural interactions from the point of view of the group of people living them (Geertz, 1973; Knauft, 2006; Malinowski, 2012). It occurs in places and spaces where various participants enact a constantly shifting social reality (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002; Gupta & Ferguson, 1997; Latour, 1983; 2007; Marcus, 1995). In this sense, this study focused on the interactions Black male graduate students have and will have with other Black men, white professors, and their white peers, and how their identities of masculinity are socially negotiated across contexts, including the classroom, student organizations, and interactions with white people. As reality constantly shifted for these participants, so did the root of analysis, masculinity identity, and the politics of race and racism on their college campus. To this end, ethnography and case study shifts researchers' perspective from *how* the phenomenon happens and is studied to *what* is studied (Merriam, 2009). Thus, the case study is about a specific example of a phenomenon—in this case, Black male graduate students—it uses rich, thick description in data gathering and analysis to obtain a clear practice of the phenomenon in work and the participants under study, and it provides new interpretations of the phenomenon as well.

In addition to keeping with the qualitative methodological tradition by using case study methods, this study also took an interpretivist epistemological position and philosophy to knowledge. Epistemology poses the following questions about knowledge (Tuli, 2010):

1. What is the relationship between the knower and what is known?

2. How do we know what we know?

3. What counts as knowledge?

In the interpretivist epistemological research tradition, knowledge and the world is constructed, interpreted, and experienced by people in their interactions with each other and interactions with wider social systems (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Maxwell, 2015; Merriam, 2019), such as schooling and racism. In this paradigm, the nature of inquiry is interpretative, and the purpose of this inquiry was to *understand* a sample of a population, not to generalize across an entire population (Farzanfar, 2005). I worked in this paradigm because, through this study, I wanted to see the world for what it is, instead of trying to manipulate the world to fit the way I saw it. Researchers working in this tradition are naturalistic since they apply to real-world situations in the way they occur naturally and they tend to be as non-obtrusive as possible in the research environment (even though researchers cannot truly be completely detached from their research). In this sense, interpretivist epistemological perspectives add richness and depth to data—which dovetails nicely with case study research—oriented toward discovery and process, are less concerned with generalizability, and are more concerned with deeper understanding of the problem its in unique and natural context (Ulin, Robinson, & Tolley, 2004). In this sense, although human behavior may be patterned and ordered, these patterns are created out of evolving meaning systems that people generate as they socially interact with each other and social systems and from firsthand experience (Neuman, 2011).

Taking an interpretivist epistemological approach connected with this project because I did not seek to generalize to all Black male graduate students; I only sought to better understand the needs and experiences of these particular students in a particular time, place, and setting. Because I believe that knowledge is constructed through people's interactions with people and the social system in which they work and reside and that it can only come from firsthand knowledge, I explored Black male graduate students' interactions with their peers, their

professors, and how their lived experiences as gendered beings have connected them to schooling, mentorship with other Black men, and academic success. To this end, the phenomenon I studied took on a unique shape in the sense that this problem was happening in a particular time and space, across a certain amount of time, and was unique to the participants under study, allowing me to generalize across experiences *within* the confines of a bounded case study, and not to an entire population.

Participants and Recruitment

Because Black male students who are descended from the slave South are uniquely positioned to speak on their lived masculine histories, anti-Black racism in the United States, and their college-going experiences as Black men, only these students were chosen to be participants in this study. I used purposive sampling to choose 3 Black male doctoral students at my PWI[3] in the Mid-Atlantic region. I only used 3 students because (1) there are not many Black male PhD students, (2) I asked them to write 5 reflective journal entries over 5 weeks, (3) participate in an interview, (4) participate in a focus group interview, and (5) participate, if applicable, in member check interviews. Three participants allowed me to obtain rich data and to better trace their knowledge across experiences. Purposive sampling is based on the premise that informants from populations that manifest the phenomenon of interest are ideally suited to illuminate the phenomenon (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Patton, 2014), thus, only these students were sufficient for this study. Overall, Black male graduate students' experiences at PWI's are different from those of undergraduate students due to the nature of their interactions with peers, professors, and administrators. Graduate students, especially those in PhD programs, work much closer with their advisors on research projects, tend to write research proposals of their own, are engrossed

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[3] Throughout the study, I use pseudonyms for both the school and all participants.

in finding funding for their research projects, and are always thinking about ways to present their research to a broader audience. Given this, and due to the low volume of studies detailing the experiences of Black male PhD students, I was only interested in these students as participants for this study. I selected students who met the following criteria:

(a) Identified as a U.S. born African American or Black and as male, specifically descendants of the slave South.

(b) Was enrolled full-time in a PhD program.

(c) Was willing, able, and available to meet the demands of and fully participate in the study.

I asked and emailed the graduate school, my informal advisors and mentors, and professors for recommendations of students who might be interested in participating in my project. In addition, I met with these students individually, as time permitted, to introduce myself, my project, and expressed how their experiences would further and inform research on and about Black male graduate students. I provide a brief overview of each participant in Table 1:

Table 1

Student Participant Characteristics

Student	Department/Program	Race	Gender	Year
Carson	Neuroscience	Black	Male	2nd
Darrell	Minority & Urban Education	Black	Male	3rd
Bryce	Educational Policy	Black	Male	3rd

Data Collection

Data sources for this study included individual interviews with students, journal entries, a focus group interview, and member checking. Table 2 provides an overview of my data sources:

Table 2

Data Sources

Student	Interview	Journal Entries	Focus Group
Carson	Interview (4/9/2019)	Journal Entry #1 (4/14/2019) Journal Entry #2 (4/22/2019) Journal Entry #3 (4/29/2019) Journal Entry #4 (5/7/2019)	Focus Group (5/17/2019)
Darrell	Interview (4/10/2019)	Journal Entry #1 (4/16/2019) Journal Entry #2 (4/23/2019) Journal Entry #3 (4/30/2019) Journal Entry #4 (5/7/2019)	Focus Group (5/17/2019)
Bryce	Interview (4/12/2019)	Journal Entry #1 (4/14/2019). Journal Entry #2 (4/21/2019) Journal Entry #3 (4/28/2019) Journal Entry #4 (5/5/2019)	Focus Group (5/17/2019)

Student Individual Interviews

Interviews were used for this study because they are the basis of knowing and at the root of every lived experience and story is knowing (Seidman, 2013), which dovetails nicely with interpretivist epistemology. According to Vygotsky (1978), every word that people use in telling

stories is a microcosm of their consciousness. My participants' consciousness gave me access to complex issues such as education and social issues such as race and racism because these abstractions are based on the complex and concrete experiences of people. Thus, I utilized an in-depth interviewing method developed by Seidman (2013). An in-depth interview is not to get answers to questions, or test hypothesis, but it is to understand the lived experiences of people and the meanings they associate with those experiences. This process involved interviewing participants at least twice during the study, once individually and once as a focus group. The first interview focused on the participants' lived experiences of messages they received as children and adults on masculinity, gender, racism, and schooling, and how those messages impacted their trajectory to the graduate program. This interview allowed participants to place their experiences in narrative form, starting from childhood and ending at their current state as doctoral students (See Appendix A for interview protocol). The second interview, a focus group, was conducted to place their experiences in a schooling context; it focused on their interactions with white peers, professors, and how their research agendas or schooling had been impacted by those interactions (See Appendix B for interview protocol). The goal of these interviews was to urge participants to make sense and connections between how their messages of what it means to be Black men have impacted their schooling and how those messages have appeared in, threatened, and/or supported their doctoral programs.

Both interviews with participants were semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews were useful because they allowed me to obtain useful information from focused, created open-ended objective questions, while also allowing for more subjective conversational two-way communication between participants and me that I would not have gained in a tightly structured protocol (Drever, 1995; Morse & Richards, 2002). These interviews allowed for more flexibility

for participants to clarify their answers and journey to other topics if need be, and allowed me to ask follow-up questions about their experiences to gain a deeper understand of their answers. These interviews were scheduled at the participants' behest and on their free time, in an empty office space. The second interview occurred six weeks after the initial interview, to allow for participants to complete their journaling (explained below). All interviews were audio-recorded using a digital recording device, uploaded to a secure folder on a computer designated for the sole purpose of this study, and saved using only participants' pseudonyms. Interviews were transcribed using a professional transcription service.

Focus Group Interview

Although the usage of focus groups has been connected with semi-structured interviews (Parker & Tritter, 2006), its usage changes the researcher from the investigator to the moderator or facilitator of discussion among a group of people. In the focus group, the researcher takes a peripheral, rather than a center-stage role in the discussion (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001; Johnson, 1996). The most compelling reason for why I used a focus group interview as a data source is because I wanted to generate discussion and/or debate surrounding the ways PWIs can recruit and retain more Black male students into PhD programs; this required a collective view of the problem, the meanings that lie beyond those views, and allowed my participants to build on each other's ideas (Merriam, 2009). The focus group interview was completed after journal entries had been written and were held in an empty office space at a time determined by participants. It was audio recorded and lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

Documents and Artifacts: Reflective Journals

Because interviewing does not capture all of the nuances of the phenomenon under study, this study employed journaling to capture Black male students' interactions with professors and

peers in real-time as a way to compare their lived experiences on campus to their classroom atmosphere. Writing journals allowed participants to reflect upon these interactions, what they learned from their reactions to them, and what suggestions they had to make those interactions stronger and better in the future, allowing them to control the narrative around their schooling experiences. The origins of the concept of reflective thinking can be attributed to Dewey (1933) who wrote that reflecting is a thought process that schools must cultivate and King and Kitchener (1994) who argued that reflective judgment is a quality that college students must develop in order to deal with and work through ill-defined problems. Kember et al., (2001) suggests that the process of reflection may be triggered by an unusual case or deliberate attempts to revisit past experiences, that it operates through a careful re-examination and evaluation of experience, beliefs, and knowledge, and that it most commonly involves looking back and reviewing past actions, and those competent at it can develop the ability to constantly reflect while carrying out their practice.

However, Kember et al., (2001) recognizes that there is a higher form of reflection that can and must take place in order for people to truly understand the world around them and to make strides to change their responses to stimuli. Deep reflection that targets the highest levels of critical thinking, to them, necessitates a change to deep-seated, and often unconscious, beliefs that leads to new belief structures, leads to new perspectives of life as we know it, and often leads to transformation, although this may not be as noticeable and might take multiple periods of reflective practice. For this study, participants were asked to keep a reflective journal of their interactions with peers, professors, and advisors. They were asked to write at least 5 journal entries—journal prompts created by me—in the subsequent weeks after the first interview was completed. This study asked participants to compare and contrast their lived experiences of what

it means to be a Black man and how that intersects and interacts with their experiences as graduate students researching, speaking with advisors and mentors about their research, and how white professors and peers respond to them (See Appendix C for journal prompts). Reflective journaling allowed participants to tell their own counterstories, through written form, to disrupt majoritarian narratives about Black men, their masculinity, and how they perceive and interact with their educational space. The goal of journaling was to allow for more rich description of participants' experiences and to challenge or confirm their belief structures. Participants emailed their reflective journals to me every Friday during the designated period. Emails were deleted after opening them and I saved journals to a secured folder on the computer used for the sole purpose of this project using participants' pseudonyms.

Member Checking

After each interview, the audio file was immediately sent to a professional transcription company to be transcribed. Participants were given the opportunity to review their interview transcripts for accuracy and clarity. Within qualitative research, there is a propensity for the researcher to attach their views to the research study because they are usually the data collector and the data analyst, leading to researcher bias (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In order to keep the researcher from imposing his own voice and beliefs and dominating the participants' voices (Mason, 2002), I allowed my participants to confirm the results of the study and the transcriptions as member checking. Member checking is used to validate, verify, or assess the trustworthiness of qualitative results (Doyle, 2007). In this sense, not only was I allowing participants to review their transcriptions and the results of the study, I also obtained more interviews to clear up confusing answers from journal entries or interviews and to make sure I

was interpreting participants' voices and stories in the correct way. Member checking interviews were also transcribed and analyzed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was organized around each data source detailed above.

Semi-Structured Interviews/Member Checking/Focus Group

After transcribing the semi-structured interviews and focus group, open, axial, and selective inductive *and* deductive coding processes were used to identify themes in the transcribed interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Strauss and Corbin (2015) defined coding as the "operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together, in new ways" (p. 56). Deductive codes for this study came from my conceptual frameworks: memory work, racial literacy, counterstories, understanding of race and racism, striving for social justice on college campuses, challenging dominant ideology of Black male behavior, elements of Black masculine language, and masculine identities. Open coding was used during conceptualization, or my initial pass through the interview data, to determine, identify, group, and categorize concepts. Axial coding is the process by which I made connections between the categories identified in the initial stage and compared all participants' interviews. Finally, selective coding involved organizing categories around central themes that I had identified through the first two coding operations. Thus, themes did not "emerge"; I actively and consciously arrived at my themes and conclusions (Humble & Radina, 2019). Member checking interviews, if applicable, were coded and analyzed in this same way.

Documents and Artifacts: Reflective Journals

Using my conceptual frameworks, I wanted to see how Black male graduate students were experiencing college, the classroom atmosphere, and how they reflect upon the interactions

they have with their peers and professors. Much like racial literacy, this involved participants to practice memory work to produce counterstories; in this sense, participants were challenging the dominant ideology about the Black man and channeling their thoughts into writing. Not often do these students get to tell their own stories considering that researchers and creators view them in deficit ways; part of the reason for this, sadly, is that not many Black male students complete a graduate degree (NCES, 2011). Through this process, I hoped that participants were able to feel agency, as they became authors and creators of their own existence. Participants' five journal entries were coded the same way as their interview and focus group, inductively and deductively.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred in two stages: within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. Cycles of coding occurred within each stage. Within-case analysis not only allowed me to understand the individual experiences of my participants, but also allowed me to analyze patterns that appeared in individual data. Cross-case analysis enabled me to capture the commonalities of experiences across multiple cases (Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafl, 2003). This process provided me with an opportunity to balance data, as cross-case analysis sometimes strips context from experiences, while within-case analysis gives depth to context. An overview of my data analysis is provided in Table 3:

Table 3

Stages of data analysis

Stage	Research Question (Phase)	Coding & Analysis
Within-Case Analysis	Research Question #1 (Phase 1)	1st Cycle: Open inductive coding of participants' history of schooling, race, and masculinity.

		2nd Cycle: Deductive coding using the dimensions of conceptual framework: Black masculinity literacies, CRT, and racial literacy.
Cross-Case Analysis	Research Question #1 (Phase 1)	1st Cycle: Open inductive/deductive coding of participants' understandings of their interactions with white peers and professors in relation to their race/ethnicity.
		2nd Cycle: Axial inductive/deductive coding to make connections between participants' understandings of interactions with peers and professors.
		3rd Cycle: Selective inductive/deductive coding to select themes from participants' historical data.
	Research Question #2 (Phase 2)	1st Cycle: Axial inductive/deductive coding of participants' masculinity literacies in relation to their educational trajectories in white spaces.
		2nd Cycle: Selective inductive/deductive coding to select themes in relation to participants' masculinity.
	Research Question #3 (Phase 3)	1st Cycle: Axial inductive coding to identify recruitment and retainment strategies.
		2nd Cycle: Selective inductive coding to identify emerging recruitment and retainment themes.

Stage One: Within-case analysis

To prepare for the first stage of analysis, I separated each case and evaluated them as individual cases. Within each project, I gathered the data important to the case: the initial interviews and journal entries. Once I had collected and organized the data, I then began my analysis on the individual level. For each case, I analyzed only research question #1, as that was

the most pertinent question for my within-case analysis. This analysis was conducted in two cycles.

  Phase 1: Research Question #1. I analyzed the cases through my first research question: *How do Black male graduate students describe and understand their interactions with white professors and students, particularly as related to their race/ethnicity and gender?* For this question, I used open, inductive coding to capture the historical masculinity and racial record of participants, while extrapolating to their experiences and interactions with white professors and white students at their PWI. After, in cycle two, I used deductive coding to analyze participants' experiences through racial literacy, masculinity literacies, and their understandings of race and racism through CRT. This first and second cycle of data resulted in 18 initial codes for Carson (ex: role models, clinical switch because of health of patients, and code switching), 23 codes for Darrell (ex: intentionality, parents as motivators, and the difference between advanced and general education courses), and 13 codes for Bryce (ex: positive Black male role models, HCBU's as preparation, and practicing whiteness).

  I then analyzed each code list for each case to identify patterns within each case and to group similar codes into broader categories by reading the data line-by-line. This allowed me to identify themes; once I had them identified, I went through the data once more, making sure I had captured everything that needed to be captured. Finally, this process helped me to narrow the codes and categories into three to five themes for each case. Each theme described the historical schooling and understandings of race and masculinity for each participant. Through this process, I was able to identify three historical understandings for Carson and five historical understandings for Darrell and Bryce in relation to research question #1. Table 4 provides an overview of these understandings:

Table 4: Within-Case Analysis

Themes: Participants' understanding of their masculinity and racial literacies/histories

Carson	Darrell	Bryce
1. Father contributing to science educational background	1. Parents important to educational trajectory	1. Discovering racial literacy through private schooling/parents contributing to educational trajectory
2. Interest in neuroscience and Black patients in the clinical space	2. Parents inserting themselves in their children's education/children not getting a say	2. Black male success/mentors as contribution to educational trajectory
3. Fostering Black male presence and identity in science fields	3. Experience negative low expectations from teachers because of low-tracked classes	3. Attending private undergraduate study based on private school K-12 experience
	4. Difference between classroom experiences of general education courses and advanced courses	4. Transparency: sharing his story, having honest conversations, and candidly discussing race
	5. Understanding how Black students were treated vs. white students in public schools.	5. Learning to navigate white spaces from childhood to adulthood

Stage Two: Cross-Case Analysis

I conducted the cross-case analysis in three phases, based on all three research questions used for this study.

Phase One: Research question #1. Once I performed the within-case analysis for the three focal students, I looked at them all together, analyzing themes that connected them all, through the lens of research question #1: *How do Black male graduate students describe and*

understand their interactions with white professors and students, particularly as related to their race/ethnicity and gender. Data sources used for this analysis were participants' individual interviews and journal entries and the focus was their experiences matriculating to a PWI for their PhD program. In the first cycle, open inductive and deductive coding were used to determine the participants' understandings of their interactions with their white peers and professors. In the second cycle, axial inductive and deductive coding were used to determine the patterns and make connections between each participants' interactions as they completed their schooling. Finally, in the third cycle, as connections were determined, selective inductive and deductive coding were used to select the themes that all participants shared. These cycles of coding resulted in 24 codes for Carson (ex: feelings of isolation, negative experiences, and advisor competition), 28 codes for Darrell (ex: sense of frustration, professors challenging white supremacy, intentionality), and 32 codes for Bryce (ex: body as site for oppression, aloneness, and differences between PWI's and HBCUs).

Phase Two: Research question #2. This part of the cross-case analysis was performed for research question #2: *What role, if any, does their masculinity play in their navigation of a primarily white institution?* Data sources included interviews and journal entries. In my analysis, I focused on participants' masculinity literacies and how their definitions of masculinity changed or were affirmed as they traversed doctoral study. In the first cycle, I conducted axial coding, to determine patterns and connections of participants' masculinity literacies in connection with their trajectories through their schooling. In the second cycle, I analyzed these patterns and connections, combined categories and patterns that were similar and redundant, and used selective coding to identify the themes that all participants shared. These cycles of coding resulted in 14 codes for Carson (ex: respect for intersectionality, different experiences for Black

men, the need to be more progressive), 23 codes for Darrell (ex: masculinity as Catch-22, using masculinity as intentionality, and code-switching masculinity) and 9 codes for Bryce (ex: body as negativity, understanding of male privilege, and the body as site of oppression).

Phase Three: Research question #3. This part of the cross-case analyzed for research question #3: *In what ways do these students believe PWIs can recruit and retain more Black male students in graduate studies?* Data sources included interviews and journal entries. In my analysis, I focused on my evaluation on participants' knowledge and recommendations for their PWI's Black male recruitment and retainment strategies that will help them enter into doctoral study. In the first cycle, I focused on inductive coding only; I conducted axial coding to determine patterns in participants' thinking around recruitment and retaining strategies and then used selective coding to identify emergent themes. These cycles of coding resulted in 2 codes for Carson (ex: more spaces for Black men), 3 codes for Darrell (ex: intentionally creating space for Black men), and 3 codes for Bryce (ex: more mental health opportunities for Black male students).

These cycles for each research question allowed me to read though the data once again, position codes into broad categories, reduce redundancies in the codes, recognizing patterns and how participants differed from each other. Through this process, I identified four common themes, or what I call dimensions, of participants' PWI doctoral experience through their interviews and journal entries. Carson differed in one important way, which became its own theme. This analysis, finally, allowed me to member-check with Carson to provide a deeper understanding of how and why he differed from the other two participants in the masculinity theme. Table 5 provides a data matrix (Miles and Huberman, 1994) to easily identify the similarities and differences between cases:

Table 5: Interviews and Journal Entries

Data matrix for cross-case analysis of research questions 1-3

	Carson	Darrell	Bryce
Common Dimensions: Interviews/Journals			
Feelings of loneliness/not being able to forge closeness with other Black male doctoral students	X	X	X
Negative perceptions of and racial microaggressions attending a PWI	X	X	X
The influence of Black masculinity to progress	X	X	X
The ways PWIs can establish progressive spaces for Black men	X	X	X
Unique Dimensions			
Using traditional masculinity to claim manhood	X		

Focus group. It was essential for me to separate the interview and journal entry data from the focus group data. An important part of this study is to show the historical experiences of Black male doctoral students, while also helping them to see and fellowship with each other in a space where they hardly see each other. A focus group allowed me to gather all participants in one room to discuss how the study has helped them to better understand their history, their masculinity, and the way they interact with students and professors on their college campus. Analysis focused on all three research questions: *How do Black male graduate students describe and understand their interactions with white professors and students, particularly as related to their race/ethnicity and gender? What role, if any, does their masculinity play in their navigation*

of a primarily white institution? In what ways do these students believe PWIs can recruit and

retain more Black male students in graduate studies?

For the focus group, I used the same cycle of coding as I used in Table 3, for each stage

of the data analysis. I identified 11 codes for research question #1 (ex: code-switching,

intentionality, framing), 18 codes for research question #2 (ex: awareness of positionality,

changing definitions of masculinity, becoming more vulnerable), and 20 codes for research

question #3 (ex: effective professional development, mitigating financial stress, hiring Black

male professors). These cycles for each research question allowed me to read though the data

once again, position codes into broad categories, reduce redundancies in the codes, and

determine themes. Through this process, I identified two common themes, or dimensions, of

participants' reflection of their PWI doctoral experience through their focus group. Table 6

provides a data matrix to identify the themes:

Table 6: Focus group

Data matrix for cross-case analysis of research questions 1-3

	Carson	Darrell	Bryce
Common Dimensions: Focus group			
Reflecting and learning from Black masculinity in relation to white spaces	X	X	X
Recommendations for recruiting and retaining Black men in doctoral study	X	X	X

Trustworthiness and Validity

In the field of navigation, the principle of triangulation is defined as when the intersection

of three reference points is used to calculate the location of an object (Yardley, 2009). In

qualitative and case study research, this principle has been extended, meaning it is important for a researcher to triangulate their findings to increase the validity of their study. The goal is to seek at least three or more data sources to corroborate findings being reported. To Yin (2017), triangulation does not only "encourage you to collect information from multiple sources but [it is also] aimed at corroborating the same fact or phenomenon" (p. 99). Also, according to Yin (2015), there exists a need to conduct research methodically, or to make room for discovery and an allowance for unexpected events, which avoids unexplained biases and deliberate distortions in the data. With this in mind, it is important to cross-check one's data with data sources used for the study. In the interest of strengthening the findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5, I used four data sources for this study: individual interviews, journal entries, a focus group interview, and member checking. Also, while analyzing each data source, I wanted to make sure I was leaving myself open to findings that did not fit with the overall data, instead of forcing my own interpretation to participants' thoughts, words, and actions. When tensions appeared in the data, I made a conscious decision to note it. When that tension became its own theme, or dimension, I clarified it with my participant as a member checking interview. These processes helped to increase the rigor and trustworthiness of this study.

Researcher Positionality

Within the current interpretivist epistemological tradition, there is a strong acknowledgement that all researchers studying human activity bring their subjectivity and bias to the table when interpreting data (Cousin, 2010). Instead of minimizing subjectivity, researchers working within this tradition have to think about how to bring themselves into the research process and to be upfront with readers about their positionality, or the ways in which their identities are situated in conjunction with their research. Cousin writes, "the self is not some kind

of virus which contaminates the research. On the contrary, the self is the research tool, and thus, intimately connected to the methods we employ" (p. 10). Indicating my own positionality, then, is important to speak about it considering I am ultimately the one who is presenting the findings for this research. I am a former English teacher who primarily taught Black male students who were considered "problem students." My principal would place these students in my class because, "another Black man is the only person who can handle these students." In my last year of teaching, my biggest class was thirty-eight students, most of them Black and male. I've wondered why and how issues of masculinity enter the classroom and why Black male students are always considered "the problem." I was even told, as a child by my stepfather, that I had to be "tough," I had to excel at sports, and I had to be in relationships with as many women as possible. Notwithstanding, he was very upset when it was clear that I only cared about schooling and reading books.

This drive to understand Black men like me, who have resisted traditional notions of Black masculinity, and have become successful college students, led me to this research project, especially since I have experienced racism and my own struggles attending a PWI as a Black man. But, I do recognize that my experience may not be the same as my participants'. To challenge my own positionality and researcher bias, I planned to member check with my participants continuously to make sure my interpretations of their experiences and lives are correctly rendered. From here, my discussion turns to an elaboration of my findings.

Chapter Four: Individual Interview and Journal Entries Findings

As I spent time with these three Black male PhD students over the last year, it became abundantly clear that they have used numerous navigational techniques to traverse doctoral study as a Black male student attending a PWI. They have also, through their interviews, journal writing, and focus group, used memory work and counterstories to delve into their pasts as Black men, understood how masculinity has worked into their educational trajectories, and talked about how their university can better support Black male students obtaining doctoral degrees. During data analysis, I identified prevalent themes for each student that sheds light on their educational backgrounds, their histories and struggles with traditional and Black masculinity, and their triumphs and challenges attending a primarily white institution. While many of the themes overlapped with each student, there were also some that were unique and distinctive to each.

In this chapter, I first present the student profile of the three Black male students—using their pseudonyms throughout my analysis—who chose to participate in this study. This profile provides an overview of the students and summarizes their entry into doctoral study. After presenting this profile, I move into a cross-case analysis of these students, focusing on only the initial interview with students and their journal writing. Since the focus group interview happened at the end of the study, those findings will be presented in a separate chapter. In this cross-case analysis, I focus on all of my research questions for each student: *How do Black male graduate students describe and understand their interactions with white professors and students, particularly as related to their race/ethnicity and gender? What role, if any, does their masculinity play in their navigation of a primarily white institution? In what ways do these students believe PWIs can recruit and retain more Black male students in graduate studies?* This cross-case analysis depicts where the students overlap in their thinking and the places in which

they diverge. I conclude this chapter with how these themes help us understand who these students are and how they contribute to an analysis of the focus group interview data.

Carson Gates

Participant Profile

It is the perfect spring day as I arrive to Mid-Atlantic University's campus on an afternoon in April, the day growing longer and warmer. I walk to the education building, open its large white doors, and make my way to an office on the second floor; a professor friend has kindly allowed me to use her office throughout the duration of this study in the interest of privacy for the students participating. The office is small and the bookshelves around the room only make it that much smaller and cozier. As soon as I make myself comfortable at her desk and turn on my audio recording, Carson Gates, a Neuroscience and Cognitive Science PhD student, knocks on the door. I open the door, shake his hand, and show him to his seat in front of the desk. I offer him a bottle of water from my backpack, but he declines. I explain the goals of this study once again, turn on my audio and begin recording.

After I talk about my own background and why I wanted to conduct this study, Carson talks about his upbringing and how his educational trajectory has led him into doctoral study:

> I've always had an interest in science because my dad was a high school science teacher. After graduation, I went to University of South Carolina and got a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science because I had an interest in helping people as relative to rehabilitation. From there I did internships where I had a chance to observe occupational therapists, physical therapists, nurses, and doctors in a rehab environment and I decided I wanted to pursue occupational therapy, which is why I applied to Howard University for my master's degree. After graduation, I worked as an occupational therapist for seven years.

And there, from my experiences with working with patients and seeing issues with

healthcare, and how our approach to those issues were not science based enough, I

decided to come to Mid-Atlantic University to pursue doctoral study.

Like me, and so many other Black students who attend PWI's, Carson saw the importance of

education from an early age, seeing how his family were in the science and education field, and

wanted to pursue that throughout his life. I was definitely interested more in *why* his science

aptitude and interest led him to the more practical side of science instead of the theoretical. He

stated:

I worked at a national military medical center, where I worked with Black male vets and

active duty members. Because of that, I developed a specialty of neurorehabilitation,

specializing in neurological dysfunction and rehab. I am just very passionate about

treating Black patients in the clinical space and I saw a lot of the issues with the way we

treat our patients regarding our protocol and our interventions not being science or care

based.

Carson's experience of his parents in the science space from when he was a child, has informed

his integration into science programs as a college student. More specifically, Carson is speaking

to what Shelby (2002), calls "collective self-determination (p. 232)", or the theory that Black

people should unite and work together because they are an oppressed people, and that they can

only overcome or ameliorate their shared condition through Black solidarity. Shelby also states

that most Black people feel this collective identity to reach back to other oppressed Black people,

helping them on their path to liberation. It would make sense, then, that Carson's idea of science

has a practical orientation, given how his parents have modeled science practice for him and how

his experiences seeing Black veterans and active duty military officers, most of them men,

mistreated at the hands of the health care system. Because Carson does not have all of the answers and because he wants to know more, enrolling into a PhD program made all of the sense to him. One cannot change the system of mistreatment, according to Carson, unless one knows the "tricks of the trade" or how to navigate in a system that treats Black men as subhuman, especially in the healthcare system.

Because of his interest in Black male improvement in the science field, Carson has developed a practical research identity that he hopes to aid him in the future. He says:

> This is the only thing that matters to me, the advancement of Black people in the science field. I grew up in South Carolina and my mentality is that, at this point, I'm not as concerned about, I guess, making white people comfortable about me or us, but more so concerned about us, especially young Black folks, making sure that they feel confident within themselves to do what they need to do, to be that representative for them.

It is the condition of his communities in South Carolina that Carson feels that he must help his people in the science field, especially given that he has seen first-hand how Black men are discriminated against when trying to get medical attention from healthcare companies. It makes sense that he is oriented toward the practical side of science rather than the theoretical because "things sometimes get lost in translation when knowledge is transitioned from the theoretical to the practical." It is clear that Carson prides himself on breaking through the "ivory tower" (Brennan & Magness, 2019) of graduate study and becoming more of a practitioner with the theoretical knowledge to help Black people, specifically Black men, deal with the healthcare system. In fact, the other two students participating in this study talked about the importance of mentorship and reaching back to the Black community as a whole as well.

Darrell Matthews

Participant Profile

I return to Mid-Atlantic University's campus the next afternoon and park in the parking lot adjacent to the education building. Today is different; there is no sun, there is no warmth, and a heavy rain is pounding down onto the cracked pavement, grass struggling through the slivers in the ground. The office is just as I left it on the second floor of the education building, it's doorknob hard to turn and unlock, the electric light switch hard to control because I'm not used to it yet, and the desk strewn with papers from my professor friend's other class that morning. I set up my audio recording, place the questions in front of me once again, and wait for Darrell, another Black male doctoral student in the Minority & Urban Education program, to show up for our interview around 1:15pm. He knocks on the door a few minutes past our time to meet and I let him in. He is a friend from a previous class we took together, unlike Carson on the previous day. We hug each other and exchange pleasantries about our dissertation and doctoral process, lamenting the fact that we do not really see each other as much as we would like considering we are different programs. I could already tell that this interview will last much longer than my interview from yesterday; I had budgeted about an hour for each interview, but knowing how we both have a propensity to talk and laugh, this one lasted much longer.

After I discuss the aims of the study, we get into the interview questions for the day. Our rapport is already strong as Darrell begins, "Yeah, so actually this is good. I just participated in another study a couple of weeks ago and these guys were looking at resiliency among Black male graduate students. This is so good because it's the first time where I've gotten to talk with another Black male about my Black male experience. It doesn't happen often." I feel a sense of pride as he talks with me further about his background and why he decided to become a doctoral student, because he is finally getting the opportunity to converse with other Black men who are

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doctoral students but may be in other departments, constraining communication. I begin to nod

my head in the affirmative at Darrell's story because it begins to dovetail nicely with my own

experiences, especially when he talks about how supportive his parents were when it came to his

education: "Looking back, I realize now that Head Start was a public assistance program for poor

people. Back then, I didn't know that Head Start was for people below a certain income; I just

thought, you know, it was time to go to school, so that's what you did." Darrell's parents, then,

were much like mine, and much like other Black families, who understood the need for

education for their children, no matter the circumstances. Like Darrell says, it did not matter if

you were lower income or middle class or rich; it was important to get an education by any

means necessary.

Darrell continues the theme of his supportive parents as he discusses how his intelligence

helped him to take advanced courses, courses that would eventually propel him into college and

doctoral study. He says:

> I went through public school all of the way through. So, one of the critical moments for
>
> me, I think, is I always excelled in terms of making good grades in K-12 schooling. I
>
> want to say around my third-grade year, I got put into this AIG program, for students who
>
> were academically and intelligently gifted. I forget how they made this decision, but I
>
> remember meeting with the counselor, my mom, along with my twin brother, and they
>
> asked if I wanted to be recommended for the program. But my mom interrupted and said
>
> 'no, they *will* be recommended. They don't get a say."

Like most Black people, Darrell's mom was pragmatic in her decision to make sure that her twin

boys were given every opportunity to make their case in a gifted and talented program. She

understood the need for her children to obtain the same education that their white counterparts

were getting. Although Darrell claims later that he would have said "yes" to joining the program, it was his mother who ultimately made the decision for him and his twin brother. Darrell and his mother are practicing tenets of Black solidarity here, in which Black people feel a sense of responsibility for the people coming behind them and for navigating historically white spaces to obtain the same things that white people are afforded. The fact that Darrell was only eight years old and understood how his mother approached the decision, says a lot about how Black people, especially Black men, are raised. She made the decision on purely pragmatic, practical grounds, instead of thinking about what her children "could" be in a theoretical sense. She made the decision on who they "would" because she *knew* that it was important for her children to get exposed to a program that would increase their chances of college readiness.

From there, Darrell was consciously aware of the challenges that other students were facing, including racism, gendered racism, and negative stereotypes. In gifted classes he was treated as any other student in the class, but once he went to middle school and was transferred to general education courses, things started to change and his awareness grew. He says that his "brother stayed with the advanced track and I went to the general education classes; I still don't know how that decision was made…what essentially became clear about those classes— especially since they were majority Black and male, different from my gifted classes—was that that teachers had lower expectations of us." Not only were the general education courses filled with Black male students, the teachers had consciously and unconsciously fallen into holding negative stereotypes about these students, including Darrell, although he had taken gifted courses until this point in his life. Even then, Darrell, with the support of his mother, used his own skills to further his education by returning to the advanced classes the next year:

I was like, "oh, they treating me mad different in here," and I used to get into it with my

teachers, because I'm like, "you think I'm dumb or stupid or something." I could tell how

they acted as it was more like, you know, trying to, it was more focused on behavior

instead of academics. I have the language now, but even then I was like, "I don't like how

I'm being treated in this space. I'm not being treated like I'm smart. So when I went to

eighth grade, my parents helped me get back in the advanced classes.

Darrell is referencing above the expectations white teachers have placed upon Black students in

our nation's public schools, as explicated in my literature review (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986;

Wood, Kaplan, & McLoyd, 2007). It is important to note, though, that although he did not have

the language to articulate *why* teachers were treating him differently in the general education

courses, he knew what it *felt* like to be treated as if he were a number and name on a disciplinary

form, then a student who was worthy of being educated. Although he was able to leave those

courses and return to the gifted and advanced classes with his twin brother, because of the help

of his parents and the pride they instilled in him about education, one wonders how those other

Black male students in the general education courses fared if they did not have the language to

speak on the unfairness of the situation and the institutional racism forced upon them. Darrell,

though, in this instance, positively complicates the deficit narratives in research that positions

Black male students as uneducated and unteachable.

As Darrell was forced to gain perspective on how he was treated as a general education

student, he became keenly aware of the differences between advanced and general courses when

he was transferred back to the gifted classes. There was a dichotomy between the two as he takes

his experience further:

In AP Calculus, you had to practice in order to get good at it. And my teacher at the time,

she set it up where she knew almost everyone, because almost everyone was going to fail

the first test because she would put stuff that was on there from like the end of the year.

But she always gave you an opportunity to stay after class or school to get more help, and

staying after school wasn't a problem for me.

Darrel, here, recognized the differences between the treatment he received as a Black male in his advanced courses verses the treatment he received in the general education courses. One wonders if he would have understood the differences if he had not been moved into general education in the first place. In his advanced math course, his teacher was supportive of her students and established close relationships with them, knowing them on a personal level. Educators know that in order to have good classroom management that fosters positive student outcomes and behavior, a teacher must show students that they care about them, no matter how hard or easy the subject matter is (Decker, Dona, & Christenson, 2007; Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004; Wang, Swearer, Lembeck, Collins, & Berry, 2015). Not only does Darrell's understanding of himself as Black and male start when he is younger, but he also, at a young age, analyzed and evaluated the treatment he received in general education courses and advanced classes as an example of racial literacy.

With this understanding of himself as Black and male, Darrell was able to help other Black males reap the benefits of his education, showing Black solidarity and critical racial literacy, transforming his space so that other Black people can benefit from what he has:

I remember when a white young woman who didn't make the grade to stay in advanced

courses, but her mom and dad would sign her up again and say "no, we want her to stay

in Advanced Placement." So she was able to still get that bump. She's still getting

exposure. She's still getting treated in a certain way. Whereas I had a Black male friend of mine who was on the football who took it after I told him about it. We were just talking one day in the hallway and I was like, "Oh, I'm about to go to AP class," and he's like "I don't even know what AP is." He just didn't know, but he ended up taking one once I told him. So, you know, just those type of things where it's like, who knows about information, who should be in the room. It ain't always the smartest people.

Darrell made sure to bring along other people along with him, because he understood, at such a young age, that people benefit from information, that he can and should become critical and intentional about transforming space so that other Black people can join in. In this sense, his Black male friend was encouraged to play football, but was not encouraged to even know what advanced placement courses were and how they helped with GPA. His friend was only able to take the course because Darrell gave him the information. This instance also shows that white people can get into spaces easier because of the social and cultural capital they carry with them just by virtue of practicing whiteness. Although Darrell's white female classmate did not make the grades to stay in the advanced courses, she was able to lean on her parents to stay in those classes because she knew the positive impact those courses could have on her GPA and appreciates the attention she receives from teachers who teach advanced courses. Darrell's approach to whiteness and the navigational tools he employs is also true of the third participant in this study.

Bryce Quinton

Participant Profile

Two days past before I am able to meet with the final participant in this study, Bryce Quinton; we met on a Friday morning at eleven a.m., meeting in the same professor's office.

Bryce, a doctoral student in the Education Policy program, texts me when I pull up into the parking lot (this time, I park in the same lot adjacent to the education building, but it is crowded today so I have to park even further) that he will be a few minutes late. When I walk into the office, I notice that my professor friend has removed all of her classwork from the previous day and her desk is clear. I set up my audio recording, open my laptop, and pull out my interview questions for the day. Bryce comes in about fifteen minutes past eleven, which has given me enough time to look over the questions once more. We hug each other and exchange pleasantries. Bryce and I have not taken courses with each other, but he has done presentations in my education research course, showing how to write and publish in scholarly journals. He is a bit older than me, and works at the local education department as a program analyst while completing his doctoral degree.

Like Carson and Darrell, Bryce immediately goes into his own experiences of racial literacy and how he came to know himself as Black and male, and how he used those identities to navigate himself through schooling:

> I went to a private school in Cleveland, Ohio my entire childhood. I went to that same elite school for my entire K-12 experience. I wanted to pursue doctoral education because after I graduated from Morehouse College, I started to work in education research. I had to leave that job because I had already maxed out my potential there and I was making more than some people who had graduate degrees. Doctoral education just seemed to be the logical step considering I was already working in education research and I knew how to do it. I also had Black male mentors throughout my life, including my parents and my friends at Morehouse college, who were doing well for themselves, to push me.

Unlike Carson and Darrell, Bryce's journey through racial literacy was not through the lens of public schooling; it was through the perspective of attending a private school his entire K-12 experience with mostly White students. Through his private school, he learned what whiteness was and why it was important to go to an "elite" school, at least from his perspective. His parents, probably believing that majority white schools were the best schools for Black students to go to, enrolled him in a private school that they thought would give him the best chances to succeed. The same could be said for Morehouse College; even though it is a primarily Black school, it is considered to be one of the "elite" HBCUs in America. Through these experiences, he gained Black male mentors who pushed him into graduate study because it made "sense" considering he had been doing education research for a long while. Bryce pushes this idea further when he says:

> I did go to Morehouse College, but I think that actually prepared me for a PWI in the sense that I had already gone to an elite private school as a child. I was already around white people and know how to navigate those spaces as a child, so going to college was an easy step for me…I finally got to hang around other Black men who had the same private school background to me, so it was good to get the best of both worlds before doctoral study.

Although the majority of Bryce's companions as a child were white people, he was able to gain a better understanding of himself and his Blackness *because* he still had to navigate through white spaces to succeed. Although the majority of his friends were white, he understood that he was still a Black boy who was afforded different opportunities than his white counterparts.

Discussion

Carson, Darrell, and Bryce each found and practiced racial/critical racial literacy through the same way: their parents, other Black men around them, and white people helped them to understand themselves as Black and male through their experiences of hardship. It was through hardship that they understood the need for Black solidarity, the ways in which they had to persevere in order to complete their schooling. For Carson, this was displayed through his father's science role modeling and seeing how Black veterans were treated unfairly in our nation's healthcare system; his journey to doctoral study was situated in the concept of the "ivory tower", where knowledge is gained on the research level, but that knowledge does not always trickle down to the practitioners on the front lines. His passion was to make sure that this knowledge does pass down and that he becomes someone who can bridge that supposed barrier between research and the science field at large. For Darrell, this was displayed through his parents, specifically his mother, pushing him to take advanced courses so that he would attend undergraduate and graduate school and his experience seeing *who* actually holds and benefits from knowledge and how white people manipulate spaces for their benefit. Through being treated unfairly by white teachers in his K-12 schooling while taking general education courses, he was able to bring along other Black male students who had not been exposed to advanced placement courses and did not know what those courses even were. For Bryce, his parents intentionally exposed him to whiteness by enrolling him into elite private schools, furthered by their belief that those type of schools would serve him better than public schools. Even though he attended those schools, his positionality as a Black man became clear because he found out that he had to code-switch in those spaces to navigate them successfully. The stories of these Black men are, of course, not generalizable to entire populations, but they do mirror the experiences of a lot of Black men discussed in the literature review. However, what links them is their skills of

resilience through a system that is designed to keep them from benefiting from the positive aspects of schooling.

Cross-Case Analysis

When I conducted the cross-case analysis of the interviews and journal entries, all three participants explained four dimensions of their PWI experiences: 1) feelings of loneliness/not being able to forge closeness with other Black male doctoral students, 2) negative perceptions of and racial microaggressions attending a PWI, 3) the influence of Black masculinity to their progress, and 4) the ways PWIs can do a better job of establishing spaces for Black men. Carson adopted a separate belief system and dimension: using traditional masculinity to claim manhood. These dimensions of their PWI experiences are seen through their perspectives of being Black men in spaces that are majority white. In this section, I describe the dimension that each participant shared with each other, providing excerpts from their interviews and their writing—as a form of "memory work" and counterstories—to inform my discussion of their experiences. I conclude this section by discussing the ways in which Carson differed from the other two and how his beliefs connect with the traditional and hypermasculinity standards presented in the literature review of this study.

Dimension #1: Feelings of loneliness/Not being able to forge closeness with other Black male doctoral students

Each participant spoke on their feelings of loneliness in the doctoral program at Mid-Atlantic University, expressing how it was hard to create bonds with other Black men because there were not many in their respective programs. These dimensions have shown up in different ways for each participant, but their experiences are striking. For Carson, his loneliness has

emerged as an awareness of his professors and advisors and the fact that he has no one to talk at times. He explains:

> I find the professors want you to perform instead of caring about who you are. They say, "we *need* you to perform", or at least that's how I feel. At PWIs there are a lot of resources, from my experience, and also better organization and the way, you know, the processes are administratively. But then at the same time I definitely feel, especially now that I am in a PhD program, like I feel kind of lonely because there's not a lot of Black folks, especially Black men, in these spaces.

For Carson, his experiences of loneliness are compounded by the fact that his professors seem more concerned about how he is producing research than how he is doing and the struggles he is experiencing as a doctoral student. Because he attends a research university, the ultimate goal is to produce as much research as possible. Although Carson's main goal of doctoral study is to bridge the gap between researchers and practitioner, this attempt would be a bit smoother if his professors actually knew who he was, instead of what he was writing or presenting. Because his professors do not share his same race, there can be no conversations, at least from his perspective, that delve into his experiences as a Black man. And since there are no other Black men in the Neuroscience program, those conversation cannot happen peer-to-peer, at least not on a consistent basis.

For Carson, there is a disconnect between how others experience him and how he experiences white people, which leads to more feelings of isolation, feelings that he is alone and that he has to make all of the decisions for himself without the help of others. He takes this idea further in his journal entries, writing his counterstory and participating in memory work:

Pretty much it's this idea of the feeling of isolation. Although I find most of my white

peers can be friendly, there's definitely a social and cultural disconnect that carries over

into our conversations. It's a disconnect. It might not just be due to them being white and

me being black. It could also be due to age difference because I'm a little bit older and

also it could be attributed to our separate backgrounds…I feel like I have superficial

interactions with my white peers, and with my professors, I'm always the only Black

male in the room, which creates a feeling of loneliness and isolation but also this need to

really step up and perform.

In his writings, Carson alludes to his conversations with his Black male peers by going deeper

about his conversations and connections with his white peers and professors. One can assume

that there is a disconnect here because the conversations that he has with white people are not the

same conversations he has with other black people, which leads him to more feelings of

isolation. His conversations with white people are superficial and shallow, at least to him,

because they do not share his same race, they cannot operate on his level of raciality because

they no do have the experience to talk about it. These experiences are compounded by the fact

that he is an older student and that he has a southern background, migrating to the north when he

chose to attend doctoral study. Carson also writes that there is a pressure in his classes because

not only is he the only Black person in the classroom, he is also the only Black male. Although

his professors may not be doing anything differently than they would usually do, there is still this

implicit pressure that he feels based on being the only one in the classroom, this pressure to

perform at the highest level because he is the only representative. It is clear here that Carson does

not just experience his race in connection with his interactions with white peers and professors;

his race and gender intersect to inform how he views these interactions and how he feels pressure to be the best Black male representative that he can be.

This disconnect flows not just from the classroom and his interpersonal conversations and interactions, but they also connect to his fellowship as well, the work he does in exchange for tuition remission to complete his doctoral degree. He writes:

> Even during the time of my fellowship. Same thing there. I'm the only Black male, to my knowledge, in the entire division. The only other Black males I see honestly at the job within my division are actually the janitors. Now obviously there are other Black people in other departments, so I may have limited communication with them, and again, people are generally friendly. But it's just this kind of feeling of disconnect.

It is clear here that Carson may feel tension when talking about his feelings of isolation and disconnection between himself and other white people in his department and at his job at a local Neuroscience department, which causes him to "soften" the blow of these experiences as a lot of Black people tend to do when talking about their issues (Cabrera, 2018; Thompson, 2019). He makes sure to talk about how people are generally friendly, almost causing him to downplay how he feels that he is only one he sees in his department at his school and at his job, limiting the ways he can write his issues on paper. He knows that his feelings of isolation and disconnection do matter, but he is always thinking about the positives of his experiences as well, making sure to think of the good instead of the bad. Even in his interview, Carson says, "The university has a mass of resources, which is very good and again, they have a very streamlined administrative process. They are very rigorous. However, I know every university touts diversity, but again, I don't see that representation as much here. I just don't see it as much." Carson does the same

here, couching his criticisms of the university in the positive attributes that it espouses in its literature when recruiting and retaining students.

His reticence to criticize the university could be because he and I have never met each other before, which is in itself an issue. In fact, as Carson gains comfortability with me and after I pair my experiences of isolation with his own to make him feel more at ease with the interview processes, he does not color how he feels about not being able to fully connect with other Black men. He says, "statistically it can be different, but I don't see it as such. I think I'm the second Black male in my PhD program to ever come through. And then in my whole school of Public Health, I have not met any other Black male student completing his PhD. So as for its resources, it's great. But visibility? Non-existent." Carson has definitely understood his place in his PhD program and has internalized the lack he feels when he thinks about how he has not met any other Black male doctoral student to form bonds with, which is probably why it has taken him some time to gain some semblance of comfortability with me. At this point of his interview, though, he clearly states that the university likes to boast about its diversity numbers, but it is not doing enough to recruit and retain Black male students, leading to a sense of isolation and a feeling of loneliness, and, what Carson calls, as this pressure to stand out and perform at the highest levels so as to subvert his white professors and peers' feelings about Black male performance and education.

Carson continues this conversation through talking about the importance of role modeling and having Black male mentorship on campus, but that has been denied to him because of the lack of Black male presence. When asked if he feels like he is a role model for other Black men, he says, "I definitely do. I've done mentorship before through my fraternity and through a

nonprofit I'm involved in, so I see myself as a role model, but that has not been afforded to me on campus." When asked to take this idea further, Carson states:

> Again, just like the idea that it is lonely on this campus…And then sometimes the fatigue of being the only one. I mean I said I'm a role a model, but I can't be Superman all of the time. It's always, once again, this need to represent all Black folks but then also dealing with white expectations for me to be that link to the "hood" even if am not from that.

Though Carson understands the need to be a role model to other Black men who are thinking about graduate study, he does not see that same behavior being reciprocated toward him. As he says, he cannot be "Superman" and save the entire race without someone coming to save him as well, or inquiring about how he is doing as a Black man and what he needs to do to effectively become a better student and researcher. This feeling of loneliness has even impacted the way he conducts and presents research, as he does not see people who look like him around him. He explains:

> I was actually at a national conference, and there were only five Black men. I met this gentleman and we started having a conversation. During the conversation he's like "I'm so glad you're in a PhD program. Like we got you off the street." I'm just like, it took everything I could do. The only reason why I didn't go off on him because I had another conversation the previous day with an Uber driver about racial relations and that triggered me. So I know if I would have said something I would have been inappropriate in that space. So I chose not to address it. I'm like, "dude I'm dressed up more than you, my shirts tucked in, and my beard's clean." You know what I'm saying? Like my edge up is fresh and I'm talking properly, and you still equate me to the hood. What more I gotta do?

Although this quote could apply to the racial microaggression portion of this cross-case analysis, it is important to note here that this microaggression leads to feelings of more loneliness. Because as Carson says later, "I just kind of felt a disconnect there. I would not be experiencing this if I was at an HBCU. They would wrap me in open arms." Carson can, as he says, cut his hair, dress properly, and speak in ways that are not antagonistic to white people, and he is still treated as if he is uneducated. Negative stereotypes of Black men being on the "street" are still thrown his way no matter what he does. Carson reasons that if he was not in a program and university that is primarily white, he would not be treated this way. Even though he is offended by the comment by the white researcher at a national conference, he has no one to talk to about it because people do not look like him. He cannot even talk to the other Black men at the conference because he does not know them deep enough to have the conversation. This, in turn, leads him to feeling isolated and disconnected from the conference even though he has worked hard to be there. From his advisor becoming entrenched in the competitive nature of research that abounds on research campuses to being the only Black man in his courses to, finally, working hard to attend national conferences only to be treated as a stereotype, shows that Carson has not been able to make meaningful relationships with other Black men on campus even though he wants to. Our interview seems to be the one time in which Carson has been able to have these deep conversations with another Black man who understands his plight.

Darrell. For Darrell, the isolation and disconnection as a Black man attending a PWI has manifested in different ways, specifically, how certain things are considered "implicit knowledge" that every doctoral student must have by virtue of just being a doctoral student. He says:

This is something I always say, and it's an honest critique I have. Some of the things with

our program, a lot of things are just not written down. It's like, what we do as our group

of folks, we have to pass information down religiously, even if it may not apply, and be

like "oh, by the way, let me just put this in a group text message because ain't nobody

else gonna to tell you." This is just a big challenge for me.

When Darrell said this, I completely agreed with him because I felt as if I had learned things at

the last minute or I was expected to know certain things—like writing papers and how to submit

proposals for education conferences—just off the strength of me being a doctoral student.

Coming from a teaching, practical background, it is sometimes hard to reorient ones' thinking

around theory and conducting research. For Darrell, knowledge about doctoral study was not

readily passed down, keeping him at a disadvantage when it came to accessing the knowledge he

needed to be successful in his program. He has had to find other Black people in other

departments to help him through his program, to find people to conduct research with, and to

gain important information that is not written down anywhere else. This has created another

layer of burden to the already arduous process of doctoral study.

This feeling of isolation and disconnection that Darrell feels is not just something he

experiences from white people, but it is also something he feels from Black women doctoral

students who are in much more abundance at the university than Black men. He speaks on a

conversation he had with a student about the differences in treatment:

[My friend] calls Black men in higher education pandas and she calls black women

yellow tigers. And she's like "both of these species are near extinction, but people only

care about pandas." On the one hand, that's shaped me a lot. I do think on the one hand

being a Black man in higher education, because there are so few of us, we do just stand

out, you know what I'm saying? I think sometimes, for a variety of people, regardless of their race and ethnicity, like it's much harder to be like, "how do I get a Black male student from K-12 to the PhD?" And then they're like, "Oh, we found one right here, so you ain't really got to do much work." But we did. We did the work on our own to get here, and I think sometimes that makes us stand out, because there aren't many of us here. Like…It's really not easy for us.

Darrell, in this part of his interview, is talking about how isolation and disconnection is experienced differently by two oppressed groups on the same campus. Although he and his friend share the same race, there exists a tension between the two that Darrell exposes when he talks about how Black men are treated from his perspectives versus how his friend sees the situation. To her, she says that Black men and women are non-existent on campus, but that researchers only care about the abysmal Black male attrition numbers. Although more Black women graduate then their Black male counterparts at the graduate level, she still feels that Black women have a unique experience that Black men do not experience. However, for Darrell, he cannot completely discount the needs of Black men because although efforts have been made to increase the numbers of Black men at the doctoral level, he does not see as many changes as he would like. In this passage, Darrell makes clear to recognize the tension between himself and Black women, but he is not fearful to name his experience as complicated and isolating as well, being confident to say that it is hard to be a Black man on a predominately White campus because he has gotten there on his own merits and has to use his own wits to deal with the stresses that came from making that decision.

Darrell understands this dichotomy well, especially because he understands his privilege as a man and as a Black man, but he feels empowered, through his own research and

experiences, to name when things start to feel isolating. Through his experience with his Black woman friend, there is not only a disconnection that he feels towards the university, but also a disconnection that he feels between he and his friend. He says:

> You can't say it, but it's hard to hear from people who are like—who attack you because you're talking about Black males. Black women will say, sometimes, "So let me tell you what we not talking about, what we not gonna do." It's the idea of like, there's only so much people can focus on at once. And so it becomes really difficult. On the one hand, like there is gender privilege. And at the same times, and I said this to myself recently, I'm still a Black man. There's still some shit that I probably don't even think through deeply because I'm not focused on those issues. Life is good for me at times, but there's ways that people are dismissive to me. People approach me differently, they patronize me, all of the other things that are tied to the fact that I'm a Black man and that's how they see me regardless. And…I could say that and still realize that all Black folks, regardless of your gender, have real struggles too.

It is important to note that Darrell makes it clear that he understands his privilege as a man in American society and also understands his privilege as a Black man in the Black community. Although he does not want to speak over Black women and the oppression they feel in white spaces and in Black spaces, he also wants to make it clear that he feels the same disconnections and loneliness that Black women feel in white spaces. And along with that disconnection has come with experiences of feeling dismissed and patronized by white people—harkening back to his days in public school—which creates more feelings of disconnection. Later on in the interview, Darrell makes it clear that nuance is something that he would not have understood if he had not attended graduate school. This passage is a reflection of how Darrell can hold two

different concepts in his mind: the fact that Black people feel oppression, loneliness, isolation, and disconnection in different ways, but also becoming comfortable with the fact that Black man have a different layer of oppression that they must tend to in white spaces.

Through these experiences, Darrell has had to use intentionality to deal with the loneliness and disconnection he feels as a Black man on a predominately white campus, and he has had to learned that he has to empower himself. He writes in his journal entries:

> A huge advantage that I've learned in my experience is that I can be intentionally selective about the way I interact with my white colleagues. And sometimes that means no interaction at all if I feel that they are in relationship with me in ways that don't feel authentic. It doesn't feel healthy for a variety of reasons…The reality is that I have a small program. I think that made the difference for me. I have developed authentic relationships with the white peers in my program, but it was on my own terms. It hasn't felt like I've had to force them, whether it's finding people to study with or finding people to get information from, or finding places for encouragement or places for sustainment and advice. And that's important to me because I know oftentimes just for the way the world has set up and the way systems of power operate on a systemic level, that it trickles down on the individual interpersonal level. Oftentimes white folks just don't know how to be in authentic relationship with people of color. In general, this has been good for me and has felt empowering.

This is a powerful statement from Darrell because it is one of his coping and navigational techniques he has used to deal with the disconnection he feels when dealing with white people on his campus and his program. Although he has gained important friendships with some white people, he also knows that some white people do not know how to be in authentic relationship

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with people of color, no matter how hard they try, especially when one has spent their entire lives inundated with whiteness. It is interesting, here, that Darrell does not always blame them for inattentiveness to Black and Black male issues, but he has created, within himself, an intentionality to deal with the ways he feels shut down, dismissed, and oppressed for being a Black man on a college campus that is primarily white. It has become healthy for him to disregard conversations and relationships with white peers and professors if those relationships are not beneficial to him. Of course, this technique has probably created more disconnection for him, but Darrell does not languish there. He uses that disconnection to further conversations with white and other Black people who *do* see the humanity within him and understand where he is coming from when he talks about the things that are important to him as a Black man. An understanding in how oppression works on a systematic, institutional, and personal level, has helped Darrell realize that he must depend on himself, the people who support him, and to always name how he feels because how he feels that is important too. He is able to fully engage with those people who support him, no matter how small that group is.

This choosing how to engage with others has been an asset for Darrell, not a hinderance to his process and progress through doctoral study. In fact, he says that it has helped him with the loneliness he feels. He takes this idea further by giving an example during his interview:

I just don't engage. That's what I like about graduate school. It's not a full-time job so I don't have to engage. I don't. When I used to work, you had to engage and work with everybody. I remember one time I was talking to, I was trying to do this thing during my first year. I was talking to a white woman, I was talking to her and I could tell how she was dismissing me. I'm like, "Oh, you're not even listening to me." I had an idea to do something, to build community. And I was like, "Hey, do you want to be a part of this?"

She was in student affairs. And so I was like, "Hey, I'm thinking about bringing this

together. What do you think?" And she then started spitting out of these ideas that are

great, but I'm like, "you clearly aren't listening to me or critically engaging in the things

that I'm bringing to you as if I didn't just bring it to you…like you ain't got to follow my

way, but don't just talk right past me and just bring whatever idea you had..." So yes, I

completely disengaged after that.

While this is a racial microaggression that I will discuss further in the second dimension of this

cross-case analysis, it is important to note that Darrell intentionally becomes disengaged when

disconnection barges into conversations around race with other white people. In this sense, a

white woman did not listen to what he was bringing to the table, to open up a space where white

and Black people could build community together, learning from each other. In this sense,

Darrell was trying to help himself and to bridge the gap between Black people and white people

on campus so that they could build understanding between each other. However, the white

woman in this scenario took over the conversation, using his same language against him, using

his ideas as her own. Because, as Darrell says earlier, some white people are inauthentically

engaged with Black people, he is able to disengage from them, dealing with the loneliness and

disconnection he feels by grappling with his loneliness from a personal, internal space.

  Bryce. Although Bryce has grown up in white spaces his entire life and knows how to

navigate them with fidelity, he is still not immune to the loneliness and disconnection that

Carson and Darrell are going through. In his interview with me he states:

I enjoy the fact that I can do and excel at education research because that is my

background, but I don't enjoy that there aren't a lot of people who look like me in my

program and in the education department. I mean, me and you talk and we're cool, but

we're not as close as I would like us to be. It's good to see you as another Black man on campus though. There aren't many of us, so it's hard to be one of the only ones. Although I enjoy my advisor, she doesn't share my race or gender. She always has opportunities for me to succeed and we talk about my research, but the conversations usually stop there.

Bryce speaks on the same supportive nature of his advisor that Carson does; their advisors have become huge resources when it comes to supporting them in their research agendas and giving them recommendations for panels and conferences. However, Bryce's advisor does not share his same race or gender, so there is no deeper conversation around race and gender to be had with her. Like Darrell, Bryce and I know each other well, but we do not get to see each other much because we are in separate programs within the education department. Again, this has created for Bryce a situation in which he is the only one in his policy coursework, forced to feel the pressure of being the representative for Black men in those spaces. On top of this pressure, he cannot go to this advisor about how he feels, because those conversations are constrained by conversations about education research. There is a dichotomy here between how Bryce has experienced education research through his jobs before doctoral study, his private school background, and the ways in which he still feels alone in his process of getting his PhD. It is interesting, then, that his parents felt that he would be more successful if he attended majority white spaces, but that has come at the severe cost of deepening relationships with other Black men.

Later on in his interview process, Bryce talks about the importance of role modeling, and how he would like to become mentors for other Black men thinking about graduate school, but the loneliness he feels as the only Black man in his department has constrained his ability to do so. Speaking on role modeling and mentorship he says, "Hell yeah I do [consider myself as a role model]. I didn't go through all of this for nothing. While I believe that I'm not the be all end all, I

do believe that I'm striving to be a role model for other Black men. I want them to be educated and go to college like me." Much like Carson and Darrell, Bryce depicts himself as a role model for other Black men, creating a tension in the literature that suggested that Black men do not want to be role models for other men. As Bryce says, this is because he has gone through private schools with white people, went to Morehouse so that he can learn more how to navigate white spaces as a Black man, worked in education research, and continued his education at a primarily white university for his doctoral degree. For Bryce, although he stressed that he went to "elite" schools his entire life, I could tell, through his words, that he was still a bit scarred from his background of not having people around him that looked like him, and now those feelings have transferred to his doctoral study. While Bryce wants to be a role model for other Black men who are considering graduate study, as other Black men around him growing up were for him, he says that that ability has become constrained given the nature of attending a PWI. He speaks on this tension:

> I'm always being the only one, which is a problem. Like, as I said before, me and you are cool, but we don't hang out the way I would want, so I always feel alone. Also, my presence as a Black man is always scrutinized or people are scared of my words as a Black man, so I can't speak on how I really feel. So I always have to make sure that when I speak, I'm not just speaking from a Black man's lens and just talking about my problems. I know that I have privilege as a man, so I always try to bring in the experience of other marginalized people because I know that people really don't think Black men can experience the same problems that women feel, so not only am I always the only one speaking my mind, I always have to make sure I bring up others' plight to make sure people aren't thinking I'm speaking over women.

Much like what Darrell was saying about how his experiences are dismissed when he talks to people who do not share his same race and gender, including Black women, Bryce makes a powerful statement about how he is perceived as a Black man and how he navigates through those perceptions. He cannot become a role model to any other Black men—even though he wants to—because not only does he not see them in his program, he also says that this has made him feel "alone" and that this is a "problem" for him. Instead of speaking of the problems he is facing and how he feels about the ways he is alone, he knows people will not listen to him based on negative stereotypes about how Black men should deal with their emotions. Eschewing his emotions, he brings up the plight of others, hoping to combine those problems with his own so that people will listen to him. He mentions that he understands how he is perceived by people who do not share his same race and gender, so as a Black man, he has to "bring other people along" when talking about oppression, especially women because he understands he has gender privilege. Although he does have this privilege, he recognizes that his privilege does not exempt him from having his own problems as well. However, he cannot speak on them, leaving him marginalized in an already marginalizing space.

Because he cannot speak on his problems, Bryce has not given up when it comes to navigating his stresses as a Black man. Like Darrell, he has learned how to use other's stereotypes about him to his advantage. He writes in his journal:

I think that I have benefited from or been able to use my capital in ways that perhaps other scholars of color haven't to my benefit. I think about my relationship with [professor's name omitted] in particular. You know, I've joked with people that she sees me as the "Great Black Hope" even though I don't take it as one. I realized that she picks and chooses which Black people she will surround herself with. I think she might have a

thing for Black guys, which is another problem in itself…I think, for me, what's most

clarifying about my experience with white peers and professors is it was really how my

experience may differ from other scholars of color…And so I think that speaks to a larger

attention that sometimes students of color experience with their professors and peers. It

speaks to whether or not they're being hard on them because they're trying to better

them, or they're being hard on them because they don't care about them or their work.

And I think that is a tension that students of color are forced to navigate in ways that

white students never consider.

Instead of continuing to speak on his aloneness, Bryce has used the ways white people have

always responded to him and his intelligence as a child and when he was working for an

educational research firm, and has used that to his benefit. He has been afforded research

opportunities and presentations at national conferences to further his own research agenda. This

is a navigational technique that has helped him ingratiate himself with white professors who have

a lot of power in his program and in the department as a whole. Although their views on Black

people, and especially Black men, are problematic, Bryce has been able to use how they view

him to his benefit in ways that others may not—and a lot of that connects to his background with

always having to navigate white spaces. If he cannot model for or be in relationship with other

Black men, it is best, for him, to use his isolation as a tool of power instead of marginalization.

For Bryce, there is an understanding that without this particular professor's support—because of

the ways he can navigate relationships with white people—his work would not be supported, nor

would be afforded the same research opportunities as his white counterparts. Although he knows

this professor's views of him as the "Great Black Hope" is problematic—because it, as Carson

expresses, positions him as the only Black person who is intelligent and worthy of respect—he

has been able to combat his aloneness with opportunities from white people to further his own career.

It is clear, though, that even though Bryce can use his professors' stereotypical opinions of him to his advantage, that has come at a cost to him: perpetual loneliness and stigmatization. He writes:

> There's never been a moment when I'm not painfully aware of my positionality, regardless of the topic that we're discussing. I'm aware of how I'm being read in that moment or how my body language is read when I respond to someone who makes absurd comments and the extent to which I will be perceived as aggressive or some other new disparaging adjective if my response is not extremely measured and really clearly grounded in the relevant literature.

Even though Bryce is able to code-switch and navigate through his stresses, and speaks on how he has an uncanny ability to do this, it is clear from his words that this navigation has come at a price. He has become painfully aware of how he, his comments, and his responses to gendered racism are read by white people. Even though he has the research and presentation opportunities, and he is proud of them, that has come at a cost. His professional experiences are upheld, and he has made strides into being accepted into professional circles, but his interpersonal interactions are oftentimes marginalized, leaving behind feelings of loneliness and disconnection.

Discussion. Carson, Darrell, and Bryce's experiences of isolation fit neatly into the literature surrounding Black males attending PWIs. Although this stream of literature focuses on the experiences of Black men in undergraduate school, the participants add a new layer into how Black male doctoral students are living with isolation and how they are navigating through it. Each participant is careful to give credence to their university's abundance of resources and the

opportunities that are afforded to them given its research reputation. However, they are able to nuance their discussion to how they feel about them being the "only ones" in their program and how they cannot deepen their relationships with other Black men. Because they do not "see" other Black men in their classes, their voices have become marginalized in discussions of race with white people and even Black women. This research project has opened a door into discussions with another Black man who is going through doctoral study that can sympathize and empathize with their plights of being alone and their fear of bringing up their issues because they are clear as to how gendered racism and how their words can be considered aggressive. It is important to note that the participants understand that their professional lives are broadening and that they are gaining relationships with dynamic researchers that will help them in the future. However, they do see how they have had to sacrifice their feelings in favor of their professional aspirations. Due to the nature of attending a research university with a large population, their feelings have become marginalized, leaving them to feel alone and isolated in favor of research agendas and classroom experiences that do not speak to their lives as Black men. They do not experience life and college as just Black; their gender and race are entwined in ways that seep into their experiences with their white peers and professors.

Dimension #2: Negative perceptions of and racial microaggressions attending a PWI

Each participant under study has experienced microaggressions— subtle verbal and nonverbal insults directed at people of color, layered insults based on someone's race, gender, or sexuality, and cumulative insults that cause racial stress (Pierce, 1974; Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano, 2006)—that have contributed to their feelings of isolation. Carson speaks on feeling put down by his advisor in the Neuroscience program, when he tried to talk about experiences of racism on campus and how he should respond as a Black man:

No, I do not talk about my worry, fears, and problems about society with my advisor. My relationship with my advisor is definitely not that deep. I mean, granted, he's pretty much grown up in France, so though he recently got a position at the university, he has a limited understanding of the culture here, let alone the sub-cultures of Black hip-hop, etc., things that have made me the man I am. Once time I tried to bring up racism, especially in the healthcare system, and he turned the conversation around to just this idea of "produce, get the work done, write these papers." So no, I don't feel comfortable talking to him, you know?

It is interesting that Carson, here, gives his advisor the benefit of the doubt in this interaction, which shows more about Carson's moral character. He understands the need to nuance his discussion of this microaggression with his advisor by explaining that he grew up in another country, so he may not know the levels of oppression that Black people experience. However, Carson is clear that from this instance of trying to talk about racism in the healthcare system, his advisor dodged the conversation, telling Carson to just focus on producing research and write his required papers. His advisor is more concerned about Carson's professional life, and, in turn, his own, as Carson mentions that he has conducted research for his advisor later on in the interview. Because research schools are usually focused on competition and the hard work of producing and disseminating the results of research (Binswanger, 2015; Lariviere & Costas, 2016), and Carson's advisor was a new hire to the Neuroscience department, his advisor is more focused on getting the work done, instead of Carson expressing how racism and racial stress has impacted his work.

This competitiveness, though, has led to situations in Carson's progress that his advisor has used to his advantage to the advancement of his own career and to the detriment of Carson's.

Carson's maintains that his ideas are either dismissed or his advisor gets into a mental power struggle with him over ownership of ideas:

> I've noticed, while I've been here, that sometimes [my advisor] doesn't really fully listen to me when I give feedback about various research, issues, and topics. And I feel like a lot of times when I try to convey scholarly ideas or opinions, they are not fully heard. And what's interesting is, in the last couple of weeks I've had a meeting with my advisor, and I proposed various scientific ideas and he would either not respond to them or he would belittle them in a sense. Not in a disrespectful way, but just kind of slightly lessening its significance. And then he might bring up another point, but then I realized that later in the conversation he'll wrap back around and he will literally suggest the same thing that I stated in which earlier he only had a basic response. Is this because I'm young, a younger student? Is this a superiority thing? Does my race and my gender factor into that? I have definitely noted with him a lot of times I give recommendations that are solid in theory but they're not really appreciated. But then he will echo the same thing as if he's the one that is creating the idea. I don't fully understand that.

It would seem that Carson's advisor might be questioning his intelligence or there may be other nefarious reasons, like racism and gendered racism, coloring his advisor's perceptions of Carson's ideas. It is equally interesting that his advisor belittles Carson's research ideas, but in the next breath, he will use his ideas as his own, taking the power away from Carson. On a top PWI's campus, knowledge and research are power, which exemplifies concepts of the ivory tower (Brennan & Magness, 2019); Carson's ideas no longer hold weight when his advisor uses them for his own gain, leaving Carson wondering if he has been "gaslit", or psychological manipulation that forces a victim of abuse to question his sanity and is a product of normalized

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ways of being from a dominant person that allows the person to continue to benefit from that manipulation (Wozolek, 2018). In this scenario, Carson's advisor has placed him in an inferior, instead of a collaborative, role while he takes advantage of his ideas. This leaves Carson to wonder if he had done something wrong and analyzing if this interaction is racism because he is Black or if it is a consequence of him being a Black man and the negative stereotypes that come with that. Instead of focusing on the "work" as his advisor has suggested to him from the beginning of his time in doctoral study, Carson is forced to think about the implications of his advisor stealing his ideas for his own use.

Carson has also seen this power struggle between he and his advisor exemplified in other ways outside of the confines of his office. He writes:

I have noticed with him that he does seem to have a little bit of a mental power struggle, not with just me, but I have noticed when he's communicating with other professors and other people in the field I realize he's very competitive. I think it's because he's up for tenure; perhaps part of that energy is coming from he just feels like he has to be the one to state the obvious facts. He has to be the one that states the best idea.

Carson's advisor sense of competitiveness and the hard road of tenure is indicative of the research school's culture (Brennan & Magness, 2019). Although Carson understands this, his advisor does not seem to understand how that level of competition is misplaced; Carson has only just begun his doctoral journey so there is no need to compete with him. Even though Carson's advisor may see the university as a space of promotion and tenure, Carson's experiences his advisor through the lens of racism and microaggression. Through his advisor's words and actions, Carson has come to see his ideas and research as not worthy of talking about because at

best, they will be belittled, but, at worst, his advisor will essentially plagiarize his ideas and use them as his own to be "the one that states the best idea."

Although, according to Carson, focusing on conducting and presenting research does not assuage microaggressions or make them better. As discussed in Dimension #1, the research arena is just as toxic as the campus environment. He speaks on attending a national convention:

> I was actually at a national conference, and there were only five Black men. I met this gentleman professor and we started having a conversation. During the conversation he's like, "I'm so glad you're in a PhD program. Like we got you off the street." I'm just like, it took everything I could do. The only reason why I didn't go off on him because I had another conversation the previous day with an Uber driver about racial relations and I that triggered me. So I know if I would have said something I would have been inappropriate in that space. So I chose not to address it. I'm like, "dude I'm dressed up more than you, my shirts tucked in, and my beard's clean." You know what I'm saying? Like my edge up is fresh and I'm talking properly, and you still equate me to the hood. What more I gotta do?

For Carson, it does not matter what he does, focus on the work or focus on his own stresses, racism and microaggressions tend to follow him. It is interesting that he is experiencing this racism at the hands of a white professor at a national conference, a place where scholars convene to talk about their research interests. Even though Carson is dressed up, wearing a suit and tie, he is still considered a threat. The professor tells him that he is glad "we got you off the street," as a form of intimidation, marginalizing his contributions to research. Although negative stereotypes of Black men would suggest that Carson would "go off of him", he chooses to take the high road because of other racial microaggressions he had experienced earlier the previous day. It must be

made clear here that this racism attacks and targets not just Carson's race but also his Black maleness, showing how two different systems of oppression affect his progress through his doctoral degree. It should also be made clear that Carson's many attempts to navigate through negative stereotypes of Black men have not proved fruitful; no matter what he does, some white people will always associate him with the "hood".

These microaggressions have combined to create a sense of complacency in Carson, slow to interact with others he may feel harmful to him or his progress to his degree. He says that this is because he is "fiercely independent. I'll try once, I'll try twice, but after that I'm good." He explains a situation that has happened, combined with the other racism and microaggressions he has experienced, when he tried to interact with two Black woman professors:

My first "Welcome" event to my program was a workshop and we were seeing everybody for the first time and then I see, like, two Black women. So I'm very excited. So I go over and initiate conversation. You know, they are young, so I thought they were students, but actually they were professors. I was like, "wow, that's cool, actually professors in my program, although different department." But even just trying to speak, I just, you know, I'm just very friendly and I just felt like there was like a little bit of hesitation and not a lot of open arms. And even at times I've seen them since, I've had to initiate conversation until one day, one of them caught themselves and said, "Wow, I should be the one to ask you, how are you doing? How are you?" I've kind of felt like a disconnect there, which I would not experience at an HBCU. They would wrap me in open arms. But here it's more of an every man or woman for themselves.

Carson is, again, speaking to the competitive nature of PWIs and research universities discussed above. Although he expects to be isolated from his white professors and peers at best and

experiencing microaggressions and overt racism at worst, he now has to contend with feeling slighted by other Black people on campus. When he tried to meet them at a welcome event before the semester started—at a place where one is supposed to participate in meeting others—he is shunned for his actions and shunned every time since except for once, which can only be perceived as how even the nature of PWIs have trickled down to even Black scholars. It is interesting to note, however, that these Black professors changed course later and invited Carson into conversation with them and asked how he was faring through his studies. But, as Carson says, he is an independent person and after feeling slighted more than once, he has no more interest in communing with those who have done him harm in the past, no matter if the person did not mean it or not. Carson introduces, as Darrell does when he talks to his Black woman friend, the idea that even those that share his same race will exhibit microaggressions against Black men. This has created a situation in which Carson does not care to be in conversation or relationship with those who marginalize him. As he says, "I know my purpose at the moment…Beyond that, I don't care a whole lot what you think, and I'm speaking to people in my program, professors, and my advisor. I want you to know that I work. I'm confident because I really know what I want to do."

  Darrell. The dismissing of ideas and experiences as a form of microaggression reaches into Darrell's doctoral journey as well. He reveals an event that happened to him while in coursework. Although the feelings of disconnection have already been discussed with this passage, its important to analyze this event from the lens of racial microaggressions:

> I remember one time I was talking to, I was trying to do this thing during my first year. I
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> was talking to a white woman, I was talking to her and I could tell how she was
>
> dismissing me. I'm like, "Oh, you're not even listening to me." I had an idea to do

something, to build community. And I was like, "Hey, do you want to be a part of this?" She was in student affairs. And so I was like, "Hey, I'm thinking about bringing this together. What do you think? And she then started spitting out of these ideas that are great, but I'm like, "you clearly aren't listening to me or critically engaging in the things that I'm bringing to you as if I didn't just bring it to you…like you ain't got to follow my way, but don't just talk right past me and just bring whatever idea you had..." So yes, I completely disengaged after that.

To build community between white and Black people, based on his own experiences of microaggressions, Darrell has tried to plan an event where these two groups could talk together, to build camaraderie. However, his ideas are shut down, or, as what happened to Carson, they are revised to fit the needs of the person who is using them. In this example, Darrell's idea of community is marginalized, constraining his relationship with his white female peer. She understands the importance of his idea, but she uses them as a building block to her own. This, in turn, creates a racial microaggression, a subtle act of racism, that positions Darrell and his ideas as inferior and his peer's ideas as superior. Because of this event, he chooses to disengage with his peer and consciously cultivates a space where he does not have to be in collaboration with white people unless it is truly needed or if he has a deep, positive relationship with the person he is collaborating with. It is ironic, here, that in Darrell's attempt to become more inclusive, the marginalization of his ideas and microaggressions have led him to become exclusive.

Even though Darrell was dismissed by a white woman in one of his courses, he still decided to build the space of connection between white and Black students on campus, while hoping to partner with like-minded people. However, during this process, it was clear that the

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people he planned the event with still had their biases around race, racial interactions, and racism. He writes in his journals:

> We started off really thinking about how we can help create an environment in spaces for white faculty and staff to work through their own whiteness and white privilege and white racial identity. So that they can create a more inclusive, equitable, diverse environment for students of color and staff of color at the university. The group was brought together with that intentionality. It was clear that we were supposed to be having conversations about race. However, even in that, because we all had good intentions and all had a really good working relationship, there were times where the experiences we all had were influenced by race, but they might not have been comfortable naming that. Because they didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings or make anyone feel like we didn't value their work or their contributions.

Recognizing the importance of white people to the work of anti-racism and actively creating spaces where white and people of color could talk through racism, Darrell intentionally formed a group of Black and white scholars who could create this continuous event. Although the planning committee was formed with good intentions, there were still tensions into how the events should proceed. It is clear from Darrell's words that the white people on his planning committee were trying to change the original intent of his vision because they did not want to offend other white people or to marginalize their contributions to scholarly knowledge. Darrell, then, from his understandings into how his own work and ideas have been marginalized, attempted to create events so that people could speak cross-racially to build community, but the white people on his planning committee did not value the work that he had already put in. Much like Carson, Darrell began to feel gaslighted, as if the event no longer belonged to him.

His event had become colonized, placing him in an inferior position, as though he ideas no longer belonged to him. He speaks on this further in his journals:

> I think for me in those interactions, oftentimes, it was a range of emotions I would say. There were times where I was frustrated, frustrated because I felt that some of the white folks may have been too concerned about not making white people uncomfortable and not making them upset about the work we were doing. And so, because of that, they were trying to scale back my ideas to not be as explicit around conversations of race. There were times where I felt frustrated at my white colleagues in particular whose lack of awareness was evident to me but not to them. And when I say lack of awareness, I mean lack of racial awareness.

The range of emotions that Darrell feels at the event he has envisioned is because the event is no longer his; the original goals of the cross-racial conversations between people of color and white people have changed. Ironically, his planning committee has consciously and unconsciously underscored the importance of the event as they have created a situation where whiteness has become paramount. Instead of deliberately having conversations around how whiteness, white supremacy, and white privilege have become norm, they have allowed them to flourish even at the planning stage. His planning committee's insistence on not making white people uncomfortable talking about race and racism ensures the event would not be successful. Research suggests that white people consciously naming their own biases and implicit and explicit racism is important to anti-racism work (Aouragh, 2019; Joseph-Salisbury, 2019; Lentin, 2016), but Darrell's ideas have become warped, creating a microaggression in which he feels marginalized and his event effectively colonized.

Even when microaggressions occurred, Darrell still felt that his voice needed to be heard as he was the originator of the event. His voice, unfortunately, fostered more microaggressions to be committed against him. He writes in his journal:

> There were times, for example, when we wanted to do a session on whiteness and I wanted to put out a flyer with the name "Whiteness" on it and some of the white folks on the committee were a little concerned that that would be something we would come out and name. And it clearly felt like a racialized experience for me. The other people of color on the committee were like "sure, we would name this as 'Whiteness' because this is what we're talking about. Whereas on the other hand I feel like the white folks were more sensitive and nervous about not making anyone upset. And so in those moments, even though I felt frustrated, I also felt empowered just to be honest about what I was noticing and what I was feeling. As a group, we can name that, particularly if we have come together to be explicit about a conversation about racism and naming our group, "Embrace Race."

Again, even though Darrell voiced the original intent of the committee planning an event around race, his white committee members were opposed to naming whiteness as a construct that white people have to reckon with if they attend the event and something that people of color have to confront if they participate. This event was about whiteness and racism; however, the white students on the planning committee became concerned that they would upset people if the event was named such or if these issues came up during the meeting, which completely constrained the aims of what Darrell and the other people of color on the committee wanted to do in the first place. It is important to note that although Darrell was traumatized by the event—as his feelings of frustration symbolizes—the other Black people on the committee gave him the strength to

speak his mind and to stand up for what he believed were the true aims of the event. This shows that Darrell was comforted because he was surrounded by people who looked like him. One would wonder if the event would have been completely changed had no other Black person been on the committee with Darrell.

Through the planning of this event, Darrell experienced microaggressions, but an understanding of whiteness, racism, and gendered racism emerged from the experience. He writes:

Generally, one of the things that I try to, when I look at other white folks, I'm always observing how they interact with each other, not just how they interact with me. So, there could be an experience where I have white peers or colleagues in which the interactions I have with them would seem to me that they are aware of issues such as racial privilege and white privilege and whiteness and what it means to have some form of multicultural competency. But then when I see them around other white folks, they might not challenge them if they were to do something that was racially insensitive or racially discriminatory. And so for a lot of times for me, even within that group, one of the things I felt I attempted to observe was how the white folks interacted with each other.

In this sense, Darrell is marginalized and gaslit thrice because not only are the white people on the planning committee not comfortable with naming whiteness and racism on flyers, not only are they comfortable with talking about whiteness and racism at an event about racism, but they are also not challenging each other's opinions in the planning stages. For Darrell, their actions are hypocritical in that when they are having a conversation with him personally, they can name racism for what it is. But, when they are around other white people, they cannot name racism and whiteness; they can only think about how other white people would be upset or angry about these

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topics. For Darrell, this has not only given him a "crash course" in how white people interact around each other, but also helps to understand how much they really value the ideas of Black people, and in this instance, Black men.

   Bryce. Much like Carson and Darrell, Bryce has also had interactions with his white peers and professors who have dismissed him or his ideas, causing microaggressions. In Bryce's case, his experiences were closely matched to how he presented as a Black man. He recounts a classroom example with a white professor in the Cultural Studies program that he later explained to a Black woman who was considering taking this professor's class:

> When she and [my advisor] and I had our biweekly check in, I cautioned her from working with [this professor] because of the really sour experience I had taking a class with her where I felt like she, in an effort to make the other female students in the class feel empowered to make contributions, actively shut down myself in particular and a couple of other male students regularly in class. We'd be having conversations and there'd be a number of times when a student would just on and on and on for five, ten minutes, just narrating about their life story and how the reading did or did not jive with their set of prior experiences. But if a male student in class tried to make a similar overture, she'd cut them off or say, "we have to move on."

In an effort to make female students feel comfortable to contribute to the class, Bryce's experiences of the readings from the Black male lens was marginalized, causing him to feel unheard and left out of the conversations. Much like how Darrell's planned event around racism wanted to invite white people to the table to work through their biases and blindness, Bryce wanted to show he was capable about having conversations around women's issues, to show solidarity as much as he could. In Bryce's case, he wanted to use his privilege as a man to

support women, but his professor did not allow to him to do that. Bryce specifically mentions here that his voice was marginalized, "myself in particular," which helps us to understand how some white professors view Black men and their opinions. Bryce mentions earlier in his journals that he is careful to make sure his voice is grounded in the relevant literature instead of his opinions to make sure he is taken seriously by his white professors; however, that is not respected in this particular professor's course.

After dealing with this microaggression for a long while, Bryce began to become frustrated with how he was being dealt with in this professor's course. He decided to speak about his experience with the professor after she shut down his thoughts once again:

> There was one time when I called her out on it, where I emitted a comment and seven other female students disagreed strongly with what I said and went on and on, and when I tried to offer a rebuttal or a different perspective or a different opinion on the matter, she just shut me out. I responded with something to the effect of "this is ridiculous. I can't even talk!" and pointed out what appeared to me as an inequity and it was just not well received. She just brushed it off like she didn't care.

Here, Bryce is existing in what Alilunas (2011) calls a paradoxical space, a physical bearer of much that is discussed within the room while also being the symbol of patriarchy that should not have a voice. Alilunas suggests that feminist theory must move forward instead of creating situations in which men find themselves simultaneously the most conspicuous in the room, but also the most silent. He maintains that people of privilege need to be part of the conversation so that they can help move spaces forward for marginalized people. Bryce understood that the function of his male privilege is to liberate others, but his white professor and peers were not allowing him to talk or give his opinion. He specifically mentions that students in the class were

comparing the literature they read to their personal life; however, he was trying, according to him, to only speak his thoughts through the literature, leaving his personal life outside of the classroom. In trying to do the right thing, Bryce was rewarded as if he had done the wrong thing. His professor constrained his voice as a Black man and told him that there was no time to consider his opinion, although others in the class were given more time to explain their viewpoints. When he became frustrated with the experience, he tried to talk to the professor, but she brushed his experiences away as male privilege. His classroom experiences became marginalized, and so did his understandings of the relevant literature to the class.

It is interesting to note that Bryce's professor changed her demeanor toward him outside of the classroom. Bryce went to her for help with his research, although experiencing a racial microaggression from her, and she graciously accepted him. However, through this process, she committed another microaggression against him, promoting the stereotype that Black men use their bodies in ways that are not acceptable. He writes:

> She gave me a lot of substantive feedback; she was really thoughtful about ensuring that I received the feedback that would hopefully push the work forward. And in her comments, she gave me a charge that my work is really important for these reasons, but I have to be extra careful about what I'm saying in class. So there was a world in which someone could perceive the interactions that I had with her as not positive. This is a scholar who was trying to push me forward, but for whatever reason, there were a set of misunderstandings there about what was actually occurring.

Harper (2004) maintains that teachers and professors who teach Black men in secondary and post-secondary classrooms have insufficient expectations of their preparation and their intelligence, but also have high expectations of their behavior, believing that most of their

behavior is disruptive. Bryce's professor, from his written words, is unconsciously (or consciously) exhibiting these same negative Black male gendered expectations and racism. From trying to make the classroom an inclusive one, she, in turn, created an exclusive one where Bryce's thoughts and opinions were not respected. And this transferred into their personal conversations outside of the classroom. Although she was instrumental with her comments on his research to help push him forward, to become a better scholar, her comments on his behavior in class were disruptive to his learning process. Not only was he marginalized in the classroom, he was also having to deal with her negative stereotypes of his behavior outside of class when he was seeking her help with his research. Although she gave him great comments on his research, his overall experience with her and her course was negative, which allowed him to present different course options to another Black woman who wanted to take her class in the future.

These comments were not just limited to the professor; Bryce heard from others the words the white female students would use about him when he was not around. He writes:

> Invariably, there'd been a couple of students in that class who just did not fuck with me and did not like me who thought, who probably thought, I was some uppity ass bourgeois nigga who just didn't get it or something. I'm intentional about using the terms "uppity" and "bourgeois" because I think they'd probably convey what I saw as the likely critique of myself, that I was trying to shut them down and that my middle classness was clouding my ability to make a connection to them, resonate with, or empathize with what they were experiencing. Rather than, again, I'm just a PhD student and trying to get out of this class and you're preventing me from getting out of this class. And once I learned that, I've had conversations with them to reconcile the anomaly or this tension to move past it.

Because really we're both for the liberation of people, we're just going about it differently.

It is important to note here that not only did Bryce experience a microaggression through the words of others about his behavior in class, but he did not allow that to be in the end of it, to wallow in negativity about his feelings. He actively sought out those who had a problem with his behavior, expressing why he wanted to speak up in class, and wanting to move past the situation. It is interesting that Bryce was being negatively talked about outside of the classroom and inside of the classroom by not only his white peers, but also his white professor, and he still did everything he could to make the most of the situation. He went to his professor to get help with his research, only to be told in written format that he should take care in what he says. He was told by a friend from class the negative attitudes the white female classmates had about his opinions as a Black man, and he tried his best to reach out to those who experienced him negatively. Even in the midst of continuing to experience microaggressions throughout the semester, he still pursued to make the class the best he could make it. Bryce speaks later about how his voice and body are experienced by others considering what he looks like and understands how his words and action can be perceived. However, he feels like the search for justice, equality, and equity for all, including himself, are more paramount. This situation shows that even though Bryce considers himself middle class and sees himself as a good navigator of white spaces, his white professors and students still may have issues with the way he presents himself.

Although Bryce did his best to meet with students who had a problem with him and with his professor after class about research, it did not stop the microaggressions. One student experienced his friendliness and took it further:

There was literally a student my sophomore year, and I didn't find this out until months later after I'd already resolved my issue with her. She filed a formal complaint against me for harassment because she said I was trying to harass her and it was clearly unfounded. And I think for her, what the trigger was after class one day she approached me and said, "Yo, you gotta problem with me?" and I said, "I don't have a problem with you." I remember being proud in the moment on how I handled the situation. But I was very clear to say, "I don't have a problem with you, but I do have a problem with I'm trying to get X out of class and you're preventing me from getting X out of the class because you're derailing the conversation to talk about these other things that I don't think have a bearing on what we're trying to discuss in the moment." And, you know, she extrapolated from that a whole bunch of other bullshit and filed a formal complaint against me…I think it speaks to attention that scholars of color may be forced to wrestle with in some of these spaces where, in articulating what it's like to be a Black male scholar of color in an academic space, we experience tensions with white students.

There is tension here between how Bryce was speaking up for himself in class, the microaggressions he experienced at the hands of his professors and peers, and how he could have been occupying a space of patriarchy based on his words and actions. In order to deal with his own position in patriarchy, Bryce attempted to make everything right with his classmates, but it was for naught. I must note, though, that in this situation, that the white student in question approached Bryce, and not the other way around. She confronted him about his comments in class, thinking that he had a problem with her. Bryce responded that he did not have a problem with her personally, but that he had a problem with his expectations of the course being derailed by other conversations that had nothing to do with the class. In response, the student filed a

harassment complaint against him. Although it is important to note how Bryce in his actions could have been sitting in patriarchy when talking over women in the space, it must be noted how his presence as a Black man was used as site of oppression from his professor and his peers. Even when trying to do the work of a scholar, situating his comments in the relevant literature, his efforts were rewarded with a harassment complaint that could have derailed his career as a Black male scholar.

Discussion. The microaggressions that Carson, Darrell, and Bryce experience as Black male doctoral students show all four tenets of Critical Race Theory I included in my conceptual work. Through exploring the experiential stories of these three men, it is clear that racism is endemic, consciously and unconsciously, and that it infiltrates through all institutions in America, especially doctoral study. Even though Carson, Darrell, and Bryce are challenging the dominant ideology and negative stereotypes surrounding Black men and are committed to social justice, their experiences become marginalized and they feel isolation. From Carson's advisor using his words as his own, Darrell's planning committee colonizing his event to the point where he has no more ownership of it, and Bryce dealing with a harassment complaint, it is clear that microaggressions are committed against them at every turn, constraining how they complete their degree and conduct their research. Our discussion of their experiences turns now to how their understandings of masculinity undergird their progress through doctoral study.

Dimension #3: The influence of Black masculinity to the pursuit of the doctorate

Each participant under study were influenced by elements of Black masculinity, positively and negatively. They reflect on their historical connection to masculinity, explain how they have become more progressive as they gain more education, and analyze their personal choices through the lens of traditional and progressive masculinity. Each participant exemplifies

a "resilient masculinity," a mindset that understands masculinity in the lives of Black men and uses that knowledge to become successful doctoral students and scholars.

Carson. Revealing that his masculinity history starts with his mother and father, Carson explains what they told him about what a Black man is supposed to do and how he is supposed to behave. He says in his interview:

> Yeah, so the message came from my parents as well as the church. And then as I got older, I had strong Black male representatives outside of my father. And the message would typically be to "be strong". Obviously, "When you make a decision, you definitely want to make sure it's right, but there's also going to be cons to your decisions. But when you make that decision, stick to it and not in a way that you're blind to the faults of that decision. You have to commit in life, be a provider, properly plan, and stand up strong". And then it's again, this idea of being representative of the whole community. My parents kinda knew that I probably would go far scholastically and academically. So they taught me early on to get used to being able to represent. I know some Black people don't like that responsibility. They see it as a burden. But because of how I was raised, I just see it as necessary.

Because his parents, and members of his church community, knew that he would do well academically, Carson's message of what it means to be a "good" Black man are truly traditional: always being strong, taking care of ones' responsibilities, sticking by ones' decisions, no matter if they end up being right or wrong, and making sure to represent Black people well. Carson's self of manhood and masculinity, as explored in the conceptual frameworks of this study, have become socially constructed of what it means to be a good man, mostly given to him by his parents and by members of his church community. These messages have helped shaped Carson

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into the type of man he is today, especially when he talks about assuming responsibility for Black men around him, so that they can see what a successful Black man looks like. Although it is a "burden" for him to always take on the mentor or the role model role, his parents taught him that it was a necessary burden because it helps bring other people along with him. This social construction of manhood, masculinity, and Black masculinity helps Carson understood his role in society and how his life decisions have to be carefully crafted because he must stick to and take responsibility for them.

Although Carson's parents socially constructed his masculine world around responsibility for himself and others following behind him, they also were adamant about what was considered "feminine" and what was considered "masculine" in their household. He says in his interview:

Growing up, I was definitely taught to know how to "rough house." And you know, I had to grow up to play football, prefer the streets, and to enjoy wrestling and all of that. As far as sexuality growing up, you know, I grew up in the South, the Bible Belt, so I was definitely taught sexuality is definitely binary. You're either straight or gay and it was preferred you be straight. Even to the point where certain looks I wanted to do were scrutinized. I wanted to grow braids for a while and my parents were strongly against that because they said, "oh that's longer hair, you will be perceived as a woman." Even when I wanted to wear earrings, it was the same thing…I was kinda private about my social life. So I was dating girls, but I wasn't telling [my parents] and I wouldn't bring them around. So I think for a little while they were perceiving [I was gay.] I do remember their behavior around me during that time was a lot different."

Carson explains later that his parents always asked him to be "mindful of how you will be perceived" so they were careful to tell him that he needed to play football as much as he could

and to "rough house" with the male members of his family. They understood that Carson's level of masculinity would be determined as "appropriate" or "inappropriate" by other men and women, no matter how he wanted to identify. For his parents, sexuality was binary—one was either considered heterosexual or homosexual—by the choices they made about their clothing, hair, and general behavior. For Carson's parents, if he made the decision to change his hair into braids or wore earrings, he would be perceived as a "woman"—or homosexual—by not just his peers, but also his parents. Carson's world of masculinity was constructed around ideals of making good decisions and taking responsibility for one's actions, but it was also built around hegemonic notions of manhood and understanding the need for Carson to always be considered heterosexual in the eyes of other men. To compete with the other men effectively, Carson had to value sports and dress in clothes that were traditionally assigned to men.

As his masculine life was being socially constructed, Carson's ideas about femininity were being shaped by his family as well. However, he realized later in life that these notions of masculinity and femininity were hypocritical, causing him to analyze the choices his family made a bit deeper:

It was a limited view, but it was the idea of you had to definitely honor the woman but also you had to protect the woman. Roles had the appearance of being flexible but at the same time they were somewhat defined…You had to protect the women in your family. But, at the same time, as I became older, I realized that a lot of women in my family had unfortunately been abused before or molested. So there's a little bit of hypocrisy there. Like elders in my family speak of this notion of protecting your women. But then I really got older and was like, "wait a minute, y'all didn't protect her when this happened." So I got to check myself for that and for future generations. You don't need to let that carry

through…But also like the women, like they were still independent. They worked, they all worked and were also very intelligent. And I mean even though like in society you kinda of hear that men are smarter than women, right? I'll be the honest, though, like the women in my family always been smarter and I feel like my dad, my uncles knew that too. They knew that.

Although Carson was told that men were responsible for their decisions, good or bad, and had to protect the women in his family and the women he dated because that is what men were supposed to do, he saw this as a hypocrisy that he must correct for future generations when he has children. Although men were supposed to be a form of protection in his family, unfortunately, he found out later that women in his family were abused at the hands of men and their experiences were brushed under the rug. So, the protection was not afforded to women as it should have been, even though men were supposed to be there for them. Carson's messages about femininity and masculinity were socially constructed in a way that he must behave a certain way and perform his masculinity for men's eyes, but that was where it stopped. Although he was told he must use his masculinity to "protect" women from other men, no one in his family seemed to be concerned about the needs of women. It is clear that Carson's performance of Black masculinity was seen through the eyes of other men, instead of through the protection of women.

Carson would not have made the connections between masculinity being a performance for other men and the hypocrisy of Black masculinity until he completed his graduate degree and started doctoral study. His maintains that his definition of Black masculinity has changed as he has gotten older:

It has been simplified but means a lot more. Before, it was a lot of all of this extra stuff that doesn't really matter: play sports, dress a certain way, talk a certain a way, date a lot of women. All that's been stripped down and all that matters is this simple idea of like, be responsible for yourself, your immediate family, and then make sure you uplift Black people…I feel like my hometown idea of traveling was seen as too farfetched. I didn't travel a lot as a young person but always wanted to, because I always had family in Jersey and they always traveled to New York or whatever. I've traveled a lot now and to other countries. I've also gone to school where I've been around a lot of different kinds of people and the university experience had a lot to do with that. So my mentality about masculinity would not be the same if I had not gone to college, not at all.

It would seem that Carson can finally place his own definition of Black masculinity around his experiences of how women were treated in his family based on his attending graduate and doctoral study. He says that his definition of Black masculinity has become stripped down to mean that he must, as a Black man, be responsible for himself, his family, but also lifting up others in the community to realize their true potential. He contends that if he had not pursued his graduate degrees, he would have been stuck in the socialization his family placed upon him as a young child. Now, though, he can see the hypocrisy of Black masculinity and places value on how he has able to lift up his own community, protect women as much as he can, and become more responsible for his own decisions.

This idea of uplifting Black people in his community and those coming behind him has helped Carson traverse the landscape of doctoral study, when interacting with his white peers and professors. He reflects upon this idea in his journals:

My definition of masculinity is really based on responsibility, this idea of being

accountable not for just for yourself, but, in a larger aspect, also your community. I

definitely still stand by that as a far as how that impacts my interactions with my white

peers and professors. I've been able to protect that idea because sometimes, with my

loyalty and drive to want to help out Black people, some white people may not fully

understand it. In their limited view, they might view it as somewhat biased, not fully

understanding the culture and the history and why a Black man would have that

mentality. So I protect that. I really don't care for them to understand. Nonetheless,

there's a certain pride that my definition of Black masculinity gives me—it helps me

really focus when I'm interacting with my professors and peers.

There is a sense of resiliency through Carson's words. Although he has experienced loneliness

and racial and gendered microaggressions through his time as a doctoral student, he writes that

he does not expect white people to ever understand him, ever understand who he is as a Black

man, and the problems that he faces. He maintains that white people's understanding is not

something that he cares about; it is up to him to understand who he is and gain knowledge into

how he must lift up everyone in his community. It is this knowledge that has helped him to

become resilient in the face of adversity as he completes his doctoral degree. For Carson, it is not

enough to be the only Black man on campus—he must succeed so that he can open the doors for

others to follow behind him. He keeps this aspiration private, because he knows others will not

understand. However, he believes he must use his masculinity in a way that directly impacts the

lives of Black people.

Darrell. Much like Carson, Darrell details his own masculinity literacies and the history behind how he came to view what it meant to be a Black man from his family, namely from the socialization of his parents. He speaks in his interview:

> I can name some critical moments that I remember. So I played sports from five years old and I played basketball from when I was five to intramurals in college. I think the last time I played sports competitively on some level was my senior year in undergraduate school. Every day I played. Like that was my thing. From a child, I was collecting Michael Jordan basketball cards and wearing Jordan shoes and I listened to Hip-Hop…so I think, on the one side, I clearly remember this idea of the importance of being able to be aggressive and to be athletic, you know? To be cool in a way that Hip-Hop was cool. You know what I'm saying? Also, it was important to wear these big ass clothes like rappers wore in their videos. I got clothes that I wore in middle school that I can't even fit today. And there was also this thing of not being engaged in emotion. Anger was the only acceptable emotion. You couldn't say when you were afraid either.

In Darrell's household and family, sports were extremely important and he played basketball until he went to college. It is interesting to note that earlier his mother supported him and his twin brother academically, but she still saw the importance of Darrell and his brother playing basketball as much as they could. Darrell mentions later that he no longer plays basketball because of the competitiveness and aggression of the sport, but while growing up, it was considered imperative that he participate in some type of physical activity. Socialized from a young age to value sports, Darrell maintains that his masculinity was tied to the norms of sports and the constraining of his emotions, especially fear. Anger was the only acceptable emotion, considering he was being trained to value physicality and aggression as a performance of

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masculinity. His masculine literacies and language were explicitly tied to how his parents viewed masculinity performance in regard to his performance in physical activity.

Darrell, much like Carson, contends that his parents' view of Black masculinity was, in ways, in tune with the church's messages, but also hypocritical and conflicting in ways that made no sense to him even as a child. He says in his interview:

> And then I grew up in the church. So then I got messages around gender in terms of, you know, "the man is the head," head of household, all of these things. So, I was young, so they weren't talking to me to act this out tomorrow cause I wasn't head of anybody's household. But those are the messages I was receiving. But also I was being told the good things of being a man, like showing up, keeping your word, having a commitment to your family and friends, and being there if someone needs something. Also, I was made to read the autobiography of Malcolm X in sixth or seventh grade. I found it in the library and read it. And that changed a lot for me. So he became my motto of Black rage, but it was more like a righteous indignation. But there was also then a lot of messages around just like conquering women from my dad and my uncles. It was like "you should be having sex with as many women as possible. But then I'm also going to church where they were telling you not to have sex at all. So I was teetering these two lines. So it was a lot of positive and a lot of negative.

Darrell, here, is speaking on what Staples (1982) calls the conflict theory perspective, which positions Black masculinity as in inherently oppositional or in conflict with the normative definition of masculinity. Staples talks about Black men's "dual dilemma" in America (p. 24) in that its subordination of Black men in society has more than canceled out their advantages as men. Carson touches on this too in his interviews and journals, but Darrell talks about the

positive aspects of traditional masculinity that his parents and church instilled him to include

taking care of ones' responsibilities and having a commitment to ones' family. However, these

messages were in conflict with traditional, hegemonic, toxic aspects of masculinity that tells

boys like Darrell that, in order to be accepted by other Black men and their families, they must

show only anger, be devoid of all other emotions, and to make sure they are conquering as many

women as they can. There also exists another level of conflicting messages they receive from the

Black church which has told Darrell that the Black man is the head of the Black household—

effectively creating passive women—but that sex before marriage is something that he should

not be engaging in. Darrell, when he was of young age, existed in a space of contradicting

messages of what it meant to be a man, which extends the literature surrounding how the

concepts of Black male masculinity tends to negatively impact mental health (Goodwill,

Johnson, & Watkins, 2020; Kelly, Spencer, Stith, & Beliard, 2020). Darrell shows, though, that

he was able to deal with the anger his parents wanted him to have as a Black man and funnel that

into reading Malcolm X's biography, showing him how to channel his anger in righteous

indignation for the liberation of all Black people.

Much like Carson's story, Darrell also details how his messages of femininity were in

direct contrast to the messages of masculinity he received and his own lived experiences of

femininity in his family. The feminine was a site of patriarchal oppression, although this

patriarchy was considered hypocritical, exemplifying the power women held in his family. He

says:

In my family, we adhered to the Bible verse that said that women are the weaker vessel.

And I think one thing that helped me was that most of the people who raised me were like

strong women, strong Black women. So because of that, I was able to rethink some of the

messages I received about femininity later on in life. So I had women who had all of the money in the family and who were the root of our family. It was my great grandmother whose husband had passed who had all of the money. She owned the house that we all went to. Then her daughter and my grandmother inherited the money after she died and they were the ones who set our family up. A lot of my family identity was based on her and she was a strong woman. She tells stories about how she carried a box cutter and left my grandfather when my mother was two. She would say, "ain't nobody ran up on me."

You hear stories about her, you know, fighting and beating up men….So like all the things we usually associated with men having all the money, we associated with her. She was the head of that because she had it. She had the money that supported our family. If anybody needed anything, we came to her…But I also remember that we had a saying, "boys in the hood, girls in the house." As the young boys, we could go anywhere, like hop on the bike and go anywhere. But my cousin, who was a girl, she had to come from school and go straight home because someone was always looking for her. You can't go out of the house and you can't have people over. It was definitely much more like boys can do whatever they want to go out in the world, but the girls couldn't. And so we got a lot of messages that women are weak, are emotional, and irrational. But again, I think because of my lived experiences, I would say those challenged a lot of that, you know what I'm saying? My grandmother challenged that for me.

This is another example that shows how hypocritical the messages of masculinity were perceived by Darrell and how those conflicting messages connected to notions of femininity. Much like Carson explained, Darrell maintains that even though men and boys in his family were told to be mean, boisterous, and showing no emotion but anger—because they were the greater sex and

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they must hold dominion over women who were deemed the weaker sex—it was the Black women in his family that really controlled power. According to Darrell, his great grandmother and grandmother had all of the money, using it to set up Darrell's own immediate family in a home and providing them with resources when they most needed it. It was the women who took on the masculine role of taking care of the entire family, showing the hypocrisy of the social and religious feminine and masculine norms of his childhood. These messages were felt in the children as well; Darrell mentions how as a young boy he could do and go wherever he wanted to go, within reason. However, his female cousin was supposed to go straight home after returning from school, because she was the "weaker sex" and needed to be protected. For Darrell, his grandmother challenged these ideals because she showed that not only do women show the emotion and love that Darrell craved from his father—he says in his interview, "he rarely told me he loved me"—but also provided the family with the capital they needed to live while never being dependent on a man. It was this dual role that helped Darrell understand how to change his own notions of Black masculinity in a progressive way.

Before Darrell could change the ways he processed the masculine and the feminine, he had to really understand what Black masculinity was, for himself. It was not until he attended doctoral study that he began to have conversations with others about masculinity and Black masculinity and how it pertains to him. He says in his interview:

When talking about masculinity, I think about it as a system. So what are the rules of masculinity? A lot of those things we just talked about, not showing emotion and not crying and always being strong. I think those rules still exist by and large, for men in general. And I think for Black men in particular, I think those are the rules we all are rewarded for following…I do think it's definitely different for Black men because then

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you have the racialized component, you know what I'm saying? There are ways that a

Black man has to be assertive and aggressive. But I think at the same time for anybody

who's read as a Black man their aggression is going to look like danger to some people.

The performance of it looks different for me. Cause a white man can be mediocre and be

confident in that, but it's different for Black men because there's a racialized component.

Although there is, for Darrell and a lot of other Black men like him, messages that men receive

about masculinity and women receive about femininity, they do not make sense when

considering who actually holds power in Black families. And in this situation, Darrell also

maintains that—in accordance with how masculinity works and influences space in my

conceptual framework—white men can enact their masculinity in ways that Black men cannot.

Black men are expected to be assertive, aggressive, and to show their anger easily, but when they

do, they are ostracized and looked upon as destructive, not following the rules, and as suspicious.

However, white men are expected to practice their masculinity in a way that gets them ahead,

and they are *expected* to be assertive and aggressive. Not only is Darrell grappling with how

femininity is used in the Black community in a hypocritical sense, he is also dealing with the

messages he received about masculinity growing up not matching his overall experience as a

Black man in American society and in doctoral study.

While thinking on his masculinity and notions of Black masculinity, Darrell ultimately

decides that it is best for him to practice and perform his masculinity on his own terms, without

the validation of white people. His doctoral studies have helped him work through his own

childhood and the messages he received around what it means to be a man and writes about this

in his journals:

Blackness is a direct result of white folks continuing to claim and name whiteness as something to hold onto. At this point, I try to think of my own Black masculinity as something that does not rely on the validation of white folks…So here are the rules of Black masculinity, but what is my response? And I think my response is to do as much as I can to create the type of environments that are nurturing, whether that means taking a particular class or cultivating my own spaces…Not only do I not try to put myself in situations where I have to engage with white folks whose level of racial awareness is low, I also don't want to be around them and don't need to talk to them…I would say one of the biggest things that I see when I think about my own Black masculinity is that I'm aware of the rules that are externally out there. I try to, in general, reject and challenge them within myself those rules that are harmful. For example, not being willing to show a range of emotions, taking up too much space, the only emotions we can have are anger and shallow excitement. Those are the things that I'm challenging. And when I'm in interactions with my white peers and professors, I don't look for validation from them. I'm explicit about what I need from a white faculty member to feel like I'm having the learning experience that I would like to have and that I deserve.

Darrell has been able to take his history of learning the norms of masculinity, learning what it means to be a Black man who practices masculinity, and has consciously used it in his interactions with his white peers and professors. In order to succeed in doctoral study, Darrell has been able to abstain from the rules of Black masculinity to create his own definition, a resilience that has allowed him to claim who he is as a Black man while showing emotions, understanding how his body and voice show up in spaces as a Black man, and intentionally finding white people around him that accepts who he is. Instead of performing for other men to

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be accepted, he deliberately creates space where he can show who he really is with people who support him.

    Bryce. Although Bryce grew up, as he says, mostly in a white-dominated world where he had to contend with whiteness on a daily basis, his parents also gave him messages about masculinity that he as a Black man must contend with and absorb. His parents, however, did not explicitly tell him, but told him implicitly through Bryce's own experiences. He speaks on having a homosexual friend when he was younger and how his parents responded:

> I remember I had this friend. He was a Black man and he was also gay. My father hated the fact that I hung around him because he perceived that it would somehow turn me gay or something. I remember him saying to me once, "Why are you hanging around with him? He's gay. You're not scared to hang around him?" and I told him, "What are you talking about? You're not even making sense. Just because he's gay doesn't mean I will turn gay too." Yeah, I made it a point after that to always make sure my friend felt comfortable around me and always brought him around my dad as well so that he could possibly change. Like, it doesn't matter what job you have or how far you go, a Black man is always going to have some hang ups when it comes to sexuality and masculinity. That's why I make it a point to always make sure everyone around me feels comfortable around me.

Bryce details his masculinity literacies and history through the lens of his parents, namely, his father, being concerned about his son's sexuality. It was Bryce's proximity to a homosexual Black boy that created the tension in his family. In the conceptual framework, I mentioned that masculinity, and Black masculinity, is filtered through how men perceive the masculinity performance of other men. In this example, Bryce's masculinity was interrogated through his

father's evaluation of his friendship with a gay man. It was not that Bryce *was* gay; it was the fear that he could be *perceived* or could *become* gay because he was best friends with another Black boy who happened to be. Unlike Darrell and Carson, though, Bryce was able to "talk back" to his father's thinking about homosexuality and was able to bring his friend around his family until his father became more comfortable. Bryce's history of masculinity, then, was seen through the eyes of another man evaluating his presence and his mannerisms around his best friend. For Bryce's father, sexuality and Black masculinity were entwined, perceived through the eyes of other men. Instead of Bryce coming into his own sexuality and masculinity on his own, they were already controlled by his parents.

It is interesting, then, that Bryce's father was concerned about his masculinity, but was not giving him messages about femininity, like Carson and Darrell's family did. Bryce understood the importance of his mother and femininity from a young age, but also adds another dimension when he speaks on how his understandings of masculinity overpowered it:

I don't know if I ever received messages about femininity growing up. My mother always worked and always provided for her family, so she never felt like she was below my father. I think the only messages I received about femininity was the whole sexuality piece about my gay friend and his perceived lack of masculinity because of his sexuality…I think the concepts of masculinity and femininity are made up constructs to be honest. However, they are real things for people in our society. So, I think that masculinity can be defined as men acting for other men to prove themselves as men, and that includes homophobia, sexism, and sleeping with as many people as you can as competition with other men. However, I think that white men can practice this a bit better than Black men. I think being Black adds another dimension to masculinity because we

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can't get the same awards. We automatically heighten our masculinity to toxic

masculinity. Black masculinity means we can act in the same way as white men, but our

masculinity is targeted as something bad.

Bryce mentions here that masculinity and femininity are "made up" constructs, but it is

interesting that his discussion turns to masculinity, showing how masculinity is deeply ingrained

in him, no matter his upbringing. He respected his mother because, like Carson and Darrell, as a

woman, she worked her entire life and made the most money in his household. However, it was

masculinity that stood out the most for him. While understanding that masculinity is a created

concept, Bryce also understood the need for men to ultimately prove themselves to other men by

exhibiting homophobia, sexism, and promiscuity. Deep within his discussion is an analysis of

how white men can practice their masculinity in ways that Black men cannot. Black men are

rewarded in their own communities for their robust masculinity, but that is the only reward.

White men, however, when practicing domination are given societal awards that propel them on

to greater heights. Although Black men are cherished within their own communities, their

masculinity is something to be targeted and negatively perceived in American society, creating a

Catch-22, an impossible situation to overcome.

      However, even though there is an understanding of masculinity and what it does for

different communities, Bryce ultimately fell into the "trappings" of masculinity when he

attended undergraduate school. It was not until doctoral study that he started to consciously

interrogate his own beliefs:

      When I was in [undergraduate school] I was sleeping with as many woman as I could

      because that's what everyone around me was doing. Plus, I was in a fraternity and that's

      all we did. Women were just a conquest, something to be had. I would make it seem like

I liked a girl and then take her back and sleep with her, making it seem like I wanted to

be with them. Then, the next day, I would just leave without talking to them again. It was

all physical for me. It wasn't until I saw a girl I had slept with the next day crying about

me to her friends and I felt so horrible about myself. It was the first time I had seen the

consequences of my actions right to my face. When I saw that, I vowed that I would

never treat women like they are worthless ever again, like they were nothing…I don't

think I would be this way if it wasn't for going to college. I do remember in high school I

was the president of the Gay Straight Alliance because they needed a straight man to be

the co-president with a gay person. I think that was my first entrance into understanding

others. I think I would have changed eventually, but college really kicked it into high

gear.

Bryce maintains that it was not until college that he decided to change his stances on masculinity

and toxic masculinity and how they affect women, his thoughts, and his actions, but I would

argue that he really began to have these conversations with himself when he became the co-

president of his school's Gay Straight Alliance after his best friend became the president. This

was connected to how Bryce's father responded to his masculinity and sexuality in the context of

who he chose to be in proximity with. However, he was inundated with toxic masculinity with

other Black men when he attended an elite HBCU and joined a fraternity. His fraternity was the

site of toxic masculinity, where its members were expected to be promiscuous with as many

women as they could as women were the site of contest and conquest. This competitiveness was

shown through his actions of sleeping with as many women as he could, lying to them about his

intentions with them; it was not until he saw the consequences of his actions to his face did he

finally make the change that he needed to make in regards to how he approaches masculinity.

One wonders if the conversation he had about sexuality with his father when he was younger and his friendship with another Black man helped him to see the consequences of his actions when he went to college.

Bryce's commitment to changing and his understanding of himself as a Black masculine man has helped him to navigate the stresses of doctoral study. He comprehends the need to nuance the messages he has received about masculinity, using them as a navigational tactic as he confronts his coursework:

> I make sure to bring up other problems that other marginalized groups have. That navigational tactic has really helped me to avoid problems. Like I know I'm black, I know I'm a man, and I know that I'm a big man too, so I do realize that me talking loudly and being a big black man at the same time, will hinder the message I want to convey when I speak, so I always make sure I couch my commentary with other people's experiences, and also call on others to speak as well so I'm not dominating the conversation. Also, I do know how to use my aloneness to my disadvantage, to be honest. I do know how to smooze with people if I need to. I do know that I'm different enough that white people will listen to me if I sound smart to them. Because I went to Morehouse and grew up in private school, I know how to sound "smart" and codeswitch to the point that white people don't see me as the stereotypes that they have about Black people.

Unlike Darrell who is intentional about choosing the groups of white people he would like to be in conversation with, Bryce is able to navigate through doctoral study by making sure to bring other marginalized groups into the conversation he has about his experiences. He understands the space he takes up as a Black man, while understanding how white people and other Black people perceive the body he sits in. The perception of his body as "a big Black man," and how he

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presents himself has made it imperative for him to carry himself in such a way that not only are white people not in fear of him, but also other marginalized groups can see him as ally in the fight for social justice. In this sense, he has been able to use his masculinity in a progressive way, while using traditional masculinity as a steppingstone to helping all marginalized and minoritized people have a voice.

Carson: Using traditional masculinity to claim manhood. Another dimension emerged in speaking with Carson about his understandings of Black and traditional masculinity. Although he was very progressive in some ways, Carson used traditional masculinity to claim manhood in ways that Black men have done historically, which often does not leave room for alternate forms of masculinity expression (Connell, 2005; Harper, Harris, & Mmeje, 2005; O'Neil et al., 1986). For example, when discussing his progressiveness, Carson wanted to make it clear to me that he was still a heterosexual Black man as a way to "check" his own masculinity performance for me:

> I mean, again, you know, I definitely respect people of different orientations. But I'm confident in being a heterosexual Black male. I think that's another point. Sometimes I feel like as a heterosexual Black man, although we do have to learn to be appropriately understanding of genderism or sexuality, so on and so forth, and I do think we can feel subject to inappropriate thoughts in how we think, I do feel that sometimes as a straight Black man, anytime we show assertion or speak or act strongly about something it's perceived as being toxic or aggressive. I just have to say that there's nothing wrong with doing that sometimes and I'm completely comfortable with my sexuality as a straight man.

Carson, here, is proving his sexuality and masculinity to me in ways that might be evident to him. Although he is very progressive in some ways, especially when utilizing and respecting

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everyone's use pronouns and understanding how white people perceive his masculinity, Carson makes it clear that he is still a heterosexual Black male. He is also proving that, in a lot of cases, masculinity is a performance, meaning that men will act in certain ways in conversation and in community with other men to prove that they are legitimately masculine. Carson is exemplifying traditional masculinity in this sense because his manhood might be challenged if he espouses progressive ideals of masculinity behavior. Although our interview space is one where Carson can be comfortable with being the person he wants to be, I wondered if I appropriately established a progressive space where he does not feel he has to prove anything to me.

To this end, and in the interest not to assume anything from his words, I reached out to Carson after reading through his interview data to get more of an understanding of this moment. I showed him this excerpt from his interview and asked him to speak on it a bit more. He said:

> I've definitely been in spaces with other Black men where I speak on masculinity, Black men, and how they need to be more progressive and I was accused of being gay or "why are you on their side?" I was even told that what I was saying wasn't making much sense. So, when I was answering the question, I think I defaulted to those conversations with other Black men instead of being more open since we were one-on-one. And that's a shame, right? Like, I felt that I needed to make it clear that I was a heterosexual man. But, does it even matter? Why do I care what others think about me? But that's the reality that a lot of Black men face, this perception that others may perceive them in a different way. That's where I was coming from with that response.

Carson reveals an instance where his Black masculinity performance was judged by other Black men, which has made him want to claim his manhood with me in ways he did not have to. Because he did not know me well before this interview, I can understand the provocation to

default to "proving" himself because of the ways Black men can be socialized into traditional masculine roles of gender and sexuality. Even though he wanted to make clear that he does consider himself progressive, instances from his past have made him choose his words carefully. Although he is learning and growing, especially as he completes his doctoral degree, he still migrated to his historical default as a sense of comfortability with himself and as a way for me to not perceive that he is anything other than heterosexual.

Discussion. Carson, Darrell, and Bryce are all inhabiting a space of what I call "resilient masculinity," a masculinity that analyzes the ways in which messages of traditional and toxic masculinity have been passed down through generations of Black men and determines how to use those messages to create social justice spaces for all. It is clear from these vignettes of these Black men's masculinity literacies, that traditional masculinity—taking care of ones' responsibilities, showing up, and taking care of family—is not always a bad thing; it is when these traditional roles become toxic—the conquest and degradation of women—that these concepts become problematic. Each participant under study, as have a lot of Black men, have received these traditional and toxic masculinity messages as children, socializing them in ways that have followed them into adulthood. However, it is college and doctoral life—exploring and experiences the lives of other people—that have taught them how to become more progressive, adopting a Black feminist lens that seeks to destroy toxic masculinity while working toward the good of all. They have all used their knowledge of masculinity as a navigational bridge and tool to help them traverse white doctoral spaces, not only helping them to understand how they are viewed as Black men, but also helping them to fight for social justice for all.

Dimension #4: The ways PWIs can do a better job of establishing spaces for Black men

Each participant under study discussed the need for their university to do a better job of establishing space for Black men to congregate and fellowship with each other, including the need for Black men to be very better involved with their mental health to help them navigate the stresses of doctoral study. As discussed above, these participants have had to contend with and analyze their masculinity histories and literacies, deal with the loneliness of doctoral study, and also experience microaggressions. Each participant had recommendations for what their university can change to better serve their Black male doctoral students.

Carson. Because all of Carson's work experience has centered around the mental and physical support of Black male veterans, he expressly talks about the current gap between theory and practice and how the university must do a better job of bridging the gap between the two. He says in his interview:

> Because I come from a clinical background, I've found that the PhD is highly focused on the academic route. I struggle because sometimes I find the work that we do is not, it's not able to make it to the actual population. Like, research shows that there's a roughly 17-year gap between actual research done in the ivory tower from the moment that it actually hits actual people, the individual. Sometimes I try to communicate that with my advisor and my mentor. I've struggled with that a lot because I'm always thinking about the patients. So I'm always in a tug of war, tug of war between theory and practice. But this is how I want to brand myself because coming from the clinician world, I see that there's a disconnect. We don't honor theory and science now. That's why we out here doing treatments that are not backed in science, but at the same time, science is done over here in the ivory white tower that is not concerned with patients…we have to meet in the

middle…We also need more Black people here on this campus in this space so we can communicate. Those are the biggest things.

According to Carson, there needs to be more space for clinicians, theorists, and scholars to communicate with each other, effectively bridging the gap between the ivory tower of research and clinical practice. As someone who is passionate about the clinical space and making sure Black men are thriving when they return home from military service, Carson enrolled in doctoral study because his treatments for his patients were based on his personal experiences with them, with no research analogue that he could use for evidence. This evidence was hard to find when he searched for it. For Carson, the personal and practical has been left out of the research he uses to treat patients, whereas the research itself has become stale and hard to understand, leaving Black veterans at a disadvantage. Because Carson is a Black man, he understands his role in bridging the gap between theory and practice, because he is passionate about making sure America's veterans are taken care of when they return from military service. To this end, there needs to be more conversations between practitioners and those that do research. Carson has tried to talk with his advisor about these issues and either he is ignored, or his advisor has taken his ideas for his own. To combat this, Carson maintains that more Black people, specifically Black men, need to be more involved in the sciences and the Neuroscience arena. If so, more people of color would be involved in all aspects of making sure that veterans are getting the best help if theorists and practitioners are able to effectively work together. Carson, understanding his own shortcomings, has entered doctoral study to be that bridge between theory and practice, learning as much as he can. However, he cannot completely do this if the people in power are ignoring his clinical experiences.

Instead of leaning on Black male mentors in his program, Carson has had to find other outlets to gain support. He maintains that the university could do a better job with advertising physical and mental health opportunities specifically for Black men; because it does not, he has had to rely on other circles of support to keep him on track to finish his degree:

> I have a great friend and he's a physical therapist. He and I went to school together, we talk every day. Again, he's always supportive. If I briefly want to gripe about school, he always listens. Also, importantly, he holds me accountable for, you know, health and fitness, making sure that—as Black men he stresses this—but making sure as Black men we take care of ourselves, make sure our blood pressure's regulated, make sure we're not gaining weight, that we're working out. So I appreciate that. That lifts me up.

Carson has had to find other outlets to deal with the stresses of doctoral study because, from his standpoint, his university is not offering programs that specifically target the needs of Black men. In this scenario, because there are no other Black men in his program, Carson has had to rely on outer networks of communication to support him through his degree. Because he went to an HBCU for his master's degree, he has a friend who constantly and consistently checks in on him, making sure that Carson has an outlet to talk to about his stresses. Although Carson can focus on the negative at times, his friend connects with him on a deeper level, keeping him accountable for his weight, making sure that he is working out, regulating his health, and eating the right foods. Although his friend is an outlet for him to talk through any mental health issues that may arise through his doctoral studies, Carson is also held accountable for what he can control about himself, namely, his physical and spiritual health. Carson mentions that these conversations with his friend "lifts him up," when the waters get turbulent. This showcases that the university, in their motivations to increase diversity, can create opportunities for Black men

to not only talk through their stresses as students, but to also keep each other accountable, making sure that their doctoral progress is not isolating, but empowering.

   Darrell. Understanding Black men's role in patriarchy and sexism has allowed Darrell to think about the ways in which Black men can come together as a community, working through the issues and promises of Black masculinity. He wishes for a space where Black men can do that, but also has strived to make that a reality for himself and to meet other Black men on campus. However, he finds creating a space and *finding* a space to be a hard endeavor:

> There are just so few of us in general in this space. And then, on top of that, I do feel like there are even fewer of us who are actively trying to challenge patriarchy and sexism within ourselves. And it's hard to build relationship with other men who are just still, I think sometimes, consciously or unconsciously, embracing those rules, you know what I'm saying?

Darrell, through his own experiences with dealing with other Black men and his masculinity literacies, does not want to be around men who embrace patriarchy and sexism, but he is hoping for space for Black men to work through these issues as a community, without being shamed for their previous mindsets. However, he finds these spaces are hard to create and hard to find when there are not designated people on the campus to help these spaces flourish and grow. He says in his interview:

> One space I was trying to create was a discussion group for men around masculinity. So I went through all of the planning, but as a graduate student, you can only do so much. The staff member who was going to host the work, left the job…it was like, "maybe we'll pick it up", but we never did. Where I go next on the campus, I'm going to join or create a group where men could work through masculinity. My twin brother got a grant to do

some work around Black men engaging Black feminist theory. I can write the curriculum cause I've done training in those things. So I definitely want to and need to be more interested in those spaces. And I realized, but one of thing I'm realizing is that, looking back, creating those spaces aren't rewarded in the same way or those spaces are not readily available.

In seeking out spaces for Black men to commune, fellowship, and engage with masculinity and Black feminist theory, Darrell saw that no spaces were readily available to him and men like him. Darrell is attempting to become more progressive in the way he thinks about Black masculinity, by being in communication with other Black men as Black feminist theorists posit in their research (Collins, 2004; Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 1990; 2004). Seeing no positive space had been created on his campus, Darrell saw an opportunity to reach out to his brother—a tenured professor at another campus—to start such a program. However, the professor in charge of facilitating the space on Darrell's campus left his position, making it impossible to hold meetings without staff support. As it is already hard to find other Black male professors on campus, Darrell's idea never left the planning stages. In this instance, because Darrell saw a lack of space for Black men, he endeavored to create his own. However, instead of actually establishing meetings, these meetings were canceled because the sponsor for the events left the job, leaving Darrell on his own. In this sense, Darrell was marginalized twice, once when he was not able to find a space and another time when his ideas got dismantled because the professor left. Darrell wishes that more Black men could meet together to discuss their issues, working through patriarchy, sexism, and their masculinity and that his university would do more to establish meetings and events, but he just does not see them.

And when the university *does* endeavor to create space for Black men, these spaces end up being problematic, furthering stereotypes about Black men and fostering toxic masculinity. Darrell, after his own event was canceled, sought out a space where he could join and speak without the extra layer and condition of assuming leadership. At one such event, Darrell felt that the problematic notions of manhood he was trying to traverse were being reinforced:

> I want to be as honest as possible, but those spaces aren't readily available in ways that I think are healthy. So, for example, I went to, there's a Black male initiative on campus at the new cultural center. They asked me to come there—actually a female friend of mine asked me— and do something on Black masculinity. So I was like, "cool, let's talk about it." But I didn't know that [another professor] would be there too. My friend was like, "he's going to go first." And he gets in there and he just googled Black masculinity and showed a picture of a rapper with his shirt off. And so they just started having this conversation that felt pathological about Black men. It's just like all of these negative stereotypes. And I'm like, "this is not my space," and left. And I've heard from folks about other ways this space has been toxic. I think it's best to engage Black masculinity though a Black feminist and Black queer lens. If it don't start there, it's an unhealthy thing. Those spaces aren't spaces I want to be a part of. And I've realized that if those spaces I want aren't there, it takes more to create new spaces.

Darrell, here, is in an unescapable place, where the spaces for Black men to work and talk together are either not found on campus and, if they are, they are unhealthy, unproductive, and not progressive. Darrell contends, as research as borne out, that Black masculinity has to be discussed and deconstructed through the lens of Black feminist theory and men must be able to lead and participate in these discussions. In this sense, Black men were invited to speak at this

event, but Darrell's contribution was not heard because the person who spoke before him held

pathological, negative beliefs about Black men. And not only was this person asked to speak, but

this person was a professor, someone who held a semblance of respect on the campus. In this

sense, the power this professor held had the potential to sway the opinions of everyone involved

in the meeting. This Black Male Initiative on campus, then, was a site where Black men who

participate were inundated with negative images of their personhood, placing them in a deficit

lens, and reinforcing negative stereotypes in the minds of its white participants. These

stereotypes have the potential to continue the mainstream depictions of Black men, their

manhood, and their behavior. Darrell maintains that he needs spaces where Black men not only

engage the negative aspects of toxic masculinity, but also work to liberate themselves from

stereotypes to become more progressive.

Darrell also wishes that the campus provided more opportunities for Black men to gain

mentorship from other Black men. As there is no such program on his campus, Darrell has had to

look for these opportunities off campus. Much like his own thinking around centering himself as

a role model, he wants to share that with other Black men, specifically undergraduate students:

One thing I've been reaching out to, and it's more off campus, is Black role models. And

it's been good for me too. It's been something I have to come to and have been able to

name, like, "yo, I can want that," you know what I'm saying? Cause part of wanting that

is me. I don't just have to focus on other people's problems…the stronger I get in

addressing my own issues and needs that I have, I can be more empathetic to folks' needs

and committed to helping them figure those things out or working with them…I wish I

had more Black male role models. And in particular I'm thinking cis-men, because I am a

cis-gendered man. But, I want to be around Black cis-male role models who are actively

working against sexism. Cause I feel like most of the homophobia, all of those things,

comes from them. Like most of the men I run into, they're not working through those

things…They're not thinking deeply about sexism, heterosexism, homophobia,

transphobia…a lot of times you feel like you're figuring it out on your own.

For Darrell, it is important that cis-gendered Black men—men whose gender identity and

expression matches their sex given at birth (Enke, 2012)—become positive role models for other

Black men to show that cis-gendered men can be progressive as well. He makes it clear that the

Black men that he has come into contact with can be homophobic, transphobic, and sexist. I must

note that Darrell does not place the burden on non-cis people to educate Black men; they must do

the work on their own to interrogate their own biases. For Darrell, it is important for Black men

to work through their issues with like-minded Black men that will lead them to be more

progressive. He makes it clear that sometimes it hard to "figures things out on one's own,"

effectively given some leeway to Black men who are not exposed to progressive frameworks to

interrogate and transform their biases about other groups of people. Darrell also maintains that he

is not able to join role modeling opportunities on campus for Black men, so he has had to resort

to reaching out to contacts off campus to receive those resources. Not only is there no official

role modeling program, but the events that have targeted Black men have been unhealthy and

unproductive, constraining positive behavior change. In order to effectively challenge

homophobia, sexism, and transphobia, Black men must have access to positive role models to

help them think through their own biases against groups of people.

Darrell details the importance of role modeling by bringing up experiences his twin

brother had when he was attending another PWI, an experienced that not only shaped his brother,

but shaped him as well. This experienced helped to change who he was as a Black man, effectively making college a site of the necessary change that Black men must make:

> I remember a lot of my changes came from conversation with my brother about his experience. He had a community of Black and Brown folks where he was. He had a Black male advisor who studied Black issues. But I would say the biggest thing in [my brother's] doctoral program is where he was exposed to Black feminist thought and Black queer theory. So we would talk about some of those things and that was kind of a turning point for me because he was getting introduced to those ideas. So now I'm like, okay, I know there's different ways of being, but now I have a model from someone who I trust. I was first introduced to the term "ally" in ways that registered with me. I think a lot of that came from seeing the changes that he made, and then being more committed to those issues and reading more articles than the ones on Facebook. By the time I got into doctoral school, I was a little more aware. I was not perfect, not anywhere near perfect, but it kinda guided my intentions.

It is important to note, here, that Darrell was and is nowhere near perfect as he traverses doctoral study, but he is trying, especially given the messages he received about masculinity growing up as a child. He introduces his brother's experience with a Black male professor and role model in his own doctoral program that helped his brother change. In turn, in having conversations with his brother and seeing how his brother behaved in groups with other marginalized people, this was a way for Darrell to make necessary changes in his own behavior. As Darrell talked about above, it was not until having conversations with his cis-gendered brother that he began to interrogate his own biases, leading to change. Darrell contends that Black men need more chances to talk with other Black men that share their same backgrounds, effectively making it

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possible for positive role modeling on college campuses. Darrell's use of the phrase "guided my intentions" is particularly strong in that it shows that he is still a work in progress, a progress that he wants to share with other Black men. However, with no productive apparatus on campus— and he would know because he works closely with event staff on campus as a graduate assistant—to work though these issues, he feels that Black men are not getting properly exposed to other people and other ways of being as he was.

Bryce. Connecting back to his loneliness as a doctoral student, Bryce wishes that the college campus would provide more opportunities for Black men to be recruited and retained in graduate study. Through his experience as a lonely Black male doctoral student, Bryce has been able to have deeper relationships with his advisors, but he still wishes for more:

> Because I have such a good relationship with my white professors and advisors, I do feel like I have a lot of agency here. Being the only one has afforded me the opportunity to talk about issues and people will listen to me. I can speak with authority and people will listen to me because white folks see my codeswitching as white enough for them to listen. So I do feel like I have a high sense of agency… however, the college needs more mental health opportunities, more Black men in doctoral study to fend off loneliness, and more Black male professors that we can talk to about our problems, professors who look like us.

It is eye-opening that for all of Bryce's talk of code-switching and being able to fit in with white people, he still wants more opportunities for Black men to seek out mental health support from professionals, more Black men in doctoral study, and more professors that look like him. He is clear when he states that he has a high sense of agency in his classes because people see him as an authority figure, that his voice has authority. This is because, for me, he is able to code-switch

enough and sound intelligent enough to white people that they, in turn, give respect to his voice. One wonders how that would change if white people did not perceive him and his voice as intelligent. But, for Bryce, even though he appreciates how his advisors and peers perceive him as strong and sees him as an authority figure, there are still things his university could be doing to make sure that their Black male students feel supported. Although Bryce feels a sense of agency in his coursework and in his interactions with his advisors, one must make the connection between the racial microaggressions he detailed earlier and the recommendations for change that he speaks about here. For all of the authority he feels as a Black male, he is still treated in ways that marginalizing his experiences.

Bryce, in his journal entries when talking about his recommendations for the university, writes about the difference between safe spaces and braves spaces, speaking of his experiences with a professor that had a large, positive impact on him. These spaces, for him, show how white people can join conversations to make all people of color feel safe:

I think about the work of [a professor] who talks about trying to bring people in, trying to create a brave space rather than a safe space. You know, where the distinction being a safe space is one in which no one is pushed or challenged and everyone is just protected. Whereas a brave space is one in which your people are empowered to say the wrong thing and to make mistakes, but to also be pushed and challenged in a productive way toward a more positive and liberating experience. And I think that's the approach that I've tried to take with my white peers and professors.

Much like Darrell trying to create an event where white people could be comfortable having conversations around and about race and racism, Bryce is advocating for those same spaces to be established in the classroom space. In his experience with a white professor, he is advocating that

the classes dominated by white people do away with the notion of a "safe space" where people are encouraged to speak their minds without having to do the work to change problematic behaviors and thought patterns. However, Bryce is advocating for "brave spaces" in which all people, especially white people, are able to have conversations around race, racism, and whiteness with each other, but also become more open to pushback and to be challenged in not only positive, but productive ways. In Bryce's experience, especially when discussing the harassment complaint that was filed against him, white people have to not only be open to discussing their thoughts and opinions, but they also must be open to being challenged in a nurturing way to foster change. In Bryce's case, this starts with the efforts of white professors, who must foster brave spaces in their classrooms in which everyone has the opportunity to speak to their experiences.

Not only do white people have to actively participate in these brave spaces, but they also have to welcome being taught how to engage in these conversations. Bryce details in his journal entries that, "I always try to be really precise about the language that I'm using to describe people in academic spaces so as not to marginalize anyone from a historically marginalized social group. I found myself having to be forced to be even more cautious." In this instance, Bryce is speaking on how he was taught in a white professor's course, who was adamant about talking through race and racism in society and on the college campus, to analyze and evaluate how his embodiment as a Black man impacts space around him and how he shows up and is read as a Black man. His movement through space is informed by his positionality, and this helped him to be more precise and cautious with the language he used when engaging with other groups of people. Bryce thinks that his university and professors can do a better job of not only establishing space where conversations can happen between white people and people of color,

but also these spaces must be training grounds where all people become learned in *how* to engage respectfully when considering positionality. If white people come to these discussions sure of their positionality and how whiteness manifests in society, these spaces have myriad opportunities to be productive and progressive.

   Discussion. In this portion of the study, I have analyzed experiences of Black male graduate students through the lens of an individual interview and journal entries. It is conceptually built around the frameworks of racial/critical race literacy, Critical Race Theory, and Black masculinity literacies. Participants were able, through their speaking and writings—as a form of memory work, an important tenet of racial literacy and CRT—to reflect upon who they are as Black people and who they are as Black men, focusing on their varied, but compatible, literate historical experiences. Each participant from a young age was told about what it means to be a Black man growing up in America and how that connected to their journeys of becoming doctoral students. Each participant was confronted with the realities of what it means to be a Black man while also being inundated with expectations from their families as to how Black men should behave. Each participant reflected upon—with respect to their positionality now as doctoral students—the hypocrisies of masculinity, how men are rewarded for being strong, but lacking in emotion, and how the feminine is considered to be lesser and passive, although women controlled the majority of the decisions in their family. There was also an expectation, from their family members and from other Black men, that they would be rewarded if they are promiscuous, quick to anger, and if they valued physical activity and sports. This created a confusion for all three participants as they grappled with what it means to be a Black man practicing masculinity while comparing their experiences with white men who can practice their masculinity easier than Black men. This confusion was not analyzed until they decided to

become doctoral students, where they had the opportunities to reflect upon what they value about Black masculinity and what they are not interested in persevering, which confirms that they have become masculinity literate, creating a better understanding of themselves as Black men.

This, in turn, created situations in which their experiences as Black men were marginalized on a primarily white campus. Although Bryce talked about being able to codeswitch and navigate white spaces well, it was clear that all three participants were combating racial and gender microaggressions during their doctoral study. Their understandings of themselves as Black men led to a recognition that not only are their situations in which their white peers and professors are consciously and unconsciously working against them, but it also led to an acknowledgment that Black men need spaces on campus that specifically target their experiences. For Carson, this involves creating space for Black men to talk through their stresses, targeting their mental health. For Darrell, this involves supporting and creating productive events where Black men can talk with each other, working through toxic masculinity to become progressive. And for Bryce, this involves white professors creating space in their classrooms where whiteness can be interrogated, liberating everyone in the process. These men show that not only do they understand themselves as Black, as racially literate people, but they also understand the foundational nature of racism as it has affected them as they pursue their degrees. And through the understanding of themselves, they have come to know themselves as Black men, fusing their masculinity performance with who they are racially, understanding that their race and gender are coupled together when others experience them.

Chapter Five: Focus Group Interview and Analysis

Five weeks later, I met with Carson, Darrell, and Bryce in my professor friend's office, on the second floor of the Education building. Spring has almost given way to summer, the cold nip in the air gone now. It is a different atmosphere as we interact with each other; this time, the formality of our first meeting has gone away as I have gotten to know these three participants on a deeper level from talking and texting with them and reading their journal entries. We spend time talking with each other, hugging each other, and asking about our progress toward our degrees. It has been stressful as the school year is coming to an end, so we are all preparing final research papers or writing conference presentation proposals. We fellowship for more than half an hour before I start the focus group. I thank them for helping me out with my study, as I know how challenging the end of the year can be, and then I start asking them questions.

This analysis of the focus group data covers all three research questions: *How do Black male graduate students describe and understand their interactions with white professors and students, particularly as related to their race/ethnicity and gender? What role, if any, does their masculinity play in their navigation of a primarily white institution? In what ways do these students believe PWIs can recruit and retain more Black male students in graduate studies*? After talking with participants and coding the data, I identified two dimensions of their reflective practice from their interviews and journal entries: (1) Reflecting and learning from Black masculinity in relation to white spaces and (2) recommendations for the recruiting and retaining of Black men in doctoral study. It is important to note that these dimensions are the work of participants reflecting upon their answers from their interview and journal entries. Talking with each other has allowed them to deepen their understandings of not only each other, but their own answers. In this chapter, I describe these dimensions by showing my participants in conversation

with each other. I then analyze their words in a broader context, pulling from their previous interview and journals.

Dimension #1: Reflecting and learning from Black masculinity and navigational tactics in relation to white spaces

Each participant discussed what they have learned through the process of journaling and interviewing about their experiences as Black men in relation to their masculinity and to their navigational techniques of interacting with their white peers and professors. For Carson, his learning focused on the ways in which he could do better with responding to whiteness and his own anxiety:

> **Carson**: I guess I've become more cognizant of, I don't know, coping mechanisms and how I engage with white people. I realized I have the ability to be able to turn it on and turn it off. I've also recognized that sometimes, again, kind of how I mentioned in our first talk, I feel like I have a responsibility to not just do well for myself, but for my community. And I've realized that sometimes that can create extra pressure that I put on myself. Sometimes I might think, "I'm the only Black person in the room." So this white majority is looking down on me, waiting to judge me. But really they ain't even checking like that. And I had a big example of that when I had to present at the FDA in front of what I call, "the old white guard," a bunch of white males. The presentation went fine so I'm like "dang, psyching yourself up a little too much for nothing."

For Darrell, his learning revolved around his navigational techniques of being intentional about the people he chooses to be in community with and being comfortable with naming that for himself.

Darrell: I think I wrote about this, but I learned a lot about me being intentional about the PhD program I chose. I wanted a place where the majority of my professors were people of color. And I knew that [Urban Education] was the type of program I could get that experience in. And, you know, graduate school is different than work in that you don't have to deal with someone if you don't want to if they are not your direct advisor. Or your GA supervisor…I've been in a bubble of my own creation for the past few years…

The PhD process is very individualized, which I think that helps actually in terms of navigating certain spaces. My coursework definitely has less people of color so far, but I think because I had everything else outside of it, it was kind of less of a concern…So, just with the people who work for me, there were white folks who I could tell just didn't get it. I wasn't feeling them, so I made the decision not to talk to them…I just saw my brother's experience at another PWI and there was just not a bunch of people of color, but he built community with a bunch of Black folks in his program. So I looked for what he had…I was intentional because I had that model.

For Bryce, his learning is situated in understanding himself more as a Black man and gaining a thorough knowledge of how his body shows up in primarily white spaces:

Bryce: I think it's primarily for me about how I frame things, trying to ensure that I'm talking about things in a way that I don't come up as the angry black man, you know? And, again, I think it just goes back to like being aware of my positionality and knowing how I'm read in space. Knowing how I'm likely to be read if I respond in a certain way. And that I'm not afforded the same freedom as others to display the same range of emotion in certain settings and to just be cognizant of space and the ways in which my

embodiedness is not traditionally permitted to express myself. And then trying to take a

moment to not pop the fuck off.

For each participant, their reflectiveness is rooted in who they are as Black men. For Carson, he

has learned that sometimes he places too much pressure on himself because he is working toward

a goal that does not just include himself; it includes other Black men who might be coming

behind him. This drives how he responds to microaggressions or how he perceives racial

interactions as he pursues his doctoral degree. He gives an example about presenting his research

at an important department, a department that is ran by powerful white men. Before presenting

his research, he mentions that he had heard that people have had negative experiences in front of

the white male panel, which made him prepare as much as he could so that they did not think he

is inferior. In the interest of not being slighted by white people, while thinking how his

performance will be perceived by other Black people who might be looking to him for modeling,

Carson studies until his presentations are perfect and effortless. It is interesting to note that even

though Carson maintains that the presentation went "fine", it does not take away from the fact

that he is constantly second guessing himself as he confronts whiteness. He "shows up" as a

Black man in a white space, making his experience different from other people.

For Darrell, there is an intentionality—and the comfort to name it as such—that he uses

to deal with his stresses as a graduate student. Unlike working outside of the college, his PWI

presents opportunities in which he does not have engage with people who he does not want to. In

this sense, those white people who are racist against him or who hold negative stereotypes about

Black men are not given many chances to enjoy his presence. He chose his university, even

though it is considered a PWI, because the diversity of his program is an outlier in a sea of

whiteness; his program is filled with people of color and so are the professors and his advisor. He

is able to commune with people of color, namely Black people, while able to use the numerous resources that a PWI offers. However, his intentionality of only being in communication with those who understand him, he cannot separate how he experiences his PWI through the eyes of a Black men. He mentions that outside of class, he has had negative experiences with whiteness and white people. Through his graduate assistantship, as I discussed earlier, he has been in conversations in which his Black maleness has been challenged in negative ways. For Darrell, though, he feels that he can intentionally decide not to engage with those people even though his Blackness is marginalized.

For Bryce, his learning surrounds the ways in which he presents himself as a Black man and the ways in which his body is coded in the eyes of white people. As we talked about during his initial interview, he mentions that, as a Black man, he is expected not to show a range of emotions when dealing with white people. When he tried to eschew this expectation, racial and gendered microaggressions were committed against him. For Bryce, this process has helped him to reflect upon how he is viewed as a Black man, how his body interacts with white spaces, and how he must tamper down on his emotions in order to be accepted, in order for white people to be challenged and pushed by the words he uses, but not to be afraid of him.

Each participant also had their relationship to masculinity affirmed or changed throughout the process of interviewing and journaling. Being a participant has helped them think through their history of masculinity, their own masculinity, and how they have changed in their process of traversing postgraduate education:

> **Carson**: I feel like [my definition of masculinity] has been affirmed. I feel the very
>
> simplistic, but powerful, stripped down meaning of like, you know, masculinity, is just
>
> the need to be like responsible and to just to be able to produce. And you're responsible

not just to you but like the people that are around you trying to come up. Yeah, it hasn't changed any. It's been definitely affirmed.

For Darrell, his notions of Black masculinity have changed as he has grown experiencing different groups of people, in direct contrast with what he learned from his parents as a child:

> **Darrell**: At the moment, I'm transitioning to something different, like a balance. So I was sharing in my first interview that I had, I started to get introduced to feminist theory, Black feminist theory in my master's program. When I came to [this university] I worked around—and they called themselves this—radical Black feminists, Black women. I just got all of the "yo, let me tell you about patriarchy and masculinity." When I was at work I used to joke, "I'm a special Black man." And they're like, "man, you're not special! Let me tell you where the bar is for most men." My other friend was telling me that Black women might not get the same type of shine as Black men.
>
> So learning all of that was, to me, one way, but now I think I'm trying to learn to balance it. But it's still like, it doesn't make it easy to be somebody who embodies Black masculinity. So that's why I'm in this space now and trying to figure out, "how do I name those places where it's difficult? Why do I got to codeswitch if I don't want to?" different things that speak to my own individual experience, not just a global experience. But that's probably been one of the things I've had to think about the most.

For Bryce, like Carson, his reflective process was affirmed by what he already believes, based on his experiences of masculinity as a child and when he attended undergraduate school, but he has also changed too. He started having conversations around masculinity and positionality as he attended graduate school, and this process has helped him name what he accepts and upholds about masculinity:

Bryce: I think, if anything, I was already pretty aware of some of this. Whenever I'm able, I've tried to impart whatever bits of wisdom I have to others about what it means to navigate these spaces. Because I feel like I have done so fairly well and have been able to curry a modicum of favor with the power that represents the department. Because I also recognize that it's really more challenging to navigate racial and gender identities. But I think what it has clarified for me is I don't think I was ever—I'm not sure the extent to which I was like really conscious of how my maleness, my Black maleness was being read relative to just my maleness.

I'm well aware, in general, that when I talk to other graduate students of color, I acknowledge there is a difference between what your experience will look like relative to mine if you're a woman or a woman of color of if you're LGBTQIA. But I'm not sure where I really intentionally thought about the explicitness of Blackness plus my maleness. I think it's often I've been a bit bifurcated where I've recognized that there a set of benefits that I've accrued and things that I've benefited from by virtue of my maleness. And then at the same time there are barriers about my blackness but I'm not sure whether I really consciously and intentionally thought about the relationship between with respect to how I've navigated these spaces until now.

For all three participants, the process of writing down their experiences and talking about them with another Black man, has helped them reflect upon how Black masculinity has guided the ways in which they engage with doctoral study. In Carson's case, he has been able to critical analyze the messages he has received from his family about the acceptable behaviors for Black men, taking the things that has affirmed him and marginalizing the messages that were counterproductive. He has decided to keep his eyes on making sure that not only is he

responsible for himself, but his behavior must be a positive model for others to follow. He also values that he must be productive, that his research agenda must start to bridge the gap between theory and practice. These are traditional concepts of masculinity, the ability to be responsible through his Blackness. He experiences his life as Black, but works to be a model for other Black men, engaging his gender and race jointly.

In Darrell's case, he is hoping to strike a balance between his views on masculinity and femininity, and what he values about Black masculinity. In doctoral study, he has been able to expand and critically analyze the messages he received about masculinity from his parents. In this sense, Darrell has been able to be in conversation with Black women who have interrogated his views on masculinity and patriarchy, showing how men are given credence over women. Darrell has stated that some of these conversations have centered on how universities are constantly looking to recruit Black men, but Black women are usually left out of the conversation because of how they excel. Darrell, through these productive conversations, has tried to think about how he has to temper Black masculinity to be more progressive, while still being conscious of the ways in which Black men are disrespected in white spaces. For Darrell, in order to be truly progressive, is to acknowledge how Black men participate in patriarchy, while also understanding the need to recognize the barriers they face at a PWI. It is not enough for him to think about Black men in a global sense; it is also important to think on his own positionality and the ways in which his experience as a Black man needs recognition as well.

Bryce, from this process, has learned that how he looks at the world has become different. Before, he was focused on his career and success, navigating the doctoral process in a way that would gain him favors with professors and his advisor for publications and presentations. He has been keenly aware of how his maleness has allowed him power, but

journaling and interviewing has helped him to understand how his racial and gender identity are experienced jointly. Both identities have informed the ways he has been marginalized and the ways white people have treated him in and out of class. It has also led him to analyze how—as he tries to delve into feminism and acknowledge how he contributes to patriarchy—his thoughts as a Black man are not allowed as he tries to create community with other white women. Through this, his definition of Black masculinity has become expanded as he applies it to his own experiences.

Interviewing and journal has also been a cathartic experience for these participants as well. They all mentioned how the study has either provided them relief to talk to someone else who understand their beliefs and how they have changed over time or has helped to establish and compliment their own research beliefs. In Darrell's case, it has clarified the ways he should be productively in relationship with other marginalized groups:

> **Darrell**: I think the thing is we don't know what it means to be in a relationship, specifically, with cisgender women and trans folks. We know so little about what it means as Black cisgendered men to be in healthy relationships with folks because they're like, "yo, you don't even understand the scratches we have." So I learned about emotional labor in our conversations. I didn't know what it was to emotionally labor as a man. I feel like the way I was socialized growing up, I didn't know how to deal with my emotions. You're either real happy with your people or you're really angry when you got to protect yourself. So it was all these things. But, this process and me changing has helped me reflect on my relationship with my partner, and I would say that's a big one for me. Like, I learned about emotional labor. I'm not saying anymore, "why are you worried about stuff that we ain't got no control over?"

Carson is able to accurately name how he feels about a given situation and being comfortable with that naming, now that he understands himself more as a Black man and can accurately speak to his experiences:

> **Carson**: Definitely it was cathartic in a sense, reflecting upon the isolation in my experience. I mean it used to be about just being Black, but now it's about being in a program as a Black male. Then again, for me, it's a little bit different because I don't come strictly from an academic background. I'm coming from a professional background as well. So definitely doing the journal entries made me realize, "wow, you're really kinda out here on your own in this context." But then at the same time, I'm aware, you know, of being able to create as many great relationships as I can. For example, being in this space and then also have a strong network of color like outside of that. It's been very influential.

Bryce has been able to think about himself in relation to his research and how this study has helped to clarify and compliment it:

> **Bryce**: It's just something that I've already think about, right? And in my own work, the theoretical framing is on critical race spatial analysis, right? Which is trying to pull from critical spatial studies that has threads of Critical Race Theory to identify the ways in which race, space, history, and identity markers come to bear in moments of interaction. So I think more than anything it's sort of in line with my own research interests rather than challenging me to interrogate that in my work in a new way. Because, I think it's sort of affirmed and is in line with the way I see the world in general and the things that I want to draw upon and highlight in my own work.

Darrell has been able to reflect upon his relationship to women and the ways in which he has been dismissive of their experiences. Although he has talked about being willing to change how he interacts with the feminine and wanting to challenge the inherent patriarchy in Black men, there are still situations in which he is dismissive to his own partner, his wife. He attributes this to how he was raised and the messages he received centering masculinity as the most important aspect of his life. For Darrell, there was no balance. He speaks on how the only emotions he was allowed to show were shallow happiness with his family and other Black people when things went right, or anger when he had to protect himself. He did not know the importance of emotional labor, or the concept of sympathizing and empathizing with other people, especially women. It was not until graduate school that he was able to be in conversation and space with Black women, learning from them and their experiences. And it was not until this study that he was able to articulate the changes he has made with someone who recognizes how he was socialized from a child and the challenges of dealing with emotions he did not understand. These conversations have helped him to interrogate his thought process, how he was dismissive of women's problems because he did not know how to emotionally labor, and to understand patriarchy and the ways he contributed to it.

Carson has been able to understand more his aloneness and how he really is doing it all on his own. In his experience, there is a difference between coming from the professional world where he primarily worked with Black male veterans to the doctoral and research world, where he is the only Black man in his program. It is ironic, then, that Carson wanted to obtain a research background to help Black male veterans and to bridge the gap between theory and practice, but he is met with evaluating his own loneliness as he pursues his degree. However, this study has helped him to name his loneliness for what it is, participate in dialogue with another

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Black male researcher, and being in conversation with other Black male doctoral students in ways in which he has not had before. It has been influential for him to create relationships for this project, because in his program, there is no way for him to do that. He has become comfortable in talking about his experience as a Black male through the lens of masculinity.

Bryce has been able to compliment his own research agenda by analyzing his experiences as a Black man through space, race, history, and identity markers. My research focuses on the masculinity history of Black men and their navigational tactics when confronting white spaces, which connects with Bryce's own of evaluating space and positionality. This project has given credence to Bryce's own research agenda, helping him to understand how people of color cannot divorce themselves from their own point of view and how it informs, progresses, and impedes their progress through white spaces. Not only has this been a cathartic experience for him, but also confirmation that his research matters, that he is on the right track with his research agenda.

It is imperative to note that these participants, as the focus group continued, moved the conversation from a more global position to more personal, reflecting upon how thinking through Black masculinity has impacted them. For Darrell, he thinks about how he has given himself permission to become a better person:

> **Darrell**: Toward the end of my wife's pregnancy, I started journaling. I think it gave me, and this is interesting, I feel like I have permission to say things, even as strong as I am. And I felt like this study gave me the space to say what I need to say. Even when I first interviewed, I knew I needed to be more comfortable just being in my Black masculinity and not feeling that shame. I was out to dinner the other day with some friends and I said something, but I can't remember the comment. And then my friend's wife was like, "oh that sounds very masculine." I was like, "well, that may be my masculinity talking," or

something like that. And then her husband was like, "but that don't have to be bad." And I was like, "yeah, I guess that don't have to be bad."

But that hit me cause I was just used to hearing the critiques of masculinity and that I must read for myself so I can learn and be a better person. I spent decades hearing that. So I felt like this study really gave me permission to be more intentional and specific around Black masculinity, and how it doesn't have to be all negative…Cause sometimes it be like, "niggas ain't shit." And I get it. But it's also like, "what does that mean for me personally?" I think this gave me the opportunity to name what it means to me personally. How can I affirm myself especially thinking about how I want people to talk around me, around my child? There are some good things in the traditional notions, like being responsible and not complaining about things that don't need to be complained about.

Carson's discussion focusing on the personal as well, reflecting upon how his own research agenda can include more diversity to make sure Black people show up:

Carson: Well, I guess on one level, I'm definitely reflecting upon just having representation. So, again, thinking about my own data collection that [the researcher] participated in. You were the first Black male in my study. And I've had several Black women participate. This discussion, it made me think about how can you make sure we are introduced? You know, just diversity within your own collection within your research. It'll really come into play later down the road, God willing, and then once I get a job or at least start giving back again. I guess it just ties back into my theme of responsibility; I want to make sure that I'm able to bring up some Black folks, namely Black men, to further educate them along the way.

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Bryce responds that his personal change is centered around how he presents himself to other

Black men, making sure not to subscribe to notions of patriarchy and homophobia:

> **Bryce**: I will say one thing that I like that I appreciated is [the researchers'] comment
> about how you give hugs rather than [shaking hands] as a part of subverting the
> assumption that it's not okay for Black men to show physical affection to one another. I
> don't think it's changed my definition in part because I feel like I've already personally
> and intentionally done a lot of work around my own understanding of masculinity and
> femininity and the ways in which those norms are reinscribed and stereotyped. This is
> something that I actively try to challenge, and especially with my friends. I think it just so
> happens that this subject matter is something that is near and dear to me. I will say it's
> mildly affirming to hear that the things I shared with you is consistent with everyone
> here.

As someone who has grown up being told that men are supposed to be strong at all times, Darrell

is learning more about how to be vulnerable and speaking his thoughts, giving himself

permission to say what he needs to say. He maintains that he must be comfortable with standing

in the definition of Black masculinity that he has chosen for *himself*, instead of relying upon

what his parents have taught him and how other Black men have presented themselves in his

presence. In his example, Darrell talks about being in conversation with other Black folks,

learning from them and processing through his own thinking, being comfortable with naming

how he feels. With the help of his friends, he is able to critically analyze his history of Black

masculinity and the messages surrounding it. He contends that his entire life he has been told by

his family the ways Black men are supposed to act, but as he attended school, he has been told

how Black men uphold patriarchy and sexism. He has had to evaluate, through his experiences

with other Black men and having his own Black male child to raise, the messages he would uphold and the ones he would discard. He understands how Black men have the potential to be toxic, but the question that Darrell has to ask for himself is, "how does this apply to me personally?" This project has given him the opportunity to answer that question for himself because it pertains to himself personally and through his own child.

Carson realized, through this study, that there is more he could be doing to deal with his loneliness and to further his own research agenda and personal reasons for attending doctoral study. He mentions that I participated in his study after his first interview, which brings to mind how he could and should be including more Black men in his research. He says that if it were not for me, there would be no Black men participating. To connect to his theme of Black masculinity having to have a responsibility aspect to it—which is the only definition he is deciding to adhere to going forward—he feels that he could be doing a better job of recruiting more Black men into research studies, especially considering he wants to connect theory to the work he is doing with Black male veterans outside of his doctoral studies. Interviewing and writing journals have allowed him to think through the expectations he has set for himself, the ways his university could do a better job of inviting Black men into the conversation, and how he could use his definition of Black masculinity to become more responsible for those that are coming behind him.

A personal connection that Bryce has made is to me as the researcher and the answers that the other participants have given. I mentioned to him that I try to show affection for Black men I know personally, including exchanging hugs instead of handshakes. For me, when thinking about how men are rewarded based on their expressions and practices of masculinity as opposed to who they truly are, I try to subvert traditional norms of masculinity while showing

Black men that there is nothing wrong with showing affection for other Black men that one has a friendly relationship with. Bryce respects this, but also is relieved to know that other Black men around him share the same mentality. This project has allowed him to understand where he is in his constant journey of being progressive, his thinking around Black masculinity, and how community is important.

Discussion. The most salient theme of this dimension of the focus group is the idea of community and how Black men can and will create it through talking and inserting themselves in research that has decidedly placed them in deficit positions. As I think about masculinity expectations and critically analyzing Black masculinity from the eyes of Black men, it is clear that each participant has thought about the messages they have received as children, and have evaluated which ones they wanted to uphold and those they wanted to discard. Through discussions with each other, participants are able to tie their understandings of Black masculinity to how they negotiate their identity and to how they persevere through doctoral study. For these participants, it is clear that they cannot escape their masculinity histories, their lived experiences of masculinity, and the processes they use to navigate schooling. There is no divorcing their parents' expectations, how they have lived their lives, and how they have crafted personal and research agendas. Finding community has been a struggle for each of them on campus. Even though they have been able to navigate successfully through their studies in myriad ways, the focus group has allowed them to be in conversation with other Black men that they rarely see on campus, Black men who are asking themselves the same questions of identity, race, racism, and gender.

Dimension #2: Recommendations for the recruiting and retaining Black men in doctoral study

Although each participant discussed the need for recruiting and retaining more Black men in doctoral programs in their individual interviews, the focus group provided them an opportunity to learn from each other, deepening their awareness of things their university could do. For Carson, there needs to be more partnerships between HBCU's and PWIs to recruit intelligent Black men, establishing programs in undergraduate and graduate schools that explicitly state that their aims are to give these men information about and to send these men to doctoral study.

> **Carson**: I think systematically, I'm thinking about program creation between HBCU's and PWIs. My master's program had a partnership with the University of Southern California where, if you wanted to, you could pursue a PhD. I chose not to go there, but I do see a benefit in having a segue program to increase diversity in research and into the workforce. That's one main solution that I am interested in exploring.

Darrell agreed with these types of programs, but maintained that more trust needed to be established between Black men and white spaces for them to be comfortable attending programs that center whiteness. He offers different ways for this to happen:

> **Darrell**: I would second that but add something else to it. I worked on a project in my master's program, trying to recruit more racial and ethnic diversity. I did some research on recruitment from HBCUs. I didn't attend an HBCU, but a lot of it talked about how trust is a really important thing. So, you know, you have to build that relationship between faculty members, build that trust there so that if they recommend to a student, that student will know it's good for them. You also need to be intentional, you know, because it's not easy sending them. People need money, especially in this area. People have to know you want them. If you are for recruitment than you have to be intentional

saying why you want them to be here, following up with calls. And when you are

retaining students, it's easier to do that when you have more than one or two. I think

about the things that retained me. Like I said, my advisor's a Black woman and my

community on campus are mostly Black and brown folks.

Bryce responds to Carson and Darrell by contending that PWIs need to expand their talent pool

as HBCUs do in their admission policies because, as he maintains, there are systemic bias and

racism in testing and GPA requirements:

> **Bryce**: HBCUs in general and Morehouse in particular are designed to "rake the rubble"
>
> of Blackness and Black maleness, right? I think part of it goes back to widening the pool
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> of what they like, what they need, and the sort of experiences, both academic and
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> interpersonal that they are looking for when they're trying to attract students. I have a
>
> friend, one of my best friends, he graduated from high school with a 1.9 or 2.1 GPA and
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> had to go into the military for a couple of years. He went to the navy for a couple of years
>
> and then transferred to Morehouse and graduated with honors. I got another friend who
>
> went to Morehouse on academic probation and then after graduation he worked at the
>
> White House, the treasury, and the Senate. He now works for Google…No PWI would
>
> have paid them any mind out of high school because of their academic performance
>
> indicators. HBCUs saw something in these students and they had a vision for what they
>
> could be, like molding them.
>
> The model of academic like graduate programs is where you're trying to identify people
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> who already indicated that they have like really, really strong skills and you ask them to
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> make themselves an asset for their, um, advisors and other researchers in the program so
>
> you can use them as cheap labor for their own research projects or for teaching

responsibilities. So like when you're thinking about students that may have not have, may not have had some of those same opportunities previously due to like financial barriers that prevented them from thinking of certain opportunities after they graduated from undergrad or social capital barriers that are particularly keeping them from exposure to certain kinds of experiences that would inform how they would do in these sorts of spaces. And then you end up with, then you have a tougher time finding students of color, Right?

There is an expansion of ideas as the participants continue to talk with each other about the importance of attracting Black male talent to PWIs. Carson thinks about program creation, establishing programs that will specially target Black male scholars, inviting them to apply and guaranteeing them a place in the ranks of research universities. Although he did not exploit the opportunity for his own personal gain, he saw the importance of having these programs that will allow for Black men to learn about high-ranking universities, participate in coursework that will help them when they transition to graduate schools, and eventually attend.

However, Darrell brings up a great point as he talks about the research he has conducted on HBCUs. He maintains that there is no reason for Black men to attend PWIs if there is no trust established between schools. While committing to diversity and recruiting and retaining more Black men at research institutions is important, there must be a level of trust that these students must feel when they consider these universities. For example, there needs to be an even exchange of communication between faculty members at HBCUs and those at PWIs to make it a true partnership. There should not exist a situation in which faculty members and staff at PWIs colonize the entire process because they feel that their university is more esteemed. Because, as Darrell mentions, if Black male students see an even exchange of ideas, where everyone

important to the process holds the same weight, they are more likely to attend research and high-ranking university. Also, as Darrell contends, financial resources and capital are important, so PWIs must recruit these talented students by offering them scholarships, lessening the burden of taking out student loans. Finally, recruiting is important, but retaining these Black male students is even more important. In order to do so, PWI administrators must think of how their university is perceived and how diverse their professors are. For Darrell, he is better able to handle the loneliness that comes with being a Black male doctoral student because his advisor and most of his professors are Black, even though they do not share his gender.

Bryce takes this idea further by speaking on *why* PWIs find it hard to recruit Black male graduate students to their ranks and what they can do to mitigate the issue. He says that HBCUs are more attractive than PWIs because they have less stringent admission policies while offering a high-ranking experience with a diverse set of academic scholars and professors. Because they do not just rely on high school grades, GPA, and college admission exam scores, they are able to attract students who might need more support but have the potential to become talented scholars in the future. Bryce's personal experiences with other Black men in his immediate circles speaks to this. Bryce's recommendation for PWI's is to not only to better recruit Black men into graduate schools by establishing trust, but also loosening some of the academic requirements for these students when they start classes and provide them with the financial resources they need to actually *stay* on good academic and financial standing as they complete their coursework.

Bryce takes this idea further when he mentions that there is a reason why program creation is not as successful as admission officers would hope, especially given how participants hardly ever see each other even though they are all doctoral students:

Bryce: And then on top of that, there is the whole issue with race-based admission preferences, which really isn't a thing for graduate and postgraduate spaces. I think the larger problem is the failure to interrogate whiteness and how whiteness operates in these spaces. I think about the hiring process at [this university] in particular for some professors who are distinguished scholars of color…no one talks about that shit…There was a student of Gloria Ladson-Billings who came for an interview. There were faculty members in the college who had never even heard of Gloria Ladson-Billings, which is fucking absurd. I think so much of it just comes back to like a failure to interrogate whiteness and I see minimal interest in doing that. Writ large. I think there are pockets of resistance, but there are significant institutional barriers within the college and within the university structure that are systematically designed to not ensure or support the success of scholars of color.

This discussion goes back to what Darrell was mentioning about the level of trust that has and needs to be established between HBCUs and PWIs in order to open the channel and allow for more diverse scholars of color to attend research universities. For Bryce, there has to be intentional discussions and a decolonization of admission and hiring practices that specifically target whiteness. On the admissions side, there has to be a breaking down of barriers that will allow for university staff to establish trust with HBCUs, ensuring that there is an open-door policy and also an equal distribution of resources so that one side is not more important than the other. There also needs to be an examination of the hiring side of the equation, critically examining how scholars of color are hired, becoming knowledgeable of important research that is being conducted, and intentionally hiring diverse professors. As Darrell said earlier, an important facet of building trust is making sure that diverse students have diverse professors in

each department that they are taking courses for. Intentionally targeting whiteness and how it works is an important step to this goal.

The group takes this discussion further when Bryce brings up this important aspect of recruiting and retaining Black males in doctoral study. For Carson, the university structure needs to be more intentional about not only hiring diverse professors, but needs to be explicit about hiring Black male professors to attract Black male doctoral students:

> **Carson**: We need to hire more Black folks in general, but specifically, we need more Black male professors. I mean if you have somebody who looks like you that can be so reassuring. But then also they have that cultural kind of understanding that can actually kind of help aid a student, a minority student, and really help them on their trajectory that, you know, a white professor might just not be able to quite tap into. They just might not understand.

Darrell responds to Carson by speaking on his own personal experience and the research surrounding the cultural match between professors and their students:

> **Darrell**: And I would say, and I don't know if there's any quantitative data around this, but for what I could see, most faculty recruit people like them. And so when I see Black faculty members who are Black men, they usually have more Black male advisees, whether it's at the master's level or the doctoral level. Usually people want to go work with the people who look just like them—"I want to go work with this Black male faculty member." I think a lot of the reasons named like those connections and conversations that you can have that goes beyond the books…They're not all perfect though, which is something to think about. They not may not be what you even want…We always talk about Black fathers not being in the home, but sometimes Black fathers being in the

home could be negative because they might be the ones telling their sons to toughen up or they might not talk a lot. You know, they may show anger, only show violence. Not saying it's all bad, but it's just not guaranteed if I put a Black man in this house, everything is going to be good. It depends on what they value.

Building upon Darrell's words, Bryce believes that Black male professors can be valuable contributors to the success of Black male students; however, if they are professors and have problematic viewpoints, there must be professional development to help them remember their purpose, while also including white professors as well:

Bryce: I always bristle at any conversation in education about professional development because it's often ineffective, not scaffolded, and not differentiated. All the same, there is a need for faculty members to get trained in what it means to be a manager, to be a mentor, and receive cultural competency training and implicit bias training. There are instances where advisors don't do a good job of managing, don't do the best job of managing their own work and the different things they got going because there's just so many things going on. And so they don't give their time to their students or what is really required to ensure their success. There are certainly a lot that do all of those things, but there are those that don't and I think part of that is a function of that they don't interrogate themselves. They don't know or were never trained to do those things. I could be mistaken, but there is just not a lot of emphasis on that kind of support, or those sorts of professional developments involving the community in practice for professors to be good advisors.

Carson starts off this part of the conversation by identifying that the university must do more to meet the needs of Black male doctoral students; the most important way is to hire professors that

share the same gender as their students. Although there will definitely be differences in how these professors engage with their students, a good start is intentionally broadening the pool of Black male professors who are placed in position in each department and making them advisors of Black male students. As Carson states, sometimes all it takes is to have a diverse body of professors that allows for people of color to feel safe in white spaces. For Carson, having Black male professors in place that might understand how race and gender interact for Black men will create opportunities to continuously recruit and retain these students.

Darrell takes this idea a bit further when he mentions that professors should be given every opportunity to recruit students into their programs. Not only are they responsible for teaching and advising students, but also they should have be integral to the recruitment process. Universities must have support and programs in place where Black male professors are at the forefront of the recruiting season, so that Black men can become more comfortable knowing that even though they are choosing a PWI for graduate study, they are assured that they are taking coursework and being advised by professors who look like them and can better understand them. However, Darrell does understand that not all Black male professors will see themselves as role models, will see themselves as advising students beyond coursework. The scenario of the Black family is important because it touches on his own history of Black masculinity, where his father never showed as much love to him as his mother did, how his household was quick to anger, and how physical activity instead of emotional activity was valued. For Darrell, there needs to be discussions around *which* Black male professors will do a better job of advising and mentoring burgeoning Black male talent as they enter doctoral study.

Bryce, understanding Darrell's viewpoints, suggests that professional development— from his own experience—has not done a good job of making sure that professors and university

stakeholders are interrogating what it truly means to be an advisor and a mentor to students, instead of using them as cheap labor for their research projects (Brennon & Magness, 2019). Universities should be giving space for professors, namely Black male professors, to critically evaluate their roles as advisors, understanding their positionality as change agents. Not only should be they used as recruitment and retainment tools for Black male students, but they should be given space to become true mentors to their students. As Bryce states, the research university structure, at times, refuses to interrogate itself, creating situations in which advisors become managers, wanting to make sure their research is heard and seen, and using their advisees as workers to help facilitate their work. In Bryce's understanding, not only should Black male professors conduct their research, but they should do so in a way that uplifts their Black male advisees while also becoming lifelong mentors for them. As he states, scaffolded and differentiated professional development opportunities is a way to do this, truly focusing on the needs and wants of Black male professors, and establishing their role as change agents.

All participants discussed the need for their university to also offer space for Black male students to support each other, providing opportunities for them to fellowship with each other and also critique each other's research and masculine behavior. As all participants discussed the loneliness they have felt throughout their studies, this is particular salient feature of their recommendation for change. For Carson, communication is the most important way for Black men truly understand each other and the issues they go through:

> **Carson**: Communication most definitely. First and foremost. We need the occasional happy hour, or meet up groups, and chat groups online. Just really being able to see each other on and off campus. I think, you know, it all boils down to communication with different ways that you can do it, whether it be digital or meeting in person. I do think we

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need to make more of an effort to reach out and kind of break out of the isolation I feel I

get.

Darrell builds on this theme by saying that communication is important, but also reinforcing that

the exchanging of good ideas is also important too, as evidenced by his words in the previous

chapter about how doctoral students have had to find out information on their own instead of it

all being in one place:

> **Darrell**: I like how you say communication cause I would add—and I would agree with
>
> that—but I would add sharing information between each other. One thing we've tried to
>
> do in our program is like, the people who are the most advanced in terms of years in a
>
> program reaching out when they know a new person's coming in to say, "here's all this
>
> stuff you need to know because they're not going to tell you this. There's nothing on
>
> paper. This is a good place to study, and a good place to get your hair done." You know
>
> what I'm saying? "This is where we kick it, where you can find space." That type of
>
> thing. I think communication is essential.

Bryce takes this even further when he says that, while Black men being in space with each other

and passing down information is truly important, he wants more of the communication to focus

on critiques of whiteness, especially in the classroom and research spaces:

> **Bryce**: What lifts me up is writing what I think is a really compelling argument, or when
>
> I would teach and there's like a moment where I thought, "I killed that lecture." And so
>
> when I think about my teaching experiences, I think what lifts me up is getting the sense
>
> that I was breaking through all of the noise from my students about how they
>
> conceptualized the world…I think in terms of my scholarship it's about having someone
>
> else provide positive feedback on my work, so that's really awesome. But also knowing

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my work is important and timely…And I mentioned that, you know, it affirms me when a

person wants to have a long, extended conversation with me about my research because

I'm an expert in the subject and it's a really important topic. So I find that to be affirming

and what we need more of because I just know that I have the capacity to drive

conversation for the betterment of the community that I committed my life to.

Carson maintains the most important part of the process of the doctorate and receiving your

degree is the ways Black men reach out and communicate with each other and providing space

for them to fellowship with each other. His examples of happy hours, group messages, and group

chats are spaces Black men can establish to ensure they are always in constant communication

with each other, uplifting and helping other Black men when needed or generally making sure

that Black men know that there is community all around them. It would require, of course, an

intentionality on the part of the university and of Black men to want to create these spaces so that

everyone can flourish.

In Darrell's case, it is important to build on this communication by offering more

information. As he said in his individual interview—and something I as the researcher can attest

to—sometimes the information doctoral students need to know is not continuously and

constantly updated in a place where all students can access. This further marginalizes what

marginalized and minoritized students know and what they do not know, effectively placing

them in inferior positions when it is time to advocate for themselves. For Darrell, while

fellowship is important, it is more essential that Black men understand where and who to go to

for information that is hard to find. He has found it very helpful when others have shared

information with him and has created resources that Black students can access when they need it

and has routinely presented himself as a personal resource. This helps to retain Black male

students who are constantly searching for not only camaraderie with other Black men, but also creates effective resources and touchpoints to ensure that they are able to progress through their doctoral programs.

For Bryce, not only should these resources be applied to attaining the degree, but this network of Black male students should be used to examine research and classroom practices from a critical lens and as a form of support. He is comforted when someone is interested in his teaching and in his research, because he considers himself an expert and scholar in his chosen specialty of critical spatial studies. He has also always been interested in the prospect of interrogating whiteness and how it operates in space, so his research and classroom agenda of how he is breaking barriers is important for him. It is not enough, for him, that Black men congregate together, but it is also essential for them to help other Black male students examine their teaching practice and bolster their research agendas.

Discussion. Participants attending a focus group has allowed them to delve deeper in their feelings about their history of becoming "masculine" beings, their thoughts on Black masculinity, and how they correspond with the ways they engage doctoral study. The prevalent themes of how the study has helped them gauge their understandings of masculinity with their doctoral study and created space for them to establish brotherhood with other Black men has given them permission to put to words their true thoughts about their university, while also providing recommendations for Black men to thrive as scholars. Participants were able to build upon their thoughts, providing deeper answers into what this study has taught them about their own life and views on masculinity while giving them the courage to speak on changes that need to be made to the university structure. Their previous interviews and journal entries, enabling them to write themselves in the research, has helped to give them that permission to be confident

in their Blackness and Black maleness, as they show vulnerability and, also, courage. For them, doctoral study and becoming a scholar has been an isolated struggle as they carve out their research agenda, but this study has allowed them to not understand and evolve their own viewpoints, but to also gain community with other Black men that they do not see on a daily basis as they take and teach classes and write and present their research.

Chapter Six: Discussion, Implications, & Conclusions

Study Overview

Negative perceptions of Black boys and men have persisted and analyzed through numerous studies over the years, showcasing educator's low gendered schooling expectations of them (Hall, 2001; Hudley & Graham, 2001; Ross & Jackson, 1991; Wood, Kaplan, & McLoyd, 2007) and their racial trauma and stress they experience attending PWIs if they are able to graduate from secondary school (Boyd & Mitchell, 2018; Brown & Davis, 2017; Burt, Williams, & Smith, 2018; Craig, 2014). Placing Black men in deficit positions start in our nation's PreK-12 public schools through their experiences in college, impacting their ability to successfully participate in the labor market, obtain higher earnings and savings (Day & Newburger, 2002), increase their professional and personal mobility, and constraining opportunities for leisure activity, which increases their stress levels (Wilson, 1996). HBCUs have been found to serve the needs of Black men, helping them to gain access to PWIs for graduate education.

After analyzing the extant literature surrounding Black men in undergraduate education, I sought to showcase the masculinity literacies of Black male doctoral students, tracing their progression from childhood, our nation's schools, through doctoral study using the lenses of racial/critical race literacy, CRT, and Black masculinity to create a new asset-based picture of their ability to perform and write themselves in a literature that deems them as deficient, dangerous, and uneducable. A collective case study design was used to investigate the dimensions of navigation that three Black male doctoral students of Mid-Atlantic University use to be successful scholars of color through their understandings of their own childhood, their definitions of masculinity, their understandings of themselves as men, and their experiences of racism and microaggressions. This study broke new ground as it explored the intersection of race

and racism, gender, and identity through the eyes of Black men succeeding as and becoming scholars in the face of perceptions of failure. The three focal doctoral students, Carson, a Neuroscience student hoping to bridge the gap between theory and practice, Darrell, an Urban Education student intentionally holding space for people of color, and Bryce, an Education Policy student hoping to break new ground in research, each served as individual instrumental cases for this study, while also coming together to speak truth to their experiences. The study was guided by the following research questions:

- How do Black male graduate students describe and understand their interactions with white professors and students, particularly as related to their race/ethnicity and gender?

- What role, if any, does their masculinity play in their navigation of a primarily white institution?

- In what ways do these students believe PWIs can recruit and retain more Black male students in graduate studies?

Data collection for the study took place during the 2018-2019 school year. Each student participated in an individual interview, wrote five journal entries, and engaged in a focus group interview, communicating with each other. Within case and cross-case analyses were performed to identify their masculinity literacies, the microaggressions and racisms they experience at the hands of professors and their peers, the isolation they feel as Black men in primarily white doctoral programs and spaces, their recommendations for their university to ensure Black male success, and the differences in how their identity and history has informed the way they engage at a PWI.

As a result of the cross-case analysis for the individual interview and journal entries, I identified what I call four dimensions of their PWI realities for all three participants. One

participant, Carson, inhabited another, separate dimension. These findings address all three

research questions. These dimensions include:

1) feelings of loneliness/not being able to forge closeness with other Black male doctoral students

2) negative perceptions of and racial microaggressions attending a PWI

3) the influence of Black masculinity to their progress

4) the ways PWIs can do a better job of establishing spaces for Black men

5) using traditional masculinity to claim manhood

After analyzing and coding the focus group data, I also identified two other dimensions of

participants' experience with PWIs as they built knowledge together, digging deeper into the

layers of their navigational tactics as doctoral students. These dimensions of the focus group also

connected back to all three research questions and they include:

1) reflecting and learning from Black masculinity and navigational tactics in relation to white spaces

2) recommendations for the recruiting and retaining Black men in doctoral study

While each participant exemplified all six of these dimensions, they all did so in different, but

complementary, ways, based on who they believe they are as Black men, their history before

attending doctoral study, and their definitions of masculinity. Through these dimensions, there

was an undercurrent of *change* through all participants' stories: questioning traditional

masculinity and Black masculinity, understanding the hypocrisy of Black masculinity as they got

more schooling, using their new definitions to change how they navigate in primarily white

spaces, and using their knowledge to advocate for change at the doctoral level so that more Black

men are represented on their campus. For example, Carson realized the hypocrisy of what he was

being told when he understood that Black men were not protecting women in his family as they said they would when he was younger, which caused him to pick what he upholds about masculinity while eschewing the messages he did not. Darrell, realizing the conflict between masculinity, femininity, and religion, made a conscious decision to change as he got more educated, intentionally placing himself in spaces in which he would be challenged and openly advocating for more space for Black men to interrogate themselves and whiteness as Black men. Bryce, after seeing how his father reacted to his queer friend and how Black women reacted to his behavior when he was in undergraduate school, made a conscious decision to change while focusing his research on how positionality affects space. These masculinity definitions are balanced for these participants, meaning that they all hold an amalgamation masculinity, a masculinity that borrows from both traditional and progressive concepts of masculinity as a way to be resilient in white spaces that deem them as deficient.

These findings contribute to understanding of successful Black male doctoral students and break new ground in the following ways: a) demonstrate how Black men are not a monolith; they can and do uphold masculinity standards that call for the liberation and protection of all people of color, b) provide insight into how Black men are socialized as gendered beings and as racial beings, experiencing the world through their gender and race, c) demonstrate how Black men view space through the guise of their gendered and racialized socialization, not quite being able to separate the two, d) explore how Black male students use their definitions of masculinity to intentionally advocate for themselves in white spaces, and e) how Black men can and do communicate and fellowship with each other through masculinity, interrogating their own biases to create space and models for other Black men to follow.

In this chapter, I explore how all six dimensions of experience identified through this study fit into the extant literature surrounding Black men at PWIs. Next, I detail the implications this study brings forth through theoretical and practical perspectives. Finally, I acknowledge the limitations of this study, provided suggestions for how this research can be used to further our knowledge of Black male doctoral students, and how this study can foster more research into how Black men use their gender, identity, and race as levers of experience as they navigate white spaces.

Feelings of loneliness/not being able to forge closeness with other Black male doctoral students

In this study, I found that participants felt a sense of loneliness and isolation at their PWI, given how their experiences as Black men are marginalized and ignored by their white peers, professors, and advisors. This connects to prior research that contends that Black male students become passive agents in their matriculation though postsecondary school because they are targeted and ignored (Harper, Davis, Jones, McGowan, Ingram, & Platt, 2011; Harper & Newman, 2016; Martin, 2017; Wood, 2014). Unfortunately, the research suggests that Black men become conditioned to isolation and disengagement before they ever decide to go to college because of the negative stereotypes and gendered racism placed against them when they are in elementary, middle, and high school (Wood, Kaplan, & McLoyd, 2007). These low expectations come from not only their educators, but also educational stakeholders such as their parents. Because their experiences and suggestions are not respected and upheld, Black male students either feel nervousness when speaking out in class or in meetings because of fear that their responses reflect badly not only on themselves, but on their race and gender as a whole, their

responses might lead to historical stereotypical perceptions of Black behavior and intelligence, lead to a negative academic self-concept, and threats to their masculine identity.

The feelings of isolation and loneliness showed up in each participants' doctoral experience in similar ways. In Carson's case, he was told by his advisor and professors that his personal experiences were not warranted, that he needed to "perform" and "get this work done" in favor of speaking on his issues he experiences as a Black man, which contributed to his isolation. His advisors and professors are more concerned about producing research and using his labor as a way to further their own research agenda. This led to his interactions with white people being viewed as superficial, a social and cultural disconnect because they do not share his same gender and race. There is also a broader conversation to have here because he is also the only Black male in his Neuroscience program, which created situations in which he did not have anyone to talk about his doctoral process, leading him to disengage from conversations with his white peers and professors.

Darrell's sense of isolation and loneliness was evident in the lack of access to knowledge that would help him complete his program. Most things important to finishing his doctoral degree was not written down in a place that gave easy access. Not only was he the only Black man in his program, he did not have anyone to help him reach his deadlines. But a more salient feature of his isolation was the realization that there was a perceived difference in how Black men are treated versus how Black women are treated on his campus. He maintained that once Black men are recruited into doctoral study, they do not get the help they need to matriculate successfully whereas Black women are given more opportunities to engage with each other because there are more of them creating informal communication strategies. In response, Darrell gained employment in the Student Affairs department, which allowed him to gain access to

crucial information that Black men must have and was able to share that with his peers. His

isolation created disengagement on his part, but also spurred him into action.

Bryce felt the same isolation even though he had trained his entire life to be in white

spaces. As the literature contends, Bryce is more cognizant of his role as a Black man in his

coursework than the other participants. He is careful with sharing out in class and makes sure

that when he speaks his opinions, he has to make it clear that he is speaking from his own

experience as a Black man instead of speaking for everyone else. Much like how Darrell has

become intentional with dealing with his isolation by passing down information, Bryce uses the

negative stereotypes that others have about him by constantly excelling. These participants show

that not only are they isolated as Black male doctoral students, but they have navigational tactics

to deal with them.

Negative perceptions of and racial microaggressions attending a PWI

After participants detailed their isolation and tactics to reduce that feeling, it became clear

that these students were also struggling through racial and gendered microaggressions, further

illuminating the fact that they experienced their marginalizations in equal ways. This contributes

to our understanding of not only microaggressions (Pierce, 1974; Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano,

2006), but also fits into the literature surrounding how microaggressions and gendered racism

negatively impact Black male student progress (Harper, Davis, Jones, McGowan, Ingram, &

Platt, 2011; Harper & Newman, 2016; Martin, 2017; Wood, 2014), how microaggressions lead to

racial battle fatigue, racial trauma, internalized oppression, and hypervisibility (Burt, Williams,

& Smith, 2018; Sawyer & Palmer, 2014; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Smith, Hung, &

Franklin, 2011; Smith, Mustaffa, Jones, Curry, & Allen, 2016; Strayhorn, Johnson, & Barrett,

2013; Watkins & Neighbors, 2007), and the strategies Black men have used to navigate through

microaggressions and gendered racism (Boyd & Mitchell, 2018; Brown & Davis, 2017; Craig, 2014; Hall, 2017; McGee & Martin, 2011). The literature maintains that Black males experience adjustment periods when they enter college spaces that are majority white, led by the fact that although these spaces are advertised as places where they can experience the American dream and social mobility, they are not so for these students. Unfortunately, they become spaces of gendered racism, microaggressions, racial battle fatigue, stress, and blocked opportunities. All three participants detailed how they have become victims to microaggressions and what they have done to combat them.

Carson specifically speaks on bringing up issues of racism with his advisor, but his problems are ignored, and he is told to "produce, get this work done, write these papers." His advisor ignoring racism could have been dismissed, but Carson maintains that his thoughts and ideas were constantly marginalized and belittled—to be used later in research articles and presentations, he found. As mentioned above, Carson would present his scholarly ideas to his advisors, only to have them overlooked and disregarded in the moment. However, he found out later that his advisor was using his labor to further his own research agenda, using Carson's ideas as his own. Showing his moral character, Carson gave his advisor the benefit of the doubt, but he does make it clear that he might be competing with Carson. Further highlighting his isolation and microaggressions, Carson experienced gendered racism even at scholarly conferences, being told by another professor that "we got you off the street" in a doctoral program. This further marginalized him and made him question all of the things he did "right" to be considered a scholar.

Darrell and Bryce detailed their own microaggressions as well at the hands of their white peers. Darrell mentioned how he was trying to—from his own experiences of marginalization—

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create spaces where white people can interrogate their own whiteness and racism, but the committee he tapped to join him were constantly pushing back on his ideas, taking control of the event to better fit their white gaze instead of his. This caused Darrell to shut down, creating an intentionally within himself that would not allow him to ever be in conversation with white people he deemed to be problematic. The same type of example happened to Bryce where he joined a class on feminism, understanding the need for men to join the conversation around patriarchy and sexism to combat them. Instead of being accepted, his professor dismissed his comments in class and ignored his grievances when he presented them outside of class. These events microaggressions and racial trauma are only a sample of the stresses Black men deal with in primarily white spaces.

The influence of Black masculinity to the pursuit of the doctorate

A significant portion of this study detailed the need for "memory work" and counterstories, how Black men speak to their masculinity practices, performances, and how they have *become* masculine beings in Black bodies. A lot of this work is situated and explored in the literature surrounding how deficit viewpoints of Black masculinity history has guided not only research agendas but also student progress (Ford, 2011; Harris, Palmer, & Struve, 2011; Strayhorn & Tillman-Kelly, 2013; Wilkins, 2012), how researchers and Black men resist deficit views of Black masculinity in favor of more productive and progressive forms (Harper, 2004; Harper, 2009; Harper & Nichols, 2008), and how Black men inhabit amalgamation forms of traditional and progressive masculinity (Dancy, 2011; Mincey, Alfonso, Hackney, & Luque, 2015). In this study, participants explored and reflected upon their own histories of masculinity by interviewing and journaling, settling on a masculinity stance and definition that gives

credence to who they were as children, but also reflects who they are not as Black men in doctoral study.

For example, Carson detailed how his family and religion constructed his masculine worldview by letting him know that men should be able to "rough house" and become emotionless, while being responsible for all their decisions, good or bad. Carson called out the hypocritical nature of this viewpoint because his actions were considered feminine if he dressed in a certain way or wore his hair in a different style than what his parents preferred. Instead of protecting women, his immediately family were more concerned about how he would be perceived as feminine. In doing so, harm against women in his family was not taken as seriously as he thought it should be. As a result, Carson decided to do away with the hypocritical expectations and take on the mantle of being responsible for his decisions and being a model for other Black men who decided to go to college.

In Darrell's case, his father hardly ever showed love to him, but was quick to anger, an emotion that he was encouraged to show. It was also impressed upon him that he needed to be continuously aggressive, and the way to show that aggression was through sports and other physical activity. However, those messages of masculinity became complicated when he experienced church, being told that men were the "head of the household" and that women had to be passive in their own homes. Although he was being told by his father and uncles that he needed to be promiscuous and "conquer" as many women as he could, religion was telling that it was important to become responsible for women and protect them. This same hypocrisy, which Carson talked about, allowed Darrell, later on in life, to create his own definitions of Black masculinity to follow, which focused on consciously interrogating his own biases and externally

challenging traditional notions by intentionally curating the spaces around him, the people he interacts with, and the ways in which he can change his own behavior.

Bryce, much like Carson and Darrell, received traditional notions of masculinity from his parents as well, which carried on to his undergraduate education. His father did not want Bryce to be friends with a queer Black man, under the impression that Bryce would turn queer because of personal association. Although Bryce had enough power to combat his father's ignorance, he still was still socialized in traditional ways, continuing as he joined a fraternity whose implicit mission was the conquering of women and patriarchy. It was not until he was able to see the consequences of his actions did he finally strive to understand how one's socialization impacts worldview and space. He is able, now, to use his knowledge of Black masculinity to advocate for the needs of others, while understanding how patriarchy and sexism inundates space in ways that he contributes to. This "memory work" of the participants showcases how these Black men have adopted an amalgamation masculinity, a masculinity that upholds progressive masculinity while giving them the space to choose which notions of traditional masculinity connects to them.

The ways PWIs can do a better job of establishing spaces for Black men

Participants have expressed a desire for their PWI to establish student organizations that cater to the needs of Black men, effectively allowing them space to be themselves, find community with each other, but also confront masculinity in ways that are productive and progressive. These ideas are shown in the literature centered around how student organizations and universities become sites of productive, progressive masculinity (Dancy, 2011; Dancy & Hotchins, 2015), strategies Black men have used to persist through negative stereotypes hindering academic success (Boyd & Mitchell, 2018; Brown & Davis, 2017; Craig, 2014; Hall,

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2017; McGee & Martin, 2011), and utilizing student organizations as leverage for success (Harper, 2008; Harper & Quaye, 2007). In this study, participants discussed the need, through detailing their masculinity practices and racial microaggressions, for PWIs to truly understand who Black men are by establishing space for them.

One way is for PWIs to bridge the gap between theory and practice, according to Carson. Because of his practitioner background of helping Black male veterans, he finds the university can be limiting in how they handle theory, discussing it but never implementing it in ways that are productive for minority populations. This can be applied to the Black male population on campus, as well. There are always conversations, for Carson, around how to retain Black male talent, but are those theories ever supplanted by action? From the lack of Black male presence on campus, Carson does not believe so. Also, he expressed a desire for the university to do more with advertising mental health and therapy options for Black men to talk about their stresses of attending white spaces, to help them deal with the doctoral program on a personal basis.

Recognizing Black men's role in maintaining and furthering patriarchy and sexism, Darrell advocated for meeting spaces where these men can come together to work through these concepts to become more progressive. He gave an example where the university, in an attempt to allow Black men a safe space to eradicate their biases, allowed them to flourish. They established a meeting, where a professor was allowed to showcase negative Black male stereotypes and behavior, such as them being sexual promiscuous and violent. This, in turn, created a situation in which Darrell, in response, chose to create his own space. However, he found that because he was a graduate student, he needed to have a professor sponsor to foster positive discussions for Black men to work through masculinity. The sponsor ended up leaving the university and the group had to disband. For Darrell, the university must allow progressive

Black men to establish productive spaces where Black men not only can be accepted, but also pushed to interrogate their own biases.

Building upon Darrell's thoughts, Bryce advocated for the eradication of "safe" spaces for the creating of "brave spaces." These brave spaces are communities of practice where Black people, especially Black men, discuss and air their grievances with whiteness without becoming marginalized. White people, in turn, would attend these meetings with reconciliation and work in mind, committed to social justice for all. For Bryce these spaces would allow for a more liberatory praxis, where white professors and students become more comfortable with the uncomfortable, to become actively anti-racist when approaching and engaging with Black students. Later, Bryce spoke on how he always needed to be precise and cautious with the language he chose to use when discussing whiteness and other marginalized groups. With these spaces being created and advocated for, Black people would not be cautious with how they feel about the racism that occurs in their daily interactions with white people. Universities should establish space where all people are forced to evaluate their biases, so that Black students can become more comfortable navigating white spaces.

Reflecting and learning from Black masculinity in relation to white spaces

A part of this study was to analyze how successful Black male students have used their masculinity literacies and histories to understand the ways they experience themselves as masculine beings in relation to other Black men. This was done with all three participants being in communication with each other in a focus group, reflecting upon their schooling trajectories and learning from each other. This fits into the literature centering how research agendas targeting Black men leading to social cohesion, friendship, and camaraderie among them (Brooms, 2018; Brooms, Goodman, & Clark, 2015; Jackson & Hui, 2017) and how Black men

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are able to control their own narratives in contrast to how the research has depicted them (Ingram, 2016; McGowan, 2018; Woodward & Howard, 2016). Through this study, participants delved into how their masculinity compares to their understanding of the navigational tactics they have implemented to be successful and what they have learned from the process of interviewing and writing themselves into the research.

In Carson's case, he has been able to become more cognizant of the coping mechanisms that he has had to use to protect his mental health. While he understands that there needs to be more Black men in his program and that his academic advisor has used his ideas for his own, Carson has had to, in his words, "turn it on and turn it off" in regard to those situations. He knows that his ideas are not accepted, and when they are, they are stolen, so he has had to cope with this understanding by remembering the reasons why he chose doctoral study. It was because he wants to bring theory to practice, but it is also because he sees himself as a role model for those Black men coming behind him, which connects to his definition of masculinity. For him, Black masculinity has become convoluted—based on how he was raised—so the most important thing for him is that he must go through all of the microaggressions, racism, and gendered racism because he must work for those coming behind him. He believes that he has a responsibility to those that have may be deciding to continue their education like he has done.

Darrell has learned how he is balancing his ideas of Black masculinity, based around his conversations with other Black women. As he graduated from undergraduate and went into graduate school, he became more familiar with Black feminist and queer theory, understanding how men benefit from patriarchy and sexism. Although he has strived to understand these concepts, this study has allowed him to gain more knowledge and reflect upon how whiteness interacts with Black maleness, and how it is sometimes not easy to perform Black masculinity in

white spaces. In response, Darrell has become much more aware of his own intentionality, how he controls who is able to gain access to him. He has also learned, with his masculinity growth, how he has to engage and be in conversation with women and queer people. Part of the reason why he wanted establish space for Black men to work through masculinity is because, for him, so many Black men do not know how to be in conversation with different groups. This project has allowed him to explore his progressiveness in productive ways, while also understanding the struggles he faces as a Black man.

For Bryce, his masculinity practices became much more affirmed, in the sense that he is constantly evaluating his positionality as a Black man and how he is read in spaces where his presence is coded and viewed as threatening. This constant evaluation of Black masculinity has allowed him to intentionally become more comfortable showing emotion with other Black men and also has given him permission to challenge his friends on homophobia, transphobia, and patriarchy. This study has allowed these participants to either confirm how they have revised their masculinity standards as they navigate schooling or how they have consciously challenged Black masculinity in ways that are more conducive to who they are as doctoral students.

Recommendations for the recruiting and retaining Black men in doctoral study

Finally, participants discussed the need—especially as they deal with their loneliness and isolation on campus—for PWIs to constantly recruit and retain Black men in doctoral study. A previous theme explored the need for establishing space for Black men on campus, while this theme builds upon it with actual, tangible recommendations. This connects to the literature showing how Black male students thrive when they can establish positive mentoring experiences with successful Black male students (Alston, Guy, & Campbell, 2017; Cummings & Griffin, 2012), how student organizations can leverage Black male success (Harper, 2008; Harper &

Quaye, 2007), and how Black men can speak to and control their own narratives when advocating for themselves (Ingram, 2016; McGowan, 2018; Woodward & Howard, 2016). Each participant enumerated their recommendations for how PWIs must create programs to ensure Black male success.

In Carson's case, he advocated for systematic program creation between HBCUs and PWIs, establishing a bridge between both universities, creating strategic partnerships that target Black male students. He is interested in exploring, especially because of why he decided to attend doctoral study, the link between increasing diversity in research and how it connects to the workforce. But what happens when those Black male students are recruited into a PWI and how can we retain those students? For Carson, he believed that there needs to be cultural understanding between professors and students. To this end, Black male professors have to be recruited and retained as well. It is one thing to make sure that students see themselves on a primarily white campus, but they need to see people who look like them in positions of power, people that they can go to when they have issues. Black male students need programs that recruit them into doctoral study and they also need those cultural, racial, and gender touchpoints as well.

Darrell built on this discussion when he spoke on not only the need for segue programs between PWIs and HBCUs, but the need for establishing complete trust between these two types of colleges and universities. He was adamant that there should not be a situation where talent is perceived as "stolen" from HBCUs, given how racism works in America. To this end, in Darrell's explanation, PWIs need to be even more intentional with how they are persuading HBCUs to send their best and brightest to their schools. As Darrell said, students may need scholarships for room, board, and tuition to ensure that not only can be they recruited, they can also be retained. He also suggested that one cannot be retained at a PWI if only one or two Black

male students from an HBCU is recruited. There must be an intentional orientation to establishing a core mass of Black male students who are able to fellowship with each other, to mentor each other, to help each other through the stresses of graduate school.

For Bryce, PWIs must relinquish their insistence on intensive admission requirements for students and especially students of color. He spoke on his experience with attending an HBCU for undergraduate school, where students were admitted because of their potential for success instead of their scores on examinations that may not truly encapsulate their ability. If PWIs are serious about recruiting and retaining Black male students, they must evaluate their admission policies and provide resources—such as mentorship opportunities, mental health resources, and tutoring—for those students once they are on campus. He also spoke on the need for Black male doctoral students to be in constant communication with other Black male students in productive ways. He mentioned that he was able to better his scholarship and teaching when he was able to gain resources from other students of color who were adamant about his success. Through each participants' recommendations, it is not just important to have Black male students attending doctoral study, but universities must adequately provide resources that will strengthen the HBCUs and PWIs pipeline, while also intentionally bolstering student success.

Implications

In this section, I discuss implications for this work on a theoretical and practice basis. I begin with the theoretical implications, tying the findings into the conceptual framework I have chosen for this study. Then, I address the practical implications of this study, tying the findings into university structures, admission requirements, and professional development for professors and students.

Theoretical Implications

This study used racial/critical racial literacy, critical race theory (CRT), and Black masculinity literacy to conceptualize how Black men explore their histories of race to understand their educational trajectory, how they position and talk through racism when evaluating their doctoral experiences, and how they describe different dimensions and understandings of Black masculinity as they become aware of how they have been shaped by the beliefs of others and their own thoughts. I used a more global definition of literacy, tied to the individual potential for social and cultural critique which involves a critical consciousness and awareness of oneself, oppressive structures, and power.

Feelings of loneliness/not being able to forge closeness with other Black male doctoral students. An important tenet of CRT is positioning the experiential knowledge of minoritized and marginalized populations at the forefront of discourse on race and racism through the form of counterstories, stories that deviate from racist and deficit narratives. This study highlighted the lives and experiences of successful Black male students, showing how they have forged through feelings of isolation and loneliness as they finish their doctoral degrees. The significance of counterstories is to showcase untold stories and to disrupt the majoritarian narratives of colorblindness, meritocracy, and post-raciality (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Participants have shown that Black men are not uneducable and not unworthy of education because of their backgrounds, as the literature has positioned them. They have shown that Black male scholars have multiple barriers to cross as they complete their education, namely not seeing other Black men to commune with.

Negative perceptions of and racial microaggressions attending a PWI. Another essential tenet of CRT is the endemic nature and intercentricity of race and racism. CRT starts from the premise that race and racism are central, endemic, permanent, and a fundamental part of

defining how American society functions (Bell, 1992; Russell, 1992). This study highlighted how participants' isolation and loneliness were compounded by the racial and gender microaggressions they experienced attending a PWI. These Black men have pushed through to achieve the highest degree one can achieve, yet there were still attempts to plagiarize their research, marginalize them in their own events they created, or report them to higher administration for harassment. Participants have shown that not only is gendered racism an important part of their educational trajectory, but it is also a counterstory that "muddies the waters" of why Black men might not find advanced degrees worthwhile.

      The influence of Black masculinity to their progress. Because racial identity formation and socialization occurs early in a person's lifespan and is learned over time as he or she moves in and out of spaces (Boutte & Johnson, 2013; Guinier, 2004; Howard, 2015; Nash & Miller, 2015; Tatum, 2017), critical race literacy requires memory work to "reconnect knowledge about the past that has been torn apart by Eurocratic narratives" (King & Swartz, 2015, p. 1). Participants under study detailed their socialized racial and gender practices, messages given to them by their immediate families and religious institutions, using memory work to construct and reconstruct their lives through the lens of masculinity. Black masculinity, then, is centered on the language Black men use and the literacies they use to identify themselves as masculine beings. This work drew upon the Black masculinity progressive definition Mutua (2006) gives that this masculinity should "personally eschew and actively stand against social structures of domination and, on the other [hand], value, validate, and empower [Black] humanity" (p. 7). Participants used racial literacy to understand their Black masculinity in progressive ways, marginalizing the problematic aspects of their histories while upholding the ideal parts.

The ways PWIs can do a better job of establishing spaces for Black men. CRT is committed to social justice in one of its tenets, offering a liberatory and transformative response to racial, gender, and class oppression (Matsuda, 1991). This connects to how Black men can actively work to become more progressive in action and thought. Black feminist scholars argue that a revolutionary change and conscious shifting can happen through conversations as how masculinity is constructed and performed (hooks, 1990; 2004). Taking these two parts of the conceptual framework into consideration, participants spoke on the need for their university to establish space for Black men to talk through masculinity and racism. Not only are they committed to social justice, and not just for themselves, they were cognizant to the ways Black men contribute to patriarchy and sexism. Through this process, they are not only fighting for social justice for themselves and Black women, they are also advocating for more social cohesion between groups of Black men to become more progressive.

Reflecting and learning from Black masculinity and navigational tactics in relation to white spaces. CRT argues that centering race and racism in all discourse is a way to challenge dominant ideology about minority and marginalized communities. Through this study, I hoped to show that Black men can and do speak to their needs, their shortcomings, and their successes in response to the deficit literature surrounding their practice. All participants challenged the dominant ideology by showing that even in the face of crushing racism and microaggressions, they were able to further their education, continue to advocate for themselves and marginalized communities, and strive to create meeting places for Black men to productively converse with each other, all in an attempt to finish their doctoral degrees and become active role models for other Black men who may be thinking about graduate education.

Recommendations for the recruiting and retaining Black men in doctoral study.

CRT argues that the history of meritocracy and supposed colorblindness of educational admission policies and neutral research camouflages the real issues that minorities face and upholds the standards of dominant white ideology (Bell, 1987; Calmore, 1992; Solórzano, 1997). Participants did not just call for more Black men to be admitted into graduate study; they called for programs that established trust between HBCUs and PWIs so that institutional and financial barriers would not harm these men when they gain access to doctoral study. Also, they spoke on the need to systematically analyze "colorblind" admission processes and policies, truly focusing on the potential of a future candidate instead of their test scores. Participants, in their quest for social justice for all, advocated for policies that target the success of marginalized communities.

Taken together, these findings are connected to the conceptual framework in myriad and multiple ways. Thus, I conceptualize that when given the chance, marginalized communities can and do use memory work and counterstories to speak on their histories that have kept them out of white spaces and to advocate for themselves in productive ways. These communities not only understand the deficit narratives spoken and written about them, but they use their own language to speak to their successes and to the changes they have made in their educational histories, using both to establish space for themselves in white institutions while activity working for justice for all.

Practical Implications

The importance of productive professional development. So much of professional development is unproductive and ineffective and not aligned to the goals of increasing diversity in meaningful, transparent ways as most university administrators and faculty tend to see it as either an addendum to what they are currently doing, or a single response to a crisis that happens

on campus (Gay, 2004). This study shows that professional development for university faculty members and administrative staff should do more to ensure that students of color, specifically Black male students, are retained when they decide to traverse graduate education. Effective professional development should be nuanced, culturally contextualized, and ongoing, engaging participants in reflective storying, critical inquiry, and restorative community building (Morales, 2018). It should also be a place of cultural responsiveness, where faculty members learn to understand the culture of the students in their classrooms to help them successfully navigate the culture of white spaces, while also learning about different teaching modalities to impact all students (Hinton & Seo, 2013). Reflective storying—much like memory work—allows for educational stakeholders to focus on their biases, reflecting upon their understandings of race and racism and their impact on minority students, allowing them to actively engage with the problems their students may be traversing as they complete their degrees. This allows them to become more empathetic to their needs, helping to raise their critical consciousness. Reflective storying allows for more critical inquiry, actively gathering new information by asking in-depth questions about race and racism, which fosters change. These steps would lead to restorative community building, where white educational stakeholders can engage with their lessons and their interactions with minority students and faculty to ensure that their decisions are culturally responsive, which would help to retain these groups in white spaces.

Black male mentorship. In the student realm, this study shows that more Black male mentorship opportunities need to be afforded to Black male students when they enter the graduate school arena at PWIs. The research clearly shows that Black men are more successful in white educational spaces when they are able to foster mentorship experiences with other Black male students and professors (Alston, Guy, & Campbell, 2017; Cummings & Griffin, 2012) and

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how such experiences can lead to more social cohesion, educational attainment, friendship, and camaraderie (Brooms, 2018; Brooms, Goodman, & Clark, 2015; Jackson & Hui, 2017). To change the deficit narrative on Black male educational aspirations, success, and masculinity behavior, PWIs must gain a liberatory praxis and a critically reflective agenda that allows for Black men to productively mentor other Black male students. As Bryce stated in the focus group, his teaching and scholarly agenda became much stronger when students of color were able to observe his practice and read his research. It is more important, then, that these mentorship opportunities are deeper than casual conversations; they need to be fruitful and constructive, focusing on the success of everyone involved. As stated by participants, there needs to be a consciousness shifting and raising that allows for faculty members to become more than advisors that just focus on their own success. The notion of mentorship should be melded into the role of Black male faculty members and Black male students, fostering a sense of community on white educational campuses that provides for the success for all. This would provide a critical mass of Black male scholars who can be utilized in the pursuit of other successful Black male students.

Limitations

While the findings from this collective case study informs the field of Black male graduate students and the racial and gendered microaggressions these students experience, while breaking new ground in deepening our understandings of broader definitions of literacy, there are some limitations that must be discussed.

Because case study design focuses on "thick description," or the concept of building my own constructions of what participants are saying through their interviews and journal entries, making my interpretations richly described (Geertz, 1973), I truly wanted to tell their stories in a way that made sense, was linear, but also historical. I focused on purposive sampling, because I

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wanted to provide an in-depth understanding of participants, so I only focused on three Black male doctoral students. Also, given the low number of Black male doctoral students on campus, this study allowed me to focus on just three participants. To this end, while this study breaks new ground, and allowed me to deeply generalize across participants' experiences, it does not allow me to generalize across all Black male graduate and doctoral students at Mid-Atlantic University or the United States.

Although I make connections to HBCUs in the literature review—because the literature is dominated by Black male undergraduate students' experiences at these colleges and universities—and explain how these settings can allow for productive masculinity discussions, camaraderie, mentorship, friendship, and more success for Black male students, this study only focuses on these students at a PWI. Due to the nature of this study, and the intense focus on thick description of three participants, I was not able to compare and contrast the experiences of Black male students at a PWI and those at an HBCU as other studies have done. However, two of the participants, Carson and Bryce, attended HBCUs as undergraduate students so they have first-hand knowledge as to how welcoming these institutions can be for Black male students. Also, Darrell's graduate assistant work is in student relations, allowing him to research HBCUs and make recommendations into how PWIs must engage with them if they want to recruit Black male students. These experiences have allowed them to speak more fully on the negative aspects of PWIs as they are able to compare with HBCUs.

Additionally, a large part of this study focused on the interactions' participants had with their white peers, advisors, and professors. Although some of them were positive, the majority of them were ultimately negative, causing them to become lonely or intentionally isolating themselves. I did not, however, observe these interactions as they took place in class or during

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their meetings with their advisors. Also, because Black female students were not included in this study, I was not able to study if their interactions with their white peers and professors would mirror those of Black men. The results from this study suggest that successful Black male students are able to navigate through their stresses effectively because they are able to understand the deficit mindsets others have about their masculinity, behavior, and race, and use them to their advantage. However, I was not able to observe the microaggressions as they took place, nor was I able to observe the navigational techniques. My own positionality, though, as a Black male doctoral student informs the way I interacted with participants and my own negative experiences largely conforms to theirs.

Implications for Future Research

The findings from this research confirms that Black male doctoral students at PWIs, in accordance with the extant literature, are confronted with racial and gender microaggressions and explicit and implicit bias and racism as they complete their degrees. The findings also confirm that the research literature mostly focuses on deficit narratives of Black men. Finally, it has attempted to showcase how Black men work to produce positive portrayals of their schooling and masculinity behaviors through their own writing. It is important for researchers to continue to develop a strong and balanced understanding of Black male doctoral students, bolstering the scant research into this group of students. Thus, future research should be conducted in the following areas:

Expand this study to include other Black doctoral male students at PWIs across the Mid-Atlantic region.

Although the literature is clear on how Black male undergraduate students experience PWIs, I am curious if my findings from Black male doctoral students are generalizable across

these doctoral students in the Mid-Atlantic region. Findings from this study suggest that Black male doctoral students speak to their masculinity practices and history in conjunction with the way they interact their white peers and professors. If this study was expanded, researchers must not only focus on these students' interactions, but they should also interrogate and analyze their masculinity backgrounds as well to see if there is any connection between the two as this study shows. Because this research attempts to break new ground in the research on Black masculinity and Black male doctoral students, it would be interesting to see if these findings cross into other PWIs and if they could be generalizable across these specific universities and students.

Compare and contrast Black male doctoral students' masculinity practices and interactions attending HBCUs and PWIs.

Although studies suggest that HBCUs are much more inviting to Black male students, a study comparing the masculinity practices and interactions between these doctoral students attending HBCUs and PWIs would be helpful in determining which environment is more nurturing and which offers the most successful opportunities for these students. This new study could mimic the research design from this study, interviewing a subset of the Black male doctoral students attending each type of school, having them write their experiences in journal entries, while allowing them to establish camaraderie with each other in a focus group. Findings from the study would help to further understand how masculinity background and place of doctoral education influences these students' trajectory through their doctoral degrees. To make it more generalizable, such a study could be expanded to include a number of HBCUs and PWIs across the mid-Atlantic region or across the United States.

Observing and analyzing Black male doctoral students' interactions with their white peers and professors in and out of the classroom.

One of the limitations discussed in this study was that observing my participants was not part of data collection. Adding an observational element to a future study would not only allow for more data but would also add a deeper dimension to students' experiences. It would also allow the researcher to make connections and comparisons to what participants are saying versus what it is actually happening in the classroom and in meetings with advisors and mentors. A new study would interview participants about their experiences with whiteness while observing their practice as they teach and participate in coursework while working on research agendas with their advisors. This study could also be expanded by comparing and contrasting participants at PWIs and those at HBCUs to see if there is a meaningful difference in their experiences.

Researching the linkages between HBCUs and PWIs in an effort to recruit and retain Black male doctoral students.

Darrell mentioned during the focus group that in order to successfully recruit Black male students into their doctoral ranks, PWIs must not only establish linkages with HBCUs, but they must also work to establish trust with these schools. A mixed methods approach would be able to deeply analyze the documents, policies, and admission numbers connecting these universities across America, and the number of Black male doctoral students who transition from HBCUs to PWIs because of these policies. It would also interview admission counselors, university administrators, HBCU and PWI professors and mentors, and Black male doctoral students, to understand if there is an equal transfer of resources that flow from PWIs to HBCUs to establish trust between these two entities. As Darrell suggests, programs recruiting Black male doctoral students should not leave the impression that PWIs are "stealing" talent from HBCUs. If PWIs are serious about recruiting and retaining Black male students, they need to be serious about the amount of resources they invest in this endeavor.

Conclusion

Low gendered schooling expectations and racism have hunted Black boys for decades, following them from the kindergarten classroom to postsecondary education. Because this phenomenon has been well documented and recorded in the research literature, it has, unfortunately, allowed for deficit notions of Black maleness, including underachievement, disengagement, and a dis-identification for schooling, to become further entrenched. These negative stereotypes lead to Black boys growing into Black men that have to face gendered and racial microaggressions as they come into contact with white academic spaces. They must also confront unwelcoming classrooms, peers, and advisors as they strive to find camaraderie and friendships with other Black men. Taken together, these negative experiences hamper their progression to their advanced degrees.

Fortunately, this study has a balanced approach; it allows for Black men to historicize their own masculinity practices and schooling as they navigate their doctoral education. These men are scholars, endeavoring to create their own research agendas even though they are confronting powerful forces that have the potential to constrain their success. This study not only allows for Black men to speak to their experiences, but it also allows them to write themselves in the literature in positive and balanced ways. In the future, researchers must do a better job of allowing academically successful Black men to have a voice. When they do, a more robust literature can emerge that allows for more creative research designs. A new approach would also help change those national headlines and news stories about Black men from the negative to the positive.

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

I. <u>Background and Entry into Doctoral Education:</u>

- Explain your educational trajectory from high school, undergraduate studies, to graduate studies. What made you want to pursue doctoral education?
- When did you first consider doctoral education? At that time, what messages had you received about doctoral education, and how did those messages affect you?
- What do you enjoy about doctoral education, and what do you not enjoy?
- How would you describe your current school and students to an outsider?
- How do you identify yourself racially? How do you identify in terms of gender?
- How did your gender influence your matriculation into doctoral education?
- How would you describe the relationship between these identities for you personally? Are they intertwined, or do you ever "experience" each identity separately? Is one more important to you than the other? (Probe for stories, situations, etc. to illustrate themes.)
- What messages have did you receive as a child about what it meant to be [race/ethnicity] and [gender]? As a teenager? As a young adult? And where did those messages come from?
- How has being [race/ethnicity] and [gender] shaped you as a person? Do these identities shape your view of the world? Your relationships with other people? Your daily life?

II: <u>In-depth Interview:</u>

- How did your racial and gender identification influence your doctoral education?
- What messages did you receive about masculinity while growing up?
- What messages did you receive about femininity while growing up?
- What is your definition of masculinity and how does it show up in doctoral education?
- Do you see yourself as a role model to other Black men? If so, for whom and in what ways? If not, why?
- What challenges do you encounter as you conduct your work as a black man in doctoral education?
- Do you feel it necessary to talk about your worries, fears, and/or problems about society with your advisors? Why or why not? What hinders/promotes these conversations?
- How do you work through problems you have with white peers and professors? Do you think these negotiation tactics are necessary? Why or why not?
- What do you value about masculinity? Do you think these views are traditional or progressive? Why or why not?
- What opportunities do you experience as you conduct your work as a black man in doctoral education?
- How does your relationship with white peers, white professors, and your advisor affect your work and your sense of agency?
- What strategies do you use to negotiate through challenges you may face dealing with doctoral education?
- What additional supports do you desire in dealing with doctoral education?
- Describe one incident from the past that speaks to the significance and/or impact of your presence, as a black male doctoral student.
- How would you compare or contrast the relationships you have with other black male students to the relationships you have your advisor/other white peers and professors?

Protocol:
- What have you learned about the strategies you use to navigate white spaces as a Black male graduate student?
- How has your definitions of masculinity changed and/or has been affirmed/negated through this process?
- How has the process of journaling your classroom/peer/professor interactions shaped your understanding of what it means to be a Black man in doctoral studies?
- How has this process impacted your own research interests?
- What can the graduate school do to recruit more Black male students into doctoral studies?
- What can the graduate school do to retain more Black male students into doctoral education?
- How can you support each other through the doctoral process?
- What final insights can you share about your experiences as Black male doctoral students that educational stakeholders need to know/listen/respond to?

Appendix C: Journal Writing Prompts

<u>**Journal Prompts: (6 weeks—a minimum of two double spaced typed pages—due every weekend)**</u>

- Introductory journal: In general, how would you describe your interactions with white peers/professors as a graduate student on campus?

- Reflect on your interactions with white peers/professors for this week. How did you feel about them? Did you feel race and/or gender played a role in how these interactions transpired? (This could be from your perspective or your perception/understanding of the other person's perspective.) **(Same journal prompt for weeks 2-4)**

- Reflect upon the definition of masculinity that you provided in the first interview (I will provide you with the definition). How does your understanding of yourself as a Black man impact how you understand and respond to interactions with white peers and professors after you have been given the opportunity to speak/write about them?

Appendix D: Literature Review Categories and Figures

Figure 1

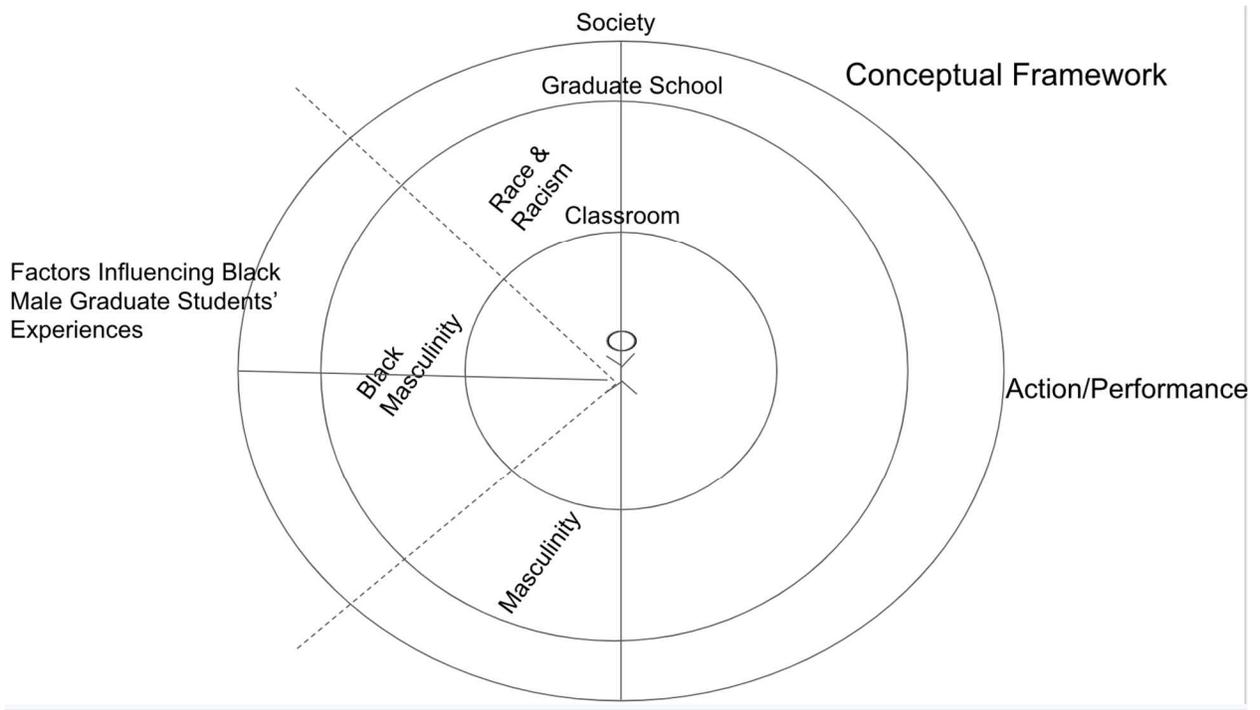| How Black male students detail their masculinity practices in conjunction with schooling	
Research Question 1: How do Black male graduate students describe and understand their interactions with white professors and students, particularly as related to their race/ethnicity and gender? Research Question 2: What role, if any, does their masculinity play in their navigation of a primarily white institution?	
Deficit views of masculinity guiding research and student progress	Ford, 2011; Harris, Palmer, & Struve, 2011; Strayhorn & Tillman-Kelly, 2013; Wilkins, 2012
Researchers resisting deficit views of Black male behavior in favor of productive/progressive versions of masculinity and progress	Harper, 2004; Harper, 2009; Harper & Nichols, 2008
Black men inhabiting amalgamations of masculinity	Dancy, 2011; Mincey, Alfonso, Hackney, & D
Student organizations as sites of productive, progressive masculinity	Dancy, 2011; Dancy & Hotchins, 2015

Figure 2

The struggles of dealing with racial battle fatigue and trauma as response to deficit viewpoints from white peers and professors	
Research Question 1: How do Black male graduate students describe and understand their interactions with white professors and students, particularly as related to their race/ethnicity and gender? Research Question 2: What role, if any, does their masculinity play in their navigation of a primarily white institution?	
Negative stereotypes and gendered racism affecting Black male student progress	Harper, Davis, Jones, McGowan, Ingram, & Platt, 2011; Harper & Newman, 2016; Martin, 2017; Wood, 2014
Racial battle fatigue leading to racial trauma, internalized oppression, feelings of hypersurveillance and hypervisibility, and affecting mental health	Burt, Williams, & Smith, 2018; Sawyer & Palmer, 2014; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011; Smith, Mustaffa, Jones, Curry, & Allen, 2016; Strayhorn, Johnson, & Barrett, 2013; Watkins & Neighbors, 2007
Strategies Black men have used to persist through the negative stereotypes that hinders their academic success	Boyd & Mitchell, 2018; Brooms & Davis, 2017; Craig, 2014; Hall, 2017; McGee & Martin, 2011

Figure 3

How Black male students use PWIs as sites for persistence, academic success, vulnerable masculinity, and friendship with other Black male students	
Research Question 3: In what ways do these students believe PWIs can recruit and retain more Black male students in graduate studies?	
Black men thriving by fostering positive mentoring experiences with other Black men and professors	Alston, Guy, & Campbell, 2017; Cummings & Griffin, 2012
Student organizations as leverage for success	Harper, 2008; Harper & Quaye, 2007
Programs targeting Black men leading to social cohesion, friendship, and camaraderie	Brooms, 2018; Brooms, Goodman, & Clark, 2015; Jackson & Hui, 2017
Black men controlling their own narratives by writing themselves into research	Ingram, 2016; McGowan, 2018; Woodward & Howard, 2016

Figure 4

Conceptual Framework Illustration

Appendix E: Codes Charts

	Codes (Interviews and Journal Entries)		Categories	Themes (Dimensions)
Carson	1. PWI experience can be positive but lonely sometimes 2. Pressure/alone 3. Resources/positives of PWI 4. Negative experiences of PWI/no Black men 5. Expectations not met 6. Respect for intersectionality but Black male experiences are somewhat different 7. Progressive notions of sexuality 8. Definition of masculinity 9. Difference between masculinity and Black masculinity 10. Changing definition of Black masculinity 11. Would not have changed if not gone to graduate school 12. Role model 13. Challenges of doctoral study 14. Nuance of role modeling role 15. Challenges 16. Challenges maintaining professionalism 17. No deep connection to advisor	18. Finding comfort and distance in Black women professors 19. Tried once but not twice 20. Camaraderie out of school 21. Good pieces of traditional masculinity but need to be more progressive 22. Progressive use of pronouns 23. Connection to reaching back to other Black men 24. Need more Black spaces 25. Resiliency 26. No bonds with other Black men 27. Feelings of isolation 28. Disconnect from others 29. Feeling pressure 30. Microaggression 31. Isolation/Friendly 32. Advisor competition/Microaggression 33. Understanding mentor 34. Opportunities given by mentor 35. Sense of frustration 36. Support 37. Reflecting upon definition of masculinity. 38. Uncaring about white people's opinion. 39. Accountable for Black people as masculinity performance. 40. Listening to music 41. Dad as role model 42. Clinical practice 43. Switching career to care 44. HBCU positive experiences 45. Messages about PhD 46. Financial implications of PhD. 47. Messages about being a Black man 48. Hypocritical messages about femininity 49. Sports as importance 50. Negative messages about sexuality 51. Messages about masculinity	• PWI experiences as a positive experience • PWI experience as an isolating and lonely experience. • Resources of PWIs not being to outweigh the isolation.	*Feelings of loneliness/not being able to forge closeness with other Black male doctoral students*
			• Isolating advisors and disconnect from advisors. • Expectations not met • Finding comfort and distance from Black women professors • Racial and gender microaggressions	*Negative perceptions of and racial microaggressions attending a PWI*
			• Reflection upon definition of masculinity • Accountability as masculinity performance • Reaching back to other Black male students • Respect for pronouns	*The influence of Black masculinity to progress*
			• Create more Black male oriented spaces. • Desire to create bonds with other Black men	*The ways PWIs can establish progressive spaces for Black men*
			• Confidence in being a heterosexual male	*Using traditional masculinity to claim manhood*

	Codes (Interviews and Journal Entries)		Categories	Themes (Dimensions)
Darrell	1. Parents treating all education the same 2. Supportive parents 3. Difference between advanced and general education courses 4. Challenged and treated better in advanced courses 5. Understanding of how treatment differed 6. Black students did not take advanced courses if they were not told 7. Role modeling 8. Pushed by other Black people 9. Importance of religion 10. External forces/salary 11. Intentionality about choosing 12. Critical mass of Black folks at PWI in certain programs 13. Taking class outside of program 14. Opportunities as the only Black male student 15. Importance of oral tradition 16. Intentionality through hardship 17. So few that Black male students "stand out" 18. Need for a space to discuss Black male issues and masculinity 19. Does not want to take space from Black women 20. Hardship to talk about Black male issues 21. Identity as Black and male.	22. Working through positionality 23. Messages about masculinity/gender 24. Church/religious messages 25. Good things about traditional masculinity 26. Bad things about traditional masculinity 27. Teetering lines/not knowing exactly what to follow 28. Respect of queer people 29. Change when ceasing sports 30. Negative messages about femininity 31. Powerful symbols of femininity 32. Hypocritical ideal of femininity 33. Definition of masculinity and Black masculinity 34. College as sites of change 35. Role modeling 36. Intentionally creating space 37. Unhealthy spaces at the college level. 38. Challenges of being a Black man/microaggressions 39. Navigating white spaces 40. Becoming disengaged 41. Choosing coursework 42. Using traditional masculinity by becoming more progressive 43. Resources needed 44. Relationship with white peers 45. Less discrimination because of choosing faculty intentionally 46. White faculty lack of knowledge 47. Using positionality to break through 48. Would be worse if not for intentionality. 49. Positive interactions with white faculty 50. Positive experiences on a micro-level, not a macro-level. 51. BLM support 52. Challenging white supremacy 53. Professors naming ignorance 54. Graduate assistantships only sites for professional development 55. Creating space for white folks 56. Sense of frustration 57. Hypocritical allyship. 58. Positivity coming from tension 59. Masculinity as Catch-22 60. Code-switching masculinity 61. Challenging traditional masculinity 62. Using masculinity stereotypes as gauge. 63. What uplifts	• Navigating white spaces • Intentionally choosing coursework and professors • Unhealthy spaces at the college level	***Feelings of loneliness/not being able to forge closeness with other Black male doctoral students***
			• Challenges of being a Black man/microaggressions. • White faculty lack of knowledge • Awareness of positionality • Becoming disengaged	***Negative perceptions of and racial microaggressions attending a PWI***
			• Respect for queerness • Changing definition of masculinity • Identity as Black and as a man • Using traditional masculinity to become more progressive	***The influence of Black masculinity to progress***
			• Create more Black male oriented spaces. • Resources needed	***The ways PWIs can establish progressive spaces for Black men***

	Codes (Interviews and Journal Entries)		Categories	Themes (Dimensions)
Bryce	1. Positive Black male models 2. HBCUs as preparation/practicing whiteness 3. Practicing whiteness as survival 4. Parental push 5. Positive messages about education 6. Frustration with "only one" status. 7. Good to talk to other Black men 8. No personal connection to advisor 9. Advisor pushes academically 10. Navigating stress by practicing whiteness 11. Awareness of traditional masculinity 12. Including other gender expression as navigational tactic 13. Father as site of homophobia/understanding traditional masculinity 14. Possibility for change 15. Femininity on the same level as masculinity 16. White male masculinity privilege 17. Black masculinity definition 18. Expectations of traditional masculinity 19. Awakening 20. College as site of change 21. Role modeling 22. Feeling alone 23. Bringing in other stories to connect to personal story 24. Body as negativity 25. Understanding male privilege 26. White expectations for research and professional development 27. Navigational tools 28. Body as oppression	29. Using negative experiences and aloneness as liberation and navigation 30. Complicating traditional masculinity 31. Code-switching 32. Using aloneness as advantage 33. Additional supports 34. Token Black male 35. Working twice as hard to get opportunities 36. Recognizing male privilege in face of oppression 37. Pity disguised as motherhood 38. Trying not to judge too harshly 39. Grounding conversations in the literature to avoid microaggressions 40. Spokesperson as navigation 41. Bringing people in instead of calling out 42. Professor microaggressions 43. Black maleness/body being policed and disrespected 44. Scholarships is important but still need to be careful 45. Modifying language 46. Navigating masculinity 47. Forcing friendships to be accepted. 48. Being the only one 49. Students making excuses for ignorance 40. Irony of class titles. 41. Difference between HBCUs and PWIs 42. Microaggressions 43. Race and maleness getting in the way of progress 44. Body as site of negativity	• PWI experiences as a positive experience • PWI experience as an isolating and lonely experience. • Resources of PWIs not being to outweigh the isolation.	*Feelings of loneliness/not being able to forge closeness with other Black male doctoral students*
			• Isolating advisors and disconnect from advisors. • Expectations not met • Finding comfort and distance from Black women professors • Racial and gender microaggressions	*Negative perceptions of and racial microaggressions attending a PWI*
			• Reflection upon definition of masculinity • Accountability as masculinity performance • Reaching back to other Black male students • Respect for pronouns	*The influence of Black masculinity to progress*
			• Create more Black male oriented spaces. • Desire to create bonds with other Black men	*The ways PWIs can establish progressive spaces for Black men*

	Codes (Focus Group)		Categories	Themes (Dimensions)
Carson Darrell Bryce	1. Code-switching 2. Burden of responsibility 3. Intentionality 4. Modeling 5. Definition of masculinity affirmed 6. Definition of masculinity changing 7. Balancing masculinity 8. Embodying Black masculinity 9. In conversation with women 10. In relationship and conversation with different marginalized groups 11. Emotional labor 12. Cathartics 13. Emotional permission 14. Comfortable masculinity 15. Traditional not always bad 16. Impact on research 17. Importance of recruit and retain 18. Partnerships between HBCUSs and PWIs 19. Program creation 20. Building relationships between faculty of color and PWIs. 21. Building trust 22. Hiring Black male professors 23. Recruiting dilemma 24. Not all perfect 25. Supporting each other 26. Communication 27. Sharing information 28. Black men exploring masculinity	29. Logic and emotion 30. Framing oneself 31. Awareness of Positionality 32. Awareness of masculinity 33. Navigating space 34. Complimenting research 35. Lessening graduate requirements 36. Identifying academic success in different ways 37. Financial barriers 38. Critically examining race-based admission preferences 39. Interrogating whiteness in every aspect of academic programs 40. Eliminating graduate testing 41. Creating safe spaces 42. Examining, challenging, and changing professional development 43. Reinscribing masculinity 44. Work into practice	• Balancing masculinity • Learning from masculinity practices • Awareness of positionality and masculinity performance • Code-switching masculinity	*Reflecting and learning from Black masculinity in relation to white spaces*
			• Interrogating whiteness in every aspect of academic admissions and coursework and professor hires • Critically examining financial barriers of graduate study and abolishing testing requirements	*Recommendations for recruiting and retaining Black men in doctoral study*

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