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Social Inequality: Cultural Racism as a Predictor of Collegiate Academic Success

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Abstract

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

The economic sustainability of an area is largely dependent on the education level of its population, yet little is known about the role cultural racism may play in academic success. The purpose of this correlational study was to evaluate the theory of cultural racism, defined as, the establishment of cultural institutions by whites/Europeans to the detriment of non-white people, as it relates to academic success at the college level. Data were collected from 100 participants from 3 predominately African American high schools in the Atlanta, Georgia area to explore whether the presence of cultural racism existed from the perspective of the participants, and the impact of cultural racism, income, and status as a first generation college student on self-reported academic success. Data were collected through a web-based survey which included the Index of Race-Related Stress questions and analyzed using logistic regression. Study results indicated a statistically significant relationship ($p < .01$) between the elements of cultural racism and academic success, suggesting that students who experienced cultural racism also experienced poor academic performance. Other variables, including income and whether the student was a first generation college student, also contributed to the overall collegiate academic achievement among this population. Indicators of positive social change stemming from this study include recommendations to policy makers at all levels of government to enhance diversity training for students and educators about the implications of cultural racism in order to ameliorate its negative effects, thereby promoting more economically stable and diverse communities.

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Dedication

"Intense love does not measure, it just gives" (Mother Teresa).

Were it not for the intense love of God as well as the love and support I have received from my family and friends, this process would not have been possible.

To my father, my best friend, my first love, James Edward Ball, while you did not get to see this to fruition, I know that you are watching over me from on high. I love you and hope that I have made you proud; my mother, Dr. Joyce Ball, who has always instilled in me the importance of educational attainment and a desire to be a lifelong learner; sisters: Dr. Yolanda Watson Spiva who I strive to be half as great as one day; and Dr. Tenaya Watson, the depths of our friendship and sisterhood knows no bounds, and for that I am truly blessed and grateful; Nieces and nephews: Gabrielle Moore in whom I know many great things are to come and have enjoyed every minute of watching her become the young woman she is today; Brooke Spiva, my little lefty with whom I share an unspoken spiritual bond, your laughter and love have meant more to me at times than you will ever know; Caleb Watson, my independent pop-jock (scholar/athlete), your intelligence never ceases to amaze and impress me; and my little one, Wendell Spiva, Jr., probably the sweetest person I have ever met in my life, truly God's spirit of calm and love have been bestowed upon you, you truly keep me wanting to be sweet. Lastly, to my love, Ricardo Lewis for all of the countless hours of love, laughter and support you have provided me throughout my program; your constant reminder that I am destined for greatness was exactly the push I needed to persevere. Without all of you I am nothing.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Background of the Study

Within U.S. society, some assume that a sense of equality is present among all residents. Rather than accept this assumption as fact, public policy often calls for the examination of whether this assumption is true and what factors, if any, influence inequalities among the country's residents. Little (2004), stated, "for the purposes of public policy, we are particularly interested in social inequalities that represent or influence differences in individuals' well-being, rights, or life prospects" (p. 488). The inability to obtain academic success within the higher educational arena is often a reality for low-income, first generation, African American college students. This study was designed to examine whether the appearance or influence of cultural racism has an effect on low-income, first generation, African American college students' ability to be academically successful, ultimately impacting their potential life prospects. This is an important public policy problem, as "reducing inequities within regions makes economic, social, environmental, and health sense since the future of cities and suburbs are inextricably interdependent" (Bullard, 2007, p. 8). This interdependence of U.S. society is what makes the academic success of all students important to the sustainability and livability of the country as a whole.

For many low-income, first generation African American college students, their academic success is often stifled by their inability to escape societal discrimination. According to Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich (2011), discrimination in society is often subtle

and is not associated with race. Covert forms of racism encompass the concept of cultural racism. Cultural racism is defined as

 The systematic manner in which the white majority has established its primary cultural

 institutions (e.g., education, mass media and religion) to elevate and glorify European

 physical characteristics, character and achievement and to denigrate the physical

 characteristics, character and achievement of nonwhite people. (Oliver, 2001, p. 4)

It is necessary to remember that cultural racism is an issue that plagues many races within U. S. society. Often inclusive of assumptions previously made about race, cultural racism also includes new ideas that certain cultures and often certain ethnic backgrounds have identifiable negative and unattractive characteristics. While these assumptions may fit people within the general ethnic background, they do not represent the whole. Some people use assumptions as a determinant of a given cultural group's behavioral makeup.

When these assumptions or stereotypes are introduced into society, they often carry over into the various aspects of an individual's life. In the workplace, school, religious groups, social groups, and other areas, assumptions about other cultures are often thought and in some cases discussed. These assumptions can result in cultural racism when the assumed characteristic is not considered desirable and leads the assumer to distance him or herself from the person with this assumed characteristic. Within the higher education arena, "educational institutions have significant power to maintain racial hierarchies by limiting individual social mobility" (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011, p. 196).

Oliver (2001) noted that cultural racism is a factor in the existing cultural crisis among African Americans. This crisis can be examined through three factors. The first is the loss of historical memory as a result of being subjected to macrostructural and cultural practices in which African Americans have been disconnected from their history and traditional cultural practices (Oliver, 2001, p. 6). This lack of cultural identity, pride, and belief in self contributes to poor results for many low-income, first generation, African American college students in their attempts at higher educational attainment. A second factor is "a lack of appreciation of the physical characteristics and cultural practices unique to Africans and African Americans. And third, a lack of cultural confidence leading to a lack of cultural competence" (Karenga as cited in Oliver, 2001, p. 6).

When they encourage cultural stereotypes, thus influencing cultural racism, places of higher learning often add to the perpetual brick wall that has been placed in front of these students. The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of the idea of cultural racism in the lives of low-income, first generation, African American college students when examining their academic success. A further analysis of the research surrounding these factors as they relate to this and future studies is included in Chapter 2.

Problem Statement

The presence of cultural racism can often have a debilitating effect on low-income, first generation, African American students' abilities to be academically successful. While this effect can impact their present attempts at academic success, the long-term effects of an uneducated or undereducated adult range from increased crime,

drug usage, a cycle of uneducated familial generations, to a lack of educated people returning to and enhancing their hometown communities. Cultural racism can create a cultural identity crisis within those who are subject to its presence, leading to a lack of achievement and confidence in self. Ultimately, "The lack of cultural confidence diminishes the competence of people to believe that they can collectively work to achieve broad-based goals that benefit the group" (Oliver, 2001, p. 6). Currently, the body of literature relating to this subject is almost nonexistent. While many scholars have examined cultural racism as it relates to students' self-esteem and social interactions, these studies have fallen short of acknowledging the potential connection between the presence of cultural racism and students' academic success, or lack thereof.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether cultural racism existed in the lives of low-income, first generation African American college students and ultimately impacts their ability to achieve academic success. Realizing the lack of current policy that addresses the appearance of cultural racism as it relates to educational achievement within U.S. society, this study was designed to inform and begin the conversation to create such policy. Conducting a quantitative study using survey data, I examined the effect that African American college students who are a combination of low-income and first generation, feel cultural racism has on their academic success. These students were chosen from three different levels: first year in college, sophomore year/junior year in college facing the choice to remain enrolled, and senior year in college/post college graduation. Due to the potential social implications of these students' ability to succeed

academically, it was important to examine factors that might ultimately impact their success. Knowing that the education level of a community's inhabitants can determine the area's ability to succeed in business, compete in global markets, attract outside residents, as well as continue advancing in most technological areas, it was important to focus future educational policy on ways to support and foster these students' academic success. Cultural racism can ultimately have a lasting effect on the sustainability of the community.

The culture of society in many ways, "as William Ryan (1976) pointed out a long time ago, is 'blaming the victim'—arguing that minorities' standing is the product of their lack of effort, loose family organization, and inappropriate values" (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011, p. 193). While this assumption may support the idea that low-income, first generation, African American college students' academic success is based solely on their desire and abilities, it does not consider the external factors that influence academic success; one such factor is the existence of cultural racism. Cultural racism can create negative stereotypes of these students, some of which are forced upon them while others they believe and perpetuate, which ultimately act as determinants of their academic success.

African American college students who are first generation and low-income can face the challenge of overcoming cultural racism when attempting to succeed academically in their given colleges or universities. They face such cultural racism not only at the hands of their collegiate counterparts who are unfamiliar with their home life, but also when returning home to their community members who are not familiar with or

understanding of the college-going culture. Cultural racism is "not 'false consciousness' but rather unacknowledged, contextual standpoints that provide the intellectual (and moral) building blocks" (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011, p. 192). These explanations often manifest in the way in which people choose to interact with people from other cultures as well as their willingness to accept and attempt to understand cultural differences. This belief is no longer limited to those people of White/Caucasian ethnicity, it is now prevalent within many different cultural backgrounds. Miliora (2000) stated, "Cultural-wide racial stereotypes can be conceptualized as fantasies that are shared by a large segment of the culture. These shared fantasies are expressions of needs, wishes, and dreads and they contribute to the creation of cultural myths" (pp. 47-48).

This overarching presence of cultural racism can be seen in the assumption by the older woman who clutches her purse because a teen in baggy clothing enters the same elevator and she assumes he will steal it, or the gentleman at the gas station who shoots an unarmed teen because his hip-hop music is playing too loudly. For low-income, first generation, African American college students, these cultural myths can often be stifling when attempting to attain a higher educational degree as they are not only crippled by those beliefs to which others subscribe, but also by those which they observe within themselves. Often unable to escape the cultural assumptions they face at school as well as at home, many of these students succumb to the pressure and do not find success when seeking their education.

Nature of the Study

Through an examination of a participant pool of college students and recent

college graduates from various colleges and universities, this study was designed to

establish the correlation between their academic success and the presence of cultural

racism. The students who participated in this study included all or a combination of the

following characteristics: low-income, first generation, and African American. This study

involved an exploration of the cultural racism participants encountered from other people

within society. These students' academic success was defined by course completion with

passing grades as well as college graduation. Through the use of surveys, which allowed

the students to remain anonymous and provide candid answers, data were collected from

these students during an academic term. The survey data were analyzed using an exact

logistic regression within SPSS 21.

Research Question and Hypotheses

1. Does cultural racism exist and have an effect on the ability of low-income,

   first generation, African American college students to achieve academic

   success?

$H1_a$: The ongoing perpetuation of cultural racism through the use of negative

stereotypes has an adverse effect on the academic success of low-income, first

generation, African American college students.

$H1_0$: The lack of successful completion of higher education is in no way related to

the influence or existence of cultural racism within the lives of low-income, first

generation, African American college students, thus the creation of educational policy to combat it is unnecessary.

Definition of Terms

Academic success: Successful completion of a course with passing grades as well as graduation/completion of a degree/certificate program at an institution of higher education.

Cultural racism: The systematic manner in which the white majority has established its primary cultural institutions (e.g., education, mass media, and religion) to elevate and glorify European physical characteristics, character and achievement and to denigrate the physical characteristics, character and achievement of nonwhite people (Oliver, 2001, p. 4).

Emersion: Positive bonding both socially and emotionally with other African Americans.

First generation: Students who are the first in their family, not including siblings or relatives such as cousins who are on the same generational level, to have attended college.

Immersion: The existence of psychological withdrawal into environments comprised primarily of other African American people due to negative interactions with their Caucasian counterparts.

Internalization: Presence of positive commitment to self and a valuing of other racial groups.

Low-income: Annual household income of less than $40,000.

Post-encounter: Description of participants' feelings, attitudes, changed behaviors, and beliefs following important or negative racial interactions.

Pre-encounter: The study participants' assumptions about other cultures and the beliefs associated with those cultures prior to any interactions.

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions of the Study

Independence of errors was an assumption of this study. Should the participants be exposed to questions related to cultural racism on multiple occasions, the study may have resulted in overdispersion. Additionally, I assumed there would be a significant relationship between cultural racism and the academic success of low-income, first generation, African American college students. This assumption was necessary for the purposes of this study, as much of the literature surrounding African American student achievement implies there is a psychological relationship between cultural issues and student success. In this study, I sought to expose and explore the causal link between cultural racism, as a psychological factor, of student success. A limitation of this assumption was the lack of consideration for other potential influential factors of academic success. This limitation, however, proved to be minor, as the assumption only states there would be a causal link between the factors and not an assumption of sole/absolute influence.

Potential Weaknesses of the Study

It was difficult to determine whether the Likert scale would be valid for this type of research as survey research itself "is generally weak on validity and strong on reliability" (Babbie, 2001, p. 287). The difficulty surrounding accurate placement of

personal opinion on an agree/disagree scale is what calls into question the validity of this approach to such a study. This is one of the pitfalls of the Likert scale, rendering it less valid when attempting to measure the feelings and opinions of the sample population. On the other hand, this scale is more reliable than other methods, such as interviews or observation as it eliminated the bias and opinions of the observer and measured solely the opinions and ideals of the sample population themselves.

This weakness was alleviated through the use of a pre-existing survey tool with a proven history of validity. Further, the survey invitation instructions were designed to invoke participants to give their open and honest opinions on all of the items included. Through the knowledge that their participation is voluntary and anonymous, participants felt comfortable being candid with their responses.

Ethical Concerns

An ethical concern for the purpose of conducting this research was objectivity. Objectivity is important because it allows the researcher to remove his or her personal feelings from the research being conducted. This ensures the information attained is not tainted and its accuracy is not changed due to the researcher's personal feelings. Another ethical concern for this particular study was the population sample, as the group comprised of students 18 years of age and older who attended three high schools within the same city. This posed a dilemma as I have worked with a number of these students on various occasions. To ensure participation and opinions were not compromised, I used anonymous solicitation for participation and received blind responses to the survey.

The use of an outside source to act as a liaison between the students and me during this process was helpful in ensuring the anonymity of the participants. Further, garnering their informed consent through detailed instructions placed in the solicitation e-mail and at the beginning of the survey instrument alleviated any further ethical concerns of inappropriate data collection. Once those issues had been resolved, the accurate completion and implementation of the study was seamless.

Significance of the Study

Given its ability to affect the social climate of the communities in which these students resided, a study such as this has the potential to affect everyone, making it an important public policy issue. While the primary focus of this study was on the effects of cultural racism on low-income, first generation, African American college students, its potential implications on other cultures and the inequalities among them are worth noting. Utsey and Ponterotto stated, "African Americans encounter individual and institutional negative portrayals of their cultural group (e.g., on TV, on the radio, or in historical accounts) and rarely confront positive ones, which constitutes cultural racism" (as cited in Lyris Lewis-Coles & Constantine, 2006, p. 434). The daily struggle with the widespread assumptions about their culture is something many African Americans, both young and old, grapple with throughout their entire lives. It is important to remember that this also affects other groups. For example, "A major consequence for whites has been a generalized acceptance of racist folklore and stereotypes as being truthful portrayals of African Americans" (Fredrickson as cited in Oliver, 2001, p. 6). This is not only true for

Whites/Caucasians, it is a reality for many other racial/cultural groups who accept the often negative stereotypes of African Americans as true.

Chapter 2 of this study includes an examination of the limited research in this area. This examination was conducted to determine where the research is lacking and what if any previous research could support and explain the importance of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

There are many factors that lead to the disparaging numbers of African American students who are not academically successful in college compared to their Caucasian counterparts.

Despite overwhelming evidence of a strong correlation between race and academic performance, there is considerable confusion about how and why American minority students come to perceive a linkage between their racial identities and their academic ability, and how these in turn shape their aspirations and behaviors toward education and school. (Noguera, 2003, p. 52)

Much of the disparity in academic success can be associated with the varying levels and strategies of coping that students apply when dealing with not only the day-to-day stress of collegiate life, but that which goes above and beyond the norm. While many students are fortunate enough to experience little to no stress throughout their college matriculation, for some low-income, first generation, African American students, the ability to cope within their new environment proves to be a factor in their collegiate retention and academic success. Positive and negative social encounters with their counterparts from other racial and social groups often leave these students feeling the need to cope.

For the purposes of this study, much research was done using various databases available through the Walden University Library, as well as through the use of the Georgia State University library and the personal catalog of books available within my

home library. Many of the online and catalog searches were conducted using key terms such as *cultural racism*, *academic success*, *low-income*, *first generation college students*, and *African American*. Within the research on cultural racism, often an examination is taken into the overarching effect of its existence on many different communities. "There is a large body of research on racial identity development (Cross, Parnham, & Helms, 1991; Phinney, 1990; Tatum, 1997), but most of the studies have not considered the process through which racial identities evolve and shape academic performance" (Noguera, 2003, p. 52).

Despite conducting an open search of resources (peer-reviewed, dissertations, books, etc.) from 1980 to 2013, there exist a lack of current literature related to policies that impact cultural racism in higher education which could be used as sound research support. Thus, I sought to fill the gap while ultimately influencing educational policies, which may be enacted to aid in these students' academic success. In order to further examine the literature related to this study, this chapter will provide a theoretical foundation of this study, examine cultural racism, racial assumptions, the psychological effects of cultural racism, academic success, combating cultural racism, and potential next steps.

Theoretical Foundation

According to Thompson and Neville (1999), most of the coping strategies prevalent in the literature can be divided into four approaches: cognitive approach, behavioral approach, cognitive avoidance, and behavioral avoidance. The cognitive approach includes having people engage in critical thought about prevailing stereotypes and also

seeks to provide accurate information to challenge negative views. (Gabbidon & Peterson, 2006, pp. 87-88)

The cognitive approach assumes the existence of stereotypes among those involved in the examination of racism and posits such stereotypes influences their thoughts and feelings. On the other hand, "the cognitive avoidant approach 'enables people to avoid confronting race and, thus, maintain an inaccurate assessment of one's environment'" (Thompson & Neville as cited in Gabbidon & Peterson, 2006, p. 88). The existence of affirmative action and other cultural equal opportunity programs may lead to the assumption that racism at the collegiate level does not exist, while on the other end, those who are victims of such racism view the discrimination as a part of life and do not understand the point of attempting to change what cannot be altered.

The behavioral approach includes directly confronting the problem. In practice, this is typically achieved through the use of strategies such as cultural immersion where individuals immerse themselves in someone else's culture, which, according to Thompson and Neville, allows them to "obtain more complex social attitudes" (Thompson & Neville as cited in Gabbidon & Peterson, 2006, p. 88)

The behavioral approach is not the most popular as it requires a specific self-examination as well as a deeper examination into an individual's environment and social interactions. Behavioral avoidance describes situations where people stay away from directly dealing with race. By using this approach, and not discussing their attitudes on race, misconceptions continue to color the race-related views of people who use the

behavioral avoidance coping strategy. (Thompson & Neville as cited in Gabbidon &

Peterson, 2006, p. 88)

For some low-income, first generation, African American college students, behavioral

avoidance is the approach many people choose when dealing with racial or cultural

relations where they are concerned.

Due to the easier path of avoidance, not many "…studies of undergraduates from

similar socioeconomic circumstances have . . . been published, thus much remains to be

known about such students and which programs, policies and institutional practices

enable them to access particular sectors of postsecondary education" (Harper & Griffin,

2010, p. 43). Campus climate not only includes the academic factors associated with

student academic success, it includes the personal and social aspects of such existence for

low-income, first generation, African American students. "Museus et al. conducted a

national study of campus climate across the United States and observed notable

differences in degree completion across racial groups with African American students

demonstrating the most sensitivity to unfavorable campus environments" (Museus,

Nichols, & Lambert as cited in Conner and Rabovsky, 2011 p,. 103). In attempting to

understand and explain postsecondary access, many studies fall short as they neglect to

address the fact that it is also important to examine academic success as it relates to the

campus cultural climate, specifically cultural racism.

"As of 2006, rates of college enrollment among African-American, Latina/o, and

American Indian students continued to lag behind their Anglo counterparts by as much as

18 percent" (Horn & Caroll as cited in Conner & Rabovsky, 2011, p. 102). Although this

lag exists, the number of African American students currently enrolling in college has increased. Such an increase is evident in the 2-year/technical college enrollment numbers and the 4-year college enrollment statistics.

Furthermore, although enrollments in public 4-year universities have increased by as much as 11 percent for historically disadvantaged groups from 1975-2001, fewer than 46 percent of minority students completed a college degree within six years compared to 64 percent of Whites. (Carey as cited in Conner & Rabovsky, 2011, p. 102)

According to Conner and Rabovsky (2011), African American students are most susceptible to negative influences from the campus climate, which ultimately influences their rate of degree completion compared to that of other racial and cultural groups. This susceptibility often leads to these students' internalizing negative interactions, which ultimately may distract them from their studies and ultimate academic success. Another factor to consider when contemplating this influence is the level of education attained by parents. "Current research indicates that parent educational attainment is an even more important predictor of educational attainment and college enrollment than family income for low-income and minority students" (USDOE, as cited in Ward, 2006, p. 52). If this is true, low-income and first generation college students are less likely to be academically successful in college than are those students who are not low-income with parents who attended college before them, who also have a greater understanding of the college-going culture. "Practitioners and scholars alike argue that such trends have much larger implications in regards to addressing serious economic disparities in our society that have

persisted for generations" (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Hoxby, 2004, as cited in Conner & Rabovsky, 2011, p. 103).

Certain cultural characteristics are often passed on from one generation to the next and are often mimicked by those who have observed them in their predecessors. This is exhibited in the ethnicity surrounding people from various cultural backgrounds. "The term ethnicity is most often used to refer to a group of people who have a distinct culture, shared historical identity, or a national or religious identity" (Carter as cited in Utsey, Chae, Brown, & Kelley, 2002, p. 367).

Helms and Cook (1999) defined ethnicity as the national, regional, or tribal origins of one's oldest remembered ancestors and the customs, traditions, and rituals (i.e., subjective culture) handed down by these ancestors, which among the ethnic group members, are assumed to be their culture (p. 19). (Utsey et. al., 2002, p. 367)

"According to Yancey, Aneshensel, and Driscoll (2001), ethnicity distinguishes individuals based on their membership in groups with common social, cultural, and historical heritage" (Utsey et. al., 2002, p. 367). It is important to understand that ethnicity is associated with cultural background, unlike race, which is associated with skin color or a person's genealogical heritage. For low-income, first generation, African American college students, ethnicity/culture is just as important when dealing with their educational attainment as is their racial heritage. The distinction is important as many of these students encounter some level of racism or discriminatory practices within their lifetimes.

Pierre van den Berghe (1967 as cited in Ratcliffe, 2004, p. 20) defined racism as any set of beliefs that are organic, genetically transmitted differences (whether real or imagined) between human groups, which are intrinsically associated with the presence or the absence of certain socially relevant abilities or characteristics, hence that such differences are a legitimate basis of invidious distinctions between groups socially defined as races. Having a functioning definition of racism aids in the understanding of not just what it is, but also who it affects. "African Americans in the United States are exposed regularly to racism (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Outlaw, 1993), which could represent a continuous stressor, influence their responses to stress, and affect their levels of psychological well-being" (Harrell as cited in Lyris Lewis-Coles & Constantine, 2006, p. 433).

Cultural Racism

According to Gabbidon and Peterson (2006), Thompson and Neville (1999) found Jones' (1981) division of racism into three categorical forms to be the most successful way to examine the definition of racism. This allowed researchers to begin to understand what racism is as it relates to those it affects through the addition of a fourth form of racism, cultural racism, which they felt completed the definition.

Individual racism refers to individual acts of discrimination and often manifests itself in the form of "personal acts to humiliate or degrade an individual(s) based on his or her racial group membership, such as name-calling or physical abuse" (p. 166). According to Thompson and Neville "Institutional racism generally refers to the policies, practices, and norms that incidentally, but inevitably, perpetuate inequality (i.e., restrict life

opportunities of people of color)" (p. 167). *Cultural racism* results in the belief that

White culture is superior to other cultures. Thompson and Neville described it this way:

"This form of racism often results in limiting, pathologizing, exoticizing, or entirely

omitting the cultural practices or values of racial minorities" (pp. 167-168). Finally,

environmental racism relates to when policies and practices related to the environment

place communities of color in the midst of deadly pollutants. (Gabbidon & Peterson,

2006, p. 86-87).

      Using Jones' (1981) model, the idea of cultural racism is introduced to society as

a potential form of racism, based solely on one's cultural background rather than race,

which garners further examination. The introduction of cultural racism shed light on the

reality that racism is not only limited to that which surrounds one's skin color or ethnic

background, it has now entered into one's cultural identity. Powell (2000) defined

cultural racism as the opinions, feelings, and ultimately social interactions that are taught

based on human differences. "Historically, cultural racism has been embedded in many

educational practices that have perhaps even appeared to be liberal or progressive but that

in essence were grounded in a melting pot perspective of assimilation based on White

behavioral standards" (Powell, 2000, p. 8). This being the case, it is necessary to

understand "cultural racism in educational practices is not a thing of the past but

continues to be the underlying force in a system of schooling that perpetuates the status

quo" (Powell, 2000, p. 11). This ongoing existence of cultural racism plagues low

income, first generation, African American college students as they attempt to venture

out of their cultural background into environments of higher education.

Thus, perhaps more than any other form of racism, cultural racism is integrally linked to the perpetuation of educational failure among students of color, and partially among poorer students of color whose cultural knowledge differs significantly from upper- and middle-class White populations. (Powell, 2000, p. 8).

Cultural racism often perpetuates the "societal beliefs and customs that promote the assumption that the products of White culture (e.g., language, traditions, appearance) are superior to those of non-White cultures" (Jones, as cited in Powell, 2000, p. 8). The existence of cultural racism for many African Americans and other people of color is a reminder that racism is not confined to skin color, as cultural values are considered. While cultural racism is somewhat of a new idea for many, its existence can often act as a negative influence depending upon the nature of its associated assumptions.

For low-income, first generation, African Americans, these cultural myths can often be stifling when attempting to attain a higher educational degree as they are not only crippled by these beliefs in themselves, but often by the fact that others subscribe to these beliefs. L. D. Patton (2007) related this difficulty to the fact that higher educational institutions are often not prepared to meet the needs of these students as minorities on their campuses. Low-income, first generation, African American college students, like other "marginalized groups have varying levels of access because some policies have been created to include them" (Brown, Hinton, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007, p. 3). Unfortunately, for these groups, access is where consideration of these needs begins and ends. This lack of consideration often thrusts them into unfamiliar and uncomfortable

settings, thereby stifling their ability to be successful during their college matriculation and beyond.

In an attempt to explain and further understand cultural racism and the policies or lack thereof that it influences, scholars constructed the Critical Race Theory (CRT):

Which emphasizes the importance of viewing policies and policy making in the proper

historical and cultural context to deconstruct their racialized content . . . Critical Race

Theory (1) recognizes that racism is endemic to American life; (2) expresses skepticism

toward dominant claims of neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy; (3)

challenges historicism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of institutional

policies; (4) insists on recognizing the experiential knowledge of people of color and our

communities of origin in analyzing society; (5) is interdisciplinary and crosses

epistemological and methodological boundaries; and (6) works toward the end of

eliminating racial oppression. (Howard-Hamilton, 2007, p. 21)

While this has often been applied to various aspects of society, when contemplating the

impact on student academic success, the critical race theory as it relates to cultural racism

policy is silent. "CRT was useful for illustrating how various policy decisions have caused

African Americans to essentially take three steps forward and two steps back over the lifespan of

higher education" (Harper, S. R., Patton, L. D., & Wooden, O. S., 2009, p. 410).

Racial Assumptions

Critical race theory is important within society as it can be used to understand and

alleviate those issues, both racial and cultural, that divide its people. Realizing that there

is such a thing as racism and understanding the problem with ignoring its existence is a

major component of the critical race theory. It is important to note that in order for

critical race theory to be successful, especially within the academic arena, there must first

be recognition that a problem exists. Many are oblivious to the existence of racism or

choose to turn a blind eye to its existence and effect on the academic success of low-

income, first generation, African American students. Cultural assumptions are often the

crux of the problem when addressing such an issue, and thus can prove to be a

debilitating issue for the students involved; both the assumer and the victim of the

assumption.

A significant number of the students . . . interviewed said that they thought blacks were

not as smart as whites, and so studying hard made little sense. The result is "academic

self-doubt" that leads to "self-elimination." Black students were reluctant to take

advanced placement courses and did not work as hard as they could on their studies, all

because doing so was "white." Hanging around with too many white friends was

frowned upon. (Wilson, 2003, p. 85).

"For a number of African American college students, the idea of being viewed as

"acting White" plagues their ability to focus and be successful in college for fear of being

ostracized by their cultural counterparts. While this is an important factor, there are those

who believe cultural racism, Eurocratic education, and low to no teacher expectations are

all attempts to blame Whites for the educational shortcomings of African American

students" (Wilson, 2003, p. 85). Although Wilson (2003) deemed cultural racism to be an

excuse, one must consider not that this issue is an excuse for why African American

students are unable to succeed academically, but more so a symptom of the larger issue of

ongoing generational disparities. Remembering that there are more public policy issues at stake when dealing with cultural racism and its ultimate effect on low-income, African American, first generation, college students makes the need to educate the masses as to the severity of this issue more prevalent. "It is only through education that we can come to know ourselves and the ways in which our taken-for-granted cultural assumptions are grounded in a racist and classist ideology" (Powell, 2000, p. 11).

Psychological Effects

"Several researchers have noted that the chronic exposure to racial stressors has a deleterious effect on African-Americans" (Broman, 1997; Harrell, 1995; Jones, 1997; Utsey, 1999 as cited in Utsey et al., 2002, p. 368). Low-income, first generation, African American college students often encounter cultural racism on a daily basis. This continuous exposure to cultural racism within their collegiate lives can prove to be a major distraction as they attempt to be academically successful. Often these students find themselves encountering cultural racism not only from their peers, but also from those educational professionals entrusted to educate them. These encounters often result in the students second guessing themselves, their ability to succeed, and their cultural backgrounds. This questioning of oneself is often the result of lowered self-esteem. Coopersmith (1990) describes self-esteem as: . . . a set of attitudes and beliefs that a person brings with him or herself when facing the world. It includes beliefs as to whether he or she can expect success or failure, how much effort should be put forth, whether failure at a task will "hurt" and whether he or she will become more capable as a result of different experiences. In psychological terms, self-esteem provides a mental

set that prepares the person to respond according to expectations of success, acceptance,

and personal strength. (Pierre, Chadee, Bazelais, & Mahalik, 2011, p. 109)

For any person, self-esteem is important when attempting to accomplish goals. A

lack of positive self-esteem can prove to be a major factor in the inability to focus on

given goals and aspirations. For low-income, first generation, African American college

students, much of their self-esteem develops prior to entering the collegiate environment;

however, it is important to understand that self-esteem is forever developing and

changing. "Because an ethnic group's status in society significantly influences their self-

esteem (Steffenhagen & Burnes 1987), living in a society that devalues ethnic group

membership will likely result in the internalization of a devalued self-concept" (Fernando

as cited in Pierre et al., 2011, p. 109). This being the case, the appearance of cultural

racism calls into question much of the cultural identity these students have developed and

ultimately proves to be debilitating when attempting to be academically successful in

college.

The foundation of cultural racism is the surrounding various assumptions and

perceptions of a given cultural group. Internalizing these often negative assumptions can

prove to be stifling to low-income, first generation, African American college students.

According to Utsey et al. (2002), feelings of anxiety, paranoia, helplessness-

hopelessness, frustration, resentment, and fear often result from the internalization and

perception of the stress caused by cultural racism. These emotional responses to cultural

racism distract from students' ability to focus on successful educational attainment.

"According to Utsey and Ponterotto (1996), race-related stress occurs as the result of

acute and chronic encounters with racism and discrimination" (Pierre et al., 2011, p. 107).

Understanding this allows for a successful examination of the psychological effects of

cultural racism on a student's academic success.

Accepting that "the perception and experience of race discrimination may

adversely affect the psychological well-being of people living in a multi-ethnic society"

(Pierre et al., 2011, p. 105) can aid in further understanding the ultimate effects of

cultural racism. Many low-income, first generation, African American college students

have their first true interactions in such a society while in college. Not understanding how

to cope with such negative interactions brought on by cultural racism, these students

often allow the influence of such stressors to disrupt their educational path. Thus, "self-

perceptions exist only in the context of the larger culture and are formed through

interactions with other people . . . in the environment" (Pierre et al., 2011, p. 109).

Combating Cultural Racism

According to Hutcheson, Gasman, and Sanders-McMurtry (2011), racial equality

is not a goal that rests only with higher educational institutions or the dominant race to

achieve. This assumes racial equality should be attained through the work of various

important and influential groups. The literature suggests racial equality is something that

can be achieved with the elimination of cultural racism, as well as racism in general. Is

cultural racism relevant enough within the higher educational arena that its elimination

could create a sense of racial equality for everyone?

 It can be argued . . . that from a systems perspective, if cultural racism is eradicated at

 the highest level of our social system, it will become non-existent at the lower echelons

of society since a change in one part of their system affects the entire system. (Oliver,

2001, p. 3)

The lack of attention in this area is mostly due to the overshadowing of the

subject by the idea of affirmative action. Historically, affirmative action has been viewed

by some as the implementation of lower standards or a quota system to ensure minorities

have access to the same educational and job related opportunities as their Caucasian

counterparts.

Racial equality has, of course, multiple meanings in higher education: for example, it

can refer to gaining entry at historically White institutions or it could refer to access one

gains to knowledge as a result of the education he or she acquires, regardless of

institutional type. (Wallenstein, 2008; Williamson, 2008, as cited in Hutcheson et al.,

2011, p. 123)

This is not to say the ideals that influence access are not important, as much as it is to

imply that the retention and success factors associated with this access are just as, if not

more, important.

While attempting to impact change within the societal system, being aware of the

existence of cultural racism as well as the necessary steps to combat it will prove to be

imperative to achieve the desired results. "The color line divides us still. In recent years,

one visible evidence of this in the public policy arena has been the persistent attack on

affirmative action in higher education and employment" (Darling-Hammond, 2004, p.

214). While many view affirmative action as a practice that is no longer needed, to those

students who encounter cultural racism, affirmative action and programs like it are a

necessary part of their access to higher education. Graham (1999) stated that anti-

discriminatory practices often aid in combating racial issues and understanding such

oppression and inequality. This being the case, to combat cultural racism, various societal

programs and initiatives might prove beneficial to shed light on the subject as well as to

work toward ultimately eradicating it from society. Remembering that the programs are a

solution to a larger issue will aid in eliminating their ability to overshadow the issue.

There have been various suggestions as to how to create these programs and what steps

are most important; one prevalent approach is Devore and Schlesinger's (1991) ethnic-

sensitive model.

The ethnic-sensitive model (Devore & Schlesinger, 1991; Schiele, 1997) purports the

need for sensitivity to cultural differences, together with an understanding and

appreciation of racial, cultural, and social diversity. The model provides specific

strategies that include the following:

- awareness of and sensitivity to cultural differences and value systems of

  ethnic and cultural groups.

- adaptation to practice skills in response to the differing family patterns and

  life styles, and

- an understanding of how cultural traditions and values influence family

  functioning and consideration of these nuances in planning social work

  interventions. (Graham, 1999, p. 254)

The implementation of the ethnic-sensitive model within the higher educational

arena would call for an admittance that cultural racism exists and an examination of how

to combat and eradicate this issue. "Some postsecondary institutions have sought controversial race-conscious solutions to improving postsecondary enrollment and success among low-income and historically under-represented groups in public colleges and universities as a tactic to address vertical inequity" (Hicklin; Long & Tienda as cited in Conner & Rabovsky, 2011 p. 103). While these programs have often proved successful for collegiate access, they often fall short in supporting enrolled students' academic success once they are faced with cultural racism. In this situation, implementation of the ethnic-sensitive model could prove to be the best route to confronting the issue and promoting academic success.

Many academic programs and admissions policies that were [supposedly] designed to increase college access for African-Americans have received great opposition and been criticized for giving these individuals an unfair advantage over White students. Unsurprisingly, once these programs were halted, there were dramatic decreases in the number of students . . . the programs were originally intended to serve. (Harper & Griffin, 2010, p. 56)

Statistical changes in the number of students accessing college, remaining enrolled, and becoming academically successful without specific programs or policies in place to support them demonstrate there is a larger problem that needs to be addressed. Providing access is important, but for low-income, first generation, African American college students, more needs to be done in the realm of alleviating cultural racism. "Thus, although equal opportunity policies address institutional racism, they tend not to diminish

cultural racism, in that such policies do little to alter public perception of what is considered normative or standard behavior" (Powell, 2000, p. 8).

The presence of cultural racism to many low-income, first generation, African American college students represents the lack of racial equality they seek in their professional, educational, and social lives. Thus, it is important to understand "schools offer our best hope to address cultural racism, for it is only through education that we can come to know ourselves and the ways in which our taken-for-granted cultural assumptions are grounded in a racist and classist ideology" (Powell, 2000, p. 11).

Academic Success

Powell (2000) suggested success is measured in the decision and ability to remove one's cultural identity and to accept the cultural identity which the Caucasian society views as normal. This need to conform to norms that are influenced by society often makes it difficult for low-income, first generation, African American college students to be successful in their new collegiate environments as they are unfamiliar with these expected norms. Further, it assumes it is necessary for these students to shed their own cultural identities and thus assimilate to that of their Caucasian counterparts to be successful in their new environment; an environment that is typically expected to foster and develop them as individuals, but often does not.

Educational outcomes for students of color are much more a function of their unequal access to key educational resources, including skilled teachers and quality curriculum, than they are a function of race. In fact, the U.S. educational system is one of the most

unequal in the industrialized world, and students routinely receive dramatically different

learning opportunities based on their social status. (Darling-Hammond, 2004, p. 215)

While these disparities begin prior to the low-income, first generation, African

American students' college attendance, they often continue into the collegiate arena,

stifling these students' ability to achieve academic success.

Moreover, after controlling for factors such as family income, educational expectations,

academic preparation, parental involvement, and peer influence, findings revealed parent

education remained a significant predictor for access to postsecondary education and

attainment of a bachelor's degree at 4-year institutions. (Ward, 2006, p. 52)

The lack of educated parents is often a cultural difference that separates these

students from many of their classmates. Keeping this in mind aids in the realization that

creating access for these students does not consider nor combat the cultural differences

that exist prior to the coming to college. For many of these students, "by the time they are

in the twelfth grade, black children are two years behind white ones" (Wilson, 2003, p.

85). This education gap often is due to cultural differences not only within the education

system, but also in the ability of these students to retain various educational information

based on their cultural backgrounds. A lack of desire for higher educational attainment is

often a characteristic of these students as a result of their cultural background.

"Specifically concerning Blacks, those in the lowest income category applied to

significantly fewer colleges and universities than did their more affluent same-race peers"

(Harper & Griffin, 2010, p. 45).

Additionally, much of the reported increase in college enrollment among students of color has been in less selective, open enrollment institutions which often have alarmingly low rates of retention and graduation, while African-American enrollments in the most selective institutions, where student outcomes are often much more positive, has actually declined in recent years. (Melquizo as cited in Conner & Rabovsky, 2011, p. 102)

This decline is due to a lack of support and understanding of the cultural needs of low-income, first generation, African American students. Often their needs go well beyond the classroom and are influenced by their cultural background. Many institutions have implemented programs and initiatives designed to combat cultural racism and promote collegiate success. "These initiatives influenced access at all levels from readiness to college choice to financing high tuition costs to persistence from freshman through senior year" (Harper & Griffin, 2010, p. 55). Fortunately for low-income, first generation, African American college students:

In the past decade and a half, more attention has been paid to issues of diversity and the success of students from all backgrounds in the higher education system. As our country has become increasingly diverse, the importance of improving access and success to a quality education beyond high school for students of all backgrounds is especially important in addressing disparities in our society and growing gaps between the haves and have-nots. (Conner & Rabovsky, 2011, p. 106)

Upon students' enrollment, higher educational institutions often lack the follow-through necessary when attempting to impact diversity.

In many cases, these programs are created by people of other cultural backgrounds who have not experienced cultural racism, thus falling short in many areas of fully meeting low-income, first generation, African American college students' needs. Again, it is apparent that institutions should work to ensure programs meet the students' needs in combating cultural racism, are easily accessible, and are well known to those students who desire to participate. Despite their importance, for many students the existence, knowledge, and access to programs designed to thwart cultural racism on college campuses is often unavailable. The implementation and utilization of such programs is an integral part of these students' success.

Next Steps

The contemporary issues described herein must remain on the agendas of public policymakers, college and university administrators, and others who are concerned about the education of African Americans. Equally important are critical and ongoing analyses of policies that were supposedly enacted to improve educational outcomes for this population, as many have regressed in recent years (Harper, et.al, 2009, p. 410).

Thus, in an effort to combat cultural racism, it is imperative that ongoing research be conducted. Only:

By examining how certain populations are portrayed and assessing the intended impact of those images (e.g., the race and apparent socioeconomic class of those who appear successful, wealthy, intelligent, and powerful), it is possible to discern some of the ways in which cultural racism operates in our society. (Powell, 2000, p. 9)

Understanding the function of cultural racism is the first in a series of steps necessary to combat its effects. While a general overview of cultural racism has been conducted, that does not adequately address its presence in various aspects of society.

Knowing this, "it is . . . imperative that we confront cultural racism in our schools and classrooms so that our society eventually might overcome notions of White supremacy and become more inclusive and accepting of our human diversity" (Powell, 2000, p. 13). This level of inclusion in such a diverse society might alleviate much of the educational and professional achievement gaps that plague society. The ability to do so is greatly dependent on research such as this and that which is to follow. In an effort to conduct this research, a survey design will be utilized in which the participants will answer questions designed to measure their cultural interactions.

"Survey research provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (Creswell, 2014, p. 13). A survey will be conducted to determine the effects of both the dependent and independent variables on the sample population. "Survey research is probably the best method available to the social researcher who is interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly" (Babbie, 2001, p. 253). Because the population of college students who are African American, low-income, or first generation is so large, it would be virtually impossible to attempt to observe these people individually. Further, According to Babbie (2001), surveys serve to explain the attitudes and opinions of large populations through the use of one uniform tool. Thus, Chapter 3 of this study contains an examination of the research method, Chapter 4 will present the

results of the data collection, which will ultimately be summed up in Chapter 5, further

supporting the need for intervention with regard to cultural racism.

Chapter 3: Research Method

A survey method was deemed appropriate for this research in an effort to discover the effect of the independent variables as the students transitioned from one environment to another. Within this chapter, an examination of the instrument used for this study, data analysis, threats to validity, and sampling strategies will be discussed.

"According to Duffy (2000a, 2002), a typical web-based study involves the development of a specially designed web page containing a survey or questionnaire for completion by a specifically selected population" (Ahern, 2005, p. 58). A survey will allow respondents to express their opinions and feelings, which will ultimately be a snapshot in time of the effect of the independent variables on these students. Ahern (2005) expressed Internet surveys as being a viable option that allows for the sensitive nature of the material and comfort of the respondents surrounding their confidentiality to be considered. Thus, Internet surveys were distributed to the respondents, both for their comfort and the convenience of reaching them at their varying colleges and universities throughout the country.

To gather the necessary data, the survey administered was the Index of Race-Related Stress (IRRS; See Appendix E). The IRRS was used to help identify whether cultural racism is a determinant in students' ability and decision to be academically successful. Demographic data collected using a questionnaire (See Appendix C) gauged which students have taken a break or dropped out and returned home, those who have graduated and returned home, as well as those who intend to return home upon

graduation. This information is important as the educational attainment levels of communities' inhabitants are directly tied the possible sustainability of the community.

Design and Approach

Design Description

For the purpose of this study, drawing from a sampling frame of 2,000 students, 100 African American college students was the sample population. These students were at least 18 years of age and came from a variety of colleges and universities throughout the country. It has often been stated that college "curriculum fostered notions of racial inferiority and hindered blacks from acquiring a positive self image" (Sicherman as cited in Watson & Gregory, 2005, p. 49), which often makes it difficult for these students to be academically successful. The independent variables (i.e., cultural racism, low-income status as defined by family income level, and first generation college student status) were represented on the scale by their own score, and students who matched the entire group of variables were given a combined score. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008), the creation of these various scores results in the existence of an index. This population was the group examined to determine whether there was an effect on their academic success as college students (i.e., dependent variable).

When designing the research portion of this study, the target population of African Americans was chosen because this group is often susceptible to the concept of "groupthink," where the group as a whole has one mind and one decision on how to accept and view various influences within their lives, such as the independent variables. Facing "direct pressure on any member who expresses strong arguments against any of

the group's stereotypes, illusions, or commitments, making clear that this type of dissent is contrary to what is expected of all loyal members" (Janis, 1982, p. 175), is what makes this group most vulnerable to the influence of factors rather than their own judgment. The survey allowed for an understanding of how exposure to cultural racism has affected these students over time.

A cross-sectional design was the most appropriate for the purpose of this study. With this design, a survey was conducted using the sample population. An experimental design and a quasi-experimental design were inappropriate for this study as they would be difficult to implement within the sample population. Considering the influence measured was the effect of the existence of cultural racism on the sample population, without actually recreating an instance of such racism it would be difficult to conduct an experiment or quasi-experiment. For this study, an experimental narrative could be created, though the students' opinions on the existence or nonexistence of cultural racism and its influence, which would prove to be enough for the purpose of this study without using fictional situations; however, the opinionated nature of such narratives could potentially take away from the reliability of the study.

While many would argue the experimental or quasi-experimental approaches are stronger as they follow the participants for a period of time, weighing the data, they would not be an adequate fit for the purpose of this study. Unlike cross-sectional experiments, which are often based on logical inferences, the ability to have various time sensitive data makes the experimental and quasi-experimental more sound with time

tested data, but that does not make them the right approach for all types of quantitative research.

Justification and Rationale

Using 100 former students of three predominately African American high schools who are from low-income families, this research involved an examination of the effect of cultural racism on their academic success as first generation college students. These students were chosen at different levels: first year in college, sophomore year/junior year in college facing the choice to remain enrolled, and senior year in college/post college graduation. Given the varying levels of the participants, this particular study could be experimental and long-term in nature; however, in the interest of time and to limit the possibility of the appearance of additional influential factors, a short-term version of the study was conducted.

Variables. Within this study, the independent variables were (a) exposure to cultural racism, (b) low-income economic status, and (c) first generation college attendance. Thus, the dependent variable was student academic success. This study was designed to determine what effect, if any, the independent variables had on the dependent variable for African American college students.

Problem/Issue Statement

The culture of society in many ways, "as William Ryan (1976) pointed out a long time ago, is 'blaming the victim'—arguing that minorities' standing is the product of their lack of effort, loose family organization, and inappropriate values" (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011, p. 193). While this theory supports the idea that low-income, first

generation, African American college student academic success is based solely on their desire and abilities, it does not consider external factors; one such factor is the existence of cultural racism. Cultural racism creates negative stereotypes that surround these students, some which are forced upon them and others they believe and perpetuate, which ultimately act as determinants of their college academic success. This study was designed to examine such an effect on these students.

Setting and Sampling

Sample Population

A population is the "'aggregate of all cases that conform to some designated set of specifications'" (Selltiz et al., as cited in Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008, p. 163). For the purpose of this study, the population was low-income, first generation, African American college students. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008), the nature of a given population for a quantitative study is determined by the research problem. When attempting to address the problem of cultural racism and its effect on the academic success of low-income, first generation, African American college students, these particular demographic characteristics were important to streamline the sample population.

The population was limited to individuals who were low-income, first generation, African American college students or a combination of these three characteristics (eg.,. some students may be first generation, but not low-income). This answers the questions of content, extent, and time. The content was low-income, first generation, African Americans; the extent was college students; and the time was currently.

Participants. For the purpose of this study, participants were low-income, first generation, African American college students. These students were chosen at different levels: first year in college, sophomore year/junior year in college facing the choice to remain enrolled, and senior year in college/post college graduation. Each participant had attended predominately African American high schools in the metro-Atlanta area and participated in a college readiness program that provided me with general e-mail information to solicit their participation within the study.

Site. The surveys were conducted within this study from various locations as it was available for completion online. The availability of online access to the survey enabled the students to be comfortable during the completion of the survey as well as ensured the anonymity of the survey participants. This flexibility allowed students to participate in places of their choosing, without cause for concern as to their identities being revealed.

Method

A stratified convenience sample was used to ensure the students were a representative sample of low-income versus not low-income and first generation college student versus not first generation college student; this was important so as to "create a set of homogeneous samples based on the variables" (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008, p. 172). The criterion for this type of sampling is to ensure the sample is based on the chosen variables. In this case, the two variables of low-income and first generation college student were used to gather a sample population of those with various combinations of these characteristics. The researcher's ability to access students without

ethical complications or having to amass extra expenses is the convenience factor of this

study.

This convenience sample included only sampling units that are readily available.

The ability to access these students for the purpose of this study makes the sampling

convenient and easy. Only a small representative sample was necessary to work toward

proving or creating a given theory. In an effort to combat the possibility of error due to

the convenience approach, a quota was set when choosing the sample participants to

ensure they are all members of the given population, or a close variation thereof.

Drawing the Sample

The initial sampling frame solicited for the purpose of this study was comprised

of 1,000 students, from which the goal is to achieve at least 100 who will take the time to

complete the survey both accurately and honestly. Should these students have not decided

to do so, the goals of this study allowed room for a smaller sampling group. An online

survey was available for their completion. The group was solicited via an anonymous e-

mail sent using PsychData.com, describing the study and its purpose and inviting students

to complete the information. Further, the survey tool notified the students of the

anonymous nature of its completion, and that they were open to opt out should they so

desire to do so.

Sampling Size

The sample size of this study was determined utilizing a 95% confidence level, .5

standard deviation, and a margin of error (confidence interval) of +/- 10%. For a

representative sample of this population, a minimum of 96 participants were needed.

$$SS = \frac{Z^2 * (p) * (1 - p)}{c^2}$$

$$SS = \frac{1.96^2 * (.5) * (1 - .5)}{10^2}$$

$$SS = \frac{3.8416 * .5 * .5}{.01}$$

$$SS = \frac{.9604}{.01}$$

$$SS = 96.04$$

A sample size of 100 is ideal for this research, though the optional nature of the survey may have resulted in the sample population being much lower. This number was chosen to ensure that it encompassed a variety of students who possessed various combinations of the population characteristics. For example, while the majority of the students were be low-income, first generation, African American college students, some were just low-income college students or first generation college students, but they were all African American. The small participant pool of low-income, first generation, and African American college students allowed for a glimpse into their opinions based on the intimate nature of the survey questions. This particular group of students may not represent all students from these same demographics; however, they can prove to be a starting point for further research.

Instrument

The IRRS, a Likert scale, was developed by Shawn O. Utsey and Joseph G.

Ponterotto to measure the existence of racism in the lives of African Americans.

Further, the pair attempted to establish subscales to measure cultural racism,

institutional racism, individual racism and collective racism with the creation of this

new scale. The purpose of this scale is to determine the varying intensity of a group of

items. A 5-point Likert scale (0 = This has never happened to me; 1 = This event

happened, but did not bother me; 2 = This event happened and I was slightly upset; 3 =

This event happened and I was upset; 4 = This event happened and I was extremely

upset), will prove useful in the attempt to gauge the effects of the various indicators

(i.e., cultural racism, low-income status, or first generation college student status) on

the sample population. As the students responded to the indicators as they relate to

them individually, they used this scale and its levels of measurement to do so. The

IRRS provided an average index score for those within the sample population's

opinion on a given statement. "Each respondent would then be assigned an overall

score representing the summation of the scores he or she received for responses to the

individual items" (Babbie, 2001, p. 178).

The IRRS is in line with the racial identity development theory which examines

racial identity attitudes at five different status levels for each participant: Pre-Encounter,

Post Encounter, Immersion, Emersion, and Internalization. Each of these levels is

designed to determine racial identity attitudes as they relate to encounters with people of

another race.

Determining the importance of each as well as the level of influence they hold on the participants was useful in understanding what effect, if any, cultural racism had on the retention and academic success of the study participants.

Reliability

According to Shively (2002), the simplest way to ensure the reliability of a measurement within a given study is to repeat the measurement a second time. This might prove difficult when attempting to re-measure the results. Further, it is difficult to determine whether changes come into play based on measurement issues or natural changes. Shively recommended the split-half test to avoid such issues, in which the researcher randomly divides the sample population into two groups and then compares the results of the measurements for reliability. Utsey and Ponterotto (1996), conducted a split half test to establish the reliability of their scale. Utilizing two groups of African Americans (302 – study 1 and 341 – study 2), they were able to establish that the scale produced consistently reliable results from both groups; most importantly, a strong correlation between cultural racism and the scale indicators.

Validity

In an effort to ensure construct validity, the content of the survey/questionnaire used included questions that answered all of the items that were being measured. Utilizing an existing scale, the Racism and Life Experiences Scale – Brief Version (RaLes-B) as a comparison, the pilot studies consisted of two groups of over 300 African Americans each in an effort to establish the validity of this new scale. The empirical validity of the study occurred because there was a relationship between the outcome of

measurement and the instrument being used, which in this case is the IRRS. Utsey and Ponterotto, (1996), conducted a content and delivery method validity study prior to their initial pilot study. As a result of this validity study, the Likert scale utilized was changed from a 5-point to a 4-point scale to ensure clarity for the study participants. For the purpose of this study, the measurement was used to prove the theory of the study and, therefore construct validity will exist.

Validity for quantitative research often includes issues that are external and internal. These can include history, maturation, regression, selection, mortality, diffusion of treatment, compensation/resentful demoralization, compensatory rivalry, testing, instrumentation, interaction of selection and treatment, interaction of setting and treatment, and interaction of history and treatment. Often these threats can work to invalidate the study either as design flaws or cause issues to the validity of the measurement.

Validity with respect to the research measurement is important to ensure that the unit of measurement applied to the study is correct, as well as the results attained from the research itself; whereas the validity with respect to design is concerned with ensuring the approach to the study and its implementation are correct. Both types of validity can be affected by internal and external issues and can be viewed jointly through predictive validity which attempts to predict the relationship between the design and the measurement of the study.

Limitations

It was difficult to determine whether the IRRS would be reliable for this type of research as the initial study was completed face-to-face; however, the individual nature of the completion will be consistent, without the researcher's interference or bias. Further, although survey research itself "…is generally weak on validity and strong on reliability" (Babbie, 2001, p. 287),

> Pedhazur and Schmelkin (1991) cautioned that there is no numerical cutoff in terms of acceptable and unacceptable levels of reliability, and thus, when judging acceptability, one must consider the purpose of the measure and the consequences of its interpretations. A possible explanation for lack of constancy of the racial identity attitude scores may be that they reflect more of a state than a trait variable. State refers to conditions or events, whereas trait can be described as a stable characteristic (Lemon & Waehler, 81).

This is one of the pitfalls of a Likert-type scale, which made it slightly less valid when attempting to measure the feelings and opinions of the sample population. On the other hand, this scale is more reliable than other methods such as observation as it eliminates the bias and opinions of the observer and measures the opinions and ideals of the sample population only.

This weakness was addressed through the use of closed-ended questions while ensuring the instructions given to the survey participants invoked them to give their open and honest opinions on all of the matters included.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

This study required both a nominal and ordinal level of measurement to be used. "As a rule, when a set of objects can be classified into categories that are exhaustive (that is, they include all cases of that type) and mutually exclusive (that is no case can be classified as belonging to more than one category), a nominal level of measurement is attained" (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 2008, p. 143). This level of measurement assumes the characteristics of people in one group are indicative of those found in other groups. For example, the students were all African American college students while some were low-income and some were first generation. Because this characteristic is shared, a nominal level of measurement was appropriate to ensure the results were adequately measured.

"The ordinal level of measurement is amenable to any monotonic (unidimensional) transformation no matter how the numbers are manipulated, that is, the information obtained does not change" (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 2008, p. 145). Thus, no matter how the information is manipulated as it relates to the sample population, it will always be the same. The outcome of the survey will always result in the same answers, no matter how they are recorded or added up, and therefore this most certainly falls within the ordinal level of measurement.

It may be argued that this particular sampling size and associated strategies would not generate adequate results; it does, however, generate results that are not mutually exclusive to this particular group of students and can be applied in other areas. Further,

when attempting to conduct such surveys, the larger the sampling size, the larger the

potential for error when recording the data and conducting the surveys.

These sampling strategies should work well when conducting research from the

perspective of an applied researcher. "Applied . . . researchers are able to bring their

personal insights and experiences into any recommendations that may emerge because

they get especially close to the problems under study during fieldwork" (M. Q. Patton,

2002, p. 217). The ability to relate these students' perspectives to personal interactions

with the students and other insights gained from the survey process is what makes this

particular study unique. The politically important nature of the study allowed for room

for personal experiences and insights to be brought in to illustrate the important public

policy nature of the study. Overall, these particular strategies used a sample population

which was easily accessible, while creating a study that is important due to its social

impact.

The Internet often proves to be a valuable way to conduct surveys, as "for certain

questions and for situations involving large groups, distance is inevitable, perhaps even

helpful" (M. Q. Patton, 2002, p. 49). Thus, this method is perfect for the purpose of this

study as it allowed access to students outside of a given geographic area. Once the

surveys were completed, the data was organized, interpreted, and analyzed.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of the data collection, the data was put through the

interpretation process. According to Janesick (2011), the researcher often includes

theoretical discussions to ensure the data are related to previous theories that might have

guided the study while including any interpretive commentary to ensure the data are

taken in context and explained further if necessary. The SPSS 21 program performed as a

data management tool to organize relevant data into specific categories and sub-

categories, which provided the researcher with a more organized system. In addition to

the ability to organize and manage the data, the program provided the researcher the

ability to create relevant reports and data presentation tools to be used within the final

research analysis.

To examine the research question, due to the small sample size, an exact logistic

regression (logit model) was conducted to investigate whether being low-income, first

generation, and subjected to cultural racism predicts African American college student

academic success, which is a mutually exclusive dichotomous dependent variable.

…logistic regression does not directly model on the value of the response

variable, but on the probability that a particular value occurs. Let π be the

probability that a value occurs; then $1 - \pi$ is the probability that it does not occur.

The odds is the ratio of these two probabilities:

$$\text{Odds} = \frac{\pi}{1-\pi} \quad \text{(Yang, 2007)}.$$

There should be a linear relationship between the odd ratio and the independent variable.

Linearity with an ordinal or interval independent variable and the odd ratio can be

checked by creating a new variable that divides the existing independent variable into

categories of equal intervals and running the same regression on these newly categorized

versions as categorical variables. Linearity is demonstrated if the β coefficients increase

or decrease in linear steps. "After taking the natural logarithm of the odds, a linear

relationship between the transformed variable and the explanatory variables can be

established, which is called the logistic transformation, or logit, for short:

$$\text{logit}[\pi] = \ln\left(\frac{\pi}{1-\pi}\right)\text{" (Yang, 2007).}$$

For the purposes of this study, this model utilized three explanatory (independent)

variables: $\beta_1(cultural\ racism)$, $\beta_2\ (Low\ income)$, β_3 (First generation). To simplify

the use of SPSS 21 and ensure that each explanatory variable is properly analyzed the

following simple equations was utilized:

$$\ln\left(\frac{\pi}{1-\pi}\right) = \alpha + \beta_1(cultural\ racism)$$

$$\ln\left(\frac{\pi}{1-\pi}\right) = \alpha + \beta_2\ (Low\ income)$$

$$\ln\left(\frac{\pi}{1-\pi}\right) = \alpha + \beta_3\ (\text{First generation})$$

According to Yang (2007), the resulting values will be a measurement of the

difference between the predicted value and those values which have been exhibited

within the survey results. To further analyze this data, the Cox & Snell R Square and the

Nagelkerke R Square were used to exhibit the data correlations.

Participant Protection

A convenience strategy will be appropriate for this study as access and rapport are two of the biggest concerns. The nature of the researcher's interactions with a college access and success organization affiliated with these students, who attend a variety of colleges and universities throughout the 0country, will aid in the solicitation of students to participate in the study. "Although studying one's own 'backyard' is often convenient and eliminates many obstacles to collecting data, researchers can jeopardize their jobs if they report unfavorable data or if participants disclose private information that might negatively influence the organization or workplace" (Creswell, 2007, p. 151). This issue was not a concern for this study due to the separation between the actual work formerly being conducted and surveys of students. Further, the anonymous survey solicitation (See Appendix B) and nature of the study through the online survey completion allowed for the further protection of the students' identities and ensure that no researcher bias exists.

Ultimately, the use of the IRRS to conduct this research allowed for the accurate measurement of what relationship, if any, existed between low-income, first generation, African American college student academic success and their interaction with cultural racism. The results of these surveys will be explained, analyzed, and a conclusion provided within Chapters 4 and 5 of this study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Within this chapter, a further examination of the data collection process, the results of the study survey, and a brief summary of the research findings will be examined.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine whether cultural racism exists in the lives of low-income, first generation African American college students and ultimately impacts their ability to achieve academic success. I hoped that the results and recommendations will be reviewed and considered when making implementing which will impact the academic success of students whose demographic background is similar to the study participants.

Research Question

1. Does cultural racism exist and have an effect on the ability of low-income, first generation, African American college students to achieve academic success?

Hypotheses

$H1_a$: The ongoing perpetuation of cultural racism through the use of negative stereotypes has an adverse effect on the academic success of low-income, first generation, African American college students.

$H1_0$: The lack of successful completion of higher education is in no way related to the influence or existence of cultural racism within the lives of low-income, first

generation, African American college students, thus the creation of educational policy to combat it is unnecessary.

Data Collection

Background

Having received permission to use 1,000 student e-mails from a college readiness program, I registered with psychdata.com as a survey distribution tool. Using the psychdata.com tool, students were notified of the optional nature of the study and asked to participate. Within the original solicitation e-mail (Appendix B), it was explained to students that they were invited to complete the survey due to their participation in a college readiness program. This e-mail also provided students with the caveat that their decision to complete the survey was optional and doing so implied their consent to participate. Lastly, students were given the option to submit their e-mail address to receive a copy of the completed study. The solicitation e-mail was sent in two groups (500 in each cluster) over the course of 4 weeks, with each group receiving a final reminder during Week 4.

Those students who chose to participate did not have their survey responses connected to their e-mail addresses; thus, they were entirely anonymous. While they did provide general demographic data (i.e., low-income, first generation, African American), these data were general in nature and matched many other student profiles. When the survey closed in Week 5, 105 students had responded, surpassing the 96 needed to provide a representative sample. The sample size of this study was determined using a

95% confidence level, .5 standard deviation, and a margin of error (confidence interval) of +/- 10%.

For this study, only the first 100 survey responses were used. This number was chosen to ensure that it encompassed a variety of students who possessed various combinations of the population characteristics. Upon completion of the survey, psychdata.com provided a complete breakdown of survey results in SPSS format. Results were then downloaded and transferred to SPSS.

Sample Population

In this study, I sought to determine if cultural racism was a predictor of academic success for low-income, first generation, African American college students. Although given the option to choose otherwise, 100% of the survey respondents indicated that their ethnicity was African American.

Figure 1. Respondent Ethnicity
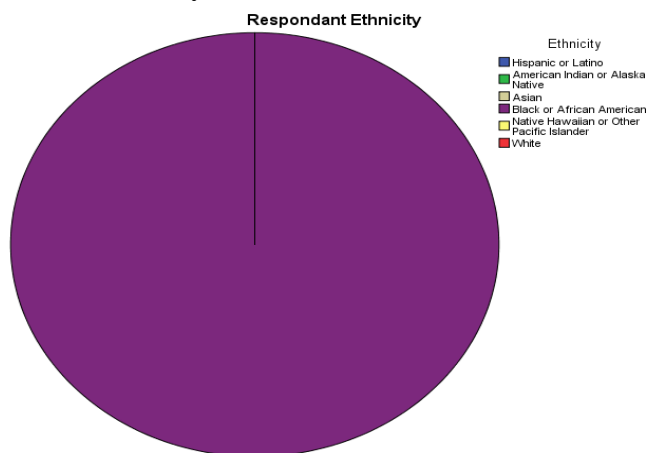
Of these African Americans, 59% were first generation college students, while the remaining 41% indicated that a combination of either parents, siblings, and/or extended family had previously attended college.

Figure 2. First Generation College Student Status
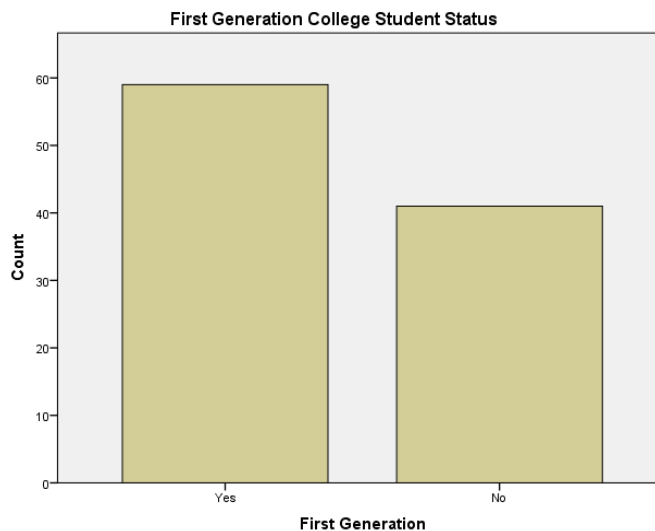
Based on the number of people who resided in their households, as well as the overall household income, 34% of the survey respondents represented middle- to upper-income families. Low-income students comprised 66% of the overall study participants.

When considering the academic success of the survey respondents, many factors such as retention (continuous enrollment), classification, grade point average (GPA), and collegiate ethnic make-up were considered.

Student retention seemed consistent among the survey respondents as 42% reported having enrolled in nine or more semesters/quarters of school; 11% enrolled in between seven and eight semesters/quarters; 31% enrolled in five to six semesters/quarters; 12% enrolled in three to four semesters/quarters; and 4% enrolled in one to two semesters/quarters.

Figure 3. Student Retention

Student Retention
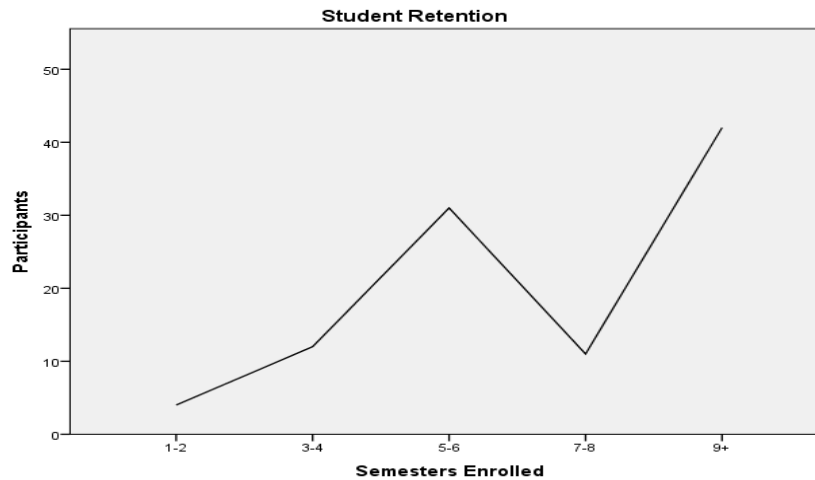
To ensure the survey results were representative of a variety of students, those at varying classification levels were invited to participate. Study participants were divided among each of the potential classification levels: 18% first year; 22% sophomore; 26% junior; 21% senior; and 13% recent college graduates.

Figure 4. Student Classification

Student Classification
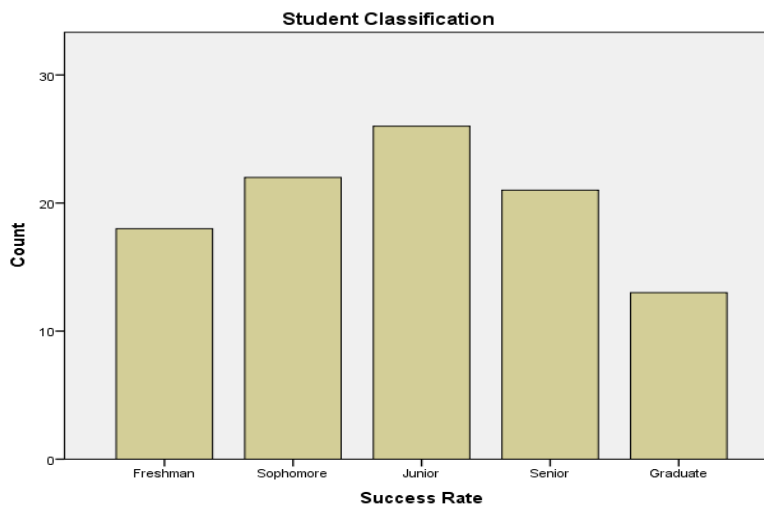
Participants attend a variety of colleges and universities. These schools were classified as predominately White, historically Black, or ethnically diverse institutions.

Figure 5. Collegiate Ethnic Make-up

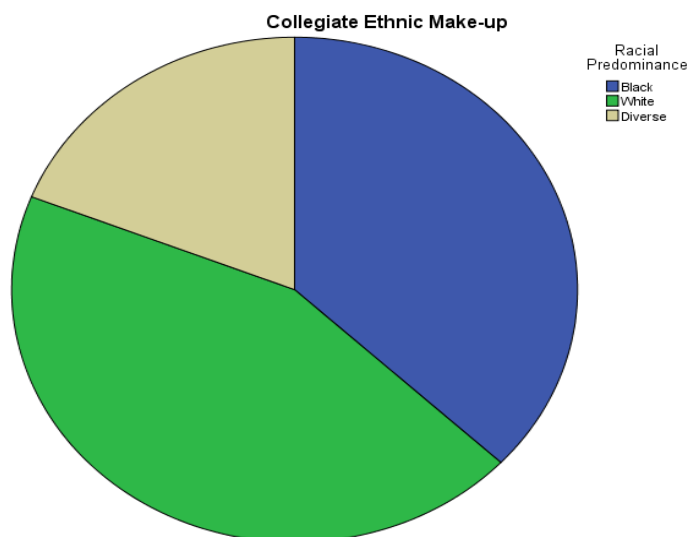While the 44% of the survey participants attended predominately White institutions, 37% attended historically Black colleges and universities, while the remaining 19% attended universities with a diverse student population.

At these institutions, student grade point averages varied across the spectrum, with a majority of participants falling within the 2.1-3.0 range. While this is the midpoint of the scale, many institutions do not consider anything below a 3.0 passing. Thus, for many of these students, they may not have achieved the required grade point average to indicate course/program success.

Table 4.4
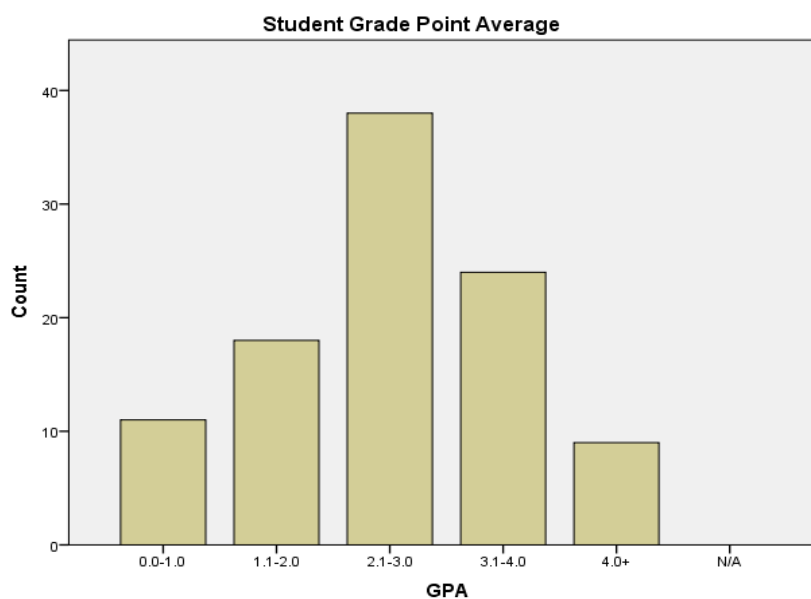
Results

Independence of errors is an important assumption of this study, as multiple

exposures of the survey participants to questions of cultural racism may impact the

results. This study limited the exposure to ensure the results were accurate based on the

current state of the participants' lives. Independence of errors is important because it

alleviates the appearance of an overly significant relationship between the independent

and dependent variables, beyond that which is naturally present. Another assumption of

this study was the presence of cultural racism and the causal link between its presence

and student ability to achieve academic success.

Further, this study assumed that 100% of study participants would have been

exposed to cultural racism at some point during their collegiate career. Based on the

results of the Index of Race Related Stress (IRRS), it is evident that this assumption was

correct. Participants' answers to the survey questions indicated that cultural racism has

had an impact on their lives and how they view the world.

The numbers listed in each column in the table below (Table 4.5), represents the

number of participants who indicated the corresponding response. These answers were

given as students examined the IRRS questions as they related to their personal, cultural

interactions.

Table 4.5

IRRS Question	0 = This has never happened to me	1 = This event happened, but did not bother me	2 = This event happened, and I was slightly upset	3 = This event happened, and I was upset	4 = This event happened, and I was extremely upset	Overall Presence of Cultural Racism?
You notice that crimes committed by White people tend to be romanticized, whereas the same crime committed by a Black person is portrayed as savagery, and the Black person who committed it, as an animal.	4	0	12	51	33	Yes
You notice that when a Black person is killed by a White mob or policeman no one is sent to jail.	3	0	0	30	67	Yes
You notice that when Black people are killed by the police, the media informs the public of the victim's criminal record or negative information about their background, suggesting they got what they deserved.	0	0	7	43	50	Yes
You have observed that White kids who commit violent crimes are portrayed as "boys being boys," while Black kids who commit similar crimes are wild animals.	0	0	12	35	53	Yes
You seldom hear or read anything positive about Black people on radio, TV, newspapers, or in history books.	19	12	4	35	30	Yes
You have observed a double standard in the way the law or other systems of government	0	0	4	35	61	Yes

(court, media, disciplinary committees, etc.) work (or don't work) when dealing with Blacks as opposed to Whites/non-Blacks.						
White/non-Black people have been apologetic about the Japanese internment, Jewish Holocaust, and other violations of human rights, but would prefer to forget about slavery, Jim Crowism, and other abuses of Black people.	16	0	4	27	53	Yes
You have observed the police treat White/non-Blacks with more respect and dignity than they do Blacks.	12	0	0	42	46	Yes
You have noticed that the public services are inadequate or nonexistent in Black communities (police, sanitation, street repairs, etc.).	3	4	23	32	38	Yes
You have heard Blacks constantly being compared with other immigrants and minorities in terms of what they have not achieved, in spite of having been in the U.S. for so much longer than the other groups.	4	0	15	47	34	Yes
You have observed situations where other Blacks were treated harshly or unfairly by Whites/non-Blacks because of their race.	12	0	4	38	46	Yes
You have heard reports of White people/non-Blacks who have committed crimes, and in an effort to cover up their deeds falsely reported that a Black man was responsible for the crime.	20	0	4	34	42	Yes
You notice that the media plays up those stories that cast Blacks in negative ways (child abusers, rapists, muggers, etc. [or as savages] Wild Man of 96th St., Wolf Pack, etc.) usually accompanied by a large picture of a Black person looking angry or disturbed.	4	3	12	35	46	Yes
You have heard it suggested that Black men have an uncontrollable desire to possess a White woman.	20	23	26	4	27	Yes
You have heard racist remarks or comments about Black people spoken with impunity	16	0	15	26	43	Yes

by White public officials or other influential White people.					
You have heard or seen other Black people express the desire to be White or to have White physical characteristics because they disliked being Black or thought it was ugly.	22	0	16	24	38	Yes
You did not receive a promotion you deserved; you suspect it was because you are Black.	62	4	7	19	8	No

To avoid the appearance of results inflation, those questions to which students responded: 0 = this has never happened to me; 1 = this event happened, but did not bother me; 2 = or this event happened and I was slightly upset, the classification of "no cultural racism present" was assigned. For those questions to which students responded: 3 = this event happened and I was upset; or 4 = this event happened and I was extremely upset, the classification of "cultural racism present" was assigned. This allows for cultural racism, as it relates to this scale to be classified as a dichotomous variable.

Additionally, in an effort to determine whether a causal relationship existed between the presence of cultural racism and the academic success of low-income, first generation, African American college students, an exact logistic regression analysis was utilized. When conducting the exact logistic regression, the classification table below (Table 4.6), supplied the probability that with or without the additional data, if we assumed that none of these students would not be academically successful, we would have been right 67% of the time.

Table 4.6

Classification Table[a,b]

Observed			Predicted		
			Academic Success		Percentage Correct
			Yes	No	
Step 0	Academic Success	Yes	0	33	.0
		No	0	67	100.0
	Overall Percentage				67.0

a. Constant is included in the model.

b. The cut value is .500

When testing the constant model against a full model, the test exhibits a significant relationship between the indicators. With a chi-square of 4.842, $p<.184$ with df= 3, the significant relationship between the variables appears to be the initial outcome of the logistic regression. (see table 4.7)

Table 4.7

Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	4.842	3	.184
	Block	4.842	3	.184
	Model	4.842	3	.184

To further determine the validity of this relationship, the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test (H-L statistic), (see Tables 4.8 and 4.9), is utilized to determine whether the testing and methods are a good fit for this study. "The *H-L statistic* assumes sampling adequacy, with a rule of thumb being enough cases so that 95% of cells (typically, 10 decile groups

times 2 outcome categories = 20 cells) have an expected frequency > 5" (Demaris, 1992,

p. 580). For this study, the H-L statistic has a significance of .696 shows that it is not

statistically significant, making the model utilized for this study a good fit.

Table 4.8

Hosmer and Lemeshow Test

Step	Chi-square	Df	Sig.
1	2.216	4	.696

Table 4.9

Contingency Table for Hosmer and Lemeshow Test

		Academic Success = Yes		Academic Success = No		Total
		Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected	
Step 1	1	15	13.449	16	17.551	31
	2	6	7.263	11	9.737	17
	3	3	3.288	8	7.712	11
	4	4	5.563	20	18.437	24
	5	4	2.725	8	9.275	12
	6	1	.712	4	4.288	5

Ultimately, the ability to determine whether a correlation existed between the

variables was achieved. The table below (Table 4.10) examines the correlation between

each of the variables, both dependent and independent, which were examined in this

study. Correlation is important because it works to ensure the assumed causal

relationship, between the independent and dependent variables, exist.

Table 4.10

Correlations

		Cultural Racism	First Generation	Low-Income	Academic Success
Cultural Racism	Pearson Correlation	1	-.087	-.025	-.082
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.196	.401	.209
	N	100	100	100	100
First Generation	Pearson Correlation	-.087	1	.045	-.107
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.196		.327	.144
	N	100	100	100	100
Low-Income	Pearson Correlation	-.025	.045	1	-.032
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.401	.327		.376
	N	100	100	100	100
Academic Success	Pearson Correlation	-.082	-.107	-.032	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.209	.144	.376	
	N	100	100	100	100

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

Because a linear regression does not properly measure dichotomous variables, "a range of regression techniques have been developed for analyzing data with categorical dependent variables, including logistic regression" (Demaris, 1992, p. 568). Additionally, an exact logistic regression was conducted in an effort to determine the Upon receiving the results of the IRRS, a series of tests were conducted to determine whether a significant relationship existed between low-income, first generation African American college student academic success and the presence of cultural racism.

The presence of cultural racism within the lives of study participants was exhibited as 100% recounted its presence in one way or another through their IRRS

survey question answers. These results indicated the need to determine whether there is a correlation (relationship) between the dependent variable (academic success) and the independent variables (low-income, first generation, exposure to cultural racism).

The table above (Table 4.10) examines the correlation between each of the dependent and independent variables. As exhibited in the chart, there is a significant relationship between Academic success and the presence of cultural racism, being low-income, and first generation college students. Utilizing the 0.01 level to determine when a relationship becomes significant, we are able to gauge from the chart that each of the dependent variables has a significant negative impact on student academic success. Being low-income has the least significant negative effect, while cultural racism and then being first generation have higher negative effects, respectively. For example, this means that the more exposure to cultural racism a student encounters, the more of a negative impact it has on their academic success.

Understanding the correlation between the variables directly answers the question of whether cultural racism exist and has an effect on the ability of low-income, first generation, African American college students to achieve academic success. For the study participants, the answer to the research question has been determined to be yes. Additionally, the hypothesis of this study, the ongoing perpetuation of cultural racism through the use of negative stereotypes has an adverse effect on the academic success of low-income, first generation, African American college students, has been proven. "There are two main uses of logistic regression:

- The first is the prediction of group membership. Since logistic regression calculates the probability of success over the probability of failure, the results of the analysis are in the form of an odds ratio.

- Logistic regression also provides knowledge of the relationships and strengths among the variables" (Demaris, 1992, p. 569).

For this study, it is evident that the need to determine the probability of success or failure is the key to answering the research question. Thus, as an examination of the exact logistic regression was conducted, the ultimate answer that: yes academic success of low-income, first generation, African American college students is impacted by the presence of cultural racism, became evident.

Summary of Findings

As indicated by the chart above, the majority of the study participants indicated the presence of cultural racism within their lives. On 16 out of 17 survey questions, the majority of respondents indicated that each cultural racism scenario question either happened, and they were upset or happened, and they were extremely upset. Such strong responses to the questions provided indicate that for these students, cultural racism has a strong and memorable effect on them as individuals.

In chapter 5, a deeper exploration of the finding of this study will occur. These indicators will be further examined as well as a final determination if a causal link between cultural racism and the academic success of low-income, first generation, African American college students exists.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

Due to the potential social implications of participating students' ability to succeed academically, it was important to examine factors that might ultimately impact their success. "The needs these students bring to the higher education environment are multi-faceted, including issues of family, finances, and cultural roadblocks" (Pagliarulo & Kurotsuchi Inkelas, 2006). The education level of a community's inhabitants can determine the area's ability to succeed in business, compete in global markets, attract outside residents, as well as continue advancing in most technological areas. Thus, it is important to focus future educational policy on ways to support and foster these students' academic success. Cultural racism can have a lasting effect on the sustainability of the community; thus, the purpose of this study was to recognize its presence and make potential policy recommendations for corrective action.

The students who participated in this study included all or a combination of the following characteristics: low-income, first generation, and African American. This study involved an exploration of the cultural racism participants encountered from other people within society and their ability to remain academically successful despite the presence of such adversity.

Interpretation of Findings

In this study, I sought to fill the gap in the research as it related to the impact of cultural racism on the academic success of low-income, first generation, African American college students. While much research occurred on the academic success of this

demographic, a gap in the research existed in relation to cultural racism. Still a relatively new concept, this study provided additional support to the initial assumption, that cultural racism has an impact on these students attainment of academic success. Using the IRRS for this study proved to be the proper tool for analyzing how cultural racism has impacted the participating students. Recalling the four approaches to coping strategies discussed in Chapter 2, the answers provided by students to many of the survey questions were representative of each.

According to Thompson and Neville (1999), most of the coping strategies prevalent in the literature can be divided into four approaches: the cognitive approach, behavioral approach, cognitive avoidance, and behavioral avoidance. The cognitive approach includes having people engage in critical thought about prevailing stereotypes and also seeks to provide accurate information to challenge negative views. (Gabbidon & Peterson, 2006, pp. 87-88)

This study in itself was a cognitive approach to cultural racism as it relates to participants' academic success. The results of the IRRS began the necessary critical thinking around the participants' opinions on cultural racism. Additionally, this study, if used correctly will continue the necessary critical thought at the academic level to ensure the future creation and implementation of policy at institutions of higher education as it relates to cultural racism.

Limitations of the Study

In this study, I sought to expose and explore the causal link between cultural racism, as a psychological factor, of student success. A limitation of this assumption was

the lack of consideration for other potential influential factors of academic success. This

limitation, however, proved to be minor, as the assumption only states that there would

be a causal link between the factors and not an assumption of sole/absolute influence. For

the students who participated in the study, the biggest limitation was the lack of current

policy that would educate those about their cultural differences and provide some relief

from the negative interactions that they have encountered. My inability to provide them

relief from these interactions limited the scope and impact of this study. This limitation

in many respects is the most important of all. This study was designed to examine and

potentially affect change in the lives of students; the lack of guaranteed impact was the

biggest limitation to both the students involved and me.

Additionally, the implied limitations of conducting a Likert scale, as indicated in

Chapter 1, were unfounded. The participants were able to navigate the tool, and the scale

was a suitable example of their thoughts/feelings on questions related to cultural racism.

Ultimately, for this study, the concern of this type of tool being a limitation proved to be

unwarranted.

Recommendations

This study proved to be insightful as to the existence of cultural racism in the

lives of the sample population. For many, cultural racism is a real and present issue

impacting their success; for others, they have been able to persevere and excel despite its

existence. Using federal, state, or local agencies that have a financial impact on

colleges/universities may prove to be the best approach to influencing far-reaching policy

changes. Considering the federal government alone, students at colleges and universities

nationwide, received over $167.38 billion in aid during the 2014 fiscal year (See Figure

5.1). The $167.38 billion is not inclusive of federal, state, and local funds given directly

to colleges and universities for research, grants, operating costs or tax breaks.

Figure 6. Federal Higher Education Student Aid

Federal Higher Education Student Aid, Fiscal Year 2014
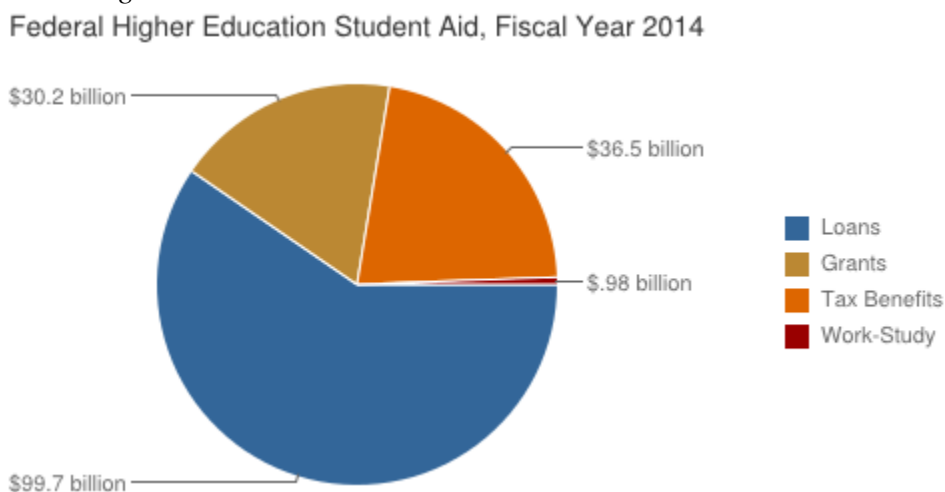
If the recommendations below are required by federal, state, and local

government agencies providing funds to colleges and universities; a significant change

could occur. These policy and programmatic recommendations include:

- Understanding that "university research is a long-term national investment in the

  future, the federal government supports about 60 percent of the research

  performed at universities. In 2009, that amounted to the federal government

  supporting about $33 billion of universities' total annual R&D spending of $55

  billion" (Association of American Universities, 2011). Such research could

  explore the low-income, first generation, ethnically diverse and other students of

  many different backgrounds/beliefs.   To meet this need, colleges/universities

  would "…no longer plan…research agenda based on the assumption

that…undergraduate student population is made up of White undergraduates from middle or uppermiddle class homes, ages 18 to 22, attending four-year institutions full time, living on campus, not working, and having few if any family responsibilities" (Pascarella & Terenzini as cited in Pascarella, 2006). Adjusting the nature of this work would require that research surrounding college students on all levels: federal, state, and local colleges/universities, be inclusive of the demographic make-up of students nationwide.

- All first year students attending any college/university that provides state or federal student aid, must participate in a cultural sensitivity course. This course could introduce students to other cultures as well as point out how cultural assumptions could have an adverse effect on others. It could explain to them the concept of cultural racism and shed light on any indications that they have been practicing it. Additionally, the course could prove beneficial to these students when entering society. Given that the world is currently a melting pot of races, genders, and cultures, the pre-emptive sensitivity training could prove to be beneficial to the well-being of the world.

- The presence of diversity and inclusion professionals on all campuses that does not wait for students in need of support to come to them. Many students do not feel they have a voice or a support system on their college campus. Further, "the same intervention or experience might not have the same impact for all students, but rather might differ in the magnitude or even the direction of its implications for students with different characteristics or traits. When the latter happens, it is

commonly referred to as a conditional effect. Such limited results are in contrast to general effects, in which an intervention or experience is assumed to have the same impact for all students irrespective of their individual differences" (Pascarella, 2006). Further, having a designated person who gets out of their office to meet with students and find out how they are dealing with any potential diversity issues, could prove to be beneficial to students' success.

- Campus-wide cultural activities. The implementation of activities relating to a number of different cultures can often be informative for those who are not familiar with cultures other than their own. Further, this time can educate students about the actual nature of other cultures, alleviating those assumptions with which they are familiar. Additionally, cities and states could seek to implement a variety of cultural activities to begin the students' exposure to diverse groups beyond the college campus. This exposure could aid students in feeling comfortable not only on campus but in society, as well as expose those in the surrounding areas to cultures outside of their own.

Policy with requirements such as this does not currently exist. Much of federal, state, and local funding for students include pre-enrollment requirements: income level, high school or previous semester/quarter grade point average, etc. Such recommendations occurring from the federal or state level will create a new policy that will ultimately have a trickle down impact upon the colleges and universities and the students they serve. This is important, as "along with creating new knowledge and the foundation for new products and processes, U.S. universities…educate students who will become the next generation's

scientists and engineers, teachers, and leaders in government and industry" (Association of American Universities, 2011). The ability for the federal, state, and local governments to play a role in this education process is vital to the sustainability and livability of the nation as a whole.

Implications for Social Change

While the social change implications of this study are far reaching, the use of the study to initiate the conversation surrounding the need for cultural support policies is the goal. These policies can be implemented at the collegiate and eventually the federal level to alleviate the inequalities among various cultures. "There is intriguing evidence to suggest that the academic and out-of-class experiences that influence intellectual and personal development during college differ along such dimensions as race/ethnicity (e.g., Bray et al., 2004; Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, & Flowers, 2004; Posner & Markstein, 1994; Seifert et al., 2005) and first-generation versus non-first generation status (Pascarella, Pierson et al., 2004; Terenzini et al., 1996)" (Pascarella, 2006).

Hopefully, this study will function to shed light on the erroneous nature of cultural assumptions and the overarching effect of their existence on the academic success. The further examination of this issue and possible implementation of policies to support education around cultural racism and the eradication of it may lead to widespread equality and acceptance of all cultures within American society.

Conclusion

For many students, the results of this study ring true. "Consequently, interactions with a diverse spectrum of people, ideas, values, and perspectives that are different from

one's own and challenge one's assumed views of the world have the potential for important developmental impacts during college" (Pascarella, 2006). Their interactions with others greatly dictate their ability to remain successful students and ultimately, successful members of society. While many are strong and able to ignore the misconceptions of those around them, a number of students internalize these assumptions, and it ultimately reflects on their academic performance.

Much of the repair work falls on the shoulders of colleges and universities and their ability to ensure their students receive information about cultural differences. Further, these students should understand the impact of such differences and the need for sensitivity when it comes to interacting with others. Additionally, "if we are to fully capture the range and nature of these impacts, it will mean that our future research agenda on diversity will need to be broadened to include an array of experiences, interactions, and interventions more inclusive than just those based on race or ethnicity" (Pascarella, 2006). Until such research, cultural policies, supports, and informative practices are in place, the debilitating effects of cultural racism, will still be prevalent in the lives of low-income, first generation, African American college students.

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Appendix A: Participant Contact Permission

Natasha L. Ball

5193 Covington Highway ~ Decatur, Georgia 30035

September 4, 2012

Dr. Yolanda Watson Spiva, Executive Director
Project GRAD Atlanta
260 Peachtree Street, Suite 402
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Dr. Watson Spiva:

I hope this letter finds you well. As you know, I am completing a doctoral dissertation at Walden University entitled "Culture Matters: Examining the Influence of Cultural Racism on the Retention & Academic Success of Low-Income, First Generation, African American College Students." I would like your permission to utilize student email data for anonymous solicitation as survey participants for the purposes of my study.

The requested permission extends only to the initial survey solicitation and nothing beyond that. At no time will the student's identities or email address be printed within the dissertation proposal or the final dissertation. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you.

If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return it to me in the enclosed return envelope. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Natasha L. Ball, M.S.

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE
USE REQUESTED ABOVE:

Dr. Yolanda Watson Spiva
Date: 9/6/12

Appendix B: Participant Solicitation Email

Dear Student,

I hope this email finds you well. Based on the high school you attended and your participation in college readiness activities, you are being asked to participate in a survey. This survey should take 15 minutes to complete as part of research being conducted by a doctoral student at Walden University, for the purpose of completing the requirements of a Ph.D. in Public Policy & Administration. It is the researcher's hope that once the results of the survey have been found, potential higher education policies can be recommended and implemented to ensure academic success for all college students.

Having said that, please know that your participation in this study is voluntary, there will be no penalty for discontinuing or refusing participation. As such, due to the voluntary nature of this study, there will be no compensation for participation. The researcher has chosen to remain anonymous in an effort to avoid placing any influence on your answers or you feeling pressured to participate. This research will be closely supervised by Dr. Paul Rutledge, a professor at Walden University. The only minor risk of this study, is that you are being asked to share experiences and opinions that some might consider private. To protect your privacy as much as possible, an anonymous survey is being used. While your email address was used to send you this participation email, no data related to who you are has been saved or will be asked if you choose to participate.

Please be advised that you should keep/print a copy of this email for your personal records. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please feel free to contact: (612) 312-1210 or email address irb@waldenu.edu. Should you have any questions about this study prior to beginning the survey, you may send those to: dissertationsurveyquestions@gmail.com. Additionally, you may use the previous email address to indicate your interest in receiving a copy of this study after it is completed.

By clicking the link below and beginning the survey, you are providing your consent to participate. Remember that this is completely voluntary and for research purposes only. Please note that if you begin the survey and stop, you will be unable to start again.

Thank you in advance for your consideration in this matter.

Kind Regards,

The Researcher

Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

Please select the racial classification that best describes you:

□ Hispanic or Latino
□ American Indian or Alaska Native
□ Asian
□ Black or African American
□Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
□ White

Are you the first person in your family to attend college? □Yes □No

If not, please state the relationship of that person(s) to you (ex: sister):

Relationship: _____

How many people currently reside in your household?

□ 1-2   □ 3-4   □ 5-6   □ 7+

What is the annual income of the household in which you reside?

□ $0 - $25,000   □ $25,000 - $50,000
□ $50,000 - $75,000   □ $75,000 +

How many semesters have you been enrolled in college? _____

What is your current classification? _____

What is your college GPA? _____

Is your university predominantly:

□ Black or □ White □ Other

Appendix D: Permission to Utilize Scale

PsycTESTS®

Index of Race-Related Stress

PsycTESTS Citation:
Utsey, S. O., & Ponterotto, J. G. (1996). Index of Race-Related Stress [Database record].
Retrieved from
PsycTESTS. doi: 10.1037/t03869-000

Test Shown: Partial

Test Format:
Sixteen item measure; responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert score (0 = This has
never happened to me; 1 = This event happened, but did not bother me; 2 = This event
happened and I was slightly upset; 3 = This event happened and I was upset; 4 = This
event happened and I was extremely upset).

Source:
Utsey, Shawn O., & Ponterotto, Joseph G. (1996). Development and validation of the
Index of Race-Related Stress (IRRS). Journal of Counseling Psychology, Vol 43(4), 490-
501. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.43.4.490

Permissions:
Test content may be reproduced and used for non-commercial research and educational
purposes without seeking written permission. Distribution must be controlled, meaning
only to the participants engaged in the research or enrolled in the educational activity.
Any other type of reproduction or distribution of test content is not authorized without
written permission from the author and publisher.

Appendix E: Index of Race-Related Stress (Cultural Racism Subscale)

PsycTESTS™ is a database of the American Psychological Association

Note. **Responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = This has never happened to me; 1 = This event happened, but did not bother me; 2 = This event happened and I was slightly upset; 3 = This event happened and I was upset; 4 = This event happened and I was extremely upset).**

2. You notice that crimes committed by White people tend to be romanticized, whereas the same crime committed by a Black person is portrayed as savagery, and the Black person who committed it, as an animal.

3. You notice that when a Black person is killed by a White mob or policeman no one is sent to jail.

8. You notice that when Black people are killed by the police, the media informs the public of the victim's criminal record or negative information in their background, suggesting they got what they deserved.

13. You have observed that White kids who commit violent crimes are portrayed as "boys being boys," while Black kids who commit similar crimes are wild animals.

15. You seldom hear or read anything positive about Black people on radio, TV, newspapers, or in history books.

21. You have observed a double standard in the way the law or other systems of government (court, media, disciplinary committees, etc.) work (or don't work) when dealing with Blacks as opposed to Whites/non-Blacks.

23. White/non-Black people have been apologetic about the Japanese internment, Jewish holocaust, and other violations of human rights, but would prefer to forget about slavery, Jim Crowism, and other abuses of Black people.

29. You have observed the police treat White/non-Blacks with more respect and dignity than they do Blacks.

31. You have noticed that the public services are inadequate or nonexistent in Black communities (police, sanitation, street repairs, etc.).

34. You have heard Blacks constantly being compared with other immigrants and minorities in terms of what they have not achieved, in spite of having been in the U.S. for so much longer than the other groups.

35. You have observed situations where other Blacks were treated harshly or unfairly by Whites/non-Blacks because of their race.

37. You have heard reports of White people/non-Blacks who have committed crimes, and in an effort to cover up their deeds falsely reported that a Black man was responsible for the crime.

40. You notice that the media plays up those stories that cast Blacks in negative ways (child abusers, rapists, muggers, etc. [or as savages] Wild Man of 96th St., Wolf Pack, etc.) usually accompanied by a large picture of a Black person looking angry or disturbed.

42. You have heard it suggested that Black men have an uncontrollable desire to possess a White woman.

43. You have heard racist remarks or comments about Black people spoken with impunity by White public officials or other influential White people.

44. You have heard or seen other Black people express the desire to be White or to have White physical characteristics because they disliked being Black or thought it was ugly.

12. You did not receive a promotion you deserved; you suspect it was because you are Black.