

Spring 5-2011

The Identity Negotiation of Silence by Black Males in Predominantly White Spaces

Charles P. Alexander

Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Cpalexander3@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/gs_rp

Recommended Citation

Alexander, Charles P., "The Identity Negotiation of Silence by Black Males in Predominantly White Spaces" (2011). *Research Papers*. Paper 128.

http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/gs_rp/128

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at OpenSIUC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research Papers by an authorized administrator of OpenSIUC. For more information, please contact opensiuc@lib.siu.edu.

THE IDENTITY NEGOTIATION OF SILENCE BY BLACK MALES IN
PREDOMINANTLY WHITE SPACES

by

Charles P. Alexander

B.A., Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2009

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Masters of Arts Degree

Department of Speech Communication
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
May 2011

RESEARCH REPORT APPROVAL

THE IDENTITY NEGOTIATION OF SILENCE BY BLACK MALES IN
PREDOMINANTLY WHITE SPACES

By

Charles P. Alexander

A Research Report Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Masters of Arts

in the field of Speech Communication

Approved by:

Dr. Rachel Griffin, Chair

Dr. Ninanjana Bardhan

Dr. Derrick Williams

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
May 10, 2011

Copyright by Charles Alexander, 2011
All Rights Reserved

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my Lord and savior Jesus Christ for providing guidance and strength for me when I was in a time of need.

To my adviser, Rachel Griffin for thoroughly supporting me during my writing process and always keeping me focused and on track.

To my committee member, Nil Bardham for always having an open mind and being willing to make sacrifices for my academic progression.

To my brother and mentor, Derrick Williams for going beyond the call of duty to ensure my success as a man, a student, and an activist.

To my family and friends, who were always supportive of my beliefs and decisions.
I immensely thank you all.

I dedicate this work to the Black males and all minorities that struggle with their identity on a daily basis in today's society. I want you all to understand that your voice matters and you should never allow yourself to become silenced, speak out.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	i
CHAPTERS	
CHAPTER 1 – Introduction.....	1
CHAPTER 2 – Review of Literature	4
CHAPTER 3 – Identity Negotiation Theory.....	15
CHAPTER 4 – Methodology.....	19
CHAPTER 5 – Analysis/Discussion.....	22
CHAPTER 6 – Conclusion.....	36
REFERENCES	38
APPENDICIES	
Appendix A – Demographic Survey.....	43
Appendix B – Interview Questions.....	44
VITA	45

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I have been a student here at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) for six years; during my stay here I have been very observant with regard to the progression of Black men, since I am a Black man. Throughout this paper I will refer to people of color with African origins as Black or African American. I refer to both racial labels because people of color view their identity in many different ways. Given my identities, it is very easy for me to relate to the issues that we face on a daily basis. On college campuses across the nation negative stereotypes, overt and covert discrimination, and a history of prejudice have combined to create environments for Black male students often contextualized by social and psychological disengagement, substance abuse, depression, suicide, and other forms of violence (Cuyjet, 1997; Hopson & Orbe 2007; Jackson, 2004; Orbe, 2008; Stewart, 2008). From my perspective, it is imperative that Black males and all students share a comfortable learning environment. If this is done, I believe the African American retention rate at SIUC of 34.1 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) will increase and Black male students will become more involved with the dealings of the university. I do not look at this project only as a requirement for graduation but more as an action step in the direction towards the progression of Black men.

The primary purpose of this research report is to understand how Black males use silence in the classroom to negotiate their identities. From my perspective, silence is a major concern for Black men on predominantly White campuses; it seems that many Black men are silent because of their lack of involvement with people who do not look like them on a college campus. To examine the silence of Black male students, I first

provide a review of literature on conceptualizations of Black masculinity, Black males at predominantly White institutions, and meanings of silence. Then, I focus on identity negotiation to establish a framework to explain the silence of Black males at a predominantly White institution. Next, I provide an analysis of the interviews that I conducted with Black males on their uses of silence. To conclude, I discuss how my research contributes to the growing field of research about Black males and higher education.

This past year I resurrected an organization named the Black Male Roundtable (BMR). The organization is for all men to come and express their thoughts on different issues that they face in their everyday lives. During the roundtable discussions, I have listened to students discuss many issues that are holding Black men in particular back in society. These Black males discuss their inability to sometimes succeed due to what I interpret as systematic oppression that starts at the top levels of the institution and filters down to the students. Listening to their perspectives, I believe that their problems are rooted in their lived experiences and a lack of resources before they attend college. Hearing these Black males speak about their experiences at this university really made me pay attention to what I perceive as a disconnect between the Black male students and the predominantly White campus. In particular, during BMR meetings, many Black males expressed why they do not speak in class and why they become hesitant to speak in predominantly White classrooms. I believe it is problematic that there is not much research in the communication field on the silence of Black males in education even though Black males are having many difficulties within the collegiate educational system.

Therefore, my experiences at BMR have led me to examine the notion of silence in regards to Black men in predominantly White classrooms.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Conceptualizations of Black Masculinity

This section explores the numerous ways in which Black males express masculinity. I first examine Jackson and Dangerfield's (2004) perspective on the struggle of Black males to embody masculinity. Then I address many different perspectives of the "cool pose" (Cones & White, 2002; hooks, 2004; Majors & Billson, 1992).

Jackson and Dangerfield (2004) believe that Black masculine identities are created and negotiated in relation to societal struggle which includes four factors that affect the positionality of Black males: struggle, community, achievement, and independence. From my perspective and experiences on a predominantly White campus, having to cope with elements of struggle on a daily basis can have a major effect on one's psyche as a human being. "Struggle can be understood as the effort to seek out portions to fulfill our conscious needs and desires" (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2004, p. 205). For Black male students this means that we are constantly piecing together our identity to negotiate who we are in certain spaces.

The second factor, community, refers to the way that masculinity becomes validated; in order for us to understand who we are as Black men, our community must support our actions. From my lived experiences, I can attest that community is extremely important in the Black culture because many of us have the mentality that we must work together in order to reach higher levels in society. If the community does not understand our actions, then we are usually viewed negatively as an outsider. "The value of black manhood is what it gives to the rest of the community. If one is unproductive then the

community must question his value” (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2004, p. 207). The next factor is achievement. I believe that achievement is what many people in society reach for; we all want to accomplish our individual goals. Achievement in the Black community is a place where many of us fall short, not because we lack the intellect or capabilities, but because we lack resources and confidence. “To speak of achievement and independence, for instance, one must at some point address the issue of potentiality and ask: what are the possibilities of my achievement or of me being independent?” (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2004, p. 205).

From growing up in different Black urban environments, I did not know many Black people in the community that went to college which to me indicates a reason why achievement is a major portion of the struggle for Black males to develop a progressive sense of manhood. The next factor that contributes to Black masculinity is independence. Jackson and Dangerfield (2004) believe, “Independence is about self-authorization, autonomy, and freedom expression” (p. 138). From my perspective, if a Black male does not believe he is independent, it affects our masculine identity. In my household the man is viewed as the head of the household, and when there are factors that disallow this identity our sense of independence can be affected.

Majors and Billson’s (1992) scholarly work on Black masculinity and sociological coping mechanisms resulted in the “cool pose.” According to Majors and Billson (1992), the cool pose refers to a set of social postures, clothing styles, social roles, behaviors, social scripts, and attitudes that inform a style of speech and cultural expression. These scripts are used by Black males as coping mechanisms in predominantly White settings as a way to maintain their pride, dignity, and respect

(Majors & Billson, 1992). On college campuses, the cool pose might surface when Black males encounter people from different races in the classroom or in campus organizations.

Cones and White, in *Black Man Emerging* (2006), find the cool pose problematic in its “over reliance on suppressing emotion” (p. 93). They further add, “Bottling up powerful emotions over an extending period can lead to pent up frustrations that can explode” (p.93). Instead Cones and White (2006) offer a multidimensional understanding of the cool pose that does not trap Black men in narrow definitions of masculinity. Cones and White (2006) believe that Black men should not define themselves as the negative stereotypical characteristics of Black males, but instead appear as positive and progressive.

bell hooks also offers an insightful approach to the cool pose in her book *We Real Cool* (2004) by calling for a rejection of traditional Black masculine roles. According to hooks (2004), traditional Black masculine roles can include aggressiveness, violence, and defiance of rules. She writes, “negative stereotypes about the nature of Black masculinity continue to over determine the identities Black males are allowed to fashion for themselves” (p. 8). From my perspective, I believe bell hooks is referring to the mundane portrayals of the Black male image that include depictions of Black men as being hyper-masculine or violent. These characteristics can force Black men to think that our character is pre-defined, but in actuality we can foster different personalities and traits that form our masculine roles. If a Black young man does not abide by traditional masculine rules then he is usually ostracized in the Black community. This idea of holding on to stereotypical masculine roles can sometimes force young men to perform an identity that they really are not comfortable with (Alexander, 2006). From previous

experience, this act or performance is often portrayed only to stay in good graces with peers.

Relating to these discussions of the cool pose, I remember having to make particular choices to perform certain masculine roles to be accepted. For example, I sometimes had to talk or dress a particular way to fit in with the majority. Making these choices was sometimes very stressful for me as a young Black male. As hooks (2004) discusses, the highly perpetuated media and societal images of Black men influence how young Black men form their identity. According to hooks (2004), these stereotypes demonstrate how Black men are living in a society that does not want them to succeed and offers narrow identities for them to enact. Addressing mediated images in the paragraph that follows, I will provide insight on the perpetuation of the negative Black male image in mainstream media.

Ronald Jackson's book, *Scripting the Black Male Body* (2006) discusses the Black male image in the media. Jackson (2006) believes, "Because mass media and popular culture is predominantly littered with these negative images, it appears they are unwilling to appear Black bodies positively, and this effects everyday looking relations" (p. 2). Hopson and Orbe (2007) also make a valid point by stating, "Dehumanizing stereotypes continue to situate the 20th-century Black man as a threat" (p. 7). I believe that Hopson and Orbe (2007) are referring to stereotypes not only in the media, but also in the larger society as well. The negative representations of Black masculinity in the media and beyond play a major part in the disparity of Black males who achieve and identify with academic success and achievement (Alexander, 2004). According to Alexander (2004) even though there are Black males that strive to achieve success, we are constantly

struggling to separate the negative mediated image from the reality. Furthermore, I believe that identities are influenced by the media and are enacted in many different facets of life including the educational system. This next section will discuss the experiences of Black males while attending predominantly White institutions to illustrate how Black males are struggling in context of education.

Black Males at Predominantly White Institutions

Merida (2007) reports that about half of Black males are not finishing high school in most major U.S. cities. Black male high school students are disproportionately assigned to special education, receive school suspensions, and perform more poorly on standardized tests than any other demographic group (Merida, 2007). With such inconsolable data on Black males in high school, it should be noted and celebrated that there are Black males graduating from degree granting universities. The percentage of Black males graduating from universities has increased from 26 percent to 36 percent in the last 15 years, which is still much lower than rates of graduation among Black women and all White students (*The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 2010).

While many celebrate the increase of Black male university enrollment, I am a bit cautious and want to understand the reasons that Black males are not graduating once they arrive at college. The nationwide college graduation rate for all Black students is low at 43 percent (*The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 2010). This figure is 20 percentage points below the 63 percent rate for White students (*The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 2010). The previous statistics on Black male graduation rates are disappointing, but they show us that there is an issue in need of solutions. As I research Black men in education and listen to the stories of Black males at the BMR, they have

educated me on the different struggles that Black males continuously strive to overcome. Previous research has shown that this problem does not begin in college, Black men are suffering in high school as well.

Building our understanding, many Black students encounter cultural barriers which result in lonesomeness, isolation, and eventual withdrawal from college (Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenberg, Klukken, Pollio, Thomas, & Thompson, 2004). Predominantly White institutions of higher education, in fact, often devote intense efforts to minority student recruitment but find that subsequent retention is a significant problem (Davis et al., 2004). “Many Black students are not used to being in classes with large numbers of white students they encounter on a predominantly white college campuses” (Davis et al., 2004, p. 422). From my experience, attending a predominantly White university can present many different challenges for African American first generation college students. In addition to lacking resources such as a strong support system like that of non-first generation college students, many must also simultaneously adjust to significant shifts in terms of racial diversity (Orbe, 2003). Cuyjet (2009) is also concerned about Black males in education in “Invisible Men –Almost: The Diminution of African American Men in Higher Education” in which he addresses the decline of Black males in post-secondary education. Cuyjet (2009) draws from the classical work of Ralph Ellison’s novel *Invisible Man* (1952), which addresses social and intellectual struggles facing African Americans during the twentieth century such as race and identity. Ellison’s (1952) novel depicts the journey of an African American man known as the protagonist who believes that he is socially invisible. The novel starts with the young man coming into conflict with White culture in search of education (Ellison, 1952). As pointed out in Ellison’s (1952) novel

and Cuyjet's (2009) book chapter, Black male invisibility on predominantly White universities is an ongoing issue.

I believe predominantly White social settings can create pressures and expectations for Black students to perform which can take longer than what is expected while students adjust to their new surroundings. Some Black males are never able to cope with society's stereotypes of Black men while attending a predominantly White institution, the long term effect is leaving college before they are able to obtain a degree (Cuyjet, 1997). In Cuyjet's (1997) article "African American Men on College Campuses: Their Needs and Their Perceptions," he states, "Among those African American men who do make it to college, a significant portion of the group are burdened with what can be generally characterized as an "underpreparedness" for the academic challenges of postsecondary education" (p. 7).

Another factor many Black male college students face is the adjustment to college culture (Owens, Lacey, Rawls, & Holbert-Quince, 2010). First-generation African American male students who are entering colleges and universities across the country may also need extensive support in the development and implementation of their career plans (Owens et al., 2010). This is due to a lack of information and exposure to college environments, a lack that significantly contributes to the vulnerability of these students (Hertel, 2002; Orbe, 2003). There is a tendency for ethnic minority students, especially African Americans, to experience resistance, alienation, and a culture that is dissimilar to the one to which they are accustomed (Hurd, 2000). As a result, they lack a sense of belonging, and this lack of belonging presents a challenge to achievement of their scholastic goals and to their graduation (Hurd, 2000). From my perspective, these factors

that contribute to the disparity of Black males in college raise the need to consider the silence of Black males in these institutions. In the next section, I discuss the meanings of silence to map out why the silence of Black males should be considered, and the ways that silence affects Black males in college. My research on silence was influenced by attending weekly discussions at the Black Male Roundtable (BMR). The Black males that attend often talk about their experiences in majority White classrooms and why they hesitate to speak. The BMR is an outlet for Black males to overcome their silence and express their thoughts on issues that they face on campus or in their personal lives. Upon hearing about the lived experiences of Black males, I became convinced that silence is a real problem for Black males at predominantly White institutions.

Meanings of Silence

In U.S. - American society, we have our routine ways of thinking when it pertains to communication and silence. To be silent in the presence of others may well lead to tension and unfriendly regard, since an unwillingness to talk is often interpreted as an attitude or hostility (Barbara, 1958). In essence, U.S. - American culture is one that is based on communication and speaking, and if you do not speak out you are often viewed in a negative light (McKenzie, 2004). Johannesen (1974) indicates that when a person is not speaking, in Western culture they can be assumed to be worthless or unfriendly. It has become normal to assume that a person is not speaking because they are not comfortable with discussing the particular subject or because they are not knowledgeable about that current topic. It is rare in U.S. - American society for us to consider the underlying reason for a person not speaking or for us to be concerned about why a person is not speaking. Foucault (1978) provides very thought provoking insight on the implications of silence.

He wrote, “silence itself is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say” (p. 27). Foucault (1978) challenges the mundane definitions and assumptions about silence while expressing that there is not just one reason why people speak or do not speak. As we can see, silence is an ambiguous but at the same time fine-tuned phenomenon, and in cross-cultural encounters it can have a subtle effect on misunderstandings or miscommunications (Nakane, 2005).

Student silence is typically a concern for instructors who encourage oral participation from students or believe oral participation is necessary for learning (Meyer, 2008). Studies have shown that in multicultural classrooms the students that are members of a minority ethnic group are more silent in comparison to the White students (Meyer, 2008; Nakane, 2007). It can be argued that some instructors do not really think of silence as people being uncomfortable in their environment. For example, if an instructor assigned a reading for class and a particular student does not speak, they may genuinely think the student did not read for this class period. In actuality, the student might not have been comfortable with the article or there might be personal reasons why that student is not speaking. I can recall my sophomore year when a topic came up in class about Black people and I was the only Black male in class. From my perspective, everybody in class looked at me including the instructor to answer the question on behalf of the entire African American race. That situation made me very uncomfortable and I feel that it forced me to be silent. After this experience, I developed a sense of nervousness anytime my class was comprised of majority White people. Ochoa and Pineda (2008) state, “Students of Color may have experiences of being treated as “native informants” who are

asked to “educate” the class on the histories, experiences, or opinions of an entire group of people” (p. 47). Applying their insight, I developed a fear of speaking because I was put on the spot without having the proper preparation to answer questions on behalf of the entire African American population.

I was also hesitant to speak in class because I did not think students in a predominantly White classroom would relate to my lived experiences. Coming from a majority Black high school and going into a predominantly White environment is a major adjustment (Orbe, 2003). Similar to my experiences, it can take time for some Black male students to become comfortable in a new educational environment. I believe that my first bad experience in a predominantly White classroom effected my ability to speak for the following few years of my undergraduate career. Reflecting on my experiences and the experiences that I have learned about during discussions at the BMR, it is unfortunate that in our U.S. - American culture we often view silence in a negative way instead of being open to different views of silence.

From my experience, Black men are not only silent in the classroom but at the university as a whole as well. Not only are Black males often silent, we also experience being silenced. We sometimes feel silenced because we realize that we lack support and people are not listening to our needs. I believe being silent is a choice for some, but a necessity for others. Being silenced can be caused by people not understanding the Black culture or making assumptions about Black culture. I believe silence and silencing can be mitigated with more understanding and caring about a student’s well being. I do not understand why a person would even have a desire to speak and express their thoughts if they feel that the masses are not listening or simply do not care about their thoughts. A

simple solution to fight the silencing of Black males is through listening and caring, I think that people are receptive when they realize the person has a genuine concern for their thoughts and feelings.

Drawing from previous research (Foucault, 1968; Johannesen, 1974; Nakane, 2005), I want to conceptualize silence for this study as Black men not engaging in conversation and being hesitant to speak on particular topics. From my experiences in mostly White classrooms, silence happens when Black males encounter cultural, social, and personal factors that can lead to communication withdrawal. Therefore, I designed this study to raise awareness about the silence of Black men at predominantly White universities, and for students and instructors to become knowledgeable of the many implications of silence. I want people to understand that there are many issues that Black males face when attending predominantly White universities, and there should be special attention focused towards Black male students and all minority students of color for whom silence might be a struggle. I do believe all students have issues while attending college, but Black male students in particular are having problems that are not being solved. In the next section, I explore identity negotiation theory in order to present a framework for understanding how Black males' identity can affect their process of coping in new environments.

CHAPTER 3

IDENTITY NEGOTIATION THEORY

This section on identity negotiation provides insight on how important the negotiation of identities is in context of Black males as ethnic minorities in society. Orbe (2008) writes, “Identities simultaneously revolve around both individual and social aspects of identification. This primary dialectical tension, then, reflects the struggle between an individual (personal) and social (collective) self-concept” (p. 84). From my perspective, as Black men, we have a very hard time negotiating our identities in predominantly White spaces as individuals and as part of a collective group. This struggle is not always caused by our White colleagues or peers, but also by the history of slavery and the influence of the media. When growing up surrounded by majority Black people, sometimes the only knowledge Black people have about White people is through the media and what others might tell us. Likewise, sometimes the only knowledge that White people have about Black people is through the media and what others might tell them. In these circumstances, identity negotiation is very important on a predominantly White campus because everyday we must negotiate our identities to racially adjust to our environments (Orbe, 2003). The process of identity negotiation can involve when we speak, our nonverbals, the words we use, who we are with, and if we feel judged or accepted. Before exploring how I use identity negotiation theory to understand the silence of Black males within predominantly White universities, it is useful to consider the ways in which communication scholars have developed this theory.

Stella Ting-Toomey’s (1988) scholarly work on identity negotiation provides a framework for understanding human social interaction across different cultures. Ting

Toomey's (1988) work on face-negotiation initiated the development of identity negotiation theory. Ting-Toomey's (1988) face-negotiation theory illustrates how people from different cultures manage conflict in order to maintain face. According to Ting-Toomey (1988), face serves as a descriptive symbol of self-image that permeates all factors of social life. Thus, face is the image of the self that is negotiated in conversations with others. Facework takes place during interpersonal interaction; self-face and other-face are used to negotiate possible conflict between individuals from various cultures (Ting-Toomey, 1988; Ting-Toomey, 1994). Self-face refers to an individual expressing their self-identity and their personality to others, while other-face refers to adapting or assimilating to the identity of someone else. Self-identity is important in interpersonal interactions, since people negotiate their identities differently across cultures (Ting-Toomey, 1994). The scholarship on face and facework proposed by Ting-Toomey (1988; 1994) forms an important framework to understand self-image and identity negotiation. More specifically, the development of multiple aspects of identity in an environment that may be hostile to certain characteristics of one or all of these socio-cultural identities presents psychosocial identity challenges for Black students, particularly for those in predominantly White educational contexts (Stewart, 2008).

Ting-Toomey's (1988; 1994) research sparked interest in the negotiation of cultural identity amongst various cultures. How we perceive our sense of self and how we wish others to perceive us is central to the field of communication and communicative experiences (Ting-Toomey, 1993). Building upon identity negotiation, Ronald Jackson (2002b) cites Ting-Toomey's (1988; 1994) work as being a cornerstone in studying identity across cultures. Jackson (2002b) offers, "The 'negotiation of identity' is a general

concept that has been in existence for as long as there have been intergroup and interpersonal differences; however, the terminology as we know it today first emerged in the field of communication via the work of Stella Ting-Toomey” (p. 359). Jackson (2002b) discusses that this theory of identity negotiation did not start when Ting-Toomey (1988) developed it as a theory, but rather people have been dealing with negotiating identities since the beginning of humanity. I agree with Jackson’s (2002b) view, because sometimes we do not think that issues exist within society until someone writes about it or develops a theory. I believe that there are numerous issues affecting people in society that have not been academically documented at all, but people still have to cope with them.

Jackson (2002b) cites identity as “the primary crucible of the twenty-first century” (p. 359). Jackson’s (1999) work provides further interpretation of the communicative process of identity negotiation. He contends that cultural identities are negotiated through interactions between people and groups, yet like Du Bois (1903) argues that the exchange is often more injurious for marginalized groups than majority groups in society. In short, our identities are shaped and molded during interactions with others. We use others as guideposts for normative behavior (Jackson, 2002b). Useful for this study, Jackson provides an interpretive language for studying the negotiation experiences of marginalized groups when interacting with dominant cultural norms (Jackson, 1999). W.E.B. Du Bois landmark work on “double consciousness” found in *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903) defines and highlights the duality of African American cultural consciousness that connects between both African American and European American identity boundaries. Interestingly, Du Bois (1903) and Jackson’s (2002b) work although

one hundred years apart, still draws a direct connection between identity negotiation and cultural identity. Du Bois (1903) refers to his notion as double consciousness, but they both inform identity negotiation theory.

Jackson's (1999; 2002b) scholarship on identity negotiation is useful theory for examining the meanings and implications of Black male silence in the classroom. Ting-Toomey's (1988) initial focus was on intercultural conflict and how people from different cultures managed their identity in unfamiliar environments, however, she did not focus on one particular ethnicity. Ting-Toomey's (1988) early work, identity negotiation theory, has been mainly used to study the dynamics of culture in today's society. For example, Croucher (2008) uses identity negotiation theory to explain how Muslims construct their culture in France, while Xiao (2009) uses identity negotiation theory to define intercultural personhood in the individual and the collective group. Ting-Toomey's work has mainly focused on intercultural communication and people being able to relate to each other from different backgrounds and cultures. Her books, *Communicating Across Cultures* (Ting-Toomey, 1999) and *Understanding Intercultural Communication* (Chung & Ting-Toomey, 2007) both speak to her passion for encouraging intercultural communication. Her work and Ronald Jackson's (1999; 2002b) work have paved the way for me to write about how identity negotiation in relation to silence affects the progression of Black males. For this study, the theory of identity negotiation is used specifically to examine the uses of silence in predominantly White classrooms by Black males. The next section provides an explanation of the methodological procedure I used to conduct my research.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Scope of Study

I selected Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) for my study because this is where I attended school for my undergraduate and graduate studies. By collecting narratives at a school I am familiar with, I am using my own journey as a reflective guide while learning even more about the progress and struggles related to Black males and education. SIUC has a strong record with the enrollment of Black males, but the record for retention is poor. For example, currently there are 3,558 Black males enrolled at SIUC, but only a 34.1 percent of all Black students graduate within five years (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). I believe that interviewing Black male students at SIUC about silence will provide an understanding of what Black males need in order to progress and succeed in predominantly White spaces.

Research Design

Interviews have been found to be a useful tool in collecting rich data from research subjects (Fontana & Frey, 2002; Hunt, 2010;), which is why I chose to use qualitative interviews. Interviewing provided Black males with an opportunity to share their experiences in a detailed manner and speak candidly about issues pertaining to silence in the classroom. Hunt's (2010) article, "Active Waiting: Habits and the Practice of Conducting Qualitative Research," was very useful for insight on interviewing and expertise on qualitative research. From Hunt's (2010) article, I learned that qualitative research is a way to gain a clear understanding about one's subjects from interviewing. Interviews helped me to understand the lived experiences of Black male students at

SIUC. Since I decided to interview current students and use a tape recorder, there were certain guidelines that I had to follow. I first had to get clearance from the Human Subject Committee (HSC) in order to conduct interviews. HSC ensures that all studies involving human beings are done in a ethical manner. Once I received HSC approval, I began recruiting participants at the Black Male Roundtable (BMR) meetings. After I received the names and email addresses of those interested, I sent out an email solicitation and a consent form.

I conducted the interviews in SIUC Morris Library meeting rooms, which are very quiet and personable spaces. Before each interview started, I explained the scope of my study and the confidentiality of the interviews. All of the interviewees were given pseudonyms, they completed a demographic survey (See Appendix A) and they signed consent forms before the interview began. When I began the interviews, I reiterated the topic of my research. During the interviews the participants responded to questions (See Appendix B) such as, “Do you ever feel that you cannot express your personal experiences while being in a classroom setting?” and “When you are silent in the classroom, what influences your decisions not to speak?” The duration of the interviews ranged between 11-23 minutes, the average among all seven interviewees was 15.63 minutes. The participants’ pseudonym names are Kevin, Jason, Craig, Terry, Stan, Dennis, and Reggie. Some of the men provided more information for this study than others, but all of the interviews were useful.

Upon completion of all of the interviews, the next step was the tedious process of transcribing each interview. After I transcribed each interview, I started the coding process. The coding process consisted of reading each interview several times to generate

a codebook. My codebook started with five codes, but due to enough relevant information in the first four, I did not have to use the last one. The four remaining codes were broken down by color and also sub-codes to help me find useful information that informs my analysis. The codes are: (1) Black Male identity, (2) Black Male struggles, (3) Black male comfort at a predominantly White university, and (4) the effect of stereotypes. According to Lindlof and Taylor's (2002) book *Qualitative Communication Research Methods*, all forms of qualitative methods are essential to understanding research. "Regardless of when they take place, categorization (codes) and coding are essential to making sense of qualitative research (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 214). While coding the transcripts, I looked for examples of the codes to thematize the participants responses to my questions about silence in the classroom. In the section that follows, I present an analysis of the interviews of seven Black male students. This analysis section seeks to understand how identity negotiation theory plays a major role in the use of silence by Black males in predominantly White classrooms.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

As mentioned throughout this research report, identity negotiation theory is a vital tool for investigating the usage of silence in predominantly White classrooms by Black males. Therefore, I employ this theoretical framework to analyze data collected through the interviews. I had the opportunity to interview seven Black male students whose voices illustrate the key themes associated with my research. My analysis is guided by the following research question: How does identity negotiation play a role in the silence of Black males in predominantly White classrooms? The analysis is divided into four sections according to the major codes that emerged: (1) Black male identity, (2) Black male struggle, (3) Black male comfort at a predominantly White university and (4) the effect of stereotypes. By analyzing these themes, the voices of Black males are highlighted to explore their use of silence.

Black Male Identity

This section explores the characteristics of Black male identity negotiation within the context of the African American experience in predominantly White classrooms. The characteristics discovered will demonstrate how Black males view themselves and how they feel others might perceive them.

When discussing the issue of identity, participants were eager to share how they perceived themselves. For example Kevin, a 20-year-old sophomore, had this to share: “I’m very head strong and confident. I know how to speak up to a teacher regardless, but I do not want to be perceived as the mad Black man.” Terry, a 21-year-old junior, says, “I am not saying I speak differently, but White people may not think I am as intelligent as

they are from the way I speak.” Kevin and Terry’s statements show that Black males are struggling to be themselves because of stereotypes such as the “mad Black man.” From my perspective, the mad Black man is perceived as being loud, aggressive, and sometimes violent. From Terry’s statement, it seems that he has a pre-conceived notion of what White people think about Black people. It seems that he is trying to negotiate his voice in a way that is acceptable to White people. This is a prime example of identity negotiation in the classroom atmosphere. Orbe (2008) refers to Terry’s feelings as struggling between his individual (personal) dialect and the social (collective) perception of his dialect. This is a tension that many minorities have to negotiate when assimilating to new environments (Orbe, 2003; Orbe, 2008;). Consequently, Black males are hesitant to speak or show confidence due to historically negative perceptions associated with their identity. Kevin’s comment supports a long struggle that Black males still face on a daily basis. Too often Black males’ passionate speech is misinterpreted as “angry” “confrontational” and “bitter” by dominant groups (hooks, 2004). This is no more apparent than in classroom settings where Black males, like Kevin, are sometimes stereotyped.

As seen in Kevin’s and Terry’s statements, they have learned to speak openly in classes, yet they remain cautious of the stigma in speaking too candidly. I think it is important to understand how Black males negotiate their cultural identity in classroom settings where they can easily become marginalized and silenced. Kevin states, “I have realized being a Black man is hard, it is hard! A lot of Black men are silent because of the daily pressure.” Jackson (2002a) contends that power is an underlying signifier in how different cultures interact. The cultural exchange amongst Kevin and his classroom peers

is based upon privilege and power. Jackson's (1999) understanding of identity situates Kevin and Terry's struggles to interact as people from a historically marginalized group with members from a majority group in power.

I believe Jackson (1999) is correct when he offers the idea that cultural exchanges amongst marginalized and privileged groups are usually not equal due to power differences. Power affords privileges for White students in the context of racial identity such as not having to think about if their answer will be right or wrong or answering questions on behalf of their entire race. Dennis, a 19-year-old freshman, explains: "I feel like I am in the shadows of White people, I think to myself, what do I have to do to get out the shadow? I do not want to be here." Dennis' statement highlights how he feels as a Black male in comparison to White people. It seems that he believes that he is inferior to others. In alignment with Jackson (1999) I interpret Dennis' sentiment as an indication of people who represent marginalized identities having to negotiate their experiences while interacting with dominant cultural norms. From my perspective, I believe that students from majority cultures are more likely to speak out because they do not carry the same burden as minority students such as Kevin, Terry, and Dennis. With Kevin and the other participants there are numerous factors that contribute to Black male identity construction, and many times it starts with their lived environments. Kevin points this out:

Yea, I am from Chicago, the city, the doggy dog world type of area. I am from an area where Black people had to fight, had to physically fight. There was no such thing of talking where I am from, you were labeled as a wimp if you talked about a situation.

Kevin says that in his neighborhood there was not much talking at all, you had to fight to prove yourself. I grew up in many poverty stricken Black neighborhoods and this behavior that Kevin speaks about was very common in those environments. Some of the Black students that attend SIUC are also from these types of urban environments. Often when Black students come to a predominantly White university their mentality and identity has to change to fit their new environment. This too is an example of identity negotiation. I am not saying that all Black people had to fight, but for students like Kevin and myself who come from these urban neighborhoods, fighting rather than talking was a way of survival. Many times in these urban environments talking showed signs of weakness. When Black male students come from these environments and attend college, they may not be accustomed to talking and expressing their thoughts. Identity negotiation in this sense plays a major role in students adapting to a college classroom atmosphere, where talking and expressing your thoughts is very necessary.

The fascinating part of my interview with Kevin was his ability to articulate the steps he had taken to negotiate his urban lived experiences. "Many Black people live their past and let their past determine their future," states Kevin. I interpret his comment as explaining how Black people sometimes have a difficult time assimilating to new environments. From personal experience, I too had a difficult time adjusting from my cultural background to a completely new environment. The pressure of contemplating on a daily basis what to say and how to act can force many Black students to shutdown and not speak in certain environments at all. For myself, the pressure of speaking in class on behalf of an entire race was very stressful and hard. I often contemplated my thoughts in class to make sure that I did not say something that would further perpetuate negative

stereotypes of Black males. This feeling is what many Black students have to deal with in majority White classrooms.

From Kevin's comments we can also see how self-concept plays a crucial part in his identity negotiation. As previously mentioned, self-concept is not only comprised of one's view of self but it is also based upon others' perceptions of an individual (Ting-Toomey, 1994). Terry says,

I feel like I am in the shadows to White people since we are classified, so quite naturally their going to classify me. I believe when we are out there on campus White people always have a perception of me.

From Terry's statement, I interpret that he feels that he is constantly being judged or watched. An important component of the college transition and development process is being able to integrate successfully into new academic and social environments (Tinto, 1993). From my perspective, feeling judged would likely interfere with the ability of students who feel like Terry does to successfully integrate. Next, I examine different struggles encountered by Black males via their lived experiences at a predominantly White institution.

Black Male Struggles

African Americans are faced with many struggles that are influenced by growing up in a White male dominated society (hooks, 2004). Some struggles that I faced when deciding to attend college was leaving my lived environment, leaving my support system, and assimilating to a completely new environment. Concerned about this issue, I asked the interviewees: "Do you ever feel silenced as a Black male in a mostly White classroom, if so why?" In response Terry said, "It is best to be silent in a White male

dominated world.” This mentality of “being silent” applies to Black men in the larger society and in classrooms as well. For 21-year-old junior named Jason, he finds it difficult to speak in majority White classrooms. He adds,

If I do disagree with something I have to make sure I say it right or word it right. It is like you always have to be on your P’s and Q’s when you are inside of a class with other races. You have to be on point, if you are not on point you will look like a fool.

Jason’s concern of not wanting to appear as if he is unintelligent amongst peers of a different culture is known as “face-saving,” a cultural negotiation strategy that is related to identity negotiation (Ting-Toomey, 1994). Jason seems to often find himself, like so many other Black students, as a single representative of his race in predominantly White spaces (Davis et al., 2004). Therefore, Jason feels pressured to present a version of Black male identity that works outside of perceived stereotypes. He is trying to overcome stereotypes such as, Black men are not smart, are lazy, and do not value education (hooks, 2004; Jackson, 2006). As Ting-Toomey (1994) notes, Jason is engaging in cultural “facework” (p. 307), since he is attempting to communicate a sense of cultural dignity by representing Black males as intelligent which counters the stereotypical perception of Black males as unintelligent. Dennis adds, “You are in the spotlight like are you going to graduate? It is harder to attend a predominantly White university and focus on your grades. Yes it is harder actually!” Dennis’ thoughts voice the pressure of dealing with others stereotypical perceptions and still having to succeed academically.

The Black male students who interviewed noted many struggles that they face. Despite the struggles encountered, these students refuse to give up and they lean upon

their lived experiences to cope at SIUC. The balancing of two cultures simultaneously as shared by the participants has historical relevance. Returning to Du Bois (1903) concept of “double consciousness” best describes their struggles to negotiate their lived cultural identities in a predominantly White college environment as Black men. From double consciousness, the idea of “twoness” emerges which demonstrates how Black males can be positioned between two cultures. Illustrating this phenomena, Kevin shares: “I dealt with personal problems like having to eat restaurant food for a week because the lights were off or my mother waiting to pay the gas bill. So personal problems of survival.” In this example, Kevin is navigating the struggles of his cultural lived experiences while also trying to focus on his education. Such stories of Black males’ struggles are real and many people do not understand.

From my perspective, it is important for instructors to understand that Black male students are faced with many obstacles and are dealing with these struggles in the classroom. Upon leaving the classroom, there are also issues that they face in their college community that relate to identity negotiation. Jason expressed frustration while being in the local community of Carbondale; he describes an incident during a outing:

It was a loose bottle of vodka at a liquor store I was at and the bottle fell on the floor. Once that happened the White cashier called security and it was not my fault, they made the situation very extreme. I felt like that had something to do with race. Instead of just having a regular conversation or asking me what happened, he was yelling at me and decided to call security. If I decided to react the way I was feeling then the situation would have escalated and I would have been the bad guy.

Jackson (1999) would refer to Jason's situation as cultural identities being negotiated through interactions. At this moment in the store, Jason and the cashier were both negotiating who they each represented in that situation. Jason believed he had to hold back his voice because of his identity and that race plays an intricate role in him being accepted in this majority White community. I do not believe Jason is sure if the cashier would have responded the same way if it was a White guy, but the fact that Jason believed the situation was racially influenced embodies significance. For a Black man to suggest that his actions are viewed differently because of his skin color is problematic within itself. This next theme addresses Black males' comfort with attending a majority White institution.

Black Males' Comfort at a Predominantly White University

"Are Black males comfortable and satisfied with their identity at a majority White university?" This is a question that I presented to my participants. Selecting a college to attend is a major decision for Black males. Having to make the decision to attend a majority White university can yield a lot of pressure. Speaking from personal experience, it was very hard to leave my comfort zone of a Black high school and come to a completely new environment. I was concerned with whether or not I would have the same support that I enjoyed during my high school years. In addition, I was also aware that most of the students would not look like me, therefore, I felt that I would be alone.

Having to relocate to a small southern town was another difficult issue that I had to face. Several of the interviewees shared a parallel narrative of experiencing social apprehension due to the racial environment often found in small southern rural towns. Stan is a 18-year-old freshman who speaks about his decision to attend school in southern

Illinois, “I felt uncomfortable coming to SIUC because it is southern and they do still have that southern mentality. They also still throw out the N word sometimes.” Along with Stan’s comment, Jason was reminded of a national issue of racism in a small rural town in Louisiana. “When I thought about attending SIUC, I automatically thought of the situation with Jena 6. I knew they were in a majority White town.”

From my perspective, both Jason and Stan’s comments speak directly to identity negotiation theory (Jackson, 1999; Jackson, 2002b). They were both struggling with negotiating their identities in a comfortable cultural environment in comparison to coming to an often very uncomfortable environment for Black males such as a Southern town. Such sentiments conjure up memories for me when I think about my own experiences here. When I first came to SIUC, I was told to stay away from a sundown town called Anna, which is not located too far from the university. I was told that the word Anna is a acronym for “Aint No Niggers Allowed.” Once I heard this statement, I was very cautious of my surroundings in southern Illinois. I immediately put my guard up and I did not feel comfortable going to certain places alone. These are similar feelings that Stan and Jason felt when deciding to attend SIUC. It seems that all of us were concerned about what it means to embody Black masculinity in a southern town.

Both Stan and Jason’s comments also reflect an uncomfortable feeling they harbor because of racism and the history of racist actions in southern towns. While these Black males attend SIUC, they have come to the realization that at some point racism will affect their experience. For example, Stan states,

When I was in the trueblood cafeteria eating with a few of my White friends, I sat down and the White girl across from me looked at me crazy and I knew she was

uncomfortable. She then looked at her friend across from me and said why is he sitting here.

Stan's comment is the reality of different forms of racism that Black men are dealing with on a daily basis. I believe that this is another hard struggle to deal with mentally for any student. I believe that having to excel academically as a college student is enough pressure, but to worry about racism is an added stress that no student should have to deal with. From my perspective, enduring the adversity of racism that often requires students of color to negotiate their identities can be quite overwhelming for any student.

What I discovered from the interviews was a sense of Black male students not feeling inclined to speak about race issues and more importantly individuals not understanding why some Black male students do not speak. I received candid responses to the following question: If you are silent in the classroom, what influences your decision not to speak? Kevin responded by saying,

We talk about a whole bunch of isms and what makes me feel uncomfortable is when White people cannot ask us questions. They do not understand about racism or they think there is no such thing of racism.

From Kevin's statement it seems that he is hesitant to speak because White people do not understand that racism still exists and they do not ask him questions to clarify why he feels that it does exist. Terry also explains his unwillingness to discuss issues of race: "I do not really think White people care that much about what Black people have been through so I stay away from certain questions." Kevin and Terry's stories refer to others not understanding their identity and struggle. It seems they are hesitant to speak because

they believe that in order for people to understand their identity, they must negotiate their surroundings. From my perspective, this mentality shared by the interviewees reflects how they perceive White people as not being willing or perhaps capable of understanding the Black struggle. Reggie, an 18-year-old freshman, shared a different experience having attended a mostly White high school. He says:

I feel comfortable at SIUC, it all depends on the type of high school a person came from. I went to Mt. Caramel with mostly White people, so I am kind of used to being around other races. Maybe that is why I do not feel the same way as other Black folks that came from the inner city. I grew up in the suburbs that was predominantly White.

Interestingly, Reggie believes he did not have to negotiate his identity when he came to SIUC because he was already comfortable in being in a mostly White environment. It is very fascinating how Black males' experiences are different depending on where they grew up and who they grew up around. Reggie was very comfortable discussing his experiences at SIUC and his attitude was very different compared to the other Black males I interviewed. He showed little tension and he was very confident in discussing his experiences at SIUC. Reggie did not believe that his identity was in jeopardy while attending at a mostly White university; he felt that he could speak whenever he wanted to. He was the only Black male interviewed that attended a mostly White high school prior to attending SIUC. While Kevin and Terry expressed a different perspective than Reggie, it is important to examine how stereotypes can contribute to all of their experiences.

The Effect of Stereotypes

With negative media depictions constantly streaming over the airwaves of Black men being irresponsible, violent, and dangerous, these stereotypes are damaging (hooks, 2004; Jackson, 2006). Through stereotyping, generalizations are formed in society, which can inhibit Black male students from speaking in predominantly White environments. The interviewees elaborate on stereotypes that are embedded into society about Black people; they also show how these stereotypes force them not to speak in the classroom. Dennis states,

There are times when I am silent because I say to myself all snap (wow) she knows I am Black, so what to say or what to do. It is times when I cannot be myself or I will not be accepted.

Dennis discusses how he is hesitant to speak mainly because he is Black. He believes that because of his skin color people will judge his words. He also talks about how he cannot be himself because others will not accept him. Craig states, “I don’t want the students to think I’m the typical Black male.” These statements that Dennis and Craig share explain how deep the notion of silence is for them upon entering new environments. They are both negotiating their identity through voice to make sure others will accept them. From my perspective, their silence in the classroom can further cause problems with excelling academically if students do not feel safe and comfortable to participate in class.

The Black males that I interviewed also discussed their experiences in mostly White classrooms and why they hesitate to speak. Terry talks about his experience, “When I ask questions they look like I am not as smart as they are. That is the most

difference I see with White people and I am not comfortable with that yet.” Terry believes that there is a stereotype within society that indicates that White people are smarter than Black people. He is hesitant to speak because he doubts that what he says will not sound “smart enough” to White people. It seems that Dennis and Terry are dealing with the stress of understanding their worth and identity when being surrounded by White people. There is a strong sense of inferiority that is internalized in Black males when comparing themselves to White people. From my perspective, there are two ways that Black men deal with this inferiority; Black males will continuously try to negotiate their identity to the liking of White people or they will not speak and be viewed as an outsider. These are very tough decisions that Black males often have to make when interacting with White classmates. These choices that Black males have to make are rooted in their identity. Jason brings this to light when he suggests,

When I am in class I listen to some of the White students responses to questions and I think I am just as smart as they are if not smarter. At first I was nervous but after being here I became comfortable and adapted quick.

The notion of being watched or evaluated by peers is a serious reality for Terry, and he ponders over providing the wrong answer in class.

If I do give the wrong answer, then they will judge me on that. They will perceive me in a negative light the whole class. That is when I am hesitant to answer the questions.

The perceptions of these Black males usually operate out of social expectations many White peers and faculty may hold. Kevin says, “I think the university needs to realize that there is not just one type of Black man, there are many types of Black men.”

This student feels that the university can only see the stereotypical Black man and does not understand that personalities, backgrounds, and characteristics among Black men vary. I can agree with this because I have heard people say, “You are a different type of Black guy.” I constantly ask myself, what do they mean by saying I am different? All I can gather from that statement is that they see Black men as monolithic. When hearing statements such as “you are different” it reaffirms stereotypical perceptions of Black males as all being the same. These are all issues that Black men face in an attempt to negotiate their identities on predominantly White campuses.

The experiences of the Black male participants of this study are not random but they start from ideas filtered through parents, the media, and also from past experiences that they have encountered at an early age. When multiple Black males say they do not speak in class because of what White people may think, this reflects a detrimental problem in society. When students do not speak in class it can possibly affect their grades and academic achievement. As stated earlier, the retention rate for African Americans is very low at 34 percent, compared to other ethnic demographics. I believe student silence is one factor that is adversely affecting their progression as students and as human beings. We are all afforded freedom of speech, but this data shows that there are many factors that disallow certain groups to speak freely.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study is useful because it highlights the issues that Black males are facing in higher education at predominantly White institutions. The data gathered also gives us an in-depth perspective on why Black males are uncomfortable and hesitant to speak in predominantly White classrooms. The strengths of this study were accompanied by several limitations. By only selecting SIUC, the research gathered is connected to a certain locale and region, thus information derived from my research cannot be used to make national assessments on the subject. With such a small pool of interview subjects it is important to note that the data collected should not be interpreted as a means to speak for the large number of Black males students at SIUC. Rather, the limited scope provides insight to certain themes, ideas, and perspectives that are valuable to the ongoing conversation about Black males and higher learning. I wish to expand this research project in the future to include a larger scope of Black male students on a national level.

While my research project is limited in scope, the offering points out the dynamics in relationships between Black male students in predominantly White classrooms. In classroom settings there are multiple personalities that exist. I believe instructors should attempt to adjust to people's identities and their personalities. Instructors and students are sometimes very judgmental toward students that do not speak in class but they rarely understand why the person does not speak. Hopefully this study has provided a deeper understanding and outlook on why many Black males limit their voice in the classroom where they are the minority. In society we sometimes think that we know the answers to everything because of what the media disseminate, but there are

always missing pieces to the puzzle such as the perspectives of marginalized identity groups. Universities should encourage instructors to become more culturally competent and sensitive towards the needs of students from marginalized populations such as Black males. I suggest that all departments on campus have a “Minorities in the Classroom” training seminar, in which they can train instructors and faculty on how to identify and understand minority students struggles. Faculty and staff can also work with particular students on a personal level, once they realize there are personal issues that are impeding their academic progression. In conjunction with structural institutional change, Black male students should continue to work towards personal growth. This growth can take place through student organizations, faculty of color, fraternities, and peers.

Researching the topic of Black male silence and identity negotiation has really enlightened my understanding and knowledge of how there are many factors that prohibit Black male voices from being heard in the predominantly White classroom. It is my hope that as the result of this study, the reader will have a deeper understanding into the everyday struggles of Black males. As shown, Black males face many obstacles pertaining to identity, not only from other races but internally as well. I believe my duty in society is to continue to uplift my race, community, friends, and others so that we can all live in one world separated by none. I will continue to gain knowledge on my culture and numerous other cultures throughout my lifetime. I want to encourage all of humanity regardless of identity that there is always hope for change. We must continue to respect the difference in human beings and treat everybody as equal.

REFERENCES

- Alexander, B. K. (2004). Passing, cultural performance, and individual agency: Performative reflections on Black masculine identity. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 4(3), 377-404.
- Barbara, D. (1958). Don't be afraid of silence. *Today's Speech*, 6(1), 13-15.
- Chung, C. L., & Ting-Toomey, S. (2007). *Understanding intercultural communication*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Cones, J. H., & White, J. L. (1999). *Black man emerging: Facing the past and seizing a future in America*. New York, NY: W. H. Freeman & Company.
- Croucher, S. M. (2008). French Muslims and the Hijab: An analysis of identity and the Islamic veil in France. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 37(3), 199-213.
- Cuyjet, M. (1997). African American men on college campuses: Their needs and their perceptions. *New Directions for Student Services*, 80, p. 5.
- Cuyjet, M. (2009). Invisible men – almost: the diminution of African American males in higher education. In H. T. Frierson, W. P., J. H. Wyche (Eds.) *Black American males in higher education: Diminishing proportions* (pp. 1-11). London, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Davis, M., Dias-Bowie, Y., Greenberg, K., Klukken, G., Pollio, H., Thomas, S. P., & Thompson, C. L. (2004). "A Fly in the Buttermilk": Descriptions of university life by successful black undergraduate students at predominantly white southeastern university. *Journal of Higher Education*, 75(4), 420-445.

- Du Bois, W.E.B. (1903) *Souls of Black folks: Essays and sketches*. Chicago, IL: University Press John Wilson and Son.
- Ellison, R. (1995). *Invisible man*. New York, NY: Random House, Inc.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (1994). Interviewing: The art of science. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 361-377). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality: An introduction*. New York, NY: Random House, Inc.
- Hertel, J. B. (2002). College student generational status: Similarities, differences, and factors in college adjustment. *Psychological Record*, 52(1), 3-18.
- Hopson, M., & Orbe, (2007). Playing the game: Recalling dialectical tensions for Black men in oppressive organizational structures. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 18(1), 69-86.
- hooks, b. (2004). *We real cool: Black men and masculinity*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hunt, M. (2010). Active waiting: Habits and the practice of conducting qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 9(1), 69-76.
- Hurd, H (2000). Staying power: Colleges work to improve retention rates. *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 17(18), 42.
- Jackson, R. L. (1999). White space, White privilege: Mapping discursive inquiry into the self. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 85(1), 38-54.
- Jackson, R. L. (2002a). Cultural contracts theory: Toward an understanding of identity negotiation. *Communication Quarterly*, 50(3/4), 359-367.
- Jackson, R. L. (2002b). Exploring African American identity negotiation in the academy:

Toward a transformative vision of African American communication scholarship.
Howard Journal of Communications, 13(1), 43-57.

Jackson, R. L., & Dangerfield, C. (2004). *Defining Black masculinity as cultural property: Toward an identity negotiation paradigm*. In R. L. Jackson' (Ed), African American communication and identities: Essential readings (pp. 1-347). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Jackson, R. L. (2004). *Acting black: College, identity, and the performance of race*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Jackson, R. L. (2006). *Scripting the Black masculine body: Identity, discourse, and racial politics in popular media*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Johannesen, R. L. (1974). The functions of silence: a plea for communication research.
Western Speech Journal, 2, 25-35.

Leander, K. M. (2002). Silencing in classroom interaction: *Producing and relating social spaces*. *Discourse Processes*, 34(2), 193-235.

Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2002). *Qualitative communication research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Majors, R., & Billison, J. M. (1992). *Cool pose. The dilemmas of Black manhood in America*. New York, NY: Touchstone.

Mckenzie, N. (2004). Competent silence: The ignored communication skill. *Florida Communication Journal*, 32(2), 37-44

Meyer, K. (2008). Student classroom engagement: A multiple linear regression analysis of the variables predicting student silence and participation. *National Communication Association*, p. 1.

- Merida, K. (2007). *Being a Black man: At the corner of progress and peril*. Washington, D.C: Public Affairs.
- Nakane, I. (2005). Negotiating silence and speech in the classroom. *Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*, 24(1-2), 75-100.
- Nakane, I. (2007). *Silence in intercultural communication: Perceptions and performance*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Ochoa, G. L., & Pineda, D. (2008). Deconstructing power, privilege, and silence in the classroom. *Radical History Review*, 102, 45-62.
- Orbe, M. (2008). Theorizing multidimensional identity negotiation: Reflections on the lived experiences of first-generation college students. *New Directions for Child & Adolescent Development*, 120, 81-95.
- Orbe, M. (2003). African American first generation college student communicative experiences. *Electronic Journal of communication/La Revue Electronique de Communication*, 13(2/3). <http://www.cios.org/www/ejc/v013n2toc.htm>.
- Owens, D., Lacey, K., Rawls, G., & Holbert-Quince. (2010). First-Generation African American male college students: Implications for career counselors. *Career Development Quarterly*, 58(4), 291-300.
- Stewart, D. L. (2008). Being all of me: Black students negotiating multiple identities. *Journal of Higher Education*, 79(2), 183-207.
- The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2010). African Americans in higher education: Then and now. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 5(7), p.7.

- Ting-Toomey, S. (1988). Intercultural conflict styles: A face negotiation theory. In Y.Y. Kim & W. B. Gudykunst (Eds.), *Theories in intercultural communication* (pp. 213-235). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (1993). Communicative resourcefulness: An identity negotiation theory. In R. L. Wiseman & J. Koester (Eds.), *Intercultural Communication Competence* (pp. 72-111). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (1994) *The challenge of facework: Cross-cultural and interpersonal issues*. New York, NY: SUNY Press.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (1999). *Communicating across cultures*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- U.S. Department of Education (2010). National center for education statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/>
- Xio, Dong Dai (2009). Intercultural personhood and identity negotiation. *China Media Research*, 5(2), 1-12.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Demographic Survey

Directions: Please complete the following survey

1. Please indicate your Age _____

_____ **Please indicate an “X” if you would prefer not to answer the above question**

2. Please indicate your Gender: _____ Male _____ Female

_____ **Please indicate an “X” if you would prefer not to answer the above question**

3. Please indicate your Major: _____

_____ **Please indicate an “X” if you would prefer not to answer the above question**

4. Please indicate your year here at SIUC: _____

_____ **Please indicate an “X” if you would prefer not to answer the above question**

5. Please indicate the number of semesters you have attended SIUC _____

_____ **Please indicate an “X” if you would prefer not to answer the above question**

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. What was your motivation for attending this University? Did you have any uncomfortable feelings or thoughts about attending SIUC.
2. Do you always feel content with attending a mostly white university? Please explain.
3. Can you share a specific example when you felt uncomfortable while attending SIUC?
4. Do you believe that instructors have a genuine concern with your ability to learn in the classroom?
5. Do you ever feel that you cannot express your personal experiences while being in a classroom setting?
6. Do you ever feel silenced as a Black male in a mostly white classroom, if so why?
7. Do you believe you would feel more comfortable attending a HBCU (Historically Black Collegiate University)? If so, explain.
8. When you are silent in the classroom, what influences your decisions not to speak?
9. Are you typically a person that speaks frequently in the classroom?
10. When Black males encounter issues that they do not agree with, what can the university do to help solve the problems?
11. Is there anything else you would like to add to this interview? If so feel free to do so.

VITA

Graduate School

Southern Illinois University

Charles P. Alexander

Cpalexander3@gmail.com

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Bachelor of Science, Speech Communication, May 2009

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Master of Science in Education, Curriculum and Instruction, May 1993

Research Paper Title:

The Identity Negotiation of Silence by Black Males in Predominantly White Spaces

Major Professor: Dr. Rachel Griffin